

Update for Registered Inspectors October 2022

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A message from HM Chief Inspector

Our new Chief Inspector, Owen Evans, took up his post in January. You can read more about Owen on our [website](#) – and you can follow him on Twitter: @OwenEvansEstyn

Owen says, “It’s been just over eight months since I took up post as Chief Inspector. I’ve already been to a number of the pilot inspections and have valued seeing first-hand the impact of our work. The work you do on behalf of Estyn is vital as we roll out the new inspection arrangements and continue with the positive relationships we built through engagement activity.

“We’re sympathetic to the challenges faced in the aftermath of the pandemic but are focused on getting back to a new normal – back to what’s best for learners and ensuring they get the education they deserve. We want all education and training professionals feel that inspection is a positive experience.

“I hope to meet many more of you – our peer inspectors, additional inspectors, registered inspectors and lay inspectors as I continue to strengthen our stakeholder engagement and my commitment to increase the impact of Estyn’s work.”

Shaping our new inspection arrangements: pilot inspections

In the summer term, we carried out over 100 pilot inspections in schools and PRUs using the guidance on [What We Inspect](#) and [How We Inspect](#). These have replaced our previous inspection handbooks and follow-up guidance. Thanks to everyone who has been involved in a pilot inspection and helped us to shape our arrangements. We also inspected in most other sectors. [Read more information about our inspection arrangements](#).

Our Estyn mindset

One of the most important parts of *How We Inspect* is our revised and refreshed mindset. We want everyone involved in inspection to feel that it's a positive experience. The way we think about inspection – our mindset – helps us to do this. It sets out the fundamental principles that we'd like you to consciously strive for when visiting or working with a provider.

Our approach should always be:

- fair and impartial
- supportive
- reflective
- transparent

You can read more on page 6 of *How We Inspect* and [watch our animation here](#).

Post-16 news

We returned to inspect **further education colleges** and **adult learning in the community partnerships** from the spring term, developing our *What we inspect* and *How we inspect* [inspection guidance](#), following consultation with the sectors and our Post-16 reference group. Our update training in the summer outlined the changes to our guidance and followed on from pilot peer inspector update training earlier in the spring term.

For **work-based learning**, we conducted monitoring visits to all the apprenticeship providers – [find out more](#). We consulted the sector about our methodology and arrangements for inspecting the apprenticeship providers in the summer term. Then, in late September we provided additional update training for nearly all of our current work-based learning peer and additional inspectors on the new arrangements.

We have also returned to inspect **independent specialist colleges** with updated [What we Inspect](#) and [How we inspect](#) guidance.

We continued to inspect **Welsh for Adults** providers using the current inspection guidance, holding three online inspections throughout the year. Peer inspector update training is being held this term.

We also piloted **Youth Work Services** inspection methodology during three Local Government Education Services (LGES) inspections.

Have you read our new Writing Guides?

We reviewed our [English](#) and [Welsh](#) Writing Guides for use in the pilot inspections. As has always been the case, the guides aim to promote consistency across our reports, as well as helping you to communicate messages in a clear, unambiguous way that is accessible to stakeholders.

In these updated versions, we aim to be less restrictive in our approach to our writing whilst maintaining consistency. Now that we no longer give summative overall judgments, it is important that you, as an inspector, are able to capture the key messages about a provider's strengths and areas for improvement in a way that is specific and clear.

Some key changes:

- There is still a list of helpful evaluative words, but they are no longer grouped in line with the four overall judgements we used to apply.
- We have added an appendix about the use of inclusive language.
- We now only use one space after a full stop.
- 'Wellbeing' is now written as 'well-being', in line with the Curriculum for Wales.
- We now capitalise 'Key Stage'.

Peer inspector training

For your information, this summer, we trained school senior leaders who wish to become peer inspectors. The use of peer inspectors is an integral and invaluable part of our approach to inspection, so we were delighted that so many applied to take part. Unfortunately, we weren't able to offer places to all who applied, but we aim to provide further opportunities during the next academic year.

Withdrawals from inspection

Once you have committed to an inspection, we would respectfully request that you do not withdraw from an inspection unless it is unavoidable. Recently, we have experienced a high number of PIs withdrawing from inspections, especially at the start of a new term. We value the work of peer inspectors and registered inspectors highly and your contribution to inspection is crucial. Once deployed, we would ask you to think carefully before making a request to withdraw.

Make sure you have employer permission to inspect

If you're a registered inspector, please send us your signed form from your employer confirming permission to be deployed on inspections. If you change employer, don't forget to send us a new employer endorsement form and update your online inspector profile.

Keep your inspector profile up to date

Your profile gives us vital information to help us arrange inspections. Your preclusions are especially important as these are crucial to your deployment. And of course, if your contact details aren't right, you could miss important information about training and deployment.

Can't remember your username or password? Please contact the Deployment team.

Additional learning needs specialists

If you're a registered inspector who has registered interest to inspect ALN, please update your skills and experience on the specialisms page on your inspector profile. We need this information to deploy you on inspections.

Is your DBS current?

To join our inspection teams, you must have a valid Disclosure and Barring Enhanced (DBS) certificate that is less than 3 years old and includes the Child Workforce category. We are able to accept update service transferable certificates if they meet the same criteria. DBS certificates can take up to 6 weeks to process – you can apply through DDC – [DBS and pre-employment checks - Due Diligence Checking Ltd \(ddc.uk.net\)](#)

Please send a scan or photo of your whole DBS certificate to dbschecks@estyn.gov.wales so that we can confirm it meets our requirements.

[Read our DBS policy](#)

Conversion training – stay enrolled

All RgIs should have attended conversion training by now. It's essential that you attend conversion training to remain on our enrolled list of inspectors. If your training isn't current and/or your DBS is expired, you may have to attend initial training to be able to inspect with us again.

Travel and subsistence – how to claim

Some of you also work for us as peer inspectors from time to time (not contracted). When you do, please complete a [Travel and subsistence claim form \(Peer Inspectors\).xlsx \(live.com\)](#) and email it to the Finance team, with your digital receipts (making sure that they're legible, show a breakdown of full costs, the date and amount paid).

The [Travel and Subsistence Policy \(gov.wales\)](#) explains what you can claim and the limits.

If we've not paid your expenses before or your details are older than two years, please complete the [Bank details form](#)

Accessing the Virtual Inspection Room and your inspector profile

We have been making changes to our Virtual Inspection Room (VIR) and how you gain access has changed. To help you familiarise yourself with the enhanced VIR, we have created a comprehensive guide which can be accessed from the help section on the home screen once you have logged into the VIR.

Find the links on the [Estyn website homepage](#) in the top blue ribbon or use the direct links below:

- [Virtual Inspection Room](#)
- [Inspector Profiles](#)

VIR

Logging in: your username for the VIR is longer prefixed by the word **Extranet**, but you'll need to add **@vir.cymru** after the numbers.

For example:

Username – 02700@vir.cymru

Password – Blue.Cathy82

[This link](#) will take you to a brief video explaining how to access the VIR. **Inspector profile**

Accessing your inspector profile remains the same. You will still need your username and password that you were given after your initial training.

For example:

Username – Extranet\02700

Password – Blue.Cathy82

If you would like to contact us about your inspector profile, VIR or have any queries about deployment please contact us – details are outlined below.

New inspection questionnaires

The views of learners, parents, teachers, governors are very important to us. For our pilot inspections in schools and PRUs, we've been using updated questionnaires to gather their views. [See the questionnaires on our website.](#)

Supplementary guidance

These guides provide additional information to support your work. Over the last two years, we've reviewed and updated them where necessary in light of, for example, ALN reform, Curriculum for Wales and the effects of the pandemic. [See the full list of these documents on our website.](#)

We have also published some new supplementary guidance:

- [Supplementary guidance on inspecting assessment](#)
- [Supplementary guidance for inspecting schools with a religious character](#)
- [Supplementary guidance on inspecting professional learning](#)

Supplementary guidance on inspecting approaches to reduce the impact of poverty on attainment and well-being

This [new supplementary guidance](#) is based on the key principles of the Welsh Government's ambition. They have placed tackling poverty on educational attainment at the heart of its national mission for education as outlined in the Minister's oral statement and speech to the Bevan Foundation.

The document explains our new approaches to reporting on the progress of pupils eligible for free school meals or those from low-income households. We will also report on the ways in which leaders pay due regard to tackling the impact of poverty.

We recognise that schools will be at different stages in tackling this challenge and that some schools will only have a small number of pupils eligible for free school meals or from low-income households. Therefore, we are taking a phased approach to how we report on the progress of these pupils. Our supplementary guidance explains how we will do this.

How you can share effective practice

We're still committed to sharing best practice through publishing case studies. Here are some of our most recent that you can refer providers to:

- [Putting outside play at the heart of learning](#) (Primary)
- [Sport for all](#) (Primary)
- [Developing a school community](#) (Secondary)
- [Enhancing curriculum experience through film skills](#) (Special)
- [Formal and informal learning approaches that enable learners to assimilate into the Welsh-speaking community \(welsh for adults\)](#)
- [Developing pupils' social and emotional skills](#) (PRU)
- [Creating a digital platform for the Welsh for Adults sector](#) (Welsh for Adults)
- [Turning learners into users of the Welsh language](#) (Welsh for Adults)
- [Placing children at the centre of learning](#) (Non maintained)
- [Transforming youth work provision: young person led digital innovation \(Youth Work Services\)](#)
- [Embedding targeted youth work within schools](#) (Youth Work Services)

Thematic reports

Here is a selection of our most recently published thematic reports:

- [A review of the current 16-19 curriculum in Wales](#)
- [Initial Teacher Education reform in Wales - emerging strengths and areas for consideration](#)
[Impartial careers advice and guidance to young people aged 14-16 years provided by Careers Wales advisers](#)
- [We don't tell our teachers, but schools need to know – a report for learners](#)
- [The Curriculum for Wales - How are regional consortia and local authorities supporting schools?](#)
- [Welsh Immersion Education - Strategies and approaches to support 3 to 11-year-old learners](#)
- [All-age schools in Wales - A report on the challenges and successes of establishing all-age schools](#)

Early insights from the Chief Inspector's Annual Report 2021-22

Our Annual Report summary findings can help providers to focus right now on the priorities for improvement.

There's prompts for self-evaluation as well as activities for school council meetings.

Summary findings and self-evaluation <https://annual-report.estyn.gov.wales/>

School council activity – primary <https://annual-report.estyn.gov.wales/pupil-resource-primary>

School council activity – secondary <https://annual-report.estyn.gov.wales/pupil-resource-secondary>

Get in touch

Query	Team	Contact
Inspector profiles Peer inspector deployment DBS certificates	Deployment	planningteam@estyn.gov.wales
T&S Supply cover costs PI retirement with conversion to an Additional Inspector	Finance	financeteam@estyn.gov.wales
Inspection, including accommodation and VIRs	Inspection co-ordinators	ic@estyn.gov.wales
If you have forgotten your password or have any issues logging into the VIR.	IT	ITSupport@estyn.gov.uk
Inspector training	Events	events@estyn.gov.wales