



Report  
Estyn  
Stakeholder Perceptions Research  
December 2025



Strategic Research and Insight  
4 Park Court Mews, Park Place  
Cardiff, Wales  
CF10 3DQ  
Tel: +44 (0)29 2030 3100

[www.strategic-research.co.uk](http://www.strategic-research.co.uk)

[research@strategic-research.co.uk](mailto:research@strategic-research.co.uk)

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## 1. Executive summary

<b>Method</b>	The research involved an online survey and qualitative interviews. The survey ran from 23 <sup>rd</sup> September to 30 <sup>th</sup> October 2025 and received 658 responses (up from 415 in 2024). Twenty-five follow-up interviews were conducted with stakeholders from a wide range of roles and settings, providing deeper insight into their experiences and perceptions.
<b>Survey sample</b>	Of those who took part in the survey, 64% work for an education or learning provider. Representation of non-senior staff increased this year, with 48% coming from non-senior roles, compared to 35% in 2024; whilst representation from senior staff decreased from 65% in 2024 to 52% this year. A key aim this year was to increase representation of non-senior staff.
<b>The push for greater non-senior representation</b>	Last year's findings suggested that non-senior staff may hold more negative views of Estyn than senior leaders, but the 2024 sample for these roles was small. In 2025, we aimed to boost participation among non-senior staff, both to improve representation and to explore these emerging insights further.
<b>Overall perceptions are lower this year</b>	Overall perceptions of Estyn are less positive this year. 35% of respondents expressed a positive view (compared with 50% in 2024), while 42% expressed a negative view (compared with 24% in 2024).
<b>Why are results lower?</b>	<p>The change is likely driven by two key factors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) A higher proportion of respondents are in non-senior roles, and these tend to hold more negative views of Estyn;</li><li>2) Perceptions have also declined across all stakeholder groups, including senior leaders, meaning there is some genuine decrease in sentiment towards Estyn. Results are lower across most perception questions.</li></ol>
<b>Overall perceptions from non-senior staff</b>	22% of non-senior staff have a positive view of Estyn, compared to 45% of senior staff. Results for both groups have decreased since last year, where 56% of senior staff expressed a positive perception, compared to 34% of non-senior staff.
<b>Overall perceptions by year of inspection</b>	Among respondents inspected in 2024/25 or 2025/26, 42% reported a positive perception of Estyn, compared with 32% among those inspected before 2024/25. Negative views are also lower among those inspected more recently (37%, compared with 46% for earlier inspections).
<b>Words used to describe Estyn</b>	Respondents were asked to describe Estyn in three words. The most common positive descriptors were 'thorough' (12%), 'professional' (11%) and 'supportive' (9%). On the negative side, the most frequent terms were 'inconsistent' (9%), 'stressful' (8%) and 'outdated' (5%).
<b>What drives positive and negative perceptions?</b>	Positive views were most often linked to constructive interactions and communication (18%), with respondents valuing approachable inspectors and professional dialogue. Smaller proportions cited improvement-focused feedback (9%) and Estyn being fair, rigorous and professional (7%).

	<p>Negative perceptions were most commonly driven by stress and workload associated with inspections (18%), followed by inconsistent experiences between inspectors (15%). Others questioned inspection processes and outcomes (12%) or felt Estyn should do more to support improvement and share best practice (7%).</p>
<b>Key characteristics</b>	<p>More respondents felt that Estyn is professional (59%) than not. Similarly, more respondents felt that Estyn is respected (42%), responsive (40%), and progressive (37%) than not. However, as shown, the proportion of respondents that felt this way was often less than half, with many providing a neutral response.</p> <p>In contrast, almost the same proportion felt that Estyn is unapproachable (39%) than approachable (38%), and more felt that Estyn is unsupportive (46%) than supportive (35%).</p>
<b>Key attributes</b>	<p>More than half of respondents (54%) feel Estyn shares best practice, 47% believe it is fair, 45% say it is transparent, and 38% feel it works with providers. For each of these attributes, more respondents agreed than disagreed. Again however, as shown, the percentage that felt this way was often less than half, with many providing a neutral response.</p> <p>Most strikingly, 84% said Estyn causes apprehension (the same proportion as last year).</p> <p>More respondents disagreed than agreed that Estyn provides reassurance (48% disagreed, 32% agreed), has a positive impact on education (44% disagreed, 37% agreed), whilst almost the same proportion felt that Estyn is open to change (38% disagreed, 36% agreed).</p> <p>Differences between the perceptions of senior and non-senior staff are substantial. For example, 67% of senior leaders say Estyn shares best practice compared with just 37% of other staff, and 55% of senior leaders believe Estyn is fair compared with only 33% of others.</p>
<b>More or less apprehension than might be natural?</b>	<p>New questions on apprehension were introduced this year to explore why 84% of respondents in 2024 felt Estyn causes apprehension. Almost two thirds (63%) said that Estyn inspections create 'more apprehension than might be naturally expected from any educational inspection'. This falls slightly to 56% of those inspected in the 2024/25 or 2025/26 academic years.</p>
<b>What impacts apprehension?</b>	<p>Respondents were asked what factors contribute most to the apprehension they feel about Estyn or its inspections. The most common results were 'fear of negative judgements or outcomes' and 'inconsistency of inspectors or process' (both 66%), whilst a similar proportion said 'stress and extra workload' (64%) and 'wanting to do well' (61%). 52% said the 'snapshot nature of inspections' and 48% said 'inspectors approach or attitude'. As shown, many responses were chosen by around 50% or more respondents, demonstrating that a number of factors contribute to apprehension.</p>
<b>What can be done to reduce apprehension?</b>	<p>Most commonly, this included broadening understanding of settings to reduce 'snapshot' judgements (21%), improving consistency of inspections and expectations (14%), and reducing the unknown through greater visibility and communication (11%). Inspector behaviour and a more positive, supportive approach were also mentioned (both 11%). Clearer explanations of expectations, particularly for non-senior staff, alongside reduced paperwork</p>

	and more collaborative approaches, were seen as ways to easing apprehension.
<b>More disagree than agree that Estyn improves the sector</b>	When asked whether Estyn's work has led to the improvement of the delivery of education and training services, 36% agreed and 38% disagreed, whereas a third (33%) say its work has led to improvements in education and learning policy development in Wales, although 35% disagree.
<b>Inspections in the last two years</b>	Those inspected in 2024/25 and 2025/26 were asked to rate their most recent inspection (inspections for previous years were covered in last year's survey). More than half (57%) of respondents recently inspected (2024/25 and 2025/26) said the experience was positive, while 29% say it was negative.
<b>Interim visits</b>	Around half (51%) of respondents who have been through an interim visit said the experience was positive, compared to 18% who said it was negative and 28% who described it as neither positive nor negative. However, the sample was very small, as only 39 respondents had received an interim visit. We would hope that a larger sample is achieved in next year's survey.
<b>Resources</b>	Of those who have used these resources, 87% said that thematic reports are useful, 80% said the same of the full annual report, and 84% for the annual early insights report.  However, many respondents said they 'haven't used' these resources. As could be expected, more non-senior staff have not used these reports, including 31% (14% seniors) for the annual report, 44% (20%) for the annual report's early insights and 31% (9%) for the thematic reviews.
<b>Events</b>	Nearly a quarter (24%) of stakeholders say they have been to an Estyn stakeholder event in the last year. When it comes to respondents who work in an education setting, this includes 38% of seniors, but only 4% of non-senior staff.  Stakeholders who have been to an event in the last 12 months tend to view them positively, with three quarters (75%) rating them as 'very useful' or 'useful'.
<b>Communication</b>	Estyn's communication and engagement fares well, with 38% giving a 'very good' or 'good' rating compared to 17% who report it as 'very poor' or 'poor'.  When it comes to stakeholders who work in an education setting, there is a difference between seniority – 52% of senior staff report Estyn communications favourably, compared to 16% of non-senior staff. However, 37% of staff not in a senior role say they have not seen any communication from Estyn, compared to 9% of those in a senior position.
<b>Communication with staff</b>	Staff who work in an education setting outside of senior roles were asked how they hear about Estyn's communications, messages and findings. The most common route, recorded by 40% of respondents, was via their senior leadership team.

## 2. Methodology

### Research design and recruitment

#### An online survey and qualitative interviews

This is the second wave of a three year survey project. Where appropriate, comparisons have been made with the 2024 results.

SRI worked with Estyn to develop a questionnaire for an online survey and a topic guide for qualitative interviews. The two elements allowed comparison with some aspects of the 2024 project, along with additional questions designed to further explore last year's findings as well as other new perceptions.

The online survey was launched on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and closed on October 30<sup>th</sup>. Estyn distributed the survey link to all inspected providers in Wales, along with social media advertising. SRI built up a database of additional stakeholders who may have had experience of or engagement with Estyn, and promoted the survey with these organisations, primarily through email.

The survey received 658 responses this year, compared to 415 in 2024.

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they would be happy to take part in a qualitative interview. Of those who agreed to take part, SRI conducted 25 interviews, ensuring representation from stakeholders with varied perspectives and professional roles.

Participants included senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers working in education and learning providers across a range of settings, including nurseries and childcare settings, primary and secondary schools, PRUs, special schools, independent specialist colleges and further education. Interviews also included governors, as well as stakeholders working in government and local government.

#### Qualitative interview format

The 25 qualitative interviews lasted around 20 minutes and were conducted via Teams or telephone, according to participant preference. They explored some of the feedback already given in their survey, along with additional questions as outlined in the topic guides.

#### Reporting

In the interest of keeping this report to a readable length, we have focused on the key findings.

This report combines both the quantitative and qualitative elements of this research, exploring the findings of the survey and the themes coming through the interviews.

Below each chart we refer to the 'base'. This refers to the number of respondents who answered the question. Not all respondents answered every question. This will generally have been because they were intentionally 'routed out' of questions which were not relevant to them.

Not all charts will add up to the total 'base' figure. Some questions were multi-choice, where respondents were able to choose more than one answer and in these cases the number of responses may add up to a higher figure than the base. Similarly, for open questions (questions where respondents are asked for their comments), responses have been analysed and coded into themes. In many instances, respondents made comments which reflected more than one theme.

## Coded responses

Some of the questions in the survey were open questions. These are questions with no pre-coded answers, which allow the respondent to give a free-text response. Many gave full responses raising several points.

Open responses were coded by SRI into themes. Responses were often coded into several themes because the respondents' answers covered several topics. As a result, the quotes used in this report may represent several coded themes. In addition, some respondents gave more specific answers than others.

This type of thematic analysis is a valuable tool for extracting meaningful patterns and insights from qualitative data. It is important to acknowledge however that it involves a degree of human interpretation and judgement. It should not be seen as an exact science, but a useful tool to help readers understand the main themes which arose from open responses.

Coded responses can often be similar in nature but represent slightly different points. This again helps the reader to fully understand the full range of opinions expressed in open questions.

To keep the report as concise as possible, and readable, only the most common themes from open-ended questions are presented. A full list of themes is included in the marked-up questionnaire in the appendix.

## Survey respondents

### Respondent type

Which of the following best describes you?	2025	2024
I work for an education or learning provider/setting	64%	63%
I am a parent/carers	12%	12%
I work in government or local government	9%	9%
I am a governor or a committee member for an education or learning provider/setting	4%	7%
I work for a public body	2%	3%
I am a contracted Estyn inspector	1%	4%
I work for or represent an association, union, representative body or society	1%	2%
Other	6%	0%

Base: 658 (all respondents)

Making up the majority of the sample, nearly two thirds (63%) of survey respondents work for an education or learning provider. Responses from parents (12%) are explored primarily in a separate chapter towards the end of this report.

Most of the 6% who fall into the 'other' category are retired from positions in an education or learning provider setting. The breakdown is almost identical to last year.

#### **Setting type (those working for education or learning providers)**

<b>Which type of provision do you work in?</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2024</b>
Primary school	49%	56%
Secondary school	24%	19%
Nursery or pre-school	6%	11%
Further education	5%	2%
All-age schools	3%	1%
Special school	3%	2%
Work-based learning	1%	5%
Pupil referral unit	1%	1%
Independent specialist college	1%	-
Welsh for adults	1%	-
Youth work setting	1%	-
Adult learning	<1%	1%
Other	2%	2%

*Base: 424 (those who work for education or learning providers)*

Those in education or learning settings were asked to specify the type of provider they work for. Around half (49%) work in a primary school, 24% in a secondary school and 6% in nursery or pre-school, with smaller representations from other types of settings. This breakdown is broadly similar to last year.



### Staff role (those working for education or learning providers)

Which of the following best describes your role in the provider you work in?	2025	2024
I am a member of senior management	52%	65%
I am a teacher/lecturer	24%	15%
I am a member of middle management	17%	8%
I am a teaching assistant/higher level teaching assistant	4%	7%
I am a member of the support staff team	2%	5%

Base: 424 (those who work for education or learning providers)

Representation of respondents who work for education or learning providers was improved this year. Around half (52%) said they are a member of senior management (compared to 65% in 2025). A quarter (24%) are teachers or lecturers (up from 15% last year) and middle managers accounted for 17% (up from 8%).

### Local authority (those working for education or learning providers and governors/committee members)

Those who work for an education or learning provider, as well as governors and committee members, were asked where their setting is based, with the results shown below.

Local authority	Percentage	Local authority	Percentage
Cardiff	12%	Vale of Glamorgan	4%
Flintshire	8%	Swansea	4%
Gwynedd	7%	Powys	3%
Caerphilly	7%	Wrexham	3%
Denbighshire	6%	Torfaen	2%
Carmarthenshire	6%	Monmouthshire	2%
Rhondda Cynon Taf	5%	Isle of Anglesey	2%
Pembrokeshire	5%	Blaenau Gwent	2%
Neath Port Talbot	5%	Ceredigion	1%
Conwy	5%	Merthyr Tydfil	1%
Bridgend	4%	Refused to disclose	2%
Newport	4%		

Base: 449 (those who work for education or learning providers and governors/committee members)

### Year inspected

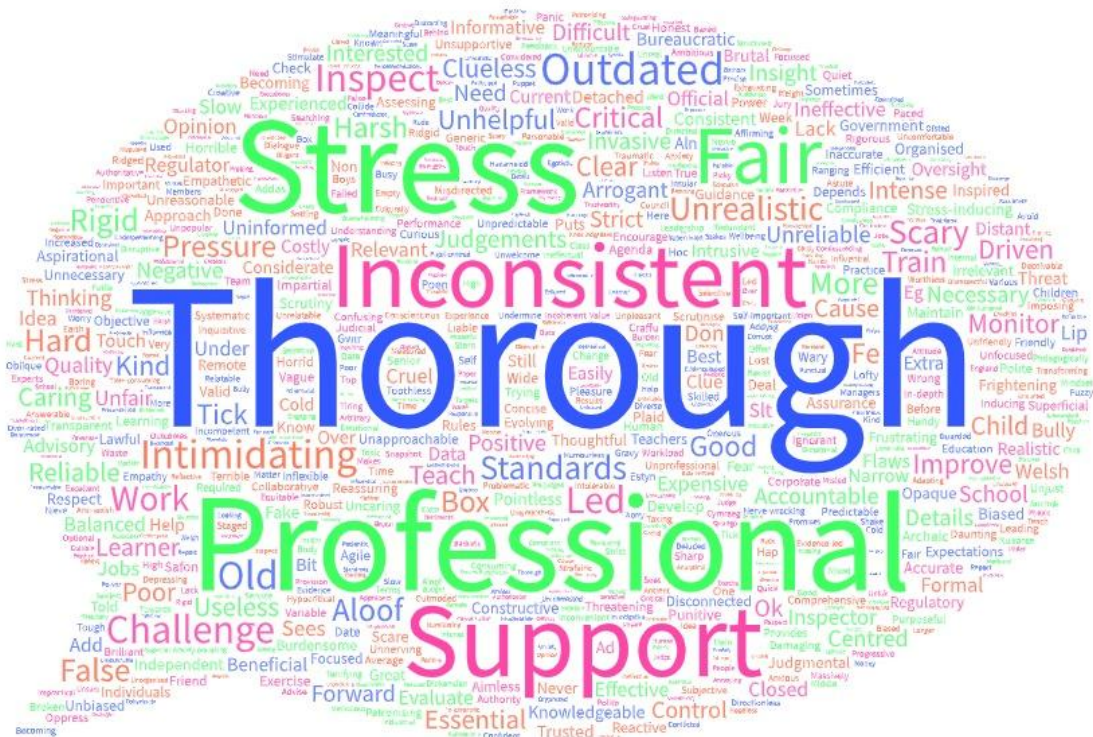
Finally, in terms of understanding respondents, those working in settings as well as governors were asked when their setting was last inspected. The results to this question are shown below.

When was your setting last inspected?	2025	2024
2025/26	11%	-
2024/25	25%	17%
2023/24	19%	31%
2022/23	9%	8%
2021/22	3%	5%
2019/20	7%	7%
Before 2019/20 academic year	11%	23%
Don't know / can't remember	13%	9%
My setting doesn't get inspected by Estyn	1%	1%

*Base: 449 (those who work for education or learning providers and governors/committee members)*

Just over a third (36%) of these received an inspection under the new framework (2024/25 and 2025/26 combined).

All survey respondents were asked to describe Estyn in three words; the results are illustrated in the word cloud below:



The top ten positive and negative themes are in this table, along with the proportion of respondents using each word:

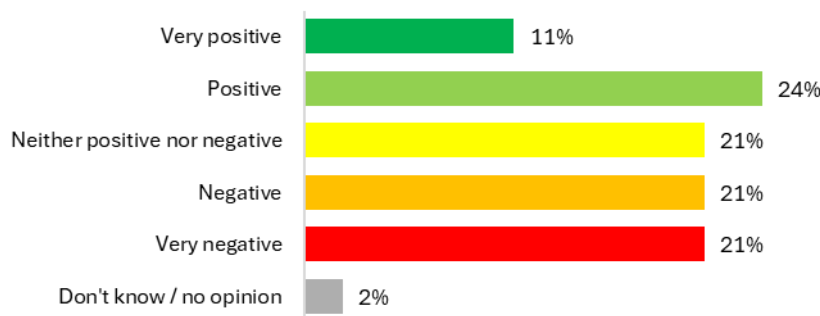
Positive themes	Percentage	Negative themes	Percentage
Thorough	12%	Inconsistent	9%
Professional	11%	Stressful	8%
Supportive	9%	Outdated	5%
Fair	8%	Intimidating	5%
Necessary	2%	Scary	3%
Evaluative	2%	Unrealistic	3%
Informative	2%	Unhelpful	3%
Knowledgeable	2%	Judgemental	2%

Accountability	2%	Unfair	2%
Constructive	2%	Ineffective	2%
Quality	2%	Pressure	2%
Approachable	2%	Out of touch	2%

Alongside this, some of the most common words could be classed as neutral. These included: challenging, inspection, standards, critical and intense (each representing 3% of responses).

## Overall Perception

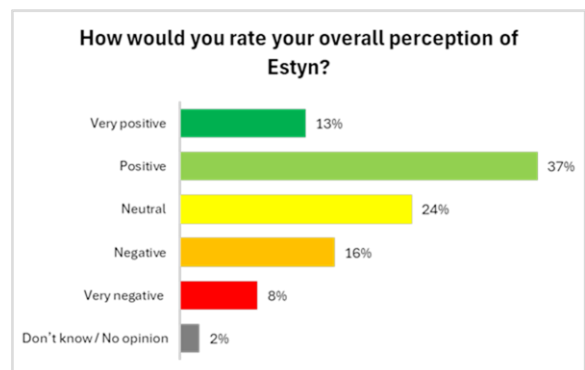
### How would you rate your overall perception of Estyn?



Base: 658 (all respondents)

### 2024 comparison

Overall perceptions of Estyn appear less positive this year than in 2024. In 2025, 35% of respondents expressed a positive or very positive view (compared with 50% in 2024), while 42% expressed a negative or very negative view (compared with 24% in 2024). However, these differences should be interpreted with caution, as there are important shifts in the make-up of the sample between the two surveys.



So, why might results have worsened this year? The change is likely driven by two key factors:

1. A higher proportion of respondents this year are in non-senior roles, and these groups tend to hold less positive views of Estyn.

2. Perceptions have also declined across almost all stakeholder groups, including senior leaders, who have historically been the most positive.

This year's survey includes a much larger proportion of non-senior staff, including teachers. Last year's findings suggested that these groups may hold more negative views of Estyn than senior leaders, but the 2024 sample for these roles was small. In 2025, considerable effort was made to boost participation among non-senior staff, both to improve representation and to explore these emerging insights further. As a result, the expanded sample provides a more robust picture, but also likely contributes to the lower overall levels of positive response reported this year.

At the same time, perceptions have dropped across most learning provider staff groups, including senior leaders. This means the change is not only due to the different sample, and we cannot say for certain why views have declined.

Overall, the mix of a more representative sample and a real drop in views across groups helps explain the change in perceptions since 2024.

### **Overall perceptions by respondent type**

The proportion of different stakeholders expressing a 'very positive' or 'positive' view of Estyn, is shown below. The sample size is too small to make reliable year-on-year comparisons for most stakeholder types, with the exception of those working for an education or learning provider. Although direct comparisons are not possible for these respondent types except education staff, the results for these other groups are broadly similar to last year.

- I am a contracted Estyn inspector (88% positive view)
- I work for or represent an association, union, representative body or society (71%)
- I work in government or local government (64%)
- I work for an education or learning provider/setting (34% ▼ 12pts)
- I work for a public body (31%)
- I am a governor or a committee member for a learning provider/setting (36%)
- I am a parent/carer (26%)

### **Overall perceptions by staff type**

Looking at the results more closely, particularly for those who work for an education or learning provider, members of senior management are more likely to have a positive overall perception of Estyn, compared to other staff who are likely to have less engagement with the inspectorate.

- I am a member of senior management (45% positive)
- I am a member of middle management (22%)
- I am a teacher or lecturer (21%)
- I am a teaching assistant / higher level teaching assistant (21%)
- I am a member of the support team (44% - very small base of 9 responses)

When combining responses from non-senior staff, this shows that 22% of 'other' staff have a positive view of Estyn, compared to 45% of senior management. Results for both groups have decreased since last year, where 56% of senior staff expressed a positive perception, compared to 34% of 'other' staff.

Two of the themes running through this report are the visibility and familiarity of Estyn, and the feeling of apprehension it can cause. These themes appear to feed into respondents' overall perception of Estyn. The data above shows correlation between a positive perception of Estyn and the closeness to the 'top' of the education tree, where communication from Estyn is likely to be higher.

In addition, of the respondents who describe Estyn inspections as causing *more* apprehension than might be naturally expected, only 16% report having a positive perception of the inspectorate.

### Overall perceptions by year of inspection

Looking at overall perceptions by year of inspection, those inspected under the current framework tend to hold more positive views of Estyn than those whose last inspection took place before the 2024/25 academic year. Among respondents inspected in 2024/25 or 2025/26, 42% reported a positive perception of Estyn, compared with 32% among those inspected before 2024/25. Negative views are also lower among those inspected more recently (37%, compared with 46% for earlier inspections). This suggests that more recent inspection experiences may be contributing to slightly more positive overall perceptions.

### Themes driving positive perceptions

All survey respondents were asked to explain the rating they gave through an open question, which has been coded into themes.

Please explain the reasons for your rating (positive themes)	Percentage
Interactions /communication has been positive	18%
Supportive/useful feedback/ feedback drives improvement	9%
Fair/honest/rigorous/professional	7%

### Positive interactions and communication

The most frequently mentioned reason (18%) for a positive perception of Estyn was a feeling that any interaction or communication they have had with them has been good.

This primarily includes positive experiences during inspections, including teachers who were observed in a classroom, and tend to focus on the quality of engagement between inspectors and the wider school community or a generic positive experience.

*"Inspectors have been very approachable and reassuring with all staff and constantly checked on the wellbeing of all stakeholders throughout the process"*



*“All my interactions with Estyn have been positive and supportive so therefore I could only have a very positive outlook of the organisation”*

In addition, a few have praised Estyn for the supportive and informative peer inspection training, and others say their positivity stems from their experience of other Estyn training programmes.

*“Having successfully completed Estyn AI training, I can honestly say that it was one of the best professional learning experiences I have had. A lot of my school-based experiences with Estyn had been very different to this in terms of how meetings with inspectors had taken place, which were, in some cases probing to the point of humiliation. In the AI training, this was not the case and changed my opinion of Estyn as an education body. I think there should be a similar professional learning opportunity for middle leaders, so that these leaders understand the process, their role and feel more at ease about an inspection”*

### **Supportive and improvement-focused feedback**

Around one in ten respondents (9%) described Estyn’s feedback as supportive and helpful in driving improvement. They said inspectors provided clear, fair and constructive feedback that reflected the school’s context and helped identify practical next steps. Some felt inspections were carried out with schools rather than to them.

*“Recent inspection was a positive step in the right direction in being more supportive than judgemental compared to the inspection before”*

### **Fair, honest and professional**

7% described Estyn as fair, honest, rigorous and professional. These respondents felt inspections were thorough, but evidence-based and fair. They valued inspectors who listened, understood context, and engaged in open and honest professional dialogue. Some said that feedback was balanced and constructive, recognising strengths as well as areas for improvement, and that inspections felt rigorous but respectful, helping schools feel judged fairly rather than unfairly criticised.

*“Inspectors listened carefully to staff and students, recognising the context in which the school operates, yet they carried out their role with rigour and clarity. Their balanced approach ensured that while the challenges we face were acknowledged, the many strengths of the school were also valued. The outcome left us feeling respected and understood, while still providing us with clear recommendations for improvement”*

*“I am positive about Estyn because throughout the numerous inspection processes they were professional, attentive, and empathetic. Inspectors listened carefully to staff and students, recognising the context in which the school operates, yet they carried out their role with rigour and clarity. Their balanced approach ensured that while the challenges we face were acknowledged, the*

*many strengths of the school were also valued. The outcome left us feeling respected and understood, while still providing us with clear recommendations for improvement"*

## Themes driving negative perceptions

Please explain the reasons for your rating (negative themes)	Percentage
Cause stress / huge amount of work	18%
Experiences differ between inspectors / inspections	15%
Query over inspection process our outcomes / suggested changes to these	12%
Need a greater focus on supporting settings / sharing best practice	7%

### Stress of Estyn inspections drive down perceptions

Where respondents have described negative perceptions of Estyn, this is sometimes (18%) due to stress and extra workload they experience as from inspections.

*"Inspections place excessive pressure on schools, leading to a culture of performativity rather than genuine improvement. The focus on rigid criteria and data-driven outcomes can overshadow the individual needs of pupils and the professional judgment of teachers"*

This pressure might not come directly from Estyn. For staff not in senior management, some respondents say that the top-down pressure is felt throughout the school.

*"Pressure from management to "perform" for inspection"*

*"Whilst I can see there have been efforts to improve the experience for school leaders, it still needs to be filtered down for the average class teacher to reduce the stress on them"*

### Experiences differ between inspectors and inspections

15% said their perception of Estyn is shaped by inconsistencies between inspectors and inspections. Some of these responses talked about different experiences depending on who led or formed the inspection team, with some inspections feeling fair, supportive and professional, while others felt rigid, dismissive or unfair. Respondents often felt judgements depended too heavily on individual inspectors' views, subject knowledge or approach, leading to reduced confidence in inspection outcomes. In turn, some said that expectations of differences of approach can increase anxiety for schools.

*"It really depends on who you get! My experiences differ greatly. Last inspection the lead inspector was very sarcastic and tried to catch us out with vague questions"*



*“The system is needed. The people running ESTYN are excellent. However, the people inspecting are still inconsistent and often too far detached from being in a school. Inspectors should be no more than 5 years outside of teaching and being a senior leader in a school”*

### **Questions about the inspection process and outcomes**

Around one in ten (12%) queried how inspections are carried out and how judgements are reached. These respondents sometimes questioned whether inspections provide a true and fair reflection of settings, citing things such as limited engagement with staff and learners, and an over-reliance on paperwork, and a more tailored approach for different sectors (including ALN and post-16).

*“Outdated methods that don’t lead to improvement. Leads to box ticking by heads who are “Estyn experts” and not a fair reflection of schools”*

### **Need a greater focus on supporting settings / sharing best practice**

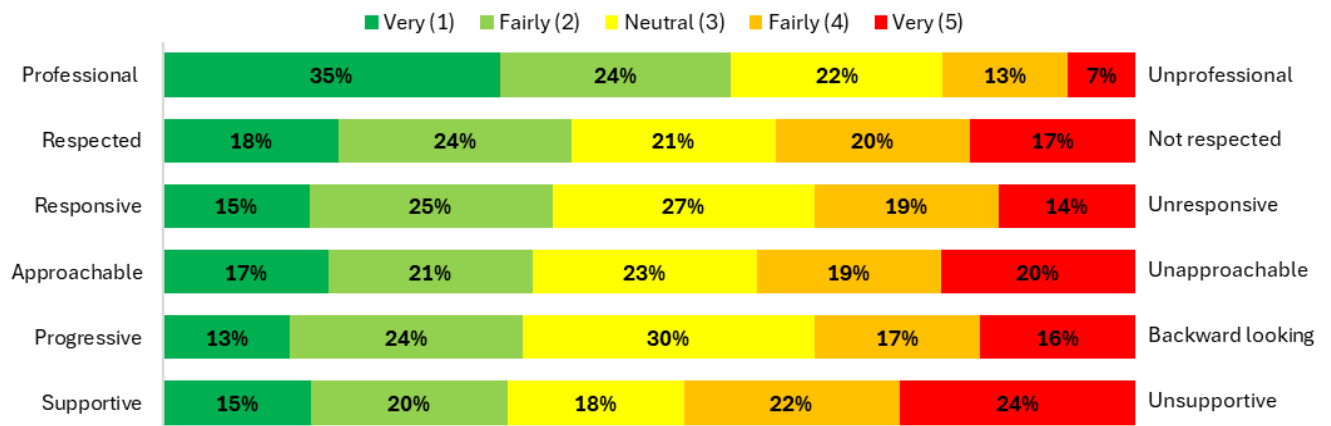
7% of respondents felt that Estyn should place a stronger emphasis on supporting improvement rather than, in their opinion, primarily judging performance. These respondents often described inspections as focusing too heavily on identifying faults, with limited guidance on how settings can improve. Some felt that Estyn sometimes highlight issues but do not offer clear, achievable ways forward. Others called for Estyn to do more to share good practice with education settings.

*“Teachers become more stressed when an inspection is due, I have a feeling they are often criticised. Inspections are seen as a negative experience not as a positive experience, I feel inspections generally pick up faults rather than see and promote the positives. I believe inspections need to be more supportive to their schools. Work with them rather than go in inspect, say what’s wrong and then leave. Inspections need to see both positives and things to work on, give ideas of how the setting can improve things and generally support schools”*

## 4. Key characteristics

### Characteristics

Thinking of Estyn as an overall organisation, which of the following is closest to your opinion?



Base: 576 (all respondents except parents)

### Mixed views on characteristics

As reported, stakeholders have mixed overall perceptions of Estyn, and this is reflected in their views of the inspectorate's characteristics.

Well over half (59%) of respondents say they believe Estyn is a professional organisation overall (when combining the 'very' and 'fairly' responses), while 20% report them to be unprofessional. Some comments for those who put forward an unprofessional rating, include comments about bias or out-of-touch inspectors, inconsistent inspection teams and inspector behaviour.

In terms of other characteristics, similar proportions believe Estyn is respected (42%), responsive (40%), approachable (38%), progressive (37%) and supportive (35%).

*"We're very good at what we do, but it's nice to have it confirmed, and they do that in a supportive way. If there are issues, I didn't have any in my department, but others did, they dealt with those in a supportive way"*

### Comparison with 2024 survey results

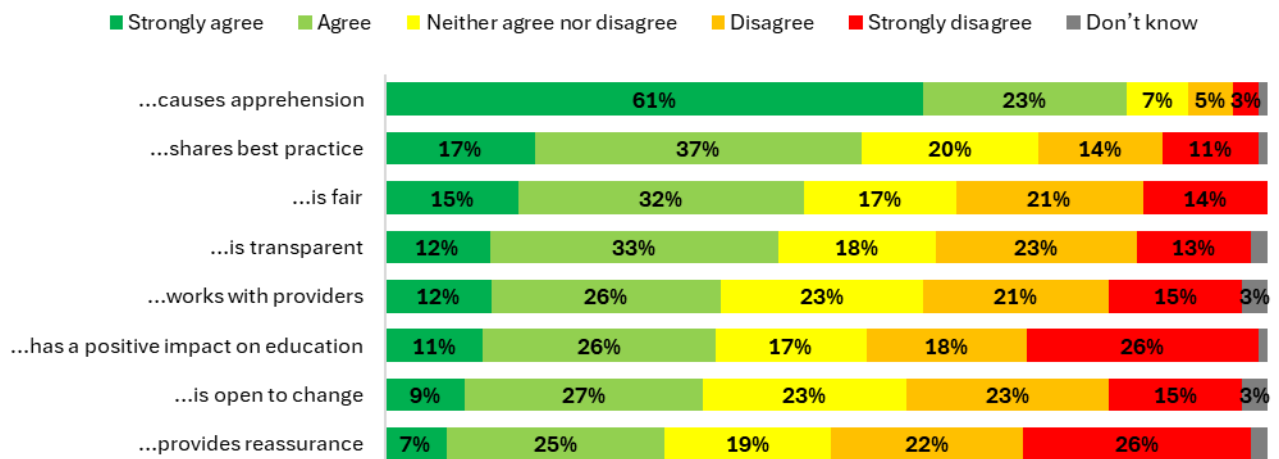
The table below compares responses to this question between the 2024 and 2025 surveys. As noted earlier when discussing the 'overall perception' question, there appears to have been a real decline in sentiment this year. However, as also discussed earlier, some of this is likely linked to the larger and more representative sample of non-senior staff in the 2025 survey, who appear to hold less positive views of Estyn.

Across most characteristics, the proportion of respondents giving a positive rating has fallen by around 12-13%, apart from 'progressive' and 'professional', which have dropped by 15% and 19% respectively.

Key characteristics (2025 vs 2024 comparison)	2025 Percentage	2024 Percentage
Professional	59%	78%
Respected	42%	54%
Responsive	40%	53%
Approachable	38%	50%
Progressive	37%	52%
Supportive	35%	47%

## Key attributes

### To what extent do you agree or disagree that Estyn...



Base: 576 (all respondents except parents)

### Sharing best practice

More than half (54%) of survey respondents feel that Estyn shares best practice (combining the percentage that 'agreed' and 'strongly agreed'), compared to 25% who believe it does not (combining the percentage that 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed').

There is a significant difference between respondents in senior positions, of which 67% agree compared to other staff combined, which is 37%. This reflects a theme running through the research, which has found little engagement with non senior staff outside of inspections.

*"I think there is a clear emphasis on sharing effective practices that exist pan Wales"*

*"Outside of the inspection process, they are a distant sector"*

In the qualitative interviews, some participants talked about the value they find when Estyn shares best practice. They say they learn what other schools are doing effectively, which not only allows them to reflect on their own school's approach, but they also feel it gives them insight into what Estyn might look for during inspections.

### **Estyn is fair**

Nearly half (47%) of respondents believe Estyn is fair, compared to 35% who do not. Again, there is a significant difference between the percentage of respondents who are seniors (55% say Estyn is fair) compared to all other staff (33%).

*"Always seems very fair, clear and consistent in my view"*

Through the survey's open comments and the qualitative interviews, this disparity seems to stem from the interactions between inspectors and staff – particularly teaching staff – during inspections.

Often, teachers say they feel like they are not able to give context and explanations during a visit or lesson observation. This is felt to be unfair and not allowing a true reflection of life in the classroom and the efforts they put in year-round.

*"Many staff who have been teaching for years begrudge the snapshot look that Estyn have on their lessons / books, often with no context or conversation thus creating feeling of being devalued"*

### **Transparency**

Estyn appears to operate transparently according to 45% of respondents, but 36% disagree.

Again, it is a smaller proportion of staff outside senior positions who perceive Estyn to be transparent (34%) compared to those in higher positions (50%).

In the qualitative interviews, some participants said that the lack of transparency comes with the unknown ahead of an inspection, unsure of what they will be asked to produce or see, along with inconsistencies in inspection teams.

### **Working with providers**

Nearly two fifths (38%) of respondents said Estyn works with providers, compared to a similar proportion (36%) who disagreed to some extent.

Those who speak positively on this subject often describe the collaboration they experienced during a recent inspection.

*"I do feel that there is a more collaborative approach and strive for positive change"*

*"Link visits and inspections have been a collaborative approach with professional dialogue. This has helped the institution to continue to drive standards and outcomes"*

### Estyn's impact on education

Estyn's impact on education has been positive, according to 37% of survey respondents.

*"I think they have improved education, because they've been open to understanding things from the people actually doing the work"*

However, a larger proportion (44%) do not agree. Through open comments and qualitative interviews, the research has found that in these instances there tends to be a feeling that the stress and apprehension around inspections can cause upset and negatively impact the wellbeing of staff.

Some have said that staff have left because of the pressure of inspections, which fall on top of an already challenging teaching role.

*"Cause workload and stress to an already overworked, underpaid and demoralised profession"*

*"The stress of the situation made some colleagues quit teaching, made me consider quitting teaching and led to some taking long term sick for work related stress"*

However, there remains a belief among others that Estyn is a positive force in education, holding settings to account, sharing best practice and the beginnings of an inspectorate that will offer positive feedback along with guidance and support where needed.

*"I see Estyn as valuable because its reports highlight strengths and areas for improvement, helping schools, parents, and learners understand and support progress"*

*"Estyn is seen as a professional and independent body that brings credibility to the evaluation of education and training. Estyn plays a vital role in maintaining high standards in education across Wales. Their inspections are thorough and help drive improvement. The feedback provided by Estyn is fair, balanced and constructive, supporting work-based learning providers in identifying areas for development"*

### Open to change

When it comes to the perception of whether Estyn is open to change, similar proportions agree (36%) and disagree (38%). A few respondents said they welcomed this survey as part of a feedback loop, while others say they have seen positive changes within the inspectorate.

*"I think the culture within Estyn has changed significantly in recent years and stakeholder perceptions are in the main very positive"*

However, there remains a perception among some that while Estyn as an organisation is open to change, there remains some inspectors that are stuck in old ways.

*“The change in Estyn has been noticeable, however there are still a few inspectors who have not fully bought into the process and schools have very different experiences”*

### **Providing reassurance**

A larger proportion (48%) of survey respondents said they do not feel like Estyn provides reassurance, compared to those who do, at 32%.

There are differences among stakeholders. Those who have had an inspection under the new framework are more likely (38%) to agree there is reassurance compared to those whose latest inspection fell before that (29%).

In the qualitative interviews, those who have had an inspection in the 2024/2025 or 2025/2026 years have said they have noticed more effort to reassure schools through sharing their own experiences, talking about the process, taking questions, being approachable and taking a more collaborative approach. Some senior leaders have welcomed the change to talk to the inspector before the visit, offering context and background and being able to share information before a visit.

Others talk of the reassurance they have felt knowing they have a peer inspector, who will likely have recent experience of the challenges schools face.

And again, there is a significant difference between role type. While 42% of senior leaders agree the reassurance is there, the same is only reported by 18% of other staff.

Staff sometimes say they believe it is the senior leadership teams' role to offer that reassurance, as it is the nominee that has the lion's share of communication with Estyn.

### **Apprehension caused by Estyn**

Last year, 84% of survey respondents said that they thought Estyn causes apprehension, a theme which has been explored in more detail this year.

The same question was posed again this year, with the same proportion – 84% – saying that they think Estyn does cause apprehension.

There is a small difference between seniority, with fewer (82%) senior leaders agreeing with the statement compared to other staff (89%).

Stakeholders were asked more about this apprehension through a series of questions, which are explored in the following chapter, along with detailed discussions in the qualitative interviews.

### Comparison with 2024 survey results

The table below compares responses to this question between the 2024 and 2025 surveys. Again, there have been decreases across all attributes, with the exception of 'causes apprehension', which has stayed the same (84%).

The remaining attributes have all decreased, with the largest decrease for 'has a positive impact on education' (decreasing by 16%, to 37%), and the smallest decrease for transparency (dropping by 11%, to 45%).

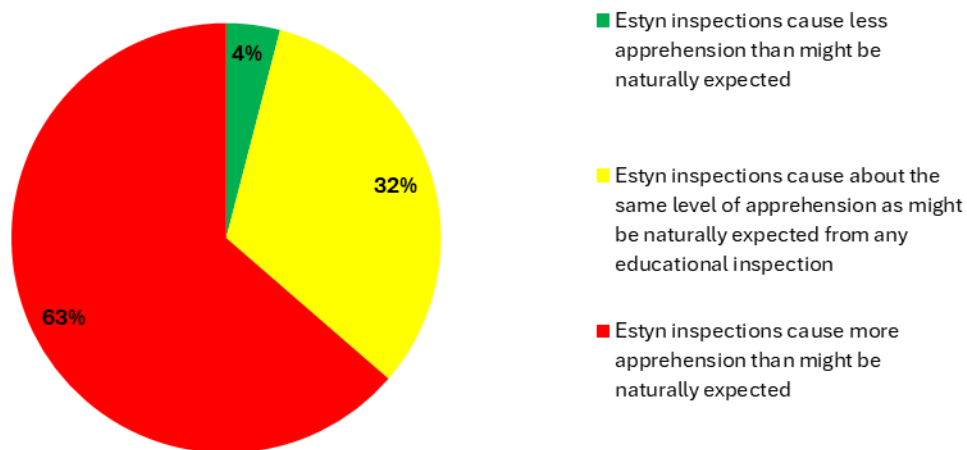
Key attributes(2025 vs 2024 comparison)	2025 Percentage	2024 Percentage
...causes apprehension	84%	84%
...shares best practice	54%	68%
...is fair	47%	61%
...is transparent	45%	56%
...works with providers	38%	51%
...has a positive impact on education	37%	53%
...is open to change	36%	51%
...provides reassurance	32%	44%

## 5. Apprehension

As mentioned above, the feeling that Estyn causes apprehension came out strongly (agreed by 84% of respondents) in the 2024 survey. To explore this topic further, questions were asked in the survey and in qualitative interviews to understand the causes of this apprehension and whether there is anything Estyn can do to reduce those feelings. The results have been analysed and reported together in the following pages.

### How much apprehension is natural?

Please select the statement that best reflects your view:



Base: 449 (those who work for education or learning providers)

#### Apprehension often more than naturally expected

Perceptions reflected by more than a third (36%) of respondents is that Estyn inspections cause about the same level of apprehension – or less – than might naturally be expected. However, 63% said that Estyn inspections cause more apprehension than might be naturally expected.

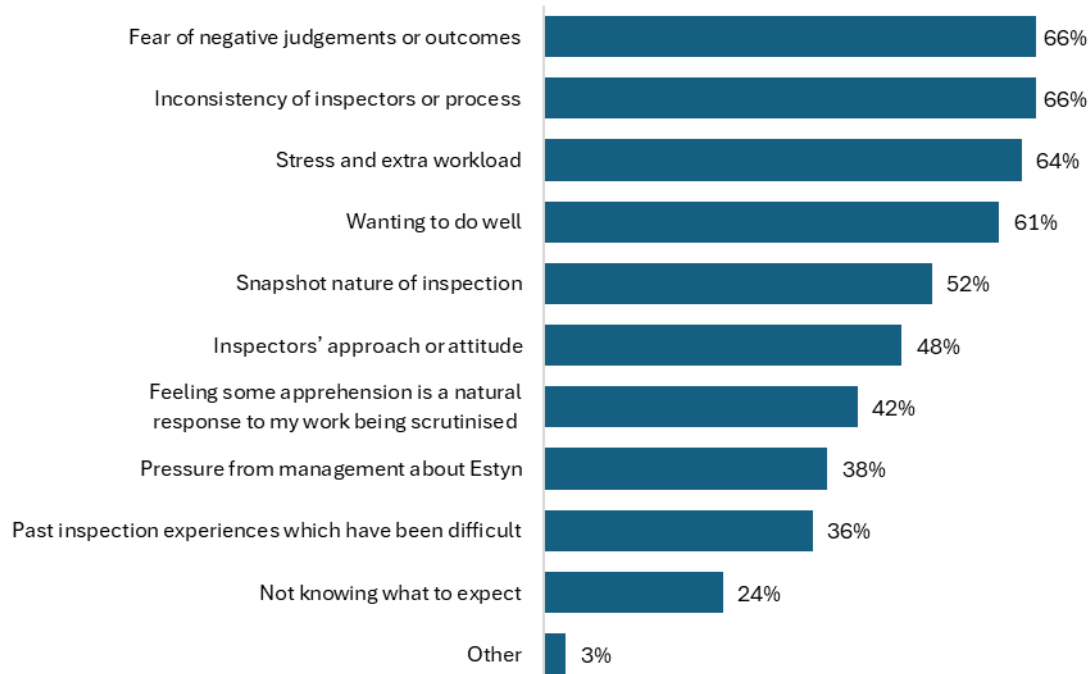
While 63% of respondents inspected before the 2024/25 academic year believe Estyn causes more apprehension than might naturally be expected, this falls slightly to 56% of those inspected in the 2024/25 or 2025/26 academic years.

Similarly, increased apprehension is higher among staff outside of senior positions (70%) compared to those in senior roles (56%).



## What impacts apprehension?

### Which of the following factors contribute most to any apprehension you feel about Estyn or its inspections?



Base: 391 (those who work for education or learning providers)

### Apprehension stems from multiple routes

When it comes to apprehension, respondents often note more than one way inspections bring about this feeling.

While 42% say that feeling some apprehension is a natural response to their work being scrutinised, there are other aspects of an inspection – both within the setting and external factors – that play a part, along with differences in respondent role.

*"I don't think you can do much to alter that apprehension. It's in people's nature to want to do their best and there is always going to be the issue that inspectors are not going to see what you see and affect outcomes"*

### Inconsistencies in approach cause apprehension

A theme running through both qualitative and quantitative elements of this research is the apprehension around inconsistencies between inspectors or processes, noted as a factor by 66% of survey respondents.

And around half (48%) of survey respondents said that the approach or attitude of inspectors can also cause apprehension.

*"Inconsistency between Estyn teams is the biggest single factor in my opinion. Schools in the same cluster operating very similar policies and practices have experienced significantly different inspection outcomes. Apprehension stems from who you're going to get"*

The open comments and qualitative interviews revealed a similar theme. Included in the interviews were members of senior leadership teams, peer inspectors, middle leaders, teachers and other stakeholders, who often talked about the desire to build more context and understanding into an inspection.

*"Usually it's either a core subject specialist or someone who's been in senior leadership for so long that they've forgotten what it's like in the classroom, what it's like 'in the trenches'. So when I hear some of the opinions they have about students and teachers and lessons, I just think they're completely wrong. They're not seeing the wider picture of why things are happening"*

### **Ready, already? Stress and workload**

Qualitative interview participants who are aware of Estyn's Ready Already campaign appreciate its sentiment – and in some way agree it is working - but there is a feeling among others that it doesn't reflect the nature of inspections. Nearly three quarters (64%) say that stress and extra workload adds to the apprehension around inspections, jumping to 75% of non-senior staff compared to 54% of seniors.

*"There is instant pressure, which feeds into middle leaders who still have full teaching loads and massively overdemanding days, then need to collate information or gather information on top"*

*"Having an Estyn inspection is sort of like having your mother-in-law coming to visit; you've cleaned your house, you've sorted your cupboards and everything is tidy, and then you are just making sure that everyone knows that your mother-in-law might have something to say that you don't like"*

That extra workload includes examples such as data requests from Estyn, which doesn't always align with the format in which the setting collects and stores data. In some instances, stakeholders believe that requests are outdated and unnecessary, such as an expectation to 'print a website'.

*"As an IT teacher everything I do is digital, but in all the visits I've had, they've never looked at anything digital. They want hard copies. I've had deputy heads ask me to print out students' websites. I wasn't printing a website off"*

Pressure from management (38% overall) is also high for other staff (62%), a sentiment shared by only 18% of senior staff. For those who talk about internal pressures, the

demands from senior leadership often lead to more meetings, more checks, increased internal scrutiny, and sometimes an atmosphere that leads to a feeling of 'walking on eggshells'.

### Snapshot judgement

There is a feeling for 53% of respondents that it is the snapshot nature of inspections that raises apprehension.

Further explanation through the open comments and qualitative interviews reveals that there is a level of 'unfairness' felt in how the school is reflected in a relatively short space of time.

*"There are challenges around getting a really true perception of the school within three days of inspection activity... any school can be outstanding on the day and on another day because of circumstances may not be as great"*

### Past experience

For more than a third (36%), it is past experiences that cause apprehension over inspections. Experiences of negative outcomes, unapproachable and unpredictable inspectors and the feeling that staff could give no context or offer wider understanding to the inspection teams has made some inspection experiences feel negative.

Some staff, having felt a lot of pressure and stress, have left their position at the school or have left teaching all together.

### Not knowing what to expect

A theme in the survey's open comments talked about the fear of the unknown, when it comes to inspection. This is reflected by 24% of respondents stating that apprehension also derives from 'not knowing what to expect' (17% senior leaders; 33% other staff). This can include not knowing who the inspectors are or what their background is, what they might be looking for, who they are going to talk to, who they are going to observe and what they will ask for.

This can have a big impact on staff emotionally and physically above feelings of apprehension, with some reporting working late to gather data once the inspection has started because they didn't know what was going to be asked of them and in what format.

## Reducing apprehension

In the survey, respondents were asked what Estyn could do to minimise any feelings of apprehension its work may cause. The table below presents all themes identified from the open comments. Unlike other questions, the full set of themes is shown here because this is a new question introduced this year.

<b>What could Estyn do to minimise feelings of apprehension?</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Broaden understanding to reduce 'snapshot' judgement	21%
Consistency of inspections and expectations	14%
Reducing the unknown: inspections and Estyn visibility	11%
Inspector behaviour	11%
Be more positive/supportive/constructive	11%
Explain expectations	10%
Apprehension is natural	7%
No/reduced inspection notice	6%
More peer inspectors	6%
Better communications	5%
Reducing the gap between inspections	5%
Reduce paperwork	4%
SLT's role	2%
More time during the inspection	1%
More notice before the inspection	1%
Don't publish reports	1%
Other	13%
Nothing/more of the same	10%
Not answered	3%

### **Broaden understanding to reduce 'snapshot' judgement**

A common theme (21%) featured comments about the desire to be able to show the setting with more context, understanding and collaboration, away from the more 'snapshot' view they feel Estyn has.

*"Talking to service users such as parents, the children, staff, outside agencies to avoid 'snapshot' judgements"*

Sometimes, there is a feeling that some settings can 'perform well' for a week, masking underlying issues, while others feel like a few bad days during inspection week can undermine years of hard work and consistency amid a myriad of challenges.

Some settings talk about the desire for two-way conversations, engaging with more staff, or allowing explanations and context where they feel they are needed.

*"I think a friendlier more "hands-on" inspection. Where inspectors ask teachers and students to provide an insight into what they think is working well, to highlight their own good practice, and to be more transparent as to what lessons are being visited and what the key outcomes are"*

In addition, a lot of change can happen in the years between inspections, so some call for more frequent inspections, a longer inspection, or a more ongoing collaborative approach.

*"Be part of a school's journey not a be all and end all destination. Inspectors don't know the schools, and it is condescending to assume that during the span of an inspection the team can make more sensible judgments than the professionals who are there every day. Have link inspectors who have a feel and understanding of schools by working collaboratively on a regular basis"*

### Improved consistency of inspections and expectations

When respondents talk about apprehension around inspections (14% of comments), this usually falls into two categories – inconsistency in expectations and inspector behaviour.

Having differences in approach, requested data and how inspectors behave at their setting can leave stakeholders feeling uneasy.

Some respondents feel that inspectors have their own biases, preferences and expectations when it comes to an inspection, with 11% also saying it is improving inspector behaviour that would help ease apprehension ('Inspector behaviour' in the table above). Bringing some consistency to their approach should help to ease that apprehension with the knowledge that settings are given them same measuring stick.

*"You need to make sure your inspections are consistent – there are completely different opinions/feedback given to schools in the same cluster (who foster the same plans/approaches) at present"*

In addition, the behaviour of inspectors can heavily contribute to apprehension during an inspection. Some inspectors have been described as rude, dismissive, tough, intimidating, which drives up apprehension.

*"In my experience and feedback from colleagues, apprehension pre-inspection can sometimes come when staff feel they may have, or know they do have a 'particular' inspector, whose reputation for conduct is already established negatively amongst schools, based on first hand experiences"*

*"Having completed the peer inspection training, it's clear there are many excellent people working with Estyn. However, colleague's first question remains 'who's the lead and/or who's on the team' as it's still very much dependent on the team/ lead in some cases"*

In both the qualitative and quantitative elements of this research, stakeholders talked about positive experiences of inspectors and inspection teams who entered the setting with a

friendly and approachable demeanour. Some have held initial meetings with staff to introduce themselves, talk about their background and share their expectations. This approach has been welcomed by SLT and staff. It helped to put a name and face to inspectors

*“Inspectors are allowed to smile and engage with conversation. We all know and understand exactly why they are there, but it does not put you at ease when you are trying to speak with an inspector and you struggle to get more than one-word answers”*

## Reducing the unknown: inspections and Estyn visibility

Expectations are just part of stakeholders’ suggestions for how to reduce apprehension. There is a broad theme (from 11% of comments) of an overall lack of visibility or familiarity with Estyn outside of inspections, that seems to grow the further away from SLT a staff member is.

Increasing engagement could be one way Estyn could improve understanding and reduce apprehension, but the challenge will be in competing against an already full workload that time-poor teachers have.

Other suggestions include:

- Including inspector bios on the Estyn website / in inspection correspondence
- Meet / talk to all staff before inspection
- Touring road show / regional meetings / informal meet-and-greet meetings
- More case studies / blogs from schools who have gone through recent inspections
- More sharing of best practice / what Estyn is looking for

*“In my opinion it would be nice to have a short letter sent to school staff from Estyn about why they are visiting and what they hope to achieve”*

## Explain expectations

When asked how apprehension could be reduced, respondents often (10%) talked about the desire for Estyn or inspectors to outline expectations for all staff, but in particular non senior staff, who often feel a step removed from the inspectorate.

*“Have more interactions and discussions around the expectations of inspections. What will be looked at and what is required”*

This is partly down to how infrequent inspections are, but is also linked to inconsistencies previously identified, where inspection teams might have different preferences, hold different expectations or request different information.

*“Although Estyn say they’re not trying to catch us out, the secrecy and lack of communication with staff throughout the process makes it feel very much them vs us”*

While the nominee will have more correspondence with Estyn, this doesn't always filter down to middle managers, teaching staff or support staff, who feel like they are more in the dark. This can lead to a feeling of being on tenterhooks during an already 'intimidating' and unfamiliar experience.

### Other ways apprehension could be reduced

Stakeholders have put forward other ways they believe apprehension could be reduced, often based on their own experience:

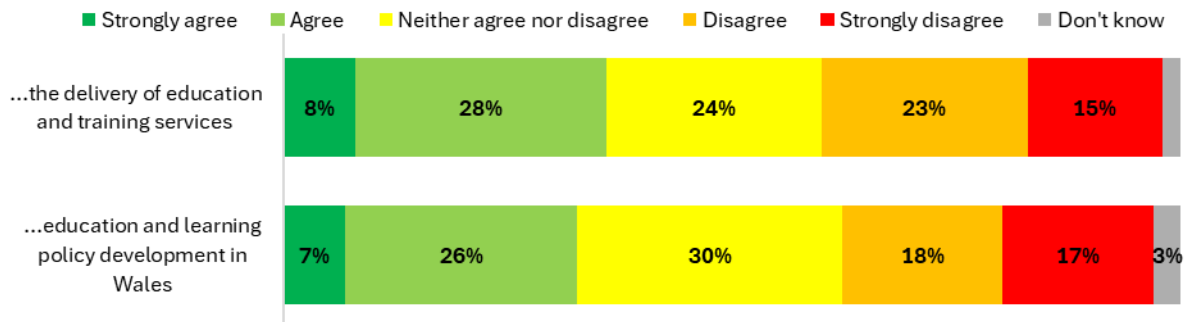
- *Reduce paperwork:* Stakeholders report being up until the early hours, collating requested data or putting together 'perfect' lesson plans
- *Change in notice period:* Some stakeholders say Estyn should just turn up, others want a longer lead-in time
- *Better SLT support:* Some non-senior staff say that the pressure comes from SLT, who add to their workload and create a stressful environment. Giving SLT guidance and information to support wider staff could help
- *More peer inspectors or inspectors with recent in-school experience:* Having an inspector that understands current pressures in particular settings gives stakeholders some peace of mind
- *Don't publish reports:* Some stakeholders say added apprehension comes from knowing outcomes will be publicly available
- *More comms:* Some stakeholders have said the myth busting has helped. More communications like 'Everything you need to know' could help

*"I think the peer inspector programme is really helpful in helping see the triangulation in what you need to do to be ready. More promotion and work around that would be helpful"*



## 6. Improving education

### To what extent do you agree or disagree that Estyn's work has led to improvements in...



Base: 576 (respondents except parents)

#### Delivery of education and training services

When asked whether Estyn's work has led to the improvement of the delivery of education and training services, 36% agreed and 38% disagreed. In last year's survey, 52% agreed and 23% disagreed. As noted throughout, some of the declines in response can be attributed to a larger sample of non-senior staff. For this question, 44% of senior staff agreed, whereas only 21% of all other staff (combined) agreed.

*"It holds school staff accountable for their actions and responsibilities. It encourages attention to detail. It highlights areas of improvement. It commends high standards of teaching, safeguarding and whole school environment"*

*"I believe strongly that schools should be held accountable and that oversight is necessary in a system that plays such a critical role in people's lives"*

*"I haven't seen any benefit from an inspection. Regardless of inspection and report, I haven't seen any changes to the school. Teachers do what they have to get through an inspection and that's it"*

#### Policy development

While comments about Estyn usually centre on inspections, when specifically asked, a third (33%) say its work has led to improvements in education and learning policy development in Wales, although 35% disagree. In last year's survey, 51% agreed and 21% disagreed.

When looking at results by learning provider staff type, 40% of senior staff agreed, whilst only 19% of other staff (combined) agreed.

*"There are some positives with Estyn and its ability to be a voice in challenging Welsh Government policy through its thematic reviews"*



*"If policy shaping is an Estyn mandate then it isn't reporting on this enough"*

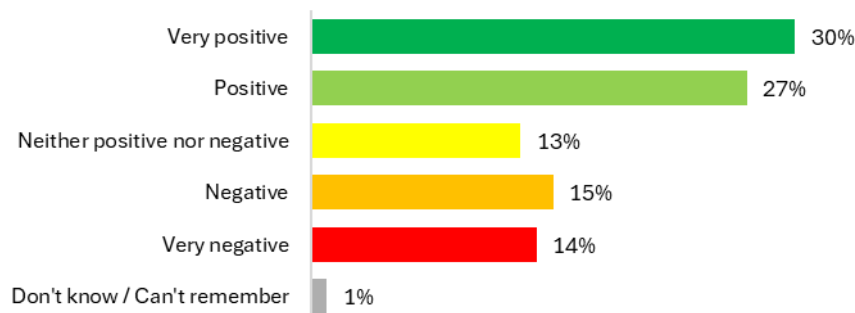
*"You claim to improve standards. I don't believe this to be true. In my opinion, you only monitor them. The South Wales consortium on the other hand DO help to improve standards. They do this by sharing resources, showing examples of what to do/what not to do, sharing good practice, sharing new pedagogy ideas. Estyn never give us examples of what we could have done/share resources. They merely tell us what went wrong/right. That isn't helpful!"*

## 7. Recent inspections

### Description (rating) of experience of last inspection

The following question was asked of respondents working in learning and training providers, as well as governors, who were last inspected in the 2024/2025 or 2025/2026 academic years.

#### How would you describe your most recent experience of a full inspection by Estyn?



Base: 160 (provider staff and governors inspected in 2024/25 or 2025/26)

More than half (57%) of respondents recently inspected said the experience was positive, while 29% say it was negative.

Why do you say that (rating of previous inspection)	Percentage
Inspectors/Inspection was fair/positive	31%
Inspectors friendly /approachable/professional	30%
Stressful/affect wellbeing	20%
Lack of engagement with wider staff/school community	13%
Inspectors listened/engaged	11%
Unfair	11%

The most common theme (31%) was that respondents described their inspection or inspection team as fair and positive. This included comments such as the inspectors understanding the school's context and providing constructive feedback that reflected the setting's strengths and areas for development.

A similar proportion (30%) said inspectors were friendly, approachable and professional, helping to put staff and pupils at ease through supportive dialogue and a genuine effort to understand the setting.

A number of respondents (20%) described the inspection process as highly stressful. They discussed the intense scrutiny, fear of negative judgements and the impact this can have on staff wellbeing both during and after the visit.

Some respondents (13%) felt that inspectors did not fully engage with the wider staff team, noting limited opportunities to speak, share context or contribute, and in some cases feeling inspectors were rushed or dismissive.

Around one in ten respondents (11%) reported positive engagement with inspectors, stating that inspectors took time to listen, asked relevant questions and held two-way conversations that helped discuss strengths, challenges and contextual factors.

*"I felt very at ease, very listened to and respected and supported at all times, before and during the visit"*

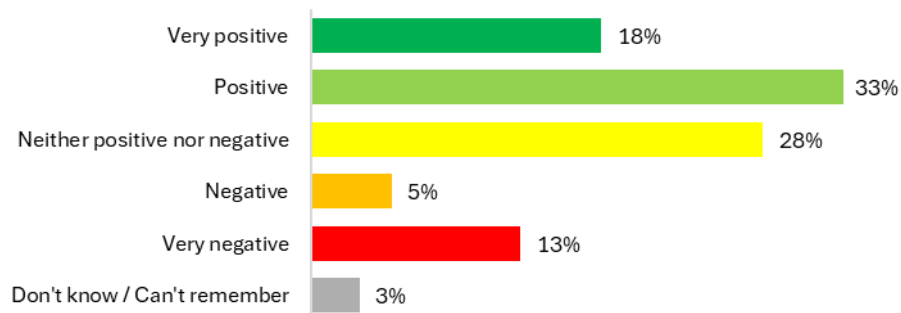
A similar proportion (11%) felt their inspection was unfair, describing inconsistency between inspectors, a lack of subject expertise and final reports that did not reflect the evidence or verbal feedback shared during the visit.

*"Comments made by inspectors to staff did not align with the final written report"*

## Experience of interim visit

The following question was asked of respondents working in learning and training providers, as well as governors, who said they have had an interim visit as part of the new inspection approach. Please note there are only 39 responses to this question, which should be considered when interpreting results.

### How would you describe your experience of that interim visit?



Base: 39 (provider staff and governors who have had an interim visit)

Around half (51%) of respondents who have been through an interim visit said the experience was positive, compared to 18% who said it was negative and 28% who described it as neither positive nor negative.

Why do you say that (rating of interim visit)	Percentage
Supportive / helpful	22%
Professional / friendly	19%
Intense / stressful	19%

The most common theme (22%) was that respondents found the interim visit supportive and genuinely helpful. They said inspectors created a professional, low-stakes environment where discussions felt collaborative, with clear and constructive suggestions from inspectors. (19%) highlighted the professional and friendly manner of the inspection team.

*“They were supportive not judgmental, it felt like a professional discussion, constructive criticism. Estyn referenced other schools for us to go and see during this time, which was useful”*

Around one in five respondents (19%) described the interim visit as intense or stressful. Some felt the process resembled a full inspection, with a similar level of scrutiny. Others said that the experience felt more demanding than anticipated.

### A step in the right direction

In the qualitative interviews, those who had been through an interim visit tended to think they were a ‘step in the right direction’, with an increased feeling of collaboration.

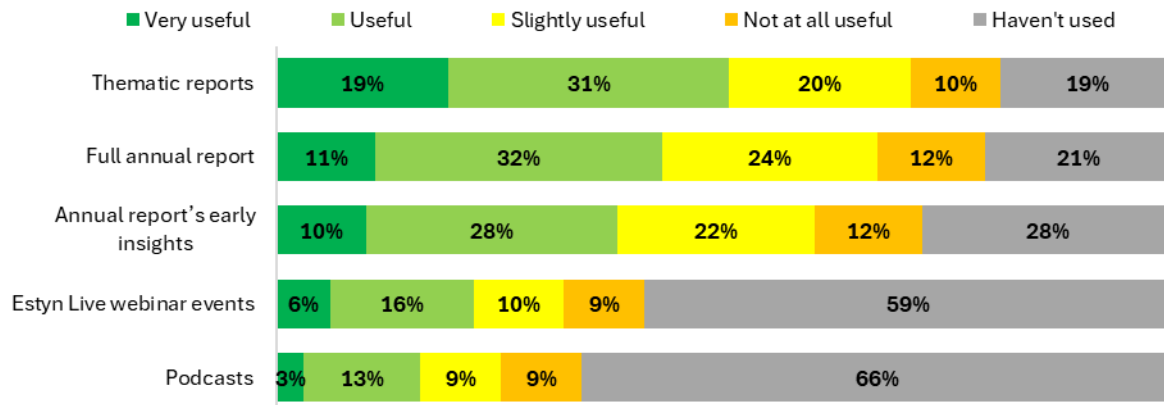
While the intensity was still there, the levels of stress seem to be lower, thanks in part to that two-way conversation, softer demeanour, less addition to workload and offer of guidance.

*“The conversation was much more two-way, not just us having to get data and running around. They shared their own experiences and other practice they had seen – I think that was quite a step forward”*

## 8. Resources, events and communication

### Resources

#### How useful are the following resources from Estyn?



Base: 576 (all stakeholder types excluding parents)

#### Estyn's report resources

Two thirds (67%) say they find the full annual reports 'very useful', 'useful' or 'slightly useful' (80% excluding those who have not used), while 70% say the same of the thematic reports (87% excluding those who have not used).

*"I love reading through the reports because they are a way you can evaluate where you are and introduce things you haven't thought of before"*

*"When you are holding 20 balloons, what Estyn can release in podcasts and stakeholder events helps us notice trends, take a step back and see what we need to focus our attention on. Like literacy issues across Wales"*

Stakeholders were also asked about their thoughts on the annual report's early insight, which 62% of respondents find useful, to some degree (84% excluding those who have not used).

As could be expected, more education setting-based staff outside of SLT have not used the reports, including 31% (14% seniors) for the annual report, 44% (20%) for the annual report's early insights and 31% (9%) for the thematic reviews.

#### Podcasts and webinar events

Estyn's podcasts and Live webinar events have been accessed by fewer stakeholders. When looking at respondents who work in an education setting, two thirds (66%) say they have not listened to the podcasts (63% seniors; 74% other staff), and nearly six in ten (59%) say they have not watched the Live webinar events (47% seniors; 75% other staff).

*"I've never heard of them. Teachers are busy, and at the end of the day the last thing you want to do is listen to a work-related podcast"*

Considering only those who have accessed these communications, the podcasts are described as useful by 74% (9% very; 38% useful; 27% slightly useful).

For the Live webinar events, the results are slightly better; 78% of stakeholders say they are useful to some extent (15% very; 39% useful; 24% slightly useful).

*"I like the fact that the lives and podcasts don't take hours and hours"*

## Stakeholder events

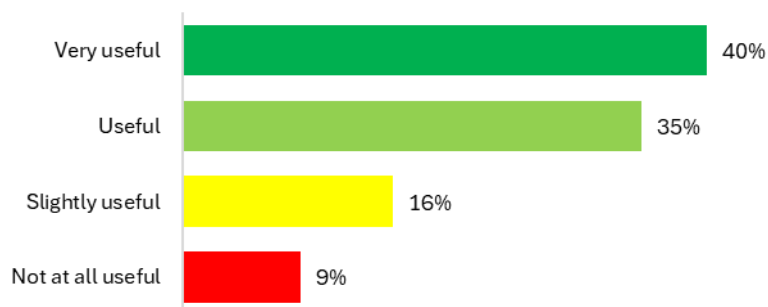
### Estyn event attendance

Nearly a quarter (24%) of stakeholders say they have been to an Estyn stakeholder event in the last year. When it comes to respondents who work in an education setting, this includes 38% of seniors, but only 4% of other staff.

In the depth interviews, some stakeholders say their location is one of the main reasons they do not attend and said they would attend events if the distance was reduced.

*"Because we're in mid Wales, there are never any events close to us, it's always 2-3 hours away"*

### How useful have you found Estyn stakeholder events in the last 12 months?



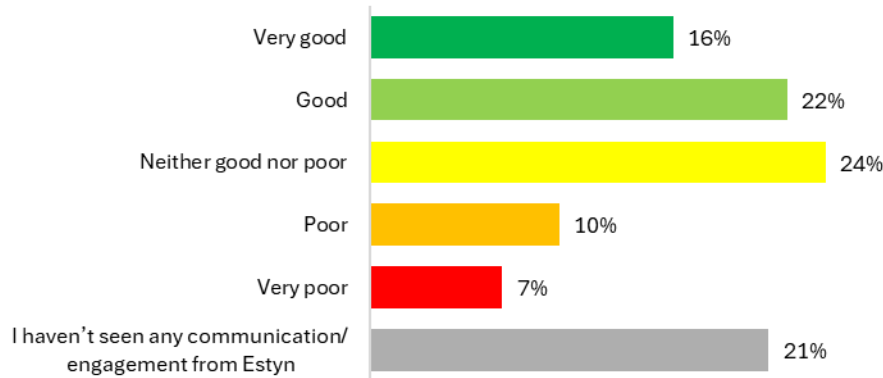
Base: 139 (event attendees)

### Estyn event attendance

Stakeholders who have been to an event in the last 12 months tend to view them positively, with three quarters (75%) rating them as very useful (40%) or useful (35%).

## Communications

### How do you rate Estyn's communication or engagement with you?



Base: 576 (all stakeholder types excluding parents)

### Rating communication

Estyn's communication and engagement fairs well, with 38% giving a 'very good' or 'good' rating compared to 17% who report it as 'very poor' or 'poor'.

When it comes to stakeholders who work in an education setting, there is a difference by seniority – 52% of senior staff report Estyn communications favourably, compared to 16% of other staff.

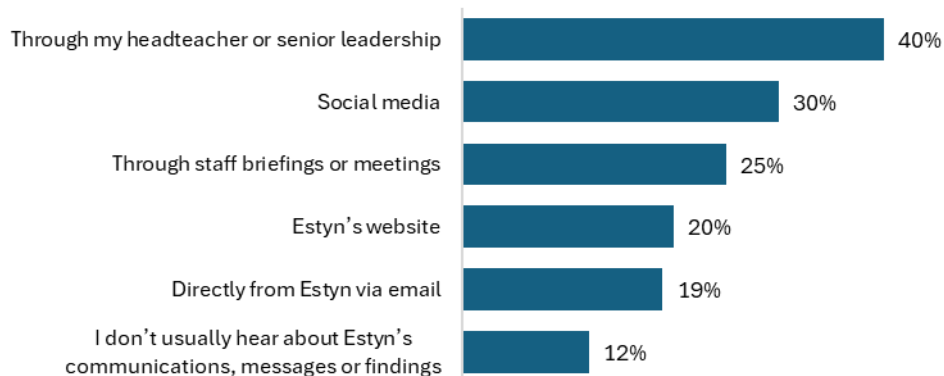
In addition, and following the theme of visibility, 37% of staff not in a senior role say they have not seen any communication from Estyn, compared to 9% of those in a senior position.

In the qualitative interviews, a few stakeholders said that wider staff would benefit from some exposure to Estyn on a more regular basis, which may also help ease apprehension when an inspection call comes in.

*"Having access or exposure to Estyn, just once during that cycle for everybody to understand where Estyn are coming from could have a benefit... person to person access would have a real impact"*



### How do you hear about Estyn's communications, messages or findings?



Base: 186 (non-senior staff in education settings)

#### Communicating with non-senior staff

Staff who work in an education setting outside of senior roles were asked how they hear about Estyn's communications, messages and findings.

The most common route, recorded by 40% of respondents, was via their senior leadership, and 25% are reached via staff meetings.

In the qualitative interviews, a few stakeholders said that it's the senior leadership's responsibility to direct staff to what will be of interest and relevance to them.

*"It's all out there, Estyn put's it all out there. The website, the invitation to webinars and so on, the thematic reviews and case studies are great, it's up to senior leader to meet Estyn halfway and get that information to others"*

But Estyn also reaches 30% of these respondents via social media, and 19% via direct emails. A fifth (20%) of those who do get updates say they go on the Estyn website directly, while 12% said they don't usually hear about Estyn's communications, messages or findings.

#### Cost v reward

In the qualitative interviews, the theme of communicating with wider staff was discussed with stakeholders.

There was a feeling that broader communication and increased awareness and visibility of Estyn would help alleviate some of the apprehension around inspections, but how that could be done was a point of discussion.

One of the biggest barriers to communicating directly with non SLT staff is their lack of time. There was a lot of talk about the heavy workload of teaching staff, in particular, who do not have time to read emails in their working day, and often spend evenings and weekends working on the must-haves, leaving little time for the nice-to-haves.

*“The bottom line in education is really not in a good place, for all the wonderful innovative stuff coming through with the new curriculum, it’s just relentless at every level, it’s exhausting. If you want to be a good teacher, then every night you need to be sat at your computer working... so when you ask them to read thematic reports or other material, they might want to, but their ability to do it is just not there”*

Senior leaders in the qualitative interviews tended to be happy with feeding their staff what they consider to be relevant. However, a thread running through this research is the lack of familiarity of Estyn among school staff and the impact that has when an inspection knocks on their door.

There were some suggestions, however, on how communication with wider staff could be improved:

- Integrating some communication on Hwb
- Use of Local Authority Link Inspector
- Increased activity on Twitter and Facebook
- A touring Estyn ambassador
- Encouraging more staff to sign up to Estyn newsletter
- More engagement during inspections

*“If the promotional stuff you find on the Estyn website was linked into Hwb, I think more non leadership staff members would have a wider understanding”*

## 9. Further feedback from the qualitative interviews

The qualitative stage included 25 interviews with school staff including senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers in nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, FE, PRU, special schools and independent specialist colleges. They also included governors, peer inspectors and people working in local government.

Interviews uncovered similar themes found during the survey. Stakeholders talked about:

- How much the inspection teams can impact their experience of an inspection, and the variation in behaviour
- Inconsistencies in approach
- Apprehension – what is causing it and what would help reduce high levels
- Lack of visibility / familiarity among wider staff
- The benefits of an inspection team introducing themselves to all staff

These themes have been addressed in the report. Below are additional findings from the qualitative interviews.

### Warm up call can lower apprehension

One of the frustrations stakeholders have with inspections is the feeling that they are not able to give context and wider understanding to what is going on within their school environment. While some say this has improved, others feel like inspections are 'done to them' and feel exasperated that inspectors pass judgement on a snapshot visit, not seeing the challenges they face and the hard work they put in to overcome these.

Because of this, stakeholder nominees say they welcome the opportunity to have a conversation with an inspector before they walk through the school doors. The chat – sometimes over the phone, sometimes on a video call – allows the nominee to give that context and talk about what they have been doing since the last inspection. However, not all settings are offered this opportunity, which leads to feelings of anxiety.

*"Estyn makes the call on Monday or Friday, then the follow up procedure is where the inspector will phone the school and speak to the Head – it was great for me as my RRI phoned up the day after and said we need to arrange a meeting to discuss the context of your school. That allowed me thinking time between. But the other two schools (in the cluster) had a very different experience – they had a call the day after the administrative one; asked to arrange a call to discuss context and they said 'no, you don't need one'. That built anxiety, because they want to showcase the school in the best light"*

### Talking in Welsh

Welsh-speaking stakeholders mentioned how being spoken to in their first language helped lower their feelings of apprehension as it brought familiarity to an otherwise unfamiliar situation.

*"Having someone talk to me in Welsh is weirdly calming. The conversation felt quite casual, which made me think 'this is fine'. He didn't speak at me, it was a nice conversation"*

### New framework awareness

Stakeholders taking part in the qualitative interviews were asked about staff awareness of the new framework. Senior stakeholders talked about how they have passed down information about changes to their staff.

INSET days have been used to talk about the new framework and expectations around it, along with additional staff training.

*"I would say staff are made aware of it... the level of knowledge and understanding will be less the lower down the staffing structure"*

*"We did specific training. We kept tutors, learning assistants and senior learning assistants informed. We did CPD so they were familiar with the changes"*

Wider staff mentioned a pyramid of understanding, with senior leaders sharing new information before an impending inspection.

*"Only seniors would be aware until they have the call to say the inspectors are coming, then everyone will be aware"*

### Understanding the setting

The desire for more understanding and context that was highlighted in the survey results was also raised during the qualitative interviews. Those who had been through an inspection which they felt was unfair and lacked that deeper understanding about the setting, the challenges they faced and the efforts to react to these, felt frustration that they were being judged without that wider contextual picture.

*"I think they really need to do their homework, and they need to understand the different context of the school"*

This often goes hand-in-hand with an inspection team that has no recent in-school or in-classroom experience, drawing comparisons with an education system that has seen huge changes.

*"My bug bear is that they haven't been in the classroom a long time...I know peer inspectors who haven't been in the classroom for 10 years"*

In contrast, those who had a positive experience often talked about that understanding that came from an inspector – often a peer inspector, or an inspector that had that recent first-hand experience of what it's like to work in the kind of setting they were sent to inspect.

*"In our last inspection they were all really friendly. Sometimes you get inspectors who come in with an attitude of "I'm from Estyn and I'm important," but we didn't have any of that. The ones we had had all worked in colleges, they understood what it feels like to be inspected"*

Others talked about a general shift in approach that was reflected in their understanding, and that feeling of 'old school Estyn' coming in with an iron rod had made way for an approach that is more supportive.

*"Years ago they seemed to be like the police, we assumed they were coming in looking for problems but the impression I have now is they are working more collaboratively and are more supportive"*

### Peer inspector training

Stakeholders who had been through peer inspector training said that they deeply appreciated their ability to see both sides of an inspection, and to understand that changes in Estyn were positive, actively looking for the good within a setting during the inspection.

This has helped to lower their own apprehension during inspections, and to also create that positivity and 'we've got this' approach with their staff.

Some talked about the desire to share some of that experience with their staff, which they believe would be beneficial.

*"Everything I've been [involved in] and had access to has been very positive and I was thinking in the back of my mind how we get more staff exposed to that"*

### Lack of diversity

One stakeholder interview highlighted their perception of a lack of diversity among inspections teams, which had a big negative impact on apprehension as they did not feel represented. The perceived lack of subtlety over inspectors' dress and transport also fed into an immediate feeling of not being understood and was felt to be in bad taste.

*"There was no diversity. It didn't feel like anybody had an understanding of the background of our children. It didn't feel like they wanted to know or understand the background of our children when you were working in a school that is diverse and multicultural"*

### Other positive observations

These additional points were made during qualitative interviews:

- Daily inspection feedback has been useful
- Inspectors with ALN experience is welcomed
- Less over-reliance on data
- Value notice for data requests
- Value resources to share with staff
- Some inspectors sat with learners at lunch

### Room for improvement

The following points were made on areas for improvement, many of which have been discussed in the report or are self-explanatory:

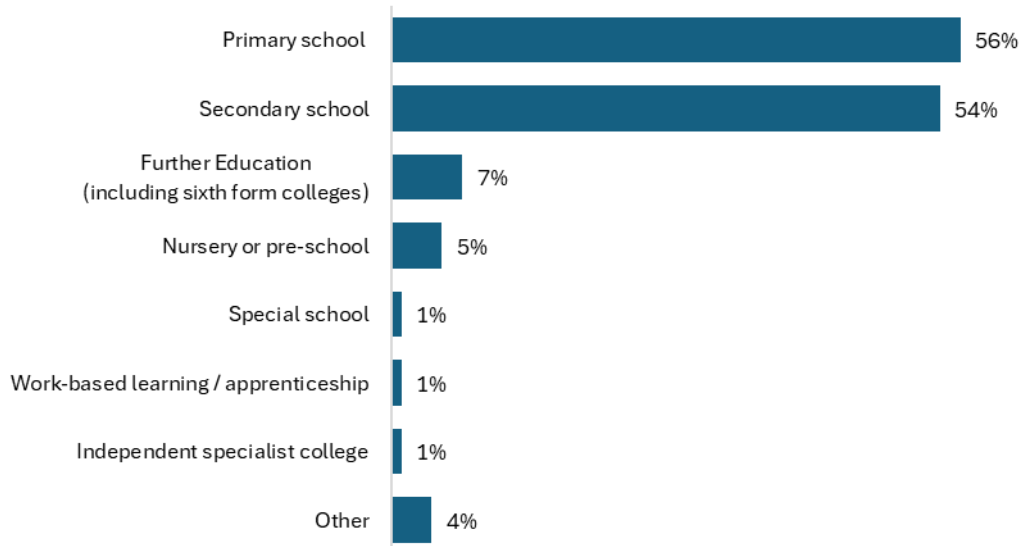
- Lack of diversity in inspection teams
- Requested data is held in different formats locally, causing a lot of extra work and resource

- Frustrations that schools are blamed for 'poor education' in Wales, when there are wider factors having an impact (social, financial etc)
- Having a timetable of observations would help with staffing issues
- Would like to see governors formally included in interim visits
- Wanting more guidance, direction and feedback at the end of an inspection
- The timing of some inspector questions can feel intimidating ("How is your wellbeing" at the end of a fraught and upsetting day)

## 10. Parents and carers

### Settings

#### Which of the following types of education or learning settings does your child/children attend?



Base: 106 (parents)

Parents and carers made up 16% of the overall sample. More than half (56%) have at least one child in primary school, and a similar proportion (54%) have at least one child in secondary school.

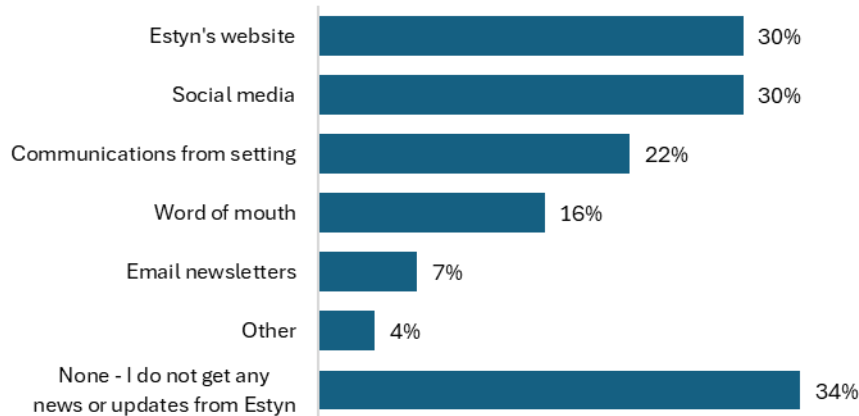
One in five (20%) have a child or children in settings in Rhondda Cynon Taf, 13% in Pembrokeshire and 10% in Carmarthenshire. Other local authorities had representation of under 10%.

Last year, the survey was completed by 49 parents. This year, the number has increased to 106. It is important to consider the self-selection bias inherent in online surveys, particularly among parental respondents, as those who choose to participate are likely to have a strong interest in the topic. Parents and carers may also be less inclined to respond to surveys from organisations like Estyn, compared to those working in educational settings, which could further restrict the representativeness of the sample.



## Communication methods

### How do you typically receive news and updates from Estyn?



Base: 106 (parents)

#### Range of direct and indirect communication

When it comes to getting news and updates from Estyn, around a third (34%) of parents say they do not get anything.

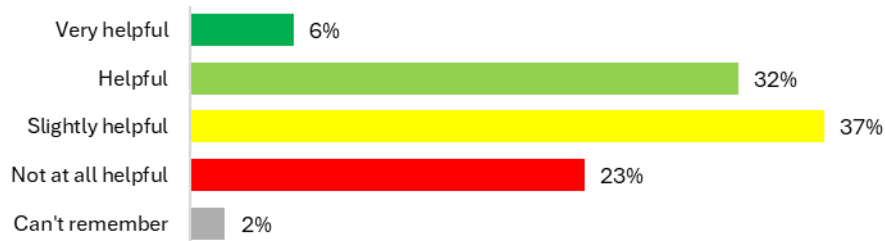
The remaining 66% receive information through a range of sources, with 30% saying they get Estyn news and updates directly from the inspectorate's website or from social media.

Around one in five (22%) say they hear Estyn-related news from their child's setting, 16% pick up information via word of mouth, and 7% get news and updates via email newsletters.

Parents who ticked 'other' mentioned the news, parent and disability group communications, Welsh Government and local authority emails, and the Senedd website.

## Information needs

### How clear and understandable did you find this information?



Base: 65 (parents who had accessed information from Estyn)

### Accessing Estyn's setting information

Parents were also asked if they have ever read or accessed information from Estyn about their child's place of learning: 79% said they had, 16% said they had not, and 5% couldn't remember.

Those who had accessed information were asked how clear and understandable the information was – 75% said it was helpful to some extent, while 23% said it was not at all helpful.

### Mixed reception of reports

Parents who had read or accessed information were asked what they had accessed, and why they gave it the rating they did.

Most responses (48%) talked about the school's inspection report. Those who found them positive talked about the straightforward language and how it was easy to read and easy to understand. Some found the supporting materials helpful as they navigated the report.

*"Guide to new inspection report format so I could understand the report they then made for my children's schools. It was a video and I liked it"*

In contrast, those who did not find the information helpful said they don't see their child's setting reflected in the report, or that they were dry and contained too much jargon.

*"The reports are often bland and formulaic"*

*"Estyn report only helpful as it's a snap shot of the school during basically a performance put on for Estyn"*

A few parents talked about wanting to see more detailed reports, or additional information (17%) with areas of focus such as English, Maths and ALN support.

*“The Estyn information bears no resemblance to what the experience of a pupil at the school is like. There is also no indication of what the actual experience of learning is like in school. Specifically with reference to ALN, there is no useful information about what interventions are available and how ALN provision is delivered in school, or whether it is effective. Nothing on inclusion measures either and how effective they are”*

## Information and support

Parents were asked in an open-ended question what information or support they would like to receive from Estyn regarding their child's education. It is important to note, however, that the sample size is small, with only a limited number of survey respondents, meaning each theme is based on feedback from just a handful of parents.

- **Better reports / more information in reports (13%):** Some parents said they would like to see better reports with suggested improvements including more information, a broader overview of the school and how that impacts their child, details of strengths and weaknesses and clearer language
- **ALN communications (13%):** As with last year, there continues to be a desire for more information about Additional Learning Needs, including how ALN needs are met and how ALN learners are progressing
- **School status / broad overviews (12%):** These parents are interested in knowing how their child's school is fairing, but that offers a 'true reflection' of the school and not just the snapshot they perceive an inspection brings
- **Less jargon (9%):** Some parents say that the language used in reports should be easier to understand, and be more school-specific, less formulaic and not 'like they are using a tick box'
- **School comparisons (7%):** Parents want to understand how their child's setting compares to other settings in Wales
- **Wellbeing (6%):** Understanding how wellbeing needs of both learners and teachers is important to some parents
- **Improvement measures (6%):** Parents are interested in understanding where schools need to improve and how they are addressing those improvement needs / targets for improvement
- **Teacher support (6%):** These parents expressed a desire for more support to be given to teachers and more understanding about the challenges they face
- **More frequent inspections (5%):** Some parents believe that more frequent inspections, spot checks or fuller inspections would help get a better understanding of how schools are performing
- **Learning support (5%):** These parents would like to understand how they can better help their children at home
- **Nothing/don't know (18%):** Some respondents either felt they did not need additional information or were unsure about what information would be helpful
- **Other (20%):** This category includes comments or responses that do not fit into the other themes, such as understanding finances, whether the setting caters for their child's needs, consistency in inspections and understanding school discipline.

## 11. Conclusion

A key priority following the 2024 survey was to improve representation of non-senior staff, particularly as there were suggestions amongst the small pool of non-senior staff who previously took part that this group hold less positive views of Estyn. This has been achieved, which makes the survey slightly more representative of the teaching sector, albeit the survey remains skewed towards senior staff.

Importantly, the wider sample has confirmed that non-senior staff hold significantly less positive views of Estyn. For example, only 22% of non-senior staff reported a positive overall perception, compared with 45% of senior staff. This shift in sample partly explains the overall decline in positive perceptions of Estyn this year. However, perceptions have fallen across all stakeholder groups, including senior leaders (whose positive ratings dropped from 56% in 2024 to 45% in 2025), demonstrating that a genuine decline in sentiment has also occurred. The reasons for this shift in sentiment are unclear, and identifying specific causes is challenging.

One positive indication is that those inspected under the newer framework (2024/25 – 2025/26) hold more favourable views: 42% reported a positive overall perception, compared with 32% of those inspected under earlier frameworks.

However, some findings indicate areas where perceptions remain particularly challenging. More respondents feel Estyn is unapproachable (39%) and unsupportive (46%) than approachable and supportive (38% and 35% respectively).

Apprehension remains a significant talking point: 84% say Estyn causes apprehension (the same proportion as last year). Additional questions were asked around apprehension this year. 63% believe that Estyn inspections create 'more apprehension than might be naturally expected from any educational inspection', which is interesting and should be considered ahead of next year's survey. Of particular concern, 66% said that inconsistency between inspectors or processes contributes to this apprehension, mirroring qualitative feedback from both last year's survey and this year's survey.

Interim visits were viewed more positively overall (51% positive), though some respondents felt these visits were more intensive than expected, which contributed to why some rated their interim visit negatively.

A key challenge for Estyn is how to reach and engage with non-senior staff. Notably, 37% of non-senior staff say they have not seen any communication from Estyn, and the most common way they hear about Estyn's communications, messages and findings is indirectly via senior leadership (40%). This creates a risk that key messages may not reach wider staff, or may not be shared consistently.

Looking ahead, we understand that Estyn is considering research with non-senior staff (and parents) in 2026 and this would provide an opportunity to deepen understanding of these groups' perceptions. The insights from this year's survey could help inform that work. Equally, findings from that project could help inform the repeat of this survey next year, for example, to follow-up on or test findings from that piece of research.

## 12. Marked-up questionnaire

The full results set against the questionnaire are shown overleaf.

# Estyn Perceptions Survey 2025

**All:** Would you like to complete this survey in Welsh or English?

565 (86%)	English
93 (14%)	Cymraeg

**All:** Which of the following best describes you?

*If you are both a parent/carer and work in any of the other fields noted below, then please tick the option which represents your professional role.*

*If you are an education professional and a contracted Estyn inspector, please respond as an Estyn inspector.*

*Tick one box only*

424 (64%)	I work for an education or learning provider/setting
82 (12%)	I am a parent/carer
61 (9%)	I work in government or local government
25 (4%)	I am a governor or a committee member for an education or learning provider/setting
13 (2%)	I work for a public body
7 (1%)	I work for or represent an association, union, representative body or society
8 (1%)	I am a contracted Estyn inspector
38 (6%)	Other

**Parents:** Which of the following types of education or learning settings does your child/children attend?

*Tick all that apply*

46 (56%)	Primary school
44 (54%)	Secondary school
6 (7%)	Further Education (including sixth form colleges)
4 (5%)	Nursery or pre-school
1 (1%)	Special school
1 (1%)	Work-based learning / apprenticeship
1 (1%)	Independent specialist college
3 (4%)	Other

**Those who work for an education or learning provider/setting: Which type of provision do you work in?**

*If you work in more than one type of setting, then please choose the type of setting that you work in most*

*Tick one box only*

- 209 (49%) Primary school
- 102 (24%) Secondary school
- 26 (6%) Nursery or pre-school
- 23 (5%) Further Education (including sixth form colleges)
- 14 (3%) All-age school
- 13 (3%) Special school
- 6 (1%) Pupil referral unit
- 6 (1%) Work-based learning / apprenticeships
- 6 (1%) Independent specialist college
- 5 (1%) Welsh for adults
- 3 (1%) Youth work setting
- 2 (0%) Adult learning
- 9 (2%) Other

**Governors/Committee members: Which of the following settings are you a governor or a committee member in?**

*Tick all that apply*

- 17 (68%) Primary school
- 11 (44%) Secondary school
- 1 (4%) Nursery or pre-school
- 2 (8%) Special school

**Those who work for an education or learning provider/setting: Which of the following best describes your role in the provider you work in?**

*Tick one box only*

- 222 (52%) I am a member of senior management
- 101 (24%) I am a teacher/lecturer
- 73 (17%) I am a member of middle management
- 19 (4%) I am a teaching assistant/higher level teaching assistant
- 9 (2%) I am a member of the support staff team

**Those who work for an education or learning provider/setting: In which local authority is your provider or setting based?**

*If there are multiple campuses, pick the local authority for the campus you visit the most*

*Tick one box only*

11 (2%) Blaenau Gwent	34 (8%) Flintshire	20 (4%) Powys
17 (4%) Bridgend	30 (7%) Gwynedd	23 (5%) Rhondda Cynon Taf
30 (7%) Caerphilly	8 (2%) Isle of Anglesey	16 (4%) Swansea
53 (12%) Cardiff	4 (1%) Merthyr Tydfil	11 (2%) Torfaen
27 (6%) Carmarthenshire	9 (2%) Monmouthshire	16 (4%) Vale of Glamorgan
6 (1%) Ceredigion	23 (5%) Neath Port Talbot	15 (3%) Wrexham
21 (5%) Conwy	19 (4%) Newport	7 (2%) Other
27 (6%) Denbighshire	22 (5%) Pembrokeshire	

**Parents: In which local authority is your child's / children's setting based?**

*You can tick more than one local authority if you have more than one child and they attend settings in different local authorities*

*If one of your children attend multiple campuses, pick the local authority for the campus they visit the most*

0 (0%) Blaenau Gwent	6 (7%) Flintshire	4 (5%) Powys
2 (2%) Bridgend	7 (9%) Gwynedd	16 (20%) Rhondda Cynon Taf
3 (4%) Caerphilly	2 (2%) Isle of Anglesey	1 (1%) Swansea
4 (5%) Cardiff	2 (2%) Merthyr Tydfil	2 (2%) Torfaen
8 (10%) Carmarthenshire	1 (1%) Monmouthshire	4 (5%) Vale of Glamorgan
3 (4%) Ceredigion	3 (4%) Neath Port Talbot	1 (1%) Wrexham
5 (6%) Conwy	1 (1%) Newport	1 (1%) Other
1 (1%) Denbighshire	11 (13%) Pembrokeshire	

**Those who work for an education or learning provider/setting & Governors/Committee members: When was your setting last inspected?**

*Dates where inspections were suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic have been excluded*

*Tick one box only*

49 (11%) 2025/26 academic year
111 (25%) 2024/25 academic year
87 (19%) 2023/24 academic year
42 (9%) 2022/23 academic year
13 (3%) 2021/22 academic year
31 (7%) 2019/20 academic year
51 (11%) Before 2019/20 academic year
60 (13%) Don't know / Can't remember
5 (1%) My setting does not get inspected by Estyn



## **Your thoughts about Estyn**

Thank you. We now want to get your thoughts and opinions of Estyn.

### **All: What three words would you use to describe Estyn?**

*Please type your answer below*

- 1) *Analysis in report*
- 2) *Analysis in report*
- 3) *Analysis in report*

### **Parents: How do you typically receive news and updates from Estyn?**

*Tick all that apply*

- 25 (30%) Social media
- 25 (30%) Estyn's website
- 18 (22%) Communications from setting (e.g. letters, newsletters)
- 13 (16%) Word of mouth
- 6 (7%) Email newsletters
- 3 (4%) Other
- 28 (34%) None – I do not get any news or updates from Estyn

### **Parents: Have you ever read or accessed information from Estyn about your child's place of learning?**

*Tick one box only*

- 65 (79%) Yes
- 13 (16%) No
- 4 (5%) Can't remember

### **Parents: How clear and understandable did you find this information?**

*Tick one box only*

- 4 (6%) Very helpful
- 21 (32%) Helpful
- 24 (37%) Slightly helpful
- 15 (23%) Not at all helpful
- 1 (2%) Can't remember

**Parents:** What information have you read or accessed, and why do you feel it was how clear and understandable did you find this information?

*Open question: responses coded by SRI*

31 (48%)	School Reports
11 (17%)	More information
4 (6%)	Improvement Measures
3 (5%)	Straight forward / easy to understand
18 (28%)	Other

**Parents:** What information or support would you like to receive from Estyn regarding your child's education?

*Open question: responses coded by SRI*

11 (13%)	Better reports / more information in reports
11 (13%)	ALN comms
10 (12%)	School status/overview
7 (9%)	Less jargon
6 (7%)	School comparisons
5 (6%)	Wellbeing
5 (6%)	Improvement measures
4 (5%)	Learning support
4 (5%)	More/ frequent inspections
4 (5%)	Teacher support
15 (18%)	Nothing / don't know / happy
16 (20%)	Other

**Parents:** Do you have any suggestions for how learners could be better supported to understand the purpose and outcomes of an inspection?

*Open question: responses coded by SRI*

31 (38%)	Nothing/don't know
20 (24%)	Understanding / less jargon
19 (23%)	Inclusion
4 (5%)	No inspections
4 (5%)	Anxiety / stress
3 (4%)	Improvement measure
1 (1%)	Support measures
12 (15%)	Other

**All, except parents: To what extent do you agree or disagree that Estyn...**

*Tick one box on each row*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
...causes apprehension	354 (61%)	134 (23%)	39 (7%)	28 (5%)	18 (3%)	3 (1%)
...shares best practice	97 (17%)	214 (37%)	115 (20%)	78 (14%)	66 (11%)	6 (1%)
...is fair	85 (15%)	187 (32%)	99 (17%)	123 (21%)	80 (14%)	2 (0%)
...is transparent	71 (12%)	188 (33%)	102 (18%)	131 (23%)	74 (13%)	10 (2%)
...works <b>with</b> providers	71 (12%)	150 (26%)	130 (23%)	122 (21%)	84 (15%)	19 (3%)
...has a positive impact on education	65 (11%)	149 (26%)	100 (17%)	105 (18%)	151 (26%)	6 (1%)
...is open to change	53 (9%)	158 (27%)	131 (23%)	131 (23%)	85 (15%)	18 (3%)
...provides reassurance	39 (7%)	146 (25%)	108 (19%)	127 (22%)	147 (26%)	9 (2%)

**Those who state strongly agree, agree or neither to 'causes apprehension' above:** People often feel some level of apprehension about educational inspections. We'd like to understand whether Estyn inspections create about the same level of apprehension as might be expected, or whether they cause more or less apprehension.

**Please select the statement that best reflects your view:**

*Tick one box only*

- 20 (4%) Estyn inspections cause **less apprehension** than might be naturally expected
- 145 (32%) Estyn inspections cause **about the same level of apprehension** as might be naturally expected from any educational inspection
- 284 (63%) Estyn inspections cause **more apprehension** than might be naturally expected

**Those who state strongly agree, agree or neither to 'causes apprehension' above, and work for an education setting, or a Governor or a Committee member:** Which of the following factors contribute most to any apprehension you feel about Estyn or its inspections?

*Tick all that apply*

- 274 (66%) Fear of negative judgements or outcomes
- 272 (66%) Inconsistency of inspectors or process
- 265 (64%) Stress and extra workload
- 254 (61%) Wanting to do well
- 217 (52%) Snapshot nature of inspection
- 200 (48%) Inspectors' approach or attitude
- 174 (42%) Feeling some apprehension is a natural response to my work being scrutinised
- 159 (38%) Pressure from management about Estyn
- 149 (36%) Past inspection experiences which have been difficult
- 100 (24%) Not knowing what to expect
- 14 (3%) Other

**All, except parents: What do you think Estyn could do to minimise any feelings of apprehension its work may cause?**

*Open question: responses coded by SRI*

122 (21%)	Broaden understanding to reduce 'snapshot' judgement
78 (14%)	Consistency of inspections and expectations
65 (11%)	Be more positive/supportive/constructive
62 (11%)	Inspector behaviour
61 (11%)	Reducing the unknown: inspections and Estyn visibility
58 (10%)	Explain expectations
39 (7%)	Apprehension is natural
32 (6%)	No/reduced inspection notice
32 (6%)	More peer inspectors etc
26 (5%)	Better communications
28 (5%)	Reducing the gap between inspections
22 (4%)	Reduce paperwork
12 (2%)	SLT's role
7 (1%)	More time during the inspection
5 (1%)	More notice before the inspection
7 (1%)	Don't publish reports
75 (13%)	Other
55 (10%)	Nothing/more of the same
17 (3%)	Not answered

**All, except parents: Thinking of Estyn as an overall organisation, using the scale below please select the circle that comes closest to your opinion.**

*For example, if you think Estyn is 'very approachable' you would tick column '1'; if you think Estyn is 'fairly unapproachable' you would tick column '4'.*

*Tick one box on each row. Please leave any row blank if you cannot answer.*

	Very (1)	Fairly (2)	Neutral (3)	Fairly (4)	Very (5)	
Professional	199 (35%)	137 (24%)	127 (22%)	74 (13%)	39 (7%)	Unprofessional
Respected	101 (18%)	138 (24%)	119 (21%)	118 (20%)	100 (17%)	Not respected
Responsive	86 (15%)	142 (25%)	158 (27%)	111 (19%)	79 (14%)	Unresponsive
Approachable	98 (17%)	121 (21%)	131 (23%)	109 (19%)	117 (20%)	Unapproachable
Progressive	73 (13%)	140 (24%)	171 (30%)	99 (17%)	93 (16%)	Backward looking
Supportive	87 (15%)	118 (20%)	103 (18%)	128 (22%)	140 (24%)	Unsupportive

**All, except parents: To what extent do you agree or disagree that Estyn's work has led to improvements in...**

*Tick one box on each row*

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
...the delivery of education and training services	46 (8%)	163 (28%)	139 (24%)	130 (23%)	87 (15%)	11 (2%)
...education and learning policy development in Wales	39 (7%)	151 (26%)	170 (30%)	101 (18%)	96 (17%)	19 (3%)

**Those who work for an education or learning provider/setting: and inspected in 2025/26 or 2024/25: How would you describe your most recent experience of a full inspection by Estyn?**

*Tick one box only*

- 48 (30%) Very positive
- 43 (27%) Positive
- 20 (13%) Neither positive nor negative
- 24 (15%) Negative
- 23 (14%) Very negative
- 2 (1%) Don't know / Can't remember

**Those who work for an education or learning provider/setting and inspected in 2025/26 or 2024/25: Why do you say that?**

*Open question: responses coded by SRI*

- 49 (31%) Inspectors/Inspection was fair/positive
- 48 (30%) Inspectors friendly /approachable/professional
- 31 (20%) Stressful/affect Wellbeing
- 21 (13%) Lack of engagement with wider staff/school community
- 17 (11%) Inspectors listened/engaged
- 17 (11%) Unfair
- 14 (9%) Supportive/Respectful/Considerate
- 15 (9%) Inconsistent
- 12 (8%) A negative experience
- 12 (8%) Rude/Unfriendly/unprofessional/Confrontational
- 10 (6%) Demoralising
- 10 (6%) Worked well with staff/children
- 7 (4%) Much better experience than last time
- 7 (4%) Rigorous/Thorough
- 4 (3%) No opinion / little engagement
- 29 (18%) Other

**Only setting which could have received an interim visit:** Has your setting had an interim visit from Estyn as part of the new inspection approach?

*Tick one box only*

39 (28%) Yes  
84 (60%) No  
16 (12%) Don't know

**Those who had received an interim visit:** How would you describe your experience of that interim visit?

*Tick one box only*

7 (18%) Very positive  
13 (33%) Positive  
11 (28%) Neither positive nor negative  
2 (5%) Negative  
5 (13%) Very negative  
1 (3%) Don't know / Can't remember

**Those who had received an interim visit:** Why do you say that?

*Open question: responses coded by SRI*

8 (22%) Supportive / helpful  
7 (19%) Intense / stressful  
7 (19%) Professional / friendly  
5 (14%) Negative  
3 (8%) Tighter processes / more specific  
3 (8%) Positive  
1 (3%) Unprofessional  
1 (3%) Increased workload  
5 (14%) Don't know / not answered  
2 (6%) Other

**All:** How would you rate your overall perception of Estyn?

*Tick one box only*

72 (11%) Very positive  
161 (24%) Positive  
139 (21%) Neutral  
137 (21%) Negative  
138 (21%) Very negative  
11 (2%) Don't know / No opinion

**All: Please explain the reasons for your rating.**

*In writing your response, please think about any experiences or observations that have influenced your perception of Estyn*

*Open question: Coded into themes by SRI*

113 (18%)	Cause stress / huge amount of work
108 (18%)	Interactions /communication has been positive
92 (15%)	Experiences differ between inspectors / inspections
75 (12%)	Query over inspection process our outcomes / suggested changes to these
63 (10%)	Little interaction / not been inspected recently / no strong opinion / don't know
57 (9%)	Supportive/useful feedback/ feedback drives improvement
43 (7%)	Fair/honest/rigorous/professional
41 (7%)	Need a greater focus on supporting settings / sharing best practice
35 (6%)	Inspectors were not friendly / approachable / poor interactions
29 (5%)	Negative comment (non-specific / little detail)
22 (4%)	Need to be more understanding / compassionate
22 (4%)	Poor/lack of communication
18 (3%)	Inspectors were friendly/approachable
17 (3%)	Progressive organisation / listens to feedback from stakeholders
15 (2%)	Feedback is not always useful or lack of feedback
13 (2%)	Estyn is viewed negatively / negatively by some
12 (2%)	Happy with recent changes to inspections/framework/ changes to approach
12 (2%)	Play an important role
12 (2%)	Negative experience of last inspection (other reasons or non-specific)
9 (1%)	Does not help parents / more engagement with parents
6 (1%)	Comments / queries over policy / education in Wales
4 (1%)	Inspectors are out of touch
3 (0%)	Inspections went well / positive inspection
3 (0%)	Resources are useful (reports, guidance, website etc.) / training has been useful
25 (4%)	Other

**All, except parents: How useful are the following resources from Estyn?**

*If you haven't used or seen any of these then please choose 'haven't used'*

*Tick one box on each row*

	Very useful	Useful	Slightly useful	Not at all useful	Haven't used
Thematic reports	111 (19%)	180 (31%)	118 (20%)	59 (10%)	108 (19%)
Full annual report	65 (11%)	183 (32%)	138 (24%)	69 (12%)	121 (21%)
Annual report's early insights	60 (10%)	159 (28%)	126 (22%)	67 (12%)	164 (28%)
Estyn Live webinar events	34 (6%)	92 (16%)	57 (10%)	51 (9%)	342 (59%)
Podcasts	17 (3%)	75 (13%)	52 (9%)	52 (9%)	380 (66%)

**All, except parents: Have you attended any Estyn stakeholder events in the last 12 months?**

*Examples of stakeholder events include HMCI's annual report launch, post 16 stakeholder forum, headteachers' reference groups and inspector training events.*

*Tick one box only*

139 (24%) Yes  
413 (72%) No  
24 (4%) Don't know / Can't remember

**All, except parents: How useful have you found Estyn stakeholder events in the last 12 months?**

*Tick one box only*

56 (40%) Very useful  
49 (35%) Useful  
22 (16%) Slightly useful  
12 (9%) Not at all useful

**All, except parents: How do you rate Estyn's communication or engagement with you?**

*Tick one box only*

92 (16%) Very good  
127 (22%) Good  
137 (24%) Neither good nor poor  
60 (10%) Poor  
39 (7%) Very poor  
121 (21%) I haven't seen any communication/engagement from Estyn



**Non-senior leaders who work for an education or learning provider/setting:** How do you hear about Estyn's communications, messages or findings?

*Tick all that apply*

- 51 (40%) Through my headteacher or senior leadership
- 38 (30%) Social media
- 32 (25%) Through staff briefings or meetings
- 26 (20%) Estyn's website
- 24 (19%) Directly from Estyn via email
- 15 (12%) I don't usually hear about Estyn's communications, messages or findings