

# Guidance for Inspectors

## What we inspect

Maintained schools and PRUs  
– for inspections from 2022



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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**This document is also available in Welsh.**

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## Introduction to ‘What we inspect’

This handbook sets out what inspectors need to consider when evaluating the five inspection areas in maintained schools (primary, secondary, all-age and special schools) and pupil referral units. It explains ‘What we inspect’. It should be read in conjunction with the document ‘How we inspect’, which sets out our approach to inspection in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The guidance is essential reading for reporting inspectors and all other members of the inspection team, including the nominee. It may also be useful for providers to support their understanding of the inspection guidance. There is a separate handbook that explains the inspection process and methodology, [‘How we inspect’](#).

The five inspection areas are set out below.

### Inspection areas

#### IA1 Learning

- 1.1 Standards and progress in learning and skills

#### IA2 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

- 2.1 Wellbeing
- 2.2 Attitudes to learning

#### IA3 Teaching and learning experiences

- 3.1 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum
- 3.2 Teaching and assessment

#### IA4 Care, support and guidance

- 4.1 Personal development
- 4.2 Safeguarding

#### IA5 Leadership and management

- 5.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
- 5.2 Self-evaluation processes and improvement planning
- 5.3 Professional learning

There is further information about inspections on our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

## Evaluating each inspection area (IA)

Inspection teams will not give overall grades for each inspection area. However, they will make a robust and thorough evaluation of the school or PRU's provision and its impact on pupils' learning and wellbeing.

Inspectors will always include clear evaluations in relation to the reporting requirements in each inspection area, as exemplified in this handbook. However, what inspectors report on within each inspection area may differ depending on the relative significance of what they find in each school or PRU. Inspectors may report 'by exception'. This means that they may report on some aspects only where there are particular strengths or weaknesses.

Where inspectors identify any interesting or innovative practice that is worthy of sharing more widely, they will invite the school to complete a case study. We showcase a range of these case studies on our website.

Where inspectors identify serious shortcomings in one or more inspection areas, the school or PRU will normally require a statutory level of follow-up activity (significant improvement or special measures). In a few instances where inspectors have seriously considered but rejected significant improvement and special measures, they may decide that the provision requires monitoring through Estyn review. There is [further guidance about follow-up activity](#) on our website.

## About the school or pupil referral unit (PRU)

This section of the report will be brief and contain only factual background information about the provider from the latest PLASC return and will not contain any evaluation of the provision. The reporting inspector normally agrees the content of this section with the school or PRU during the inspection and during the factual check of the draft report prior to publication. Where there are important differences between the most recent PLASC information and the school's current circumstances, these should be discussed with the reporting inspector and if appropriate this will be reflected in this section. If there is disagreement about the content of this section, the reporting inspector will make the final decision about what to include in the report.

This section will contain brief information on:

- the size, nature and location of the school or PRU
- the background and circumstances of the pupils, such as the proportion eligible for free school meals
- the linguistic background of the pupils
- any important changes since the last inspection
- any other relevant factors, such as the proportion of pupils with additional learning needs<sup>1</sup> or the degree to which pupils leave or join the provision during

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<sup>1</sup> We have used the term 'additional learning needs', but we acknowledge that 'special educational needs' may also be used in this context during the period of implementation of reforms.

- the academic year
- the date of appointment of the headteacher
- the month/year of the provision's previous inspection

If a school or PRU is currently an innovation or professional learning school, the reporting inspector should include the statement below. This indicates their involvement in education reform but does not constitute a statement on the quality of its work: 'The school/PRU is currently working with the Welsh Government and other schools/PRUs to take forward developments relating to education reform in Wales.'

If appropriate, the context should include the sentence: 'The school is a lead school for initial teacher education.'

When the school has a religious character, the reporting inspector should also include the following statement: 'Estyn does not inspect denominational religious education or the religious content of collective worship when it is a school with a religious character. Instead, the governing body is required by law to arrange for denominational religious education and collective worship to be inspected separately.'

The context section will also include a link to [www.mylocalschool.wales.org.uk](http://www.mylocalschool.wales.org.uk), a website with information on schools for parents/carers and others with an interest in their local school.

## Overview

This section of the report should:

- contain a short overview of the main findings (200-300 words), outlining the key strengths and any important weaknesses that require improvement
- make the link between pupils' outcomes, the quality of the provision and the effectiveness of leadership
- be consistent with the findings in the body of the report

## Recommendations

Recommendations should:

- link closely to the main evaluation areas of the inspection guidance, with the weightiest recommendations reflected in the overview
- give the provider a clear and specific indication of the area(s) that require improvement
- help the provider to understand clearly what they should do to make the necessary improvements
- be written in order of priority, not in the order of the guidance

## **What happens next**

The 'What happens next' section will set out what the provider needs to do following the inspection. In all cases, leaders will need to respond to the recommendations by putting in place the actions needed to make the improvements identified by the inspection team.

It should exemplify any interesting or innovative practice case studies that we have invited leaders to share.

This section will explain if the provision requires statutory follow-up (special measures or significant improvement), or Estyn review. The overview will make a brief explanation of the reasons for follow-up.

## **The evidence base of the inspection**

Inspectors use a wide range of evidence to make sure that their findings are valid, accurate and reliable. This section of the report will explain the sources of evidence that they used as well as the range of activities that they carried out during their visit.

## Inspection areas

The following section explains what each inspection area covers and what inspectors need to keep in mind when evaluating each one.

The inspection areas are numbered 1 – 5, but they are all equally important. Within each inspection area, the report will not always cover the aspects in the order they appear in this handbook. For example, in Inspection Area 3 – Teaching and learning experiences, inspectors may write about teaching before the curriculum if this makes the report clearer or they may combine elements of teaching and curriculum to explain their findings where appropriate.

The report on each inspection area will normally be around 500 words.

There is supplementary guidance on the inspection of various aspects of the work of schools on Estyn's website: [www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/supplementary-guidance](http://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/supplementary-guidance).

## Inspection area 1: Learning

### Standards and progress in learning and skills

In all schools and PRUs, when evaluating the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and achievement, inspectors should base their evaluations on first-hand evidence, for example from observations of pupils in lessons, learning walks, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Careful observation of pupils in lessons and talking to pupils will provide evidence of their listening and speaking skills, their numeracy skills and mathematical knowledge, and their metacognition skills. Scrutiny of work, including work created digitally, will provide evidence on how well pupils can write and use their reading and writing skills, and how well they can use their numeracy and digital skills in a range of subjects. Where appropriate, listening to pupils read aloud and discussing the text with them will help inspectors understand how well pupils can read for understanding.

Inspectors should **report** clearly on pupils' standards of:

- listening and reading (in Welsh/English)
- speaking and writing (in Welsh/English)
- numeracy
- digital skills

When evaluating **pupils' learning, progress and achievement**, inspectors should consider how well the school is doing overall, the standards pupils achieve, and progress made, by individual and groups of pupils.

Inspectors should consider how well pupils:

- develop the knowledge, understanding and skills appropriate to their ages and starting points
- make progress across the school, especially since starting school, from one



phase to another and during the school year

- recall previous learning, acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills, and develop their thinking and problem-solving skills
- apply their skills, knowledge, and understanding to new situations, both in and outside of the classroom

Inspectors should evaluate the progress of all pupils across the school including that of different groups of pupils. Depending on the school's context, this might include pupils eligible for free school meals, pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), pupils who are more able, pupils with alternative timetables or regularly receiving education off-site and those from minority ethnic groups.

When evaluating the **progress of specific groups of pupils**, inspectors should consider:

- whether specific groups of pupils are making as much progress as they could in relation to their starting points
- how much progress pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) make in relation to their individual targets and starting points, taking into account their individual needs
- the progress of pupils with relatively weak skills who do not receive support for additional learning needs

When evaluating **pupils' skills**, inspectors should consider how well all pupils:

- develop the skills they need to access the whole curriculum and to learn effectively
- have the literacy (Welsh/English), numeracy and digital skills that they need and use them in their work across the curriculum
- progressively develop their skills in reading, thinking and understanding
- develop the communication and processing skills necessary to engage successfully in classroom interaction with teachers and with other pupils
- develop their artistic, creative and physical skills across the curriculum, for example through fieldwork and environmental studies or play and active learning outdoors
- solve problems and find alternative and creative solutions
- where appropriate, develop their technical and vocational skills, for example during the secondary phase

In English medium, dual stream or bilingual schools, inspectors should consider:

- pupils' ability to speak and respond to spoken Welsh, taking into account pupils' starting points
- the progress pupils make in developing their communication skills in Welsh through their learning across the curriculum and in more informal contexts

In schools that educate **pupils with additional learning needs**, inspectors should evaluate:

- the extent to which pupils develop their fine and gross motor skills, their mobility and their independent living skills
- how effectively pupils develop their social skills, including their ability to relate to other pupils, staff and visitors to the school

- the extent to which pupils develop the skills they need to prepare them for future life

Where appropriate, inspectors should consider the differences between the progress of pupils with different types of additional learning needs, for example autistic learners and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

The absence of performance data for 2020 and 2021 means that inspectors will not be able to identify trends in examination performance for secondary and all-age schools. Inspectors should base their evaluation of pupils' learning on evidence from lesson observations, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their written, practical and digital work. They will consider how well the school uses its own assessment information to monitor and support the progress of individual and groups of pupils in inspection area 3 (teaching and learning experiences) and in inspection area 5 (leadership and management).

## Inspection area 2: Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

### 2.1 Wellbeing

Inspectors should consider the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires from learners, parents, staff and governors carefully, particularly where respondents disagree with particular questions. Inspectors should consider evidence from observations of pupils interacting in classes, at break and lunchtime and around the school, as well as evidence from discussions with individuals and groups.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which pupils feel **safe and secure** and free from physical and verbal abuse and that they are respected and treated fairly. They should consider how well they are becoming **healthy, confident individuals** and understand, for example, how to make healthy choices relating to diet, physical activity and emotional wellbeing, including how to keep themselves safe online.

Inspectors should consider how well all pupils:

- use this understanding in their life at school or PRU
- develop their physical skills and make healthy choices, for example in responding positively to opportunities to undertake a range of physical activities during lessons, at break and lunchtime and through after-school clubs and activities
- develop as **ambitious, capable learners** who are ready to learn and show **confidence and resilience**, for example in the way they interact with adults and persevere with their work
- develop as **ethical, informed citizens**, for example through their awareness of fairness, equality, sustainability and children's rights
- develop as **enterprising, creative contributors**, for example in the way they explore problem solving
- develop their understanding of the purposes of rules, rewards and sanctions in school, and how laws are formed and apply to wider society

Inspectors should consider the extent to which all pupils, including those with

additional learning needs, are ready to take on **leadership roles and responsibilities** and to play a full part in the life and work of the school, for example as members of the school council, peer mentors or digital ambassadors. They should consider whether pupils feel that adults in the school or PRU listen to their views and take them into account in decisions that affect them.

## 2.2 Attitudes to learning

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which pupils are developing the **key attitudes and behaviours** that will help them to learn throughout their lives.

Inspectors should consider:

- the extent to which pupils are ambitious, confident, capable and independent learners
- how well pupils engage with new, unfamiliar experiences and ideas
- pupils' level of interest in their work
- how readily pupils engage in and complete tasks
- how well they sustain concentration and avoid distractions
- how well pupils persevere or look for new solutions when they face difficulties
- the extent to which pupils value and demonstrate respect for the contributions of others, for example by allowing others to speak or by remaining calm when others disagree with them
- how well pupils value and respond to feedback from adults and their peers
- how effectively pupils use feedback to move their learning forward

When considering **standards of behaviour**, inspectors should observe whether pupils are considerate and relate well to each other and adults. They should consider the extent to which pupils demonstrate good standards of behaviour:

- in lessons and moving around the school
- during activities such as group work and whole-school assemblies
- at lunchtime and breaks or playtimes

Where relevant, inspectors should consider the extent to which pupils with a history of exclusion in their current or previous school demonstrate improved behaviour and attitudes to learning. They should not routinely report on the number of exclusions, but may decide to do so exceptionally, for example where it is notably higher than the proportion usually found and/or shows an increasing trend.

When evaluating **participation and enjoyment in learning**, inspectors should use evidence from lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with pupils and observation of their engagement in lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities.

***Reports should not contain an evaluation of rates of attendance over recent time, due to school closures during the pandemic. Instead, the following paragraph should be used in all reports:***

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's/PRU's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

## Inspection area 3: Teaching and learning experiences

### 3.1 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the school's curriculum

When evaluating the quality of **learning experiences**, inspectors should consider:

- the extent to which learning experiences across the school stimulate and challenge the full range of pupils and support them to make the best possible progress
- whether the curriculum provides pupils with a suitable breadth and depth of learning experiences across all disciplines and areas of learning and experience to develop their interests and wider skills
- the nature and extent of learning outside the classroom that links directly to the planned curriculum, for example maximising the use of the provider's outdoor spaces and using visits to support the development of pupils' understanding of a specific area of learning
- how the school enriches the curriculum through additional activities

Inspectors should approach the evaluation of a provider's curriculum in a flexible and positive way. They should consider 'The Journey to 2022' to understand the expectations of schools in preparation for Curriculum for Wales.

When evaluating a provider's curriculum, inspectors should consider how well the school is aligning the development and delivery of their curriculum to their shared vision for curriculum and teaching. Inspectors should consider how the choices leaders and staff are making align with this vision to support pupils to make progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding.

During the preparation phase (referenced in 'The Journey to 2022'), inspectors should consider how providers have explored their approaches towards curriculum design and reflected on these approaches taking the best ideas forward. These may include approaches to learning from home during the recent pandemic.

Inspectors should evaluate whether learning experiences meet the needs of pupils. They should have no preference for any particular curriculum model.

When evaluating **the provider's curriculum**, inspectors should consider how well:

- the school or PRU provides learning experiences that inspire pupils and raise their aspirations around future careers and the world of work, helping them to make informed choices
- the school or PRU meets the needs of all pupils and how well teachers and other practitioners take full account of individual pupils' learning needs in the planning of the curriculum, including the delivery of individual lessons and sequences of lessons
- the curriculum builds systematically and coherently on pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and skills to secure progression as they move through the school

- the provider develops their curriculum to fully reflect the nature of their context, including designing learning activities that reflect the cultural, linguistic and diverse nature of Wales and the wider world, including how the provider plans for teaching pupils about the history and experiences of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and LGBT+ people
- the school or PRU's curriculum provides for specific groups of pupils (for example, in Welsh-medium schools or Welsh-medium streams, this might include immersion provision for pupils with little prior knowledge of the Welsh language; in schools with pupils receiving part of their education off-site or on-site in nurture groups or inclusion provision, inspectors should evaluate how well this curriculum meets these pupils' needs)
- the school or PRU provides authentic and engaging learning experiences for pupils and how well practitioners develop pupils' knowledge and skills
- the curriculum enables pupils to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills in listening and reading, speaking and writing (Welsh/English), numeracy and digital to support their work and enable progression across the curriculum

When evaluating the school or PRU's provision for the **development of Welsh language communication skills**, inspectors should also consider:

- the extent and quality of the provision for the development of Welsh language communication skills in both formal teaching activities and informal situations
- how well the provider promotes the advantages of learning Welsh and being multilingual
- where appropriate, how well the proportion of teaching in Welsh matches the school's official language categorisation

When evaluating the school or PRU's provision for **personal and social education**, inspectors should consider how well it:

- supports the development of the social and emotional skills of all pupils from all backgrounds
- helps pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to make healthy lifestyle choices, for example in relation to healthy eating and drinking, substance misuse, relationships and sexuality education (RSE) and online safety
- supports pupils' wellbeing and mental health, for example following periods when the school is closed to pupils
- helps pupils to understand the impact of lifestyle choices and behaviours on their present and future mental and physical health and wellbeing

### **3.2 Teaching and assessment**

When evaluating teaching and assessment, inspectors should note that there is no preferred methodology that teachers should follow, and that teachers may use a range of different approaches over time. The key consideration is whether classroom practice is successful in engaging all pupils and developing their skills, knowledge and understanding to an appropriately high level as they move through the school.

Inspectors should consider:

- how well teaching and assessment support the delivery of the school's curriculum
- the extent to which teachers and other practitioners have high expectations of all pupils
- whether teachers' subject knowledge is expert enough within the areas of the curriculum that they teach
- the extent to which teachers and other practitioners have clear objectives for pupils' learning and use a range of approaches and resources to engage and support all pupils to achieve as well as they can
- how effectively teachers make their classes stimulating and engaging places in which all groups of pupils, including the most and least able, can learn productively
- the clarity of teachers' and practitioners' explanations and how well they support the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding
- how well teachers and other practitioners manage pupils' behaviour and whether they treat all pupils equally and with appropriate respect
- how successfully teachers use other staff to support pupils' learning

When evaluating the **quality of feedback** from teachers and other practitioners, inspectors should consider how well verbal and written feedback helps pupils to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They should evaluate the effectiveness of the feedback that pupils receive about work they have completed online or digitally.

Inspectors should consider:

- the extent to which teachers develop pupils' thinking and understanding through skilful questioning and monitoring of pupils' learning
- how effectively teachers and other practitioners respond to pupils' learning during lessons and activities and adapt their approach accordingly
- how successfully teachers provide relevant, purposeful opportunities for pupils to assess their own and their peers' learning where appropriate

Inspectors should evaluate how well teachers develop a shared understanding of progression to ensure that their **assessments** are valid, accurate and reliable.

When evaluating teachers' use of the outcomes of their own and external assessments, inspectors should consider how well they use this information to:

- plan lessons and the next steps in pupils' learning
- inform teaching and learning, and to help pupils to understand their own strengths and areas for improvement
- assess the progress and development of individuals and specific groups, for example those pupils at risk of underachievement or those who are more able

Inspectors should consider a sample of **reports to parents or carers** to check that they give parents appropriate information on their child's progress and how their child can make further progress in the future.

When evaluating teaching and assessment, inspectors should use the full range of evidence available to them. This is likely to include evidence from pupils' work (including that completed online), teachers' planning, assessment records, information on pupils' progress and discussions with pupils and staff, as well as lesson observations and learning walks undertaken by members of the inspection team.

## Inspection area 4: Care, support and guidance

### 4.1 Personal development (including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the provision of learning support)

When evaluating the provision for **pupils' personal development**, inspectors should consider how well the school or PRU:

- supports all pupils' emotional, health and social needs so that they can engage positively with the school and benefit from the opportunities that it offers
- provides well-considered support for pupils' physical and mental health and wellbeing, for example following the recent pandemic

When evaluating the **provision of learning support**, inspectors should consider how well the school or PRU:

- makes provision for pupils with additional learning needs
- tracks the progress of these pupils in relation to the targets in their individual plans, and their progress from their individual starting points
- provides assurance that pupils educated off-site or on-site receive appropriate support
- uses partnerships with other schools or agencies to provide effective support for learners with additional learning needs or who may need extra support

Inspectors should consider whether the school's culture promotes pupils' **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** appropriately. They should consider whether provision is effective in supporting all pupils to participate in decision-making at a school level, including the opportunities they have to influence what and how they learn. They should evaluate the effectiveness of the school council and other pupil groups, for example those that encourage pupils to express their views about teaching, learning and the curriculum. In all schools that do not provide denominational education, inspectors should consider whether there are appropriate acts of collective worship. There are other arrangements in place to inspect this aspect in denominational schools.

Inspectors should consider how well the school or PRU:

- helps pupils, including those from different groups, such as those eligible for free school meals, to take on responsibilities and to contribute to the school and wider community

- helps pupils to develop an understanding of their identity, heritage and culture and how they relate to the local community and the wider world
- helps pupils to understand issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion and develops the values of respect, empathy, courage and compassion
- fosters shared values, such as honesty, fairness, justice and sustainability
- helps pupils to understand the needs and rights of others, both locally and as members of a diverse world, and promotes human rights
- challenges stereotypes in pupils' attitudes, choices and expectations
- promotes principles that help pupils to distinguish between right and wrong
- provides effective opportunities for pupils to develop secure values and to explore their spiritual and ethical beliefs
- develops pupils' ability to reflect on fundamental questions and on their own beliefs or values
- encourages pupils to use their imagination and to engage with the creative arts through their studies, extra-curricular activities and educational visits
- gives pupils the opportunity to participate in performance and events, as individuals and in groups, to foster their self-confidence and expressive capacities, their ability to contribute creative ideas and their ability to work in a team
- provides opportunities to encourage pupils to participate in the arts and in sport and recreation, for example through sports teams and tournaments, performances or Eisteddfodau

Inspectors should evaluate how well the school or PRU provides effective, impartial **guidance and advice** to learners, for example relating to future career choices. They should consider how well the school or PRU helps to prepare young people for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, including education about careers and work-related experiences and the importance of regular attendance.

## 4.2 Safeguarding

Inspectors should evaluate the school or PRU's approach to safeguarding, and the degree to which leaders promote and support a **culture of safety and wellbeing** within the school or PRU community whether on-site, off-site or online. They should evaluate how well staff and governors promote this culture in the way they understand and implement the school or PRU's safeguarding approaches. The Welsh Government has issued specific statutory guidance about safeguarding matters and schools and PRUs should comply with these requirements.

On every inspection, inspectors should consider the effectiveness of the **school's own evaluation of its safeguarding arrangements**, and any actions planned or taken to address any identified shortcomings. They should check whether all staff have received a suitable range of safeguarding training at the appropriate level. Inspectors should consider the school's provision to improve attendance and behaviour where this is appropriate.

Inspectors should consider the full range of evidence available including, for example pupils', parents', staff and governors' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires. They should consider whether pupils feel safe in school, and how well pupils believe



that the school's leaders will take seriously any concerns they have about their safety.

Inspectors should consider how well the school or PRU:

- responds to, records and addresses any alleged incidents relating to bullying, including those involving protected characteristics; prejudice-related bullying, harassment and discrimination, whether by staff or by fellow pupils, including onward referral and reporting where appropriate
- develops pupils' knowledge and understanding (in line with their stage of development) of emotionally damaging or unsafe behaviours, for example grooming, sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying and extremism
- keeps pupils safe from the dangers of radicalisation and exploitation
- uses its arrangements to promote and support an anti-bullying culture and a positive approach to managing pupils' behaviour, including the appropriate use of exclusions
- use their records to improve the quality of provision

Inspectors should consider the provider's **record-keeping processes** for attendance and absences from school (this may include absences for all or part of the school day). They should consider how well the school or PRU addresses persistent absenteeism, for example through partnerships with education welfare services, social care services, health services, youth services or the police.

In secondary and all age schools, inspectors should consider why any pupils who start in the school do not complete their education there. Schools should provide information about decisions made to educate pupils other than at school and demonstrate how these decisions are taken with the pupils' best interests in mind.

Inspectors should consider the general **security of the school buildings and site**, and how well leaders promote an awareness of risks to pupils' wellbeing.

Inspectors should check whether the school or PRU has appropriate policies, procedures and reporting arrangements in relation to physical interventions. They will examine any areas used for withdrawal.

When considering **child protection arrangements**, inspectors should consider:

- the identification and support provided for children in need or at risk of significant harm, and those pupils who are looked after by the local authority
- whether staff and leaders at all levels know what to do if they have concerns about a pupil, or an adult's behaviour towards pupils
- whether the school has robust procedures to ensure the suitability of staff and others who are in contact with pupils, and maintains a current record of these checks

Inspectors will **report** on whether the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet requirements and give no cause for concern. They should consider whether it is appropriate to describe the nature of any strengths or shortcomings in the report, for example to allay parents' concerns. Where arrangements do not meet requirements, inspectors should normally include a recommendation to improve the

provision. After the inspection, we will issue a ‘wellbeing letter’ to the school or PRU and the local authority to seek assurance that they are addressing the shortcoming(s) suitably.

## Inspection area 5: Leadership and management

### 5.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers have established and communicated a clear **vision**. They should consider whether there are appropriate aims, strategic objectives, plans and policies that focus on meeting all pupils’ needs. Inspectors should consider how well leaders ensure that pupils achieve as well as would normally be expected for their stage of development. They should consider the priority that leaders have given to ensuring that all staff understand and promote the school’s **safeguarding culture**.

When evaluating the **effectiveness of leadership**, inspectors should consider how well leaders at all levels:

- set high expectations for staff, pupils and themselves
- develop an effective, engaged team of teachers and support staff, and actively promote staff wellbeing
- model and promote professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to school improvement and effective collaboration between staff and with other providers
- ensure that staff at all levels understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities
- manage the performance of staff in order to improve their practice, and address issues of underperformance robustly and directly where necessary

Inspectors should consider how well leaders and managers act in accordance with the **principle of sustainable development** and how well they make decisions, for example relating to spending, and set priorities for improvement that balance immediate, short-term needs with the long-term needs of pupils and their local community. Inspectors should evaluate whether the **financial resources**, including the pupil development grant, are managed effectively. Inspection reports should state as a matter of fact whenever a deficit or positive balance exceeds 5% of the school’s total income in two or more of the past three years.

Inspectors should consider how well leaders address **national and local priorities**, such as keeping pupils safe, reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment, preparing for the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales, and improving the development of pupils’ literacy, numeracy and digital skills. Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers plan strategically purposeful opportunities for pupils to develop their Welsh language skills in formal and informal situations and implement these plans effectively.

Inspectors should evaluate how well **governors** understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities. When evaluating the effectiveness of governance, inspectors should consider to what extent the governing body:

- fulfils its statutory obligations and takes full account of relevant legislation and guidance, including in relation to how it manages complaints and appeals from parents
- contributes purposefully to the setting of the school's strategic priorities
- has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development
- provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge and holds senior leaders to account on behalf of the local community in its role as a 'critical friend'

Inspectors should consider how well the governing body ensures that food and drink provided by the school complies with legislation. They should **report** on whether the school has the appropriate arrangements to promote **healthy eating and drinking**.

Inspectors should consider how well the school's leaders establish productive **relationships with parents** and have effective lines of communication with them so that they can raise any issues that may affect their child's learning and wellbeing. For example, the school may provide information on the curriculum, guidance on the benefits of regular pupil attendance, workshops for parents on how to help their child to develop their reading skills and support for families of pupils with additional learning needs. Inspectors should consider the extent to which the school actively helps to develop parents' capacity to support their own children, for example during the recent pandemic.

## **5.2 Self-evaluation processes and improvement planning**

Inspectors should evaluate how accurately leaders and managers know the school's strengths and weaknesses. They should focus on the effectiveness and impact of the school's self-evaluation and improvement processes, rather than the quality of documentation. When evaluating these processes, inspectors should consider how well the school or PRU:

- involves all of its staff, as well as a wide range of partners, including pupils and parents
- gathers and analyses robust first-hand evidence of standards and provision
- maintains a clear focus on the impact of its provision on pupil progress and wellbeing
- uses self-evaluation findings, together with other information, to devise relevant priorities and actions for improvement
- sets specific, realistic timescales and allocates appropriate responsibility for securing improvement
- supports improvement priorities through the appropriate allocation of resources
- ensures that spending decisions and financial planning link appropriately to its strategic improvement priorities
- monitors and evaluates progress against its priorities and adapts its approaches where necessary
- uses evaluative approaches to assure leaders and governors of the effective operation of key policies and procedures, for example in relation to safeguarding

Inspectors should consider the extent to which leaders and managers **sustain high quality or improve weak aspects** of provision. They should consider how well leaders and managers prevent problems from occurring in the first place and how quickly they bring about any remedial actions.

Inspectors should investigate the **school's track record in making and sustaining improvements** and the extent to which they have led to a positive impact on pupils' learning and wellbeing. Where appropriate, inspectors should consider how well the school has responded to recommendations from previous Estyn inspections or from strategic partners and whether the school's actions have led to improvements.

### 5.3 Professional learning

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which leaders have created a positive culture and ethos to promote and support the professional learning of all staff. They should consider whether professional learning to improve teaching and develop the Curriculum for Wales has had a positive impact in developing classroom provision that meets learners' needs.

When evaluating **professional learning**, inspectors should consider how well the school or PRU:

- links professional learning clearly to self-evaluation findings and improvement priorities
- engages all staff in purposeful activities that support the development of their professional knowledge, understanding and teaching and leadership skills
- ensures that professional learning encourages innovation and is focused consistently on securing improvements in pupils' progress and wellbeing
- identifies good practice within the school and ensures that other staff may benefit from it
- collaborates with other schools, initial teacher education providers and providers of professional learning to share and to develop professional practice
- monitors the impact of professional learning on the effectiveness of teaching and leadership, and on pupils' progress and wellbeing

Where the school is a lead school for initial teacher education, inspectors will report on the impact of this work on the school's approaches to professional learning.