



# Guidance for Inspectors

## How we inspect in Welsh for Adults



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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## 1. Introduction

### **Purpose of the guidance handbook ‘How we inspect’**

This handbook sets out our approach to inspecting Welsh for Adults providers from 2024. 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 inspection arrangements, the inspection mind-set and methodologies.

The guidance should be read alongside [‘What we inspect’](#) guidance for Welsh for Adults providers, which outlines the inspection framework for full inspections. Providers can use this guidance to see how full inspections work and to help them in strengthening their own self-assessment and improvement processes. For themed inspections, we will write to providers annually outlining the focus for the year and our approach.

Where the inspection identifies practice worth sharing, inspectors will include a spotlight on this practice as part of the inspection report. We will showcase a range of these spotlights and, in some cases, more in-depth case studies on our website. Recommendations should give the provider a clear and specific indication of the areas for improvement that it will need to address. The progress against recommendations will be monitored in the subsequent inspection of the National Centre for Learning Welsh. Inspectors may also consider progress against recommendations within periodic evaluations of providers’ work.

There is further information about inspections on our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

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.

### **Legal basis for the inspection of Welsh for Adults providers**

In the post-16 sector, the Learning and Skills Act (2000) requires the Chief Inspector to report on:

- the quality of the education and training provided
- the standards achieved by those receiving education and training
- the quality of leadership and management, including whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used to provide value for money

## 2. Inspection arrangements

### Introduction

The Welsh for Adults sector consists of Learn Welsh providers who are funded and quality-assured by the National Centre for Learning Welsh. During the 2016-2024 inspection cycle, we inspected each of the Learn Welsh providers once, using a common core inspection framework and applying summative gradings. In addition, the National Centre for Learning Welsh was inspected twice, without using summative gradings: half-way through the cycle and then at the end of the cycle.

During the 2024-2030 inspection cycle we will adopt a more flexible inspection model that will allow us to be agile in our response to a rapidly evolving sector. The range of inspection models we will use includes:

- Themed inspections
- Periodic evaluations of individual providers' work
- Full inspections of a sample of Learn Welsh providers
- Inspections of the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

### Themed inspections

This will constitute the main focus of our inspection activity with the sector. Each year, we will produce **national reports** on a range of themes relevant to the sector with the aim of highlighting effective practice and helping the sector to improve. We will visit or survey a sample of providers as part of this work and will normally visit all providers at least twice during a 3-year period. We will deploy HMI and peer inspectors during these activities. We will confirm our theme(s) for each academic year during the previous summer term. We will write to providers annually outlining the focus for the year and the approach we will take.

### Evaluations of providers' work

In addition to publishing national reports, we will write a letter to providers at the end of each 3-year period outlining our evaluations of specific aspects of their work. We will publish these **individual provider letters**. These will be based on evidence gathered as part of our themed inspections and will ensure that providers, learners and other stakeholders receive an evaluation of the effectiveness of the provision, in place of a full inspection. They may also include a brief evaluation of progress on recommendations made during the provider's last inspection report.

### Full inspections

We will also inspect a sample of Learn Welsh providers using our **full inspection** framework. The 'What we inspect' document provides this framework which uses three inspection areas.

1. Teaching and learning
2. Well-being, care, support and guidance
3. Leading and improving

We will not use summative gradings for these inspections.

### **Inspections of the National Centre for Learning Welsh**

We will inspect the National Centre for Learning Welsh at least once during the cycle. The inspection framework for the National Centre is designed to reflect the evolving nature of the Centre's work. During these inspections we will consider progress made against recommendations from individual provider full inspections and themed inspection activity. We will not use summative gradings.

### **Principles of our work**

We expect our inspectors to work according to a number of key principles. They will:

- ensure that inspection is of high quality and responsive to the needs of all learners
- ensure that judgements are secure, reliable, valid and based on first-hand evidence
- involve providers fully in the inspection process, including, for full inspections, the opportunity for the provider to select a nominee
- for full inspections, use the provider's improvement priorities as the starting point for the inspection and to identify key issues for investigation in order to make judgements 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 learners', staff and governors' (where appropriate) perspective and that of other stakeholders
- apply the principle of equality for Welsh and English to all our inspection work, providing bilingual services whenever they are appropriate
- be constructive in identifying and supporting providers with important aspects or areas that require improvement

### **Inspection mind-set**

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 areas for improvement in ways that reflect the particular circumstances of each individual provider. As a result, our actions promote trust and respect.

### **Expectations of inspectors**

Our code of conduct explains how we embody the inspection mind-set through our 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 any inspection activity, inspectors will:

- be courteous and professional
- establish and maintain appropriate professional boundaries when talking to both learners 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 the evaluations is whether the methods and organisation are fit for the purpose in supporting all learners 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 an inspection team.

### **Expectations of providers**

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 and their staff 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 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
- recognise that inspectors need to observe practice and talk to staff, learners and other stakeholders without the presence of a manager or senior leader
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of the reporting inspector in a timely and suitable manner through the nominee
- give due regard to the health and safety, and well-being 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
- refrain from taking photographs or videos during the inspection process, including of draft evaluations developed during the inspection

At the point of the inspection notification, providers should review the composition of the inspection team. It is the provider's responsibility to highlight any perceived or actual conflicts of interest prior to the start of any engagement, for example prior to their on-site inspection visit.

### **The Welsh language**

We will carry out any engagement, including inspections, in line with our [Welsh Language Policy](#).

### **The Virtual Inspection Room**

We will use an electronic system, called the 'Virtual Inspection Room' (VIR), for managing many aspects of inspection, including themed inspections. It is a web-based system that allows providers to upload information before an inspection and to download guidance from Estyn about the inspection process.

We ensure the security of information uploaded by subjecting the VIR to security testing. This testing evaluates system security. We identify and implement any actions to prevent unauthorised access. All users of Estyn's VIR system have a username and password, which are recorded and maintained securely within an active directory. The system also has features to ensure password protection including threat detection and conditional access.

### **The inspection team**

Inspection teams will be led by a reporting inspector (RI), with other team members drawn from among HMI, or additional inspectors (AIs). Additional inspectors may be on secondment or contracted to Estyn. Each team will also use peer inspectors from other Learn Welsh providers. Peer inspectors will not be used in the inspection of the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

The RI manages the inspection team and is the first point of reference for everyone involved in the inspection.

For full inspections, we will invite providers to select a senior member of staff, called



the nominee, to work with the inspection team. In practice, nearly all providers accept the invitation, but it is not a requirement. The nominee should have sufficient seniority to act as a link between the provider and the inspection team. Providers 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.

### **Safeguarding, including health, safety and well-being issues**

Inspectors will carry out inspection activity in accordance with Estyn's guidance on inspecting safeguarding. If they observe anything that they think constitutes in their opinion, a real risk to the safety of staff, visitors or learners, inspectors should alert managers at the provider. In all cases, inspectors should make a separate electronic note of the risk and that they informed managers of it.

During full inspections, inspectors should report on obvious risks relating to health, safety and well-being under inspection area 2 (Well-being, care, support and guidance). Where these risks are a serious concern, inspectors should include a short comment in the report and a recommendation in the report. Estyn will send a well-being letter to the provider asking them to outline how they will address the shortcoming.

During themed inspections, inspectors should highlight concerns to the provider immediately and follow up with a well-being letter.

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 as set out in the current version of 'Estyn's policy and procedures for safeguarding', which is available on Estyn's website.

### 3. Approach to full inspection

The starting point for a full inspection is the provider's assessment of its own performance and priorities, supported by relevant evidence. Inspectors will not inspect all aspects of work in depth during a full inspection. They will sample evidence to test the provider's own assessment of its work.

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

The inspection period and number of inspectors may vary according to the size of the provider.

Each full inspection report will cover all inspection areas covered by the common inspection framework.

We will carry out inspections in line with our Welsh Language Policy, available from our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales).

#### Contacting the provider before a full inspection

For full inspections, the provider will receive 15 working days' notice of the inspection.

Following this, Estyn will contact the provider by telephone to set up the arrangements for the inspection. An Inspection co-ordinator (IC) in Estyn will undertake the initial contact with provider. 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 provider 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 ask for a general health and safety briefing for the team at the start of the inspection
- establish whether the provider wishes to have a nominee and, if it does, agree the role of the nominee and explain the process for completing the nominee guidance
- arrange a meeting at the start of the inspection with the nominee to provide a health and safety briefing for the team
- arrange a meeting at the start of the inspection for the provider to set out its priorities for improvement and its current stage of development
- provide links and guidance for the completion of online pre-inspection questionnaires for learners and staff
- agree for a member of the governing/managing body (where appropriate) to

meet inspectors during the inspection period (e.g. Head of College/Faculty/School etc.)

- arrange the availability of supporting evidence, including samples of learners' work
- ensure that there are agreed procedures for addressing any concerns or complaints that might arise during the course of 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
- inform the provider through the initial contact form of the key inspection arrangements

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

- information and data provided by the National Centre for Learning Welsh and the provider's own local data
- key background information on the provider
- the provider's most recent quality development plans and self-assessment reports
- the number of learners, and their locations
- details of the provider's timetables for the period of the inspection
- arrange a date (as agreed with the RI) for the initial planning meeting

If the inspection is to take place early in the academic year, Estyn may ask for samples of learners' work from the previous year.

When we notify providers of the inspection, they will receive information on how to conduct a confidential online survey of learners. Estyn will also provide a pre-inspection online questionnaire for all teaching and support staff directly employed by the provider. The outcomes of the surveys will form part of the pre-inspection evidence and help inspectors to form emerging questions to investigate.

The team will also consider the most recent survey of learners' perceptions conducted by the sector.

During the inspection, inspectors may interview a sample of learners, and teaching and support staff as part of their gathering of evidence.

### **Planning the full inspection and preparing the team**

Taking into account the provider's identified improvement priorities and self-assessment reports, and any information already held by Estyn, the reporting inspector will plan the inspection and allocate responsibilities to members of the inspection team.

Inspections involve observation of teaching, training, and other work with learners. Providers are expected to send the reporting inspector a full plan of all the intended activities, including informal learning, during the inspection week. This will include off-site activities and the locations of community learners. On the basis of the information received, the reporting inspectors will plan their observations of teaching

and learning. These will reflect the range of provision on offer, including face-to-face and online learning where available.

## **During the full inspection**

### **Initial team meeting**

In the initial meeting of the inspection team, there should be a health and safety briefing from a member of the provider's staff. The provider should provide a brief position statement on its strategic priorities and its current stage of development. After that, the team should discuss with senior leaders the improvement priorities identified by the provider and the progress that it is making in its improvement work. The reporting inspector will confirm these arrangements with the provider during the pre-inspection phone call.

Inspectors will sample, test and validate the provider's own priorities and its evaluations of its strengths and areas for improvement and any other strengths and areas for improvement which the reporting inspector identifies. The discussions will also consider the evidence that inspectors need to review. This will include learning walks, session observations, sampling learners' written work, and interviews with learners, staff, and other stakeholders (where appropriate).

### **Gathering and reviewing inspection evidence during a full inspection**

The team will plan the inspection so that they can cover the reporting requirements within the three inspection areas. The team will ensure that they have enough time to review the key evidence they need to make their evaluations. The main forms of evidence are:

- documentary evidence, including information on learners' outcomes, performance and progress
- observation of teaching, learning, and other activities
- scrutiny of learners' work, including oral work observed during the inspection
- the views of learners, staff, and other stakeholder (where appropriate)
- discussions with learners, leaders, managers, governors or supervisory boards

The team will use direct observation of learners' practical skills and written work wherever possible to gather evidence to support their judgements. Inspectors may select an additional sample of learners' work to meet the needs of a particular emerging question or to further their investigation of a specific aspect.

Inspectors will undertake a range of activities to gather evidence for their evaluation of learners' progress and the quality of the provider's provision. This may include session observations, including sampling online lessons, learning walks, where inspectors move relatively quickly through a number of teaching or training sessions looking at a specific aspect of the provision, conversations with selected learners about their work, and discussions with individual tutors, about learners' progress in their sessions and how they plan work to meet their needs.

The voice of learners is a key source of evidence for inspectors. Discussions with learners will provide an opportunity to explore learners' knowledge and understanding of their work and skills. It will also help inspectors to gauge how well they feel the provider supports learners and contributes to their well-being.

Providers should make information available to the inspection team about the standards achieved by learners. This will help inspectors to judge learners' progress, to come to a view about the standards learners achieve compared to their starting -points and the way tutors use the information.

The team may consider stakeholders' views about the provider and test out the validity of those views during the inspection.

Where the nominee is not the head or manager of the provider, it is important that the reporting inspector holds a brief daily meeting with the head of provider and nominee to clarify inspection issues and the broad, emerging findings of the inspection team

### **Recording inspection evidence**

Inspectors will use various forms to note and to collate their findings and evaluations.

Wherever possible, inspectors will complete their forms electronically as part of Estyn's electronic 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 standards and the quality of provision and leadership. Meetings will provide opportunities for inspectors to:

- test the evaluations in the provider's quality development planning and self-assessment processes
- discuss emerging issues
- review visits to learners
- resolve pre-inspection issues and emerging questions
- identify any gaps in the evidence base
- consider main inspection findings and any recommendations

### **Professional dialogue**

At the end of a session observation, inspectors should have a brief professional dialogue with the member of staff involved in the activity. It may be necessary, in some cases, to conduct this discussion later during the inspection.

The main focus of the discussion should be on the learners, the progress they make during the session and the standards they achieve during the activity. The inspector should stress that these are emerging, interim findings on one aspect of the evidence base and that these may be amended, on reflection, after scrutiny of learners' work or talking to learners, or as the result of moderation within the team. Inspectors should try to focus on any strengths or areas for improvement in relation to the specific activity seen.

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

### **Formal feedback**

At the end of the on-site part of the inspection, the team will provide oral feedback to

the provider's leaders and governors. The provider should invite representatives from the National Centre for Learning Welsh to this meeting. The feedback should focus on the main evaluations for each of the three inspection areas and the reasons for these.

The feedback meeting provides the opportunity for leaders and managers to hear and to reflect on the evaluations. 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 provider that factual matters may be corrected, and evaluations may be clarified, although they are not negotiable.

During the inspection, the team will also consider if there is any effective practice in the provider that is worthy of consideration and emulation by other providers. Where this is the case, the reporting inspector will ask the provider to prepare a case study (or studies) for dissemination on Estyn's website.

All the evaluations reported during an inspection are provisional and subject to moderation and validation by HMCI. They are confidential to the provider's staff and leaders/managers. 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 provider, through the nominee, should raise these directly, and as soon as possible, with the reporting inspector. The provider should not wait until after the inspection, but should raise any issues during the on-site inspection. Issues often arise due to misunderstandings, and these can usually be resolved quickly and satisfactorily in the partnership close to the time when they occurred.

There is guidance for providers on Estyn's complaints handling procedures on Estyn's website.

### **After the full 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 provider.

When writing reports, inspectors should take account of Estyn's writing guidance which is available on our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales).

All reports are written in Welsh. We will publish reports bilingually, where providers have made this request, in line with Estyn's Welsh Language Policy.

The full inspection report will take the following form:

**About the provider**

**Summary**

**Recommendations**

**What happens next**

**Main findings**

- 1 Teaching and learning
- 2 Well-being, care, support and guidance
- 3 Leading and improving

**The evidence base of the inspection**

We will produce the report within statutory or agreed sector timescales.

### **The factual accuracy check**

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

The focus of the factual accuracy check is on resolving any factual inaccuracies in the inspection report. It does not focus on the findings or the evaluations. There is further guidance for providers on the nature and scope of the factual accuracy check on Estyn's website.

The provider should raise any complaints about the conduct of the inspection during the on-site inspection. However, if the provider continues to have unresolved complaints about the conduct of the inspection after the end of the on-site inspection, then it should refer to our complaints handling procedures on our website. The focus of the procedures is on the conduct of the inspection and not the findings or the evaluations arrived at by the inspection team.

### **Assuring the quality of inspections**

The inspectorate is committed to:

- effective selection, training, briefing, support and deployment of inspectors, including peer inspectors and additional inspectors
- effective briefing and support to allow the nominee to play an active role
- regular dialogue with the nominee and senior manager during inspection
- criteria and recording systems that comply with the common inspection framework and guidance
- careful review and analysis of evidence
- unambiguous oral feedback of the team's findings for each inspection area
- clear, accurate and well-presented reports

As part of our quality assurance procedures, we invite providers to complete a post-

inspection questionnaire (PIQ) following a full inspection. The questionnaire will be available to providers in the VIR. Providers should complete the first part of the PIQ immediately after the on-site inspection and submit it electronically to Estyn through the VIR system. Providers can complete the second part of the PIQ after the publication of the inspection report, again through the VIR system.

Providers should raise any concerns about the conduct of an inspector during the inspection as soon as possible with the reporting inspector.

We apply a robust quality assurance process to all of our inspections. The reporting inspector will quality assure the team's work in the first instance. After the end of on-site activity, the report and evidence base are quality assured by an experienced HMI who has not been involved in the inspection thus far. The full evidence base is scrutinised and matched to the report text, to ensure that the two align. In addition, the quality assurance process considers the appropriateness of the recommendations emanating from the inspection. As part of the quality assurance process, recommendations may be amended, removed or added.

Progress against any recommendations will be evaluated in the next full inspection of the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

In addition, we quality assure a sample of inspections through on-site visits. Our full arrangements for assuring the quality of inspections are available on our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales).



## **4. Approach to themed inspection**

We aim to notify the sector of the topic of a themed inspection during the summer term preceding the academic year in which we will undertake the inspection activity. We will invite a representative from the National Centre for Learning Welsh to act as nominee for the themed inspection. We will visit a sample of Learn Welsh providers to gather evidence to inform the themed inspection and will notify no less than 10 working days before the visit.

Themed inspection visits are normally undertaken by a Reporting Inspector and a Peer Inspector.

We will publish a report outlining our findings. We will also use evidence from themed inspection within our periodic evaluations of individual providers' work, normally at three-year intervals.