



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

**Nominee handbook**  
**for schools and PRUs**  
**for pilot inspections from 2023/24**

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

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

Estyn also:

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

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## Introduction

A new inspection cycle will start September 2024 and we currently developing new inspection arrangements. We have developed and consulted on our proposed new frameworks with stakeholder.

The consultation findings can be found here: [Inspecting for the future \(2024–2030\) | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#)

Our draft 'What We Inspect' and 'How We Inspect' for maintained schools and PRUs can be found here: [What We Inspect](#) and [How We Inspect](#)

Our draft 'What We Inspect' and 'How We Inspect' for independent schools can be found here: [What and How We Inspect \(Independent Schools\)](#)

It is very important that you are familiar with them before the inspection.

The next step as we develop our inspection arrangements for 2024 is for us to pilot our draft arrangements.

This handbook is for nominees who will be the school representative on the inspection team during their school's<sup>1</sup> pilot inspection. It aims to provide guidance for headteachers and senior leaders that will enable them to understand and carry out the role of nominee effectively.

The handbook is in three parts.

- Part 1: Before the inspection
- Part 2: During inspection
- Part 3: After the inspection

**In order to act as a nominee on an inspection, you must have read the nominee handbook and completed the declaration in the initial contact form (ICF) in the virtual inspection room (VIR).**

The inspection co-ordinator (IC) will check to see that the declaration has been completed before the start of the inspection.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the handbook, the term 'school' is used to include maintained nurseries, primary, special and secondary schools, all age schools, and pupil referral units (PRUs).

## **Part 1: Role and responsibilities**

This section will explain your role and responsibilities as the school nominee.

This section should enable you to:

- have a good understanding of the role
- understand the protocol that guides your work as the nominee
- know the nominee's responsibilities prior to the inspection

### **Background**

By inviting schools to choose a nominee for the inspection to work closely alongside the inspection team, we aim to involve schools actively in the inspection process. The presence of a nominee helps to strengthen the partnership between the inspection team and the school. It will also give schools a better insight into the inspection process and provide valuable opportunities for professional learning. However, it is not a requirement that the school put forward a nominee. The initial call with the reporting inspector (RI) will be an opportunity to discuss and agree who will assume this role. The nominee will normally be the headteacher.

The nominee will:

- ensure that inspectors are fully informed about the context of the school's work
- contribute to meetings of the inspection team
- hear the emerging findings of the team

### **The nominee**

As nominee, you will act as a link between the school and the inspection team. Inspectors value the role and contribution of the nominee highly, as the nominee contributes significantly to ensuring that the inspection runs smoothly. Normally, the nominee is the Headteacher, but on occasions schools prefer to nominate a deputy Headteacher or other senior leader.

If the school decides not to take up the offer of having a nominee:

- this should not prejudice the inspection; the fact that a school does not have a nominee will have no impact of the evaluations made by the inspection team
- the RI will still need to establish a climate in which the school values the inspection. The RI should always work to maintain a good working relationship with the senior staff

### **An effective nominee**

The role of the nominee is demanding. It requires you to exercise the objectivity essential to an external inspection process. Your role is not that of an advocate or defender of the school, but is intended to facilitate the inspection process, for example by ensuring that the team has access to the evidence and information it

requires to come to a valid and reliable evaluation of the school's work. **You will also be required to respect the strict confidentiality of all inspection discussions.**

**Before the inspection** you should:

- become familiar with the two documents [What We Inspect](#) and [How We Inspect](#). Independent schools should refer to [What and How We Inspect \(Independent Schools\)](#)
- become familiar with Estyn's guidance on the role of the nominee
- make appropriate administrative arrangements for the inspection
- ensure that the evidence required for the inspection is available for the inspection team

As a senior leader in the school, you should play a substantial role in the school's self-evaluation and improvement processes and have a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and improvement priorities. The inspection team will not expect you to know the answer to every single question about the school instantly, but they will expect you to know who or where to go to get the relevant evidence.

### **Gathering evidence**

Almost all of your contact before the inspection will be with the IC. The IC will contact the school by telephone two weeks before the inspection to give notice of the date of the inspection. During this telephone call, the IC will give the school details of the inspection team and discuss the detailed arrangements for the inspection. The IC will send you a form with information taken from your last PLASC data return. It is important that you check the accuracy of this information as soon as possible and let the IC know of any changes.

Once you have been notified that an inspection is to take place, you will be asked to provide the following five pieces of information for the RI:

- a copy of your school's most recent improvement or development plan
- a full timetable for all classes during the inspection week
- a labelled plan of the school's teaching rooms or areas
- a list of members of staff, including their roles and responsibilities
- a copy of the DBS information for staff and any governors or volunteers who have had a DBS check, in line with the school's policy

This information should be uploaded to the VIR no later than five working days after notification. The IC will explain to you how the VIR system works.

Estyn will also ask you to upload a self-evaluation of the school's safeguarding arrangements. There is no specified format for this self-evaluation. You may upload your most recent safeguarding self-evaluation, for example your local authority form or the national model, if this is available. If required, the IC will provide a copy of a self-evaluation template for you to use, through the VIR.

The RI will contact the headteacher by telephone shortly after the school has been notified of its inspection. The RI will discuss with the headteacher any other evidence that the RI requests to be available for the team when they arrive.

## **Part 2: During the inspection**

### **Section A: Roles and responsibilities**

**During** the inspection you should:

- liaise with the RI about administrative arrangements
- respond to team requests for additional information
- assist in resolving any problems that arise
- contribute to discussions in team meetings regarding the school's strengths and areas for improvement

Your role is not to act as an advocate for the school, but you may, where appropriate, suggest further evidence for inspectors to consider that may be relevant to the inspection.

As nominee, you should provide a line of communication between the school and the inspection team. If staff have any concerns, for example about the conduct of the inspection, they should raise them with you and you should pass these concerns on to the RI. If for any reason you feel unable to discuss the matter with the RI, you should contact Estyn and ask to speak to the relevant assistant director for your sector.

As the nominee, it may be worthwhile to share Estyn's 'How we inspect' and 'What we inspect' documents with other staff members. This could provide staff with useful insight into the inspection process. On our website, there is a range of documents that you may find helpful to read before the inspection, including supplementary guidance on a variety of inspection issues.

### **Section B: Inspection activities**

This section will enable you to have a better understanding of:

- what the team will do during the inspection
- your role in team meetings

The size of the team and the length of the inspection will depend the sector and size of the school. The initial contact form (see VIR) describes how inspectors may use their time during the inspection. It will be useful to share this information with staff and governors before the inspection.

Monday morning will usually be used for travelling. Normally, the inspection team will arrive at the school around 12 o'clock (the RI will arrange the exact time with the headteacher in the initial telephone call).

The first activity will be the pre-inspection team meeting. The RI may decide to include some or all of the following on the agenda:

- Welcome and introductions
- Domestic arrangements, health and safety issues, and safeguarding arrangements
- Where appropriate, specific issues/activities during the week that will affect the inspection program
- Team responsibilities – allocation of Inspection Areas and writing sections of the report
- Key features of the responses to the pupil, parent, staff and governor questionnaires
- Arrangements for meetings with pupils, parents, staff and governors
- Recording of evidence, including the use of the judgement forms and arrangements for collating the team's findings
- Arrangements for feeding back on the last day of the inspection

This meeting will also provide an early opportunity for the headteacher to draw any context-related issues to the team's attention, for example the impact of the pandemic on the school community.

**Daily team meetings** are a very important part of the inspection process. As nominee, you should attend all team meetings, including the pre-inspection team meeting.

On the Monday, this team meeting will take the form of a professional dialogue with the headteacher (and, in some instances, with other senior leaders). This discussion will be led by the RI, who will have read the school's development or improvement plan as part of their pre-inspection work.

In secondary and all age schools, at the RI's discretion, the team may hold more than one of these professional dialogue meetings. The RI will discuss the arrangements for these meetings with the headteacher in their initial telephone call.

In other sectors, there will usually only be one professional dialogue meeting, involving the inspection team and the headteacher only.

In all of the professional dialogue meetings, the focus of the discussion will be:

- the processes by which the school selected its improvement priorities
- how the school is monitoring and evaluating its progress towards its improvement targets
- the impact that the school's improvement work is having on pupil outcomes

The after-school team meetings on the remaining days of the inspection will focus on considering the emerging strengths and areas for improvement under each of the inspection areas.

A good nominee is well prepared, well briefed and contributes positively to team discussions. You may be asked your advice about where the team can obtain certain evidence or the best person with whom inspectors can discuss a specific aspect of the school's work.



Do not be afraid to ask for clarification if there is something that you do not understand. You are the person who is most likely to be asked to explain the inspection findings to other staff and to help move the school forward following the inspection so it is important that you know why inspectors have come to their evaluations.

Please read the following examples of three very different nominees and their role in team meetings

### **Example A**

Context: the first afternoon initial team meeting

*During the team meeting, I was able to take notes of things I wished the team to be aware of and additional information that I felt may be useful to them. This was very helpful. I felt confident to contribute to the discussions and was able to use my knowledge of the school to provide useful context for the team. While I didn't challenge anything that the team said, I did direct them to where more information could be found. For example, the RI mentioned that the school didn't appear to be involved much with other schools in sharing good practice. I was able to point the inspectors to a cluster initiative that the school had led.*

The nominee in example A is well prepared and knows where evidence can be found and is engaging positively with the inspection process.

### **Example B**

Context: the team meeting at the end of the first full day of the inspection.

*One of the team inspectors and the lay inspector had met with groups of children during the day and fed this back to the team. The lay inspector said that the pupils he'd talked to felt that behaviour was an issue in the school. The RI said that the team should look for further evidence about behaviour to identify if it was an area for improvement. I didn't say anything but felt angry that one small group of pupils could impact so negatively. I should have asked whether anyone had seen any evidence of bad behaviour in classes and around the school but didn't. I wish that I had told the team more about the successful work we do in encouraging positive behaviour.*

The nominee in example B is far too passive. This nominee has additional evidence and information but is uncomfortable in bringing this to the attention of the team and thinks that this may appear 'too pushy' and may reflect badly on the nominee or the school. The nominee's reticence is not helpful for the inspection team.

### **Example C**

Context: the second after-school team meeting. The team are discussing the Inspection Area 1 and are focusing on teaching. The peer inspector says that the majority of the teaching she has observed so far has been ineffective. The RI asks her to elaborate, and she goes on to say that the questioning was limited to closed questions and that the work wasn't challenging enough. As a result, pupils become bored and started to display off-task behaviour.

*I asked the RI if had he checked the peer inspector's work as in my opinion she was totally wrong. I know the PI has been in Humanities this week – I'm their line manager and I know for a fact that all of the staff there are excellent teachers. I asked the peer inspector what her experience was of observing teaching. I'm going to pop down to Humanities tomorrow morning to give them my support, tell them that that PI's criticisms are nonsense.*

This defensive and argumentative approach is inappropriate and unhelpful. The protocol makes clear that the role is not that of an advocate or defender of the school. If you share the details of the team's discussions with staff, you will breach the confidentiality of the team.

It would have been more helpful for the nominee to comment at the team meeting that they are surprised by inspectors' findings, but accept that this is what was observed. They could provide inspectors with records of the school's own monitoring and scrutiny of pupils' work over time, for example in humanities. Listening to the team discussion will provide the nominee and the school with a helpful understanding of why the classroom provision is less effective than the school's leaders believe it to be.

### **Gathering evidence**

The inspection team will undertake a range of activities to gather evidence during the inspection, including learning walks, lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and meetings with pupils, staff, parents and governors. As well as lessons, inspectors may visit assemblies, registration periods or support programmes.

Inspectors will also look at a range of documentation, for example minutes of governing body meetings. They will use this documentation to find information about the school's work and identify areas for further discussion. They will not, however, evaluate the quality of the documentation itself.

Schools and PRUs are not required to provide inspectors with a self-evaluation report either before or during the inspection. However, schools are welcome to provide inspectors with any documentation regarding their evaluation and improvement work that they feel might be useful or relevant.

Inspectors will take every opportunity to **talk to pupils**. They will ask pupils to show them their work and discuss it with them. The RI will schedule timetabled meetings with pupils, but inspectors will also talk to pupils during lessons and around the school where appropriate.

When evaluating **pupils' work**, inspectors will focus on the progress that pupils make over time. They will consider how well the curriculum provides pupils with worthwhile and meaningful opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Inspectors may ask the school to provide further examples of pupils' work if necessary, for example work they have completed digitally.

When **visiting lessons**, inspectors may carry out a lesson observation of part or a full session, or they may visit part of a session as part of a learning walk. The length of these visits will vary between sectors – the RI will discuss this with the

headteacher in advance of the inspection so that staff will know what to expect. Where there has been a full lesson observation, the inspector will hold a brief professional dialogue with the teacher observed, either at the end of the lesson or later in the week. Inspectors do not 'grade' individual lessons/sessions.

When evaluating teaching and assessment, inspectors will focus on the **impact** of the school's provision on pupils' progress and the standards they achieve. We do not have any 'preferred approach' regarding teaching and assessment practices. There are no approaches that inspectors 'expect' to see in lessons, such as the sharing of learning objectives or the use of a plenary session. Inspectors do not expect to see the full range of skills being developed in every lesson. When considering teachers' feedback, inspectors will focus on the impact that it has on pupils' progress.

**In maintained schools and PRUs, the Lay Inspector (LI)** will normally join the team on the first full day of the on-site inspection. The LI will focus on gathering evidence on the experience of school for pupils and the contribution that the relationships and environment make to their safety, attitudes to learning and wellbeing. They will gather information through activities such as learning walks, meetings with staff and pupils as well as observing pupils at break and lunch times. The LI will not undertake formal lesson observations or contribute to evaluations on standards and teaching.

It may be helpful to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the [Reducing Workload](#) guidance endorsed by Estyn, regional education consortia, local authorities, Education Workforce Council, unions representing the education workforce and the Welsh Government.

## **Section C: Frequently asked questions**

### **1. Do we have to change our timetables if the RI asks?**

We are keen for schools to continue as normal during an inspection. It is best for teachers and pupils to undertake their usual activities at the usual times. Therefore, the RI should not normally ask for any changes to the normal school timetable. In secondary school inspections, where appropriate, the school may consider covering the nominee's teaching responsibilities for the week.

### **2. Do I stop PPA teachers coming to school during the inspection days?**

Inspectors will need to see the school operating as it normally does, which includes how the school covers teachers' PPA time. Normally, it would not be appropriate to make alterations to normal staff practice just for the inspection.

### **3. If I am a member of the team, can I go to the parents' meeting?**

As the nominee, you cannot attend the parents' meeting unless you are a parent. If you are a parent, you may attend the parents' meeting as a parent and should make your contributions to the meeting in that role.

### **4. As I am head/deputy headteacher of a very small primary school with a full-time teaching commitment, and want to attend the team meeting first thing**

**in the morning, can I ask the RI not to observe my teaching until after first play?**

It is important that you discuss these issues with the RI. RIs are sympathetic in such circumstances and would normally try and accommodate this request. RIs recognise the specific challenges that face leaders and managers in very small schools.

**5. If I think the team has not seen something important, what do I do?**

It is very important that you bring any significant evidence to the team's attention. This does not have to be confrontational, but you should ensure that the RI knows the significance that you place on this particular evidence.

**6. If there is a special event taking place in school during the on-site inspection, should I let the lead inspector know?**

Of course, and please make sure that you mention this to the Inspection Co-ordinator when they announce the inspection. Also, please make this obvious in the timetables you send to the IC or contractor before inspection. However, inspectors cannot guarantee that they will be able to attend any special events.

**7. If the team mention that they have not seen pupils using any ICT in classes can I go and tell the staff this?**

No. Team discussions are confidential. However, you may want to ensure that the team has received any significant evidence relating to pupils' digital skills and use of ICT in class, if it is available.

**8. If I disagree with what the team says in their meeting, what can I do?**

You may bring any additional information and evidence to the attention of the team. While they will consider this information, this may not be reflected in a change of evaluation of that area. The team will come to its own view.

**9. Can I be asked to leave a team meeting?**

It can be challenging to listen to an inspection team discuss and reach evaluations on your school, especially where those are not in line with your own views, and you may often feel the urge to interject. However, you need to remember that the nominee's role is not to defend the school, but to direct the team to relevant evidence and to facilitate the inspection.

It is rare for the RI to ask a nominee to leave a team meeting. However, if you behave in a way that disrupts the smooth running of the inspection, for example constantly challenging the team's findings, then the RI may ask you to leave the meeting. Before this occurs, the RI will remind you about the protocol that was agreed and explain that you are stepping outside the terms of the agreement.

**10. Do I need to make sure that the team have a selection of pupils' books from all classes/subjects for able, average and less able pupils?**

It is likely that the inspection team will ask for a sample of pupils' books to act as a reference sample during the inspection. The RI will discuss the exact nature of the sample with you before the inspection.

**11. Will the inspectors meet with all my co-ordinators / middle leaders?**

It is unlikely that inspectors will meet with all of them, especially in larger schools. They are more likely to select a sample to meet, if and as required.

**12. As nominee, can I see the Team Inspection Forms completed by members of the inspection team?**

No, these are confidential to the inspection team.

**Part 3: After the inspection**

**After** the inspection you should:

- attend the feedback meeting
- contribute to checking the factual accuracy of the draft of report
- contribute to the completion of the post-inspection questionnaire (PIQ), which the IC will send to you after the inspection
- play a full part in devising the action plan following the inspection