

Initial Teacher Education sector newsletter – summer 2026

Issue: Summer 2026 | **Date:** 26.06.2026 | **From:** Estyn | **Audience:** ITE partnerships and stakeholders

Welcome to the Estyn Initial Teacher Education (ITE) sector newsletter for Wales. This newsletter provides a round-up of key messages for the ITE sector and wider Estyn developments that may be of interest to university and school-based teacher educators. Please feel free to forward the newsletter to ITE colleagues.

In this issue

- ITE Partnership Reference Group meeting
- ITE link inspector role
- Estyn's enhanced focus on reading
- Mathematics teaching and leadership
- The use of Generative Artificial Intelligence to support teaching and learning
- More than a last resort: Arrangements and quality of EOTAS tuition in Wales
- Teaching and Learning Science: Teaching for understanding in science classrooms
- Mentoring
- Sgwrs podcasts
- ITE sector pages on our website
- Dysgu
- Upcoming events and dates
- Contacts

ITE Partnership Reference Group meeting

In April, we welcomed representatives from all ITE partnerships in Wales to the first meeting of our ITE Partnership Reference Group. The event provided an opportunity to discuss our emerging proposals for the new ITE inspection framework and to gather feedback from across the sector. Since then, we have carefully considered the views shared by partnership representatives and used this feedback to refine the second draft of *What we inspect* and inform the early development of *How we inspect*. Some of the key changes include:

- moving from 5 to 3 inspection areas
- focusing the inspection areas on:
 - IA1 Learning, teaching and mentoring
 - IA2 Professionalism, well-being and care

- IA3 Leading and improving
- introducing a ‘progress over time’ section that provides a brief evaluative commentary, detailing an aspect of the partnership’s work where there has been positive progress made towards meeting a recommendation (or aspect of a recommendation) from its last inspection report.

The table below highlights some of the key messages we heard during the reference group event and how they have influenced the next phase of our work:

What we heard from the partnerships	How we’ve responded
The framework was welcomed, particularly its focus on student teachers, progress and impact.	We have retained the core structure, vision and rationale underpinning the framework.
Some aspects of the framework felt too dense, with duplication between inspection areas.	We have reduced duplication and strengthened coherence across inspection areas, particularly between IA1 and IA2.
Participants wanted greater clarity about key concepts and what inspectors would be evaluating.	We have strengthened introductory narratives and clarified the purpose and focus of each inspection area. We will be developing supplementary guidance for key areas, such as teaching and mentoring.
The complexity of partnership working and accountability should be reflected more strongly.	We have strengthened references to collaboration, partnership working and student voice, particularly within Inspection Area 3, Leading and improving.
The distinction between inspection and EWC accreditation should continue to be strengthened.	We have further sharpened the framework's focus on quality, impact and student outcomes, while maintaining a clear distinction between Estyn's inspection role and the EWC's accreditation responsibilities.

The group’s feedback has been invaluable in helping us to test our emerging thinking and ensure that our proposals remain focused on supporting improvement, maintaining quality and providing public accountability in a proportionate and supportive way.

Link inspector role

From September 2025, we introduced the new role of the ITE link inspector. The purpose of the role is to maintain regular engagement with the partnerships during the period between inspection cycles and to support the sector as it continues to develop its provision and leadership. Through termly visits or online meetings, link inspectors act as critical friends, engaging in professional dialogue with ITE leaders and teams, offering constructive challenge and opportunities for reflection.

Discussions and activities during visits are tailored to the context and priorities of each partnership. While there is continued focus on progress against previous inspection recommendations, engagement also provides an opportunity to explore wider partnership developments and emerging national priorities for Wales.

As the role is still evolving, we will review the first year of activity and gather feedback from partnerships to help shape future arrangements. This will ensure that the role continues to support improvement and build capacity across the sector. The link inspector role will remain an important feature of our engagement with ITE partnerships beyond the introduction of the new inspection arrangements in September 2027, helping to sustain professional dialogue and support ongoing improvement.

At the end of this newsletter, you can see an overview of other ways we are supporting improvements in Initial Teacher Education.

Estyn's enhanced focus on reading

As part of Estyn's enhanced focus on reading, we have continued to consider how reading should feature within future ITE inspection arrangements. Reading has always formed part of our evaluation of teaching and learning. However, from September 2027, inspectors will place a greater emphasis on how effectively partnerships equip student teachers with the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to support pupils' reading development.

Our *What we inspect* guidance therefore includes clearer references to reading and reflects the important role that student teachers play in contributing to the development of pupils as confident, capable readers. We have also strengthened our focus on how partnerships help student teachers understand the features of a strong reading culture and use evidence-informed approaches to support pupils at different stages of reading development.

You can read more about our enhanced reading focus across all the sectors we inspect, here: [**Reading: For learners, for Wales. - Estyn**](#)

Mathematics teaching and leadership

During the spring term, Estyn worked in partnership with Dysgu to deliver a series of mathematics roadshows and develop a range of resources to support practitioners in school settings. Drawing on national inspection evidence, these resources highlight features of effective teaching, leadership and inclusive practice in mathematics.

The materials may also be of interest to ITE partnerships, providing valuable insights into the approaches and practice that support strong outcomes for learners. They can help to inform provision for student

teachers, supporting their developing understanding of effective mathematics teaching. Click here for a summary and access to the resources developed: [Unlocking potential: Insights into improving teaching and leadership in mathematics education - Estyn](#)

The use of Generative Artificial Intelligence to support teaching and learning

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI (GenAI), is increasingly influencing many aspects of daily life, including education. As AI technologies become more widely available, schools and education systems are exploring how they might support teaching and learning, while also considering important questions around ethics, safety, data protection, and the future of learning. For ITE partnerships, this presents opportunities and responsibilities. Our recent thematic report highlights the importance of initial teacher education providers preparing student teachers to use AI appropriately in their professional practice and to support pupils to engage with AI safely, ethically and critically. Read more about it here: [A New Era: How Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) is Supporting Teaching and Learning](#)

More than a last resort: Arrangements and quality of EOTAS tuition in Wales

In the spring term, we published our thematic report, '[More than a last resort: Arrangements and quality of EOTAS tuition in Wales](#)' which gives an overview of the arrangements and quality of EOTAS tuition in Wales. It may be useful for ITE partnerships in helping to strengthen student teachers' understanding of the needs of vulnerable pupils' needs and consider practical examples of how theory can be applied in practice.

Teaching and Learning Science: Teaching for understanding in science classrooms

This recently published thematic report examines the quality of teaching and learning in science in primary, secondary and all-age schools in Wales. It evaluates how well schools are developing pupils' scientific knowledge, understanding and enquiry skills as part of the Science and Technology Area of Learning and Experience (Area) within the Curriculum for Wales for the 7-16 age range. The report considers the effectiveness of curriculum design, teaching, assessment and leadership, and how well schools support progression in science across phases. It also explores pupils' attitudes towards science and how well they apply their learning in authentic contexts. The report highlights examples of effective practice in the primary and secondary phases: [Teaching and Learning Science](#)

Mentoring

High-quality mentoring is central to effective initial teacher education and plays a vital role in supporting student teachers' learning, confidence and professional development. Effective mentoring also benefits early career and experienced practitioners by providing valuable opportunities for professional learning, reflection and leadership development. Although published in 2018, our thematic report on mentoring in ITE that focused remains a useful resource for leaders and teacher educators, particularly those who are newer to the sector. The report explores the features of effective mentoring and highlights the important contribution that mentoring makes to the professional learning continuum. Read more about it here: [**The professional learning continuum: mentoring in initial teacher education**](#)

Sgwrs podcast

Our podcast series, *Sgwrs*, explores key topics shaping education and training in Wales. One recent episode that you may find of interest explores how schools in Wales are working to reduce the impact of poverty on learners and ensure every pupil has the opportunity to succeed. Explore all our podcasts here: [**Podcasts - Estyn**](#)

ITE sector pages on our website

The Initial Teacher Education (ITE) section of the Estyn website contains a range of information and resources designed specifically for the sector. Alongside access to inspection reports, thematic reviews and improvement resources, the pages provide updates on current inspection development work, engagement activities and resources that may support partnerships, mentors, teacher educators and leaders. We regularly update these pages to reflect ongoing developments, including our work on future inspection arrangements and wider activity to support improvement and build capacity across the sector. Visit the ITE pages [**here**](#).

You may find our recent resource, [**Initial Teacher Education \(ITE\) Reading: Reflective Prompts**](#), helpful in supporting student teachers to observe, reflect on and discuss effective reading practices during their school-based experiences.

Dysgu

Dysgu is Wales' national professional learning and leadership body, focused on strengthening the quality of teaching and leadership across the education system. Our work supports the entire education workforce, including colleagues in initial teacher education and those preparing to enter the profession.

Key areas of focus include:

- **Additional Learning Needs (ALN):** A dedicated professional learning offer for ALNCos to strengthen leadership and clarify their role, alongside a whole-school approach that embeds inclusive practice and shared responsibility.
- **Curriculum and Pedagogy Development:** A new programme for Cymraeg Craidd teachers (Years 5 - 8) to strengthen pedagogy and support transition between primary and secondary. This is complemented by a national Dysgu Roadshow (October 2026) and podcast series on Cymraeg Craidd, numeracy and mathematics (Autumn 2026).
- **Literacy and Engagement:** National reading events delivered with CAL:ON Cymru across Wales (November 2026).
- **National Programmes and Partnerships:** Funding and oversight of the National MA Education (Wales) from June 2026, alongside recruitment and promotion of the National EdD (Wales), with applications closing 14 August 2026.

To stay informed about opportunities and updates, sign up to our newsletter: www.dysgu.llyw.cymru.

Upcoming events and dates

Term	Event / activity
Summer term 2026	Link inspector visits and Enhanced Estyn Engagement visits to all ITE partnerships
Autumn term 2026	ITE Partnership Reference Group meeting, Estyn Offices, Anchor Court (1 October 2026)
Autumn term 2026	Joint Estyn/EWC Stakeholder Forum, Estyn Offices, Anchor Court (13 October 2026)

Contacts

In preparation for future stakeholder events, we would like to invite partnerships to suggest ideas for workshops or aspects of practice they would like to showcase.

Please email sarah.lloyd-davies@estyn.gov.wales with your ideas.

If you have any questions about our work with the ITE sector, please contact Carwyn Jenkins HMI or Liz Barry HMI:

carwyn.jenkins@estyn.gov.wales

liz.barry@estyn.gov.wales

Wishing you a restful summer break,

The ITE team at Estyn

6 ways Estyn supports improvement in Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

1 Termly link inspector visits

Link inspectors support ITE partnerships to reflect on their strengths and identify, or refine, areas for improvement through regular, supportive, low-stakes professional dialogue and joint activity.



2 Improvement resources

Estyn supports improvement by offering a wide range of resources, including podcasts, case studies and supplementary guidance that showcase effective ITE and school-based practice across Wales.



3 Inspection reports The Estyn Annual Report

Through its core inspection and thematic reports, Estyn provides a clear summary of what's going well and what needs to improve. Reports include recommendations that ITE partnerships can consider as part of their improvement planning processes.

Every year we publish our annual report on the state of education and training across Wales and this includes guidance on how to improve.



4 Professional learning activities



Estyn provides a range of professional learning and development events, including:

- assessed initial training for peer and additional inspectors to contribute as team members of ITE inspections
- annual update training for peer and additional inspectors
- workshops on important themes, such as self-evaluation and the development of student teachers' skills.



These opportunities aim to strengthen leaders' knowledge and evaluative skills, which they can apply to their own partnership settings, helping to build capacity across the sector.

5 Professional dialogue and joint activity during ITE inspections



Inspectors engage in professional discussions with a wide range of stakeholders during core inspections, especially with the 'nominee' who is a full member of the inspection team. These discussions provide beneficial opportunities to reflect on a partnership's strengths, challenges and areas for improvement.

Senior leaders may take part in joint activities with inspectors. These help inspectors to learn more about the partnership's context and provide opportunities for leaders in ITE to learn from inspectors' evaluative practices.

6 Stakeholder events



Estyn leads a wide range of stakeholder activities, including meetings, workshops and conferences. It also contributes to USCET Cymru meetings, Welsh Government advisory panels and international research projects, for example on Generative Artificial Intelligence. These contributions aim to support ITE developments and inform national policy. It works closely with the Education Workforce Council on such matters.