



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

Report:

**Consultation Results – Local Government Education
Services (LGES)**

December 2023

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Consultation Results – Local Government Education Services (LGES)

1. Introduction

This document contains a detailed analysis of Consultation Results for Local Government Education Services (LGES)

2. Methodology

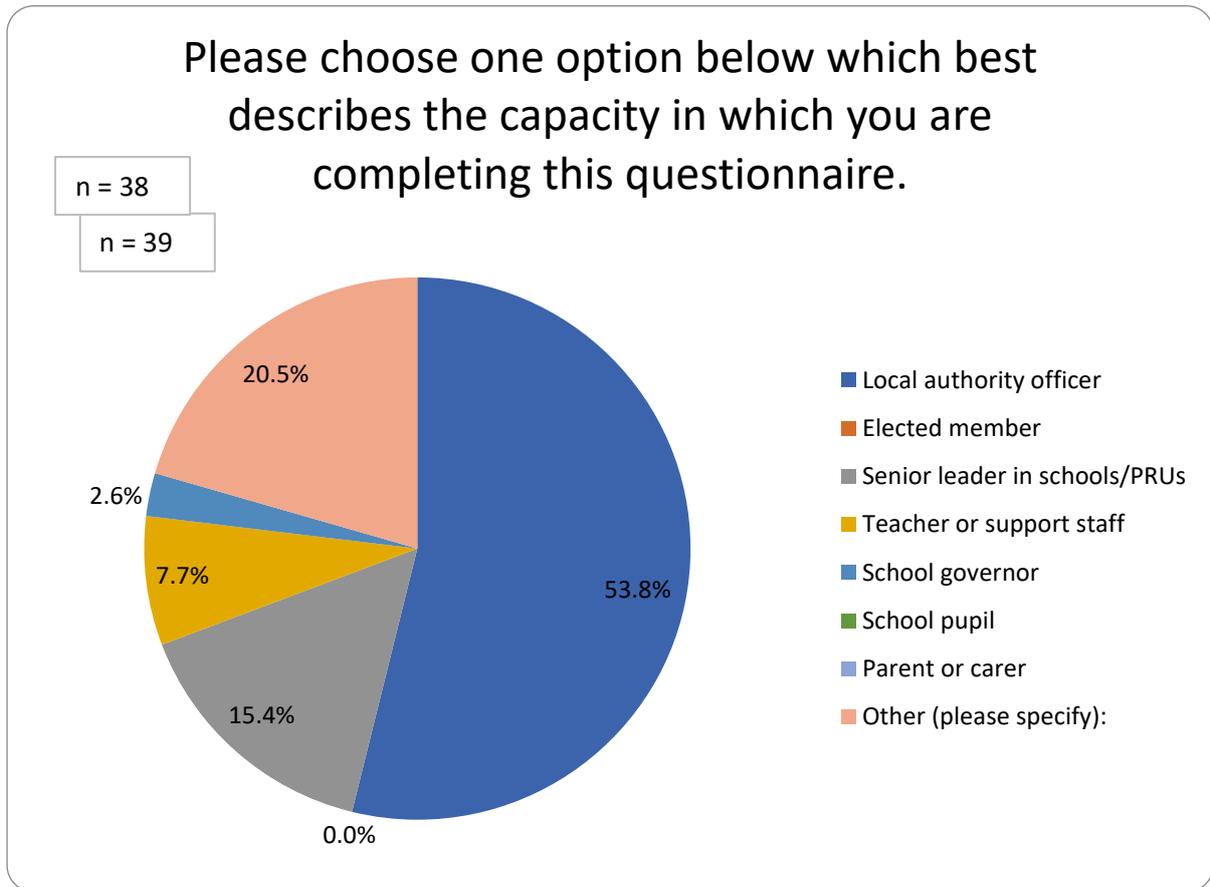
The consultation took the form of a questionnaire that was available to complete either online or offline (a PDF document to be completed and returned via e-mail or post). We launched the survey on 29 September 2023, and it closed on 30 November 2023.

The responses to the free-text questions were grouped into themes. Common responses have been included in this report to convey the key themes associated with each question – although the numbers of free-text responses are typically low and are not necessarily representative of the total population. These included a mixture of direct quotes and paraphrasing (where elements from several responses were summarised). The Estyn Writing Guide was followed when describing the proportions of responses (e.g., ‘few’ equates to less than 20% of respondents).

3. Profile of respondents

We received a total of 43 responses to the consultation questionnaire although 5 respondents failed to answer any questions. Therefore, the effective number of responses is 38. Nearly all of those respondents (well over 90%) provided responses to all of the ‘menu questions’ (i.e. those with a set of pre-defined answers). The number of responses to individual free-text questions varied from 9 to 20 (i.e. 24% to 57% of respondents). The specific response rates will be included when discussing individual questions throughout the report.

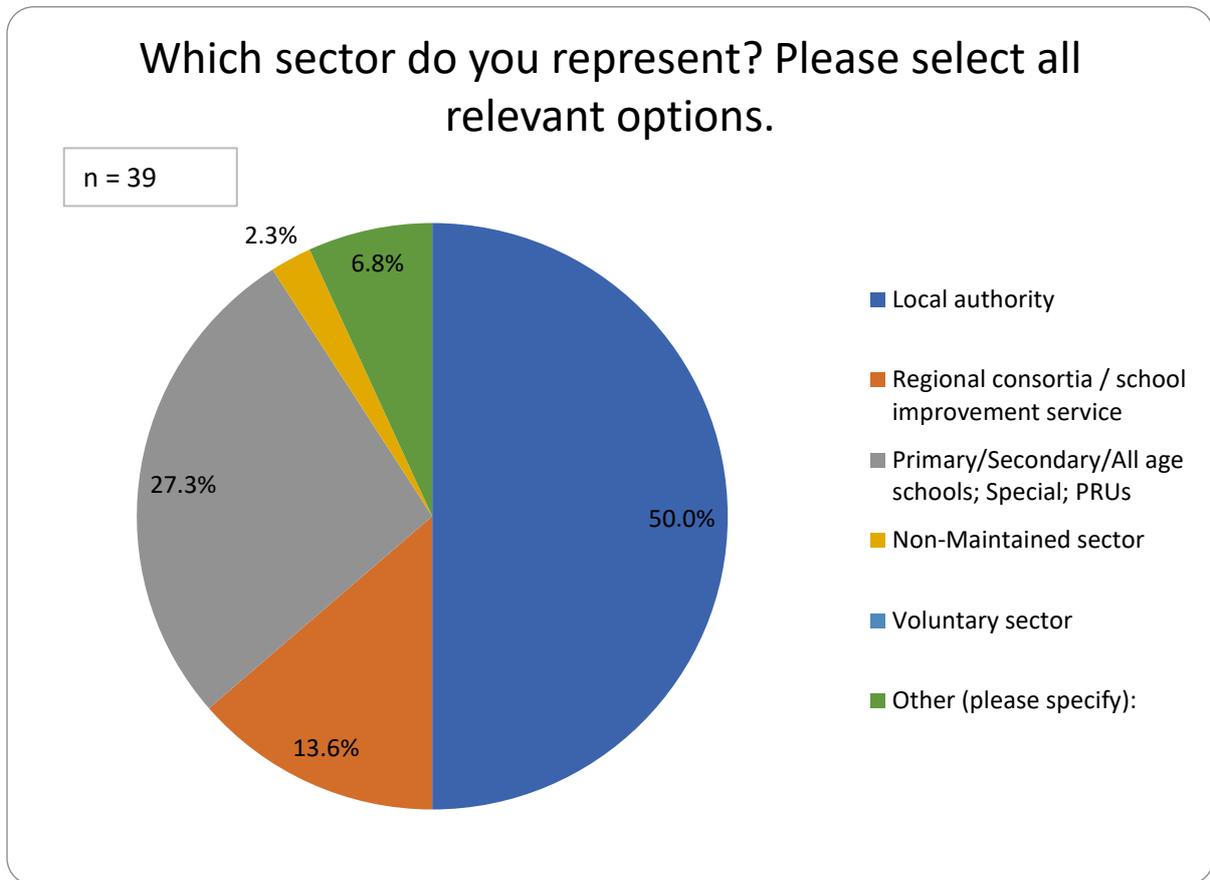
Figure 1: Please choose one option below which best describes the capacity in which you are completing this questionnaire.



No responses were received from either school pupils or parents/carers.

We also asked respondents which sector they represented.

Figure 2: Which sector(s) do you represent? Please select all relevant options.



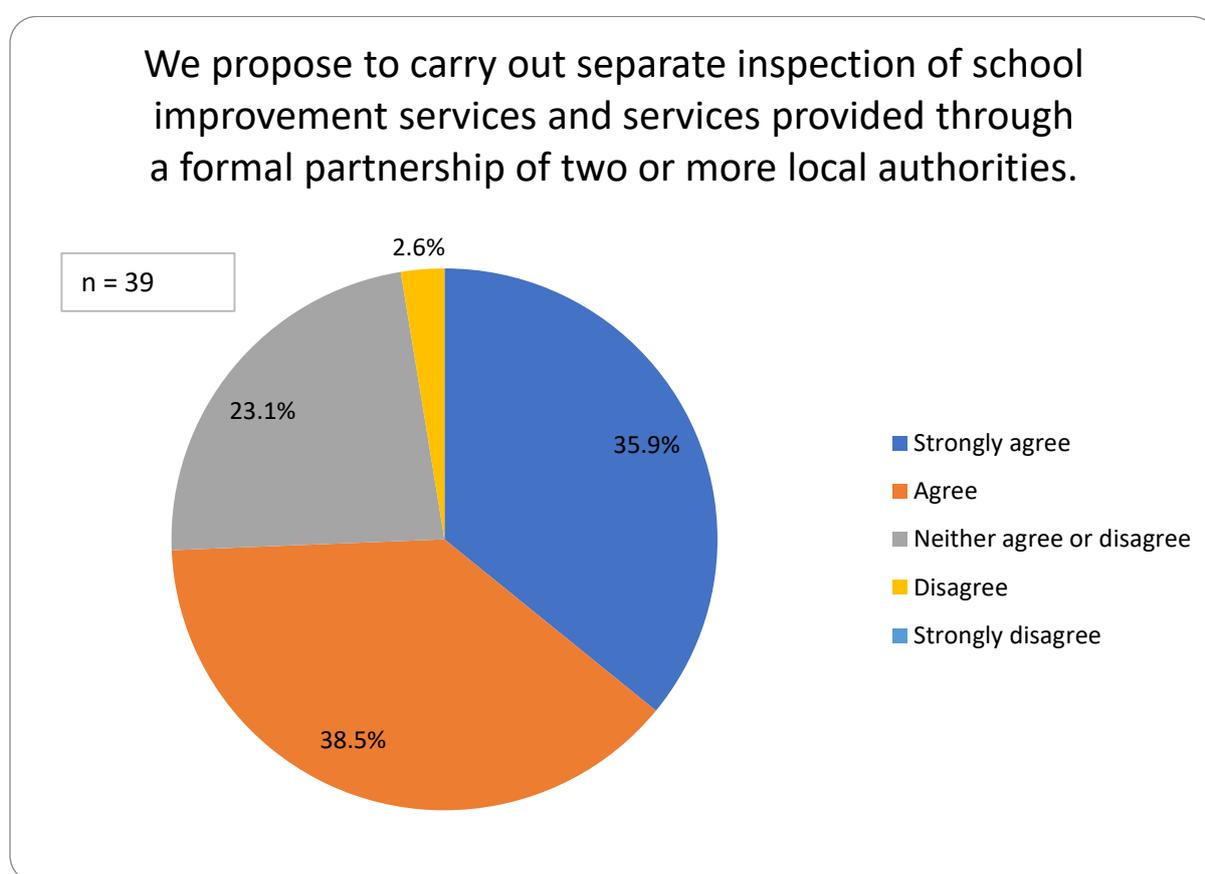
Some respondents represent more than one sector. No responses were received from individuals representing the voluntary sector.

4. Results

4.1 Responses to Proposals

Firstly, we asked respondents what their views were on the following proposal: **We propose to carry out separate inspection of school improvement services and services provided through a formal partnership of two or more local authorities. The school improvement services' inspections and other services provided through formal partnership agreements inspections will look at the quality and impact of the services with local inspection questions providing specific focus areas for this work.**

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?



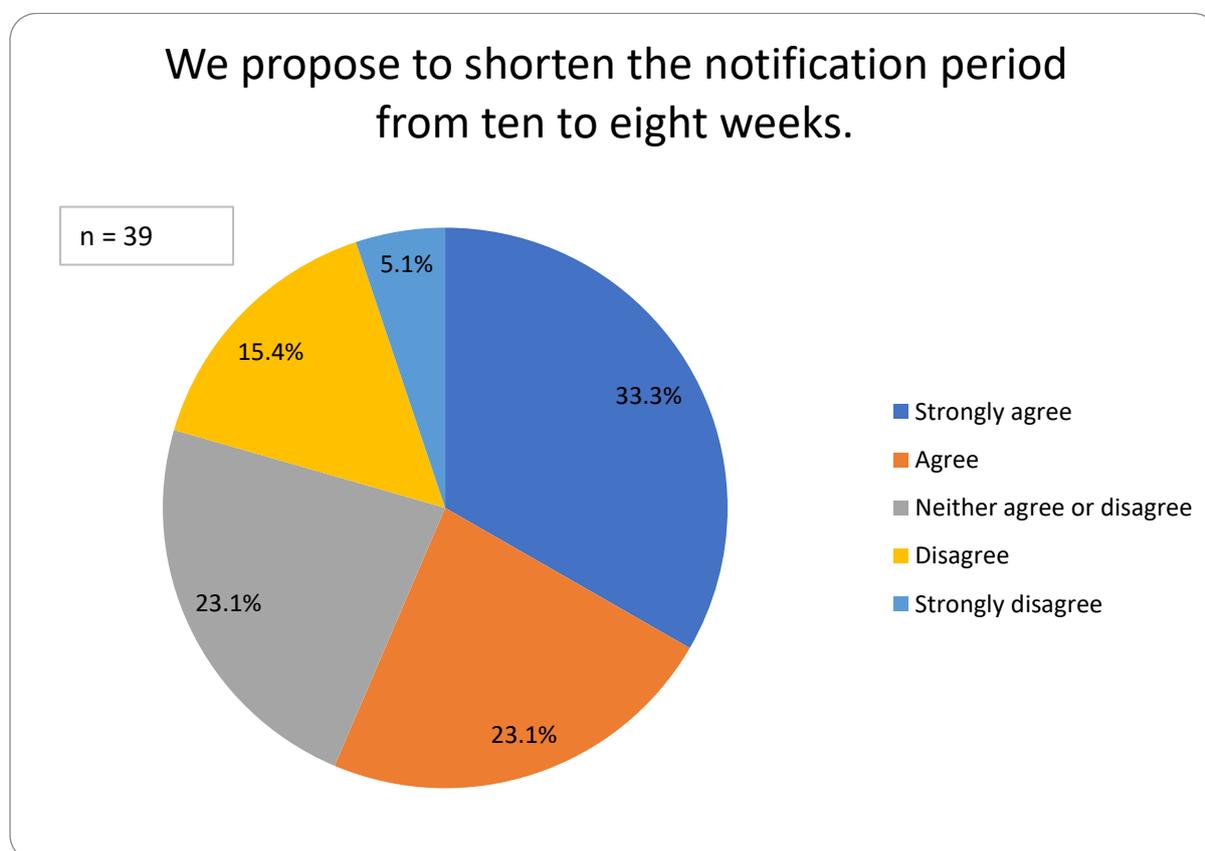
There was strong support for this proposal – with 74% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). Only 3% of those who answered, disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing), with 23% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

16 out of 39 (41%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. The most common theme, mentioned in half the comments (8 out of 16 – 50%) was the avoidance of duplication: *School Improvement Services are also inspected as part of Local Authority inspections. This leads to duplication and means that the same School Improvement Services provided through regional*

consortia are inspected several times over by different HMIs during an inspection cycle.

We then asked about the opinion on the following statement: **We currently provide a 10-week notification for a LGES inspection. This allows us to carry out the pre-inspection activities such as discussing and finalising the local inspection questions, issuing the citizen and headteacher questionnaires and holding the pre-meetings with key stakeholders prior to the inspection week. We propose to shorten the notification period from ten to eight weeks. This would still allow us sufficient time to carry out the pre-inspection activities. We will also notify the local authority that we will inspect their youth services as a stand-alone inspection four weeks into the LGES notification period. This will enable us to consider and include the key messages from the Youth inspection in our LGES inspection.**

Figure 4: What are your views?

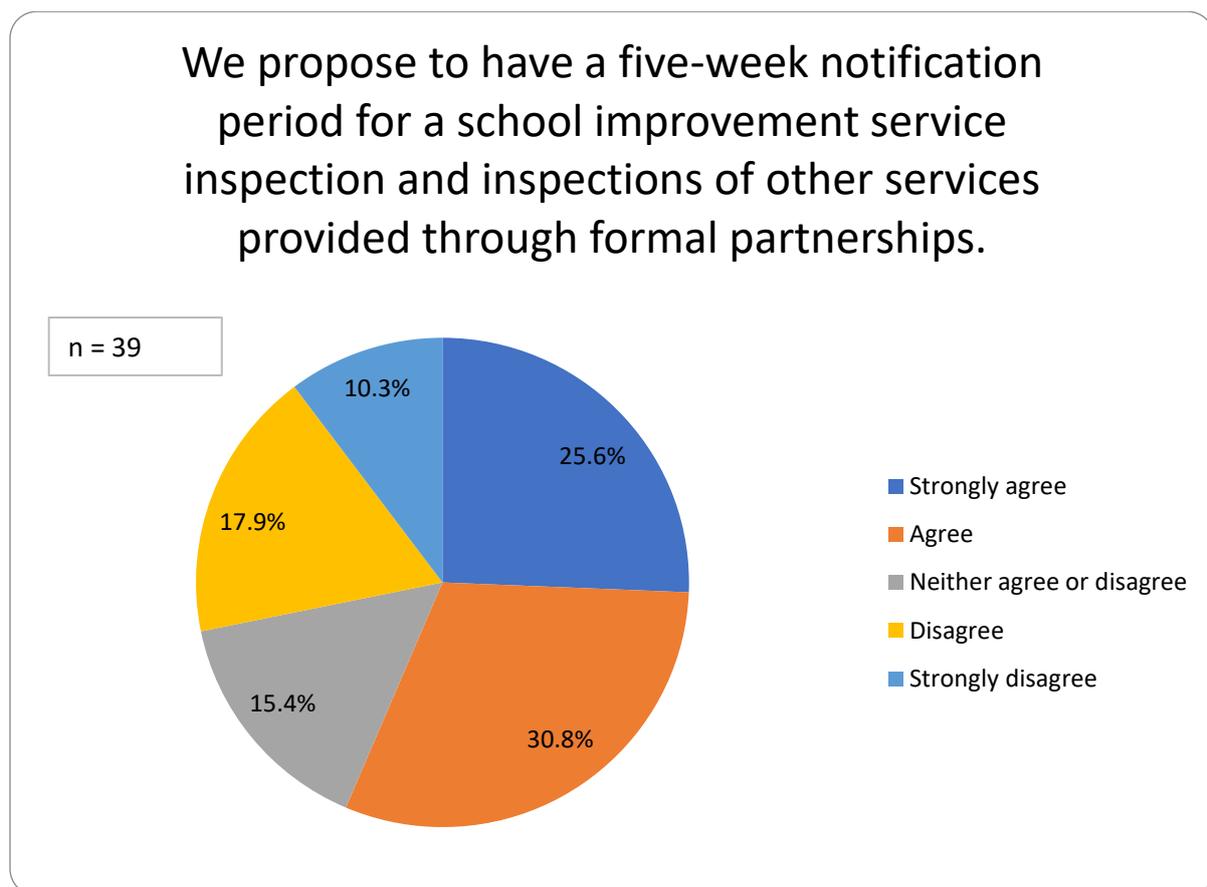


There was a level of support for this proposal – with 56% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). 21% of those who answered, disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing), with 23% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

17 out of 39 (44%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. Almost half of the comments (7 out of 17 – 41%) stated that this is a *sensible and agreeable proposal*. A minority of comments (6 out of 17 – 35%) questioned why the notification period is so long, with a few citing *schools as having a clearly shorter notification period*.

We then asked about the proposal: **Notification for school improvement services inspection and other services provided through formal partnerships. We propose to have a five-week notification period for a school improvement service inspection and inspections of other services provided through formal partnerships. This will also provide us with the time to discuss and finalise the local inspection questions and issue and analyse the relevant questionnaires before our on-site visits.**

Figure 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to have a notification period of five weeks for the school improvement services' inspections?



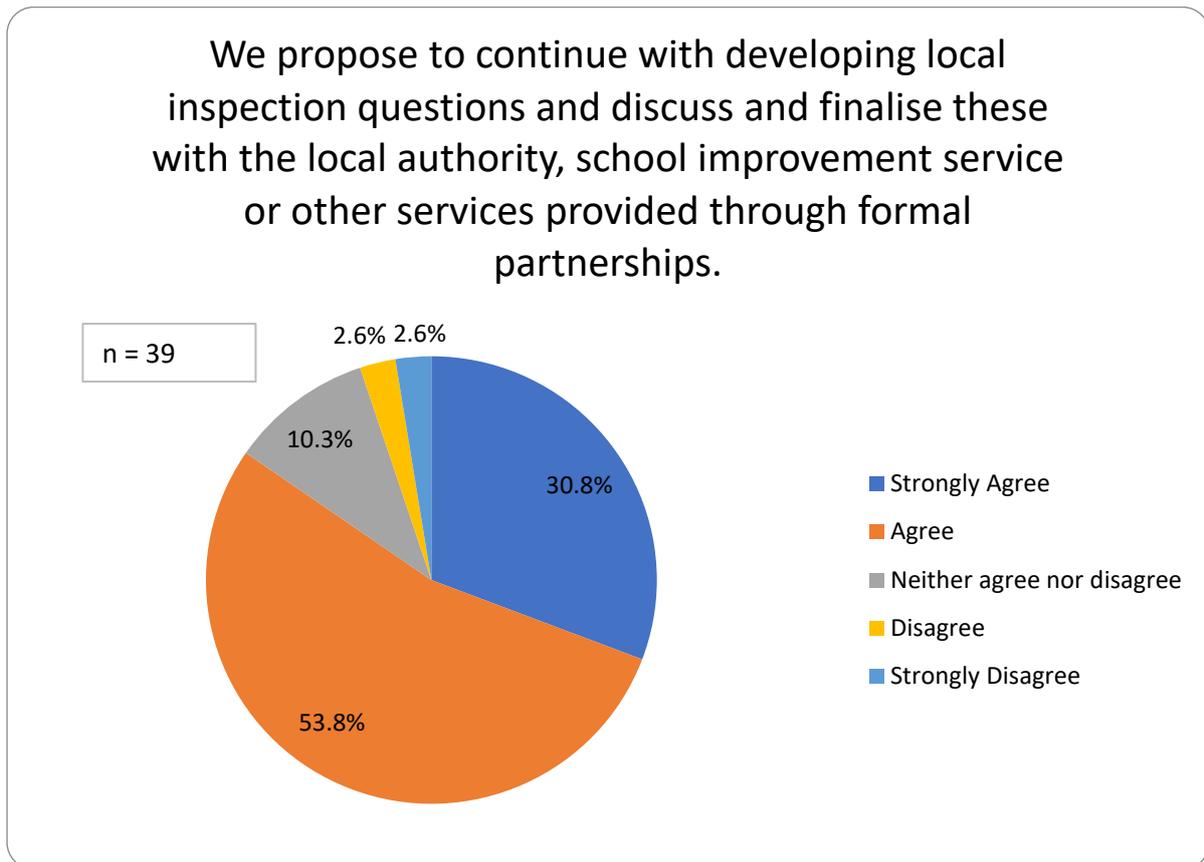
There was generally positive support for this proposal – with 56% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). 28% of those who answered, disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing), with 15% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

14 out of 39 (36%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. A minority (3 out of 14 – 21%) felt that the proposal gives sufficient time to prepare the logistics and the required information for the inspection.

A minority (5 out of 14 – 36%) questioned why the notification period is so long, citing *school inspections as having a clearly shorter notification period.*

We then asked for views on the following: **We propose to continue with developing local inspection questions and discuss and finalise these with the local authority, school improvement service or other services provided through formal partnerships. We think local inspection questions provide a proportionate focus for our inspection work, whilst also ensuring the inspections cover the most important areas.**

Figure 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should continue to use ‘local inspection questions’ on our LGES inspections?

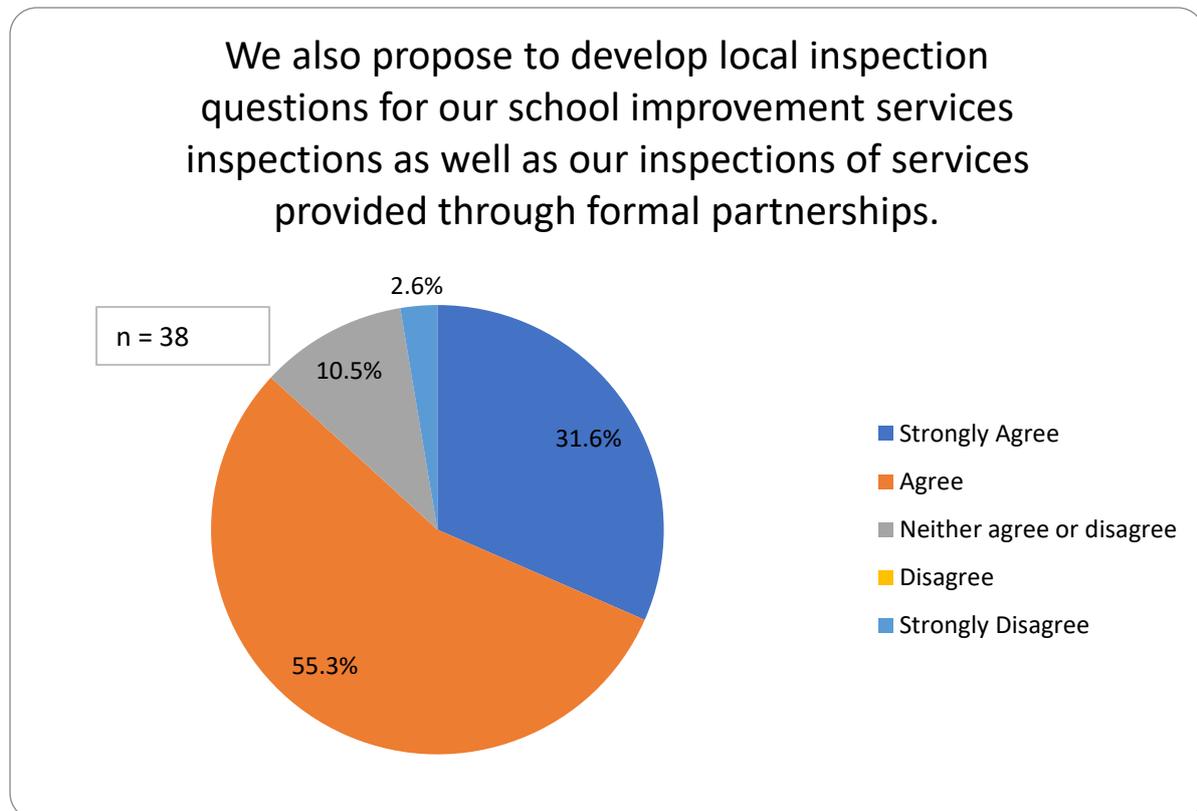


There was strong support for this proposal – with 85% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). Only 5% of those who answered, disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing).

12 out of 39 (31%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. Almost half of the comments (5 out of 12 – 42%) agreed with the proposal. Others agreed too but a minority (3 out of 12 – 25%) thought that the *local inspection questions should be agreed with the LA*. While another minority (3 out of 12 – 25%) thought that *there should be a cap on the number of local inspection questions*.

We then asked for views on the following: **We also propose to develop local inspection questions for our school improvement services inspections as well as our inspections of services provided through formal partnerships.**

Figure 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should have local inspection questions for our school improvement services’ inspections and for services provided through formal partnerships?

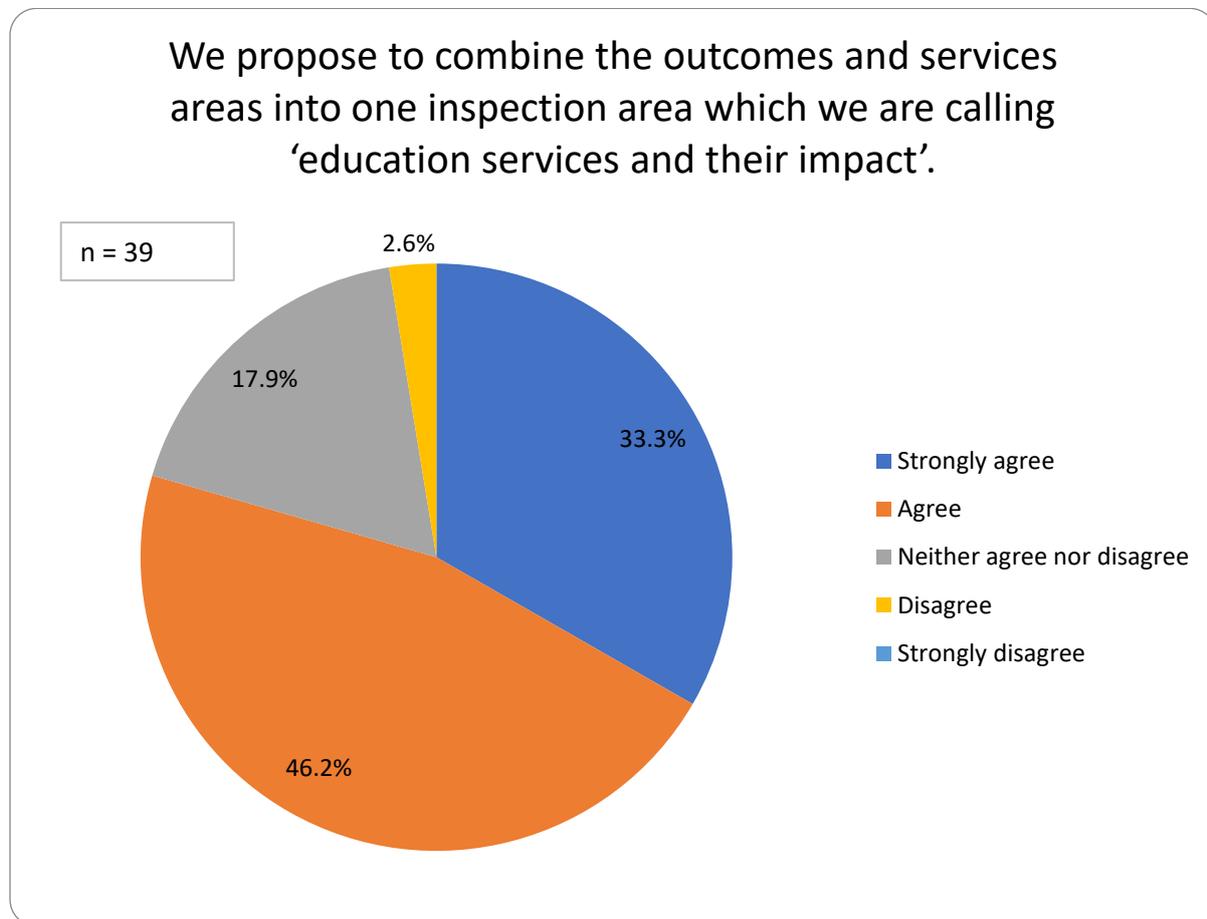


There was strong support for this proposal – with 87% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). One respondent (3%) strongly disagreed with the proposal.

10 out of 38 (26%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. Almost half the comments received (4 out of 10 – 40%) agreed with the proposal but wanted some reassurance that *there would be a suitable and formal process to agree the local inspection questions beforehand.*

We then asked for views on the following: **Our current inspection guidance has three inspection areas – outcomes, education services and leadership. We propose to combine the outcomes and services areas into one inspection area which we are calling ‘education services and their impact’. We think strengthening the link between actions and outcomes will make our reports more accessible. For example, we could report on the work the local authority is undertaking to improve attendance and make the link to the difference it is making to the attendance rates in its schools and PRUs. Current inspection areas|A1 Outcomes|A2 Education services|A3 Leadership. Our proposed inspection areas|A1: Education services and their impact|A2: Leading and improving.**

Figure 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to combine the outcomes and services areas into one inspection area for our LGES, school improvement services and services provided through formal partnerships inspections?



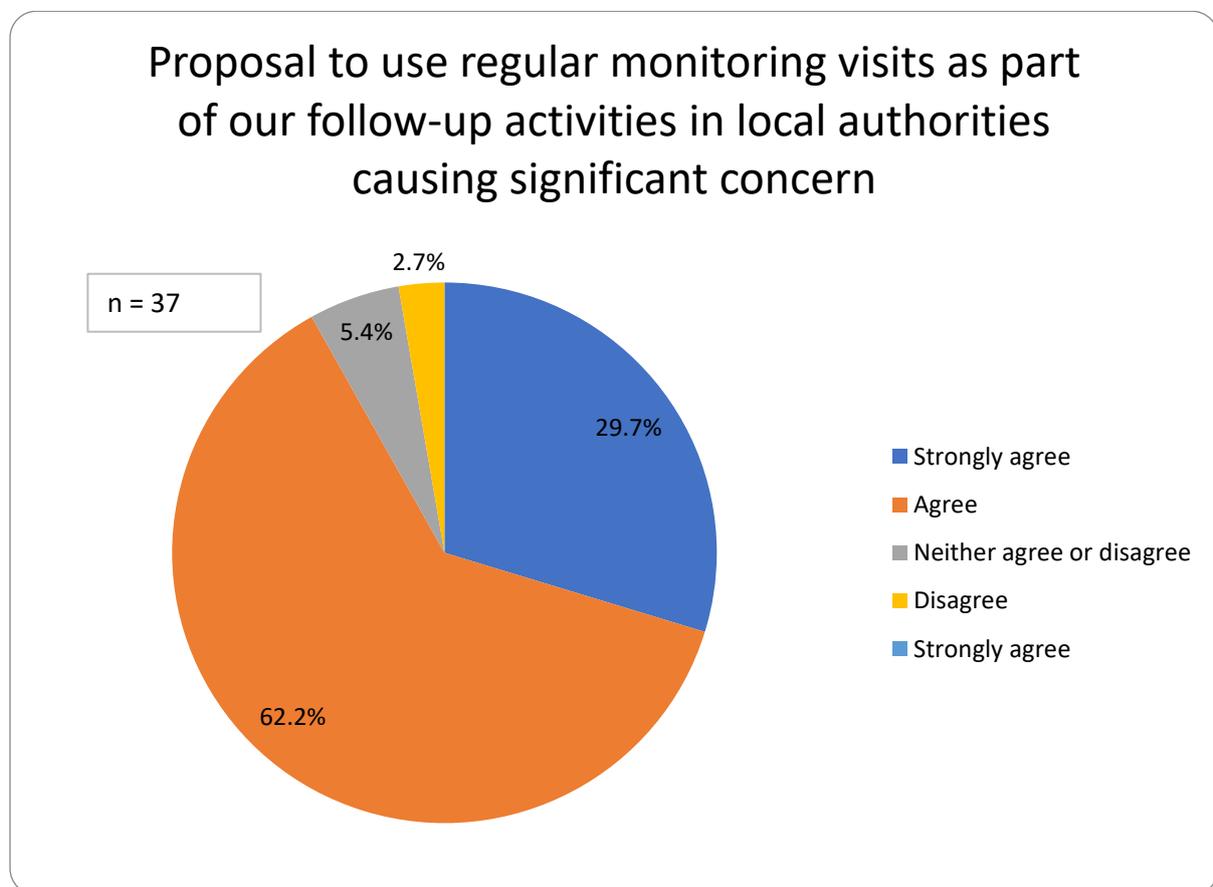
There was strong support for this proposal – with 80% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). Only 3% of those who answered disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing).

16 out of 39 (41%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. There were no key themes which emerged. Interestingly though there were 2 comments calling for *a link to attainment*, and 3 comments stating that *any historical link to attainment was inappropriate and should not be made when setting goals*.

We then asked for views on: **Replacing our current approach with regular monitoring visits. Currently, when a local government education service is judged to be causing significant concern, we arrange an improvement conference to discuss and agree a forward work plan to address the recommendations. The attendees at this conference are the key stakeholders involved in carrying out and supporting the local authority’s improvement plan. Around a year later, we arrange a ‘progress conference’ which considers the progress against the targets in the improvement plan. We usually arrange a monitoring visit around a year after the progress conference. The monitoring visit involves a team of inspectors visiting the local authority to evaluate the**

progress against the plans and determine whether the local authority has made sufficient improvements and does not cause significant concern. The timing of the monitoring visit depends on the rate of progress made by the local authority in addressing the areas requiring improvement. We propose that our follow-up process will continue to start with an improvement conference, but that the subsequent activities are monitoring visits looking at specific recommendations over time. We believe this approach is more helpful to local authorities as it gives them direct feedback on their work and helps them to consider their next steps. It also provides better opportunities for them to demonstrate their progress against the improvement priorities. Once we have judged the local authority has made sufficient progress against all the recommendations, they will be removed from follow up.

Figure 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to use regular monitoring visits as part of our follow-up activities in local authorities causing significant concern?



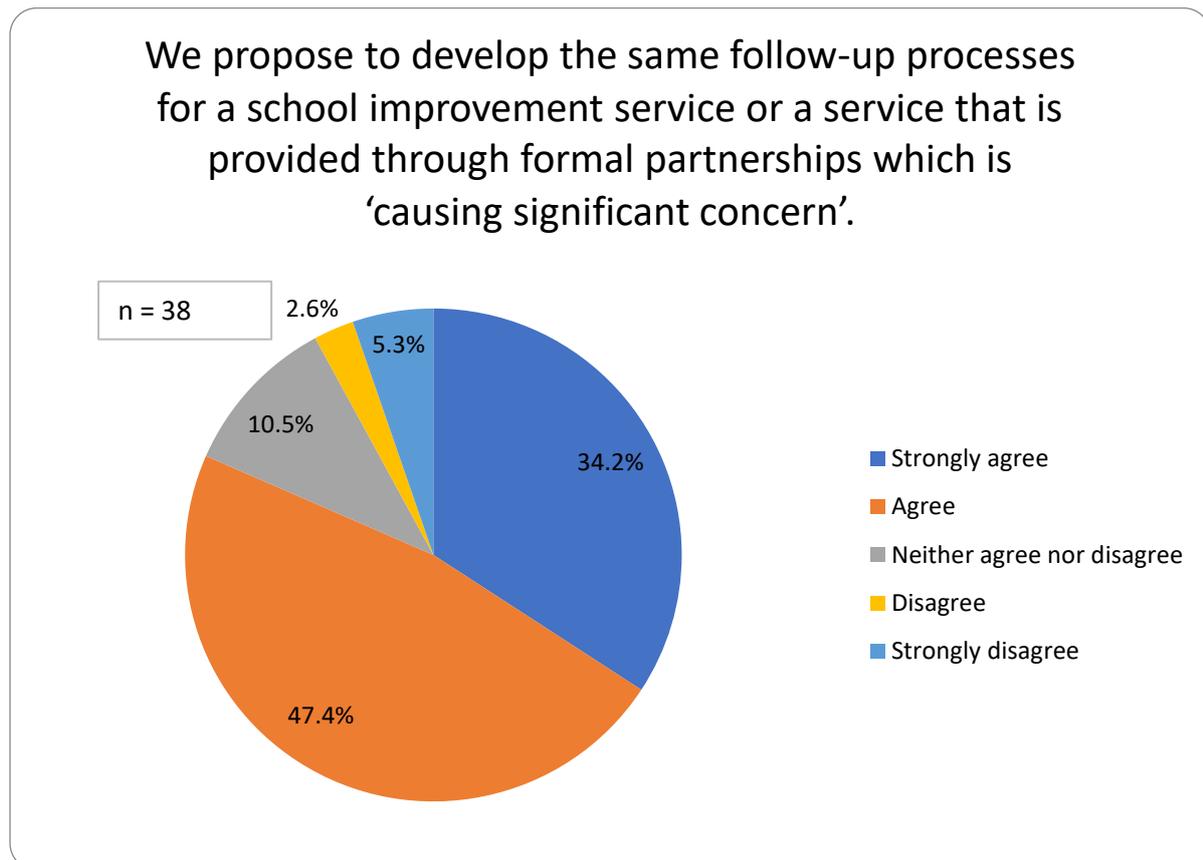
There was a strong level of support for this proposal – with 92% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). Only 3% of those who answered disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing).

14 out of 37 (38%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. Almost half the comments (6 out of 13 – 46%) focussed on one question - *If there is to be a particular focus in each meeting on an individual recommendation and there is sufficient evidence that sufficient progress has been*

made, could the recommendation then be 'ticked off' as having been successfully addressed along the way rather than at the end of the formal review period?

We then asked for views on the following: **We propose to develop the same follow-up processes for a school improvement service or a service that is provided through formal partnerships which is 'causing significant concern'.**

Figure 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to follow-up for a school improvement service or a service that is provided through formal partnership that is causing significant concern?



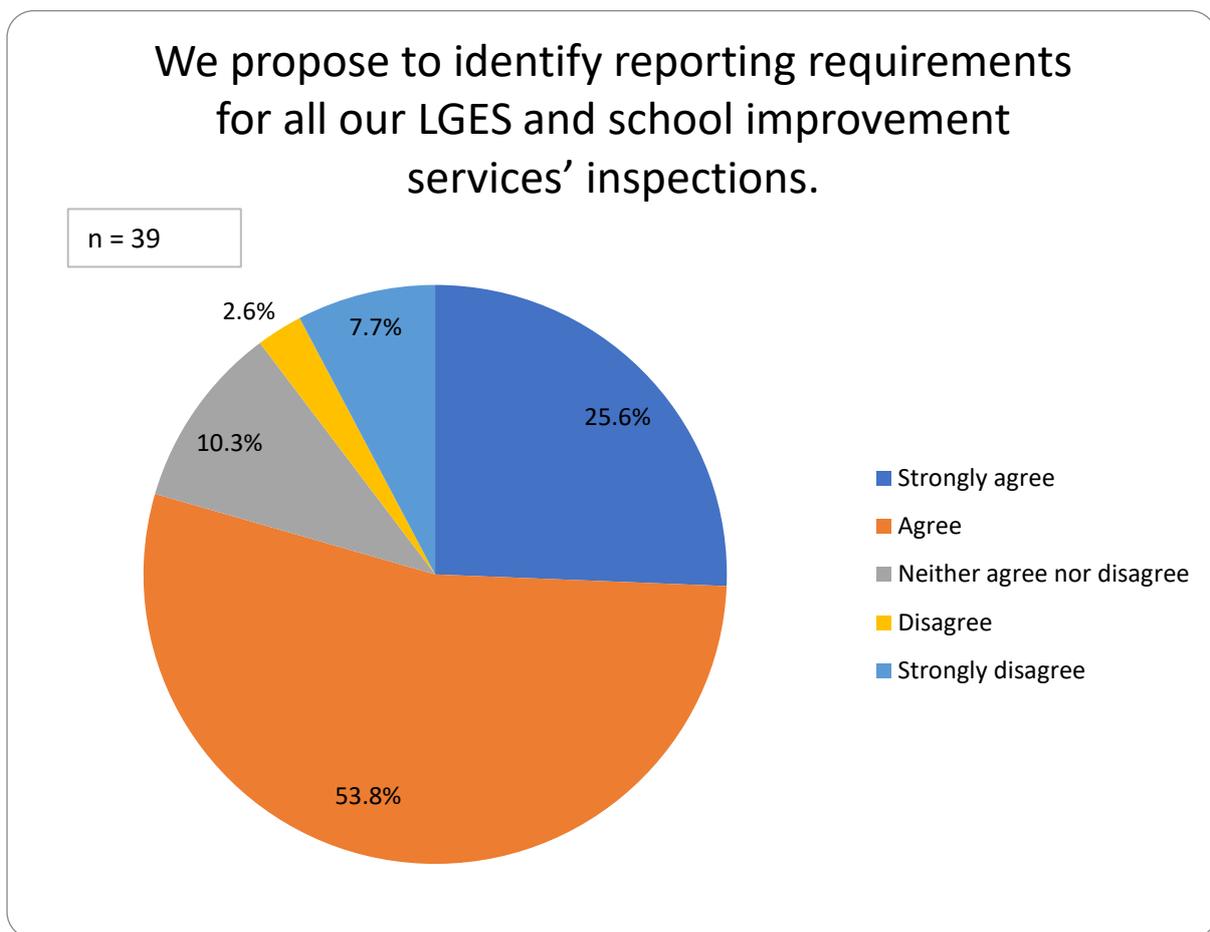
There was strong support for this proposal – with 82% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). 8% of those who answered, disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing).

10 out of 38 (26%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. A minority of comments (3 out of 10 – 30%) have suggested that *we believe that that School Improvement Services inspections should be a rolling programme rather than an 'inspection event'. This would provide an ongoing dialogue with Estyn and give continuous confidence and assurances to stakeholders through an annual published written report. There would be no need for a 'Follow-up' category under an annual rolling programme of inspections.*

We then asked about: **We propose to identify reporting requirements for all our LGES and school improvement services' inspections. This will ensure that we have evaluations of these key areas in all our reports. Our draft guidance identifies the following as reporting requirements: Reports must cover:**

- **Impact of the work of services areas on learners' progress, wellbeing, attendance and behaviour**
- **Equity in the education system**
- **Welsh language**
- **Safeguarding**

Figure 11: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the areas we have identified as reporting requirements for our LGES inspections?

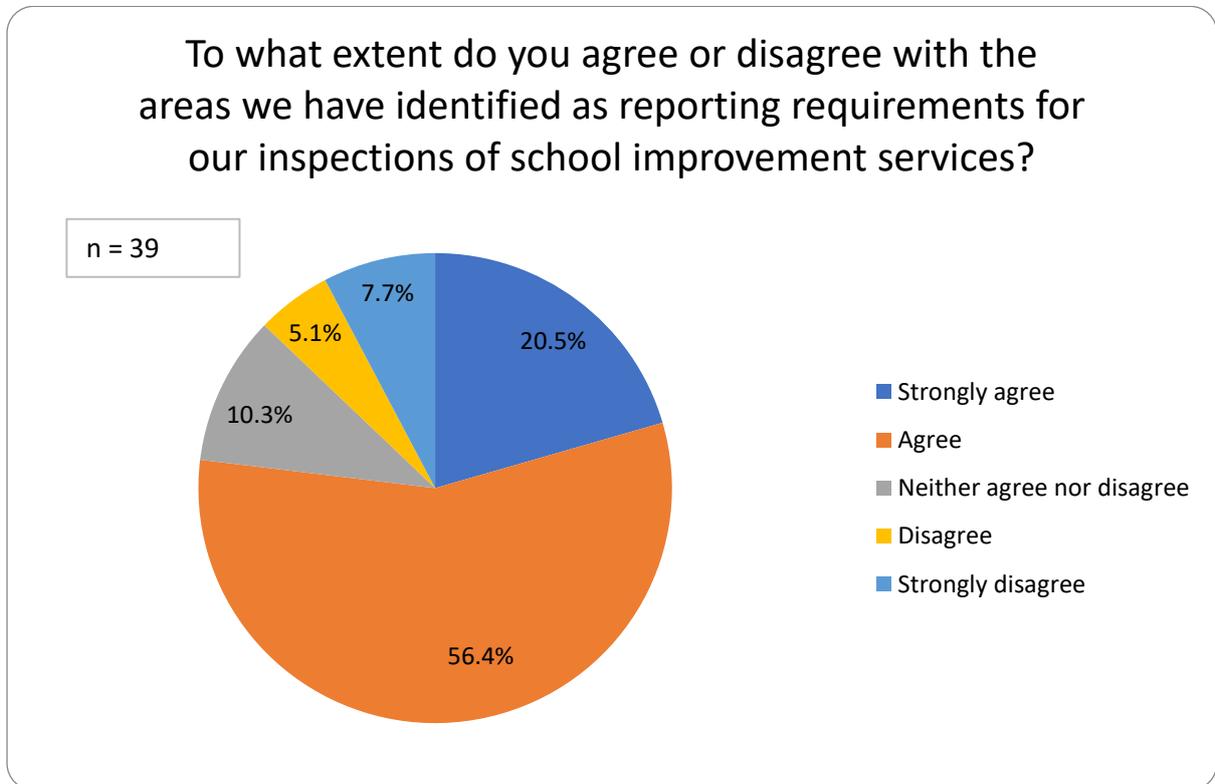


There was strong support for this proposal – with 80% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). 10% of those who answered, disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing).

11 out of 39 (28%) of respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. A minority (3 out of 11 – 27%) of comments referred to the fact that *the 'impact' of School Improvement Services has been inappropriately linked to learners' progress and end of key stage performance indicators. Only schools have direct impact on learner progress.*

The next question was:

Figure 12: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the areas we have identified as reporting requirements for our inspections of school improvement services?

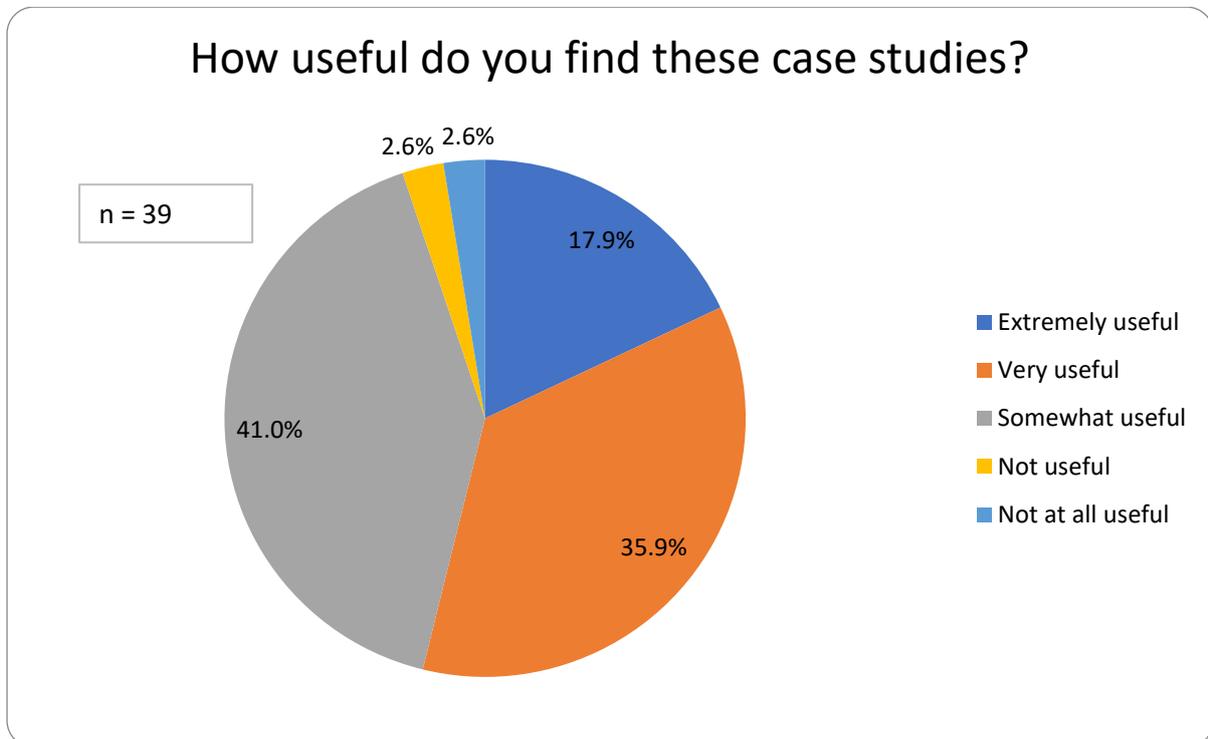


There was strong support for this proposal – with 77% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). 13% of those who answered, disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing)

10 out of 39 (26%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. The key theme, mentioned in half the comments (5 out of 10 - 50%) is accountability: *Not all areas listed above are the responsibility of the regional consortium. How will Estyn ensure that there is a common and fair framework for inspecting school improvement services provided through regional consortia and those Local Authorities that have their own school improvement service?*

We then asked about the Case Studies we share online in order to share interesting and effective practice.

Figure 13: On our inspections, we identify interesting and effective practice that may be helpful to other providers. We currently share this practice as case studies on our website. How useful do you find these case studies?

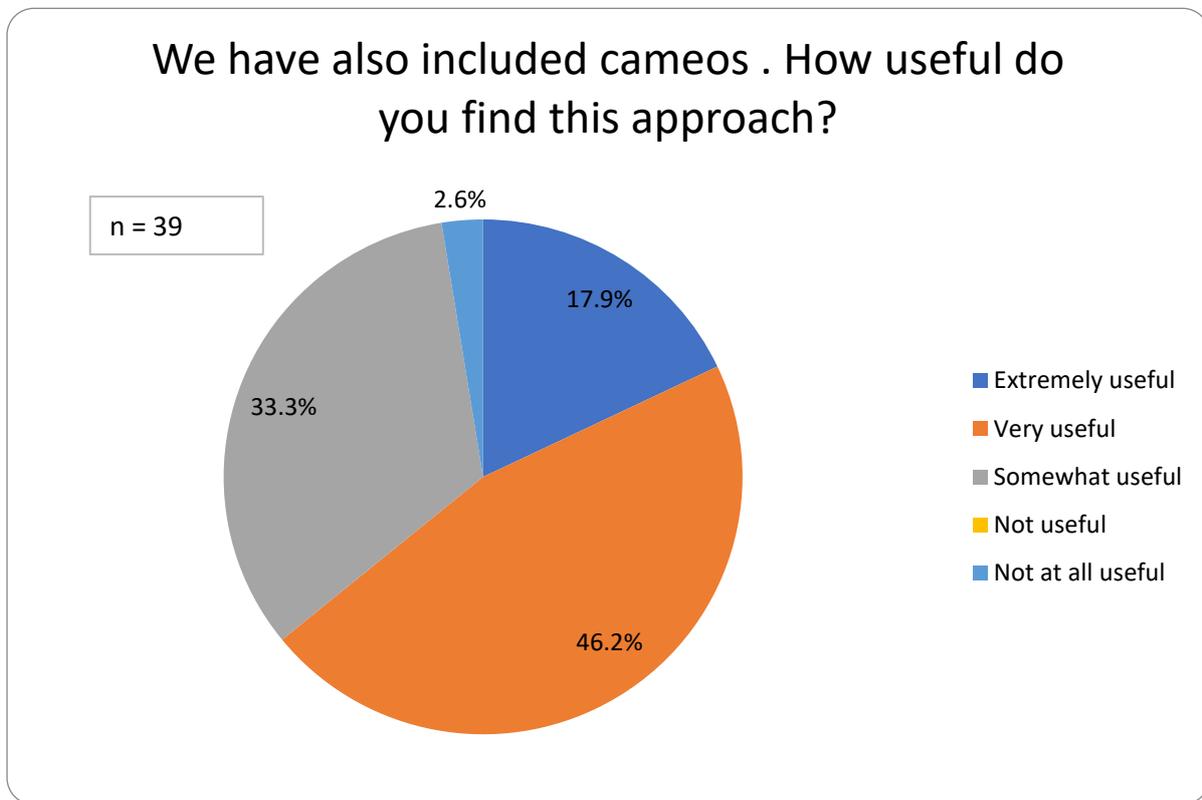


Most respondents found the case studies useful:

- 18% *Extremely useful*
- 36% *Very useful*
- 41% *Somewhat useful*

There were no additional comments in response to this question.

The next question was about the use of cameos: **We have also included cameos to highlight interesting, innovative or effective practice within the narrative of the inspection report, such as using a highlighted box in the text. Figure 14: How useful do you find this approach?**



There was relatively strong support for this– with 64% of those who answered finding cameos useful (either extremely, very or somewhat). 3% of those who answered did not find cameos useful at all.

10 out of 39 (26%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. A minority (4 out of 10 - 40%) of comments suggested that cameos were *a great way to learn best practice from others*. While around (4 out of 10 - 40%) of comments suggested that cameos *had no real tangible benefit*

We followed up by asking: **What do you think is the best way we could share effective practice to have most impact?**

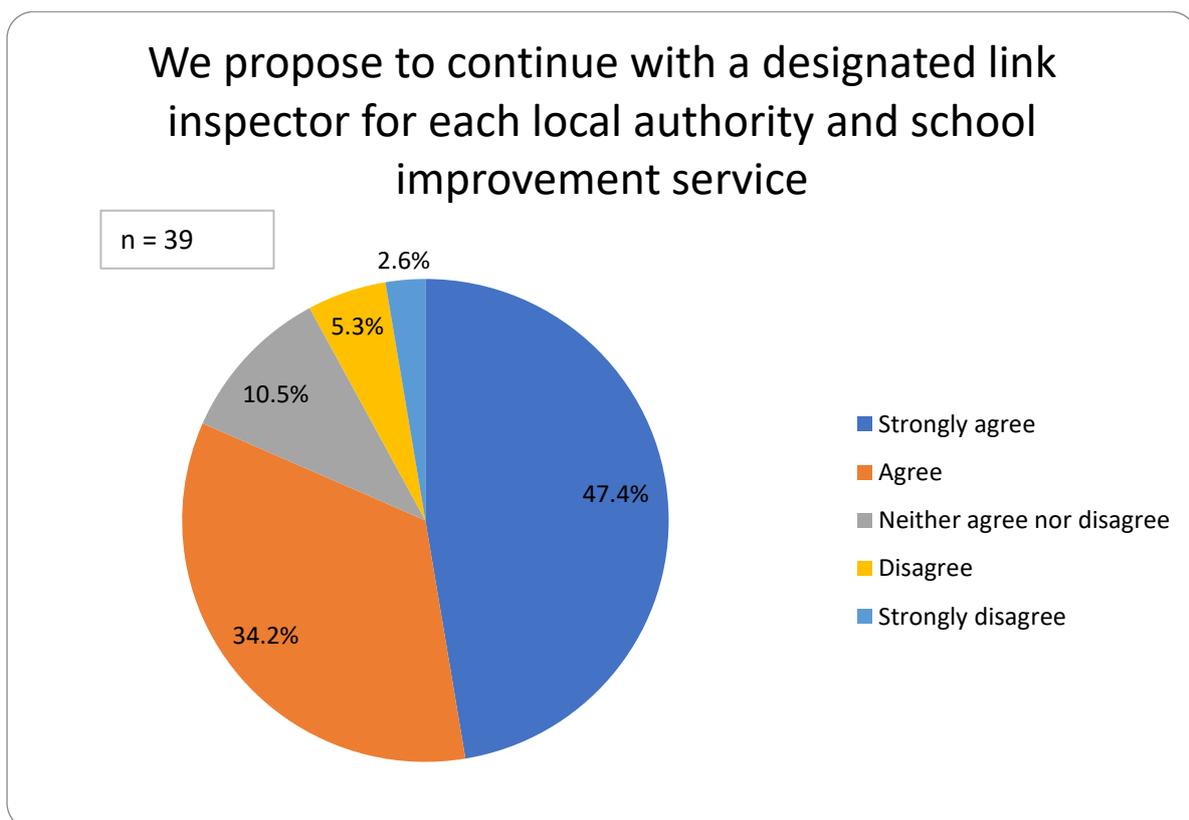
20 out of 38 (53%) respondents provided opinions.

The two most popular responses were:

- 7 out of 20 (35%) of respondents – Online via the Website, Webinars, HWB. Including links to best practice videos and cameos
- 5 out of 20 (25%) of respondents – Events including conferences and training. Both face to face and online

The next proposal: **In addition to inspection, a key part of our work with local authorities and school improvement services is our link inspector engagements. We propose to continue with a designated link inspector for each local authority and school improvement service, and their work will mainly involve being a point of contact and gathering general updates from the local authority about their services, which will help us to identify the LA’s key assurances and risks. During the last year, we have piloted a topic approach whereby we focus on specific aspects of the local authority or school improvement service’s work to get a deeper understanding of the strengths and possible considerations for moving forward. We propose to develop this approach by also undertaking an annual visit with a small team of inspectors to each local authority and school improvement service which will result in a brief evaluative published report. We will agree the focus area with the local authority and school improvement service well in advance so that the relevant officers can be made available for the engagement. We think this will give us a deeper understanding of each local authority and school improvement service’s work in specific areas, whilst also providing helpful constructive feedback to the officers involved.**

Figure 16: To what extent do you agree with our proposal to retain a link inspector for each local authority and school improvement service?

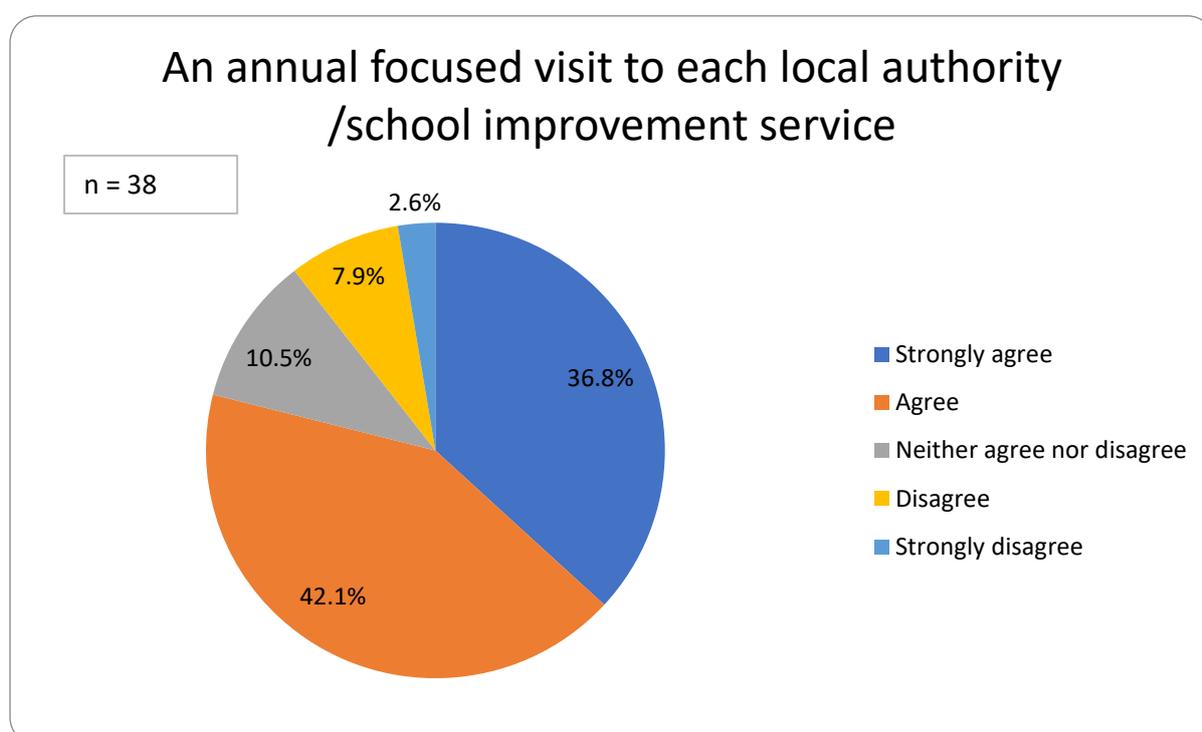


There was strong support for this proposal – with 82% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). 8% of those who answered, disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing)

14 out of 39 (36%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. The most common comment, mentioned by a minority (5 out of 14 – 36%) was: *It is useful to have an open dialogue with Estyn through Link Inspector work. It is important to have consistency in HMIs deployment so that they are allowed to develop a deeper understanding of the LA or regional consortium. The LALI should be included in LGES / regional consortium inspections to share their knowledge and understanding harvested from LALI visit.*

The next question was about an annual focused visit to each local authority /school improvement service to look at a specific aspect of their work:

Figure 17: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to carry out an annual focused visit to each local authority /school improvement service to look at a specific aspect of their work?

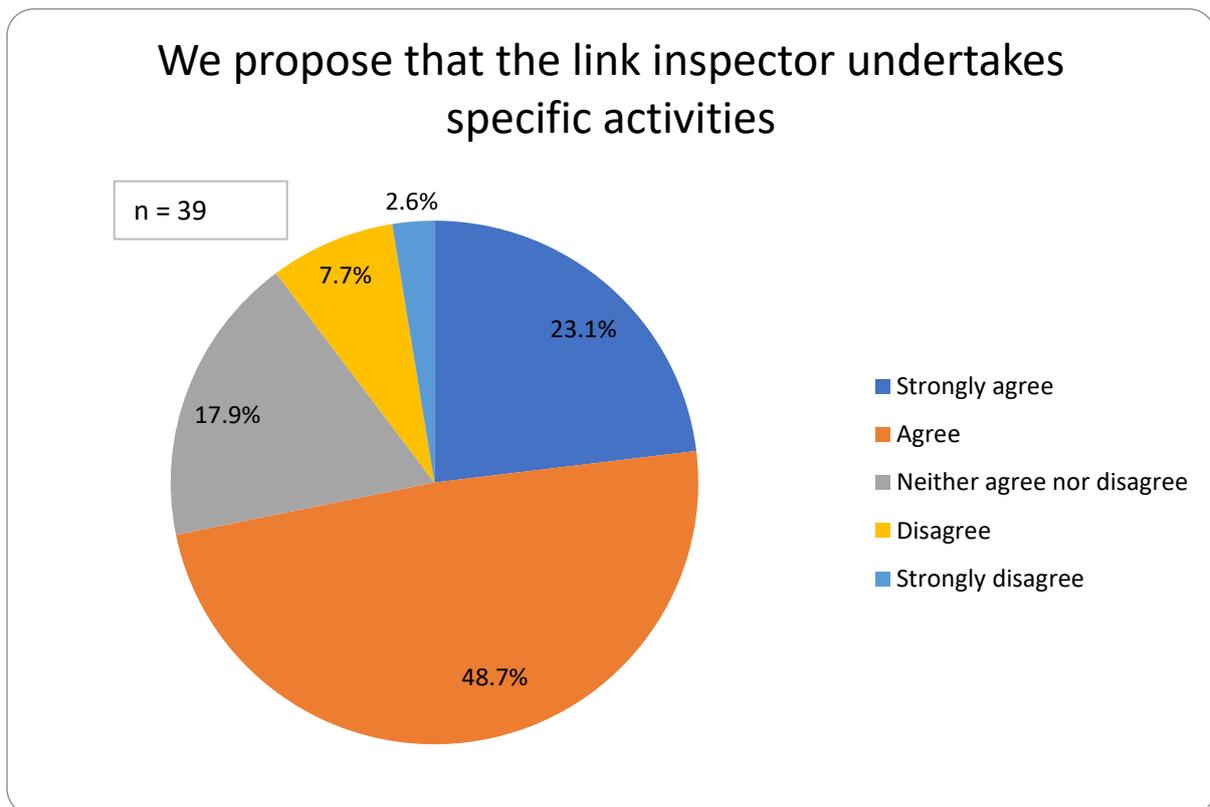


There was strong support for this proposal – with 79% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). 11% of those who answered, disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing).

13 out of 38 (34%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. The most comment appeared in a minority of observations (3 out of 13 – 23%). *Does allow greater involvement of inspectors to bring wider expertise. Does allow for a more focused review of LA's work and should encourage LA's to ask for a deeper dive into aspects of its service for improvement purposes. Needs to deepen the mutually beneficial professional dialogue and must avoid becoming a heavy annual inspection.*

The final question was about the link inspector undertaking specific activities: **Currently we do not formally evaluate the impact of the local authority’s work in supporting individual schools and PRUs in special measures. We propose that the link inspector undertakes specific activities which could include for example, joining the monitoring team or visiting the school independently of the monitoring team to consider and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the support provided by the local authority. The outcome of this work will be a brief letter to the local authority. We propose that this activity will take place normally every 12 to 16 months.**

Figure 18: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal that we carry out activities evaluating the impact of local authority’s support on the progress being made an individual school or PRU in special measures?



There was strong support for this proposal – with 72% of those who answered agreeing (either strongly agreeing or agreeing). 10% of those who answered, disagreed with the proposal (either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing).

14 out of 39 (36%) respondents provided opinions and stated the reason(s) why they chose the option above. Almost half the comments (6 out of 14 – 43%) referred to the support given to schools: *The quality of the local authority support needs to be more closely monitored for effectiveness. Without this Estyn are simply relying on second hand information*

5. Next Steps

The findings of the consultation will help inform the new inspection arrangements from 2024 onwards.