



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

Responses to the consultation on Estyn's proposed transition year 2020–2021 (academic year)

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1 Introduction

In summer 2019, we conducted a public consultation on our proposed transition year 2020–2021 (academic year). The results of the consultation will be used to help plan our activities during the proposed transition year.

2 Methodology

The consultation took the form of a questionnaire that was available to complete either online or offline - a Word document to be completed and returned via e-mail or post. We launched the survey on 21st May 2019 and it closed on 28th June 2019.

3 Profile of consultation respondents

We received 560 responses to the consultation.¹ Eighty eight per cent of responses were from education professionals, 4% from parents/carers, 4% from 'other', 2% from members of the public, and 1% from learners. Of the respondents that selected 'Other', the most commonly identified group were school governors. Twenty per cent of responses were in Welsh.

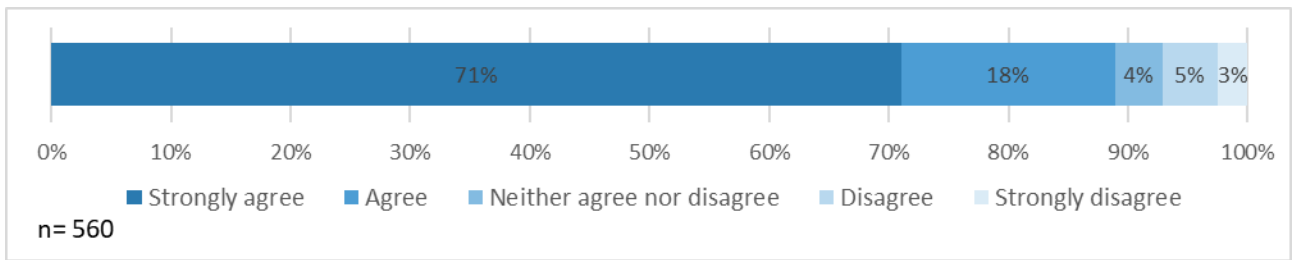
4 Results

4.1 Inspection work

Firstly, we asked respondents whether they agreed with the proposal to partially suspend inspections for schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) during the transition year. Eighty nine per cent strongly agreed or agreed with the proposal and 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 1: Do you agree that we should partially suspend inspections for schools and PRUs during the academic year 2020–2021 so that inspectors support curriculum reform?

¹ Twenty additional responses were received by e-mail. Due to the late receipt of these responses caused by technical issues, the responses were not incorporated into the statistical analysis but were incorporated into the qualitative analysis.



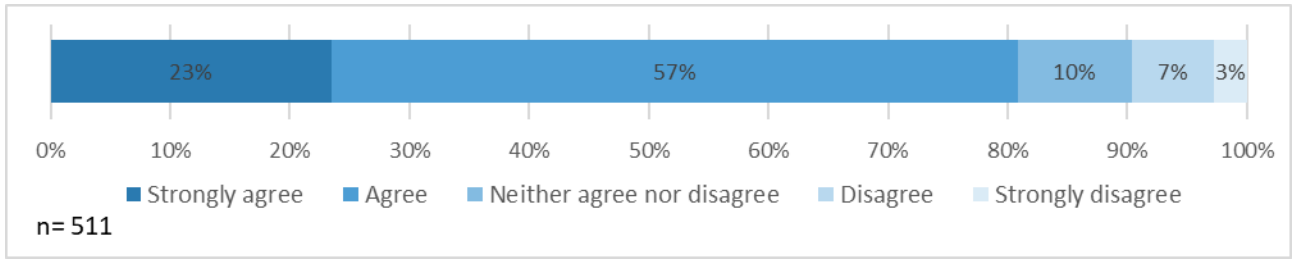
We then asked if they had any comments regarding which inspection work should continue, if any, during the transition year. Some education professionals noted that inspections should continue in all schools, especially in PRUs, and expressed concerns regarding the possible detrimental effect of suspending inspections on standards and on children’s safety. Suggested foci for inspection during this time were preparation for ALN reform, schools’ self-evaluation, health and wellbeing, verifying the qualifications of teaching staff, validating work in pioneer schools and leadership. A recurring message was that HMI should observe day-to-day life in schools. Other education professionals argued that schools would need time and space to implement curriculum reform and argued for a longer transition period. In general, there was consensus that inspection should continue for schools in follow-up, schools causing concern and struggling schools, and for providers which are not part of curriculum reform. The need for thematic inspections was another key message from education professionals, especially those with a focus on aspects of the new curriculum.

Many parents and members of the public felt that all inspections should continue. The need to inspect struggling schools and schools in special measures was once again a strong message. Some governors argued that inspections should continue in independent settings and again noted that inspection should continue in struggling schools. Some ‘other’ respondents argued that all inspections should be suspended.

4.2 Engagement Visits

Next, we prepared a statement describing engagement visits, and we asked respondents if the information described the purpose of the visits. Over 80% strongly agreed or agreed that the information explained the purpose of the visits. Only a very few disagreed or strongly disagreed.

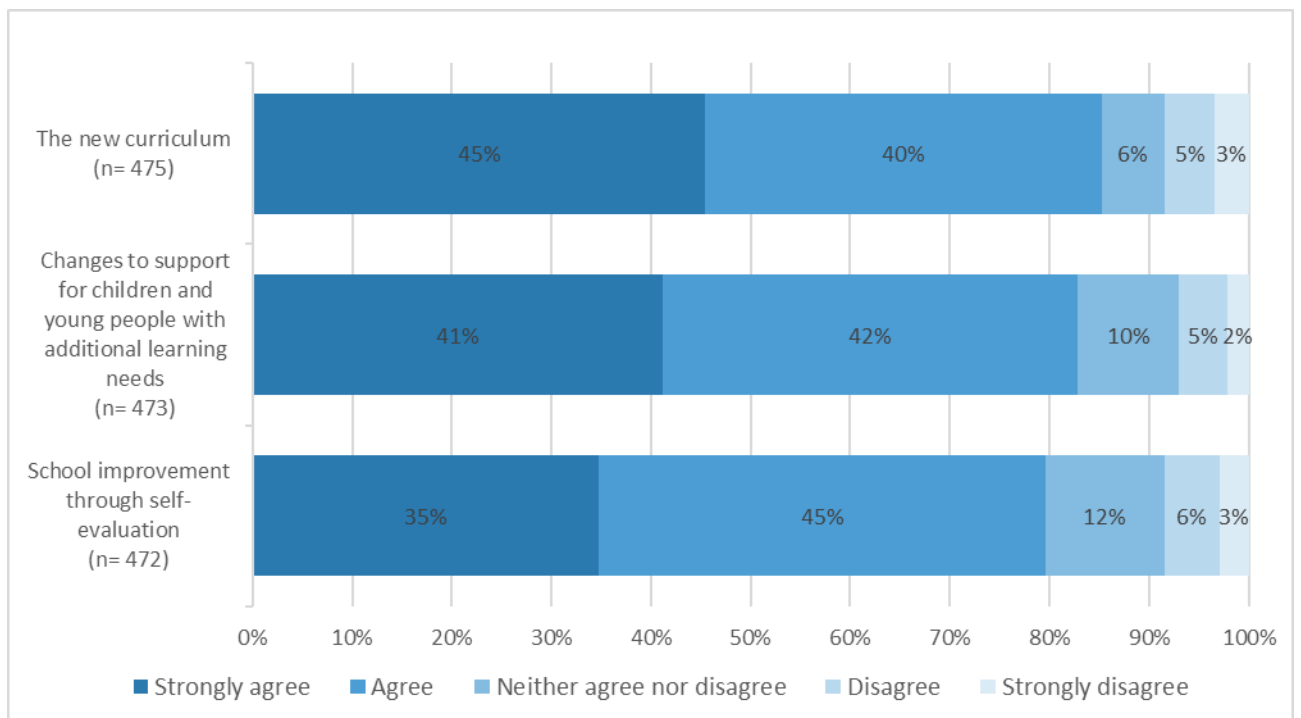
Figure 2: Do you agree that the information above explains the purpose of the Engagement Visits?



4.2.1 Priorities

We asked respondents to what extent they agreed with a list of three priorities for engagement visits. Respondents agreed or strongly agreed (over 80%) that the new curriculum, changes to support for children and young people with ALN and school improvement through self-evaluation should all be priorities.

Figure 3: To what extent do you agree with these priorities?



We then asked respondents what else we should be considering during engagement visits. A strong message from education professionals was that visits should provide schools with support, guidance and information to help them implement the new curriculum, encourage open dialogue and help build relationships and trust. Another strong message was the importance of training HMI to have a consistent approach to the visits and to be up-to-date on curriculum reform. Respondents told us that we should be communicating our expectations regarding visits to schools, and emphasising that the visits are not inspections.

Another key message was that we should give schools time to experiment. Respondents argued that this would put less pressure on schools who would otherwise spend time preparing for visits. Recurring questions were how much information can be gathered in one day and whether we have the capacity to visits all schools in a year.

Education professionals, suggested strongly that we should be considering staff wellbeing and workload, as well as learners' wellbeing as key themes during the visits. Another key theme was partnership working and collaboration between schools. Other important considerations according to this cohort were school funding and staffing, Professional Learning, safeguarding, ALN and teaching and learning. Other recurring messages were the need to consider support for supply staff, support from LAs/regional consortia, staffing issues, schools'

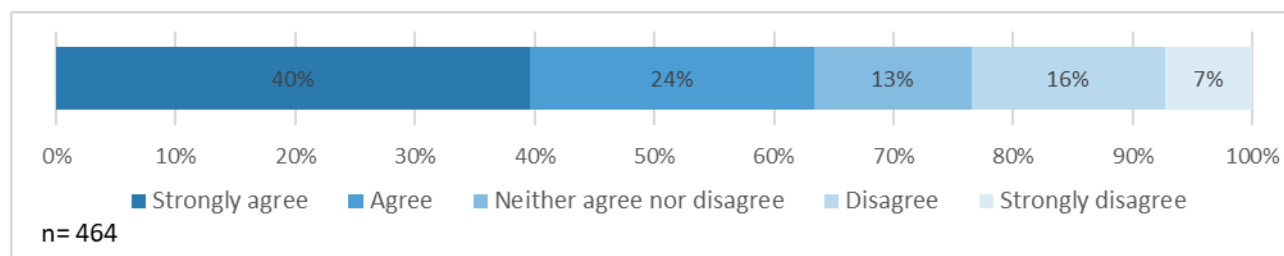
community engagement, schools as learning organisations and schools' use of the Pupil Development Grant.

Some education professionals and members of the public argued that supporting schools should be the role of Local Authorities and regional consortia. Some parents argued that our role should be to consider the level of support from regional consortia and Local authorities. Learners suggested that teachers' workload should be considered during engagement visits. Governors and parents argued that there is a need to listen to parents' opinions. Other suggested considerations from parents included bullying policies, school facilities and wellbeing. Other respondents suggested considering support for teachers, staffing issues, including using TAs instead of teachers, school funding, careers education and Professional Learning.

4.2.2 Feedback

We then asked respondents if they agreed that we should not provide written feedback following an EV. Sixty three per cent strongly agreed or agreed with this proposal. Twenty three per cent strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Figure 4: Do you agree that we should NOT provide written feedback following a visit?



There were mixed views from education professionals about providing feedback. Some argued that not providing written feedback would help to emphasise the difference between engagement visits and inspections, and would encourage schools to be more open and honest, without fear. Others felt that schools should have feedback in some form, including verbal feedback to all staff. However, several respondents also noted that verbal feedback could be misinterpreted. Those in favour of written feedback argued that it would provide schools with a useful base from which to move forward and reflect upon. This should be for internal use only and not published. A key theme was that written feedback need not necessarily be a formal report, but could be a summary of main points or

minutes of discussions. Another strong message was the need for an action plan, outlining areas for development and making recommendations. The need for open, professional dialogue was another important message. Respondents felt strongly that feedback should be supportive, constructive and encouraging, not judgmental. Respondents also argued that feedback should focus on developing the new curriculum.

Some members of the public noted that feedback should be published and openly available, while governors noted that providing feedback is a key part of our role. Parents noted that unlike a report, issues raised by us in a discussion could not be shared with them in the same way.

4.2.3 Additional comments

We asked respondents if they had any additional comments about engagement visits. A strong message from education professionals was that visits should not be high stakes and should not put pressure on schools. Another strong theme was that HMIs' attitudes must be consistent, that we should be transparent about the purpose of the visits, in particular in conveying that they will not impact future inspections. The need to allow schools the opportunity to give feedback was another key theme. In addition, respondents felt that the information gathered should be collated and shared at a national level and used to inform training and policy. The need to use PIs was another strong message. Many respondents emphasised the importance of HMI being informed about the new curriculum and the need for training to ensure this.

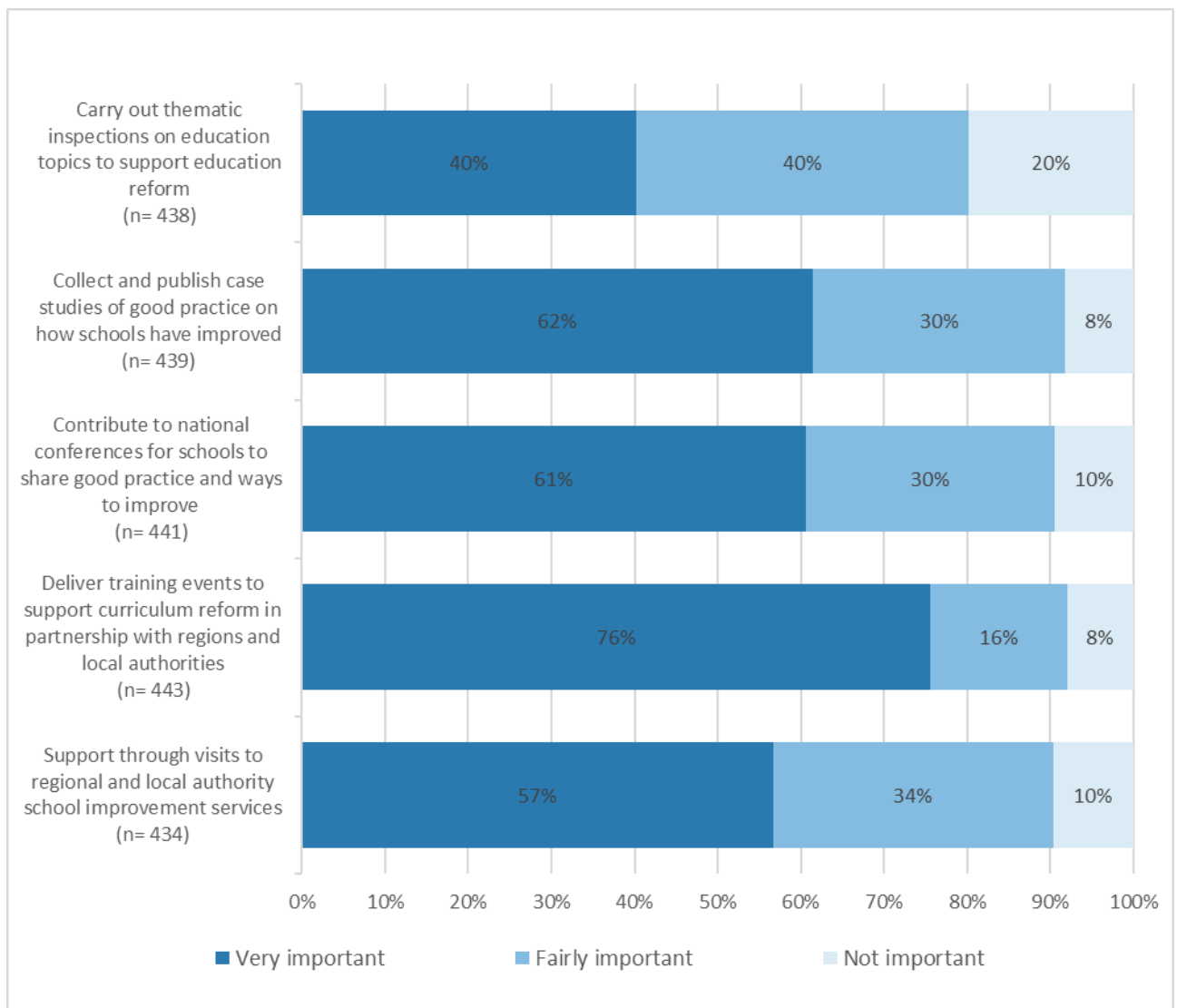
A key message from governors was that HMI must have positive attitudes during visits. However, some governors and parents expressed concerns that moving towards a more supportive role would blur our remit and argued that supporting schools is the role of LAs and regional consortia. Responses from parents were mixed regarding the need for engagement visits, some arguing that there is a need to give school space, while others suggested more frequent visits.

4.3 Activities during the transition year

In the next question, we asked respondents what type of activities we should be carrying out during the transition year, from a list of five options. Many respondents noted that delivering training events to support curriculum reform in partnership with regions and local authorities is very important. A majority felt that it is very important to collect and publish case studies of good practice on how schools have

improved. A majority also noted that contributing to national conferences for schools to share good practice and ways to improve is very important. Fifty seven per cent felt that we should support through visiting regional and local authority school improvement services. Finally, a minority felt that carrying our thematic inspections to support education reform is very important.

Figure 5: What type of activities do you think are important for us to do during the transition year?



4.4 Encouraging school and PRUs to take their next steps with the new curriculum

In the next question, we asked respondents how we could encourage schools and PRUs to take their next steps with the new curriculum. A

key message from education professionals was that we should work with schools to support and motivate them, with a collaborative approach, building relationships and trust. They noted the need for open, honest and professional dialogue. However, other education professionals argued that we should give these schools time and space to implement changes and take risks. Another key message was that we should give advice to schools and PRUs, identifying strengths and areas for development. Several respondents suggested assigning an HMI to a secondary school and feeder primaries for a year to support staff. These respondents added that these HMI would need training on the new curriculum. Sharing case studies of effective practice, including from Pioneer Schools, was a very strong message regarding how we could support such schools, along with sharing the knowledge with LAs and regional consortia to inform training. Many education professionals expressed the need for us to give clear messages and advice regarding the purpose of the new curriculum. Many also noted the importance of thematic inspections, especially those linked to the new curriculum. Some respondents argued that it is not our role to support schools as other middle tier organisations, such as regional consortia, are already doing this.

A key message echoed by parents/carers and governors, was the need for us to share case studies of effective practice, including sharing ideas and resources from other schools, as well as providing training. Other respondents noted that we should give these schools and PRUs time to implement changes but should also be available to give advice.

4.5 Other activities to carry out during the transition year

We asked respondents if they had any other suggestions for activities which it is important for us to carry out during the transition year. The strongest message from education professionals was the need to ensure consistency amongst HMI, including through training. Seconding HMI to teach in schools was another prominent suggestion as was producing model resources for staff. Spending time learning from Pioneer Schools and excellent schools was a recurring suggestion and holding cluster discussions and collaboration meetings for schools working together were other suggestions. Thematic reports, on curriculum reform in particular, was another theme, as was engagement with parents/carers and governors.

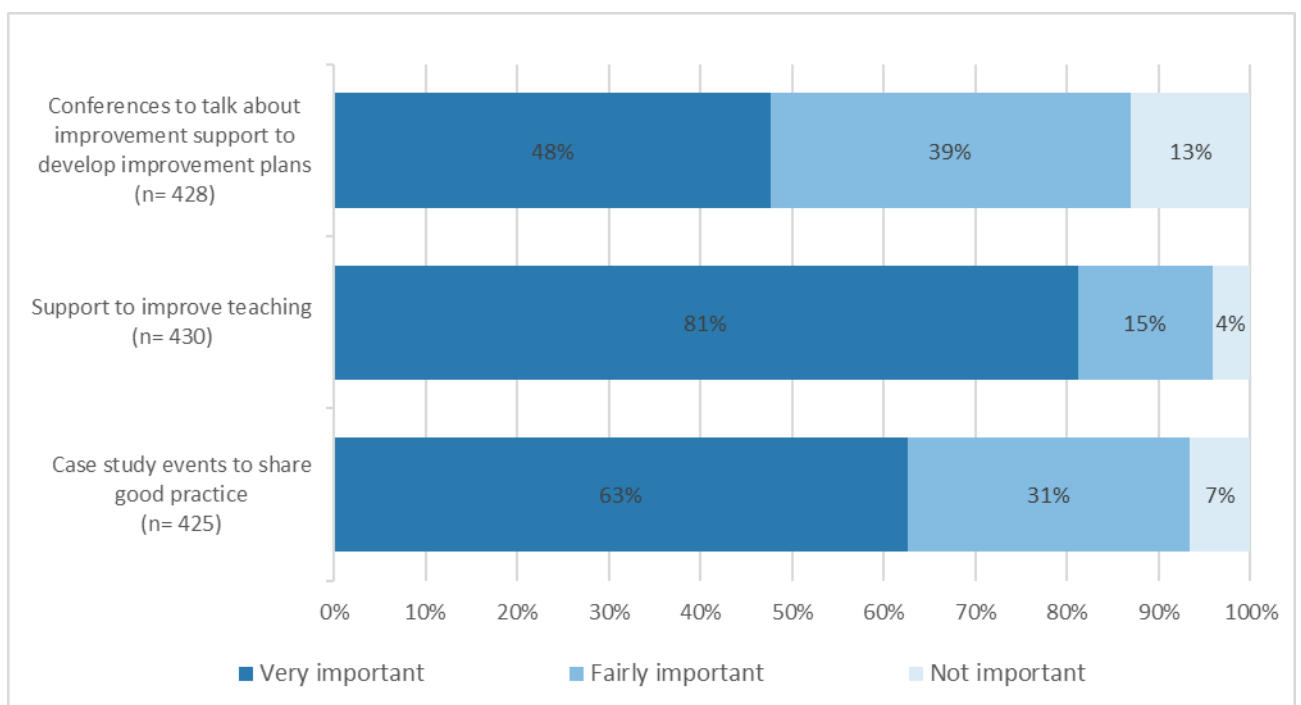
Other respondents also suggested seconding HMI to schools to deliver the new curriculum. Governors noted that we should keep stakeholders

informed of news and progress while parents/carers suggested parental engagement evenings and annual school visits.

4.6 Support for schools/PRUs causing concern

The following question noted that in line with current arrangements, we will continue to plan visits to schools causing concern during 2020–21. Respondents were asked to rank how important a choice of three activities would be in helping us support these schools. Over 80% of respondents noted that support to improve teaching was very important, 63% noted that case study events to share good practice were very important and 48% noted that conferences to talk about improvement support to develop improvement plans were very important.

Figure 6: In line with our current arrangements, we will continue to plan visits to schools causing concern during 2020–2021. In addition, how important are the further activities listed below to help us support these schools?



Respondents were then asked if they had any other suggestions as to how to improve support for schools causing concern. A key message from education professionals was that this should be the role of the regional consortia and we should avoid duplicating what they do. However, other education professionals suggested that we should cooperate with LAs, regional consortia and Challenge Advisers. The need to support leadership was another key message, in particular in the

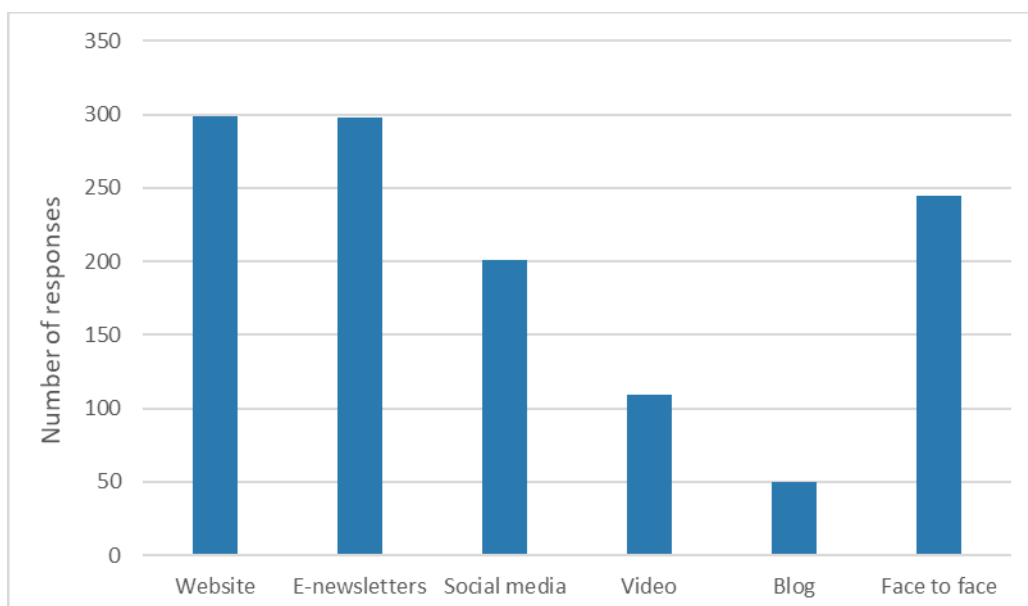
form of training, as was the need to mentor staff by trained mentors. A recurring message was that schools should be allowed time to plan for the new curriculum with less frequent visits from us. Also that we should encourage schools to work with other schools from similar backgrounds or more successful schools. A school improvement inspector to visit frequently to check on progress was another frequent suggestion, along with placing an inspector into a school for a term.

Parents/carers suggested we should visit schools more frequently. Members of the public noted that we should ensure that regional consortia are providing appropriate support and organise events for all staff, not just the leadership. Learners suggested visits from other schools to schools causing concern, and that we should work with the regional consortia. Other respondents suggested training for leadership and support to improve teaching.

4.7 Preferred channels of communication to be kept up-to-date with developments during the transition year

The final question asked respondents regarding their preferred channels of communication to be kept up-to date with developments during the transition year, from a choice of six options. Over a half chose Estyn's website and e-newsletters as their preferred channel, 44% chose face-to-face events, 36% selected social media, 19% video and 9% a blog.

Figure 7: Which of the following channels of communication would you prefer to keep you up-to-date with developments during the transition year?



Finally, respondents were asked if they had any other suggestions regarding how to keep stakeholders up-to-date. Educational professionals had many suggestions for other possible channels of communication. These included Estyn e-mailing school leadership directly, providing school updates via the senior leadership team, sending letters to head teachers addressing all staff and regular communication with parents through sending letters home. A yearly diary/overview of events e-mailed to schools to enable forward planning was another suggestion, as was staff watching the latest news video in their staff meeting. An Estyn news app was another suggestion, with sub-sections for specific sectors. Assigning a link HMI to every LA to attend head teachers' associations and supporting HTs in a similar form to update training was another comment. Another suggestion was that Challenge Advisers relay messages. Others ideas included newsletters, national and regional meetings to ensure consistent messages, contributions to national conferences and regional events, local training events and a road show. Education professionals noted that there is a need to contact stakeholders often and using different means to get the whole workforce to engage and challenge any preconceptions about our role.

Governors suggested subject specific supplements to newsletters as and when information becomes available. Other respondents suggested television, radio and webinars. Parents suggested that we engage with parents.

5 Next steps

The findings of the consultation will help inform our activities during the proposed transition year. We will launch a second nationwide, public consultation about future inspection arrangements in the autumn term 2019.