



Understanding inspections
in independent schools:
a guide for parents
and carers



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

Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. It is independent of, but funded by, the National Assembly for Wales under Section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998. The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

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

Estyn also provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

Our inspection work and advice play a key part in raising standards and quality and informing policy in education and training across Wales.

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How will an inspection benefit my child?

Inspection tells you about the standards and quality at your child's school. It tells you what the school does well and not so well. It gives the school an expert view on its work and helps it to improve and raise standards.

Why do we inspect independent schools?

Section 163 of the Education Act (2002) requires Estyn to inspect all independent schools in Wales at least once in every six-year period. The current period lasts from September 2014 to August 2020.

Who inspects the school?

The inspection team is led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). They are joined by team members who are either HMI or additional inspectors with considerable experience of teaching and education in the sector.

Many inspection teams will include a peer inspector. Peer inspectors are normally current teachers or leaders from other independent schools.

Each school can have someone who works at the school on the inspection team. This nominee keeps the inspectors informed about the school and its work. Schools do not have to take up this option.

Inspectors will have gained enhanced clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service. In conducting the inspection, inspectors will adhere to Estyn's code of conduct.

How will the school be inspected?

Schools will generally receive about four weeks' notice of their inspection.

All schools have the same type of inspection. Inspections are carried out in accordance with Estyn's guidance for the inspection of independent schools, which you can find by visiting the Estyn website at www.estyn.gov.wales.

Inspections start with the school's evaluation of its own work. Inspectors use this self-evaluation report to plan the inspection.

How do inspectors take account of my views of the school?

Estyn wants to know your views of the school.

There are two main ways that you can do this. Firstly, you can complete a questionnaire online at <http://vir.estyn.gov.wales> by entering a five digit code provided by the school or in hard copy and returning it to Estyn. Secondly, all parents will be invited to attend a meeting with inspectors during the inspection week. The inspection team will use this information to find out more about the school.

If you feel you need to talk to inspectors, but cannot attend the parents' meeting, the reporting inspector will try to arrange this for you. However, this may not always be possible. You can always put your views in writing and leave them in a sealed envelope with the school secretary marked for the attention of the reporting inspector.

How will inspectors take account of my child's view of the school?

During the inspection week, in the school day, inspectors will be asking groups of children how they feel about the school. They will talk to them about the work they are doing and how well they are getting on. Listening to learners is a very important part of the inspection process.

A sample of learners representing all ages in the school will complete an online questionnaire before the inspection. For specific groups of learners, inspectors will carry out oral surveys during the inspection instead.

How will I know the inspectors' views?

Estyn will produce the final report and summary within 35 working days from the end of the inspection period. Officially, the inspection period is 10 working days starting on the first day at the school, although the number of days spent at the school is usually much less than this and depends on the size and type of school. The school will then be able to make available to you a copy of the inspection report upon request once they have received it.

You can also read the report on our website at estyn.gov.wales.

The report will have:

- / an overall judgement on current performance of the school
- / an overall judgement on the school's prospects for improvement

It will also have judgements on:

- / outcomes – the standards achieved by pupils and their wellbeing
- / provision – learning experiences, teaching, care, support and guidance, and the learning environment
- / leadership – leadership, improving quality, partnership working and resource management

All judgements will be based on a four-point scale:

Excellent: many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice

Good: many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement

Adequate: strengths outweigh areas for improvement

Unsatisfactory: important areas for improvement outweigh strengths

The report will indicate the extent to which the school meets the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. Further details about these standards are available on the Office of Public Sector Information website¹.

The report will include a table summarising the responses expressed in the questionnaire.

What happens next?

Schools that are doing well will have recognition of their performance in their inspection report. Any sector-leading practice will be written up as a case study and may be shared with other schools via Estyn's website.

If the inspection report states that the school does not meet one or more of the Independent School Standards, the Welsh Government will require the proprietor to submit an action plan within a specified period of time. Estyn inspectors will monitor the school's progress to meet these standards on behalf of the Welsh Government.

If there is a risk of serious harm to the welfare of pupils, the Welsh Government may remove the school from the register of independent schools, subject to 28 days right of appeal.

¹ <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/wales/wsi2003/20033234e.htm>

What do I do if I have concerns about the inspection?

Complaints about an inspection are rare. All complaints are treated very seriously. If you have a concern about the inspection of your child's school, you should telephone 029 20 446446 or email feedback@estyn.gov.wales or write to:

Feedback and Complaints Manager
Estyn
Anchor Court
Keen Road
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CF24 5JW