



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Guidance handbook for the inspection of independent specialist colleges

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Introduction	1
Purpose of the guidance handbook	1
Legal basis for the inspection of independent specialist colleges	1
Policy background	1
Part 1: Inspection arrangements	2
Introduction	2
Principles of inspection	2
Code of conduct for inspectors	2
Expectations of providers	3
Health, safety and wellbeing matters	3
Responding to a safeguarding allegation	4
Approach to inspection	4
The Virtual Inspection Room	4
The inspection team	4
Contacting the college before the inspection	5
Planning the inspection and preparing the team	6
During the inspection	6
After the inspection	9
Assuring the quality of inspections	10
Part 2: Inspection areas and reporting requirements	11
The Common Inspection Framework	11
Making judgements	12
About the college	12
Summary	13
Recommendations	13
What happens next?	13
Inspection areas:	13
1 Standards	14
2 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning	15
3 Teaching and learning experiences	17
4 Care, support and guidance	19
5 Leadership and management	22
The evidence base of the inspection	24
Thematic focus	24

Introduction

Purpose of the guidance handbook

This guidance sets out the way the inspectorate will conduct inspections of independent specialist colleges from September 2017. It sets out the inspection arrangements for independent specialist colleges and offers guidance to inspectors on making inspection judgements.

Where the inspection identifies important concerns in relation to standards, quality of education and training or leadership and management, the inspectorate may arrange to conduct an early monitoring visit to support improvement.

Independent specialist colleges can use this guidance to see how inspections work and to help them in carrying out their own self-assessment and improvement processes.

There is further information about inspections on the inspectorate's website www.estyn.gov.wales

Legal basis for the inspection of independent specialist colleges

In the post-16 sector, the Learning and Skills Act (2000) requires the Chief Inspector to report on:

- the quality of the education and training provided
- the standards achieved by those receiving education and training
- whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used to provide value for money

Policy background

While not governed directly by the following policies and conventions, the guidance handbook takes account of the following:

- the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the Welsh Government in 2004 as the basis for policy-making for children and young people
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

Part 1: Inspection arrangements

Introduction

This section is set out in a way that reflects the sequence of work before, during and after a core inspection.

The reporting inspector (RI) is responsible for the conduct and management of the inspection and for the inspection report. While this guidance focuses mainly on the role of the reporting inspector, all team members must comply with the same inspection requirements.

Principles of inspection

Inspectors will:

- ensure that inspection is of high quality and responsive to the needs of all learners
- ensure that judgements are secure, reliable, valid and based on first-hand evidence
- involve the college fully in the inspection process, including the opportunity for the college to select a nominee
- use the college's self-assessment as the starting point for the inspection and to identify key areas for investigation in order to make judgements on the validity of its findings
- include peer inspectors in the inspection process
- keep to a minimum any requirements for documentation and preparation by the college
- gain the perspective of learners and other stakeholders
- apply the principle of equality for Welsh and English to all our inspection work, providing bilingual services whenever they are appropriate
- be constructive in identifying and supporting colleges with important aspects or weaknesses that require improvement

Code of conduct for inspectors

Inspectors should uphold the highest possible standards in their work. All inspectors have to meet the standards of Estyn's code of conduct. When conducting the inspection, inspectors will:

- carry out their work with integrity, courtesy and due sensitivity
- evaluate the work of the provider objectively
- report honestly, fairly and impartially
- communicate clearly and openly
- act in the best interests of learners
- respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of their work

It is important that inspectors judge the effectiveness of provision and leadership on their contribution to outcomes and not on the basis of any preferences for particular methods. The key to the judgement is whether the methods and organisation are fit for the purpose in supporting all learners to achieve high standards and strong levels of wellbeing.

Inspectors should inform Estyn of any perceived or actual conflicts of interest as soon as they receive notification that they are on the inspection of the college.

Expectations of providers

In order that inspection and regulation are constructive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a professional working environment based on mutual courtesy, respect and professional behaviour. We expect inspectors to uphold Estyn's Code of Conduct, but we also expect providers to:

- be courteous and professional
- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
- enable inspectors to conduct their inspection in an open and honest way
- enable inspectors to evaluate the provision objectively against the Common Inspection Framework
- use Estyn's electronic systems for managing inspections, as required
- provide evidence that will enable inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably about the college
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the reporting inspector and other inspectors
- recognise that inspectors need to observe practice and to talk to staff, learners and other stakeholders without the presence of a manager or senior leader
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors in a timely and suitable manner through the nominee or senior leader
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption and stress throughout the inspection
- ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on the college premises
- maintain the confidentiality of meetings and inspection findings until the final publication of the report

At the point of the inspection notification, colleges should review the composition of the inspection team. It is the responsibility of colleges to highlight any perceived or actual conflicts of interest prior to the start of their inspection.

Health, safety and wellbeing matters

Inspectors will carry out inspections in accordance with the inspectorate's guidance on inspecting safeguarding. If they observe anything that they think constitutes, in their opinion, a real danger to the safety of staff, visitors or learners, inspectors should alert managers at the college. In all cases, inspectors should make a separate electronic note of the threat and that they informed managers of it. Inspectors should report on obvious risks relating to health, safety and wellbeing under inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance). Where these risks are a serious concern, inspectors should include a short comment in the report's text and a recommendation in the report. Estyn will advise Welsh Government to send a letter to the college asking them to outline how they will address the shortcoming.

Responding to a safeguarding allegation

If an inspector becomes aware of a safeguarding allegation/suspicion in respect of a child, young person or vulnerable adult, they should follow the procedures set out in the current version of 'Estyn's policy and procedures for safeguarding', which is available on Estyn's website.

Approach to inspection

The starting point for inspection is the college's evaluation of its own performance, supported by relevant evidence. Inspectors will not inspect all aspects of work in depth during a core inspection. They will sample evidence to test the college's own evaluation of its work.

The progress learners make from their starting-points and the standards they achieve are key measures of the quality of the education they have received and of the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the college. Inspection will focus on the needs of learners, their attitudes to learning and the impact that the provision in the college makes on supporting their progress and the standards they achieve.

The inspection period and number of inspectors may vary according to the size of the college.

Each inspection report will cover all inspection areas and reporting requirements covered by the common inspection framework.

We will carry out inspections in line with our Welsh Language Policy, available from the inspectorate's website.

The Virtual Inspection Room

The inspectorate will use an electronic system, called the 'Virtual Inspection Room' (VIR), for managing many aspects of the inspection. It is a web-based system that allows colleges to upload information before the inspection and to download guidance from the inspectorate about the inspection process. The VIR is also the place where colleges can access the nominee's guidance on preparing for the inspection and where principals and nominees can access the emerging questions from the reporting inspector at the start of the inspection and the post-inspection questionnaires.

The inspection team

Inspection teams will be led by a reporting inspector (HMI or additional inspector), with other team members drawn from among HMI or additional inspectors. Additional inspectors may be on secondment or contract to the inspectorate. Each team will also have a peer inspector (staff from another college or school).

The reporting inspector manages the inspection team and is the first point of reference for everyone involved in the inspection.

We will invite colleges to select a senior member of staff, called the nominee, to work with the inspection team. In practice, most colleges accept the invitation, but it is not a requirement. The nominee should have sufficient seniority to act as a link between

the college and the inspection team, but need not be the leader of the college. Colleges can access the guidance for nominees on preparing for the inspection from links within the initial contact form (ICF), completed by the Inspection Co-ordinator (IC) and available via the VIR.

Contacting the college before the inspection

The college will receive 15 working days' notice of the inspection.

Following this, the inspectorate will contact the college by telephone to set up the arrangements for the inspection. Inspection co-ordinators in Estyn undertake the initial contact with colleges. During this discussion, the Inspection Co-ordinator will:

- explain the purpose of the inspection and discuss an outline programme for the inspection
- discuss the specific information required before the inspection, including the completion by the college of a self-evaluation form on its provision for safeguarding, and make the arrangements for receiving it in electronic form through the Virtual Inspection Room
- ask if there are any issues or risks the team should be aware of and ask for a general health and safety briefing for the team at the start of the inspection
- establish whether the college wishes to have a nominee and, if it does, agree the role of the nominee and explain the process for completing the nominee guidance
- arrange a meeting at the start of the inspection with the nominee to provide a health and safety briefing for the team
- provide links and guidance for the completion of online pre-inspection questionnaires for learners, parents, staff and governors
- agree arrangements for setting up a meeting with parents/carers
- arrange the availability of supporting evidence, including samples of learners' work
- ensure that there are agreed procedures for addressing any concerns or complaints that might arise during the course of the inspection
- arrange for a member of the governing body to meet inspectors during the inspection period
- organise any domestic arrangements, such as a base for the inspectors, parking and internet access
- set up the arrangements for feeding back the inspection findings
- agree the arrangements for completing the post-inspection questionnaire
- inform the college that the key matters of the arrangements will be confirmed in writing through the initial contact form of the key inspection arrangements

The Inspection Co-ordinator will request the following information from the college through the Virtual Inspection Room as soon as possible after the formal notification of the inspection:

- key background information on the college
- a copy of the college's most recent self-assessment, including an analysis of learners' performance over recent years, and college development or improvement plan
- details of the college's timetables for the period of the inspection

If the inspection is to take place early in the college year, the inspectorate may ask the college to make samples of learners' work from the previous year available during the inspection visit, where possible.

When we notify colleges of the inspection, they will receive information on how to conduct a confidential online pre-inspection questionnaire of learners and all parents/carers. Estyn will also provide a pre-inspection online questionnaire for all teaching and support staff directly employed by the college. The outcomes of the pre-inspection surveys will form part of the pre-inspection evidence and help inspectors to form emerging questions to investigate further.

During the inspection, inspectors may interview a sample of learners with leadership or representative roles, other specific groups of learners and a sample of teaching and/or support staff as part of their gathering of evidence.

Planning the inspection and preparing the team

Taking into account the college's self-assessment and any information already held by the inspectorate, the reporting inspector will plan the inspection and allocate responsibilities to members of the inspection team.

The reporting inspector will use the pre-inspection information to frame a short set of emerging questions to guide the initial inspection activity of the team. The college will receive the emerging questions via the VIR on the morning of the first day of the inspection. The reporting inspector will brief the team further on arrival at the college.

Inspections involve observation of teaching, including learning walks and scrutiny of learners' work. We require colleges to place a full plan of all the intended activities during the inspection week in the VIR. On the basis of the information received, the reporting inspector will plan the observations of teaching and learning, learning walks and the scrutiny of learners' work. The sample will reflect the range of the college's work and support the investigation of emerging questions and areas of interest suggested by inspectors' initial and ongoing inspection work.

During the inspection

Initial team meeting

In the initial meeting of the inspection team, there should be a health and safety briefing from the college and an opportunity for the college to provide a brief position statement on its current strategic priorities and stage of development. After that, the team should discuss the strategy for the inspection, focusing initially on the emerging questions that stem from the college's self-assessment. Inspectors will sample, test and validate the evaluations made by the college. The discussions should centre on the evidence that inspectors need to review. This will include observations, including learning walks, sampling learners' work and interviews with learners, staff, supervisory bodies (for example directors or trustees) and other stakeholders.

Gathering and reviewing inspection evidence

The team will plan the inspection so that they can cover the reporting requirements within the five inspection areas and the emerging questions from the review of the pre-inspection information. The team will ensure that they have enough time to review the key evidence they need to make their judgements. The main forms of

evidence are:

- learners' work (this may include photographic evidence)
- discussions with learners, staff, leaders, managers, supervisory bodies, parents and others
- observation of teaching and other activities, including evidence gathered through learning walks
- pre-inspection questionnaire responses from learners, parents/carers and teaching and support staff
- documentary evidence, including information on learners' performance and progress

The team will use direct observation of learners' work wherever possible to gather evidence to support their judgements. Inspectors may select an additional sample of learners' work, if required, to further their investigation in a specific aspect.

Inspectors will undertake a range of activities to gather evidence for their evaluation of learners' progress and the quality of the college's provision. This may include learning walks, where inspectors move relatively quickly through a number of classes looking at a specific aspect of the college's provision, conversations with selected learners about their work, and discussions with individual tutors about learners' learning in their classes and how they plan work to meet their needs. They may also undertake longer classroom observations.

The voice of learners is a key source of evidence for inspectors. Discussions with learners will provide an opportunity to explore learners' knowledge and understanding of their work. It will also help inspectors to gauge how well the college supports learners and contributes to their progress and wellbeing.

Colleges should make information available to the inspection team about the standards achieved by learners, particularly the results of any initial screening tests and other assessments. This will help inspectors to judge learners' progress, to come to a view about the standards learners achieve compared to their starting-points and the way tutors use the information from assessment to influence their planning and their lessons.

The team will need to consider stakeholders' views on the college and test out the validity of those views during the inspection.

Where the nominee is not the principal, it is important that the reporting inspector holds a brief daily meeting with the principal to clarify inspection issues and the broad, emerging findings of the inspection team.

Recording inspection evidence

Inspectors will use various forms to note and to collate their findings and judgements.

Wherever possible, inspectors will complete their forms electronically as part of Estyn's electronic system for collecting, collating and recording inspection findings.

Team meetings

The main purpose of team meetings is to arrive at an accurate, reliable, valid and

corporate view of standards and the quality of provision and leadership. Meetings will provide opportunities for inspectors to:

- test the judgements in the college's self-assessment
- discuss emerging issues
- resolve pre-inspection questions and issues
- identify any gaps in the evidence base
- consider main inspection findings and any recommendations

Professional dialogue

At the end of a lesson observation, inspectors should have a brief professional dialogue with the member of staff on the work seen. It may be necessary, in some cases, to conduct this discussion later during the inspection.

The main focus of the discussion should be on the learners, the progress they make during the lesson and the standards they achieve. The inspector should stress that these are emerging, interim findings on one aspect of the evidence base and that these may be amended, on reflection, after scrutiny of learners' work or talking to learners or as the result of moderation within the team. Inspectors should try to focus on any strengths or areas for development in relation to the specific work seen.

Due to the sharply focused nature of learning walks, and the spread of the activity across a number of lessons/classes within a relatively short period of time, inspectors will not be in a position to offer professional dialogue to individual tutors after learning walk activity.

Formal feedback

At the end of the on-site part of the inspection, the team will provide oral feedback to leaders and managers. The college should invite representatives from the governing body (or other board) to attend the meeting. The feedback should focus on the main judgements for each of the five inspection areas and the reasons for awarding them.

The feedback meeting provides the opportunity for leaders and managers to hear and to reflect on the judgements. The feedback should focus on the strengths and areas for improvement and the factors that contribute to them. The reporting inspector should explain to the college that issues may be raised and discussed, factual matters may be corrected and judgements may be clarified, but the judgements themselves are not negotiable.

During the inspection, the team will also consider if there is any effective practice in the college that is worthy of consideration by other colleges. Where this is the case, the reporting inspector will ask the college to prepare a case study (or studies) for dissemination on Estyn's website.

All the judgements reported during an inspection are provisional and subject to moderation and validation by HMCI. They are confidential to the college staff and supervisory body. They should not be communicated beyond this group, including via social media, until Estyn publishes the report on its website.

Complaints about the conduct of the inspection

If there are any issues about the conduct of the inspection overall or the conduct of individual inspectors, then the college, through the nominee, should raise these directly, and as soon as possible, with the reporting inspector. The college should not wait until after the inspection, but should raise any issues during the on-site inspection. Issues often arise due to misunderstandings and these can usually be resolved quickly and satisfactorily in the college close to the time when they occurred.

There is guidance for providers on Estyn's complaints handling procedures on Estyn's website.

After the inspection

The inspection report

The reporting inspector is responsible for producing a final inspection report that is clear to a lay audience and helpful to the college.

When writing reports, inspectors should take account of Estyn's writing guidance, which is available on its website www.estyn.gov.wales.

We will publish reports bilingually, where colleges have made this request, in line with Estyn's Welsh Language Policy.

We base the structure of the inspection report on a common inspection framework and the report will take the following form:

About the college

Summary

Recommendations

What happens next

Main findings

- 1 Standards
- 2 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning
- 3 Teaching and learning experiences
- 4 Care, support and guidance
- 5 Leadership and management

The evidence base of the inspection

We will produce the report within statutory or agreed sector timescales.

The factual accuracy check

The inspectorate will give the college a late draft of the report to help check the

factual accuracy of the content. The college will normally have five working days in which to consider the draft report and to identify any factual errors.

The focus of the factual accuracy check is on resolving any factual inaccuracies in the inspection report. It does not focus on the findings or the judgements. There is further guidance for providers on the nature and scope of the factual accuracy check on Estyn's website.

The college should raise any complaints about the conduct of the inspection during the on-site inspection. However, if the college continues to have unresolved complaints about the conduct of the inspection after the end of the on-site inspection, then it should refer to Estyn's complaints handling procedures on Estyn's website. The focus of the procedures is on the conduct of the inspection and not the findings or the judgements arrived at by the inspection team.

Assuring the quality of inspections

The inspectorate is committed to:

- effective selection, training, briefing, support and deployment of inspectors, including peer inspectors
- effective training, briefing and support to allow the nominee to play an active role
- regular dialogue with the principal during inspection
- criteria and recording systems that comply with the common inspection framework and guidance
- careful review and analysis of evidence
- unambiguous oral feedback of the team's findings and judgements for each inspection area
- clear, accurate and well-presented reports

As part of its quality assurance procedures, the inspectorate invites colleges to complete a post-inspection questionnaire (PIQ). The questionnaire will be available to colleges in the VIR. Colleges should complete the first part of the PIQ immediately after the on-site inspection and submit it electronically to Estyn through the VIR system. Colleges can complete the second part of the PIQ after the publication of the inspection report, again through the VIR system.

Colleges should raise any concerns about the conduct of an inspection during the inspection as soon as possible with the reporting inspector.

The reporting inspector will carry out the quality assurance of the inspection in the first instance. The inspectorate will quality assure a sample of inspections on-site and will assure the quality of all inspection reports before their publication on Estyn's website. Estyn's arrangements for assuring the quality of inspections and the arrangements for dealing with complaints are available on the inspectorate's website www.estyn.gov.wales.

Part 2: Inspection areas and reporting requirements

The guidance that follows sets out how inspectors should approach the various sections of the inspection report and what they need to consider when evaluating the five inspection areas of the common inspection framework.

The Common Inspection Framework

The five inspection areas of the common inspection framework are set out below.

Each inspection area contains reporting requirements. These are the aspects that the inspection team must cover when reporting on each college.

The Common Inspection Framework

1 – Standards

- 1.1 Standards and progress overall
- 1.2 Standards and progress of specific groups
- 1.3 Standards and progress in skills

2 – Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

- 2.1 Wellbeing
- 2.2 Attitudes to learning

3 – Teaching and learning experiences

- 3.1 Quality of teaching
- 3.2 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum
- 3.3 Provision for skills

4 – Care, support and guidance

- 4.1 Tracking, monitoring and the provision of learning support
- 4.2 Personal development
- 4.3 Safeguarding

5 – Leadership and management

- 5.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
- 5.2 Self-assessment processes and improvement planning
- 5.3 Professional development
- 5.4 Use of resources

Making judgements

The inspection team will award each inspection area a judgement using the four-point scale below.

Excellent – Very strong, sustained performance and practice

Good – Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement

Adequate and needs improvement – Strengths outweigh weaknesses, but important aspects require improvement

Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement – Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

Inspectors will arrive at their judgements by considering and weighing the importance of the strengths and weaknesses in each inspection area. The report on each inspection area will reflect and support the relevant judgement.

Weaknesses become important where they have a significant impact on standards and/or wellbeing. Strengths are often present where there are important aspects that require improvement. However, where there are important aspects that require improvement then the appropriate judgement will normally be 'Adequate and needs improvement' or 'Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement'.

Where colleges receive 'Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement' for one or more inspection areas, Estyn may arrange an early monitoring visit to check progress.

Inspectors will always include clear evaluations in relation to the reporting requirements in each inspection area. They will also consider all aspects of these reporting requirements as set out in the inspection guidance handbook. However, what inspectors report on within each reporting requirement may differ depending on the relative significance of what they find in each college. Inspectors may report 'by exception'. This means that they may report on some aspects only where there are particular strengths or significant weaknesses.

About the college

This section of the report should be brief and contain factual background information about the college. The section should not contain any evaluation of the college or its provision. The reporting inspector normally agrees the content of this section with the college during the inspection and during the college's factual check of the draft report prior to publication. Where 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 college
- the learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) that the college provides for

- the background and circumstances of the learners
- the linguistic background of the learners
- any important changes since the last inspection
- the date of appointment of the principal
- the month/year of the college's previous inspection

Summary

This section of the report will contain a short summary statement (usually 100-200 words) on the inspection findings.

The summary should report on the key strengths and any important aspects or weaknesses that require improvement. It should be consistent with the findings in the body of the report. It should not contain one overarching judgement on the college as a whole.

Recommendations

The recommendations should give the college a clear and specific indication of the areas for improvement that it will need to address. Inspectors should write the recommendations in order of priority. The recommendations should arise from the main judgements in the inspection areas and should provide a clear and practicable basis on which the college can move forward.

What happens next?

This section of the report will set out what the college needs to do following the inspection. In all cases, the college will need to respond to the recommendations by putting in place the actions required to make the improvements identified by the inspection team. The report will also indicate whether Estyn has asked the college to provide a case study in relation to any aspect(s) of its work. The report will state whether the college requires any level of follow-up activity by Estyn.

Inspection areas

For each inspection area, there is guidance on what it covers and the considerations that inspectors need to keep in mind when evaluating it.

Within each inspection area, the reporting inspector may report on the aspects in the order they appear in the handbook or they may choose to sequence the aspects differently in order to reflect their findings. For example, in Inspection Area 1 - Standards, they may begin with standards and progress in skills, then specific groups and standards, and progress overall at the end. In Inspection Area 3 - Teaching and learning experiences, they may begin with the curriculum and then teaching if this makes the findings of the team clearer.

The report on each inspection area should normally be around 250-700 words.

There is supplementary guidance on the inspection of various aspects of the work of schools/colleges on Estyn's website:

www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/supplementary-guidance.

1 Standards

1.1 Standards and progress overall

Inspectors should evaluate the standards reached by learners overall and judge whether these are appropriate to learners' ages and abilities. Inspectors should consider learners' progress, especially their progress since starting college, from one phase to another, and during the college year.

Inspectors should base their evaluations of learners' achievement and progress on the outcomes of lesson observations, learning walks, scrutiny of learners' work and discussions with learners. Inspectors should evaluate how well learners recall previous learning, develop thinking skills, acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills, and apply these to new situations.

Inspectors should consider the achievements and attainments of learners against baseline information. They should consider whether learners are making as much progress as they could, given their starting-points and their age and ability. For example, inspectors should consider how well learners with more developed skills achieve and the extent to which the work they undertake stretches them fully to achieve as well as they could.

Judgements about achievement for learners with LDD should take account of their achievements in relation to agreed learning goals.

Inspectors should consider evidence in learners' individual learning plans (ILPs) when making a judgement on the rate of progress learners make.

Inspectors should be aware that it will not always be possible or appropriate to compare results of learners in independent specialist colleges with other providers. However, it is important to form a view on the extent to which learners are fulfilling their potential.

Where appropriate, inspectors will consider the number and range of accredited qualifications that learners achieve and whether these are in line with their ability.

Inspectors should consider whether learners move on to courses, training, employment or specialist provision that are appropriate for their ability, interests and previous performance. They should consider the proportion of college leavers not in employment or who are not engaged in education and training (NEETs).

1.2 Standards and progress of specific groups

Where possible, inspectors should evaluate the progress of particular groups of learners, for example boys and girls, learners with English as an additional language (EAL) and those from minority ethnic groups. However, this will not always be appropriate.

It may be appropriate to report on differences between the progress of learners with different needs, for example autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). This should only be if there is a significant difference between the progress of the two groups.

Inspectors should consider whether specific groups of learners are making as much progress as they could in relation to their starting-points and their age and ability.

1.3 Standards and progress in skills

Inspectors should evaluate to what extent learners develop the skills required to access the whole curriculum and to learn effectively throughout their lives.

Inspectors should report clearly on learners' standards in literacy, communication, numeracy and ICT. When inspecting skills, the focus should be on how well learners use their literacy, communication, numeracy and ICT skills appropriately in their work across the curriculum and outside the classroom.

Where available, inspectors should consider the results of other relevant assessments, such as those of learners' reading ability, when coming to a view about learners' literacy skills.

Inspectors should judge standards in skills based on first-hand evidence, for example from observations of learners in lessons, learning walks, scrutiny of learners' work and discussions with learners. Careful observation of learners in lessons and talking to learners will provide evidence of their speaking and listening skills, their numeracy skills and their ability to think. Scrutiny of work will provide evidence on how well learners can write clearly and read for understanding, how well they can use their numeracy skills at appropriate levels in a range of subjects and whether they are acquiring a useful range of skills and knowledge in ICT.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which the level of learners' communication and thinking skills support or hinder their progress in classroom interaction with tutors and with other learners. They should consider how well learners develop their creativity and their physical skills, in the classroom and outdoors, and how enterprising they are.

Where relevant, inspectors should consider the extent to which learners develop their fine and gross motor skills, their mobility and their independent living skills. They should consider the extent to which learners develop the skills they need to prepare them for future life. Inspectors should evaluate how effectively learners develop their social skills, including their ability to relate to other learners, staff and visitors to the school.

2 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

2.1 Wellbeing

Inspectors should consider the extent to which learners feel safe and secure, and free from physical and verbal abuse. They should consider the extent to which learners understand how to keep themselves safe within the college, in the wider community and online.

Inspectors should consider how well learners are becoming healthy, confident individuals and understand, for example, how to make healthy choices relating to diet, physical activity and emotional wellbeing. They should consider how well learners use this understanding in their own lives in college and respond positively to opportunities to undertake physical activity, for example during lessons, at break and lunchtime and through other clubs and activities.

Inspectors should consider the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires from learners, parents and staff carefully in relation to learners' behaviour and develop appropriate emerging questions, where appropriate. Inspectors should consider evidence from observations of learners interacting in classes, at break and lunchtime and around the college, as well as evidence from discussions with individuals and groups.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which learners are ready to take on leadership roles and responsibilities and to play a full part in the life and work of the college, for example as members of the college council. They should consider how well all learners show confidence and resilience in their lives, for example in the way they interact with new people and with adults.

Inspectors should consider how well learners are developing as ethical, informed citizens, for example through their awareness of fairness, equality, tolerance, sustainability and young people's rights.

2.2 Attitudes to learning

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

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which learners are ambitious, confident, capable and independent learners. They should look at how well learners engage with new, unfamiliar experiences and ideas. They should judge learners' interest in their work, their ability to sustain concentration in line with their needs and to avoid distractions. They should consider how readily learners engage in tasks and bring them to completion. They should evaluate how well learners persevere and remain purposeful when they face difficulties or seek other solutions when their first approach to a problem is unsuccessful. Inspectors should consider to what extent learners are developing their employability skills as they move through the school.

Inspectors should consider to what extent learners are ready to learn at the start of lessons and whether they move easily between different lessons and activities. They should look at how well learners are able to work in a range of ways, for example independently, in small groups and in whole-class settings. Inspectors should consider how well learners demonstrate respect for the contributions of others, for example by allowing others to speak or by remaining calm when others disagree with them.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which learners demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and around the college. They should look at how well learners move between activities and classes and how well they behave during activities such as whole-college gatherings. They should observe whether learners are considerate and relate well to each other and adults. Inspectors should consider how well learners behave at lunchtime and breaktimes.

When evaluating participation and enjoyment in learning, inspectors should consider the evidence from classes, scrutiny of learners' work, interviews with learners, observation of their engagement in college activities such as clubs and the behaviour of learners in lessons and around the college.

When evaluating attendance as evidence of learners' participation and engagement in learning, inspectors should report by exception, i.e. where there is a clear trend of weak or very strong attendance or where it has significantly improved. Inspectors should consider the trends in the overall college attendance rate and the most up-to-date information available, including any notable variations between particular groups of learners and others. They should focus particularly on the rate of persistent absence and consider how many learners have absence rates well above others in the college. However, inspectors should also consider significant mitigating factors, where there is robust evidence to support them, for example in relation to attendance at health clinics or hospital appointments. They should consider the extent to which learners with a history of poor attendance in their current or previous school/college/PRU demonstrate improved attendance.

3 Teaching and learning experiences

3.1 Quality of teaching

The evaluation of teaching does not necessarily have to be the first section of the inspection area as inspectors may begin with the quality of learning experiences or the provision for skills if this makes their findings clearer.

When evaluating teaching, inspectors should note that there is no fixed template that tutors should follow, and tutors may use a range of different approaches over time. The key consideration is whether the teaching is successful in engaging learners' interest and how well it develops their skills, knowledge and understanding to an appropriately high level as they move through the college.

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which tutors have high expectations of all learners. They should consider the quality of tutors' planning and how well their planning benefits from purposeful schemes of work. They should consider the extent to which tutors have clear objectives for learners' learning and use a range of approaches and resources to engage their interest and to challenge all groups of learners, including those with LDD, to achieve as well as they can. They should consider the extent to which they make their classes stimulating and engaging places in which all groups of learners, including the most and least able, can learn productively.

Inspectors should judge how well tutors use various questioning techniques to draw out and further develop learners' responses and to gauge their understanding. They should consider the clarity of tutors' instructions and explanations and how well the learners develop their skills, knowledge and understanding as a result. They should evaluate how well the tutors manage learners' behaviour and whether they treat all learners equally and with appropriate respect. Inspectors should judge how successfully tutors use other staff to support learners' learning.

The focus on assessment in this inspection area is predominantly on classroom practice.

Inspectors should evaluate how well the oral and written feedback from tutors helps learners to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They should consider how well tutors gauge learners' understanding through skilful

questioning and monitoring of learners' learning. They should consider how well tutors provide purposeful opportunities for learners to assess their own performance and that of other learners, where appropriate. Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which tutors analyse the outcomes of their assessment of learners to inform their future planning of lessons and the next steps in learners' learning. They should consider how well tutors ensure that their assessments are valid, accurate and reliable.

In coming to evaluations on teaching, inspectors should use the full range of evidence available to them. This is likely to include evidence from learners' work, schemes of work, assessment records, information on learners' progress, discussions with learners and staff as well as lesson observations and learning walks undertaken by members of the inspection team. Inspectors should not allocate a judgement to an individual lesson or tutor, but should report on the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching across the college..

3.2 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the curriculum

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which learning experiences across the college stimulate and challenge the full range of learners so that they engage fully in their learning and make the best possible progress.

Inspectors should consider the college's strategic approach to planning the curriculum and the extent to which it helps pupils to become ambitious, confident, aspirational and well-informed individuals. They should consider the extent to which the curriculum prepares learners for their chosen destinations.

Inspectors should approach innovation and flexibility of approach in a positive way when colleges have tried to be creative and imaginative in taking forward well-considered curricular initiatives for the benefit of learners.

Inspectors should evaluate how well the curriculum builds systematically on learners' existing knowledge, understanding and skills as they move through the college. They should consider to what extent the college provides learners with a suitably wide range of experiences to develop their interest and skills across a range of subjects and areas of learning.

Inspectors should consider tutors' planning, schemes of work, learners' work and observation of work in classes in coming to a view on the quality of the learning experiences provided. They should consider how well the learning experiences meet the needs of all learners no matter what specific models of delivery they choose to organise and deliver the curriculum.

Where relevant, inspectors should evaluate how well the college's curriculum provides for specific groups of learners, for example learners with English as an additional language.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which tutors and learning support staff take full account of individual learners' learning needs in the planning of the curriculum and in the delivery of individual lessons and sequences of lessons. Inspectors should consider how well tutors and other staff take note of learners' learning targets

and provide a suitable programme of work to help learners to meet them. Inspectors should consider the effectiveness of any support provided for learners within the classroom or in withdrawal groups to develop their skills.

Inspectors should examine arrangements for grouping learners through setting or mixed-ability grouping and consider whether the arrangements have a positive impact on the learners' learning and experiences.

Inspectors should consider the ways in which the college develops a curriculum that fully reflects the nature of the college's context, including designing learning activities that reflect the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of Wales and the college's local area.

Inspectors should consider the nature and extent of learning outside the classroom that links directly to the planned curriculum, for example to support the development of learners' understanding of a specific topic, subject or learning area. (Learners' involvement in activities such as clubs is a focus within Inspection Area 4).

3.3 Provision for skills

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which the curriculum arrangements ensure that learners acquire the necessary skills in literacy, communication, numeracy and ICT to support their work across the curriculum. The breadth of learners' experiences across the curriculum should also provide purposeful, progressive opportunities for learners to practise and to develop their skills in literacy), numeracy and ICT. They should look at the evidence in learners' books, online folders and in classes to consider the extent to which the planning is helping to deliver purposeful opportunities for learners to develop their skills across the curriculum.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which the curriculum enables learners to develop skills that they will require for future life, for example independent living skills.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which the college provides learners with opportunities to apply their skills in a range of formal and informal situations.

4 Care, support and guidance

4.1 Tracking, monitoring and the provision of learning support

Inspectors should consider how well the college tracks and monitors learners' progress and wellbeing, including attendance and behaviour, as they move through the college. They will need to consider how well the college identifies relevant issues and responds appropriately to the outcomes of tracking and monitoring, for example through the provision of appropriate support and challenge, the use of intervention strategies and the mentoring or coaching of individuals or groups. Inspectors should consider how well the college tracks the progress of learners in relation to the targets in their individual plans, and their progress from their individual starting points. Inspectors should also consider how well the college uses partnerships with others, for example other colleges or agencies, to provide effective support for learners.

Inspectors should consider how well the college supports learners with emotional, health and social needs so that they can engage positively with the college and benefit from the opportunities that it offers.

Inspectors should consider how well the college establishes productive relationships with parents and has effective lines of communication with them so that parents can support their children well and raise any issues that may affect their child's learning and wellbeing.

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.

4.2 Personal development

Inspectors should evaluate how well the college's provision helps learners to develop skills, knowledge and understanding to make healthy lifestyle choices, for example in relation to healthy eating and drinking, substance misuse, sex and relationships, online safety and so on. Inspectors should consider how successfully the college's provision helps learners to understand the impact of lifestyle choices and behaviours on their present and future mental and physical health and wellbeing. Inspectors should report on whether the college has the appropriate arrangements to promote healthy eating and drinking. They should consider the extent to which the college helps learners understand how to keep themselves safe both within the college and in the wider community.

Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which the college's provision helps learners, including those from different groups such as those eligible for free college meals, to take on responsibilities and to play a full part in the college and wider community.

Inspectors should consider how well the college's provision prepares learners to become active citizens, for example by making decisions about the life and work of the college. They should consider how well the college's arrangements help learners to participate in decision-making at a college level, including the opportunities they have to influence what and how they learn, and the effectiveness of the college council and other learner groups. Inspectors should evaluate how well the college's provision helps learners to develop an understanding of their culture, the local community and the wider world.

Inspectors should evaluate how well the college supports the development of the social and emotional skills of all learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Inspectors should consider how well the college helps to prepare young people for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, including education about careers and the world of work and the importance of regular attendance.

Inspectors should consider the effectiveness of impartial guidance and advice provided to learners, for example relating to future career choices. They should consider the overall coherence and effectiveness of the provision for personal and specialist support, including the availability of services from specialist agencies.

Inspectors should look at how well the college helps learners to understand issues relating to equality and diversity, and develops the values of tolerance and respect. They should consider how well the college develops learners' knowledge and understanding of harassment, discrimination, identity-based bullying and extremism. They should also consider how well the college responds to and manages any

incidents relating to bullying, harassment and discrimination. They should consider how well the college's arrangements foster a positive approach to managing learners' behaviour and an anti-bullying culture. They should consider the extent to which the college's provision challenges stereotypes in learners' attitudes, choices and expectations, and how well it promotes human rights.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which the college provides effective opportunities for learners to develop secure values and to establish their spiritual and ethical beliefs. They should consider how well the college promotes principles that help learners to distinguish between right and wrong. They should consider how well the college develops learners' ability to reflect on religious and non-religious responses to fundamental questions and to reflect on their own beliefs or values. They should consider how far the college fosters shared values, such as honesty, fairness, justice and sustainability, and helps learners to understand the needs and rights of others both locally and as members of a diverse global world.

Inspectors should consider how well the college encourages learners to use their imagination and to engage with the creative arts through their studies, extra-curricular activities and educational visits. They should consider the extent to which colleges give learners' the opportunity to participate in performance, 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.

Inspectors should consider how well the college provides lunchtime and after-college opportunities or puts on assemblies, performances or eisteddfodau to encourage learners to participate in the arts and in sport and recreation.

4.3 Safeguarding

Inspectors will report on whether the college's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet requirements and give no cause for concern. Where arrangements are a serious cause for concern, inspectors should include a recommendation in the report. Estyn may advise Welsh Government to send a letter to the college asking them to outline how they will address the shortcoming(s).

Inspectors should evaluate to what extent the college's safeguarding arrangements ensure that all children and young people are protected. Arrangements should include the identification of children/vulnerable adults in need or at risk of significant harm, safe recruitment practices and having appropriate arrangements for child protection/safeguarding referrals. Inspectors should also consider how well the college promotes safe practices and a culture of safety. The Welsh Government has issued specific statutory requirements and guidance about these safeguarding matters and providers should have in place policies and procedures that comply with them.

Inspectors should consider the college's provision for child protection/safeguarding. They will look at how effective its arrangements are for preventing and addressing bullying, harassment and discrimination. Inspectors should consider how the college keeps learners safe from the dangers of radicalisation.

Inspectors should consider whether the college has robust procedures for checking the suitability of staff and others who are in contact with children/vulnerable adults,

and that the college maintains a record of these checks. Inspectors should check that all staff know what to do to respond to child protection/safeguarding issues and that the designated lead officer and lead governor/proprietor, and other staff where appropriate, have received relevant safeguarding training. Inspectors should check whether the college has appropriate policies, procedures and reporting arrangements in relation to physical interventions and withdrawal. Inspectors will examine any areas used for withdrawal.

In considering safeguarding matters, inspectors should take into account the security of the college buildings and site.

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 and appropriate aims, strategic objectives, plans and policies that focus on meeting learners' needs.

Inspectors should reflect on how well leaders and managers at all levels set high expectations for staff, learners and themselves. They should consider how well they develop an effective, engaged team of tutors and support staff. They should consider to what extent leaders and managers model and promote professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to college improvement and effective collaboration between staff and with other providers. They should consider how well staff at all levels understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities and how well they collaborate in driving forward strategic priorities and college improvement.

Inspectors should consider a wide range of evidence when evaluating the quality of leadership and management, for example minutes from a range of recent meetings, interviews with staff, improvement action plans and reports on their implementation, recent self-assessment from leaders and managers and the analysis of information on learner performance.

Inspectors should consider how well leaders and managers act in accordance with the principle of sustainable development and how well they make decisions and set priorities for improvement that balance immediate, short-term needs with the long-term needs of learners, the local community and Wales.

Inspectors should look at 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 consider how well leaders have established a clear, strategic rationale for the curriculum in terms of its benefits for learners in preparing them to learn throughout their lives and to play a full part in society.

Inspectors should consider how well the college uses strategic partnerships and collaboration with other agencies to help to build its capacity for continuous improvement.

Inspectors should evaluate how well supervisory bodies understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities. They should consider how well supervisory bodies know the college's strengths and areas for development and the degree to which they have participated in setting the college's strategic priorities. They should consider whether there is an appropriate balance between support and challenge in the way the supervisory body discharges its role in holding the senior leadership to account on behalf of the local community, i.e. its role as a 'critical friend'.

Inspectors should judge how well the supervisory 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.

5.2 Self-assessment processes and improvement planning

Inspectors should evaluate how accurately leaders and managers know the college's strengths and weaknesses. They should consider how well leaders and managers gather and analyse first-hand evidence of standards and provision, including teaching. They should consider how well the college involves a wide range of partners, including learners and parents, in identifying its strengths and weaknesses.

Inspectors should consider the impact of improvement planning processes and how well identified priorities for improvement link to the outcomes of the college's self-assessment procedures. Inspectors should consider how well leaders and managers support priorities through the appropriate allocation of resources. They should evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers define relevant and measurable actions for improvement. They should consider how well leaders plan specific, realistic timescales and allocate appropriate responsibility for securing improvement to members of staff.

Inspectors should investigate the college's track-record in making improvements and the extent to which they have led to a positive impact on learners' learning and wellbeing, for example through improvements to the quality of teaching. Where appropriate, inspectors should consider how well the college has responded to recommendations from previous Estyn inspections or from strategic partners and whether the college's actions have led to improvements.

5.3 Professional development

Inspectors should evaluate to what extent leaders have created the culture and ethos to support the professional learning of all staff, including the arrangements to support the active engagement of all staff in increasing their professional knowledge, understanding and skills. They should consider the extent to which staff participate effectively in professional learning experiences, appraisal and performance management. Inspectors should evaluate the impact of leaders in the way they manage the performance of staff in order to help staff to improve their practice. They should also judge whether leaders and managers address issues of underperformance robustly and directly where necessary.

They should consider professional learning undertaken by staff and its impact on learners' learning and their own practice. They should explore the extent to which staff have shared professional learning outcomes with other staff. They should look

at how well leaders have identified good practice within the college and ensured that other staff may benefit from it. They should also consider how well staff work with other colleges, teacher training institutions and providers of professional learning to share and to develop their professional practice.

5.4 Use of resources

Inspectors should consider how well the college uses its resources efficiently and proportionately. They should consider the extent to which the college's spending decisions and broad financial planning link appropriately to its strategic priorities and its improvement planning. In relation to spending decisions, inspectors should consider how well the college balances its short-term needs alongside the long-term needs of learners, the local community and Wales.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which leaders and managers know the costs of existing programmes and activities, keep them under review and question whether they are cost-effective.

Inspectors should consider whether there is an appropriate level of staffing and learning resources to deliver the planned curriculum effectively.

Inspectors should consider whether the college uses its indoor and outdoor environment effectively and efficiently. They should consider how well the learning environment supports or detracts from teaching and learning of high quality and how well it maximises the physical and mental wellbeing of learners.

The evidence base of the inspection

The report will contain a brief overview of the evidence base of the inspection. In this section, reporting inspectors will summarise the activities undertaken by members of the inspection team and the sources of evidence that they considered before, during and after the inspection to ensure that the findings of the inspection are valid, accurate and reliable.

Thematic focus

Estyn may choose a small number of additional themes to focus on each year. The themes chosen will help Estyn to gather information on specific aspects of education and training in Wales. Estyn will use the information to complement its remit work and to inform the findings of the Chief Inspector's Annual Report.

Where there is an additional theme, the inspection team will focus on only one additional theme on each inspection. There will be no separate section of the report or a separate judgement on the additional theme in the published report.

The inspection team may approach the gathering of evidence for the additional theme in a variety of ways, depending on the theme chosen. It may involve a questionnaire or an interview with a specific member of staff or scrutiny of documentation or learners' work, or a combination of approaches. The aim is to make the gathering of evidence as proportionate and as manageable as possible for the college and the inspection team.