

Guidance for Inspectors

How we inspect

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)
From October 2023

This guidance is also available in Welsh.



Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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Introduction

Purpose of the guidance handbook 'How we inspect'

This handbook sets out the inspection process for the inspections of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) from September 2022. It explains **how** we inspect. The guidance is essential reading for reporting inspectors and all other members of the inspection team. It may also be useful for providers to support their understanding of the inspection mind-set and methodologies.

The guidance should be read alongside '[What we inspect](#)', which outlines the inspection framework. Where the inspection identifies practice worthy of dissemination, inspectors will invite the partnership to write a case study that we will share on our website. Where the inspection identifies important concerns in relation to standards, quality of education and training or leadership and management, we will arrange follow-up activity to support improvement. Guidance on the different types of follow-up activity is available on page 14 of this handbook.

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

Legal basis for the inspections of initial teacher education

Under section 18C of the Education Act 1994 (inserted by paragraph 13 of Schedule 14 to the Education Act 2005), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales may inspect and report on:

- any initial training of teachers, specialist teaching assistants, for providers; or
- any in-service training of such teachers or assistants, which is provided by a training provider in Wales.

Our inspection work also takes account of legislation governing the inspectorate and educational providers themselves including, for example the Welsh Language Act.

Accreditation of partnerships that provide ITE

Under the Education Workforce Council (Accreditation of Initial Teacher Training) Additional Functions) Order 2017, Education Workforce Council (EWC) has statutory responsibility for the accreditation of each ITE programme in accordance with criteria specified by the Welsh Government.¹ Estyn has a vitally important role in maintaining and enhancing quality in ITE. We will inform EWC if provision is judged not to satisfy accreditation requirements. Procedures for the accreditation of new ITE programmes, monitoring compliance of accredited programmes against Welsh Government criteria and the withdrawal of accreditation are available from EWC on request or on its website (www.ewc.wales).

¹ The Education Workforce Council (Accreditation of Initial Teacher Training) (Wales) Regulations 2017

Policy background

While not governed directly by the following policies and conventions, the guidance handbook takes account of the following:

- the review of teacher training in Wales as set out in 'Training tomorrow's teachers' (Welsh Government, March 2015)
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/teaching-tomorrow%E2%80%99s-teachers.pdf>
- Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales (Welsh Government, February 2018)
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/criteria-for-the-accreditation-of-initial-teacher-education-programmes-in-wales.pdf>
- Professional standards for teaching and leadership (Welsh Government, 2017)
<https://hwb.gov.wales/professional-development/professional-standards>
- the review of the curriculum in partnerships as set out in 'Successful Futures' (Welsh Government, February 2015)
- the Welsh Government's mission for education in Wales from 2017 to 2021
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/education-in-wales-our-national-mission.pdf>
- the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
<https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf>
- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the Welsh Government in 2004 as the basis for policy-making for children and young people <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

Part 1: Inspection arrangements

Introduction

This section is set out in a way that reflects the sequence of work before, during and after a core inspection.

The reporting inspector (RI) is responsible for the conduct and management of the inspection and for the inspection report. While this guidance focuses mainly on the role of the reporting inspector, all team members must comply with the same inspection requirements.

Principles of inspection

Inspection teams work according to a number of key principles. They:

- take a learner-led approach to inspection
- always focus strongly on the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning
- consider everything in the 'what' and 'how' we inspect guidance documents, 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 responsive to the needs of all learners
- ensure that evaluations are secure, reliable, valid and based on first-hand evidence
- involve the provider fully in the inspection process, including the opportunity for the provider to select a nominee
- use the provider'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 provider
- gain the perspective of learners and other stakeholders
- apply the principle of equality for Welsh and English to all our inspection work.

The Inspection Mindset

Estyn's approach to inspection is:

- **Fair and impartial** – this means that we work to be independent, objective and balanced. We are robust and consistent in our work. We weigh the evidence and its significance to provide an honest, credible and accurate view of the provider's strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Supportive** – we work to guide providers to implement improvements that benefit learners. We encourage innovation and recognise good intentions. We are friendly but always professional in our approach. We support educational reform. We work hard to develop meaningful relationships with providers and local and regional organisations.
- **Reflective** – we are open-minded. We listen to a wide range of stakeholders and reflect on their responses. We are thoughtful, measured and careful. We plan opportunities to think carefully about the inspection findings and to discuss them with others in the team.
- **Transparent** – we are well informed and communicate clearly, directly and succinctly. We use efficient and effective inspection methodologies to respond to the provider's unique situation. We plan inspection activity and report on strengths and weaknesses in ways that reflect the particular circumstances of each individual provider. As a result, our actions promote trust and respect.

Code of conduct for inspectors

Our code of conduct explains how we embody the inspection mind-set through their actions. Inspectors should uphold the highest possible standards in their work. All inspectors have to meet the standards of Estyn's code of conduct.

When conducting the inspection, inspectors will:

- carry out their work with integrity, courtesy and due sensitivity
- evaluate the work of the provider objectively
- report honestly, fairly and impartially
- communicate clearly and openly
- act in the best interests of learners
- respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of their work

It is important that we evaluate the effectiveness of provision and leadership on their impact and not on the basis of any preferences for particular methods. The key to the evaluations is whether the methods and organisation are fit for the purpose in supporting all student teachers to achieve high standards and strong levels of well-being.

Inspectors should inform Estyn of any perceived or actual conflicts of interest as soon as they receive notification that they are part of the partnership's inspection team.

Expectations of inspectors

Our expectations of inspectors explains how we embody our mind-set through our

actions. Inspectors should uphold the highest possible standards in their work. All inspectors have to meet the expected standards of behaviour and conduct.

When conducting engagement with a provider, inspectors will:

- be courteous and professional
- establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries when talking to both children and adults
- carry out their work with integrity, respect and due sensitivity
- take all reasonable steps to prevent undue anxiety and to minimise stress during inspection activity
- evaluate the work of the provider objectively using clear and robust evidence
- report honestly, fairly and impartially without fear or favour
- communicate clearly and openly
- act in the best interests of learners
- respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests

It is important that we evaluate the effectiveness of provision and leadership on their impact and not on the basis of any preferences for particular methods. The key to our evaluations is whether the methods and organisation are fit for the purpose in supporting all pupils to achieve high standards and strong levels of wellbeing.

Inspectors should inform Estyn of any perceived or actual conflicts of interest whenever they receive notification of engagement, for example that they are part of a provider's inspection team.

Expectations of partnerships

In order that inspection and regulation are constructive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a professional working environment based on mutual courtesy, respect and professional behaviour. We expect inspectors to uphold Estyn's Code of Conduct, but we also expect providers to:

- be courteous and professional, treating inspectors and inspection support staff with respect
- act in the best interests of learners
- provide evidence – or access to evidence - that enables inspectors to conduct the inspection in an open, honest and objective way
- recognise that inspectors need to observe practice and to talk to staff, learners and other stakeholders without the presence of a manager or senior leader
- work with inspectors to take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the reporting inspector and other inspectors
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors in a timely and suitable manner through the nominee
- give due regard to the health and safety, and wellbeing of inspectors while on the premises
- maintain the confidentiality of meetings and inspection findings until the final

publication of the report

- ensure that inspection teams have access to a private area to discuss inspection evidence and hold confidential discussions

Any CCTV and recording equipment should be brought to the attention of the team during the initial team meeting.

Safeguarding, including health, safety and well-being issues

Inspectors will carry out inspections in accordance with the Estyn's guidance on inspecting safeguarding. If they observe anything that they think constitutes, in their opinion, a danger to the safety of staff, visitors, students or pupils, inspectors should alert managers at the provision.

If an inspector becomes aware of a safeguarding allegation/suspicion in respect of a child, young person or vulnerable adult, they should follow the procedures set out in the current version of '[Estyn's policy and procedures for safeguarding](#)', which is available on our website.

In all cases, inspectors should make a note of the issue and that they have informed managers. Inspectors should report on obvious risks relating to health, safety and well-being under inspection area 4 (Care, support and guidance). Where these risks are a serious concern, inspectors should include a short comment in the report's text and a recommendation in the report. We will send a well-being letter to the partnership asking them to outline how they will address the shortcoming.

Approach to inspection

The progress students make from their starting points and the outcomes they achieve are key measures of the quality of the education they have received and of the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the partnership. Inspection will focus on the needs of students, their attitudes to learning and the impact that the partnership makes on supporting their progress and the outcomes they achieve.

The number of inspectors and the number of days they spend at the partnership will vary according to the size and context of the partnership.

We will carry out inspections in line with our [Welsh Language Policy](#), available from our website.

The Virtual Inspection Room

We will use an electronic system, called the 'Virtual Inspection Room' (VIR), for managing many aspects of the inspection. It is a web-based system that allows providers to upload information before the inspection and to download guidance from us about the inspection process. The VIR is also the place where partnership leaders and nominees can access the post-inspection questionnaires (PIQs).

The inspection team

There are different roles within the inspection team.

Team member	Explanation	Role
Reporting inspector (RI), may also be referred to as the lead inspector	<p>The RI for an inspection will be one of the following:</p> <p>HMI (Her Majesty’s Inspector of Education and Training in Wales) – HMIs are appointed by the crown. They are civil servants employed directly by Estyn.</p> <p>AI (Additional Inspector) – AIs normally join Estyn temporarily, for example on secondment from schools and other providers</p>	The RI leads and manages the inspection team. They liaise with the partnership and the team ahead of the inspection, and quality assure their team’s work. The RI is the first point of reference for everyone during the on-site part of the inspection process
Team inspectors (TI)	<p>The number of team inspectors 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 suitably qualified. One member of the team may be designated ‘deputy RI’. The deputy RI supports the RI with planning and coordination of the inspection and the interim and final feedback to the partnership.</p>	Team inspectors may take responsibility for gathering evidence to inform the team’s evaluation of different aspects of the inspection. The RI directs and manages the team inspectors’ work.
Peer inspector (PI)	<p>A peer inspector is a serving senior leader from another partnership who has completed Estyn’s peer inspector training and assessment. All inspection teams have at least one peer inspector as a team member. Consortia officers may also join inspection teams in this role.</p>	PIs also take responsibility for gathering evidence to inform the team’s evaluations. They are an integral part of the inspection team. The RI directs and manages PI’s work.
Nominee (from the provider being inspected)	<p>We will invite partnerships to select a senior member of staff, called the nominee, to work with the inspection team. In practice, nearly all partnerships accept the invitation, but it is not a requirement. The nominee should have sufficient seniority to act as a link between the partnership and the inspection team.</p>	Partnerships can access the guidance for nominees on preparing for the inspection from links within the initial contact form (ICF), completed by the Inspection Co-ordinator (IC) and available via the VIR.

Contacting the partnership before the inspection

The partnership will receive formal notification of the inspection eight weeks prior to the start of the inspection. To ensure that inspectors can deploy staff to the university-based and school-based parts of the inspection appropriately, we will ask all partnerships to provide us with their provisional timetables for the forthcoming academic year in the summer term.

Following this, the inspection co-ordinator will contact the partnership by telephone to set up the arrangements for the inspection. During this discussion, the inspection co-ordinator will:

- explain the purpose of the inspection and discuss an outline programme for the inspection
- discuss the specific information required before the inspection, including the completion by the partnership of a self-evaluation form on its provision for safeguarding and make the arrangements for receiving it in electronic form through the Virtual Inspection Room
- ask if there are any issues or risks the team should be aware of and request a general health and safety briefing for the team at the start of the inspection
- establish whether the partnership wishes to have a nominee and, if it does, agree the role of the nominee and explain the process for completing the nominee guidance
- discuss the links and guidance for the completion of the suite of online pre-inspection questionnaires (e.g. students, staff etc)
- arrange for the Vice Chancellor/s of the university or universities in the partnership to meet with the inspection team
- ensure that there are agreed procedures for addressing any concerns or complaints that might arise during the inspection
- organise any domestic arrangements, such as a base for the inspectors, parking and internet access
- set up the arrangements for feeding back the inspection findings
- agree the arrangements for completing the post-inspection questionnaire (PIQ)
- inform the partnership in writing, through the initial contact form, of the key inspection arrangements

The inspection co-ordinator will request the following information from the partnership through the Virtual Inspection Room as soon as possible after the formal notification of the inspection:

- key background information e.g. names of staff and information about their roles and responsibilities
- a copy of the most recent development or improvement plan
- details of the timetables for the periods of the inspection
- a copy of any recent information on the HEI(s) in the partnership available from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
- details of the partnership's confirmed university-based and school-based timetables for the period of the inspection.

Inspectors may ask the partnership to make samples of students' work from the

previous year available during the inspection.

When we notify partnerships of the inspection, they will receive information on when and how to access online questionnaire for student teachers and other stakeholders. The outcomes of the pre-inspection questionnaires will form part of the inspection evidence and support inspectors to form their evaluations of the partnership's work.

During the inspection, inspectors may interview a sample of student teachers with leadership or representative roles, other specific groups of student teachers and a sample of tutors, mentors or other staff involved in the delivery of the programme as part of their gathering of evidence.

In addition, inspectors may use information from the National Student Survey (NSS) or other surveys carried out by the ITE partnership as part of their normal procedures.

Planning the inspection and preparing the team

Soon after notification, the reporting inspector will contact the partnership to arrange a pre-inspection meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the arrangements for each phase of the inspection.

The reporting inspector will then plan the inspection and allocate responsibilities to members of the inspection team, taking into account the partnership's improvement priorities and any other information.

The reporting inspector will use the pre-inspection information to guide the initial inspection activity of the team. The reporting inspector will brief the team on arrival. The inspectorate will take into consideration any evidence from the QAA or the EWC where this is available and pertinent to the inspection.

Inspections involve observation of student teachers' teaching. Inspectors will also scrutinise student teachers' planning and assessments. Inspections also involve observation of the teaching provided by university tutors and school mentors, and other work with student teachers. We require partnerships to place a full plan of all the activities during the inspection weeks in the VIR, for all programmes and all academic years of a programme. The reporting inspector will plan the observations of teaching and learning, and the scrutiny of student teachers' work based on the information provided. Inspectors may also select a group of student teachers to track during the inspection. The sample will reflect the range of the partnership's work and support the investigation of emerging questions and areas of interest suggested by inspectors' initial and ongoing inspection work.

Inspectors will not usually observe student teachers who, in their final school experience, are judged likely to fail their programme. The partnership will, however, need to show inspectors evidence of how they have monitored the student teachers' progress and the support they have provided to help the student teachers to improve.

During the inspection

Initial team meeting

The initial inspection team meeting is likely to include:

- a health and safety briefing from the partnership
- a briefing from partnership leaders about the context of the partnership, including the impact of the pandemic
- a brief position statement from partnership leaders to set out the partnership's strategic priorities and its current stage of development
- a discussion with partnership leaders (led by the RI) about the improvement priorities identified by the partnership and the progress to date in its improvement work
- a discussion regarding how inspectors will be able to access important information, for example minutes of leadership meetings, or students' planning and assignments.

The RI will confirm these arrangements with the partnership during the pre-inspection phone call.

Gathering and reviewing inspection evidence

The team will plan the inspection so that they can cover the reporting requirements within the five inspection areas. The main forms of evidence are:

- samples of student teachers' work
- discussions with students, university and school tutors and mentors, leaders, managers, headteachers, senior university staff, and others
- observation of teaching and other activities, including evidence gathered through learning walks
- questionnaire responses
- documentary or electronic evidence, including information on students' performance and progress
- information from internal and external quality assurance reports, including those from external examiners, the EWC and the QAA where appropriate

The team will use direct observation of student teachers' work wherever possible to gather evidence to support their evaluations. Inspectors may select an additional sample of students' work, if required, to support their evaluations of a specific aspect.

Partnerships should make information available to the inspection team about the standards achieved by student teachers, particularly the results of any initial screening tests, audits and other relevant assessments. This will help us to evaluate students' progress, to come to a view about the standards students achieve compared to their starting-points and the way staff use the information from assessment to influence their planning, teaching and mentoring.

The team will need to consider stakeholders' views on the partnership and test out the validity of those views during the inspection. The voice of learners is a key

source of evidence for inspectors. Discussions with student teachers will provide an opportunity to explore students' knowledge and understanding of their work. It will also help inspectors to gauge how well the partnership supports student teachers and contributes to their progress and well-being.

In initial teacher education inspections, it is important that the reporting inspector holds regular meetings with the senior leaders of ITE to clarify inspection issues and the broad, emerging findings of the inspection team.

Recording inspection evidence

Inspectors will complete their evidence forms electronically as part of Estyn's digital system for collecting, collating and recording inspection findings.

Team meetings

The main purpose of team meetings is to arrive at an accurate, reliable, valid and corporate view of learning and the quality of provision and leadership. Meetings will provide opportunities for inspectors to:

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

Professional dialogue

Throughout the inspection, inspectors will engage in professional dialogue with practitioners. This dialogue may include meeting with individual tutors and mentors to discuss their planning and assessment of students' progress. Inspectors may want to meet with groups of staff from the support services who help students with their learning needs. Inspectors may decide to meet with leaders, either individually or as a group, to understand the impact of the partnership's leadership on bringing about improvements to students' outcomes. They may make arrangements to speak with the senior leaders of the partners organisations, Vice Chancellor/s of the university or universities, headteachers, or consortia managing directors about their views on and support for the partnership. Professional dialogue enables inspectors to gain first-hand evidence from practitioners that can be triangulated with other sources of evidence. The dialogue will provide emerging, interim findings on one aspect of the evidence base. These findings may be amended, on reflection, for example after scrutiny of students' work or talking to students or as the result of moderation within the team.

Normally, at the end of an observation of a taught session, inspectors will have a brief professional dialogue with the member of staff on the learning seen. It may be necessary, in some cases, to conduct this discussion later during the inspection.

At all times, the main focus of the professional dialogue should be on the students, the progress they make during the session and the standards they achieve. Inspectors should try to focus on any strengths or areas for development in relation to the specific work seen.

Due to the sharply focused nature of learning walks, and the spread of the activity across a number of sessions within a relatively short period of time, inspectors will not be in a position to offer professional dialogue to individual staff or students after learning walk activity.

It is reasonable for student teachers to expect inspectors to have a brief professional discussion following observation of their teaching. Inspectors must bear in mind that they are not inspecting the student teacher in isolation, but as part of the evidence of the ITE partnership's ability to provide quality provision. The inspector should, as far as possible, have this professional dialogue with the student teacher after they have observed the mentor or tutor feeding back. The inspector should not discuss any judgements with the student teacher or partnership staff, but focus on strengths and areas for improvement. The inspector should emphasise to the student that their observations are about students' teaching as a whole and will not have any bearing on their individual progress on their programme.

Interim feedback

At the end of each phase of the inspection, the reporting inspector will arrange to provide interim feedback summarising the emerging findings of the team to senior partnership leaders.

Formal feedback

At the end of the inspection, the team will provide oral feedback to leaders and managers. This meeting should include representatives of the senior leadership from the HEI/s, lead schools and any other partner organisations. There may be representation from the student teacher body, at the partnership's discretion. Estyn will invite a representative of the EWC to attend the final feedback 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 feedback meeting provides the opportunity for leaders and managers to hear and to reflect on the team's findings. The feedback should focus on the strengths and areas for improvement and the factors that contribute to them. The reporting inspector should explain to the partnership that issues may be raised and discussed, and factual matters may be corrected. The purpose of the meeting is for the partnership to understand rather than negotiate the inspection team's findings.

During the inspection, the team will consider if there is any effective practice that is worth sharing with other providers. Where this is the case, the reporting inspector will ask the partnership to prepare a case study (or studies – a maximum of two) for dissemination on our website.

During all core inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the partnership needs any follow-up activity. The reporting inspector will inform leaders if any follow-up activity is required.

All the evaluations and findings reported during an inspection, including the level of follow-up if appropriate, are provisional and subject to moderation and validation by HMCI. They are confidential to the partnership's staff and senior managers of the partner organisations. They should not be communicated beyond this group,

including via social media, until we publish the report on our website.

Complaints about the conduct of the inspection

If there are any issues about the conduct of the inspection overall or the conduct of individual inspectors, then the nominee should raise these directly and as soon as possible with the reporting inspector. The nominee should not wait until after the inspection but should raise any issues while the team is on site. In exceptional circumstances, the partnership may decide to contact Estyn directly, through the inspection co-ordinator, in order to speak with a senior manager. Issues occasionally arise due to misunderstandings and these can usually be resolved quickly and satisfactorily, close to the time when they occurred.

There is [guidance on our complaints handling procedures](#) on our website.

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 partnership.

When writing reports, inspectors should take account of Estyn's writing guidance, which is available on our website www.estyn.gov.wales.

We will publish reports bilingually, where partnerships have made this request, in line with our [Welsh language policy](#).

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

About the partnership and its programme/s

Summary

Recommendations

What happens next

Main evaluations

- 1 Learning
- 2 Well-being and attitudes to learning
- 3 Teaching and learning experiences
- 4 Care, support and guidance
- 5 Leadership and management

The evidence base of the inspection

We will produce the report within statutory timescales.

The factual accuracy check

We will give the partnership a late draft of the report to help check the factual accuracy of the content. The partnership will normally have five working days in which to consider the draft report and to identify any errors.

The focus of the check is on resolving any factual inaccuracies in the inspection report. It does not focus on the findings. There is further guidance for providers on the nature and scope of this check on our website.

Assuring the quality of inspections

We are committed to:

- effective selection, training, briefing, support and deployment of inspectors, including peer inspectors
- effective training, briefing and support to allow the nominee to play an active role
- regular dialogue with partnership leaders during inspection
- criteria and recording systems that comply with the inspection guidance
- careful review and analysis of evidence
- providing clear verbal feedback of the team's main findings and the detail for each inspection area
- producing accurate and well-presented reports

As part of our quality assurance procedures, we invite partnerships to complete a post-inspection questionnaire (PIQ). The questionnaire will be available in the VIR. Partnerships should complete the first part of the PIQ as soon as possible after the on-site inspection and submit it electronically to Estyn through the VIR system. They can complete the second part of the PIQ after the publication of the inspection report, again through the VIR system.

The reporting inspector will quality assure the inspection team's work in the first instance. We quality assure a sample of inspections through on-site visits. We assure the quality of all written inspection reports before they are published on our website. Our arrangements for assuring the quality of inspections are available on our website www.estyn.gov.wales.

Follow-up guidance

This guidance identifies the steps that inspection teams in ITE should take to help them to identify the most appropriate level of follow-up activity. It will be useful for partnerships to understand these procedures and the factors that inspection teams will consider when deciding on the most appropriate level of follow-up.

This guidance is flexible as we need to be responsive to the wide variety of situations that occur in partnerships as they improve after core inspections. We reserve the right to adapt the guidance to meet the needs of individual partnerships.

Guidance for inspectors on placing an initial teacher education partnership into follow-up

Background

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

There are two types of follow-up activity:

- 1. Causing significant concern and in need of re-inspection**
- 2. Enhanced Estyn engagement**

The activity involves increasing levels of intervention in proportion to need. The nature of the follow-up activity will vary according to the context of the partnership and depending on the aspects of the partnership's work that require improvement. The following information should be used as a guide.

The same quality assurance processes apply to follow-up work as to core inspections. The only judgement reported during any monitoring visit is whether a partnership continues to require follow-up activity. This decision is provisional and subject to moderation by HMCI. It is confidential to the partnership until the report is published.

1. Causing significant concern and in need of re-inspection

Guidance for inspectors about partnerships that may require re-inspection

On every inspection, the inspection team will consider whether the partnership is causing significant concern.

The potential reasons for identifying that a partnership is causing significant concern are:

- a high proportion of students underachieving or a considerable decline in achievement over time
- aspects of provision that do not enable students to meet the requirements of QTS successfully
- important issues raised by students about shortcomings in provision or leadership which have not been addressed
- a significant proportion of weak teaching or mentoring
- failure to address shortcomings identified during previous inspections or through other internal or external activity
- important weaknesses in leadership
- any other concern that presents a significant risk to the well-being or achievement of students, children or young people

The inspection team must report as they find, and be able to substantiate their judgements on the basis of sound evidence. If the evidence points to the conclusion that the partnership is causing significant concern, inspectors must make that judgement.

At all times, inspectors should remember that the main emphasis in ITE inspections is on the progress that student teachers make, the outcomes that they achieve and the quality of their well-being. The issues should be discussed as a matter of importance in team meetings. If there are significant weaknesses in the outcomes that students achieve, inspectors should consider carefully the quality of learning experiences and the efficiency and effectiveness of leaders.

In judging the extent to which senior leaders have the capacity to bring about improvements, inspectors will need to give attention to how well these leaders know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership. They should evaluate how well partnership leaders use the information from self-evaluation processes to take effective and appropriate decisions. Inspectors should also establish if senior leaders show the ability to tackle the weaknesses through the sense of purpose and direction they provide, and through decisions made and actions taken to address concerns. Discussions with senior leaders should provide evidence of how they are tackling these issues and if they are giving attention to the right things.

Senior leaders should be able to demonstrate that they know what quality of work they expect of student teachers and those they manage, and be able to communicate these expectations to colleagues.

In all circumstances, it is vital that inspectors evaluate the work of the partnership in the context in which it is currently operating. They should not be unduly influenced by

recently prepared plans for improvement that have yet to be implemented or the recent appointment of staff or schools to the partnership. This is because, in these cases, the effect or impact of improvements will not have taken place, and inspectors must judge outcomes rather than speculative or good intentions.

Team discussions should take account of any mitigating factors to ensure the validity and reliability of judgements before coming to a decision that a partnership is causing significant concern.

Procedures to be followed if the partnership is judged to be causing significant concern

If the partnership is judged to be causing significant concern, the RI should take the following steps:

- telephone and inform the appropriate inspection co-ordinator at Estyn before the partnership is told of the judgement – this should be before the final feedback to the partnership
- inform the Assistant Director or Strategic Director of the judgement (who will in turn inform HMCI)
- tell senior partnership leaders at the end of the inspection that the team has reached the judgement that the partnership is causing significant concern
- ask senior partnership leaders to inform the Vice Chancellor/s of the university / universities of this outcome.

Within five days of the end of the inspection, the RI will:

- complete the relevant section of the reporting judgement form (reporting JF)
- place the completed reporting JF in the inspection documents section of the VIR
- inform the designated IC by email and copy to the IC inbox at ic@estyn.gov.wales

HMCI, or HMI acting on behalf of HMCI, will scrutinise the work of the inspection team to check the judgement. The RI should ensure that all the evidence collected during the process of the inspection is available for scrutiny. HMCI has the power to call for any information required.

If HMCI does not agree with the RI's opinion, the reasons will be explained and they will be given the opportunity to discuss HMCI's decision and amend the report and summary by removing the opinion that the partnership is causing concern.

After the due process of internal challenge and moderation has been completed to secure the judgements, HMCI will notify Welsh Ministers that the partnership is causing significant concern. In exceptional circumstances, Estyn may wait until the partnership has responded to factual accuracy check stage of the process.

Reports and summaries for partnerships causing significant concern

The RI must make clear in the evidence base that, in their opinion, the partnership is not ensuring the provision of an acceptable standard of education and senior leaders lack the capacity to secure the necessary improvement, and therefore the partnership is causing significant concern. They must also make clear the main shortcomings which led to that judgement.

EWC's procedures for accreditation, monitoring compliance of accredited programmes against Welsh Government criteria or withdrawing accreditation are distinct from the arrangements for inspecting learning and the quality of provision. However, in most cases, where inspectors identify serious shortcomings in their evaluations and judge that the partnership is causing significant concern, it is also likely not to be meeting accreditation requirements. In this case, re-inspection and EWC's procedures for addressing non-compliance with accreditation criteria will proceed in parallel.

2. Enhanced Estyn Engagement

Guidance for inspectors about partnerships that may require enhanced engagement

Partnerships judged to be in need of enhanced engagement generally provide at least an adequate standard of education and training. However, there may be more minor aspects that require improvement. Enhanced engagement is a supportive process for partnerships that require additional help with their improvement journey.

Potential reasons for a partnership to be in need of enhanced engagement may be that:

- Students generally make good progress; however, a small proportion may make only adequate progress, or do not make sufficient progress in a few areas of their skills, knowledge and understanding
- A few aspects of the provision do not enable students to meet the standards for QTS successfully
- Student satisfaction with aspects of the provision is low
- A small proportion teaching or mentoring is ineffective
- There is slow progress to address minor aspects for improvement identified during previous inspections, or through other internal or external activity
- A few aspects of leadership require improvement, but not to the extent that this has a significant impact on outcomes

Procedures to be followed if the partnership is in need of enhanced Estyn engagement

If the partnership is judged to be in need of enhanced engagement, the reporting inspector (RI) should:

- telephone and inform the appropriate assistant director and inspection co-ordinator at Estyn before the partnership is told of the judgement, no later than the end of the inspection
- tell the partnership leaders at the end of the inspection that the team has reached the judgement that the partnership is in need of enhanced engagement

HMCI, or HMI acting on behalf of HMCI, will scrutinise the inspection evidence (in the VIR) to quality assure the team's evaluations. HMCI has the power to call for any further information required.

Subject to moderation, the inspectorate will write a letter to the partnership, copied to the EWC, identifying the areas that need improvement.

Estyn will work with the partnership to support any improvement planning. The exact nature of this support will be planned in a tailored way to suit the circumstances of the partnership.

Estyn will liaise with the EWC to discuss any aspects of potential non-compliance that have been identified during the inspection. In the case of any non-compliance, Estyn will work with the EWC to minimise any burden or duplication.

Promoting excellence in initial teacher education

Estyn is keen to promote excellence in ITE. If the inspection team has identified significant strengths in outcomes, provision or leadership and management, then Estyn will work with the partnership to share its work with other ITE partnerships.