

# Inspecting literacy

Literacy is an essential skill that allows pupils to understand written and spoken language, to interpret what has been written or said, and to draw inferences from evidence. Literacy also refers to the ability to communicate fluently, cogently and persuasively.

## **The key tasks for inspectors are to evaluate:**

- how well pupils develop the literacy skills they need to access the whole curriculum and to learn effectively
- how well teaching and learning experiences develop pupils' literacy skills
- the quality of and leadership in, and management of the co-ordination of provision to develop pupils' literacy skills

Inspectors should report on pupils' literacy skills in every inspection and, where appropriate, report on any outcomes or indicators that relate to these skills.

The following guidance is intended to support inspectors in evaluating and in reporting on pupils' standards of listening, speaking, reading and writing, and on their ability to use their literacy skills in work across the curriculum. Although the guidance contains information about the school's provision for literacy, inspectors should remember that the main focus should be on the impact it has on pupils' learning and progress. In addition, when inspecting Welsh, inspectors should refer to the [Supplementary guidance: Welsh in Welsh medium, bilingual and English medium non-maintained settings, schools and PRUs](#).

## **Gathering and reviewing inspection evidence**

The team will plan the inspection so that they can gather evidence about literacy within the five inspection areas. The Reporting Inspector will ensure that the team has enough time to review the key evidence it needs to make its judgements. The main forms of evidence are:

- samples of pupils' work in language, literacy and communication and Welsh/English work (including that completed online)
- samples of pupils' work from other areas of learning and subjects
- listening to pupils' activities, for example listening to them reading aloud and discussing texts, discussions with them about their literacy work

- discussions with staff, leaders, governors, parents and others
- observation of teaching and other activities, including evidence gathered through learning walks that focus on a specific aspect of literacy work, for example talking to pupils about their reading
- documentary evidence, including information on pupils' learning and progress (such as the analysis of standardised reading scores of particular groups and the progress of pupils on literacy intervention programmes), and evaluations of progress against literacy action plans

The team will use direct observation of pupils' work wherever possible to gather evidence to support its judgements. Inspectors may select an additional sample of pupils' work, if required, to further their investigation in a specific aspect of literacy. They will observe teaching and other activities.

The voice of pupils is a key source of evidence for inspectors. Discussions with pupils will provide an opportunity to explore their knowledge and understanding of their work. It will also help inspectors to gauge how well the school supports pupils and contributes to their progress.

Schools should make information available to the inspection team about the standards of literacy achieved by pupils, particularly the results of any initial screening tests and any other assessments. This will help inspectors to evaluate pupils' progress, to come to a view about the standards they achieve compared to their starting points, and the way teachers use the information from assessment to inform their planning for future learning.

The team will need to consider stakeholders' views on the school and test out the validity of those views during the inspection.

### **Points to consider:**

- Do pupils grasp meaning, develop understanding and extend their vocabulary through listening to others?
- Do pupils learn the knowledge and skills that support effective spoken communication in a range of contexts and settings?
- Do pupils (in Welsh-medium contexts) use mediation skills to support effective communication?
- Do pupils have access to texts that are sufficiently rich and substantial to engage them intellectually and emotionally?
- Is there evidence of pupils developing their reading skills through tasks based on: literal and inferential comprehension, evaluation and appreciation, information retrieval, analysis and synthesis?
- Do pupils (in Welsh-medium contexts) use their translanguaging skills, for example to read in English and synthesise their findings in Welsh?

- Do pupils make hypotheses, summarise and draw conclusions from their reading?
- Do pupils write across the curriculum to the same standards they achieve in language, literacy and communication sessions or Welsh/English lessons?
- Do they write across a range of genres for different purposes and audiences, structuring their work appropriately?
- Do they plan, redraft and edit their work effectively?
- Is spelling and punctuation age-appropriate?
- Is handwriting and presentation clear?
- Are learning activities purposeful and do they build successfully on what pupils know and can do?
- Is there clear evidence of appropriate challenge for all pupils?
- Does feedback help pupils to improve their literacy skills?