

Lesson observation: General principles

The aim of all inspection activity is for the team to gather sufficient evidence from lesson observations, learning walks and other activities to assess the validity and accuracy of the provider's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses in relation to outcomes and the quality of its provision and leadership.

During inspections, the reporting inspector (RI) will organise a number of lesson observations and learning walks. Members of the inspection team should not undertake lesson observations or learning walks on their own initiative but should always refer back to the RI for discussion and to secure their agreement.

Learning walks give, inspection teams the opportunity to see a larger number of learners, classes, activities and teachers. There is no requirement on the inspection team to observe all teachers or all subject or learning areas. The RI and inspection team should not normally share the timetable of lesson observations and learning walks with the nominee unless there is a specific, persuasive reason to do so, for example to facilitate access to a designated area of the site or to ensure the health and safety of inspectors.

Estyn has no fixed template for the structure of lessons, or the teaching approaches required. Teachers should design learning experiences that they consider to be the most appropriate for the learners in the class and the learning objectives they wish them to achieve. Inspectors should only evaluate teaching in relation to how effective it is at helping pupils to secure learning and make progress over time.

Inspectors will consider any planning that teachers may use for the lesson observed, but they do not require teachers to do any bespoke lesson planning specifically for the inspection. Inspectors wish to see the planning that teachers normally use to guide the teaching and learning. There is no desire to increase the bureaucratic burden on teachers or support staff because of inspection activity.

The inspection team gathers a wide range of evidence on the quality of teaching and the progress made by learners, for example through scrutiny of teachers' planning and talking to learners about their work. Lesson observation and learning walks form only one part of that evidence. The focus of the inspection team will be to establish the prevalence and significance of the various strengths and weaknesses in learners' progress and achievement, the quality of their learning experiences and the quality of teaching across the provider for discussion in team meetings.

If inspectors are unable to gather sufficient evidence during lesson observations or

through learning walks about learners' standards, the progress that they make, their learning experiences and the quality of teaching, inspectors should speak with the nominee and request an additional sample of learners' work, further discussion with learners and teachers' planning for further scrutiny.