

Inspection | Clarified

The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- ▶ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities
- ▶ primary schools
- ▶ secondary schools
- ▶ special schools
- ▶ pupil referral units
- ▶ independent schools
- ▶ further education
- ▶ adult community learning
- ▶ youth and community work training
- ▶ local authority education services for children and young people
- ▶ teacher education and training
- ▶ Welsh for adults
- ▶ work-based learning
- ▶ learning in the justice sector

Estyn also:

- ▶ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the Welsh Government and others
- ▶ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Introduction

We hope that the information here helps to clarify some common misconceptions about inspection requirements that affect teachers. It is important to read this document alongside the inspection handbooks guidance relevant to each sector. We also have a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section on our website.

If you would like Estyn to clarify any aspect of our inspections then email communications@estyn.gov.wales or tweet us [@EstynHMI](https://twitter.com/EstynHMI) using the hashtag [#EstynMyths](https://twitter.com/EstynMyths)

Q1. Will inspectors observe all teachers in a school?

This will depend on the nature and size of the school inspected. In a small primary school, it is likely that inspectors will observe all the teachers. In a large primary school and in secondary schools, the inspection team will sample the work of teachers.

Q2. Will inspectors observe teachers for the whole lesson?

Normally, inspectors will stay for a reasonable length of time to gather the evidence they require. In primary schools, they often stay for a session (for example from mid-morning break to lunchtime). In secondary schools, they are likely to stay for the whole lesson.

Q3. Do teachers have to provide a written lesson plan?

Teachers are not required to produce a lesson plan to give to the inspector visiting the lesson. However, inspectors will expect to see evidence of effective curriculum planning (such as schemes of work) that ensures that activities meet the needs of all learners and enable them to make sufficient progress.

Q4. Do inspectors have preferred methods and approaches that they expect teachers to follow?

Estyn does not have a checklist of specific practices or preferred methodologies. The focus of a lesson observation is on learner progress and achievement and the impact of teaching strategies on these. Good progress and achievement may derive from a variety of practices and methodologies. Inspectors will expect teachers to track the progress of pupils effectively but do not have favourite systems for doing this.

Q5. What lesson structure will the inspectors expect teachers to follow?

There isn't an 'Estyn approved' lesson structure or pattern. For example, teachers don't need to set out the learning objective formally at the beginning of a lesson and finish with a plenary for inspectors to judge the lesson as good. The key focus is on the effectiveness of the lesson in terms of standards and learning, not the method or format.

Q6. Do inspectors expect to see literacy and numeracy taught in every lesson?

Inspectors do not have literacy and numeracy boxes to tick whenever they observe lessons during inspections. Teachers should take advantage of opportunities that occur naturally in the curriculum to reinforce learning in literacy and numeracy. However, this should not mean that literacy and numeracy become mantras for repetition in every lesson in the school day no matter what the topic.

Q7. How much evidence of pupils' work will inspectors want to see?

Inspectors will want to scrutinise a sample of pupils' work. In most cases, they will ask to see a sample from specific year groups or subjects. The reporting inspector will make these requests clear to the school at the pre-inspection meeting. Inspectors focus in particular on the quality of pupils' work in English and/or Welsh and mathematics and how well they apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects across the curriculum.

Q8. Will teachers receive a judgement on their individual lesson?

No, although there will be an opportunity for professional dialogue with the inspector after the lesson. The purpose of the lesson observations is to validate the statements made in the school's self-evaluation report about the overall quality of teaching in the school. Inspectors will focus on the strengths and shortcomings in the lesson in relation to the impact the lesson has on developing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and the progress they make. Inspectors will also use other information, such as scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment records, performance data and comments by pupils and parents, in order to come to an overall judgement about the quality of teaching in the school.

Q9. What can a teacher or school do if they think an inspection judgement is unfair or if they have concerns about the conduct of an inspection?

If a teacher has a concern, then they should talk in the first instance to the school's nominee as soon as possible about the issue as they provide the best link to the inspection team. The nominee will discuss the matter with the reporting inspector.

The school can only challenge the inspection team's findings on the grounds of factual inaccuracy or if they believe that the inspection was not carried out in accordance with Estyn's code of conduct for inspectors. The school should not challenge judgments simply because they disagree with them. [Further information about Estyn's complaints policy can be found here.](#)

Q10. Can I access the notes of the lesson that the inspector completed during a lesson/session observation?

Where inspectors complete evidence forms for teaching, they may contain personal data. In these cases, they may be open to disclosure under the Data Protection Act (DPA) to the individual teacher. However, we ask inspectors to evaluate and to discuss the strengths and shortcomings in teaching that relate to all lessons/sessions observed. As a result, it may not be possible to relate any comments to a specific teacher or lesson/session. If this is the case, then we will not be able to disclose the information as it does not relate to a specific individual.

Q11. Will inspectors evaluate the work of support staff?

All staff play a role during an inspection, not just those whom inspectors observe or interview. Inspectors may evaluate the work of support staff that they observe in lessons or when they engage with pupils, for example in intervention groups or at lunchtimes. Inspectors may also interview support staff in order to gather the evidence they require to pursue a specific line of inquiry.

Q12. Will inspectors observe the lessons of supply teachers during the inspection?

Inspectors may observe lessons/sessions taught by a supply teacher or other cover arrangements if it is part of a line of inquiry.

Q13. Will the inspection team include Welsh-speaking inspectors to judge learners' communication skills in Welsh?

Yes, there will be at least one inspector on each team who has sufficient skills in Welsh to judge the quality of pupils' Welsh skills at the level appropriate for the ages of the pupils.

Q14. Can I refuse to let an inspector into my classroom and do inspectors have a legal right to scrutinise my performance appraisal?

Under the legal powers given to the Chief Inspector, inspectors have the legal right to inspect schools, to observe lessons and to scrutinise evidence. Obstructing an inspector in their work, including denying them access to a school or classroom, is actually a criminal offence. In relation to performance management, the school needs to demonstrate to the inspectors that its performance management systems are rigorous and contribute effectively towards identifying training and development needs. However, inspectors do not have the right to look at the performance management reports of individual teachers. These are confidential. Schools may provide anonymised records to exemplify their performance management system.

Q15. How will inspectors use the National School Categorisation System?

The Welsh Government introduced a National School Categorisation System for all primary schools and secondary schools. It is important to note that Estyn inspections are independent and their inspection work in a school covers a broader range of considerations than the National School Categorisation System takes into account. Estyn will consider categorisation alongside other information as part of pre-inspection work and the establishing of lines of inquiry, but categorisation will not directly inform inspection outcomes.

Q16. Does Estyn expect schools to undertake 'mock inspections' in order to prepare for inspection?

No. We actively discourage schools from undertaking 'mock inspections'. The focus of schools every day should be on the delivery of education of high quality for the benefit of the pupils.

Q17. Are schools expected to write a brand new self-evaluation report for an inspection?

No. Schools don't have to write a brand new self-evaluation or use hyperlinks in it to their policies and other documents.

Q18. Do I need to put the school's documentation onto a memory stick or hard drive?

Inspectors will need to consider evidence, but they are happy to look at it in the format that it is in already. Schools are not expected to put any/all paper-based documentation onto memory sticks or an external hard drive for each inspector.

Q19. Will schools know what the inspectors are thinking before the end of the inspection?

Inspectors don't keep their findings to themselves. They will share them with senior leaders and the nominee before the end of the inspection.

Q20. Are schools expected to provide lunch for the inspectors?

No. Schools don't have to provide lunches, cakes, biscuits or bowls of fruit for inspectors, but it is useful if they can provide basic tea/coffee-making facilities.

Q21. Is the school expected to arrange a meeting for the inspectors to meet with their key partners?

No. Schools don't have to set up meetings between their key partners and the inspection team.

Q22. Will the use of ICT, numeracy, literacy and Welsh be judged in every lesson?

Schools are not expected to create opportunities for pupils to show their skills in ICT, numeracy, literacy or Welsh in every single lesson.

Q23. Does what we do have to be unique in order for us achieve an 'Excellent' judgement?

An 'Excellent' judgement can be achieved as a result of a number of factors. 'Uniqueness' on its own is not a sufficient reason for the award of an 'Excellent' judgement. 'Excellent' should always link closely to highly effective provision that helps learners to achieve high standards.

Q24. Will the inspectors need access to the school beyond regular working hours?

No. Inspectors will arrive and depart at reasonable times, i.e. usually between 8am and 6pm (unless evening provision is part of the provider's usual work).

Q25. Is it mandatory for schools to rewrite their teaching policies and schemes prior to an inspection?

Schools don't need to revise their policies and schemes of work before the inspectors arrive. The aim is to see the school working normally and to see the policies and schemes that teachers usually use.

Q26. Our Christmas concert is scheduled the same week as we're due for inspection. Do we need to cancel it?

Definitely not. Schools do not need to cancel the Christmas concert to prepare for the inspection.