

Estyn Strategic Equality Plan

2024-2028

The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- ⤴ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities
- ⤴ primary schools
- ⤴ secondary schools
- ⤴ special schools
- ⤴ pupil referral units
- ⤴ all-age schools
- ⤴ independent schools
- ⤴ further education
- ⤴ independent specialist colleges
- ⤴ adult learning in the community
- ⤴ local government education services
- ⤴ youth work services
- ⤴ Welsh language arrangements in local authorities
- ⤴ initial teacher education
- ⤴ Welsh for adults
- ⤴ apprenticeships
- ⤴ learning in the justice sector

Estyn also:

- ⤴ reports to Senedd Cymru and provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the Welsh Government and others
- ⤴ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence

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

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Introduction and purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan

Estyn is His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. We inspect education and training in Wales. Our vision is to improve the quality of education and training and outcomes for all learners in Wales. Our mission is to support education and training providers to develop a self-improving and learning culture through our advice, inspection and capacity building.

We promote equality and diversity through the delivery of our strategic objectives, by drawing the attention of providers to their own duty to promote equality. Our equality objectives cover how we consider equality when we inspect and how we will ensure that our own staff and those we contract with have equality of opportunity and are treated equally.

We believe that through our actions we can make a difference in creating a more equal Wales, as well as being a welcoming employer of choice for our staff. We are on a journey, and this strategic equality plan is ambitious in setting out our next steps.

Who is protected under the Equality Act 2010?

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their protected characteristic. The law is designed to protect them, the protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief (or non-belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- We recognise that people who share more than one protected characteristic are at risk of multiple disadvantage and inequality. We have considered this in developing our Strategic Equality Plan. The Act also creates a socio-economic duty requiring public bodies to consider what they can do to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions.

The Equality Act 2010 does not make any requirement to promote and use the **Welsh language**. However, The Welsh Language Measure 2011 places an obligation on public sector bodies to conform to a set of 'Standards' and to work towards the principle that, in Wales, the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English

language. Our [Strategic Welsh Language Plan](#) sets out our strategic Welsh language objectives.

What are we aiming to achieve through this plan?

Through all our work and the decisions we make, we will deliver on the general duties of the Equality Act 2010 to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (protected characteristics are explained later in this report)
- reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

Specifically, we will measure our success by the following:

- our workforce, including the external inspectors we work with, is more diverse
- our staff feel more valued, respected and able to thrive and develop
- we are knowledgeable about equalities issues
- our reports identify more areas for improvement to help create a more equal Wales and share practice to support improvement
- our work is enriched by a more diverse set of stakeholder voices

The duties underpinning this plan are explained in appendix 1.

Our equality objectives

We have set three overall equality objectives to help us plan the actions we will take to achieve success.

<i>Equality objective 1</i>	We will work to increase the diversity of our staff, our external inspectors and the stakeholder voices that enrich our work
<i>Equality Objective 2</i>	We will promote equal opportunities and ensure fair treatment for our entire workforce, staff and contracted inspectors, tackling bullying and discrimination whenever it occurs.
<i>Equality Objective 3</i>	We will evaluate issues relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion during inspection and in our thematic work, sharing good practice and making recommendations for improvement where needed

In order to shape these objectives and the actions that will support them we talked to our staff and external stakeholders through surveys and focus groups. We also considered the range of research evidence and actions for us captured in various Welsh Government action plans. A list of the evidence that informed this plan is listed in appendix 2.

Staff and external stakeholders provided lots of helpful ideas that we have incorporated. However, they also urged us above all to be bolder, more explicit in our aims and to be clear that where we were wasn't good enough and that we were on a journey – for example, we are moving from being non-racist to being anti-racist.

Our equality objectives apply across the protected characteristics. Similarly, the actions we describe in the next section apply across, apart from where we refer specifically to a particular protected characteristic we are targeting with action.

We evaluated our progress against the first year of our plan and published our annual equality report [here](#). We made good progress and have updated this plan to capture the actions we will take to progress our equality objectives during 2025-2026. Alongside these actions, we will develop a baseline data set to help us measure our progress.

Actions we will take in 2025-2026 to make progress against our equality objectives

Equality objective 1: We will work to increase the diversity of our staff, our external inspectors and the stakeholder voices that enrich our work

We will:

- review our staff recruitment processes after each campaign to consider what more we can do to increase the diversity of our staff, including considering how to achieve more diversity on interview panels
- continue to deliver our leadership programme to raise awareness of our work with aspiring education leaders from ethnic minority backgrounds that are underrepresented in our staff and external inspector workforce.
- we will work with Dysgu to explore how we can work in partnership to provide development pathways for aspiring education leaders from ethnic minority backgrounds
- improve the data we hold about our external inspector workforce to better understand any underrepresented groups
- actively work with a variety of national stakeholder groups to ensure our next lay inspector recruitment leads to a more diverse pool of lay inspectors
- review our recruitment materials and processes for external inspectors to ensure they represent the full diversity of Wales and meet best practice
- ensure that our parent and carer forum include parents with different protected characteristics
- continue to engage with other bodies, stakeholders and groups who champion specific protected characteristics internally and externally in order to consider how we, and those we inspect, can improve policies and work processes to become more diverse and meet the needs of a diverse Wales
- ensure that our recruitment for our non-executive directors maintains a diverse set of members for our strategy board

review our induction training for inspectors to ensure that it includes a refresher on the public sector equality duty.

Equality Objective 2: We will promote equal opportunities and ensure fair treatment for our entire workforce, staff and contracted inspectors, tackling bullying and discrimination whenever it occurs.

We will:

- develop our ongoing programme of staff training and development to ensure our workforce works actively to promote equality of opportunity, tackle bullying and

discrimination and in particular ensure we are an anti-racist organisation and ensure temporary staff have full access to these programmes

- continue to deliver mandatory training on equalities responsibilities and awareness of bullying and harassment as part of induction for new staff
- continue to work closely with staff with a disability to ensure that we plan and make helpful reasonable adjustments for them
- develop opportunities for managers to be involved in reverse mentoring and coaching with community leaders
- ensure all members of staff consider an equality and diversity related objective as part of their performance management
- focus on inclusive line management as part of our review of performance management arrangements
- develop our staff well-being strategy.
- provide mental health awareness training for all colleagues as part of our well-being strategy
- roll out training on professional behaviours, power dynamics and appropriate workplace conduct to all HMI and external inspectors
- explore what training needs we have as an organisation in relation to neurodiversity
- upgrade our Disability Confidence status to level 3.

Equality Objective 3: We will evaluate issues relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion during inspection and in our thematic work, sharing good practice and making recommendations for improvement where needed

We will:

- include a cross-cutting theme relating to the impact of provision for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners and develop a forward programme of reviews focused on equalities issues in our annual report
- start collecting demographic data as part of any surveys we carry out with learners, staff, parents or other stakeholders to we can improve our national evidence base of stakeholders' views
- ensure where appropriate our inspection consider barriers to recruitment onto educational programmes, including through targeted and universal provision
- finalise our new supplementary guidance to support the inspection of equality and diversity in providers, including more practical guidance and questions for inspectors
- revise our supplementary guidance to support the inspection of English and Welsh as an additional language
- continue to collect and promote examples of effective practice in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion which help to raise expectations and improve practice

- work with Medr and the Welsh Government to ensure that there are improved national data sets which help us understand the experiences and educational outcomes of learners with different protected characteristics
- strengthen our lead inspector capacity to support equalities, diversity and inclusion through our revised leadership structure and ensures key lead officers and groups are consulted to inform decision making
- develop an anti-poverty strategy to deliver our role in helping to ensure that all learners have the opportunity to achieve
- strengthen how we apply equality impact assessments to our thematic reviews and any changes made as part of our mid-cycle review of inspection arrangements
- carry out a thematic review of anti-racism in schools and PRUs
- consider how we can more explicitly consider barriers to recruitment, access or entry onto apprenticeship programmes as we develop our new inspection arrangements for 2027
- consider how we can promote work in relation to the LGBTQ+ action plan through our work.

Monitoring and evaluation

To support this plan, we will develop an outcome focussed Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan each year which will provide further details regarding:

- the actions we are undertaking to move forward with each of our strategic equality objectives
- timelines of when we expect to achieve these actions
- people with responsibilities for taking the actions forward, and
- how we will measure our success in achieving the actions outlined.

We will publish our progress against each of our strategic equality plan objectives on an annual basis, modifying and amending them where relevant.

We will also ensure all teams or sectors across the organisation identify one action they will carry out to support our equality objectives.

We will also monitor a range of relevant data to help check we are progressing. The key management information we will use to track progress will be:

- Workforce data
- the People Survey
- complaints and compliments
- tracking our inspection and thematic reports, spotlights and case studies

Appendix 1 – Duties supporting the strategic equality plan

Public Sector Equality Duty

The General Duty

Public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- 1 eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- 2 advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- 3 foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The Specific Duties

The Equality Act provides a power to make regulations imposing duties on public bodies to support better performance of the general duty; these are known as the Specific Public Sector Equality Duties and are different in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Welsh Government published regulations that introduced the Specific Duties for Wales in March 2011, these set out the actions Estyn must take in order to comply and include the following areas:

- Setting Equality Objectives and publishing a Strategic Equality Plan
- Ensuring it engages with people who have an interest in how Estyn's decisions affect them
- Collecting and publishing information relevant to compliance with the General Duty
- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and publishing the results
- Publish employment monitoring information annually
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the General Duty amongst its employees and use its performance assessment procedures to identify and address the training needs of its employees in relation to the General Duties
- Set a gender pay equality objective where a gender pay difference is identified
- Think about including conditions relevant to the General Duty in its procurement processes

Appendix 2: Engagement and Consultation

A variety of sources have been used to gather the information needed to produce this plan and the equality objectives. These include:

Welsh Government Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028

National equality objective 1 – We will create a Wales where everyone has opportunities to prosper in line with our organisational goal to reduce poverty.

National equality objective 2 – We will create a Wales where everyone can be aware of their human rights, where they are protected, promoted, and underpin all public policy.

National equality objective 3 – We will create a Wales where everyone can be aware of and has equitable access to high quality public services.

National equality objective 4 – We will take action to prevent discrimination, victimisation, harassment, abuse, hate crime and/or bullying against all people, including violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

National equality objective 5 – We will create a Wales where everybody is able to participate in the workplace, have access to public transport and see themselves as reflected in the leadership of our public services.

National equality objective 6 – We will create a Wales with fair and equal opportunities to gain employment and for fair and equal treatment in the workplace.

National equality objective 7 – We will create an environmentally sustainable Wales with the capacity to both ensure our journey to net zero is fair and to respond to the inequitable impacts of climate change.

Welsh Government Anti-racist Wales action plan

Recommendations that include Estyn:

- Review Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and professional learning to ensure that it reflects an anti-racist approach to teacher recruitment and training.
- Collaborate and co-design with ethnic minority stakeholder groups to develop next phases of the ITE Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Recruitment Plan.
- Strengthen the Welsh Government's 'Rights, respect, equality' anti-bullying guidance for schools.

Post 16

- Integrate reporting on ethnicity into the suite of statistical releases on post-16 learning and learner outcomes.
- Identify equality gaps in learner participation and attainment and set targets and appropriate actions for improvement.

Welsh Government LGBTQ + action plan for Wales

Estyn is not directly mentioned in any of the recommendations. However, the following recommendations have particular relevance to Estyn:

Inclusive Education:

- 26 Provide national trans guidance for schools and local authorities
- 27 Support LGBTQ+ young people and tackle homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying
- 28 Design and implement a whole school approach that is fully LGBTQ+ inclusive
- 29 Ensure that all colleges and universities in Wales are LGBTQ+ inclusive environments for learners, students and staff

Communities, Private and Family Life:

- 31 Support the LGBTQ+ youth work sector

Inclusive Workplaces:

- 43 Provide equalities training that includes the needs of LGBTQ+ people to all public sector organisations

Is Wales Fairer? 2023 – Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

Recommendations that mention Estyn are:

- 7 Regulatory bodies including Estyn, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, Care Inspection Wales and Audit Wales should use the PSED to drive improvements on tackling inequalities through their inspection work.
- 8 The Welsh Government, local authorities, schools and Estyn should take action to narrow the attainment gaps for protected characteristic groups, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children and disabled children, including between those eligible for FSM and those not eligible for FSM from 0–16.

- 28 The Welsh Government, Local Authorities, Estyn and schools should address bullying based on gender identity including recording and reporting incidents.
- 32 The Welsh Government, local authorities and maintained schools should act to reduce the educational attainment gap for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners. Estyn should monitor progress made by schools to address this issue.
- 42 The Welsh Government, Local Authorities, Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr), Estyn and schools should reduce the risk to pupils and students of experiencing discrimination or bullying in education arising from their sexual orientation, including recording and reporting incidents.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group report:

Recommendations that mention Estyn:

Recommendation 42: The Welsh Government to commission Estyn within three years of implementation of the Curriculum for Wales to carry out a preliminary review aimed to consider the ways in which schools are beginning to develop curricula that reflect the cross-cutting theme of diversity and what types of further support they may need. The Working Group recommend that within five years a full thematic review be commissioned by the Welsh Government.

Recommendation 43: Estyn to review and report on how well schools deliver a broad and balanced curriculum that addresses diversity across all Areas of Learning and Experience, and to promote the sharing of best practice through case studies and thematic reports.

Children's Commissioner report "Take it Seriously": Children's experiences of Racism within Secondary Schools

Recommendations that mention Estyn are:

- Schools, Local Authorities and Estyn, should ensure that they have a clear policy on responding to racist incidents, and that this is part of every School Improvement plan. This should be developed with input from children and young people with lived experience within the school community or drawing on pan-Wales stakeholders for less diverse communities.
- Welsh Government should direct Estyn to revise their Common Inspection Framework to place a stronger focus on how schools respond to, record and address racist incidents, ensuring that pupil voice and views on this are heard through their inspections.

- Welsh Government should commission Estyn to undertake a good practice review to identify existing good practice in responding to racism and racist incidents amongst schools

School Report Cymru – The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Wales’ schools in 2017 by Stonewall.

Recommendations for Estyn.

Estyn should:

- Deliver initial and ongoing training to all inspectors on how to assess a school's efforts to support lesbian, gay, bi and trans pupils and their effectiveness in combatting homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and language
- Inspect all schools' sex and relationships education as part of their review for aligning to the new curriculum
- Continue to ensure that a school's effectiveness in combatting homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and creating a safe learning environment for all young people is part of the inspection framework and that this is clearly communicated to all schools
- Ensure that delivering high-quality, inclusive SRE forms a key part of the assessment of the personal development aspect of the Common Inspection Framework; make this explicit in inspection guidance and through inspector training
- Be more explicit in challenging poor performance, as well as highlighting good practice; identify exactly what would count as an inadequate approach to tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and supporting LGBT young people
- When inspecting initial teacher training providers, ensure that training prepares new teachers to combat homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and to support LGBT pupils.

Show Racism the Red Card: Understanding Racism And Anti-Racism In Welsh Educational Settings

Recommendations for Estyn:

Recommendation 8: Anti-racism organisations and Estyn should share case studies of effective strategies to involve families and communities in anti-racism efforts

Consultation exercise

We have undertaken an extensive consultation exercise to help develop our strategic objectives. As well as our usual stakeholders of schools, local authorities and post -16 providers, we included the following groups in our consultation exercise:

- BAWSO
- EYST Wales
- Race Alliance Wales
- Welsh Refugee Council
- North Wales Regional Equality Network
- SSCE Cymru
- Parentkind
- Carers Trust Wales
- Anabledd Cymru
- Comisiynydd Plant Cymru
- Anabledd Dysgu Cymru
- Association of Social Care Directors Wales
- Association of Directors of Education in Wales
- Autism Wales
- Children in Wales
- Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Local authority leads for Minority Ethnic and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller education services
- Show racism the red card
- Stonewall Cymru
- Race council Cymru
- Gypsy and Travellers Wales
- Race equality Wales
- Umbrella Cymru - LGBTQ+ support organisation
- Transaid Cymru - A mutual aid, helping trans, non-binary and intersex people across Wales

In addition, we have consulted internally with our staff and ran focus groups with staff to discuss these issues.