



Estyn Annual Plan 2026-2027

This document is also available in Welsh

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

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

Estyn also:

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

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

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Chief Inspector's foreword



At Estyn, our purpose is clear: to help ensure that every learner in Wales benefits from the best possible education and training. We are here for learners, for Wales. That purpose continues to shape our work, and this Annual Plan sets out how we will contribute over the coming year through inspection, advice, engagement and improvement-focused activity.

Over recent years, we have continued to develop the way we work. Our current inspection arrangements place greater emphasis on professional dialogue, sharing best practice, regular engagement and clear feedback that supports providers to reflect and improve. For schools and pupil referral units in particular, the combination of core inspections and interim visits has helped move inspection away from being seen as a one-off event and closer to a more constructive, ongoing relationship with providers. During 2026–2027, we will build on that approach through a mid-cycle review of our arrangements, using what we have learned from providers, practitioners and inspectors to refine what we do next.

This year, our priorities reflect both continuity and change. We will continue to deliver our core inspection programme across Wales while also strengthening safeguarding inspection arrangements, developing new frameworks for apprenticeships and initial teacher education, and rolling out new arrangements in non-maintained nursery settings. We will also continue to improve how we communicate our findings so that they are useful, accessible and relevant to practitioners, leaders, learners and the wider public. Our

ambition is not simply to report on what we see, but to ensure that our evidence supports improvement across the system.

A major focus for the year ahead will be reading. From September 2026, we will begin a three-year enhanced focus on reading across all inspection activity. We know that too many learners in Wales do not yet develop the secure reading skills they need to access the curriculum fully and to thrive in education, work and life. We want to use our inspection evidence, guidance and engagement activity to support providers in strengthening literacy and improving outcomes for all learners. This will be a shared national effort, and one that has the potential to make a lasting difference, particularly for those learners most affected by disadvantage.

We will also continue to respond to the wider changes taking place across education and training in Wales. The establishment of Medr, the ongoing roll-out of Curriculum for Wales, reform to qualifications, developments in additional learning needs and continuing concerns around attendance, poverty and leadership capacity all shape the context in which providers are working. Our role is to bring together evidence from across sectors, provide independent insight, and support policy development through clear, grounded advice.

Alongside this, we will keep developing Estyn itself. That includes investing in our people, strengthening our digital and data systems, and continuing to explore carefully how artificial intelligence may support our work and help us communicate more effectively. It also means listening to stakeholders, sharing effective practice more widely, and ensuring that equalities, diversity and inclusion are integral to all that we do. Throughout, we will keep our work fair, transparent and focused on what matters most for learners.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my role is seeing the commitment, skill and resilience of education and training professionals across Wales. I would like to thank my colleagues in Estyn, our external inspectors, and all those working across the system for their continued professionalism and dedication. We have much to do in the year ahead, but also much to build on. By working together, learning from evidence and keeping learners at the heart of our decisions, we can continue to support improvement across education and training in Wales.

Owen Evans

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales

Long-term vision

Estyn is His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. Inspection is central to improving the quality of education and training for children, young people and lifelong learners. Learners are at the heart of everything we do, and this commitment shapes our vision and mission. We are here for learners, for Wales.

Our strategic objectives set out the distinct contribution we make to promoting excellence across the system, and our values reflect the culture that underpins our work. Later in this plan, we explain our strategic objectives in more detail and how we put them into practice.



The broader policy context

Although Estyn is independent in how we carry out our work, we do not operate in isolation. We work in close partnership with the Welsh Government and Medr to fulfil our responsibilities to inspect, provide advice and help secure improvement.

The establishment of Medr as the single body with oversight of the tertiary sector is a significant development. We will work alongside Medr to strengthen and streamline our joint arrangements, and to clarify and embed Estyn's role in inspecting post-compulsory education and training in a way that aligns with Medr's Quality Framework and strategic direction, including priorities set out in [Medr Strategic plan 2025-2030](#).

Our priorities and ways of working are shaped by the wider policy landscape at national and regional level. Changes in policy can influence what we focus on, how our inspection framework develops, and the approaches we take when evaluating schools and other education and training providers.

A number of major reforms are reshaping the system, with substantial implications for learners and providers. These include:

- the ongoing roll-out of the [Curriculum for Wales](#)
- qualifications reform and the new National 14-16 qualifications [National 14-16 Qualifications](#)
- the new regulatory framework for tertiary education [Regulation - Medr](#)
- the [16 to 18 local curricula guidance](#)
- [Additional learning needs](#)
- the review of school improvement support services and related school improvement arrangements ([Welsh Government 2023](#)).

Collectively, these programmes are intended to accelerate improvement and will continue to influence expectations, provision and accountability across Wales. We will maintain strong collaboration with the Welsh Government, Medr and other partners to ensure that inspection activity contributes effectively to the delivery of these priorities.

Alongside this, we will continue to support long-term national ambitions, including:

- reducing the impact of poverty on learning and attainment, as set out in the [Child poverty strategy for Wales](#)
- improving learner attendance and reducing persistent absence, aligned with Welsh Government guidance on improving school attendance [Improving school attendance](#)
- strengthening safeguarding and governance across Wales, ensuring our work supports national efforts to protect and improve the wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults

[Review of Governance and Accountability mechanisms for safeguarding children and adults in Wales](#)

- increasing the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050 through [Cymraeg 2050](#), and supporting growth in Welsh-medium education through Welsh in Education Strategic Plans
- Medr's National Plan for the Welsh Language in Tertiary Education [Welsh language - Medr](#)
- helping to realise an anti-racist Wales by 2030 through the [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan](#)
- the ambition for Wales to be the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe through the [LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales](#)
- the ambition for a Wales where disabled people can enjoy equitable rights, inclusion and participation through the [Disabled People's Rights Plan](#),
- helping to make Wales the safest place to be a woman [Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence: strategy 2022 to 2026](#)

In doing so, we will also contribute to a fairer and more sustainable Wales, consistent with the ways of working and ambitions set out in the Welsh Government's [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).



Our priorities for 2026-2027

Alongside delivering our strategic objectives set out in the next section, the actions described here identify the areas where we can make the greatest difference over the coming year.

Inspection delivery

Inspection arrangements

The focus for the coming year will be to:

- carry out our mid-cycle review of our inspection arrangements
- strengthen our safeguarding inspection arrangements following an internal review
- develop new inspection arrangements for apprenticeships and ITE
- roll out new inspection arrangements in non-maintained nursery settings
- pilot the roll out of learner reports in the maintained schools sectors
- continue our work to support providers causing concern, particularly secondary and all-age schools and PRUs

Reading

From September 2026 and for the next three years, all inspection activity will have an enhanced focus on reading. This will look slightly different in each sector and will be supported by a comprehensive training programme for all inspection staff ahead of launch in September 2026. We will also consider how best to evaluate and report on outcomes to ensure the impact of this work is clear across all sectors. [Reading: For learners, for Wales.](#)

In addition to this, we will host a programme of live and virtual events to share best practice with education providers. Our aim is to support every education provider - from non-maintained nursery settings to schools, colleges and adult learning services - to improve literacy levels for all learners in Wales.

Organisational enablers

Welsh language

We will develop a proactive policy to develop and facilitate the use of Welsh within the organisation, building on existing work to deliver services in line with Welsh language standards. This will also strengthen our contribution to the national goal of one million active Welsh speakers by 2050 and increase daily use of Welsh.

Our data and digital strategy

We will equip our people with the technology they need to deliver our objectives and improve their working experience, optimising our learning from artificial intelligence (AI). We will continue to improve our systems, strengthen our resource management so we can plan and use our resources more effectively.

Our people strategy

Our people are our greatest asset. Our strategy will focus on developing their skills and empowering them to make well-informed, high-quality decisions that benefit learners and education practitioners.

Communication

We will draw on insights from our engagement with practitioners across sectors, to ensure our activities have maximum impact, are communicated effectively, and deliver value for learners.

Delivering our strategic objectives

Our strategic objectives aim to improve outcomes for learners in Wales by focusing on:

- providing public accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales
- informing the development of national policy by the Welsh Government and Medr
- building capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales

The way we think about our work – **our mindset** – helps us to:

- ensure the best for all learners
- offer leaders, teachers and support staff the chance to contribute professionally and constructively
- share what we've seen from across Wales to support improvement

Our Mindset



Fair and impartial

We are independent, objective, robust and consistent and our evaluations are honest, accurate and credible.



Supportive

Inspections are always supportive of improvements that benefit learners, encourage innovation and creativity, good intentions and educational reform.



Reflective

Our inspections are reflective, open-minded, receptive, thoughtful and measured.



Transparent

Our inspections are always transparent, focussing on direct and succinct communication.

Strategic objective 1: Provide public accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales



Estyn conducts inspections to support continuous improvement in the quality of education and training for all learners in Wales. Our approach focuses on how effectively providers enable learners to make progress and succeed, and inspection reports will clearly highlight how well learners are supported in their learning.

The main purposes of inspection are to:

- evaluate the quality and standards of education and training
- identify strengths and priorities for improvement
- support providers on their journey towards excellence
- provide parents, carers and the wider community with clear, reliable information about the quality of education and training

In 2026–2027, we will carry out a ‘mid-cycle review’ of our current inspection arrangements to evaluate their impact and effectiveness. Alongside this, we will

- strengthen our safeguarding inspection arrangements following an internal review
- develop new inspection arrangements for apprenticeships and ITE
- roll out new inspection arrangements in non-maintained nursery settings
- embed the roll out of learner reports

Information about our inspection processes for 2026–2027 and beyond, including inspection schedules and published reports, is available on [the inspection page](#) of our website.

We will continue to provide high-quality professional learning and training for Estyn and external inspectors to ensure inspections are carried out consistently, fairly and

constructively, with a strong focus on improvement and positive impact for learners. We will also support providers to understand and implement our inspection frameworks through clear communication, practical guidance and accessible resources.

During a core inspection, we assess whether the provider requires any further support. We refer to this as “follow-up” activity. Our approach to “follow-up” activity is set out under each section. The different types of sector ‘follow-up’ can be found in our guidance handbooks on the [Inspection guidance resources](#) page of our website.

Annex 1 outlines our planned core inspection activity, funded by both Welsh Government and Medr, across all sectors for 2026–2027. This annual plan is underpinned by detailed work programmes, while retaining the flexibility to adapt as circumstances change.



Welsh Government funded provision

Maintained schools and pupil referral units

There are 1,441 maintained schools in Wales, including primary, secondary, all-age and special schools, along with 25 pupil referral units (PRUs). Of these, 132 maintained schools have sixth form provision, the inspection element of which is funded by Medr.

Maintained schools and PRUs will receive both a core inspection and an interim visit within a six-year inspection cycle.

Following a core inspection, a full inspection report is published on our website 45 working days after the start of the inspection. The report provides a clear overview of the inspection findings, identifying key strengths and areas for improvement. Alongside this, we publish a shorter, accessible summary report designed specifically for parents and carers. This year we will also roll out specific reports aimed at learners.

Interim visits are intended to support leaders in reviewing progress since the previous core inspection and in identifying priorities for further improvement. They do not result in overall judgements about a school's effectiveness. After an interim visit, we provide feedback to the headteacher and publish a short letter on our website summarising the outcome of the visit. Schools and PRUs also receive guidance on next steps to support their ongoing improvement journey.

In addition to the planned core inspection activity set out in **Annex 1**, **Annex 2** provides details of our planned interim visit activity. Both annexes identify activity funded by the Welsh Government.

During a core inspection, we consider whether the provider needs any further support. We call this 'follow-up' activity. In maintained schools and PRUs, this is required by legislation, and there are two types of statutory follow-up activity:

- special measures
- significant improvement

Special measures and significant improvement require monitoring activity by Estyn inspectors, who will visit the school or PRU to evaluate the progress. Currently we do not publish details of interim monitoring activities during follow-up. This is because these visits are developmental in nature. We will publish a report once a maintained school or PRU is out of follow-up, or if they move from one follow-up activity to another.

In 2026-2027 we will:

- extend our deployment of pathway peer inspectors on inspection, involving them as team members on primary sector interim visits
- review the pilot of the deployment of School Improvement Partners on secondary and all-age interim visits and amend arrangements as appropriate
- continue formal monitoring of each provider in need of follow-up activity as a result of core inspection
- continue to develop our work to support schools causing concern in the secondary and all-age sectors in particular

This activity will strengthen inspection and follow-up arrangements in maintained schools, leading to sharper evaluation, more effective challenge and better targeted support. We would expect to see clearer improvement planning, stronger progress in schools requiring follow-up, and earlier, more effective intervention for schools causing concern, particularly in the secondary and all-age sectors.

Local government education services and the youth work sectors

Local government education services include provision delivered directly or commissioned by individual local authorities, as well as services delivered collaboratively across authorities. From 2026–2027, the school improvement landscape is changing. Local authorities will take direct responsibility for school improvement arrangements and will develop models that reflect local needs. They will work closely with Dysgu at a national level to deliver professional learning to support education professionals.

Wales has 22 local authorities, and our local authority link inspectors maintain regular engagement with each authority through ongoing liaison activity.

Our core inspections consider a wide range of service areas and evaluate how effectively local authorities provide coherent support for the education, training and well-being of children and young people.

We also carry out enhanced local authority link inspector visits (ELVs), which consider and evaluate two specific aspects of a local authority's work. These visits are designed to support improvement by identifying strengths and posing key questions for further consideration. ELVs do not result in judgements and do not trigger inspections.

Audit Wales works alongside us on core inspections of local government education services. Over each six-year inspection cycle, for each local authority we will undertake:

- one core inspection
- one ELV
- annual risk and assurance workshops, delivered jointly with Audit Wales and Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

For local authorities, we have one category of follow-up: a local authority causing significant concern. Where a local authority is identified as causing significant concern, we chair an improvement conference to facilitate the formulation of a post inspection improvement plan. Following this, monitoring visits are used to check how well the local authority or other education services provider is progressing with its plans to address the recommendations from the inspection, and what impact their actions are having.

Our inspection approach for youth work is tailored to the sector's distinct context. We apply a flexible model to youth work delivered by local authorities and, where appropriate, to voluntary sector organisations providing youth work.

Through our inspections, we evaluate how effectively youth work provision supports the wellbeing, participation and development of young people. Our work provides independent insight to support improvement across the sector and to inform national and local priorities for youth work in Wales.

In 2026-2027 we will:

- continue our cycle of inspecting local government education services with 4 core inspections planned for 2026-2027
- continue to provide link inspector support to local authorities causing concern, including carrying out improvement conferences and monitoring visits as required (engaging with Medr where the issues relate to the sixth form)
- continue inspections of local authority statutory youth work and inspections of other voluntary youth work providers with 4 planned for 2026-2027

This activity will strengthen accountability and support across local government education services and the youth work sectors through inspection, challenge and follow-up. We would expect to see clearer identification of strengths and areas for improvement, better support for authorities causing concern, and improved quality and consistency in education and youth work provision for children and young people.

Welsh language immersion provision in local authorities

Local authorities receive dedicated grant funding to develop Welsh language immersion provision. This support may be delivered through Welsh language immersion centres or through peripatetic teachers who support latecomers to the language across a range of schools. Most local authorities have now established Welsh language immersion centres.

We introduced our inspection arrangements for Welsh language immersion provision in 2024–2025 and have inspected seven local authority provisions to date. In 2026–2027, we will continue to embed these arrangements and carry out four further inspections in this sector.

Independent schools

There are currently 77 registered independent schools in Wales. Over half (45) are specifically organised to provide additional learning provision (ALP) for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), often focusing on needs such as autistic spectrum condition (ASC) or social, emotional and mental health needs. The remaining schools offer a mix of primary, secondary and all-age provision. Most are co-educational, with a small number of single-sex schools, faith schools and schools offering boarding provision.

All independent schools must comply with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 to maintain registration.

We will build on the objectives established in 2025–2026, strengthening our inspection and monitoring arrangements. The updated inspection framework introduced in 2024 will continue to underpin core inspections, supporting compliance and improvement across the sector.

Each independent school will receive:

- one core inspection per inspection cycle, evaluating compliance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 and reporting against our inspection framework (Annex 1)
- one monitoring inspection per cycle to confirm ongoing compliance with the regulations (Annex 3)
- follow-up visits, where required (up to three), should a school not meet the standards

In 2026-2027 we will:

- continue to evaluate schools' compliance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024
- monitor the impact of the revised inspection framework to ensure it promotes continuous improvement
- support schools requiring improvement, ensuring action plans are effective and implemented
- maintain a strong focus on provision for pupils with ALN, ensuring their needs are met and progress is secured
- provide targeted training for inspectors to strengthen expertise in evaluating compliance, particularly in relation to ALN provision and the complexities of the regulations
- continue to undertake follow-up visits to independent schools on behalf of the Welsh Government should a school not be compliant with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024.

This activity will strengthen accountability and improvement in independent schools by ensuring compliance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2024 and supporting effective follow-up where improvement is needed. We would expect to see stronger implementation of action plans, more consistent quality of provision, improved support and outcomes for pupils with ALN, and greater inspection confidence and consistency through targeted inspector training.

Independent specialist colleges

Nine independent specialist colleges provide education and well-being support for learners with a wide range of additional learning needs (ALN).

In 2026-2027 we will:

- maintain a strong focus on provision for learners with ALN, ensuring their needs are met and progress is secured
- monitor the impact of the revised inspection framework to ensure it promotes continuous improvement
- conduct at least one core inspection in this sector and at least three monitoring visits.
- Provide suitable focus on Estyn's enhanced focus on reading within the independent specialist colleges

This activity will strengthen quality assurance and improvement in independent specialist colleges through inspection, monitoring and a clear focus on learners' needs. We would expect to see stronger provision and progress for learners with ALN, improved support for reading, and greater consistency in how colleges respond to the revised inspection framework to secure continuous improvement.

Annex 3 sets out our planned monitoring inspections in the independent sector in 2026-2027.

Welsh for adults

The Welsh for Adults sector comprises a National Centre and 10 providers, offering a wide range of Welsh language courses from entry to proficiency level, delivered both face-to-face and online. Progress against recommendations for individual providers are evaluated in the next full inspection of the National Centre for Learning Welsh.

In 2026-2027 we will:

- publish findings from our themed inspection focusing on Welsh within the education workforce
- begin fieldwork for the next annual themed inspection, sampling provision across a range of Learn Welsh providers
- publish the first of our three-yearly individual provider letters outlining our evaluations of specific aspects of their work

This activity will strengthen improvement across Welsh for adults by sharing clear findings, building a strong evidence base across providers and giving regular feedback on key aspects of performance. We would expect to see better understanding of effective practice, more informed provider improvement planning and stronger consistency in the quality of provision.

Non-maintained nurseries

There are 523 non-maintained nurseries in Wales. We inspect all nursery settings that are not managed by schools and are funded to provide part-time early education for three and four-year-olds. These inspections are carried out jointly with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and take place at least once within a six-year inspection cycle. Following each inspection, we publish our findings in a joint report on our website.

We are committed to the strong partnership established with CIW over the past five years and will continue to work collaboratively to refine and strengthen our joint inspection

approach. In 2024–2025, we commissioned and published an independent review of the joint inspection arrangements between Estyn and CIW. [Independent review of joint inspection arrangements with Estyn published – Estyn](#). In response to its recommendations, we have worked closely with CIW colleagues to agree improvements to our joint working.

We plan to roll-out our new inspection guidance for inspecting care and education in regulated non-school settings eligible for funding for part-time education in September 2026.

In the non-maintained nursery sector, we have introduced a streamlined follow-up process, implemented in January 2025, which replaces the previous ‘Focused Improvement’ and ‘Estyn-only review’ categories with a single, unified category: ‘Joint Follow-Up’. These arrangements will continue under the new joint inspection framework in this sector from September 2026.

In 2026-2027 we will:

- continue to jointly develop new inspection arrangements for the sector from September 2026
- roll-out our new joint CIW/Estyn inspection guidance for the sector, in September 2026.

This activity will strengthen the effectiveness and consistency of inspection in non-maintained nurseries through the introduction of new joint arrangements and guidance with CIW. We would expect to see clearer expectations for providers, a more joined-up inspection approach and stronger support for improvement across the sector.

Initial Teacher Education

To qualify as a teacher in Wales, it is necessary to gain Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) through initial teacher education (ITE). Students wishing to undertake an ITE qualification can study on full-time and part-time routes.

There are currently six ITE providers, accredited by Education Workforce Council (EWC), each operating as a partnership between a higher education institution (HEI) and schools who work together to provide the professional education and development of student teachers. Estyn plays a crucial role in upholding and enhancing quality in ITE. Through our inspections, we evaluate the quality and impact of provision and leadership in ITE on preparing student teachers to assume the duties of a newly qualified teacher. The EWC has responsibility for accrediting each ITE programme based on criteria set by the Welsh Government. We provide the EWC with essential insights from our inspections of

programmes about strengths in their provision and leadership, and any important shortcomings.

The guidance for follow-up in initial teacher education is outlined in [How we Inspect in Initial Teacher Education](#). The guidance is flexible to take account of the wide variety of partnership needs in Wales. We state that we reserve the right to adapt the guidance to meet the needs of individual partnerships.

There are two types of follow-up activity in initial teacher education:

- Causing significant concern and in need of re-inspection
- Enhanced Estyn engagement

The nature of the follow-up activity will vary according to the context of the partnership and depending on the aspects of the partnership's work that require improvement. Enhanced engagement is a supportive process for partnerships that require additional help with their improvement journey. Estyn will work with the partnership to support any improvement planning. The exact nature of this support will be planned in a tailored way to suit the circumstances of the partnership.

In 2026-2027 we will:

- not be inspecting ITE providers during this year or the next academic year, having completed the inspection cycle in summer term 2025
- be planning our new inspection framework for ITE and piloting approaches
- continue to establish and develop the new ITE link inspector role for each partnership
- be consulting with the sector to develop our arrangements for the inspection of initial teacher education from September 2027, continue to hold joint stakeholder events with the EWC and work closely with ITE partnerships through their own stakeholder groups
- continue our work in supporting the three ITE providers requiring enhanced engagement

This activity will support the continued improvement of initial teacher education through strong engagement, clear future arrangements and targeted support where needed. We would expect to see better sector readiness for the new inspection framework from September 2027, stronger partnership working with stakeholders, and sustained progress in providers requiring enhanced engagement.

In addition, we continue to engage regularly with the EWC and Welsh Government to share relevant information about the sector. We are supporting Welsh Government with its review of policies that support ITE, and we sit on its ITE Strategy Group and post-compulsory Education and Training Advisory Group.

*Note – there will be a link inspector for each ITE partnership. The link inspector will be the point of contact in Estyn for each partnership and will meet with them on a termly basis to discuss their work. Similar systems have been long established in the Local Government Education Services and Further Education sectors in Estyn.

Learning in the justice sector

Wales has five prisons and one young offenders' institution. We work alongside His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) during their inspections, focusing on the education, training, and skills aspects of purposeful activity. We have revised our guidance for inspecting prisons in 2025-2026.

Additionally, Wales has one secure children's home, where we work alongside Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to assess the education and training provision during their inspections.

In 2026-2027 we will:

- work with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons to further embed the new inspection arrangements in this sector
- revise our guidance for inspecting young offenders' institutions based on the revised guidance for inspecting prisons
- continue our inspections of the secure children's home with CIW, and revise our guidance for these inspections

Where relevant, we will support HMIP's follow-up work with a provider by joining them on their Independent Reviews of Progress (IRPs).

This activity will strengthen the quality and consistency of inspection in the justice sector through improved joint working and updated guidance. We would expect to see clearer inspection arrangements, more consistent evaluation across settings and stronger support for improving learning and wellbeing for children and young people in secure and custodial provision.

Careers Wales and Jobs Growth Wales+

We are not funded to inspect the work of Careers Wales or the Jobs Growth Wales+ programme, but we will continue to discuss their impact on learners and providers regularly with relevant stakeholders.

Medr funded provision

Further education, adult learning in the community, apprenticeships and sixth form provision

Wales has 12 further education colleges. There are 13 regional partnerships responsible for adult learning in the community provision, alongside Adult Learning Wales, which operates nationally. There are ten apprenticeship providers. There are 132 maintained schools with sixth form provision.

From April 2026, Medr will fund and direct our work in relation to Medr's responsibilities for tertiary education. As such, we will deliver, within each six-year inspection period, one core inspection of each main provider of further education, adult learning in the community and apprenticeships and one core inspection and one interim visit of each school with a sixth form. We will also deliver the initial and ongoing training needed to ensure that these activities can include experienced peer inspectors. Where any provider is identified as needing follow up, we will monitor their improvement in line with Medr's guidance and provide regular updates to Medr until they are removed from follow up.



In addition to the planned core inspection activity set out in Annex 1, Annex 2 provides

details of our planned interim visits. Both annexes identify activity funded by Medr.

In 2026-2027 we will:

- produce a short insights report on apprenticeships in construction and the built environment
- work with Medr and apprenticeship providers to develop new inspection arrangements for apprenticeship providers in preparation for a new inspection cycle starting in September 2027
- continue to review and adapt our inspection arrangements in partnership with Medr and QAA to reflect Medr's commitment to a more coherent tertiary approach and their quality framework, which comes into effect from August 2026
- consolidate our link inspector arrangements for further education colleges, apprenticeship providers and adult learning in the community partnerships, so that each FE institution has a single link inspector and one annual visit
- work with the Welsh Government and Medr to agree the way forward when a provider is at risk of not being compliant with the Quality and Continuous Improvement Condition.

This activity will strengthen oversight and improvement across further education, adult learning, apprenticeships and sixth form provision through clearer inspection arrangements, stronger partnership working and more joined-up engagement with providers. We would expect to see better intelligence on sector performance, greater readiness for future inspection cycles, and more timely support and challenge where quality or compliance is at risk.

This revised approach will strengthen our oversight of leadership and governance across further education institutions and support closer working with Medr and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), while continuing to consider the quality of different types of provision within FE institutions.

Assuring the quality of inspections

We apply a robust quality assurance process to all our inspections. The four key systems for assuring the quality of inspections are:

- quality assurance of all inspection reports prior to publication, including the moderation and validation of evaluations, findings and follow-up activity, where appropriate, and of published post-visit letters following interim visits
- quality assurance of a sample of inspections and interim visits through site visits

- inspector evaluation forms to record an evaluation of the performance of each additional inspector, peer inspector, lay inspector and school improvement partner, as appropriate
- post-inspection questionnaires for the head of a provider to give feedback on aspects of the inspection process

The findings from each element within the quality assurance system feed through to Estyn's quality assurance database and inform our annual self-evaluation processes to identify further improvements we can make across our work. We also use these evaluations to inform professional learning and development priorities for inspectors. The quality assurance system is audited regularly, most recently in February 2025, providing substantial assurance. The audit found that Estyn has effective arrangements in place to ensure the quality of inspections. The review did not identify any instances of non-compliance with the quality assurance processes.

The findings of all quality assurance activities also influence the award of contracts for Registered Inspectors, Registered Nursery Inspectors, additional inspectors and lay inspectors, and the deployment of peer inspectors and school improvement partners.

In 2026-2027 we will:

- continue to refine our data systems for monitoring quality outcomes to improve efficiency
- review our procedures and reporting on the quality assurance of inspections (QAI) through onsite visits
- develop a new quality assurance area on our website to reflect our evolving approach to inspection
- continue our programme of professional learning to ensure HMI and assistant directors with quality assurance responsibilities across all our sectors carry out their roles effectively

This activity will strengthen the consistency, transparency and effectiveness of inspection quality assurance across all sectors. We would expect to see more efficient monitoring of quality, clearer quality assurance processes and reporting, stronger professional practice among those leading quality assurance, and greater public confidence in the robustness of our inspection work.

Schools and PRUs causing concern

We will continue our work to support providers causing concern, particularly secondary and all-age schools and PRUs.

In 2026-2027 we will:

- support pre-Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) visits, providing guidance on the principles of effective improvement planning
- support PIAP visits
- be involved in multi-agency panels where local authorities have set these up
- allocate a pastoral HMI to each secondary and all-age school in Special Measures
- inform local authorities when a provider is likely to go into a category and offer a follow up meeting with the Reporting Inspector
- continue to develop pastoral visits to some secondary and all-age schools that have been in special measures for some time. These involve a general update on progress from the school and some joint activities between school staff and HMI based on identified aspects such as recurrent issues with literacy and numeracy skills and attendance.
- pilot and continue to develop new approaches in secondary and all-age schools in follow-up, such as meetings with staff and governors to explain the process
- pilot the involvement of School Improvement Partners (SIPs) from local authorities on special measures monitoring visits to secondary and all-age schools
- use and continue to develop the guidance on supporting schools and PRUs going into category

This activity will strengthen support and challenge for schools and PRUs in follow-up by providing focused support on improvement planning, increasing collaboration with local authorities and providing more tailored pastoral support. We would expect to see better understanding of follow-up processes, stronger joint working with local authorities, continued collaborative working between Estyn and providers causing concern and steadier progress in secondary and all-age schools facing the greatest challenges.

Further joint working with inspection and other bodies

In 2026-2027 we will:

- work with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to share expertise and increase coherence between inspection and quality review processes across tertiary education providers
- work collaboratively with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and other inspectorates to strengthen our approach to inspecting safeguarding. This will include developing a future programme of joint inspections to evaluate the effectiveness of multi-agency child protection enquiries, under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989, into allegations against professionals, in line with Section 5 of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.
- maintain strong strategic and operational links with education and training inspectorates in neighbouring countries, supporting regular knowledge-sharing and information exchange
- play an active role in the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI), including:
 - promoting the sharing of best practice and learning from international inspection systems
 - hosting a SICI workshop in Cardiff in April 2026 to share the outcomes of a transnational project with inspectorates in Wales, Norway and Scotland on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in inspection.

This activity will strengthen the quality, coherence and impact of inspection through closer collaboration with partner bodies in Wales, across the UK and internationally. We would expect to see more aligned approaches across inspection and review processes, stronger joint working on safeguarding, increased sharing of effective practice and innovation, and better-informed inspection activity that supports improvement across sectors.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains fundamental to our work and central to our purpose. We recognise that safeguarding is more than a set of policies; it is a culture embedded in every aspect of a provider's work. In September 2024, we strengthened our approach to inspecting safeguarding, and we will continue to monitor and refine this approach throughout 2026–2027. Our focus is on evaluating how deeply safeguarding is embedded in practice and ensuring it remains central to all inspections.

Safeguarding will remain fundamental to our inspection framework and will be evaluated in all inspections in line with our published guidance. Inspectors consider whether leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture; whether policies and procedures comply

with statutory requirements and Welsh Government guidance; and whether those arrangements are implemented consistently and effectively in practice.

During 2026-2027, we will strengthen how we systematically receive and share intelligence with other key partners including Welsh Government, Medr, EWC, CIW and local authorities to inform our inspection planning and practice. By working collaboratively and sharing intelligence and learning, we will strengthen our evaluation of safeguarding across providers in Wales and promote greater consistency, clarity and collective responsibility.

We will also continue to strengthen our contribution to safeguarding practice and governance across Wales. We will act on the findings of our 2026 internal review of safeguarding to ensure our systems, approaches and assurance arrangements remain robust and continue to improve. We will also undergo an internal audit of safeguarding arrangements in 2026–2027 to provide assurance and identify opportunities to further strengthen our systems and practice. Alongside this, we will work closely with the Welsh Government as it takes forward its Review of Governance and Accountability arrangements for safeguarding children and adults in Wales.

Safeguarding is a shared and ongoing responsibility. Through rigorous inspection, transparent reporting and collaborative engagement, we will help ensure that children, young people and vulnerable adults across Wales learn in environments that are safe, supportive and nurturing.



Strategic Objective 2: Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government and Medr



We offer a comprehensive, nationwide perspective on education and training in Wales, drawing on evidence gathered through our inspections, thematic reviews and engagement work. We work with Welsh Government and Medr officials, Welsh Government Ministers and Cabinet Secretaries, and with other stakeholders, to provide evidence-based advice that informs policy and regulatory development.

As part of our statutory duties, we produce an annual report on the standards of education and training in Wales. We intend to publish sector summaries in early October 2026, followed by the full report in January 2027. This year's report is expected to focus on the following key themes:

- progress in science, including analysis of PISA data
- the impact of professional learning on improving the quality of teaching and learner progress in settings, schools, PRUs and colleges
- the development of Welsh language skills in Welsh-medium settings, schools and colleges
- the successes and challenges of supporting settings, schools and PRUs in follow-up
- support for learners at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- developing the Expressive Arts in settings and schools
- ensuring effective safeguarding practices are in place

The items included in the remit for 2026-2027 reflect priorities set by Welsh Government and Medr and will be delivered through a combination of thematic work, ongoing advice and collaborative activity.

Welsh Government funded reviews

During 2026-2027, we will deliver the following thematic reviews for Welsh Government:

Area of Learning and Experience review: Health and Well-being

Standard review. This review will focus on ages 3 to 16, covering curriculum planning, teaching, assessment and learner progress, highlighting effective practice.

How schools are working to reduce the impact of poverty on attainment and well-being (with a focus on curriculum and teaching)

Standard review. This will examine system pressures and impacts on learners and practitioners, including how the Pupil Development Grant supports and improves teaching and the use of external evidence to inform teaching approaches.

Development of learners' digital skills and competencies

Standard review. The review will explore how schools develop digital skills across the curriculum, barriers to access and use of technology, and any positive or negative impacts on health and well-being, highlighting effective practice.

Supporting ALN in early education

Standard review. The review will look at how 3- and 4-year-old education providers are operating ALN reforms, working with partners to identify ALN, supporting transitions and working with families.

Anti-racism in schools and PRUs

Standard review. The review will evaluate how well schools and PRUs develop and embed an anti-racist culture, including curriculum contribution and how racist incidents are identified, recorded, responded to and learned from, highlighting effective practice.

Post-16 education experiences for learners with ALN (year 1 of 2)

Large review. This review will look at the experiences of learners with ALN through 16-19 education, how individual development plans support good outcomes in learners'

progress and wellbeing, transition advice and guidance, accessibility of provision, and preparation for post-19 destinations. (This review is also supported by Medr.)

Additional work

We will provide ongoing advice based on evidence from inspection, engagement work and other activity through meetings with Welsh Government officials and through contributions to national working groups, written advice, published guidance and reports.

We will continue to work with Welsh Government, local authorities and Dysgu to support schools and PRUs causing concern, to support schools with standards in literacy and numeracy, and to support schools to reduce absenteeism.

Estyn will continue to work with partners to ensure that their monitoring and support for schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) causing concern dovetails with the school improvement support provided by others.



Estyn will continue to work with partners to promote high standards in literacy and numeracy and promote effective approaches to support attendance.

We will undertake joint inspections with Care Inspectorate Wales of Section 5 safeguarding procedures.

We will also provide advice and support on other areas as required, including:

- school closure and reorganisation proposals
- the development of the revised National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH)
- the development of qualifications and inspection arrangements for any new initial teacher training and continuing professional development requirements for teachers, tutors and trainers in lifelong learning
- registration and monitoring of independent schools and independent specialist colleges in Wales
- follow-up work in respect of local education authorities
- other requests such as background information for Ministerial meetings and Senedd questions

Medr funded reviews

We will continue to operate a system of link inspectors for colleges, adult learning providers, and local authorities and use this to gather evidence to support Medr in its assurance work.

During 2026-2027, we will deliver the following thematic review for Medr:

AS to A2 progression

Standard review. This review will explore factors affecting decisions when learners do not progress from AS to A2 courses in sixth forms or colleges, including the initial choice of AS course, advice and guidance, and the quality of support provided.

Additional work

In addition, we will continue to work with Medr and QAA (the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) to promote effective shared approaches to self-evaluation and continuous improvement planning across tertiary providers.

We completed our cycle of inspections of apprenticeship providers in July 2025. During 2026-2027, we will continue monitoring visits to apprenticeship providers and provide Insights reports for Medr on:

- timely completion of apprenticeship programmes
- health and social care delivery
- construction and the built environment delivery

We will also consult with Medr and apprenticeship providers to develop and pilot future inspection arrangements for delivery from September 2027 onwards.

Furthermore, we will provide advice to Medr and support decision making through meetings with Medr officials, contributions to the Quality Committee and national working groups, and through written advice or reports including the sharing of intelligence from engagement with schools with sixth forms where appropriate.

Based on evidence gathered from inspections, engagement work and other activity, we will also provide updates and advice on:

- the impact of professional learning on improving the quality of teaching and learner progress in settings, schools, PRUs and colleges
- the development of Welsh language skills in Welsh-medium settings, schools and colleges
- support for learners at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- ensuring effective safeguarding practices are in place

The full remit letter that the Cabinet Secretary for Education sent to HMCI can be seen [here](#). This includes an annex outlining Medr's requirements of Estyn in relation to its responsibilities for tertiary education.

Strategic objective 3 – Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales



Our inspection and thematic work provides a strong foundation for evaluating the quality of education and training in Wales. Through professional dialogue and clear, well-informed recommendations, we support improvement across the system.

From September 2026, we will begin a three-year programme with an enhanced focus on reading. We know that too many learners are not fluent, confident readers by the time they leave school or further education, and we want to help break this cycle. Our aim is to support all education providers—from non-maintained nursery settings to schools, colleges and adult learning services—to improve literacy for learners across Wales. We will strengthen our inspection focus and develop a range of resources to help raise standards nationwide and give every learner the best chance to succeed. [Reading: For learners, for Wales.](#)

Each inspection team brings together a group of inspectors with different specialisms and experiences. Each inspection team will be led by either an HMI, a registered inspector or a registered nursery inspector. Our various team roles can be found on our website - [Inspector roles](#). We will continue to strengthen professional learning for our internal and external workforce, ensuring they are equipped to respond to emerging national priorities.

In 2026–27, we will further strengthen and extend our Additional Learning Needs Inspector (ALNI) capacity to ensure consistently high-quality evaluation of ALN provision across Wales. Building on our established and effective training programme, we will deepen expertise through targeted, ongoing professional learning that enables ALNIs to confidently evaluate provision across all sectors and settings.

Drawing on the expertise of experienced practitioners from special schools, PRUs and specialist services, ALNIs will play an increasingly integral role in inspection activity. This will include a stronger focus on evaluating specialist provision within mainstream settings, enabling us to identify effective practice, highlight areas for improvement and provide a clearer national picture of how well learners' additional learning needs are being met.

We will also further develop our safeguarding training offer to ensure inspectors maintain a secure and up-to-date understanding of statutory responsibilities, emerging risks and effective safeguarding practice. This will deepen professional confidence, strengthen evaluative rigour and ensure safeguarding remains central to inspection activity in every sector.

Peer inspectors are central to building shared understanding and clear expectations across education and training. Around 1,000 peer inspectors operate across sectors, strengthening their expertise through exposure to varied inspection practice and contributing to sector capacity and a self-improving system. Alongside core inspection activity, pathway peer inspectors are involved in interim visits to maintained schools and pupil referral units, with this approach reviewed as part of the mid-cycle evaluation.



Stakeholder forums and reference groups—both sector-based and project-focused—help shape our work by enabling deeper engagement on key issues and offering insights beyond inspection. We are committed to broadening the diversity of representation within these groups to ensure a wider range of voices informs our work.

In 2026-2027 we will:

- collaborate with Medr and Welsh Government forums and steering groups to support and inform education and training policy and practice
- launch a three-year enhanced focus on reading across all inspection activity, alongside a programme of resources to help raise standards across Wales
- use survey insights on how stakeholders perceive Estyn – particularly classroom practitioners and middle leaders - to strengthen engagement, add value and increase the impact of our work
- explore and expand the use of communication channels, including social media, Estyn Live webinars and the Sgwrs podcast series
- engage regularly with stakeholder forums and reference groups across all sectors to gather insights and ensure our approach remains responsive to change
- identify, recognise and share effective practice from inspection to inspire and support improvement across the system
- recruit a fourth cohort to our leadership development programme for ethnic minority practitioners, strengthening capacity, diversity and participation in inspection
- provide ongoing professional development for our internal and external workforce to support inspection and respond to national priorities, with a focus this year on strengthening our safeguarding offer and expanding ALNI capacity.
- Continue to bring new inspectors into our external workforce including:
 - reviewing the pilot of the deployment of School Improvement Partners on secondary and all-age interim visits and amending arrangements as necessary
 - extending the deployment of pathway peer inspectors by involving them as team members on primary sector interim visits.

This activity will strengthen system-wide capacity for improvement by using inspection evidence, professional learning and stakeholder engagement to inform policy and practice across Wales. We would expect to see stronger reading standards, wider sharing of effective practice, improved safeguarding and ALN expertise, greater workforce diversity and capacity in inspection, and more responsive, influential engagement with practitioners and partners across the education and training system.

Our approach



Our workforce includes our management team, central staff and inspectors. We also train and deploy a wider pool of people to support inspection activity, including additional inspectors, peer inspectors who are practising professionals in education and training, local authority improvement partner inspectors, lay inspectors and provider nominees. Where possible, we support secondment opportunities both into and out of the organisation to share expertise and strengthen capability.

Our [Corporate governance framework](#), including boards, committees and supporting groups, together with our assurance framework, provide a strong foundation for delivering our strategic priorities and operating as an effective and well-governed organisation. Non-executive members of the Strategy Board and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee play a key role in providing independent scrutiny, challenge and support to the senior leadership team.

Further information about our role, responsibilities and ways of working is available on our website, [About Estyn](#).

In line with the principles of [A Modern Civil Service](#), we are committed to building a skilled, forward-looking and ambitious workforce. This includes investing in staff development, improving our systems and processes to increase efficiency, and strengthening how we use data and evidence to enhance our impact. We are also exploring opportunities to broaden the diversity of our workforce.

We remain fully committed to meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty. Equality and diversity are integral to the delivery of our strategic objectives. Our equality objectives

cover how we consider equality when we inspect and how we will ensure that our own staff and those we contract with have equality of opportunity and are treated equally. The February 2026 internal audit of our Strategic Equality Planning gave substantial assurance with no recommendations.

We support the Welsh Government's commitment to net zero and aim to minimise our environmental impact by embedding sustainable practices across our day-to-day operations. Our Welsh language policy underpins our commitment to bilingual working and ensures that we communicate with stakeholders in line with their language choice.

People strategy

In 2026-2027 we will:

- design and deliver our people strategy in 2026–2027, focusing on enabling our staff to make confident, well-informed decisions that add value for our stakeholders
- maintain our commitment to learning and development, supporting our people and the organisation to grow, adapt and innovate
- work closely with staff to understand the findings of the 2025 People Survey and take forward actions to address the issues raised

Data and digital strategy

In 2026-2027 we will:

- continue modernising our IT infrastructure to strengthen system integration and resilience
- enhance our resource management tools to support more effective planning and deployment
- strengthen knowledge management arrangements to improve access to information and organisational learning
- continue to test the use of generative AI and, where it adds value, extend its use across the organisation

Statutory and corporate responsibility

We will maintain a strong focus on meeting our statutory obligations and delivering key corporate responsibilities, including, equality and diversity, Welsh language standards and sustainability.

Welsh language

In 2026-2027 we will:

- ratify and implement our updated Strategic Welsh Language Plan
- introduce a comprehensive policy on the internal use of the Welsh language within Estyn, in accordance with Welsh Language Commissioner's guidelines
- undertake our annual survey of staff members' language skills
- devise a two-to-three-year strategy for Welsh language training for staff
- continue to pilot our new mentoring scheme for Welsh learners (launched in January 2026)
- produce our annual report on the Welsh language in Estyn for publication on the website

The Welsh language working group will continue to meet and monitor the impact of the above, as well as monitor our legal compliance with the Welsh Language Standards.

[Annual Report on the Welsh Language in Estyn 2024-2025](#)

Equality and diversity

In 2026-2027 we will:

- complete an end of year review of the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028
- develop an action plan to advance the necessary work for implementing the Strategic Equality Plan
- upgrade our disability confident status to level 3
- continue to develop our approach to easy read policies

[Estyn's Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.](#)

Sustainability

In 2026-2027 we will:

- seek re-accreditation to the Green Dragon Environmental Standard, demonstrating effective environmental management and action to understand, monitor and reduce our environmental impacts
- publish our Environmental Report 2026 providing assurance on our environmental management and progress towards sustainability goals
- produce our annual net zero report for the Welsh Government, outlining our contribution to national sustainability objectives

[Estyn's Environmental report 2025](#)

The activity described in this section will strengthen Estyn's ability to deliver high-quality, sustainable and inclusive services by investing in our people, systems and organisational capacity. We would expect to see more confident and capable staff, better use of technology and knowledge, stronger Welsh language and equality practice, and continued progress on environmental sustainability, all of which will help us work more effectively and add greater value for stakeholders.



Our budget

In 2026-2027, we plan to deploy a total resource budget of £18.704 million to deliver our statutory inspection and reporting programme, alongside our wider engagement, improvement, and corporate responsibilities. This is funded primarily through £16.240 million of grant in aid funding from Welsh Government and £2.056 million from Medr relating to our post-16 work in FE, apprenticeships, adult learning in the community and sixth forms. We also expect £0.408 million of additional grant funding to support specific priority work, including supporting additional learning needs in early years education, anti-racism in schools and pupil referral units, and sector improvement activity in post-16.

Our planned resource expenditure is £18.564 million which provides £0.140 million of headroom to help us manage emerging pressures and maintain delivery and flexibility during the year. Financial performance is reviewed and challenged throughout the year by the Operational Group and Strategic Management Group, with additional oversight from the Strategy Board and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.



Most of our budget is deliberately concentrated on frontline delivery and the capability needed to keep inspection and improvement work strong, consistent and responsive to change. Around £15.77 million (about 85 percent) is invested in people: £14.54 million in staffing plus £1.23 million for contracted inspection capacity to support delivery of planned inspection activity across sectors. This supports the annual plan commitments to carry out a mid-cycle review of inspection arrangements and strengthen safeguarding inspection practice, alongside developing and rolling out new inspection arrangements (including apprenticeships, initial teacher education, and non-maintained nursery setting from September 2026) and embedding learner reports.

We have also protected investment in professional learning so that our staff and contracted inspectors can apply frameworks consistently and constructively: the budget includes £0.173 million for staff training and £0.114 million for inspection-related training for contracted inspectors (including Peer and Lay inspectors). Alongside this, our data and digital strategy is supported through £0.867 million of information and communications technology costs to modernise and maintain infrastructure and systems, strengthen integration and resilience, and continue testing generative artificial intelligence where it adds value.

Table 1 Core funding, depreciation and capital funding by source. Note that grants and other sources of income are not shown.

Source	Core funding for		
	running costs	Depreciation	Capital funding
	£m	£m	£m
Welsh Government	16.240	0.276	0.250
Medr	2.056	-	-
Additional grant funding (TBC)	0.408		
Total	18.704	0.276	0.250

Monitoring our performance

We produce an annual plan by 31 March each year that is subsequently approved by the First Minister of Senedd Cymru. This year, due to the change in the way we are funded, it will also be approved by Medr's Chief Executive Officer. We consult internally with staff and unions and externally with Welsh Government and Medr officials on early drafts. Our annual report and accounts follow later in the year and sets out our progress in delivering the previous year's plan and includes a full set of accounts for the financial year.

In 2026–2027, we will continue to use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to measure, evaluate and report on our performance. This will include providing regular progress updates to key governance groups, including the Operational Group, Inspection Leadership Group, Strategic Management Group and Strategy Board, focusing on delivery against our strategic objectives and key performance indicators. Internal audit reports will also be shared with the Operational Group, Strategic Management Group and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

We have established a set of high-level key performance indicators to measure progress against our strategic objectives, which are reviewed annually. These are supported by a broader range of operational management indicators, many of which are reported both internally and externally, including through our annual report and accounts.



Key performance indicators:

S01 – Ensure public accountability to our service users and enhance capacity in the delivery of education and training in Wales

Key performance indicators	Target 2026-2027
a) Percentage of completed inspections that met planned statutory inspection activity set out in our annual plan	100%
b) Deployment of peer inspectors on each core inspection in line with Estyn standards	at least one peer inspector on each core inspection
c) Deployment of lay inspectors on all school and PRU core inspections in line with Estyn standards	One lay inspector on each school and PRU inspection

S01 / S03 - Ensure providers' experience of inspection is a positive process that promotes improvement

Key performance indicators	Target 2026-2027
Percentage of those providers who complete a post inspection questionnaire who indicate their satisfaction following inspection:	97%
a. That inspectors gave helpful feedback during the inspection by identifying relevant strengths and areas for improvement (PIQ1 – Q 15)	
b. With the reliability and independence of our evaluation (PIQ2 – Q21)	97%
c. That the inspection helped them to plan for improvement (PIQ2 – Q19)	97%

S01 / S03 – Develop our working arrangements with Medr whose aim is to promote greater coherence and collaboration across post-16 provision

Key performance indicators	Target 2026-2027
Delivery of Medr-funded inspection and inspection-related activity in the first year of new arrangements	31 March 2027

S02 / S03 – Ensure that our stakeholder events and resources amplify the positive impact of Estyn’s work and drive improvement across the education and training sector in Wales

Key performance indicators	Target 2026-2027
a) Proportion of stakeholders who rate our stakeholder events as useful or very useful	a) 96%
b) Proportion of stakeholders who rate Estyn's communication as positive	b) 55%
c) Proportion of stakeholders who believe that our work has led to improvements in the delivery of education and training services and policy development in Wales	c) 55%
d) The combined users accessing our key improvement resources through our website (Annual report, effective practice, podcasts, thematic reports) during the reporting period	d) 20,000 annual target
e) The number of views of our multimedia resources on our YouTube channel	e) 10,000 annual target
f) Click-through rate (CTR) of our half-termly external stakeholder newsletter (this is distributed to more than 2,500 contacts highlighting topical headlines and publications)	f) CTR: 7% (2-3% is industry average)

Our approach – Create and maintain an engaged and skilled workforce

Key performance indicators	Target 2026-2027
Percentage positive annual Civil Service People Survey	For the latest Survey:
a) employee engagement index (EEI) score	In the top quartile
b) learning and development theme score	At least the median benchmark score
c) Introduce a proactive policy to develop and facilitate the use of the Welsh language within Estyn.	31 March 2027

Annex 1: Planned inspection activity 2026-2027

Welsh Government funded

Planned inspection activity by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and independent inspectors – 2026-2027 (financial year)

Planned number of inspections leading to reports⁽¹⁾

Unit of inspection	No of providers (2026)	Summer 2026	Autumn 2026	Spring 2027
Non-maintained nursery settings ⁽²⁾	523	30	30	30
Primary schools	1198	66	72	68
Secondary schools ⁽³⁾	173	6	11	14 TBC
All-age schools ⁽³⁾	31	2	2	1
Maintained special schools	39	1	2	1
Pupil referral units	25	0	2	1
Independent ALN Specialist	45	1	3	2
Independent Secondary	7	0	0	1
Independent Primary	6	0	0	0
Independent All-age	19	1	1	1
Independent specialist colleges	10	0	0	1
Local government education services	22	1	1	1
Youth work inspections	22	1	1	1
Initial teacher education (ITE) Partnerships	6	0	0	0
Job Growth Wales+	5	0	0	0
Welsh for adults (WfA) – 10 Learn Welsh providers plus a National Centre.	10	0	0	1
Welsh language immersion	4	1	2	1
Total		110	127	124

OVERALL TOTAL = 361 (see footnote 3 below)

(1) Based on information as of 04/03/2026.

(2) These inspections are jointly delivered with CIW.

(3) We conduct a single inspection and produce one report covering both the Medr-funded sixth form element and the Welsh Government-funded compulsory school age element for secondary and all-age maintained school inspections.

Medr funded

Planned inspection activity by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and independent inspectors – 2026-2027 (financial year)

Planned number of inspections leading to reports⁽¹⁾

Unit of inspection	No of providers (2026)	Summer 2026	Autumn 2026	Spring 2027
Further education institutions	12	0	0	2
Apprenticeship providers ⁽²⁾	10	0	0	0
Adult learning in the community (ALC) partnerships (including Adult Learning Wales)	14	1	1	2
Sixth form- secondary schools ⁽³⁾	115	1	8	TBC
Sixth form - all-age schools ⁽³⁾	17	2	0	TBC

(1) Based on information as of 04/03/2026.

(2) We will not be carrying out core inspections in this sector this year; we will however be conducting monitoring visits to all the apprenticeship providers during the year.

(3) These figures are a subset of the Welsh Government funded activity. We conduct a single inspection and produce one report covering both the Medr-funded sixth form element and the Welsh Government-funded compulsory school age element for secondary and all-age maintained schools.

Annex 2: Planned interim visits to maintained schools and PRUs 2026-2027

Welsh Government funded

Planned activity by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and independent inspectors 2026-2027 (financial year)

Planned number of interim visits (Annual) ⁽¹⁾

Unit of inspection	Summer 2026	Autumn 2026	Spring 2027
Primary schools	56	80	64
Secondary schools ⁽²⁾	5	13 TBC	12 TBC
All-age schools ⁽²⁾	1	1	1
Maintained special schools	3	3	1
Pupil referral units	0	2	1
Total	65	99	79

OVERALL TOTAL = 243 (see footnote 2 below)

(1) Based on information as of 04/03/2026.

(2) We conduct a single interim visit and produce one report covering both the Medr-funded sixth form element and the Welsh Government-funded compulsory school age element for secondary and all-age maintained school inspections.

Note: Individual providers not yet determined for interim visits

Medr funded

Planned activity by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and independent inspectors 2026-2027 (financial year)

Planned number of interim visits (Annual) ⁽¹⁾

Unit of inspection	Summer 2026	Autumn 2026	Spring 2027
Sixth form - Secondary schools ⁽²⁾	1	8	TBC
Sixth form - All-age schools ⁽²⁾	2	0	TBC

(1) Based on information as of 04/03/2026.

(2) These figures are a subset of the Welsh Government funded activity. We conduct a single interim visit and produce one report covering both the Medr-funded sixth form element and the Welsh Government-funded compulsory school age element for secondary, all-age and maintained special school inspections.

Note: Individual providers not yet determined for interim visits

Annex 3: Planned monitoring inspections in the independent sector 2026-2027

Planned monitoring inspections in the independent sector by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and independent inspectors – 2026-2027 (financial year)

Unit of inspection	Planned number of monitoring inspections (Annual) ⁽¹⁾		
	Summer 2026	Autumn 2026	Spring 2027
Independent ALN Specialist	4	4	3
Independent Secondary	0	0	0
Independent Primary	0	0	0
Independent All-age	0	1	1
Total	4	5	4

OVERALL TOTAL = 13

(1) Based on information as of 04/03/2026.

We welcome feedback and comments about this annual plan, which can be emailed to us at feedback@estyn.gov.wales

This annual plan will be submitted to, and approved by, the First Minister of Senedd Cymru.