Estyn

Guidance for Inspectors

What we inspect (2024 – 2030):

Further education

This guidance in also available in Welsh.

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Introduction to 'What we inspect'

This handbook sets out what inspectors need to consider when evaluating the three inspection areas in Further Education (FE). It explains 'What we inspect'. The guidance is essential reading for reporting inspectors and all other members of the inspection team, including the nominee. It may also be helpful for anyone who wants to better understand our approach to inspection. There is a separate handbook entitled 'How we inspect' that explains the inspection process and methodology.

The three inspection areas are set out below:

IA1 – Teaching and learning

IA2 - Well-being, care, support and guidance

IA3 - Leading and improving

There is further information about inspections on our website www.estyn.gov.wales

Evaluating each inspection area (IA)

Inspection teams will not give overall grades for each inspection area. However, they will provide a robust and thorough evaluation of the college's further education provision and its impact on learners' learning and well-being.

Inspectors will always include clear evaluations in relation to the main aspects in each inspection area, as exemplified below. However, what inspectors report on within each inspection area may differ depending on the context and relative significance of what they find at each FE college. Inspectors may report 'by exception'. This means that they may report on some aspects only where there are particular strengths or areas for improvement.

Where inspectors identify any interesting or innovative practice that is worthy of sharing more widely, they will include a short 'spotlight on…' within the report (a short paragraph). We will showcase a range of these spotlights on our website. Where inspectors identify serious shortcomings in one or more inspection areas, follow-up activity will normally be arranged for the FE college. There is further guidance about follow-up activity in 'How we inspect'.

The inspection report

Following an inspection, each further education college will receive a report. The reports will be published on the Estyn website. Publication dates can be found on the website. The following outlines what is included in each section of the report.

About the FE college

This section of the report will be brief and contain only factual background information about the college and will not contain any evaluation of the provision. The reporting inspector will normally agree the content of this section with the college during the inspection and during the factual check of the draft report prior to publication. Data presented will be the most recent verified and published national

data, with the sources acknowledged in footnotes. If there is disagreement about the content of this section, the reporting inspector will make the final decision about what to include in the report. This section will contain brief information on:

- the size, nature and locations of the FE college's campuses and facilities
- any significant changes since the last inspection,
- the range and volume of vocational and academic provision, including course levels and any specialist provision
- the number of full and part time learners on courses of further education at the college
- the background and circumstances of learners, such as the number of learners with individual development plans, the number of learners from Black, Asian and ethnic minoritiy backgrounds and the proportion living in socio-economically disadvantaged contexts
- the linguistic background of learners, including the proportion of learners who identify themselves as Welsh speakers.
- The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff directly employed by the college
- the ownership of the college, such as those operating as stand-alone further education corporations or wholly owned subsidiaries of higher education institutions
- the date of appointment of the CEO or principal
- the month/year of the college's previous inspection

If appropriate, where the college has a religious character, the context should include the sentence: 'Estyn does not inspect denominational religious education or the religious content of collective worship for a college with a religious character. Instead, the governing body arranges for denominational religious education and collective worship to be inspected separately.'

Range of provision included in the inspection

FE college inspections evaluate nearly all 16-19 and post-19 learning programmes funded as further education provision, including non-prescribed higher education and professional courses supported through further education funding. ESOL and adult basic skills provision is inspected through adult learning in the community inspections and will not normally be evaluated as part of a further education college inspection.

Summary

This section provides a summary overview of the main findings in the report

Recommendations

Recommendations should come directly from the content of the report, identify what needs to improve and be written in priority order.

What happens next

The 'What happens next' section will set out what the college needs to do following the inspection. In all cases, leaders will be expected to respond to the recommendations by putting in place appropriate actions to make the improvements identified by the inspection team.

This section will explain if the provision requires follow-up. The reasons for the type of follow up should be clear in the main body of the report

Additional information

This section will include a statement on the following item:

Safeguarding arrangements

Statement to indicate whether the provider's arrangements for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults give no cause for concern, or whether there are causes for concern.

Evidence base of the report

Inspectors use a wide range of evidence to make sure that their findings are valid, accurate and reliable. This section of the report will explain the sources of evidence that they used as well as the range of activities that they carried out during their visit.

Inspection areas

The following section explains what each inspection area covers and what inspectors need to keep in mind when evaluating each one. The inspection areas are numbered 1 – 3, but they are all equally important.

1. Teaching and Learning	2. Well-being, care, support and guidance	3. Leading and improving
How effectively the college supports the learning of all learners, including those at risk of adverse outcomes, for example those learners affected by poverty, with ALN or other identified barriers to make progress, in terms of: **1.1** The standards of learners' knowledge, understanding and skills, including their Welsh language skills **1.2** Learners' attitudes to learning **1.3** The quality of learning experiences, teaching and assessment	How effectively the college supports the well-being of all learners, including those at risk of adverse outcomes, for example those learners affected by poverty, with ALN or other identified barriers to make progress, in terms of: **2.1** The impact on learners' well-being and personal development **2.2** The effectiveness of learner support, advice and guidance to help learners develop as individuals and overcome any disadvantage they may face **2.3** The effectiveness of safeguarding practices and the safeguarding culture	How effective leadership and management is in terms of: **3.1** Strategic direction and operational management **3.2** Self-evaluation and improvement **3.3** Provision planning and oversight **3.4** Workforce development and professional learning

There is a series of supplementary guidance documents available on our website. These provide further information about our approaches to inspecting various aspects of this framework.

Framework for the inspection of Further Education colleges

Across the inspection framework, inspectors will consider the aspects in relation to the impact they have on all learners' learning and well-being.

Inspection Area 1 Teaching and learning

How effectively the college supports the learning of all learners, including those at risk of adverse outcomes, for example those learners affected by poverty, with ALN or other identified barriers to make progress, in terms of:

1.1   The standards of learners' knowledge, understanding and skills, including their Welsh language skills

1.2   Learners' attitudes to learning

1.3   The quality of learning experiences, teaching and assessment

1.1   The standards of learners' knowledge, understanding and skills, including their Welsh language skills

(Note : these bullets are in more of a chronological order of learning rather than a hierarchy of importance)

Inspectors should consider how well learners:

- recall previous learning
- develop thinking skills
- acquire new knowledge, understanding and skills
- develop practical skills where appropriate including subject or vocation specific skills and craft
- apply their knowledge, skills and experience to new contexts
- demonstrate creativity, including creative problem solving
- develop their speaking and listening, reading and writing skills
- develop numeracy and digital skills
- develop their use of Welsh to support their future careers and social interactions
- achieve strong qualification outcomes at a suitable level and grade where relevant
- progress to positive destinations in education, training, employment, or independent living

1.2   Learners' attitudes to learning

Inspectors should consider the degree to which learners:

- develop confidence and are motivated to learn
- show interest in their work
- sustain concentration
- engage in tasks and bring them to completion
- persevere when they face difficulties or seek other solutions

- stretch and challenge themselves
- understand the ways that they as individuals learn most effectively, and make the most of this to further their progress
- demonstrate strong team working skills
- are able to work independently and collaboratively with others
- consider and build upon the contributions of others
- learn from their mistakes
- use feedback from their teachers and others to further progress their learning
- engage with new experiences and ideas
- develop their employability and career progression skills

1.3   The quality of learning experiences, teaching and assessment

Inspectors should consider the extent to which teachers and other practitioners:

- ensure that teaching strategies and learning activities are aligned to the needs and abilities of learners
- challenge and have high expectations of all learners based on a secure understanding of their abilities
- meet the support needs of all learners, including those with ALN, based on a secure understanding of their abilities and aspirations and informed by their individual development plans where relevant
- plan to meet the requirements of each learning programme
- have clear objectives for learning
- use a range of approaches and resources to engage and challenge
- use questioning to draw out and develop learners' responses and gauge their understanding
- give clear instructions and explanations
- motivate and direct learners
- make their sessions stimulating, engaging and productive
- help learners develop and apply a wide range of skills and knowledge including transferable employability skills
- provide verbal and written feedback to help learners to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
- provide learners with opportunities to influence how and what they learn where appropriate
- track and keep records on the progress of each learner and report on these clearly
- ensure that assessments are valid, timely, accurate and reliable
- ensure that learners regularly review their own learning, understand their progress, and are involved in setting their own learning targets; including the use of person-centred approaches for learners with ALN
- work with technical, learning and other support staff members to support learners' progress

Across the inspection area, inspectors should consider the impact on the following groups of learners:

- learners from different ethnic minority groups and traveller communities

- learners who are experiencing poverty
- learners with disabilities
- learners with medical needs, including those with mental health needs
- young parents and pregnant learners
- young carers
- care leavers and looked after young people
- learners of both sexes and differing gender identities
- lesbian, gay, and bisexual learners
- learners with English as an additional language
- migrant workers
- refugees and asylum seekers
- young offenders and adult offenders
- learners educated otherwise than at school
- digitally deprived learners
- learners with low attendance, engagement or at risk of falling behind in their studies who may be targeted for additional support
- learners with different types of ALN
- learners with Basic Skills needs
- learners, relative to others, in need of improving literacy, numeracy and digital skills who do not receive support
- more able and talented learners

Inspection Area 2 Well-being, care, support and guidance

How effectively the college supports the wellbeing of all learners, including those at risk of adverse outcomes, for example those learners affected by poverty, with ALN or other identified barriers to make progress, in terms of:

2.1   The impact on learners' well-being and personal development

2.2   The effectiveness of learner support, advice and guidance to help learners develop as individuals and overcome any disadvantage they may face

2.3 The effectiveness of safeguarding practices and the safeguarding culture

2.1 The impact on learners' well-being and personal development

Inspectors should consider the degree to which learners:

- feel safe, secure and free from abuse
- feel that the college listens and responds to them
- attend their planned learning activities and sessions regularly
- manage their commitments and prioritise their time effectively
- demonstrate self-awareness
- take on leadership roles and responsibilities
- develop as ethical, informed citizens
- respect and value diversity
- contribute to different communities and play a full part in college life
- recognise and value healthy relationships
- recognise and respond appropriately to damaging or unhealthy behaviours

- make healthy choices relating to diet, physical activity and emotional well-being, including online safety
- are considerate and supportive of their peers, their teachers, and others
- conduct themselves responsibly and respectfully in all forums, including online
- present a professional, positive image to others
- demonstrate resilience in wider aspects of life as well as their learning
- are ambitious and confident

2.2 The effectiveness of learner support, advice and guidance to help learners develop as individuals and overcome any disadvantage they may face

Inspectors should consider how well the college:

- provides support for learners' physical and mental health and well-being
- supports all learners' emotional and social needs so that they can enjoy their learning and benefit from the opportunities that it offers
- ensures the regular attendance and punctuality of learners for planned learning activities and sessions
- promotes, supports and encourages positive behaviour of learners
- tracks and monitors indicators of learners' progress and well-being, including attendance, engagement and behaviour
- identifies relevant issues and responds appropriately to the outcomes of tracking and monitoring, for example via intervention strategies such as tutoring, mentoring, coaching or counselling
- works in partnerships with other organisations to provide effective support for learners, including securing the services of specialist agencies where appropriate
- provides responsive support based on the progress and well-being of vulnerable learners, such as those with disabilities or ALN, those affected by poverty and disadvantage, those with caring responsibilities and learners who face other barriers to learning, including personal, domestic, transport and health challenges
- makes provision for learners with ALN in relation to their individual needs and abilities
- supports learners with a history of behavioural and engagement issues to develop appropriate behaviours and attitudes to learning
- supports more able and talented (MAT) learners to achieve their potential both within and beyond their formal programmes of learning
- helps learners to understand issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion, and develop values of tolerance and respect
- develops learners' knowledge and understanding of harassment, discrimination and extremism
- challenges stereotypes in attitudes, choices and expectations
- promotes learners' understanding of healthy relationships and the impacts of sexual harassment
- helps learners to develop an understanding of their culture, the local community and the wider world
- helps learners, including those from vulnerable and minority groups, take on responsibilities and play a part in the wider community
- promotes healthy lifestyle choices including healthy eating and drinking, issues of

substance misuse, online safety, mental health and workload management
- provides impartial guidance and advice about the full range of education and training pathways available to them, including before they join the college and as they prepare to progress to further education, higher education or training
- provides impartial guidance and advice, either directly or via external agencies, about their career options and the world of work
- guides them as they prepare to transition to the next phase of learning, employment, and independent living where relevant

2.3 The effectiveness of safeguarding practices and the safeguarding culture

Inspectors should consider how effectively the college's safeguarding arrangements:

- promote safe practices and a culture of safety
- ensure that all learners are protected on-site, off-site and online
- identify learners aged under 18 and vulnerable adults in need or at risk of significant harm
- ensure safe recruitment practices
- check and record the suitability of staff and others who are in contact with learners
- facilitate appropriate safeguarding referrals
- incorporate policies and procedures that comply with Welsh Government statutory requirements and guidance
- the college has appropriate policies, procedures and reporting arrangements in relation to physical interventions and withdrawal
- there is a suitable level of security of the college buildings and site
- prevent and address discrimination, bullying, harassment and sexual harassment
- develops learners' knowledge and understanding of emotionally damaging or unsafe behaviours, for example grooming, sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying and extremism
- ensure learners are kept safe from the dangers of radicalisation
- ensure all staff know how to respond to safeguarding issues
- ensure relevant safeguarding training for the designated safeguarding lead officer and lead governor, and other staff where appropriate
- use intelligence about safeguarding matters, both within the college's own provision and that of any delivery partners or sub-contractors
- involve senior leaders and governors to oversee and quality assure safeguarding

Inspectors should ensure that:

- arrangements for safeguarding learners meet requirements and give no cause for concern
- where arrangements are a serious cause for concern, inspectors include a recommendation in the report and that Estyn send a well-being letter to the college asking them to outline how they will address the shortcoming(s).

Inspection Area 3 Leading and improving

How effective leadership and management is in terms of:

3.1   Strategic direction and operational management

3.2   Self-evaluation and improvement

3.3   Provision planning and oversight

3.4   Workforce development and professional learning

Inspectors should consider the aspects below in light of the difference they make to learners' progress, well-being and development.

3.1 Strategic direction and operational management

Inspectors should consider how effectively leaders:

- have communicated a clear vision, appropriate aims, strategic objectives, plans and policies that focus on meeting learner needs
- work collaboratively to drive forward strategic priorities and improvement
- develop an effective, engaged team of staff
- set high expectations for staff, learners and themselves
- model and promote professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to the college
- ensure that they and staff at all levels understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities effectively
- ensure that they and all staff understand and promote the college's safeguarding culture
- monitor and manage the performance of delivery partners and sub-contractors, relating to learning , teaching, wellbeing, support and guidance and leadership
- balance immediate, short-term needs with the long term needs of learners, the local community and Wales
- prevent problems from occurring or quickly implement remedial actions when problems do occur
- ensure the progress of all learners, leading to strong outcomes and positive progression, including for learners with disabilities and ALN
- reduce the impact of poverty and disadvantage on learner well-being, attainment and progression
- ensure that spending decisions and wider financial planning link to strategic priorities and improvement planning
- ensure the quality and level of staffing and learning resources to deliver the planned provision effectively
- ensure that appropriate accommodation and facilities are available and used effectively and efficiently to support teaching, learning, assessment and well-being
- consider the costs of existing learning programmes and activities and keep them under review
- know the scale of any surplus or deficit relative to the college's budget

- ensure that any spending trends significantly above or below the annual delegated budget are appropriate
- ensure that additional funding received for specific purposes, such as to support learners with specific needs including disability or ALN, are used effectively and as intended
- promote the use of the Welsh language and the development of Welsh language skills
- plan how to use new and emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, effectively to improve the college's work

and how well governors:

- understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities
- know the college's strengths and areas for improvement
- influence and understand the college's strategic priorities
- support and challenge senior leaders as they work to improve the college or maintain high standards

3.2 Self-evaluation and improvement

Inspectors should consider how well leaders and managers:

- gather and analyse first-hand evidence to inform evaluation of the college's work
- know the college's strengths and areas for improvement across the organisation
- collaborate with appropriate partners and stakeholders, as well as with learners themselves, to evaluate and secure improvements
- ensure that identified priorities for improvement link to the outcomes of self-assessment
- define relevant and measurable actions for improvement with suitable timescales and allocate responsibility for their delivery
- ensure that improvement priorities are supported by the suitable allocation of resources
- have a strong track-record in making improvements that have a positive impact on learners' well-being, learning, outcomes and progression
- secure improvements based on the recommendations from previous Estyn inspections or from strategic partners
- work to meet national, regional and local priorities, including securing improvements that will help address the climate emergency and increase the use of Welsh

3.3 Provision planning and oversight

Inspectors should consider how effectively leaders and managers ensure that provision:

- supports the vocational, academic and personal development, as appropriate, of the full range of learners
- is reviewed and planned strategically in collaboration with relevant providers, stakeholders and partnerships (including schools, local authorities and regional skills partnerships) to ensure that a coherent provision offer is in place locally and

regionally that meets the needs of learners, employers and communities
- includes a wide range of engaging and challenging programmes of learning aligned to learners' abilities and aspirations, with clear progression routes to education, employment or training
- includes work related experience to develop vocational and employability skills
- caters for specific groups e.g. those with advanced or little knowledge and skills, and those with ALN or who are EAL/ESOL
- caters for learners with complex needs so that they develop independence, communication skills and decision making to help them prepare for their next steps
- is in place for literacy, numeracy and digital skills development, including integration into vocational, academic or wider experiences
- supports the development of Welsh language skills and promotes the use of Welsh including the advantages of being bi/multi-lingual
- includes learning activities that reflect the cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity of Wales
- includes additional learning opportunities e.g. visits, skills competitions, additional qualifications and charitable work

3.4 Workforce development and professional learning

Inspectors should consider how effectively leaders and managers:

- manage staff performance to help them improve their practice
- identify and facilitate the sharing of good practice
- address issues of underperformance in a robust but supportive way
- have established a culture and ethos of supporting professional learning for all staff
- ensure that all staff participate in valuable professional learning and performance management activities
- evaluate the impact of professional learning on learners' progress and well-being
- encourage and support staff to work with other organisations to improve their practice and update their vocational skills and technical knowledge
- consider and support the well-being of staff, including workload considerations and the extent to which leaders consider the impact of any new or revised work requirements