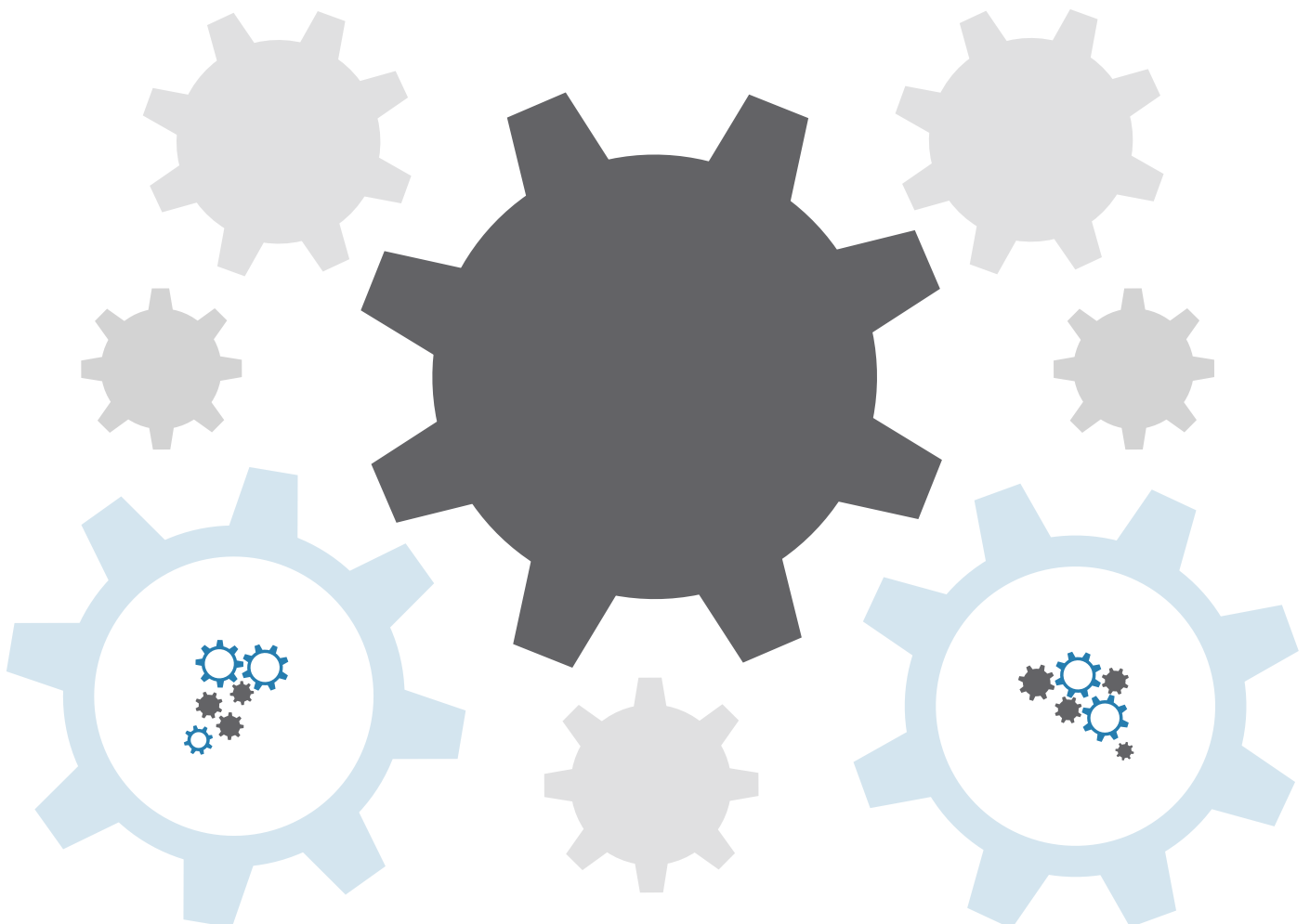

A report on the responses to Estyn's second consultation on inspection arrangements

April 2017



1 Introduction

In autumn 2016, Estyn conducted its second stage nationwide public consultation on the proposals for the future arrangements for the inspection of education and training in Wales. A previous stage 1 consultation was conducted in autumn 2015 (Estyn, 2016a) and the results from that consultation were used to shape the new proposals and 'pilot' inspections in the autumn term 2016. The new inspection arrangements will commence in September 2017 and the results from the second stage consultation will help to shape these further.

2 Methodology

The consultation took the form of a questionnaire that was available to complete either online or offline on a Word document and returned via email or post. Estyn launched the survey on 1st November 2016 and it was closed on 30th November 2016.

3 Profile of consultation respondents

Estyn received 573 responses to the consultation. However, one response was deleted as it was deemed to not be a serious response to the questionnaire. Of the remaining 572, 569 responded to the questionnaire and three did not answer the questionnaire and were free-form written responses about the new inspection arrangements. As a result, the final sample size was 569 responses to the consultation questionnaire and three free form written responses.

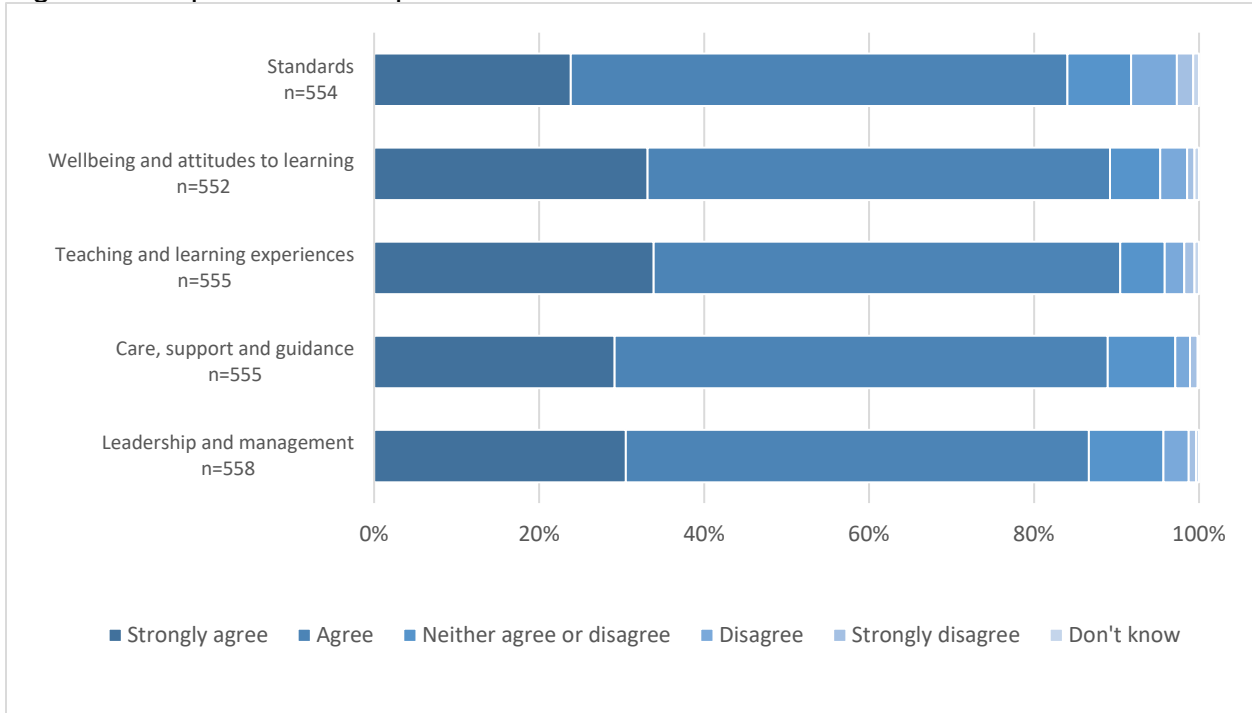
The most common group of people to respond to the questionnaire were educational professionals, with 82% of respondents identifying as part of this group. In addition, 7% of responses were from parents or carers, 1% from learners, and 1% from members of the public. Of the 9% of people who identified in the 'other' category', the most commonly identified group were school governors. Of the 569 questionnaire responses, 98 responses indicated that they were responding in a representative capacity on behalf of an organisation. These 98 responses were spread between the 'educational professional' and 'other' groups. The groups being represented in these responses included schools, charities, unions, local authorities, dioceses, and other organisations involved in supporting and working alongside schools. The opinions of these groups will be referred to throughout the report as a separate group, as well as part of the overall opinions, as it is important to remember that they are expressing views on behalf of a large group of people, even though they were only one response.

4 Results

4.1 Common Inspection Framework

The survey participants were firstly provided with information on each of the five new proposed inspection areas for the new common inspection framework. They were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each of the five proposed inspection areas. The results from these questions can be seen in figure 1. Between 86% and 90% of participants indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with each of the inspection areas.

Figure 1: Proposed new inspection areas



The pattern of results was similar for the group responses, with between 85% and 87% of the groups either agreeing or strongly agreeing with each of the proposed inspection areas.

A few respondents shared a view that Estyn should be careful when using benchmarking quartiles, especially with a small cohort or school. It was felt that Estyn should take account of a range of factors that influence a school and the learners, including learners' background and potential, and their starting point and any additional learning needs (ALN). Additionally, it was felt that more consideration should be given to how the more able pupils are challenged. A common suggestion for improvement in the area of standards for schools was to place a greater emphasis on progress or value added data.

The inspection area of wellbeing and attitudes to learning generated a lot of support through the comments sections, with respondents feeling that the health and wellbeing of learners are important to consider, as well as the important links that a high level of wellbeing has with the ability to learn. Comments included the suggestion that this inspection area could contain specific reference to anti-bullying to improve it. In addition, it was felt by some respondents, including one union response, that the wellbeing of staff in the school should be referred to as well as the learners. Within the attitudes to learning focus, a common concern regarded the emphasis on attendance. It was felt that more consideration should be given to the reasons behind low attendance; for example, in some schools absence is higher when a large proportion of learners have time off for religious festivals, or in more remote providers where learners need a full day off to attend appointments due to the distance needed to travel. It was suggested that more focus should be placed on the methods the schools are using to improve attendance and judging on this instead.

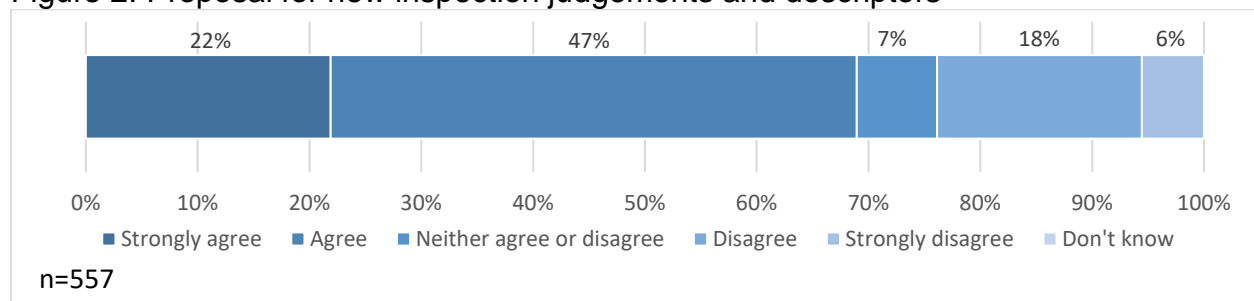
4.2 Inspection judgements

Estyn proposes to change the current four judgement words (excellent, good, adequate, and unsatisfactory) to the following four new judgement words, each with new descriptors:

- Excellent
- Good
- Adequate, needs improvement
- Unsatisfactory, needs urgent improvement

Participants were asked to what extent they agreed with the new judgement words and descriptors (see figure 2). Almost 70% of participants either agreed strongly or agreed with this new proposal, with 25% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Figure 2: Proposal for new inspection judgements and descriptors



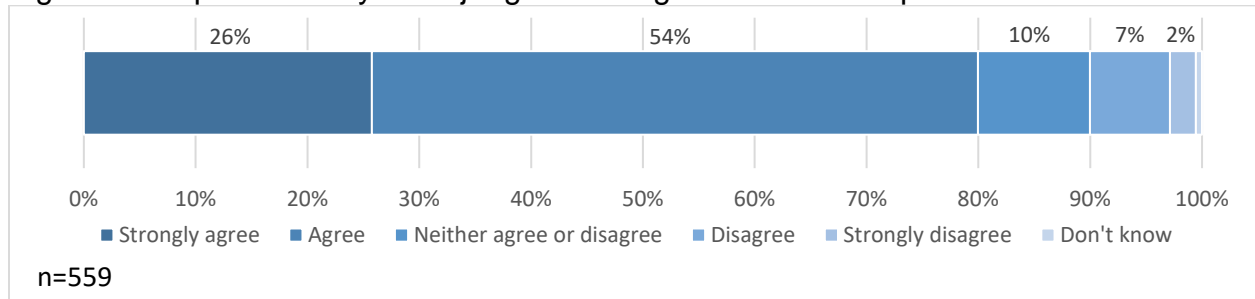
The most commonly identified issue with the judgement words and descriptors centred around the judgement: 'adequate needs improvement'. The concerns about this judgement included a dislike for the word adequate, feeling adequate was too negative, and feeling that the judgement was contradictory as the word adequate does not represent under-performance, whereas 'needs improvement' does. Alternative wordings were suggested, including using the word 'satisfactory' instead, or dropping the word 'adequate' and keep the judgement 'requires improvement'. Overall, the

removal of the phrase ‘sector leading practice’ from the excellent judgement was met with a positive response, with responses indicating that this made excellent a more viable judgement to achieve. However, another theme through the written responses was that some of the descriptors were too broad and that this may be overcome by introducing more judgement categories.

The group responses were very similar to the overall results seen, with 68% of the responses either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposed inspection words. However, it is worth noting that three out of the five unions who responded disagreed with the five judgement words and descriptors. The teaching unions raised concerns around the ‘adequate needs improvement’ judgement, and the negative associations that are perceived to exist with the ‘adequate judgement’. One union proposed an alternative could be to change to five judgement words, with ‘adequate’ described as ‘strengths outweigh weaknesses’, and ‘needs improvements’ described as ‘important areas require improvements’. In addition, a concern was raised about the descriptors not being clear enough in their own right. In contrast to the union responses, three out of four local authorities / county council responses agreed with the proposed judgement words and descriptors.

Estyn currently has 15 judgements in an inspection report. The new proposals outline that there will only be one judgement against each of the five inspection areas outlined in 4.1 above. Participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to make only the five judgements (see figure 3). Eight out of ten of the responses agreed or strongly agreed with these proposals.

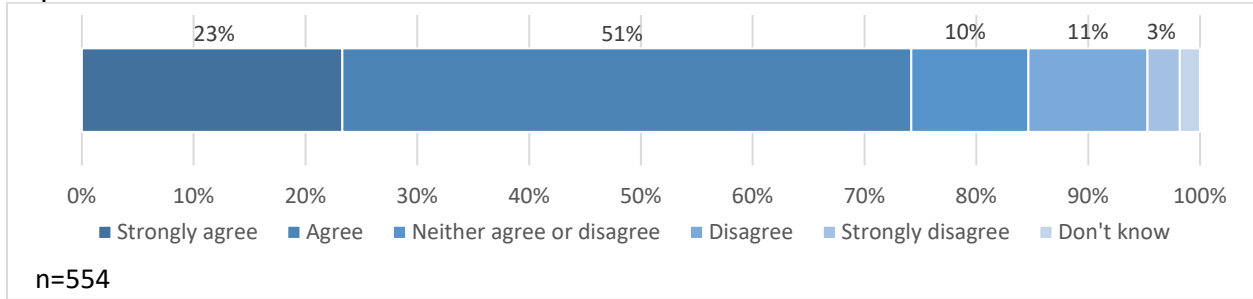
Figure 3: Proposal to only have judgements against the five inspection areas



The pattern of results from the groups were in line with the responses shown above, with 63% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposals and 12% disagreeing.

In addition, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with a proposal to have a summary statement in the report, instead of a judgement, on overall effectiveness, and another on prospects for improvement (see figure 4). Seventy-four per cent of the responses either agreed or strongly agreed with these proposals.

Figure 4: Proposal for a summary statement on effectiveness and prospects for improvement



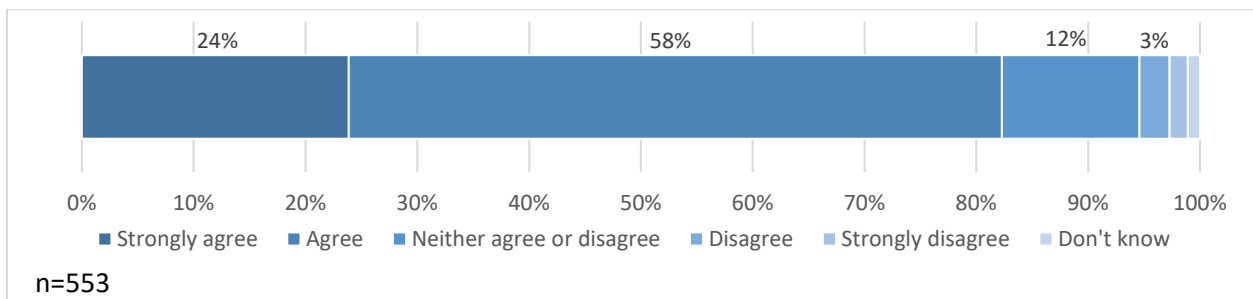
Again, the pattern of results from the group responses was similar with 61% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal and 16% disagreeing.

The response comments in support of a summary statement highlighted that this would be easier for parents to understand and more useful to the people reading the reports. However, other responses felt it was important to have an overall judgement to enable a quick understanding of how well the provider is doing.

4.3 Follow-up activity

Estyn is considering a more flexible approach to follow-up activities to enable these to more closely match to the needs of the school or post-16 provider. Firstly, the respondents were provided with information about the proposed follow-up arrangements for schools, including early support, arranging visits to match providers' needs, and more support to schools in statutory categories. They were then asked to what extent they agreed with these follow-up proposals for schools (see figure 5). Support for these proposals was strong, with 82% of the responses either agreeing or strongly agreeing with these flexible follow-up proposals.

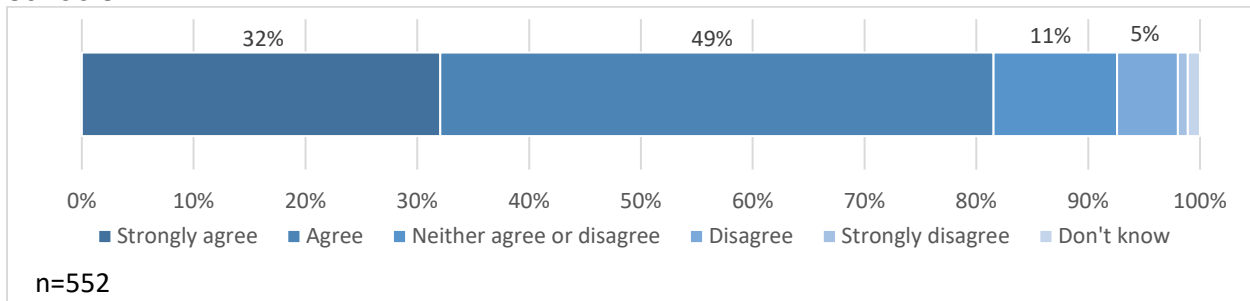
Figure 5: Proposal of more flexible follow-up in schools



The group responses followed the same pattern as the overall responses in figure 5, with 70% agreeing, and only 1% disagreeing with the proposal. A higher proportion of the groups indicated that they neither agreed or disagreed than the responses as a whole, with 20% choosing this option.

In addition, the consultation proposed that a stronger emphasis should be put on leadership when considering whether it is necessary for Estyn to further monitor the schools. Estyn proposes that if a school has shortcomings, but where leaders show they have the capacity to address these shortcomings and improve the school, they will not automatically fall into a follow-up category and would be expected to address the concerns without further monitoring activity. Participants were asked to what extent they agreed with this increased emphasis on leadership when deciding whether a provider needs further monitoring (see figure 6). Just over 80% of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with these proposals of increased focus on leadership.

Figure 6: Proposal for more focus on leadership when considering further monitoring for schools

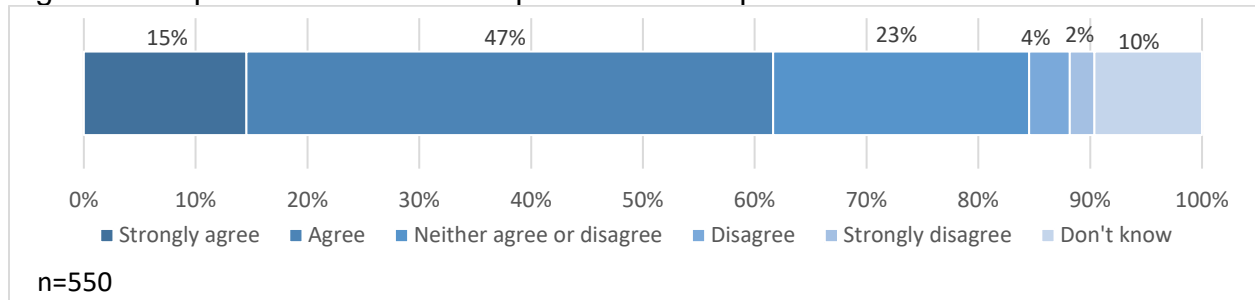


The pattern of results from the group responses were comparable to the respondents as a whole, with almost 70% of the group responses either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposals. However, more of the groups did not express an opinion with 28% indicating that they neither agreed nor disagreed.

Although there was a large support for this proposal for leadership to have increased focus when considering if a school requires monitoring, several responses raised some important areas of consideration. For example, some responses felt that the quality of teaching should be of greater consideration than leadership, while other responses felt that safeguarding issues should be considered most important when considering if a school needed monitoring. Concerns were also expressed around the role of acting headteachers and the level of support provided from different local authorities to provide for a permanent headteacher as soon as possible.

In the post-16 sector, the consultation also proposed that there will be a more flexible approach to follow-up activity, including with more focus on leadership. The respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with these flexible follow-up arrangements in the post-16 sector (see figure 7). Just over 60% of the responses either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal. Although the percentage agreeing is lower than to other questions, it should be noted that 33% either responded that they did not know, or neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 6% disagreed with the proposals.

Figure 7: Proposal for more flexible post-16 follow up

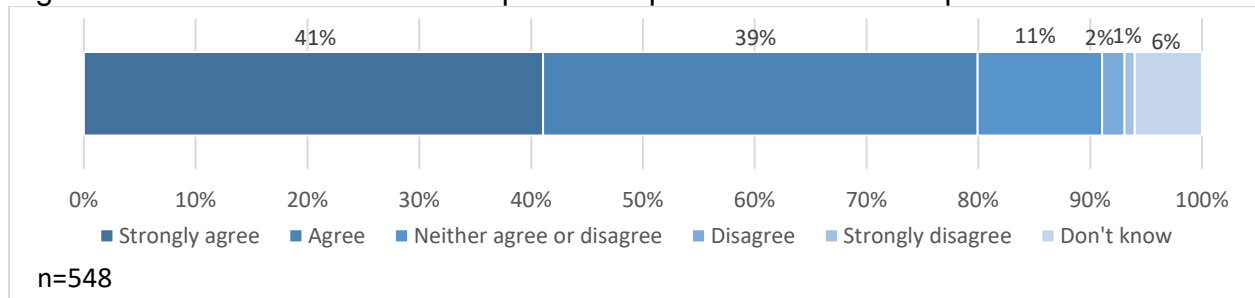


The pattern of results from the groups was again similar to the overall responses with 66% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal.

4.4 Inspecting A Level / vocational provision in sixth forms

Respondents were first asked if they agreed or disagreed that sixth form standards and provision should be inspected in secondary schools (see figure 8). Eight out of ten of responses either agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal, with only 3% disagreeing.

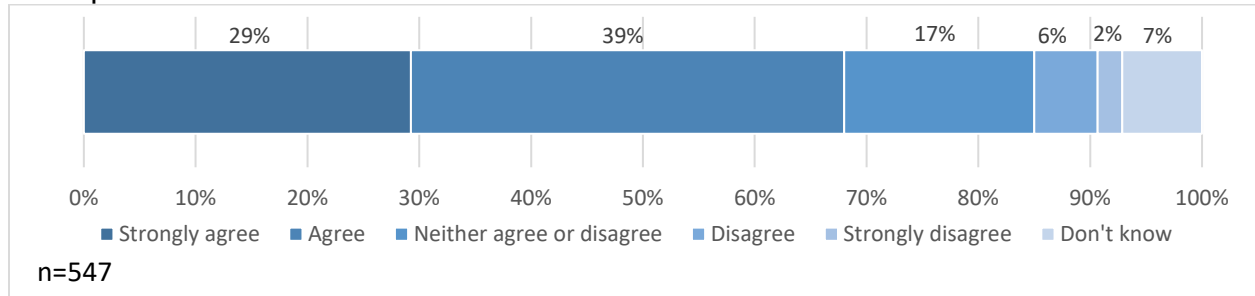
Figure 8: Should sixth forms be inspected as part of the school inspection?



Again, the same pattern of results was seen in the group only responses with 75% of the groups either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposal to inspect sixth form provision.

The respondents were then asked if sixth forms are inspected if this should result in a separate section and judgement in the report (see figure 9). Of the respondents, 68% agreed or strongly agreed with this suggestion, with only 8% disagreeing.

Figure 9: Should sixth form inspections results in a separate section and judgement in the report?



The pattern of responses from the groups was similar to the rest of the responses, with just over 60% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this proposal and only 4% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

There were mixed written comment responses regarding the inspection of sixth forms. Respondents who thought they should be inspected felt that it was important for this to happen to ensure there was a high quality of teaching across the school and ensuring consistency across the post-16 sector. However, a difficulty in this approach was also highlighted with a differing amounts of sixth form teaching being delivered through local networks and a range of providers. Responses highlight that the advantage of inspecting the sixth form provision separately is this enables comparison between various post-16 sectors and helps learners to be more informed when choosing their post-16 provision. However, others feel that as the sixth form is part of a school it should be inspected along with the rest of the school for a whole-school judgement.

4.5 Additional areas of consideration

A common theme from the consultation responses was around the way school inspections are carried out. A few participants suggested that the notice time for inspections should be reduced, or that no notice should be given for inspections at all. If adopted, it was felt that this would reduce the amount of pre-inspection paperwork, reduce stress on the staff in the build up to inspection, and allow a more accurate picture of the everyday running of the school. However, one of the teaching union responses identifies that as a reduction on the inspection notice period was not part of this consultation no significant changes to this should be made without a formal consultation on this issue. A further suggestion was that federation schools should all be inspected at the same time as each other.

A few comments confirmed that misconceptions regarding inspection documentation remain. It was felt by a few respondents that inspections should be more supportive and that the process for involving different people in the inspection could be changed, for example having one-to-one conversations or confidential surveys for teachers, having governor surveys, and improving the current parent and pupil questionnaires to ensure the most relevant questions are being asked.

Additional concerns were raised about budgets and infrastructure problems in some schools and the subsequent effect this could have on inspection judgements. Some respondents said that it should be noted that some improvements could only be made within these type of financial constraints that are not always in the schools control.

Respondents from the further education sector also highlighted that the information provided for this consultation focused on schools and therefore, more clarity was needed on how these changes would relate to the further education sector. Some of the differences between schools and the further education sector that respondents felt should be considered when drawing up the new inspection proposals included different curriculums, different focus within wellbeing for the different age range in further education, how attendance would be measured in the work based learning sector, the

more diverse range of learners in further education and work based learning. In addition, it was felt that further consideration needed to be given to pupil referral units, special schools and non-maintained nurseries as they, along with the further education sector, have noticeable differences with the schools the proposals were mainly focused on.

4.6 Conclusion and next steps

Overall, there was clear support for the proposed new inspection arrangements presented throughout the consultation. There was strong support for the five new proposed inspection areas, along with the new proposed arrangements for follow-up activity, and proposed sixth form inspections. There was also support for the new proposed inspection judgements and descriptors, although some concerns were raised with the 'adequate, requires improvement' judgement. Further work also needs to be completed when considering post-16 providers, as the current consultation focused mainly on school-based inspections.

Several misconceptions about how Estyn inspects currently were aired by quite a few respondents. This suggests that we need to do more work on our myth busting campaign as we move towards implementing our new inspection arrangements. Pilot inspections are currently ongoing and the results from this consultation will be used to shape any changes to these arrangements. The new inspection arrangements will be finalised in Spring 2017 and will commence in September 2017.

References

Estyn (2016a) *A report on the response to the consultation on how Estyn inspects education and training in Wales*. Cardiff: Estyn. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/A%20report%20on%20the%20response%20to%20the%20consultation%20on%20how%20Estyn%20inspects%20education%20and%20training%20in%20Wales%20%28Eng%292.pdf> [Accessed 10 February 2017]

Estyn (2016b) *Inspection Clarified*. Cardiff: Estyn. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/Updated%20-%20Inspection%20Clarified%20%28new%29.pdf> [Accessed 7 March 2017]