

# Guidance for inspectors

## What we inspect

Local government education services – for inspections from September 2024



This guidance is also available in Welsh.

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

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## Introduction

This handbook sets out what we inspect in local government education services (LGES) inspections. It should be read in conjunction with a separate handbook 'How we inspect' that explains the inspection process and methodology.

The guidance is essential reading for reporting inspectors and all other members of the inspection team, including the nominee. It will also be useful for providers to support their understanding of the inspection guidance.

Local government education services cover statutory education functions of the local authority for children and young people up to age 25. This includes education services provided on behalf of a local authority by:

- a school improvement service
- a partnership between two or more local authorities
- another organisation commissioned by the local authority (for example, a voluntary organisation or a private company)

These other providers may be inspected separately from a local authority, and are referred to in this guidance as 'other education services providers'. In such inspections, inspectors would only apply the sections of the framework that cover the relevant education services. Please read the ['How we inspect'](#) guidance for further information.

There are two inspection areas in LGES inspections as set out below.

### Inspection areas

#### Inspection Area 1. Education services and their impact

- 1.1 School improvement services
- 1.2 Support for vulnerable learners
- 1.3 Other support services

#### Inspection area 2: Leading and improving

- 2.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
- 2.2 Self-evaluation and improvement planning
- 2.3 Safeguarding arrangements
- 2.4 Use of resources

Inspections of local government education services include an inspection of any of the following:

- a local authority
- a school improvement service
- a partnership service between two or more local authorities for the provision of any education services
- an education service commissioned by a local authority or a group of local authorities

We will be carrying out stand-alone inspections of local authority youth work and Welsh immersion education from September 2024. In the case of the statutory youth service, the inspections will be carried out four weeks prior to the LGES inspections, so that the findings inform relevant aspects of the LA's LGES inspection.

### **Evaluating each inspection area (IA)**

Inspection teams will not give overall grades for each inspection area. However, they will make a robust and thorough evaluation of education services and their impact on learning and well-being.

Inspectors will always include clear evaluations in relation to the reporting requirements in each inspection area, as exemplified in this handbook. However, what inspectors report on within each inspection area may differ depending on the relative significance of what they find. Inspectors may report 'by exception'. This means that they may report on some aspects only where there are particular strengths or areas for improvement.

Where inspectors identify any interesting or innovative practice that is worthy of sharing more widely, the report will feature this in a 'spotlight on' box.

Where inspectors identify important shortcomings in one or both inspection areas, they may conclude that the education services are causing significant concern and require follow-up activity. There is further guidance about follow-up activity in 'How we inspect'.

### **About the local authority or other education services provider**

This section of the report will be brief and contain only factual background

information about the local authority or other education services provider. The reporting inspector normally agrees the content of this section with the local authority or other education services provider. If there is disagreement about the content of this section, the reporting inspector will make the final decision about what to include in the report.

This section will usually contain brief information on:

- the number of schools, PRUs and other education settings served by the local authority or other education services provider
- useful contextual information about the population in schools and other education settings, such as indicators of the number of learners from low-income households or other vulnerabilities
- in the case of other education settings, the scope of their services
- the budget

## Overview

This section of the report should:

- contain a short overview of the main findings (maximum 400 words), outlining the key strengths and any important areas that require improvement
- make the link between the quality of education services, their impact on learners and the effectiveness of leadership
- highlight broad themes from the recommendations
- be consistent with the findings in the body of the report
- be written in a style and tone that is accessible to the lay reader

## Recommendations

Recommendations should:

- link closely to the main evaluation areas of the inspection guidance, with the weightiest recommendations reflected in the overview
- give the local authority or other education services provider a clear and specific indication of the area(s) that require improvement
- be written in order of priority, not in the order of the guidance

## What happens next

The 'What happens next' section will set out what the local authority or other education services provider needs to do following the inspection. In all cases, leaders will need to respond to the recommendations by putting in place the actions needed to make the improvements identified by the inspection team.

This section should note if there are any 'spotlight on' boxes in the report that Estyn may feature through social media, other Estyn publications or events.

This section will note if the local authority or other education services provider requires follow-up. In such cases, the overview will make a brief explanation of the reasons for follow-up.

## **The evidence base of the inspection**

Inspectors use a wide range of evidence to make sure that their findings are valid, accurate and reliable. This section of the report will explain the sources of evidence that they used as well as the range of activities that they carried out during their visit.

## **Inspection areas**

The following section explains what each inspection area covers and what inspectors need to keep in mind when evaluating each one.

The inspection areas are both equally important. Within each inspection area, the report will not always cover the aspects in the order they appear in this handbook.

The report for each local inspection question within inspection area 1 will usually be around 400-800 words. The report for inspection area 2 will usually be around 800-1200 words.

Within each inspection area, the reporting inspector may report on the aspects in the order they appear in the handbook or they may choose to sequence the aspects differently in order to reflect their findings.

## **Inspection areas**

### **1: Education services and their impact**

The framework that follows sets out the scope of services that may be inspected and provides inspection guidance.

As part of each inspection process, we will draft a set of local inspection questions about education services that are relevant to the local authority or other education services provider. The questions could cover any of the aspects covered in inspection area 1. For more information about local inspection questions, please read our 'How we inspect' guidance.

Inspectors are only required to evaluate services covered by the local inspection questions. Inspectors must provide a response to each question separately within the report.

When addressing each local inspection question, inspectors must always consider and report on the impact that education services have on learners.

#### **1.1 Support for school improvement**

When evaluating school improvement services, inspectors should take account of the performance over time of schools and PRUs. When considering learners' outcomes, inspectors would usually give greatest weight to our inspection reports on schools and PRUs as these provide the most complete view of outcomes. Inspectors

would usually focus on the previous three years and take account of the nature of the sample during that period.

Inspectors may also take account of how appropriate data is used to support evaluations of outcomes including, for example, data about learners' progress, attainment and well-being.

Inspectors should evaluate how well the local authority or other education services provider knows and monitors the schools and PRUs it has responsibility for, and provides proportionate and flexible challenge, support and intervention to support improved outcomes for all learners through high quality education provision and strong leadership.

Inspectors should consider the impact of the range of services that support school improvement. Inspectors may consider, for example, the impact of work in the following areas:

- knowing schools and PRUs well and challenging them on their areas for improvement
- supporting schools and PRUs to plan for sustainable improvement, especially in the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of leadership
- supporting schools and PRUs with curriculum reform and other national priorities
- supporting schools and PRUs to share good practice and learn from other schools and PRUs
- supporting effective professional learning at all levels in schools and PRUs

Inspectors may consider whether partnership agreements or other agreements with schools and PRUs are effective.

Inspectors may judge the robustness of work to monitor schools and PRUs and the clarity, accuracy, usefulness and impact of the feedback to enable schools and PRUs to improve. When schools and PRUs are causing concern, inspectors may evaluate to what extent the shortcomings are identified at an early stage and how swiftly and successfully issues are addressed in these schools and PRUs as a result. Inspectors may evaluate how well the local authority uses its full range of legal powers when schools are identified as causing concern and when these schools do not make progress quickly enough. Inspectors should consider how well a local authority is able to recognise that a school or PRU is beginning to cause concern, without being reliant on a school or PRU inspection to identify this.

Inspectors may judge the quality of data and data analysis provided to schools and PRUs. They may evaluate whether data is distributed in a timely way to schools and PRUs and used appropriately to support them to improve.

Inspectors may evaluate how well schools and PRUs are supported in developing effective procedures for self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Inspectors may consider the views of reporting inspectors for school and PRU inspections regarding the usefulness of information provided by the local authority as well as feedback from Estyn colleagues about the quality of post-inspection action plans and local authority statements of action. Inspectors should also consider the



views of reporting inspectors for follow-up work with schools and PRUs, as they may pick up useful evidence about the support provided by local school improvement services.

Inspectors may evaluate work to address national priority areas for schools and PRUs. For example, inspectors may consider the availability and quality of support provided to schools in areas such as tackling the impact of poverty on educational attainment, implementing Curriculum for Wales (including specific subject and phase support) literacy, numeracy, digital competence, Welsh language development and changes to qualifications. Inspectors may assess whether or not any strategies to support these national priority areas are clear, coherent and well understood by schools and PRUs.

Inspectors may consider how well school improvement services take account of learners' well-being and the progress of vulnerable learners when considering the nature of challenge and support to provide to schools and PRUs. Inspectors may judge how well services promote health and well-being for all learners, such as mental health, healthy lifestyles and participation in physical activity through its schools and PRUs.

Inspectors may consider how well education services promote good attendance and challenge low attendance. They may consider how well education services promote and support learners to have positive relationships with their peers and education staff. Inspectors should consider how well school improvement staff challenge schools and PRUs about the effectiveness of their approaches to managing concerns about learners' behaviour, such as the use of internal facilities for learners who are removed from their class and the use of fixed-term exclusions.

Inspectors may evaluate how successfully services identify the development needs of governors and senior and middle leaders in schools and PRUs. They may consider how these needs are met through a systematic programme of support and learning for senior and middle leaders, including mentoring, consultancy, leadership programmes and the dissemination of good practice. In particular, they may consider what impact this support has had on school improvement, including improving better resource management and improved provision and outcomes for learners.

Inspectors may consider how well school improvement services meet the needs of formal and informal school federations.

Inspectors may evaluate whether there are effective policies to manage governor recruitment, including from minority or under-represented groups. They may consider the quality and timeliness of information provided to help them make decisions and address any areas for improvement.

## **1.2 Support for vulnerable learners**

Learners who are in one or more of the following groups may be more vulnerable to underachievement or poorer well-being:

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- learners with ALN
- disabled learners
- learners with physical or mental health needs
- care-experienced children, including looked-after children
- children at risk of harm, abuse or neglect
- children from families in difficult circumstances
- young carers
- pregnant young women
- young parents
- learners from minority ethnic groups
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children
- learners with English or Welsh as an additional language
- refugees and asylum seekers
- children of migrant workers
- LGBTQ+ learners
- young offenders
- learners who are excluded from school
- learners with low school attendance
- learners educated otherwise than at school
- learners from low-income households
- learners who are educated at home
- children of armed services families
- school-age learners who perform or who have employment
- more able and talented learners

This should not be seen as an exhaustive list of learners who may be vulnerable or require extra support. Local authorities and other education services providers may have other criteria for identifying vulnerable learners. A local authority has specific statutory responsibilities for learners in some of these groups, but not in all cases. Not all learners within these groups will require extra support. However, inspectors should be aware that they may experience difficulties at some time in their lives.

When evaluating support for vulnerable learners, inspectors should take account of information about these learners' progress and well-being in schools and PRUs and other education settings, particularly from inspection reports. Inspectors would usually focus on the previous three years and take account of the nature of the sample during that period.

Inspectors should also take account of appropriate data to support their evaluations of outcomes including, for example, data about attendance, exclusions, counselling services and young people not in education, training or employment. Inspectors should make appropriate comparisons with other areas in Wales and usually focus on the previous three years. Inspectors will only report on nationally collated verified data to support their evaluations.

When considering information about the performance of schools and PRUs, inspectors should take account of the performance of groups of learners across the local area, especially those that are vulnerable.

Inspectors may consider how well the local authority or education service provider co-ordinates, supports and provides a range of universal and targeted services to

promote inclusion and the well-being of all children and young people, and support vulnerable learners to achieve good outcomes. As well as considering the services provided for children and young people who are identified as vulnerable, inspectors may also consider services which may be provided universally that aim to reduce the risk of children and young people becoming vulnerable.

Inspectors may review how well the local authority is carrying out its statutory duties for learners with ALN as set out in the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal [Wales] Act 2018 and accompanying ALN Code. Inspectors may consider work to support early identification of ALN. They may evaluate that the extent to which whether learners with ALN have appropriate support, intervention, advocacy and provision in line with their needs, including pre-school and post-16 support. Inspectors may review the local authority's use of specialist provisions in schools to meet the needs of learners with specific ALN. Inspectors may review work to support learners at the point of transition between phases or providers. In evaluating support for learners with ALN, inspectors should consider the extent to which provision is equally available through the Welsh language.

Children, their parents or carers and young people up to the age of 25 have the right to appeal to the Education Tribunal against a decision made by a local authority in relation to their ALN or their individual development plan (IDP). Inspectors may evaluate the local authority's arrangements for avoiding and resolving disagreements at the earliest opportunity and at the most local level.

Inspectors may consider the effectiveness of commissioning protocols for children and young people with complex needs, particularly for those placed outside the local authority's own providers. Inspectors may review how well the local authority monitors the quality of education and outcomes for these learners.

Inspectors may evaluate how well education services work with partners such as social care services, health services, youth justice services and voluntary sector organisations to provide support for vulnerable learners and improve their outcomes.

Inspectors may consider the quality of training available for staff in early years settings, in schools, PRUs and other education settings such as youth centres to support them to meet the needs of children and young people with ALN. This training may, for example, include outreach support from maintained special schools, PRUs or specialist provision.

Inspectors may consider the effectiveness of support provided to parents and carers of learners with ALN on the quality of education and outcomes for their children, in particular the effectiveness of impartial advice or mediation services in dispute resolutions.

Inspectors may consider how well education services promote social inclusion, including the effectiveness of work to promote equality and prevent and tackle discrimination, harassment and bullying, including in relation to protected characteristics.

Inspectors may evaluate the range of opportunities for children and young people to access high quality personal support, advice, guidance, advocacy and counselling

services in response to their individual needs and to support their progress in education, including impartial advice and guidance about the full range of options post-16.

Inspectors may consider the effectiveness of the range of targeted interventions to improve attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism for vulnerable learners. Inspectors may review the local authority's role in ensuring that reduced timetables are used appropriately.

Inspectors may consider how well education services support staff to address effectively concerns with learners' behaviour and prevent issues from escalating. They may consider the effectiveness of actions to reduce exclusions. They may consider how well the local authority monitors the use of exclusions, including the rates and length of fixed-term exclusions, the rate of permanent exclusions and the number of exclusions overturned by independent appeal panels. Inspectors may also consider how well the local authority supports and monitors the effective use of managed moves between schools.

Inspectors may evaluate the quality of provision and timeliness of support to meet the needs of excluded pupils and all pupils educated other than at school (EOTAS). Inspectors may consider how effective the authority's procedures are for commissioning, monitoring and quality assuring EOTAS services.

Inspectors may consider the effectiveness of procedures for identifying pupils missing from education, not at school or at risk of being out of education, training or employment. They may consider the effectiveness of strategies to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, training or employment and the impact of these, particularly in supporting young people to sustain their initial destination or move successfully to an alternative destination if their initial destination did not work out well.

Inspectors may consider whether there are effective and timely arrangements in place for children and young people to make the transition back into education following, for example, an exclusion, a change to a pastoral support plan, a period of home tuition or a period of time at a PRU. Inspectors may evaluate whether children coming to live in the authority during the school year, including looked-after children, refugee children and children returning from custody who are no longer on a school roll, are accommodated without delay in schools that meet their needs and with appropriate support for the transition.

Inspectors may consider the quality of youth support services based on their impact on outcomes for young people. Inspectors may consider how well the services enable young people to participate effectively in education and training, take advantage of opportunities for employment and participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.

Inspectors may consider the quality of education services for young offenders. They may consider how closely the performance of young offenders is monitored and the impact of targeted programmes to prevent re-offending.

Inspectors may evaluate the local authority's oversight of children educated at home by their parents, including children and young people with statutory plans for their education. Inspectors may consider whether the local authority provides useful guidance and sign posting for support for parents educating their children at home. Inspectors may consider how well the authority monitors any patterns in pupils deregistering from schools, and the extent to which schools are challenged appropriately about their work with learners and families involved.

Inspectors may assess how well the local authority fulfils its responsibilities as a corporate parent for looked after children in relation to their education.

### **1.3 Other education support services**

Inspectors may consider whether the local authority works effectively with non-maintained settings to provide good quality funded education for eligible three and four-year-old children. They may consider the quality and appropriateness of the authority's strategic plan to offer funded education to children not in receipt of early education in maintained schools. Inspectors may consider whether there are enough places for early education of good quality to meet the demand identified through a childcare sufficiency assessment. These may include whether there are enough Welsh-medium places to reflect the authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). Inspectors may consider the effectiveness of support and training provided to enable all settings to improve.

Inspectors may consider how effectively the local authority works with other partners to co-ordinate and ensure sufficiency of play provision across the area. Inspectors may consider how well the authority assures the quality of this provision.

Inspectors may consider how well the local authority coordinates youth support services. They may consider how well the authority works with partners, including the local voluntary sector, schools and others, to provide a suitable range of appropriate youth support services that meet locally identified needs. Inspectors may consider whether or not the authority has identified gaps or duplication in the provision of youth support services and how it has intervened to plan more effectively. Inspectors may consider the quality of opportunities for children and young people to gain accreditation or recognition for learning and participation through youth support services.

Inspectors may consider how well education services ensure that children and young people's views are sought and taken into account in decisions that affect them.

Inspectors may consider whether the authority has up-to-date knowledge of the capacity of schools including information about overfull schools and numbers of surplus places. Inspectors may consider whether there is enough capacity in both primary and secondary sectors, including Welsh-medium and special education, and whether any school is significantly overfilled or has significant surplus capacity without good reason. Inspectors may seek assurance that there is appropriate provision for all learners, including through PRUs or specialist provision.

Inspectors may review post-16 provision across the area. Inspectors may consider how well the local authority works with schools, PRUs and external partners such as

further education institutions and work-based learning providers to ensure that there are appropriate education and training opportunities for all post-16 learners.

Inspectors may consider how well the local authority identifies the demand for Welsh-medium education in its area and the extent that its provision currently meets this demand. Inspectors may consider how well developed and accurate are the systems for forecasting and monitoring the requirements for places across all phases. Inspectors may evaluate whether the appropriate range of places in all phases for Welsh medium education reflects the authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Inspectors may consider how the authority works with its partners such as other local authorities to meet demand, consult each other and co-ordinate their arrangements effectively where appropriate.

Inspectors may evaluate the extent to which the local authority has accurate, up-to-date information about the condition, sufficiency and suitability of all school and PRU buildings. Inspectors should consider whether the priorities for investment in school and other education buildings are transparent, based on an evaluation of their current condition and suitability, and have been agreed with the schools and other providers involved. They may consider if funds for repairs and maintenance in school and PRU budgets are clearly identified and whether the authority ensures that schools and PRUs undertake their responsibilities in relation to their premises. Inspectors may consider the management of the building programme, including whether emergency repairs are promptly organised.

Inspectors may consider how well the local authority plans ahead and evaluates all options to ensure appropriate capital resources are available to deliver its school organisation plans. Inspectors may consider whether or not published school organisation proposals are likely to maintain or improve the standard of education provision in the area. They may consider how well the local authority has considered the benefits and risks of the proposals and have considered the educational aspects of the proposal appropriately. Inspectors may consider whether there is good use of information about local needs and liaison between authority departments, such as housing, planning and social services to link into wider regeneration strategies.

Inspectors may review any formal or informal school federation arrangements in local authority. Inspectors may consider the local authority's support for federations and evaluate their impact.

Inspectors may consider how local admissions authorities consult each other and co-ordinate their arrangements for admissions to schools effectively. They may consider whether the admissions forum is effective and whether or not the information provided to parents on school admissions is easy to access and understand, transparent and satisfies the Admissions Code of Practice.

Inspectors may consider to what extent parents' preferences for school choices are met. They may review how quickly and equitably the authority responds to appeals to minimise the risk of children and young people missing any of their education.

## **2: Leading and improving**

Inspectors **must** evaluate and report on all five aspects, although inspectors are not

required to report against all the detail covered in the guidance for this inspection area. In all inspections, this section of the report **must** take account of, and reference, outcomes for learners.

Inspectors should take account of the wide range of evidence available to them through all our inspection activities with local authorities and other education providers in addition to the specific evidence provided by the local authority during the core inspection and information gathered through interviews.

Inspectors should ensure that strong education services that are led well are taken into account and reported on in this section, particularly where these services are not captured through the local inspection area questions in inspection area 2.

Inspectors should make appropriate reference to the key findings of the statutory youth work inspection to inform the narrative in the LGES report.

## **2.1 Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers**

There is a strong link between leadership and management, the quality of education services, and outcomes for learners. Inspectors should be mindful that, while the link is strong, there is usually a time delay between leaders taking helpful and decisive action to bring about improvements and the impact of this action on outcomes, particularly in relation to school and PRU performance.

Inspectors should consider the extent to which leaders and managers have established and communicated a clear vision and appropriate aims, strategic objectives, plans and policies that focus on meeting all learners' needs. They should judge whether leaders and managers create and support a shared understanding of clearly identified needs and priorities for learners.

Inspectors should reflect on how well leaders, including officers and elected members, set high expectations for staff, schools, PRUs, other education providers and partners. They should consider how well staff at all levels understand and discharge their roles and responsibilities and how well they collaborate in driving forward strategic priorities and plans for education services.

Inspectors should consider how well leaders and managers develop an effective, engaged team of staff. They should consider to what extent leaders and managers model and promote professional values and behaviours that contribute positively to service improvement and effective collaboration between staff and with other providers. They should consider how well leaders and managers promote and provide support for staff well-being. Inspectors should also consider to what extent leaders consider the impact of any new or revised requirements on the workload of their own staff and on headteachers, leaders and staff in other education settings.

Inspectors should consider how well strategic plans take account of national, regional and local priorities and Welsh Government guidance.

Inspectors should consider how well leaders and managers act in accordance with the principles set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Inspectors should consider how well leaders and managers make decisions and set

priorities for improvement that balance immediate, short-term needs with the long-term needs of learners, local communities and Wales. Inspectors should consider the extent to which leaders prioritise sustainable improvements over short-term improvements that are unsustainable.

In every inspection, inspectors **must** consider, and report on, how well leaders and managers promote equity in the education system. Inspectors **must** assess how well leaders and managers promote equality and prevent and tackle discrimination, harassment and bullying, including in relation to protected characteristics. Inspectors **must** review how well leaders and managers are discharging their duty to consider how their decisions might help reduce the inequalities in experience and outcomes for learners from low-income households.

Inspectors **must** consider how well the local authority or other education services provider is promoting and enabling the use of Welsh within its own organisation and in the schools and other education providers it works with. Inspectors should consider how well it is supporting the national aim of one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

Inspectors should review how well the local authority or other education services provider uphold the rights of children and young people set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Inspectors should judge whether leaders take difficult decisions in a timely manner when necessary, following a rigorous and open process of examination and consultation that is consistent with strategic objectives.

Inspectors should look at the extent to which leaders and managers sustain high quality or improve weak aspects of provision. They should consider how well leaders and managers identify and assess risks and prevent problems from occurring in the first place. When problems have occurred, inspectors should consider how swiftly leaders addressed these and took suitable remedial actions to prevent problems escalating.

Inspectors should judge how clearly and transparently the local authority or other education services provider consults with and communicates its vision, intentions and expected outcomes to schools, learners and other relevant stakeholders. They should look at the quality of the relationship between the local authority, other education services providers, diocesan authorities, schools, PRUs, other education settings and wider partners in terms of their impact on outcomes for learners in the authority.

Inspectors should consider how well the authority commissions, works in partnership with, coordinates, oversees, governs, monitors and challenges any partnership or contracted services. Such services could include the school improvement services, education support services provided by another local authority on behalf of the local authority and services contracted to private or voluntary organisations, for example counselling services or advocacy services. For other education services providers, inspectors should consider how well they deliver the required services and provide useful reports on progress to the local authority.



In local authorities, inspectors should evaluate how well corporate leaders and key elected members understand the priority given to education in corporate plans and policies and their respective contributions to achieving that priority. Inspectors should evaluate whether corporate and other strategic plans are consistent with each other, so that they are clear, well sequenced, affordable and achievable.

Inspectors should judge the effectiveness of scrutiny by elected members and other supervisory boards in challenging underperformance and in informing the continuous improvement of service delivery and policy development. Inspectors should consider the effectiveness of the Public Services Board (PSB) in identifying and unblocking relevant barriers to improvement. Inspectors should use evidence from the PSB's monitoring of its impact on service delivery. Inspectors should also evaluate the arrangements to scrutinise other education services providers commissioned by the local authority or set up in partnership with other authorities.

Inspectors should evaluate the usefulness of scrutiny processes. Inspectors should judge the clarity and robustness of data and information along with accompanying analysis and evaluation that is presented to scrutiny. Inspectors should consider how well scrutiny arrangements are supported by good training to promote scrutiny members' understanding and exercise of their responsibilities. Inspectors should look at impact of the structural arrangements for scrutiny on the quality of their work such as the use of scrutiny task groups to analyse specific aspects of the education service whilst developing the understanding and expertise of members.

Inspectors should judge whether the programme of work of scrutiny is well organised and how good the alignment is between the programmes for scrutiny committees and the cabinet to enable them to make timely and well-informed decisions. Inspectors should also consider the extent to which all political groups are engaged in contributing to decision and monitoring progress so that this cross-party involvement signals a common goal in improving services for children and young people.

Inspectors should gauge whether elected members have a good overview of all services across the local authority in order to compare and challenge services more effectively and make well-informed decisions. Also, inspectors should consider the quality, accuracy and usefulness of the reports and briefings provided by officers to scrutiny committee members.

Inspectors should look at how well elected members have made difficult decisions in areas such as school reorganisation. Inspectors should consider how well members hold senior officers to account for the services and outcomes that they are responsible for.

## **2.2 Self-evaluation processes and improvement planning**

Inspectors **must** evaluate and report on how accurately leaders and managers know the strengths and areas for improvement of education services as a result of well-established processes for self-evaluation, monitoring and quality assurance.

Inspectors will judge the extent to which self-evaluation is part of the normal annual business improvement cycle, supported by relevant performance information and

evidence such as performance reports, progress reports and data analyses provided to the council's scrutiny, cabinet or audit committees. Scrutiny committees should have a key role in supporting and challenging the self-evaluation process and inspectors should assess the quality of their contribution.

Inspectors should evaluate how well the local authority or other education services provider involves, and takes account of the views of, stakeholders in its self-evaluation and improvement planning processes, including children and young people, parents, service deliverers and partners. Inspectors should check that the process is inclusive and considers proportionally the diverse communities in the local authority.

Inspectors should consider the quality of improvement planning and how well the priorities for improvement link to the findings from self-evaluation processes and are informed by audit, needs assessments and data analysis.

Inspectors should check the consistency and coherency of plans, from the highest level plan through to operational plans, and externally with partners. They should look for the 'golden thread' of education and training running through the various layers of plans, policy agreements and other initiatives. Inspectors should consider how leaders and managers ensure that priorities are supported by the allocation of resources. They should evaluate the extent to which leaders and managers define relevant, measurable and achievable actions for improvement. They should consider how well the plans have specific, realistic timescales and allocate appropriate responsibility for their delivery. If it does not feature within a local inspection question, inspectors should evaluate the local authority's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan when considering the quality of improvement planning.

Inspectors should judge the effectiveness of performance management arrangements and their impact on staff, services, partners and workforce development. They should use evidence from the local authority's or other education services provider's own monitoring of the impact of its performance management arrangements.

Inspectors should consider how the performance management system allows senior managers and, where relevant, elected members, to make effective use of performance indicators to monitor progress against milestones regularly and take appropriate remedial action. They should judge the impact that planning, priorities and actions to bring about improvement have on outcomes.

Inspectors should consider how well the authority or other education services provider has responded to recommendations from previous inspection reports, thematic reports and other relevant reports from inspectorates and regulators. Inspectors should judge the extent to which actions have led to improvements in the quality of education services and learners' outcomes. They should consider the pace of progress and the sustainability of any improvements.

Inspectors should consider how well the authority or other education services provider responds to complaints about its services whether from schools, PRUs, parents or carers, governors or members of the public and how lessons learnt from complaints are used to improve service delivery.

Key to maintaining and improving the performance of local government education services is the professional knowledge, skills and understanding of the local authority's staff. Inspectors will consider the extent to which staff at all levels keep up to date with knowledge about their areas of responsibility, including learning from good practice. Inspectors should consider how the authority's or other education services provider's staff promote and engage in professional learning through structured learning opportunities, research, and collaborations with professional networks in Wales, the UK and internationally. Inspectors will consider the impact that professional learning activities have on improving the quality of outcomes and education services.

Inspectors should consider how effectively professional learning supports the strategic vision, aims and priorities. Inspectors should consider how well performance management arrangements are used to identify the professional learning needs of staff. Inspectors should evaluate the appropriateness and impact of professional learning in motivating staff and improving their performance. Inspectors should consider how well staff develop their leadership skills through structured learning opportunities. Inspectors should consider how well professional learning is linked to succession planning.

Inspector should consider how effectively the local authority or other education services provider is developing as a strong learning community and achieving a culture of collaboration with schools, PRUs, other education settings and partners. Inspectors should consider how effectively local government education services share good practice, learns from others and contributes to professional learning communities more widely. In particular, they should evaluate how well the local authority or other education services provider learns from best practice elsewhere.

### **2.3 Safeguarding**

In every inspection, inspectors **must** report on whether or not the local authority's or other education services provider's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and give no cause for concern or do not meet requirements and give serious cause for concern.

Inspectors will consider the extent to which there is a culture of safeguarding throughout education services that supports all learners' well-being. Inspectors will also consider how well the local authority or other education services provider promotes a culture of safeguarding in schools, PRUs and other providers that supports all learners' well-being.

Inspectors will assess the robustness of procedures for checking the suitability of staff and others who are in contact with children, including the maintenance of a record of all staff working with children and the outcomes of appropriate safe recruitment checks. Inspectors will review the procedures for staff training and check that all staff know how to respond to child protection issues.

Inspectors will consider how well the authority or other education services provider fulfils their duty to prevent learners from being drawn into terrorism, by preventing radicalisation and extremism.

In local authority inspections, inspectors will evaluate how well the authority fulfils its statutory responsibilities relating to safeguarding. In particular, they will evaluate whether the authority has in place effective safeguarding arrangements, including:

- strategic planning for, and oversight of, safeguarding in education, including regular reporting to members
- appropriate support and guidance for all providers of education services in its area, including early years, play and youth support services
- following up with concerns identified during inspections of providers it has responsibility for
- appropriate safeguarding practice in its direct education services such as EOTAS, PRUs and youth service appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that all partnership work undertaken, coordinated or funded by the local authority adheres to high standards of safeguarding appropriate policies, procedures and reporting arrangements in relation to physical interventions and withdrawal following up concerns raised by stakeholders, including parents and carers, staff and pupils, of providers it has responsibility for

## **2.4 Use of resources**

Inspectors should evaluate how clearly the allocation of resources is linked to local and national priorities. They should consider whether improvement strategies are accompanied by sound financial planning and workforce development which makes proposed developments feasible.

Inspectors should evaluate how well the local authority or other education services provider regularly reviews its services in order to secure continuous improvement and value for money through due regard to economy, effectiveness and efficiency.

In local authority inspections, inspectors should consider how fairly the local authority funds schools and PRUs based on the needs of learners and the contexts of schools and PRUs. Inspectors should consider the local authority's most recent review of its funding arrangements for schools. Inspectors should consider how well the local authority deploys and ensures effective use of specific grant funding to schools, PRUs and other providers, either directly or through a partnership arrangement.

Where the local authority commissions support for children and young people from external agencies, for example support for learners from minority ethnic groups or young carers, inspectors should judge how well the local authority ensures that the support provided is good value for money, evidenced through improved outcomes. Inspectors should judge how well the local authority, with schools and PRUs, monitors and manages the quality and cost of any partnership arrangements. Inspectors should judge how effectively the local authority holds the relevant partnership to account for the service it is delivering.

Inspectors should judge how well the local authority or other education services provider compares its costs and outcomes with others in Wales and can demonstrate that children and young people achieve good outcomes in relation to costs of the services that it provides.

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Inspectors should evaluate the extent to which the local authority or other education services provider is pursuing partnerships with other organisations where this is in the interests of improving outcomes for learners and achieving better value for money.

In all of the above, inspectors should use evidence from internal monitoring reports, scrutiny reports and external audit reports on the management of resources.

When considering value for money, inspectors should evaluate the effectiveness of the local authority or other education services provider in achieving high quality outcomes for children and young people but they will also need to take into account how well resources are managed.

Inspectors should evaluate how well the local authority or other education services provider:

- balances the effectiveness of its education provision against costs, including staffing costs
- deploys its own resources makes purposeful and efficient use of the funding it receives