
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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| Enw / Name: | Meilyr Rowlands |
| Rôl / Role: | Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales |
| E-bost / Email: | ChiefInspector@estyn.gov.uk |
| Rhif Ffôn / Tel No: | 02920 446 446 |
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| Dyddiad / Date: | 10/07/2020 |
| Pwnc / Subject: | Relaxation of school reporting requirements |

Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

Estyn agrees with the Welsh Government that during this time when we are all responding to the coronavirus pandemic Covid-19, schools, local authorities and governing bodies may be unable to comply with certain statutory requirements. Estyn agrees with all the principles that the Welsh Government is proposing to bring into force in amending regulations that will modify or dis-apply a number of current school reporting requirements. By relaxing the school reporting requirements, the Welsh Government will reduce the administrative burden on those responsible.

Revoking ‘The School Performance and Absence Targets (Wales) Regulations’

Estyn agrees that the severe disruption to education in recent months has made assessments, tests and examinations at the end of this academic year untenable. The fact that this year’s attainment and attendance data is either unavailable or makes it incomparable to previous years also needs to be considered carefully in terms of reporting. We agree, therefore, that it is inappropriate for schools to be required to report against targets previously set for this academic year or to set future targets for the next one based on outcomes that may be unreliable. As the target setting cycle occurs over a three year period, we agree that the implications of the current disruptions for performance and absence data makes reviewing, finalising and reporting against targets in previous years, as well as setting, reviewing and finalising targets for future years difficult, if not impossible for schools. Estyn agrees that revoking the Targets Regulations is a sensible action to take. Although revoking this requirement will potentially allow schools to undertake their self-evaluation and forward planning into the next academic year appropriately and effectively, leaders may need additional guidance to support them to do this. It is good that evaluation and improvement arrangements are currently being developed to align to Curriculum for Wales and to highlight the approach to school improvement priorities.

Amending ‘The Headteachers’ Reports to Parents and Adult Pupils (Wales) Regulations 2011’

Estyn agrees that the current situation linked to Covid-19 will make it difficult for headteachers to make meaningful and reliable reports available to all parents or adult pupils about the educational achievements of pupils for this academic year. We agree that it may also be difficult for them to produce written reports before the end of the academic year. Estyn agrees in principle that headteachers’ duties are treated as discharged if they have used “reasonable endeavours” to comply with them. The term “reasonable endeavours” is somewhat ambiguous, and will need to be exemplified to avoid misunderstandings. We suggest that headteachers are provided with guidance containing minimum requirements.

Estyn agrees that the requirement to provide a school leaver with a suitable report needs to remain an absolute duty, so that this cohort of learners are not disadvantaged this year.

Amending ‘The School Information (Wales) Regulations 2011 (“the School Information Regulations”)’

Estyn agrees with the Welsh Government’s proposal to allow local authorities (in their composite prospectus) and schools (in their own individual prospectus) to exclude publishing data on authorised and unauthorised absences in respect of pupils registered at schools in the 2019/20 school year.

Amending ‘The School Performance Information (Wales) Regulations 2011 (“the Performance Regulations”)’

Estyn agrees that, due to school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, it has been difficult, or impossible for schools to undertake appropriate teacher assessments during the 2019/20 summer term. It agrees that the decision to cancel the collection of statutory data by the Welsh Government was a sensible one under the circumstances. Estyn agrees that amending regulations to remove the duties on governing bodies and local authorities to provide data to local authorities and Welsh Ministers respectively, on teacher assessment outcomes and authorised and unauthorised absence for the pupils registered at schools in the 2019/20 period is a sensible one. Estyn also agrees with the proposal for retaining provision that allows Welsh Government to receive results of approved qualifications, for other purposes not related to school performance or accountability.

Amending ‘The School Governors’ Annual Reports (Wales) Regulations 2011 (“the Annual Report Regulations”)’

Estyn agrees with the proposal that, although the statutory duty for governing bodies to produce a report will remain, it would be inappropriate for reports produced in respect of pupils registered at schools in the 2019/20 school year to include performance and attendance data, as it will not be comparable to previous years. Estyn agrees that the Annual Report Regulations should be amended to reflect this.

Estyn agrees that the following information (where appropriate) is dis-applied/excluded in relation to pupils registered at the school in the 2019/20 school year:

- the most recent summary of secondary performance (SSSP);
- the number of authorised and unauthorised absences in the school year; and
- any information in relation to performance and absence targets, including improvements set by the governing body in respect of performance of learners, or for reducing the level of absence.