

## Country Profile WALES

**1. Basic information** – this should be as short as possible; doesn't need to be in paragraphs or full sentences.

### **Country name: Wales**

**Structure of inspectorate:** Are you organised centrally or by region/state? Does inspection regulation or standards vary across regions or states?

Responsibility for inspecting education and training for the whole of Wales lies with Estyn, which is independent from but funded by Welsh Government.

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.

**Age of inspectorate:** How long have you been established for? What was your predecessor organisation (i.e. who did inspection before you?)

The first inspectors were appointed for England and Wales in 1839. A separate inspectorate for Wales was first established in 1907. The inspectorate assumed the name 'Estyn' (a Welsh word meaning to reach or to stretch) in 2004. Before then it was the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector in Wales.

**Size:** How many inspectors do you have? How many central/policy staff do you have?

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 4 Assistant Directors.

There are currently 62 Her Majesty's Inspectors, who also take on a wide range of policy roles. In addition, 46 permanent members of corporate services staff work centrally.

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

**Remits:** What form of education do you inspect? E.g. early years, schools, universities? Anything that is non-education?

### **We inspect:**

- 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;
- 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; and
- all-age schools.

We inspect, through joint working with HMI Probation and HMI Prisons, the education of young offenders and also of offenders in secure estates and prisons in Wales. We also work with CIW (Care Inspectorate Wales) when we inspect boarding schools. Wales Audit Office supports our inspection of local government education services.

**Unit of inspection:** Do you inspect schools or groups of schools (or both?) Do you inspect teachers, or subject departments? Do you inspect local authorities?

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.

Estyn observes the quality of teaching and learning in lessons in schools, and makes overall judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. However, it does not make judgements on individual teachers.

**What is your strapline?** E.g. Ofsted's is "Raising standards, improving lives"

We do not have a strapline. However, the word Estyn is a Welsh word meaning 'to reach out' and 'to stretch'

Estyn's mission is to achieve excellence for all learners in Wales by providing independent, high-quality inspection and advice services. Our vision is to be recognised through the expertise of our staff as an authoritative voice on education and training in Wales.

**Relationship with government:** Do you operate as part of the Education Ministry, or are you independent? Briefly explain the legal relationship you have with the Ministry (e.g. any reporting duties)? Are you allowed to report on government policy? Are you allowed to publish reports without govt approval?

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.

**Accountability:** What are you accountable for delivering? Where is this set out? (e.g. in legislation or in a policy document?) How are you held to account as an organisation (e.g. must you report annually)?

We report annually through the Chief Inspector's Annual Report on the standards of education and training in Wales, which is presented to Ministers; the outcomes of civil service staff surveys; Annual Plan and Annual Report and accounts provide the organisation's business planning.

## 2. **Evaluation process** – this should be in short paragraphs

**Self-evaluation:** Do you have a form of self-evaluation (i.e. do you expect institutions to report on themselves?) If so, briefly explain how this relates to external evaluation.

While it is not a statutory requirement to have a self-evaluation report, it is a statutory requirement that all schools produce a 3-year school improvement plan. Estyn expects schools to have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development, as gathered through robust self-evaluation activities.

The school's self-evaluation of its own performance is the **starting point** for each inspection. The reporting inspector (the inspector who leads the inspection team) will review the school's self-evaluation and other evidence to identify key areas for investigation in order to make judgements on the validity of its findings. These 'emerging questions' help make inspection relevant to the provider.

**What do you examine during inspection?** Do you look at finances? Do you look at legal compliance? Do you observe and/or grade lessons?

Before inspection we conduct online pre-inspection questionnaires with learners, parents, governors and staff (teaching and non-teaching).

We interview leaders, staff, pupils, parents and governors during inspection.

We also observe the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observations, learning walks, reviewing the work of learners, including reviewing their work in discussion with pupils. We do not grade individual lessons, but use this information to arrive at a summary of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning across the school. The balance and weight of strengths and weaknesses helps us arrive at a judgement for teaching. We do not have a preferred teaching methodology, rather we judge teaching in line with its impact on standards, the progress made by learners and the quality of pupils' wellbeing.

We also review

- performance information, including the school's own tracking information
- the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning records (whole school, departmental and also those relating to cross curricular responsibilities such as literacy, numeracy, digital competence and Welsh)
- the breadth and balance of the curriculum – does it meet the needs of all learners, including more able and talented learners and those with additional learning needs?
- the quality of individual development plans for learners with additional learning needs
- school finances
- compliance with statutory obligations and with the independent school regulations, where relevant
- leadership records, including minutes of meetings, performance management and professional learning records

**Do you have an inspection framework? Is this a quality or compliance model?** Do you evaluate the quality of education or teaching, or report against a series of non-qualitative standards? How does this work?

We have a common inspection framework for all schools, independent specialist colleges, pupil referral units, and work-based learning providers. Under this framework, inspectors evaluate a provider under 5 inspection areas:

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

We publish a report of our findings after the inspection. The report contains

- Information on the context of the school
- A brief summary of key strengths and areas for development
- Judgements, findings and evaluations for each of the inspection areas.
- A statement on the next steps (e.g. if follow up activity is required)

Estyn is currently reviewing the inspection frameworks and arrangements in other sectors (non-maintained nurseries, further education, initial teacher education and training, local government education services and Welsh for adults) to align them with the frameworks used in schools, independent specialist colleges, pupil referral units, and work-based learning providers.

For further information, please see:

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/inspection-explained/common-inspection-framework>

**Inspection time and resource.** How long are your inspections? Do they last several days, or shorter? How many people go on inspection? What sort of qualifications/experience do they have? i.e. are they former headteachers, lawyers or accountants?

**Length:** This varies depending on sector and, in some cases, also on the size of the provider. The inspection of primary, secondary and all-age schools lasts 4 days. The inspection of further education colleges currently lasts 2 weeks. The length of inspections in other sectors can vary significantly, from one day (for example in non-maintained nursery provision) to several weeks (for example in the inspection of initial teacher training provision).

**Teams:**

All inspections in secondary schools are led by **HMI**, in primary schools around half of inspections are led by HM Inspectors and half by Registered Inspectors who are independent, but trained by us and work for us under contract for specific inspections. HM Inspectors are permanent members of staff. They lead and carry out inspection work providing independent and objective judgements on the provision of education and training. The remaining members of the team are other HMI, **additional or registered inspectors** and, in some sectors such as schools and FE colleges, at least one peer inspector. Maintained schools (those funded by the state) also have a lay inspector on the team.

**Peer inspectors** are individuals who have a managerial role in a school or provider and have teaching or training experience in the relevant sector. **Lay inspectors** are members of the general public who are trained by us to take part in a school inspection. They provide an objective and impartial assessment on the provision of education.

Inspections in the independent sector (private schools and providers) are always led by a Registered Inspector.

A school or provider being inspected may nominate a member of staff to act as **nominee**. The nominee is member of the team who can sit in and contribute to inspection team meetings, check factual accuracy and provide the team with information. The nominee does not, however, take part in inspection activities or contribute to decisions on judgements.

The size of the team is determined by the size of the provider.

**Frequency of inspections:** Do you have set inspection cycles? How long are these? Are they risk-based or not? If risk-based, what information do you use for assessing risk?

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

**Main business:** Do you do anything that is not inspection? E.g. pre-registration or providers, or other forms of regulation? Are you involved in complaints examination? Do you take part in competition of headmasters?

In addition to inspection we:

- provide advice and guidance to the Welsh Government on quality and standards in education and training in Wales. This advice is published in our **thematic reports** which are commissioned by the Minister for Education and Skills.
- build capacity in the delivery of education and training in Wales based on inspection evidence, including promoting the spread of best practice through our **case studies and supplementary guidance**.
- contribute to a number of education working groups.
- provide a range of ad-hoc advice to Ministers, for example about the registration of new independent schools, or as part of other school reorganisation processes.
- carry out inspection jointly with other inspectorates. For example, Estyn works in collaboration with the Care Inspectorate for Wales (CIW), Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) and the Wales Audit Office (WAO) as part of Inspection Wales, which is a collaborative initiative between the four main inspection, audit and review bodies in Wales.
- maintain an ongoing relationship between each local authority (LA) and Estyn in order to continually monitor the quality of education services provided. Pairs of HMI are assigned to each LA as Local Authority Link Inspectors (LALIs). LALIs meet senior officers and elected members (politicians) to discuss performance and any areas for concern.

## 2. Consequences of inspection

**Reporting:** Do you publish your reports on institutions? If so, who reads them and how are they used? (e.g. to help parents make school choices?)

Our reports are published on our website and read by:

- Governors, leaders and staff of the school – to support improvement planning
- Parents – to help make school choices
- Other providers – to build their own capacity
- Local and regional education providers – to identify areas where they can provide support and areas of good practice for sharing with others or to make placement decisions for pupils in independent schools

**Grade:** Do you grade institutions? If so, how many do you have? Are there any rewards for getting the top grade? Or any punishment for getting the lowest?

We grade inspection areas for each institution we inspect, but do not give an overall grade.

Each inspection area is judged using a 4 point scale:

**Excellent** – Very strong, sustained performance and practice

**Good** – Strong features, although minor aspects may require improvement

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

**Unsatisfactory and needs urgent improvement** – Important weaknesses outweigh strengths

Where schools maintained by a local authority receive adequate or unsatisfactory judgements, they are subject to a level of follow up activity. There are three levels of follow up.

1. Estyn review
2. Significant improvement
3. Special measures

The last two are statutory categories of follow-up and have basis in law.

**Knowledge sharing:** How do you use the findings of inspection? Do you use thematic reporting, and publish your findings?

We publish:

- Inspection reports
- Thematic reports
- Effective practice case studies

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.

**What happens following an inspection?** Do schools shut down? Are the weak ones partnered with other schools; the strong ones allowed to flourish?

All schools are required to produce a post inspection action plan that notes how they will address recommendations from the inspection.

Where a school has been awarded a 'good' or 'excellent' judgement for an aspect of their work, they may be asked to publish a case study of their effective practice.

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 services.

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 and interm executive board
- give general directions to the governing body or the headteacher to take steps

In the case of voluntary-aided schools (those that receive part of their funding from the Church and are religious in character), local authorities must consult with the appropriate religious body.

If a school fails to make the desired improvement, Welsh ministers also have powers to issue the school with a warning notice under the Act. 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:

<http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/170921-schools-causing-concern-en-v2.pdf>

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, the Welsh Government may require them to close.

**What is the stated purpose of your inspectorate?** Do you have a theory of action about how improvement is achieved through inspection?

Estyn's mission is to achieve excellence for all learners in Wales by providing independent, high-quality inspection and advice services. Our vision is to be recognised through the expertise of our staff as an authoritative voice on education and training in Wales.

**Our strategic objectives are to:**

- 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

For more information, please see: <https://www.estyn.gov.wales/about-us/strategic-overview>