

Update to Governors of maintained schools and Management Committee Members of pupil referral units (PRUs) in Wales

Inspection arrangements from September 2024

With a new inspection cycle starting in September 2024, this note serves to update governors and management committee members on our new inspection arrangements. This update will focus on maintained schools and PRUs.

Approach

We have taken a collegiate approach to developing our proposed inspection arrangements. We have worked with our stakeholder groups to develop our inspection arrangements.

A key principle driving our development is to ensure we are clear about our expectations around inspections and reducing any unnecessary workload. Earlier this term we launched our [Ready Already! Barod yn Barod!](#) campaign to clarify our messages and discourage over-preparation for inspection.

We have also updated our 'how we inspect' document clarifying expectations of our inspectors, and you as governors or management committee members to ensure the process is based on mutual courtesy, respect and professional behaviour: [How We Inspect - 2024 maintained schools and PRUs \(gov.wales\)](#).

Since the summer of 2023 we have consulted on inspection arrangements across our sectors. The full analysis can be viewed [here](#). Overall, the proposed changes were well received.

Since the autumn term of 2023 we have been piloting our arrangements. Based on our consultation and pilots, a snapshot of our plans can be found below.

Maintained schools and pupil referral units

As mentioned by Professor Donaldson in his report [A learning inspectorate: listening, learning and changing together | Estyn \(gov.wales\)](#), we have explored ways our inspection work supports and complements self-evaluation and improvement within the system. We have also explored ways to engage more frequently with schools and PRUs, and to do so in a way which adds value and supports improvement.

This will be achieved by undertaking a core inspection and an interim visit to every school and PRU within the next 6 year cycle, 2024 - 2030.

We will continue to evolve our inspection arrangements and build on recent changes such as the increased focus on professional dialogue and strengthening our nominee model.

We are not changing our decision on the use of summative gradings – we will continue to inspect without making summative gradings but there will still be one overall judgement on whether the school or PRU requires follow-up. We are discontinuing the use of Estyn Review and will now only carry out our work with the two statutory categories of follow up – significant improvement and special measures. Further information about statutory follow up can be found in the [how we inspect](#).

The biggest change to our work will be the introduction of our interim visits which will provide an opportunity for inspectors and school leaders to work together to evaluate progress and support improvement. From September 2024, we will undertake interim visits which will last between a day or two days and will involve between one and four inspectors visiting, depending on the size of the school or PRU. These visits will normally reflect on the recommendations made during the previous core inspection or current school or PRU improvement or development plan.

Schools and PRUs do not need to prepare for an interim visit and will normally be notified around five days prior to the visit.

We may request a small number of documents including the school or PRUs latest school improvement plan and information about leadership roles and responsibilities. The reporting inspector will contact the school or PRU ahead of the interim visit to agree its focus and to explain what you can expect. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions.

Following an interim visit, we will provide feedback to the headteacher and publish a short letter on our website.

We are pleased to be able to share with members our updated guidance. Copies of the what we inspect and how we inspect can be found [here](#).

The guidance will allow our inspectors to have the flexibility to use the draft framework so they can report on the main strengths and areas for development for the individual provider, considering the provider's unique context.

Next steps

In preparation for the new inspection arrangements we have also been looking at ways of improving the inspection experience and other ways of driving improvement in the system.

We have reviewed our pre-inspection questionnaires making them more focussed and using plainer language.

We will continue to publish a parent / carer version of our inspection reports and we are exploring ways of presenting and disseminating the reports in different ways.

We will launch our new website to coincide with the start of the inspection cycle. A key focus of the new website will be to improve the user experience for our stakeholders for example:

- improved navigation and search tool to help share good and best practice

- present useful resources to drive improvement in a more intuitive way
- search function which yields more relevant results for practitioners
- means of finding inspection reports with greater ease, especially for parent and carers

We will hold training sessions for our external inspectors ahead of us rolling out our arrangements ready for September 2024.

Enquiries

Should you have any questions relating our plans for the inspection from September 2024, please contact rhidian.dafydd@estyn.gov.wales