

Supplementary guidance

Inspecting attitudes to learning

September 2021

Supplementary guidance: Inspecting attitudes to learning

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What is the purpose of this supplementary guidance?

To provide updated guidance for inspectors on inspecting attitudes to learning

For whom is it intended?

Inspectors of maintained and independent schools

From when should it be used?

September 2021

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About this guidance

Overview

Our inspection guidance explains What we inspect and How we inspect. In addition, we produce supplementary guidance to help inspectors to consider specific aspects of education and training further.

The supplementary guidance documents set out some key principles, considerations and resources for inspectors. They relate to all sectors that Estyn inspects, unless they state that they are for a specific sector. They expand on certain aspects of education/training (e.g. the inspection of literacy) or on ways of conducting inspections (e.g. the use of learning walks) or specific inspection arrangements (e.g. guidance on inspecting faith schools).

The supplementary guidance documents are not exhaustive. Inspectors are not required to work through them painstakingly when covering any specific aspect on an inspection. However, inspectors may find them useful when responding to specific emerging questions that arise during inspections or when they wish to reflect or investigate further.

The supplementary guidance documents may help providers gain an understanding of Estyn's inspection arrangements. They may also be helpful to providers in evaluating specific aspects of their own provision.

Our inspection work is based on the following principles:

- Inspectors will approach inspection with a positive mindset to ensure it is the best possible professional learning experience for the staff in each provider
- Inspectors will take a learner-focused approach to inspection
- Inspectors will always focus strongly on the quality of teaching and learning
- Inspectors will seek out well-considered innovative practice
- Inspectors will tailor the inspection activities according to the circumstances in each provider as far as possible
- Inspectors will be agile and responsive to emerging findings and will use the increased range of inspection tools and approaches available
- Inspectors will consider everything in the inspection framework, but will only report on the key strengths and weaknesses within each provider

Copyright statement

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

- nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities
- primary schools
- secondary schools
- special schools
- pupil referral units
- all-age schools
- independent schools
- further education
- independent specialist colleges
- adult learning in the community
- local authority education services for children and young people
- teacher education and training
- Welsh for adults
- work-based learning
- learning in the justice sector

Estyn also:

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

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Guidance

Introduction

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Introduction

Introduction

The purpose of this guidance is to assist inspectors in making accurate judgements on the strength of pupils' attitudes to learning as part of the inspection of maintained schools (primary, secondary and special schools and pupil referral units) and independent schools.

The development of positive attitudes and behaviours, such as resilience, self-control and creativity, is essential to support pupils in their learning throughout their lives and in the development of their mental and emotional wellbeing. It is important that inspection reports reflect accurately the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attitudes to learning in order that schools can build upon and share effective practice and address any shortcomings.

This document summarises the sources of evidence that inspectors will need to consider during inspections and the activities they should undertake to arrive at their judgements. It emphasises the importance of team discussions in synthesising evidence and drawing conclusions, and provides useful explanations of the kinds of attitudes and behaviours that inspectors need to be looking for.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the relevant guidance handbooks for each sector and additional guidance published on Estyn's website.

Effective practice in inspecting attitudes to learning

Sources of evidence

When making a judgement on pupils' attitudes to learning inspectors should consider evidence from a wide range of sources, including:

- the school's own evaluations
- lesson observations
- learning walks
- visits to whole-school, year group and class assemblies
- scrutiny of a wide range of pupils' work, including the presentation of work and how well pupils respond to written feedback
- meetings with pupils and their work, listening to pupils read and discussing pupils' attitudes to learning
- observation of the quality of pupils' engagement in lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities
- the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school and the quality of their interactions
- information from pupil, parent, staff and governor questionnaires
- meetings with staff
- team discussions
- any additional evaluations and supporting information from other surveys

Inspectors should consider carefully the outcomes from pupil questionnaires to help inform their inspection activities in relation to pupils' attitudes to learning. In particular, the team will want to follow up issues that have arisen from questionnaires as part of their interviews with pupils. It is useful for the reporting inspector (RI) to lead a discussion with the team, or to formulate in advance the specific questions that the team will ask during their meetings with pupils. This will ensure consistency and that the team gathers pertinent evidence that is effective in supporting discussions around any emerging issues.

Team meetings

It is important that RIs plan sufficient time during team meetings to discuss pupils' attitudes to learning. There should be careful consideration of the aspects suggested by the questions listed below and the evidence presented by the team. The discussion should be purposeful, sufficiently detailed and not a rushed 'bolt on' to discussions about standards or teaching. The team should consider how well established positive attitudes

to learning are among pupils and across all classes. The table in Annex 1 provides a useful explanation of the kinds of behaviours that the team should be looking for. The inspector leading on IA2 should consider using a selection of questions from the list below, which are based on the table, as prompts for the team discussion.

To what extent and how well do pupils:

- engage readily in tasks and persevere to bring them to completion, sustaining concentration and avoiding distractions?
- move easily between different lessons and activities and settle quickly to their work?
- engage with new, unfamiliar experiences and ideas, and approach tasks in creative ways to explore new opportunities for their learning?
- engage with tasks delivered remotely by teachers? What is their attitude towards the remote learning offer provided by the school?
- demonstrate curiosity, find delight in challenges and be content with not knowing the answer?
- work to find other solutions and to use a range of methods when their first approach to a problem is unsuccessful or where they want to take their learning further on their own or with their peers?
- act as self-confident learners that reflect thoughtfully on their learning and demonstrate an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses?
- show interest in and enthusiasm for their work, including a positive attitude towards and enjoyment of reading?
- demonstrate appreciation for the learning opportunities that the school provides?
- display a sense of ambition and aspiration for the future?
- demonstrate creativity in their learning and an ability to try out new ideas and to think 'outside the box'?
- work in a range of ways, for example on their own, in small groups and in whole-class settings?
- show respect for the contributions of others and remain calm when there are disagreements?
- demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and around the school?
- relate well to each other and adults?
- apply their knowledge of their own locality as well as awareness of global issues to their learning?

Reporting attitudes to learning

Within IA2, the report should describe how well pupils are developing the key attitudes and behaviours that will support their learning throughout their lives. It should outline clearly how well pupils engage with learning activities and whether they make the most of the opportunities that the school provides. Inspectors will need to consider all aspects

of the inspection requirements as set out in part 2 of the inspection guidance handbook for the relevant sector. However, they should report 'by exception' in their main evaluations, i.e. report on some aspects only where there are particular strengths or significant weaknesses.

This section focuses on what the pupils do and how well they do it. (IA3 and IA4 focus more on the quality of the school's provision and the opportunities for developing attitudes to learning that the school provides.) There should normally be a close between the two. Main evaluations regarding pupils' attitudes to learning should link well to the content of the report in IA4. Similarly, there are close links between pupils' attitudes to learning and the quality of teaching. Pupils' attitudes to learning will also have an impact on the standards they achieve, as described in IA1. Where there are apparent inconsistencies in the judgements between inspection areas, the RI should ensure that the main evaluations explain the reasons why this is the case, and the contents of the supporting evidence should provide suitable justification.

When drawing conclusions on the strength of pupils' attitudes to learning, the team should consider the context of the school and the progress that all pupils make in developing positive attitudes to learning from their starting points. For example, inspectors should consider how well pupils respond to activities that challenge their thinking and how well they persevere when they do not succeed initially.

The content of the report should contain useful examples that give a sense of the attitudes of pupils within the specific school and should not be generic. Effective examples will make explicit the link between the activity the pupils undertake and the specific attitudes that it develops.

Examples that link successfully activities and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils collaborate very effectively from a young age. For example, pupils in the reception class work together purposefully when constructing an ice-breaker ship from cardboard boxes, an idea that they came up with themselves.

Older pupils are respectful of the contributions of others and reflect seriously on ideas put forward by their peers. For example, Year 6 pupils participate thoughtfully in a sophisticated discussion about the consequences of the 1914 football match in no-man's land during the First World War.

Pupils have high levels of trust in the staff and believe strongly that they will always do their best for them. This builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem and helps them become independent learners and thinkers. For example, in the foundation phase, pupils confidently make their own decisions about how and what they learn as they explore all aspects of their environment.

A minority of pupils are slow to settle in lessons and are disengaged for long periods of time. These pupils demonstrate poor attitudes to learning and show limited interest in their work. As a result, they make insufficient progress.

Most pupils behave well during lessons and playtimes. However, a few pupils, particularly boys in the foundation phase, lose interest in tasks easily and disturb others' learning. This is often because they are not active enough or have too few opportunities to try new activities or to lead their own learning.

Most pupils are highly effective in pair or group work. In collaborative activities such as class debates on global issues, they listen carefully and respectfully to each other and offer mature and sensitive support and challenge to their peers' ideas.

Many pupils display positive attitudes to learning. They support each other well and work productively in pairs and groups, such as when they work collaboratively to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different types of theatre stages in drama. Many pupils sustain their interest and engagement in activities to develop their skills and understanding successfully. In music, for instance, they maintain focus and persevere in order to improve the accuracy and quality of their ensemble performance by varying elements such as timbre and tempo. However, a minority of pupils are too passive and do not engage meaningfully in their work.

Pupils show very positive attitudes towards the school and their education. Nearly all pupils behave extremely politely and are very respectful towards each other, all members of staff and visitors, in their lessons and around the school. Many are excellent representatives of the school when talking to visitors, and they take great pride in talking about their work and about school life. They have strong social skills, and discuss issues and express their views maturely with adults.

In most lessons, nearly all pupils behave well, concentrate throughout the lesson and persevere when faced with complex tasks. Many show a high level of resilience when solving problems and take ownership of their own learning. They work diligently to complete tasks independently in the first instance, or discuss with peers before asking the teacher for support. As a result, many pupils make significant progress in developing as independent learners.

Attendance

Under the current inspection framework, there is no specific requirement for inspectors to comment on rates of attendance in their main evaluation for IA2. Rather, inspectors should report by exception where attendance is particularly weak or strong. Due to

COVID-19, there is no published attendance data at a school level for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. However, in their supporting evidence inspectors should always consider:

- the number of pupils who have absence rates well above those of others in the school
- rates of attendance of particular groups of pupils in comparison to the rest of the school, such as those with additional learning needs or pupils who are eligible for free school meals
- comparative rates of attendance for year groups across the school
- whether pupils arrive at school punctually
- whether any deficit in attendance impacts on standards of pupils or groups of pupils

Inspectors should always consider the school's individual context and the impact of COVID-19 on the school community and subsequent effect on attendance.

Inspectors should also consider any additional information provided by the school, including their most up-to-date attendance data. They should take into account any analysis undertaken by schools to identify mitigating factors that may affect overall attendance rates. For example, a high proportion of pupils with serious medical needs that require regular hospital appointments or time at home. Inspectors should use meetings with pupils to pursue any emerging questions related to attendance, such as to gauge whether pupils understand the consequences of poor attendance.

It is important that inspectors remember that this section is about what pupils do rather than the provision the school puts in place to encourage good rates of attendance, such as reward schemes or the use of pupil 'Attendance Ambassadors'. Inspectors should report these kinds of initiatives in IA4, Care, Support and Guidance.

Annex: Characteristics of positive attitudes to learning

Pupils are: determined

Do pupils engage readily in tasks and bring them to completion?

Do pupils persevere and remain purposeful when they face difficulties?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Grit, resilience, tenacity

Pupils will:

- Finish tasks started and understand the value of their work; for example, pupils complete activities with minimal prompting from adults and can talk about what skill they have improved
- Learn to take positives from mistakes and appreciate how this will help them reach a goal; for example, pupils describe where they have made errors in their work and how they can avoid them in future or explain how they have improved on their weaknesses
- Try out ideas without being certain of the likely end result
- Demonstrate the skills and knowledge to work as independently as they can and seek further guidance and assistance only when needed
- Face and overcome challenges as they arise by adjusting their approaches and strategies, for example by finding and attempting different solutions to solve a problem when they initially experience failure

Do pupils sustain concentration and avoid distractions?

Are pupils ready to learn at the start of lessons? Do they move easily between different lessons and activities?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Self-control, Self-direction

Pupils will:

- Pay attention and resist distractions, for example maintaining concentration on a task despite possible environmental distractions such as from other pupils
- Remember and follow instructions, but make adaptations when faced with difficulties, for example finding alternative ways of recording the outcomes of a science experiment when technology fails
- Demonstrate good self-organisational skills and start tasks immediately, rather than putting things off, for example gathering the equipment or resources they need and settling to their work quickly at the start of an activity
- Remain calm even when criticised, such as when taking part in debates as part of whole class or small group activities, or receiving feedback as part of peer assessment
- Allow others to speak without interruption and respond appropriately

How well do pupils engage with new, unfamiliar experiences and ideas?

Do pupils seek other solutions when their first approach to a problem is unsuccessful?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Curiosity and an eagerness to solve problems

Pupils will:

- Be eager to explore new things; for example, pupils suggest ideas about new topics to study or respond with interest and enthusiasm when faced with new themes or unfamiliar tasks
- Ask and answer questions to deepen understanding; for example, pupils ask well considered questions, or use their existing knowledge skilfully to answer questions
- Enjoy solving problems; for example, pupils demonstrate an enthusiasm for finding solutions as part of a maths investigation and attempt multiple approaches
- Think creatively and 'outside of the box' to reframe and solve problems; for example, pupils demonstrate a variety of approaches to considering and solving cross-curricular problems, such as how to reduce the use of plastic
- Be content with not knowing the 'answer' but show curiosity and inquisitiveness

Do pupils understand their own strengths and weaknesses?

How well do pupils reflect on their own learning?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Self-aware learners

Pupils will:

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of what they do well and what they need to improve; for example, they talk about how successful they have been in previous learning, the areas that they need to develop further and how they will make improvements
- Explain the ideas and concepts they are learning about and understand how these fit in with the rest of their learning; for example, they describe the skills they have improved or knowledge they have gained during the lesson and relate this to previous learning or other subjects/topics
- Effectively and confidently share what they have learnt or the new skills they have developed, with their peers or the wider community; for example, at the end of a topic of work pupils plan and deliver an assembly for parents to share their learning

Pupils are: optimistic

Do pupils show interest in and enthusiasm for their work?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Enthusiasm and zest

Pupils will:

- Take an active role in their learning; for example, pupils are keen to find out more about their topic and to contribute their own thoughts and ideas, including the planning of specific activities or lessons
- Show enthusiasm and interest in their learning and strong engagement in new and creative approaches; for example, pupils are self-motivated in their tasks, need little adult intervention to progress, and come up with new ideas with little or no prompting from adults
- Identify and grasp opportunities and independently seek ways to extend their understanding; for example, pupils show independence in choosing activities that they believe will benefit their learning, such as choosing different methods of conducting a science experiment or engaging in further research on a class topic at home
- Help to invigorate others in their learning; for example, pupils' own positive

attitudes towards their learning helps to support and encourage the learning of others

- Set themselves high standards and seek and enjoy challenge; for example, when provided with the opportunity, pupils seek to engage in tasks that challenge them and, on occasion, take them beyond their 'comfort zone'

Are pupils appreciative?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Gratitude

Pupils will:

- Recognise and show appreciation for others; for example, pupils articulate how working with their peers helps them to develop their own skills
- Recognise and show appreciation for their own opportunities; for example, pupils talk about how the activities planned by their teacher, such as visits to the local community, enhance their learning

How confident are pupils?

Do they display a sense of ambition and have aspirations for the future?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Confidence and ambition

Pupils will:

- Be willing to try new experiences and meet new people; for example, pupils ask engaging and beneficial questions of visitors
- Pursue dreams and ambitions; for example, pupils discuss their ambitions and articulate the importance of their learning and how it will help them in the future
- Take measured risks; for example, pupils understand the importance of employing appropriate safety measures as part of science investigations or PE lessons, in order for them to be able to take risks to develop their skills.
- Build their mental and emotional well-being by developing confidence, resilience and empathy; for example, pupils support each other and focus well to complete increasingly complex tasks
- Have the confidence to participate in performance; for example, pupils participate in presentations to the rest of the class to demonstrate and develop new musical,

dramatic or physical skills

How creative are pupils?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Creativity, Imagination

Pupils will:

- Demonstrate originality and imagination when completing tasks
- Experience and explore situations from another point of view and are happy to consider different options
- Enjoy playing with possibilities, set aside pre-conceptions and accept the unfamiliar, for example when collaborating with other pupils to create a drama based on their studies in history; pupils are motivated by tasks that do not have predetermined or fixed outcomes
- Identify and develop new ideas; for example, they enjoy applying their literacy skills to develop imaginative pieces of writing that reflect what they have learnt in other areas of the curriculum, such as history and RE
- Form original and new ideas from stimulus; for example, pupils design a website to promote musical events
- Take on imaginative projects or tackle work in an innovative way
- Be resourceful; use existing resources in an original way, for example using an online virtual reality mapping tool to identify the best site in Wales to construct a spaceport

Pupils are: emotionally intelligent

Do pupils remain calm when others disagree with them?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Humility

Pupils will:

- Find solutions during conflicts with others; for example, when working collaboratively with their peers, pupils demonstrate the ability to compromise, assimilate the ideas of others and modify their responses
- Recognise that different perspectives, sometimes contradictory, can help them shape their own viewpoint

- Be sensitive to people's feelings and emotions

How well do pupils demonstrate respect for the contributions of others, for example by allowing others to speak?

Do pupils demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and around the school?

Do pupils behave well at lunchtime and breaktimes?

Are pupils considerate and do they relate well to each other and adults?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Respect and good manners

Pupils will:

- Demonstrate respect for the feelings of others; for example recognising when others are struggling with new concepts and provide support when appropriate
- Know when and how to include others; for example, as part of whole class or small group discussions, pupils ask for and value the contributions of others
- Be polite to adults and peers

Do pupils apply their background knowledge and awareness of global issues to their learning?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Sensitivity to global concerns, social responsibility

Pupils will:

- Show a growing awareness of global issues and their impact on people's lives; for example, pupils raise concerns over the environmental impact when preparing for a debate on the proposed development of a new supermarket in their town

How well are pupils able to work in a range of ways, for example independently, in small groups and in whole-class settings?

Pupils demonstrate the following attitudes:

- Collaborate effectively

Pupils will:

- Lead and play different roles in teams effectively and responsibly
- Work flexibly in a group, sometimes giving up personal preferences to accept the ideas of others
- Give of their energy and skills so that other people will benefit; for example, pupils willingly assist their peers to help them improve their skills and knowledge
- Form positive relationships based upon trust and mutual respect; for example, pupils co-operate well with others, including those from different social backgrounds, gender, ethnicity and friendship groups
- Listen to others, taking on their ideas or providing constructive critical challenge