

Estyn: The Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales

A summary profile of the Inspectorate

Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales. Estyn is a Welsh verb meaning 'to reach out' and 'to stretch'. This word characterises Estyn's mission: the achievement of excellence for all in education and training in Wales.

Our **vision** is to improve the quality of education and training, and outcomes for all learners in Wales.

Our **mission** is to support education and training providers to develop a self-improving and learning culture through our advice, inspection and capacity building.

The first inspectors were appointed for England and Wales in 1839. A separate inspectorate for Wales was first established in 1907. As a Crown body, we were established under the Education Act 1992 and are independent of the Welsh Parliament but funded by the Welsh Government under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 (National Assembly for Wales, 1998). The inspectorate assumed the name 'Estyn' in 2004. Before then it was the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in Wales.

The work of Estyn is governed by the Education (School Inspection) (Wales) Regulations 2006 and the Education (Amendments Relating to the Inspection of Education and Training) (Wales) Regulations 2014.

We provide an independent and high-quality inspection and advice service that is distinctive to, and serves the needs of, Wales. We are an independent, non-Ministerial civil service department. As such, Estyn has its own Senior Management Team and appropriate governance arrangements. Whatever the findings from inspection, the Minister has no powers to change inspection judgements, nor to ask the Chief Inspector to change such findings.

Strategic objectives

- Provide public accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales is Meilyr Rowlands

The leadership team consists of 2 Strategic Directors, 1 Corporate Services Director and 5 Assistant Directors. There are approximately 60 Her Majesty's Inspectors, who also take on a wide range of policy roles. In addition, around 50 permanent members of corporate services staff provide office services.

Recruitment and training of staff

For HMI, Estyn looks for people with a broad and successful career in aspects of education and training and lists the specialist areas in which we need expertise when recruiting at any given time. We seek individuals with leadership experience and with a minimum of five years of experience in an education setting. Experience of inspection is helpful but is not essential.

From time to time we also offer secondments to school and college leaders to work with Estyn for a temporary period of time.

All candidates answer competency-based questions relevant to the role as part of their application; these are used to short-list candidates for assessment and interview. For inspectors, the assessment consists of written exercises (including analysing and interpreting data and drafting a briefing paper for the Chief Inspector). Successful candidates then attend a competency-based panel interview, which usually begins with a short presentation.

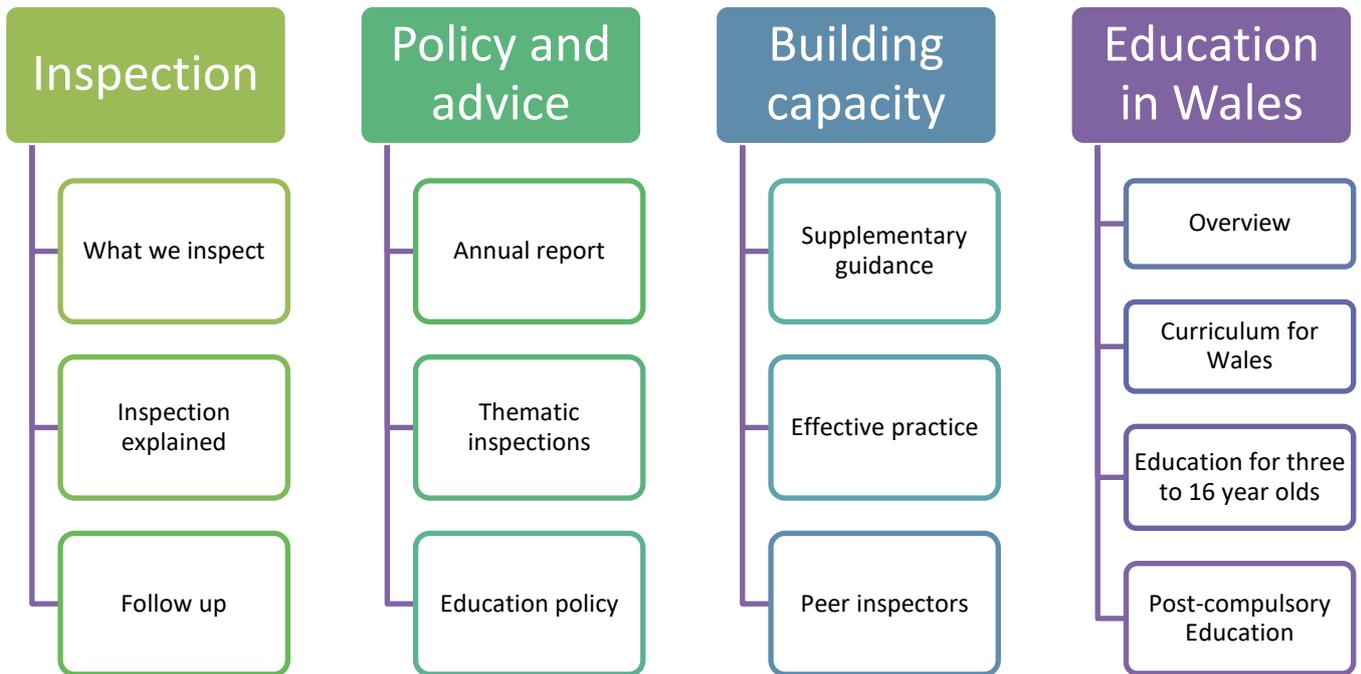
For staff in our corporate services team, no formal qualifications or educational background are specified unless it is a specialist role and a particular qualification is essential or beneficial e.g. finance, IT, research, or human resources (HR). In practice, many of the staff have specialist qualifications, for example, in office administration.

All staff receive a comprehensive induction programme when they join the organisation. We have an on-going programme of professional learning for inspectors and corporate services staff. All new inspectors have a mentor to support them with their work during their first year at Estyn.

In this country profile, you will find information on

1. the work we do at Estyn on our three main strategic objectives:
 - a. Inspection
 - b. Policy and advice
 - c. Building capacity
2. The education system in Wales

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Inspection

What we inspect

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Our inspection work is aimed directly at raising standards and quality in education and training across Wales. We inspect quality and standards in the following education sectors:

Nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities

Primary schools

Secondary schools

Special schools

Pupil referral units

Independent schools

All-age schools

Further education

Independent specialist colleges

Adult community learning

Local government education services

Teacher education and training

Welsh for adults

Work-based learning

Learning in the justice sector

We inspect providers as single organisations, they may be on a single or multiple sites, or cover one or more sectors. Where relevant, we also inspect their partners in the provision of education and training. However, we do not make judgements on these partners.

We do not inspect or advise on the competence of any individual staff. We also do not have a formal role in inspecting the setting, conduct and marking of examinations, although we may serve in an observer capacity on examination and curriculum assessment working groups.

All schools will be inspected in the 7-year inspection period which started in 2016. There are different cycles for other sectors¹.

Length of inspection

The number of inspectors and the number of days they spend with the provider may vary according to the provider's size and context. The length of

inspections can vary significantly across sectors, from one day (for example in non-maintained nursery provision) to several weeks (for example in the inspection of

initial teacher education provision).

Joint Working

We work with the Care Inspectorate in Wales (CIW, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and Audit Wales (AW). Together we are Inspection Wales, a joint initiative between the found main inspection, audit and review bodies in Wales.

For more information on our inspection framework and activities view the section [Inspection explained](#)

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Policy and advice

Estyn is the key source of advice to the Minister for Education in the Welsh Government on standards and the quality of provision in all sectors of education and training in Wales.

The Chief Inspector has a duty to keep the Welsh Parliament informed about the quality of education in schools. He may also advise on matters connected with schools, or a particular school. Similarly, the Chief Inspector can advise the Welsh Parliament on matters relating to education or training for those aged 16 or over.

Annual report

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We report each year through the Chief Inspector's Annual Report on the standards of education and training in Wales. Each annual report provides a summary of the key findings from inspection activity for each sector during the academic year. Every third year, we include a thematic section focussing in depth on a state of the nation report on a specific theme. For example, in 2018-19, we reported in depth on Education Reform (Estyn, 2019). Although a thematic review was not planned for 2019-2020, we felt that the events of this unusual year merited the inclusion of thematic section on how different sectors responded to the Covid-19 crisis. The thematic section, and now also the sector reports, reflect and draw upon evidence and findings from international research where appropriate.

¹ Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the inspection cycle has been extended.

Thematic inspections

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Each year, the Education Minister asks our Chief Inspector for advice on a range of themes in relation to education and training. These are published annually in a [remit letter on the Welsh Government website](#). Our thematic reports help to inform policy development and to monitor progress. Through this work, Estyn makes a significant contribution to the evidence base that underpins education policy review and development in Wales. We ask the government for suggestions about topics for thematic reports and for comments on these when published. However, we are wholly independent of government in terms of their content and may report on the impact of government policy where necessary.

Each thematic inspection is led by an HMI who may be supported by a team of HMIs, additional inspectors or peer inspectors, depending on the scope of the work. The evidence base for reports usually includes fieldwork, review of evidence in inspection databases, the views of stakeholders, for example through interviews and/or surveys. Reports may also include current research findings on the topic under review, where appropriate. Depending on the topic area, we may publish training materials to accompany the report.

Examples of our thematic reports can be found [here](#)

We run dissemination conferences to support the communication of key messages from Estyn's Annual Report and key thematic reports on various aspects of education and training in Wales. We also hold short webinars to share these messages. These are usually scheduled late afternoon so that teachers and others are able to attend.

Education policy

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We contribute to a number of education working groups. For example, we have worked in partnership with Welsh Government, the OECD, schools, key stakeholders (including pupils) on a National Evaluation and Improvement Resource (NEIR). A list of these is also published in our [annual remit letter](#) from Welsh Government.

National Evaluation and Improvement Resource

Self-evaluation is at the heart of the new education and improvement arrangements that we are developing to support and align with the new Curriculum for Wales. In 2018, we started working with stakeholders to consider the tools, approaches and culture that can support quality school improvement work. School-based piloting has now been paused due to COVID-19 and the project team have been working to complete some of the background tasks.

We have worked with Welsh Government to strengthen the link between the professional learning journey website developed by Welsh Government (to support the professional learning of teachers and leaders) and the NEIR platform. This will enable us to share resources efficiently and to avoid the duplication of work. Schools were given additional funding to develop resources to help them with this work.

We also provide a range of planned and ad-hoc advice to Ministers, for example on the development of Curriculum for Wales, the registration of new independent schools, or

as part of school reorganisation processes. We respond to consultations and give advice in meetings and through our thematic reports.

Building capacity

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Supplementary guidance

We publish a range of supplementary guidance for use by providers on various aspects of their work to help them understand our inspection approaches in these areas. Supplementary guidance provides them with focussed information on a specific topic area and is designed to promote the spread of best practice. Examples include supplementary guidance on:

- Additional learning needs
- Inspecting attitudes to learning
- Listening to learners on inspection
- Reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment and wellbeing
- The inspection of numeracy in schools

To view the full range of supplementary guidance that we publish, please take a look at our [website](#).

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Effective practice

When we see interesting practice during an inspection or thematic work, we're always keen to share it. We invite schools and other providers to write case studies when we think they have something important to share. During the pandemic we have shared short cameos of how different providers have adapted their work to support learners and deliver remote learning. Click [here](#) to see our full range of case studies and cameos.

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Peer inspector training

Recruited and trained by us, Peer Inspectors are full members of an inspection team, contributing to all inspection areas. They also write parts of the inspection report. We recruit peer inspectors from the providers we inspect, local authorities and regional improvement services. We provide rigorous initial training for peer inspectors and they also benefit from our annual update training programme. Peer inspectors are an invaluable part of the inspection process as their involvement helps create a shared understanding of expectations across the education system. By joining inspection teams, peer inspectors have an opportunity to see practice different from their own and hone their analytical skills to help them build capacity across their sector. There are around 1,000 peer inspectors across Wales. Peer inspectors are also required to attend annual update training as a condition of their deployment.

Stakeholder engagement

Through listening to and learning from our stakeholders we shape how and what we do to deliver each of our strategic objectives. We:

- Listen to stakeholders: make best use of their time by seeking their views, engaging them in decisions and sharing information, encourage feedback through compliments and concerns to help inform our decision-making processes and help us build better relationships
- Involve stakeholders: involve providers in planning their inspection, involve stakeholders directly in our inspections, work together on shared projects and encourage conversation through different communication channels
- Inform stakeholders: provide stakeholders with clear, coherent and consistent messages; keep them up to date with developments in inspection, the latest effective practice, recommendations from our thematic and inspection work

We engage with stakeholders through a range of channels:

- Inspection questionnaires (before and after inspection)
- Stakeholder events and webinars
- Formal consultation, forums and reference groups to share proposals and invite stakeholders to shape the future of our work
- Publishing inspection findings
- The Chief Inspector's Annual report on education and training
- National thematic reviews
- Effective practice
- Corporate publications, including our Annual Plan and Annual Report and Accounts.

In addition to education professionals, parents and carers and learners, we also engage directly with almost 100 organisations that represent the interests of education staff or providers, or who have an interest in the education or wellbeing of learners. Our current [Stakeholder Engagement Strategy](#) is available on our website.

Inspection explained

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[Inspecting maintained schools, pupil referral units \(PRUs\) and independent schools.](#)

Legal basis for the inspection of maintained schools and PRUs:

“Maintained” schools and PRUs are broadly those schools which are wholly or substantially financially maintained by a local authority. School inspections are governed by the Education Act 2005 and related regulations. Inspections must be conducted by teams of inspectors, led by a HMI, additional inspector or Registered Inspector, and must result in a published report. The information below refers to schools, which includes PRUs and their management committees.

Section 28 of the Education Act 2005 (Great Britain, 2005) says that inspectors must report on:

- the educational standards achieved
- the quality of education provided
- how far education meets the needs of the range of pupils
- the quality of leadership and management, including whether the financial resources are managed efficiently

- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- whether the school promotes healthy eating and drinking
- the contribution of the school to the wellbeing of pupils

Some schools have a religious character and teach denominational religious education. In these schools, religious education and the content of collective worship are inspected separately under Section 50 of the Education Act 2005 and are not included in Section 28 inspections.

Legal basis for the inspection of independent schools:

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 (Great Britain, 2002) and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

- the quality of education provided
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- the welfare, health and safety of pupils
- the suitability of proprietors and staff
- the premises and accommodation
- the school's provision of information
- the manner in which schools handle complaints (National Assembly for Wales, 2003).

Inspection framework:

Our current inspection framework requires us to evaluate the following areas of the school/PRUs work:

Inspection Areas

IA1 Learning

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

IA2 Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

- 2.1 Wellbeing
- 2.2 Attitudes to learning

IA3 Teaching and learning experiences

- 3.1 The quality of teaching
- 3.2 The breadth, balance and appropriateness of the school's curriculum
- 3.3 Provision for skills

IA4 Care, support and guidance

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

IA5 Leadership and management

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

Estyn's approach to inspection is fair and impartial, supportive, reflective and transparent.

To achieve this, inspection teams work according to a number of key **principles**. They:

- take a learner-led approach to inspection

- always focus strongly on the quality of teaching and learning
- consider everything in the inspection handbook and framework, but only report on the key strengths and weaknesses
- focus each inspection on the specific provider and adapt their approaches accordingly
- use a range of tailored inspection methodologies and approaches that are bespoke to the provider's circumstances, in order to evaluate the breadth of the provider's work robustly and fairly
- adopt a constructive approach that makes the interaction with the provider a professional learning experience for their staff and the inspection team as a whole.

In addition, inspectors will:

- ensure that inspection is of high quality and responsive to the needs of all learners
- ensure that evaluations are secure, reliable, valid and based on first-hand evidence
- involve the school fully in the inspection process, including the opportunity for the school to select a nominee
- use the school's improvement priorities as the starting point for the inspection and to identify key areas for investigation in order to make evaluations 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 school
- 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

Inspection team:

The **Reporting Inspector (RI)** (also known as the lead inspector) can be a

- HMI – Her Majesty's Inspector of Education and Training in Wales) who are appointed by the Crown. They are civil servants employed directly by Estyn
- AI – Additional Inspector who has joined Estyn temporarily, for example on secondment from schools or other providers
- Rgl – Registered Inspectors who are trained and qualified as lead inspectors and are contracted to lead specific inspections. Often Rgls are current or recently retired headteachers who have significant experience working with Estyn, for example as a peer inspector

The RI leads and manages the inspection team. They liaise with the school and the team ahead of inspection, and quality assure their team's work.

The number of **Team Inspectors (TI)** is determined by the size of the provider. Team inspectors may be HMI or contracted additional inspectors who have been trained by Estyn. All team inspectors are qualified teachers.

A **Peer Inspector** (PI) is a serving senior leader from another school/provider who has completed Estyn's PI training and assessment. In Wales, all inspection teams have a peer inspector as a team member. In larger schools/providers, there may be more than one PI. Sometimes challenge advisors who work in regional school improvement services join inspection teams in this role. They are an integral part of the inspection team.

Team inspectors and Peer Inspectors may take responsibility for gathering evidence to inform the team's evaluation of different aspects of the inspection.

A **Lay Inspector** (LI) is not a qualified teacher and does not have a background working in schools, although normally they have experience in community work of some form. They bring a different non-specialist ('lay') dimension to the team's work. All LIs are trained and assessed by Estyn, and contracted to work on specific inspections. In Wales, every maintained school inspection team includes a lay inspector. The lay inspector considers what it is like to be a pupil in the school, and they report back to the inspection team (including the nominee). Their views help to inform the team's ongoing work. Normally the lay inspector joins the team for one day of the inspection week.

The **Nominee** is a senior member of staff from the provider being inspected who has been invited by the team and nominated by the school to work with the inspection team. In practice, nearly all schools accept the invitation, but it is not a requirement. The nominee should have sufficient seniority to act as a link between the school and the inspection team, for example the headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team. In the few instances where the nominee is not the headteacher, it is important that the reporting inspector holds a brief daily meeting with the headteacher to clarify inspection issues and the broad, emerging findings of the inspection team.

Pre inspection

As soon as possible after formal notification of the inspection, the provider is required to make the following information available to the reporting inspector:

- key background information on the school
- a copy of the school's most recent school development or improvement plan
- details of the school's timetables for the period of the inspection

During this phase, Estyn arranges with the school to carry out confidential pre-inspection questionnaires of

- all pupils
- parents and carers
- teaching and support staff directly employed by the school, and
- members of the school's governing body

The local authority is notified of the inspection at the same time as the school. We request a short briefing on the school of its main strengths and areas for development.

The reporting inspector will plan the inspection and allocate responsibilities to members of the inspection team, taking into account the school's identified

improvement priorities and any information provided by the school.

During the inspection

Initial team meeting

The headteacher should provide a brief position statement on the school's strategic priorities and its current stage of development. After that, the RI should lead a discussion with the headteacher about the improvement priorities identified by the school and the progress that the school is making in its improvement work.

Inspectors will sample, test and validate the school's own priorities and its evaluations of its strengths and areas for development. The discussions will also consider the evidence that inspectors need to review.

Gathering and reviewing evidence

The team will plan the inspection so that they can cover the reporting requirements within the five inspection areas. The team will ensure that they have enough time to review the key evidence they need to form their evaluations. The main forms of evidence are:

- samples of pupils' work
- discussions with pupils, staff, leaders, managers, governors, parents and others
- observation of teaching and other activities, including evidence gathered through learning walks
- pre-inspection questionnaire responses from pupils, parents/carers, governors (?), teaching and support staff
- documentary or electronic evidence, including information on
 - pupils' performance and progress
 - the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning processes
 - curriculum arrangements
 - the quality of individual development plans for learners with additional learning needs
 - leadership records including professional learning
 - safeguarding
 - financial records
- compliance with statutory obligations and with the independent school regulations, where relevant
- information from the local authority/regional consortium where appropriate

Observing teaching and learning

Lesson/session observation

The purpose of observing lessons and sessions is mainly to check or validate the school's own overall evaluation on the quality of teaching and learning. However, we do not make judgements on individual teachers. We only visit a sample of lessons with the aim of seeing enough of them to come to an overall evaluation. We do not have any preferred teaching methods, rather we evaluate teaching in line with its impact on standards, the progress made by learners and the quality of pupils'

wellbeing. At the end of a longer classroom observation, inspectors should, as far as practicable, have some brief professional dialogue with the member of staff on the work seen. The main focus of the discussion should be on the pupils, the progress they make during the lesson and the standards they achieve.

Learning walks

A learning walk will normally involve 'dropping in' to around two to three classes during one session, and include brief scrutiny of learners' work in progress as well as picking up broad issues around classroom management and learners' attitudes to learning. They can provide the team with an indication of the matters the team may wish to follow up.

This approach could involve inspectors observing and engaging for a short period of time with a range of learner intervention groups that are taking place during a morning or afternoon session, for example as part of a 'catch-up' or accelerated learning provision. It might also involve an inspector visiting a range of lessons undertaking a similar activity at a set period. Learning walks could include a focus on particular provision, e.g. literacy catch up sessions, sixth form provision or on the provision of nurture support.

Professional dialogue

Throughout the inspection, inspectors will engage in professional dialogue with practitioners, for example:

- in meetings with individual or groups of teachers, for example to discuss planning and assessment of pupils' work, or to understand support arrangements for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)
- in meetings with leaders, either as a group or individually, to understand the impact of leadership on improving outcomes for pupils
- at the end of a lesson observation on pupils' progress and the standards they achieve during the lesson

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 validity of the school's self-evaluation processes and priorities for improvement
- discuss emerging issues
- resolve pre-inspection questions and issues
- identify any gaps in the evidence base
- consider the main inspection findings and any recommendations

During all core inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the school needs any follow-up activity. Where inspectors identify serious shortcomings in one or more inspection areas, the school will normally require a statutory level of follow-up activity (significant improvement or special measures).

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

Formal feedback

At the end of the on-site part of the inspection, the team will provide oral feedback to leaders and managers. Maintained schools and PRUs should invite a representative from the governing body, and one representative from either the local authority or regional consortium to attend the meeting. In faith schools, the school may also invite a representative from the local diocesan authority. In independent schools the proprietor should be invited to attend the meeting. The feedback should focus on the main findings of the inspection, including the recommendations, and the main evaluations of each of the five inspection areas.

The reporting inspector should inform the school if any follow-up activity is required.

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 school.

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 schools have made this request, in line with Estyn's Welsh Language Policy.

We base the structure of the inspection report on our inspection framework. The report will take the following form:

About the school

Summary of the main findings

Recommendations

What happens next

Main evaluations

- 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

Follow-up

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During all core inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the school needs any follow-up activity.

There are three types of follow-up activity:

- 1 Special measures**
- 2 Significant improvement**
- 3 Estyn Review**

All follow-up work involves activity by Estyn inspectors. The activity involves increasing levels of intervention in proportion to need.

Statutory categories of follow up

Special measures and significant improvement and special measures are statutory categories that apply to schools causing concern as defined by the Education Act 2005 (Great Britain, 2005).

There are specific procedures that the reporting inspector must follow when recommending that a school is placed into a statutory category of follow up. HMCI, or HMI acting on behalf of HMCI, will scrutinise the inspection evidence (in the Reporting JF) to check the judgement. HMCI has the power to call for any further information required. Following quality assurance procedures, HMCI can decide to agree or not agree with the RIs judgement.

Schools that are placed in a category and require follow up receive a range of support which is decided by the local authority and regional education service, where applicable.

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 sets out the responsibilities and powers of local authorities and ministers for schools that cause concern or are placed into a statutory category by Estyn. If school leaders do not demonstrate sufficient capacity or willingness to bring about the desired improvements, the local authority may, where relevant,

- require that the school seek advice or collaborate with others to secure improvement
- appoint additional governors, including replacing the chair of governors temporarily
- suspend the governing body's authority to manage the school's budget
- appoint an interim executive board
- give general directions to the governing body or the headteacher to take steps (National Assembly for Wales, 2013).

Special measures

On every inspection, inspectors should consider if the school is in need of special measures by considering:

- if the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education
- if the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school

Inspectors must consider if the school has the capacity to improve before coming to a judgement about whether it requires special measures.

HMCI has a duty to notify the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the local authority that the school or PRU requires special measures.

Monitoring schools in special measures:

The school's governing body will send their draft post-inspection action plan (PIAP) to Estyn within 20 working days of the publication of the report. The local authority should send their statement to us within five working days of the school's action plan. Shortly after, a one-day Post Inspection Action Plan visit will take place to formally evaluate the school's PIAP and the local authority's statement of action.

Subsequent visits will usually be for two days and take place at least every six months, although they may be termly. Normally, each visit will focus on the progress the school has made towards addressing a sample of recommendations. Over a 12-month period, we will normally evaluate progress against all of the recommendations.

At the end of each visit, we will judge whether the school continues to require special measures or not. If progress is insufficient, the school will still require special measures. We will continue to carry out monitoring visits until HMCI decides that the school has improved enough to remove it from special measures.

Where we identify that a school's progress in addressing the recommendations from its core inspection is too slow, we may decide to hold an improvement conference. This involves a one-day 'all round the table' discussion between inspectors, senior leaders, governors and representatives from the local authority and regional consortium.

The conference will focus on:

- The progress the school has made since the core inspection
- Barriers to further progress
- Reviewing the PIAP and local authority statement of action and identifying where they require strengthening and/or updating

Significant improvement

If they conclude that the school does not require special measures, they should then consider whether the school is in need of significant improvement. Inspectors must consider:

- if the school is performing significantly less well than it might in all circumstances

reasonably be expected to perform

While the school in this category may be just about providing an acceptable standard of education, it is important that the inspection team consider if there is room for *significant improvement*. The guiding principle must be whether the school is performing significantly less well than it might in all circumstances be expected to perform.

The inspection team must report as they find, and be able to substantiate their judgements on the basis of sound evidence. Coming to the decision that a school is in need of special measures or needs significant improvement is not an easy task, but it must not be avoided. If the evidence points to the conclusion that the school requires special measures or is in need of significant improvement, inspectors must make that judgement.

Monitoring schools in significant improvement:

The school's governing body will send their draft action plan to Estyn within 20 working days of the publication of the report. The local authority should send their draft statement to us within five working days of the school's action plan.

A one-day Post Inspection Action Plan visit will take place shortly after to support Estyn to formally evaluate the school's PIAP and the local authority's statement of action.

Subsequently, we will send a small team of Estyn inspectors to visit the school about 12-18 months after the publication of the inspection report. The visit will usually be for two and a half days, and the number of inspectors will be proportionate to the size and nature of the school. Inspectors will focus on the progress the school has made towards addressing the recommendations highlighted in the report, taking account of the milestones identified in the action plan.

If the team judges that the school has made enough progress in relation to the recommendations, the team will recommend to HMCI that the school be removed from the list of schools requiring significant improvement. We will publish a brief report on its website explaining our decision.

If progress is insufficient, the team will normally identify the school as requiring special measures. In exceptional cases, where the school has made appropriate progress and is nearly, but not quite, at a point where it can be removed from the list, the team may judge the school as still requiring significant improvement. There will then usually be one further monitoring visit in around six months. Normally, this exception does not apply to schools that have been identified as requiring significant improvement following a period in Estyn monitoring.

[Estyn review](#)

Normally, schools will require this level of activity when shortcomings have been identified in inspection area 5, leadership and management. It would be possible that inspectors have identified a range of strengths in other inspection areas, but the school would have some important areas for improvement that require monitoring.

We will monitor the school's progress in addressing the recommendations highlighted in the report about 12-18 months after the report's publication.

Powers of Welsh ministers if a school fails to make desired improvement

Welsh ministers also have powers to issue the school with a warning notice under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 (National Assembly for Wales, 2013). They have similar powers to the local authority to give direction to the school. Where there is no prospect, based on evidence, of the school making sufficient improvement, the Act allows ministers to direct a local authority to cease to maintain a school in special measures.

Before ministers can exercise such powers, they must consult the local authority, the governing body, and in the case of voluntary-aided schools, the person who appoints the foundation governors or appropriate religious body, if applicable.

The full guidance can be found [here](#).

In the case of independent schools that do not address inspection recommendations and as a result do not meet the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 (National Assembly for Wales, 2003), the Welsh Government may require them to close.

Inspecting Local Government Education Services

Local government education services include education services provided on behalf of a local authority by:

- a regional consortium or other partnership between two or more local authorities
- another local authority
- another organisation commissioned by the local authority (for example, a voluntary organisation or a private company)

Legal basis for the inspection of local government education services

Inspections of LGES are carried out under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997 (Great Britain, 1997) which provides that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales (HMCI) 'may, and, if requested to do so by the Secretary of State, shall, arrange for any local authority to be inspected'. Such an inspection 'shall consist of a review of the way in which the authority is performing any function which relates to the provision of education for (a) persons of compulsory school age (whether at school or otherwise) or (b) for persons of any age above or below that age who are registered as pupils at schools maintained by the authority'.

Other aspects of local authority provision are subject to inspection under a range of legislation, including:

- sections 25 and 26 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (Great Britain, 2000) relating to education, training or youth support services (within the meaning of section 123 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000)

- the inspectorate is given the powers to review a local authority's functions relating to Section 51 of the Children's Act 2004 (Great Britain, 2004) namely in co-operating to improve wellbeing and Guidance for the inspection of local government education services
- producing children and young people's plans where these functions relate to education, training or youth support services

Sometimes local authority inspections are supported by the Care Inspectorate Wales, Health Inspectorate Wales or Wales Audit Office where appropriate.

The inspection of local authority education services for children and young people will cover the statutory functions of the local authority, including the local authority youth service. In addition, it will include inspection of the partnership arrangements for youth support services.

The three inspection areas of the LGES inspection framework are set out below.

The Local Government Education Services Inspection Framework

Inspection area 1 – Outcomes

- Standards and progress overall
- Standards and progress of specific groups
- Wellbeing and attitudes to learning

Inspection area 2 – Education Services

- Support for school improvement
- Support for vulnerable learners
- Other education support services

Inspection area 3 – Leadership and management

- Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning
- Professional learning
- Safeguarding arrangements
- Use of resources

Inspectors will evaluate and report on all aspects of inspection areas 1 and 3 of the framework. Inspection area 2 of the framework sets out the scope of services that could be inspected during an inspection. As part of each inspection process, Estyn will form a set of local inspection questions about education services. Inspectors are required to evaluate services covered by these questions and report on each question separately within the report.

For more information on the inspection of local government education services, please visit our [website](#).

Inspections in other sectors

You can find further information on any of our other inspection activities on our [website](#)

Quality assurance

As part of our quality assurance procedures, we invite providers to complete a post-inspection questionnaire (PIQ).

The reporting inspector will carry out the quality assurance of the inspection team's work in the first instance. Estyn will quality assure a sample of inspections through on-site visits. We assure the quality of all inspection reports before their publication on Estyn's website. Our arrangements for assuring the quality of inspections are available on our [website](#).

If an individual or provider feels dissatisfied with the standard and quality of our work, the content of our work, the conduct of a member of staff, or specific inaccuracies, they can provide feedback or complain about our work. Our complaints handling procedure sets out how complaints of this nature can be raised and the process that we follow when dealing with complaints. This is available on our [website](#). However, we do not deal with complaints about inspection judgements, or about providers. In the case of complaints about providers, we ask that these are raised through the providers own complaints procedures. We do not inspect providers on receipt of complaints.

2 The education system in Wales

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Education in Wales is undergoing significant change. Welsh Government began a large-scale aim of improving the school system in 2014. These plans have led to wide-scale reforms of the curriculum, of initial and ongoing teacher education and to accountability systems in Wales.

The National Mission (Welsh Government, 2017 and updated 2020) underpins these changes and sets out 4 key aims to support the success of the new curriculum and the underlying for purposes for learners.



The timeline for the changes already made, or to be made to the education system to achieve these aims is as follows:

- 2017 [New professional standards for teachers, teaching assistants and leaders in Wales](#)
- 2019 [Piloting of the National Evaluation and Improvement Resource for School](#)
- 2020 [Phasing in of Additional Learning Needs reform](#) and schools start preparing for the new curriculum
- 2020 [Transition year – a changed role for Estyn \(Engagement Visits\)](#)
- 2021 [A new inspection framework](#)
- 2022 [A curriculum for Wales](#)

Further information on the transformation agenda can be found by following the links above.

Education in Wales is devolved to the Welsh Government. In Wales, responsibility for education rests with the Minister for Education in the Welsh Government.

At a local level, there are 22 local authorities who are responsible for allocating funding and services to schools maintained by them (“maintained schools”). In addition, there are 4 regional education improvement services (regional consortia) that provide challenge and support to schools to improve. They do this through bespoke packages of support, depending on the school’s needs, professional development packages for teachers, leaders and support staff, and they provide networking opportunities. The local authorities and regional education improvement services have responsibility for ongoing quality assurance in their schools. They provide reports to Estyn on schools for inspection and if a school is in follow up

In Wales, there are three main phases of education:

- Primary (3 to 11 year olds)
- Secondary (7 to 11 year olds)
- Post 16 education

In 2020 there are:

530	non-maintained nursery settings
1229	primary schools
182	secondary schools
23	all-age schools
41	special schools
22	pupil referral units
84	independent schools/colleges
12	further education colleges
17	work-based training contract holders
15	community-based adult learning partnerships

For more information about the structure of the education system, including numbers of pupils and staff visit: www.statswales.wales.gov.uk

Education in Wales is compulsory from the school term following a child’s fifth birthday (beginning in September, January and April until age 16, and parents are responsible for ensuring that their child receives education. The legal framework for primary and

secondary schools divides them into community, voluntary and foundation schools. They are comprehensive so they take children from the full age and ability profile in the area.

Welsh and **English** are compulsory subjects in all schools. Schools can teach through the medium of English, Welsh or bilingually. There is a growing trend towards Welsh medium instruction at primary school, and around a third of primary schools are Welsh medium schools. Some of the children who attend Welsh medium primary schools come from homes where English is spoken, but their parents have chosen Welsh medium education for them.

Many schools are community schools and they serve children from the communities around them. Some of these schools have specialist resource bases for children with special educational needs (also known as additional learning needs). A small number of special schools and pupil referral units provide education to those with the highest level of need.

Foundation schools are also funded by local authorities but are owned by the school governing body or a charitable foundation. Voluntary schools were originally established by voluntary bodies, mainly churches that retain some control over their management. They are now largely funded by local authorities.

In Wales, publicly-funded schools are known as maintained schools. Privately-owned independent schools and specialist colleges also exist in Wales. These are fee-paying organisations, which provide education. All independent schools must be registered with the Welsh Government if they provide full-time education for five or more pupils of compulsory school age; or one or more pupils with a statement of special educational needs or in public care. In January 2020, there were 38 independent mainstream schools, 36 independent special schools and 7 independent specialist colleges in Wales.

Independent mainstream schools educate pupils from pre-statutory school age through to post-16 provision. A few of these schools provide education that follows a specific philosophy such as Steiner schools or Montessori schools, a very few are faith schools.

Independent special schools educate pupils from 3 to 19 who have a wide range of needs, including autistic spectrum disorder, and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many of the schools are small and pupils usually live in children's homes attached to the schools. A minority of these schools also educate day pupils or pupils who reside in children's homes not attached to the school. Local authorities fund nearly all pupil placements at independent special schools.

Independent specialist colleges educate around 200 learners aged 16 and over. The colleges provide for a diverse range of learners' needs, including autistic spectrum disorder, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and profound and multiple learning difficulties. In four of the colleges, many learners live in residential homes attached to the college.

Further and higher education institutions are fully autonomous. The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (Great Britain, 1992) granted independent status to publicly-

funded further education colleges. Higher education institutions are independent, self-governing bodies empowered by a Royal Charter or an Act of Parliament to develop their own courses and award their own degrees.

Almost all institutions have a governing body, or equivalent, that is responsible for the general direction of the institution. The governing body includes representatives from a range of different stakeholders. In each institution, the governing body and senior management team have a high degree of autonomy.

Education for three to 16-year-olds

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Curriculum for Wales

In January 2020, Welsh Government (2020c) published the Curriculum for Wales Guidance. This guidance aims to help schools and settings to develop their own curriculum for learners aged from 3 to 16, enabling their learners to develop towards the *four purposes* of the curriculum – the starting point and aspiration for every child and young person in Wales.

The Welsh Government have embarked on a journey to change the curriculum in Wales to enable learners to adapt to the ever-changing employment needs, and to enable them to thrive and prosper. The aims are that all children and young people should have the opportunity to reach their full potential, to support personal development and to be responsive to the needs of individual learners.

The purpose of every school's curriculum will be to support our children and young people to be (the four purposes):

- ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives
- enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work
- ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
- healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

The Curriculum for Wales guidance was developed by practitioners through a network of schools. These schools were drawn from across Wales, including settings that were rural and urban; bilingual, English-medium and Welsh-medium; primary, secondary, special schools, schools with a religious character and a range of school sizes.

This network developed the guidance in partnership with Welsh Government, regional consortia, Estyn, Qualifications Wales and a range of key stakeholders and experts.

The Curriculum for Wales is made up of six Areas of Learning and Experience:

- Expressive Arts
- Health and Well-being
- Humanities
- Language, Literacy and Communication
- Mathematics and Numeracy
- Science and Technology

There are also cross-curricular skills which are expected to be developed across all aspects of the curriculum. These are literacy, numeracy and digital competence.

Schools will also need to develop a methodology for designing a curriculum which incorporates, where appropriate, opportunities for learning and consideration of cross-cutting elements. These should allow learners to:

- consider local, national and international contexts
- develop understanding of relationships and sexuality education, human rights education and diversity, and careers and work-related experiences.

To support schools in their planning and preparation for Curriculum for Wales, Welsh Government published [The Journey to 2022](#) (Welsh Government, 2020c). This identifies shared expectations developed in partnership with Welsh Government, Estyn and the four regional consortia in Wales.

Schools will be required to implement their curriculum from September 2022 for learners up to and including Year 7 (learners aged 11-12). Secondary schools will then be expected to roll out their curricula on a year-by-year basis, with Year 8 in September 2023 through to Year 11 (learners aged 16) in September 2026.

Inspection the Curriculum for Wales in maintained schools

During the period of familiarisation and the adoption of the Welsh Government's Curriculum for Wales, Estyn will adopt a supportive approach to the school's work to plan, design and realise their curriculum in an appropriate and timely manner. Inspectors will give due regard to any published guidance on common or shared expectations.

At all times, inspectors should approach their evaluation of the school's curriculum in a positive way when schools have tried to be creative and imaginative in taking forward well-considered curricular developments that benefit learners. Estyn will take account of the statutory guidance in place at the time of the inspection, alongside the school's vision and rationale for developing their bespoke curriculum in line with the requirements for [Curriculum for Wales](#).

Special educational needs (additional learning needs)

The current legal framework surrounding the education of pupils in primary and secondary schools with special educational needs (SEN) defines a child as having SEN if they have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children of the same age or if they have a disability which either prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for children of their age in schools within the area of the local authority.

The SEN Code of Practice for Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002) provides detailed guidance based on the following five fundamental principles:

- a pupil with SEN should have their needs met
- the SEN of children will normally be met in mainstream school settings
- the views of the pupil should be sought and taken into account

- parents and carers have a vital role to play in supporting their children's education
- children with SEN should be offered full access to a broad, balanced and relevant education, based on the National Curriculum and the Foundation Phase Framework

The Code advocates three stages of intervention, based on the requirement for schools to make full use of available classroom and school resources, before drawing on specialist expertise from outside the school. Where pupils' SEN require significant involvement from external agencies, the local authority assumes legal responsibility to provide a specified package of support which is generally set out in a 'statement of SEN'.

In 2018, the Welsh Government introduced a new statutory framework for supporting children and young people with additional learning needs. It replaces the current legislation around SEN and learning difficulties and disabilities for learners in post-16 education and training and introduces the term 'additional learning needs' to cover both groups of learners. It is expected that the changes to ALN legislation will be implemented over a three-year period, which is expected to run from September 2021 to August 2024. During the implementation period existing SEN legislation continues to apply and will continue to do so until the implementation period is concluded.

Foundation phase and primary schools (from three to 11 years of age)

Prior to the roll out of the new Curriculum for Wales, the education of children aged 3-11 is broadly organised in the following way:

The foundation phase

This covers the age range 3 to 7. It combines non-compulsory education (ages 3 to 5) and compulsory education (ages 5 to 7).

During the foundation phase children should engage with learning through play, practical activity and investigation. Through carefully planned experiences they should be given the opportunity to develop a broad range of skills including personal and social skills, language literacy and communication skills (Welsh in Welsh medium schools and settings and both English and Welsh in English medium or bilingual schools), numeracy skills, physical skills and creative skills.

Non maintained settings

All local authorities in Wales fund part-time education for three-year-olds, and occasionally for four-year-olds in settings as well as in schools. Although local authorities do not maintain these settings, they are responsible for ensuring that they provide good quality foundation phase education. This includes providing leaders and practitioners with advice and support. Settings that provide early education include day care and sessional care providers.

Estyn is required to inspect early education, and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) has the duty to inspect the quality of care at these settings. In January 2019, Estyn and CIW began jointly to inspect non-school education settings for children under five using

a new, joint inspection framework. These joint inspections consider the quality of care provided for all children up to the age of 12 and the education of three and four-year-old children that do not receive education in a maintained setting. The new inspection framework comprises of six themes in three key areas: themes 1 and 2 consider children's outcomes, themes 3 and 4 consider how well practitioners contribute towards these, and themes 5 and 6 consider the quality of leadership in ensuring good outcomes for children.

Primary schools

Most compulsory foundation phase education is provided in maintained primary schools. These schools are also required to teach pupils the national curriculum (Curriculum for Wales), to pupils aged 7 -11. Since 2008, the national curriculum for Wales has included the core subjects of English (in English medium schools) or English and Welsh (in Welsh medium or bilingual schools), mathematics and science and the non-core subjects. These are Welsh second language, design and technology, information and communication technology, history, geography, art and design, music, physical education and religious education. This curriculum has been adapted overtime and schools must also teach the Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF) and the Digital Competence Framework (DCF). However, since 2015, primary schools, at different rates have begun to move towards the new arrangements set out in the new [Curriculum for Wales](#), which will be compulsory in all primary schools from September 2022.

Secondary phase (from 11 to 16 years of age)

Secondary schools

Prior to the roll out of the new Curriculum for Wales, the education of children aged 11-16 is broadly organised in the following way:

A pupil's education is divided into two main stages. These are known as:

- key stage 3 – the first phase of compulsory secondary education (ages 11-14)
- key stage 4 – the secondary phase of compulsory education (ages 14-16).

Key stage 3

At key stage 3, the basic and National Curriculum is similar to the current key stage 2 and also includes modern foreign languages, sex and work related education.

There is a statutory assessment of pupils at the end of key stage 3 by their teachers. Internal and external moderation procedures are applied.

Key stage 4

At key stage 4, only five National Curriculum subjects are mandatory. These are:

- Welsh or Welsh second language
- English
- mathematics

- science
- physical education

This provision gives schools flexibility to provide optional subjects that meet the needs, interests and aspirations of their pupils.

The majority of learners at key stage 4 follow courses leading to external qualifications, principally General Certificates of Education (GCSE), the Skills Challenge Certificate and national vocational qualifications. The Skills Challenge Certificate is offered at Foundation, Intermediate and Advanced levels.

The current key stage 4 forms part of the Welsh Government's 14-19 Learning Pathways initiative. The initiative aims to provide all young people with the opportunity to develop an academic or vocational field to fulfil their full potential. Schools, the further education sector and the business sector work together to provide a variety of opportunities for young people to access the type of education and training that best suits them. Each young person is entitled to a learning coach to help them develop their learning pathway. In order to achieve this, local authorities have developed Learning Networks, which bring together key stakeholders to take the programme forward and to provide a strategic lead.

Since 2015, secondary schools, at different rates, have begun to move towards the new arrangements set out in the new [Curriculum for Wales](#), which will be compulsory for Year 7 from September 2022. Thereafter, the new curriculum will be 'rolled out' on a year-by-year basis until 2026, by when it will be available to all secondary age pupils.

Sixth form (or key stage 5)

Around two thirds of secondary schools also provide education for learners over the age of 16. More on sixth forms can be found in the section [Providers of post 16 education and training](#).

All-age schools

All-age schools provide education for pupils from age three or four up to 16 or 18 years old. It is a growing sector and in September 2020, there were 22 all age schools in Wales, which is an increase of two on the previous year. In total, all-age schools educate about 20,750 pupils, which is around 5% of pupils in Wales. This is more than double the number of pupils that were educated in all age schools in 2017 (Welsh Government, 2020g).

Pupils are taught the curriculum for all key stages/phases within the same establishment. However, in many schools, around a half of pupils aged 11 years old enter the school from other partner primary schools.

Estyn inspects all-age schools against its own sector specific inspection framework.

Maintained special schools

In January 2020, there were 41 maintained special schools in Wales, 6 of which have residential provision. These schools provide for pupils with additional learning needs aged three to sixteen or nineteen years. Pupils attending these schools have a wide

range of often complex needs, including profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum condition, and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

In January 2020, the number of pupils attending maintained special schools was approximately 5,153 pupils. This is around 1% of pupils in maintained schools in Wales (Welsh Government, 2020g). Around 7,255 pupils attend specialist resource bases for pupils with additional learning needs in mainstream primary or secondary schools. This is around 1.5% of pupils in maintained schools in Wales (Welsh Government, 2020g).²

To gain a place at a maintained special school, the pupil will need first to have been assessed by the local authority and to be in receipt of an individual development plan or statement of special educational needs. Overall, around 2.9% of pupils in Wales have a statement of SEN currently (Welsh Government, 2020g).

Pupil referral units

For a range of reasons, a very few pupils in Wales receive their education other than at school (EOTAS).

In January 2019, there were 2,286 pupils in Wales receiving their education through EOTAS provision (Welsh Government, 2019). About two-in-ten of these pupils had main or current enrolment status at their maintained 'home' school and about three-in-ten had subsidiary enrolment. The other half of these pupils were not on roll at a maintained school and they received their education solely through EOTAS provision. The largest provision for pupils whose main education is other than at school is at pupil referral units (PRUs). In January 2020, there were 22 registered PRUs in Wales.

Pupils who attend PRUs full-time are mostly either excluded or in danger of permanent exclusion largely because of challenging behaviour associated with social and emotional behavioural difficulties. A smaller number of pupils attend PRUs part-time because they are disengaged and/or are persistent non-attenders at their maintained school often because of mental health issues that typically centre on anxiety or bullying.

[Welsh Government \(2018 p.5\)](#) key information about the management of PRUs is outlined in italics below.

A pupil referral unit (PRU) is a type of school established and maintained by a local authority to provide suitable education for children and young people who, by reason of illness, exclusion or otherwise, may not receive such education in a mainstream school. There are a wide variety of PRUs. They are diverse in terms of the number and type of pupils catered for, the typical length of stay, arrangements for admission and transfer to other education, the nature of the curriculum and length of the school day. Local authorities operate different models of PRU provision, developed to meet local circumstances and in line with local policies. It is the responsibility of the LA to maintain PRUs and to ensure they are suitably resourced and organised to provide a high standard of education.

² This information was calculated from the Estyn database and may not be published.

Local Curriculum

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 (Great Britain, 2000) led to the establishment of local curricula for learners aged 16 to 19 within each local authority. It specified that a local curriculum should be comprised of courses of study within five learning domains:

- mathematics, science and technology
- business, administration and law
- services for people
- arts, media, culture and languages
- humanities, social sciences and preparation for life and work

The act stipulated the promotion of access to courses taught through the medium of Welsh as part of each local curriculum in Wales. It required local authorities, maintained schools and further education (FE) colleges to assist in planning the local curriculum and placed a duty to collaborate in joint-working on these parties.

The Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 stipulates that a local curriculum offer for 16 to 19-year-old learners should contain a minimum of 30 recognised level 3 courses, with level 2 alternatives being suitable for a few vocational disciplines (National Assembly for Wales, 2009). The offer should include a minimum of five general courses (including A levels) and five vocational courses. The vocational courses should span a minimum of three domains, one of which being mathematics, science and technology.

The Learning and Skills Measure (Wales) 2009 reinforces the formal duty on local authorities, headteachers, college principals and the governing bodies in schools and colleges to assist Welsh Ministers in planning the local 16-18 curriculum offer in a co-operative. In April 2014, statutory guidance from the Welsh Government explains how local curricula for 16 to 18-year-olds should be designed through joint planning and suitable consideration of both vocational and academic routes. Regional consortia, local authorities, secondary schools and further education institutions must have due regard to this statutory guidance.

Regional Consortia

In Wales, nearly all maintained secondary schools are under local authority control. Four regional school improvement consortia were introduced by the National Model for Regional Working 2013 (Welsh Government, 2013a), with each operating across a number of local authorities. The regional consortia are responsible for the oversight of standards in schools, and the coordination of school improvement work. FE colleges were removed from local authority control following the introduction of the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 (Great Britain, 1992). As such they are independent of the regional consortia. However, the national model specifies that one of the consortia's delivery functions is to have a strategic overview of the regional 14-19 offer. It also states that they are obliged to ensure meaningful engagement with other key stakeholders including post-16 providers, such as colleges. Each regional consortium has a designated officer or challenge adviser for post-16 education.

Regional Skills Partnerships (RSP)

Three Regional Skills Partnerships (RSP) across Wales help identify the skills needs of the local and national employment markets to help further education colleges shape the provision they offer. Each is a voluntary, non-statutory partnership made up of employers, education and training providers and other key stakeholders. The RSPs make recommendations to Welsh Government about further education college and apprenticeship provision including the number of graduates needed to meet regional economic needs. The three partnerships were established between 2007 and 2014, and each has evolved independently, shaped by their own regions and more recently, their respective City Deals and Growth Deals (House of Commons, 2019).

The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

In 2016, the Welsh Government commissioned review of post-compulsory education recommended that a single regulatory, oversight and coordinating authority be established (Hazelkorn, 2016). The purpose of such an authority would be to realise an overarching vision of a post-compulsory education and training system for Wales based upon stronger links between education policy, providers and provision, and social and economic goals. As a result, in October 2020 the Welsh Government Published a draft Tertiary Education and Research Bill as part of a wide consultation with the aim of bringing the bill before the Welsh Senedd (parliament) in 2021. This draft bill proposes the establishment of a Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER), which will regulate the work of all government funded providers of education and training for learners beyond 16 years of age. The commission is expected to enable a strategic and collaborative view of education and training for all providers of post-compulsory education including school sixth forms, further education colleges, work-based learning providers and higher education providers including universities. The commission will aim to improve outcomes for learners and ensure parity of esteem between the different types of education and training.

Providers of post 16 education and training

School-based 6th forms

After completing their compulsory education at the age of 16, around 40% of learners choose to progress to study at a school sixth form, normally the school in which they completed their GCSE studies.

School sixth forms typically specialise in Advanced Level (A level) provision, but in many cases also offer a limited range of vocational courses as part of their level 3 study options (Welsh Government, 2020f). A levels are subject-based qualifications at level 3 that can lead to university, further study, training, or work. Learners frequently study three or more A levels over two years. Level 3 vocational provision, delivered by schools, often takes the form of a number of subsidiary diplomas that are equivalent to one A level, rather than extended diplomas commonly offered by FE colleges which are equivalent to three A levels. Learners who follow these smaller courses often do so as part of hybrid programmes of study consisting of one or more A level subjects alongside one or more subsidiary diplomas.

Further education institutions

Around half of learners in Wales progress to study at a Further Education (FE) college after leaving school at the age of 16. Further education colleges typically offer a wide range of both academic and vocational qualifications. Most colleges offer many different qualifications ranging from pre-entry level courses up to courses at levels 4, 5 and above, including honours degrees. In 2018-2019 FE colleges in Wales taught around 122,000 learners across a range of further education, higher education and work-based learning programmes (Welsh Government, 2020e). FE colleges work closely with local and national employers to determine the pattern of the courses, qualifications and services that they provide.

There are currently 13 further education institutions (FEIs) that exist in Wales today. Two of these are wholly owned subsidiaries of higher education institutions. The majority of colleges operate across multiple sites and in several local authority areas through a group based structure in which they use several locally -based college brand names or separate identities. Three of the 13 FE institutions across Wales are comprised in part, of dedicated sixth form centres that were once distinct sixth form colleges prior to merger. These continue to provide tertiary education for learners over the age of 16 who have left secondary schools in their regions. Today, most FE colleges in Wales offer a full complement of A level courses as well as level 3 vocational courses. Around 30% of publicly funded A level delivery in Wales is undertaken in colleges (Welsh Government, 2020e; 2020f). The proportion of each college's offering that caters for 16-19 year old 'sixth form' learners varies significantly between colleges depending on local factors. There is a single stand-alone sixth form college remaining in Wales, located in Cardiff, which is classed as a Catholic further education college. A national provider of adult learning in the community is classed as the 13th FE institution; this provider caters largely for older, adult learners following part-time courses.

Work-based learning

Training providers deliver publicly funded apprenticeship framework programmes across Wales. The purpose of the apprenticeship programme is to provide employers with the learners who will develop the skills to meet the current and future needs of their businesses and the Welsh economy. Providers across the sector work closely with employers and other local organisations to identify their current and future training requirement as well as the needs of the local economy and meeting regional and national training needs.

Apprenticeship frameworks are delivered across different levels and include foundation apprenticeships, apprenticeships, higher apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships. All apprentices are employed from the start of their training and work in a wide range of industries. A large number of employers are engaged in apprenticeship training programmes, including large multi-national companies, small to medium enterprises and micro-businesses. Apprenticeship learners follow training programmes that are usually delivered over two or three years. The programmes require apprentices to develop a wide range of job-related practical skills and theory knowledge. Most learners undertake off-the-job activity at a providers training centre or local further education college. Learners undertake a framework of practical and theoretical qualifications and upon their successful completion are awarded the apprenticeship

framework. Upon the completion of a programme at apprenticeship level the individual is considered a skilled person in their trade or industry.

Adult Learning in the Community

Adult learning in the community is generally delivered by partnerships of providers covering a local authority area. Providers include further education colleges, local authorities, higher education institutions and the voluntary sector. The provision includes classes in a wide range of subjects and skills grouped under the headings: essential skills (basic literacy and numeracy), digital skills, wellbeing, and English for speakers of other languages. Classes take place at a range of venues, including libraries and community centres. Courses lead to a variety of formal qualifications.

Youth work services

‘Youth support services’ are educational services, defined under the Learning and Skills Act 2000 (Great Britain, 2000), and paid for by direct or indirect public funding. They include services provided in partnership with other agencies such as schools and voluntary sector organisations.

‘Youth work’ is a recognised methodology for working with young people, which is underpinned by National Occupational Standards (NOS), regulated professional qualifications, and has a defined ethical base. Youth work builds on the establishment of good working relationships with young people in which their needs are put first, irrespective of whether the contacts with young people are voluntary or mandatory. The definition of young people is those between the ages of 11 and 25 years old.

Learning in the Justice Sector

All offenders in Wales have access to education and skills programmes, both in custody and in the community, to assist them in securing and retaining employment and reducing reoffending behaviour.

Estyn works in partnership with other inspectorates within and beyond Wales to inspect offender learning. Estyn has developed its own guidance for inspecting offender learning in Wales. This guidance supports HMI Prisons’ own criteria. Estyn also joins HMI Probation when they inspect Youth Offending Teams in Wales, paying particular attention to how well Welsh probation services support young offenders to engage in employment, education and training.

Initial teacher education

Following the revised accreditation arrangements for initial teacher education (ITE) in Wales, there are now seven partnerships (comprising higher education institutions and their partner schools) providing newly accredited programmes of ITE in Wales.

The new programmes of ITE that began in Wales in September 2019 require:

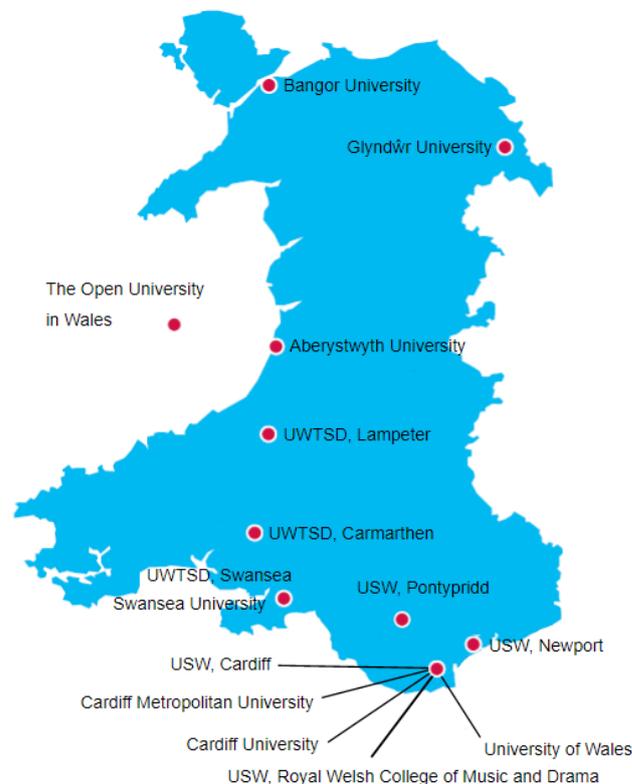
- an increased role for schools
- a clearer role for universities
- joint ownership of the ITE programme between schools and higher education institutions
- structured opportunities to link school and university learning
- the centrality of research

The partnerships offer post graduate certificate of education (PGCE) programmes in primary or secondary education courses (linear, and usually one year in duration) and three-year undergraduate programmes in primary education with qualified teacher status. The Open University partnership offers a salaried (employment-based route) and a part-time PGCE.

Initial teacher education takes place in university and in partnership training schools.

Universities in Wales (higher education institutes)

There are currently ten universities in Wales, offering a broad range of courses from level 3 (for example, foundation degrees) through to level 7 (post graduate or masters courses).



<https://www.uniswales.ac.uk/universities/>

While Estyn inspects initial teacher education provided at higher education institutes in Wales, we are not involved in the inspection of the quality of higher education institutes beyond this.

Under current arrangements, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), regulates fee levels at higher education providers, ensures a framework is in place for assessing the quality of higher education and scrutinises the performance of universities and other designated providers. They also provide funding for higher education teaching and research.

In October 2020 the Welsh Government Published a draft Tertiary Education and Research Bill. The draft bill proposes the establishment of a Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER), which will regulate the work of all government funded providers of education and training for learners beyond 16 years of age, including universities. The bill proposes that the new Commission will assume the functions currently undertaken by HEFCW. It also proposes that the Commission will work together with Estyn to inspect the quality of education and training of providers that we currently inspect as set out above.

Information: website, liaison – contact, links

Website addresses:

Thematic reports:

https://www.estyn.gov.wales/improvement-resources-search?type=thematic_report

Inspection:

Individual guidance handbooks for all sectors, including for primary, secondary, special schools and PRUs and independent schools are currently under review and will be published in due course. In the meantime, you can view the current Common Inspection Framework and guidance documents here.

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection>

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