

# Guidance for Inspectors –

# What and How we inspect:

#

# Independent schools – draft for pilot inspections

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

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**Introduction**

**Purpose of the guidance handbook**

This handbook sets out our approaches to inspecting independent schools. It explains **how and what** we inspect. The guidance is essential reading for reporting inspectors and all other members of the inspection team. It may also be useful for providers to support their understanding of the inspection mind-set and methodologies.

There is further information about inspections on our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

**Legal basis for the inspection of independent schools**

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

* the quality of education provided
* the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
* the welfare, health and safety of pupils
* the suitability of proprietors and staff
* the premises and accommodation
* the school’s provision of information
* the manner in which schools handle complaints

The Welsh Government, in its role as the registration authority for independent schools in Wales, may at any time:

* require His Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HMCI) to inspect any registered school, or to secure its inspection by one or more reporting inspectors
* arrange for the inspection of any registered school by a body approved by the registration authority

Estyn must:

* make a report to the registration authority on the extent to which the school meets the standard/s to which the inspection relates
* where they are not met, indicate what the school needs to do in order to comply with the regulations
* if the registration authority so requires, arrange for the publication of the report

**Overview of engagement with independent schools**

**Inspection of unregistered provision**

* To determine whether a provision may need to register as an independent school.

**Initial inspection of a new independent school**

* Registration inspection to advise the Welsh Government on the school’s compliance with the registration standards.

**Follow up to registration visit**

* Follow up registration visit following the school’s opening, to advise the Welsh Government on the school’s continued compliance with **all** the registration standards, but in particular standard 1(quality of education provided), regulation 1(3 a- h) (teaching).

**Core Inspection (Section 163)**

* A full inspection focussing on the three inspection areas and the Independent School Standards

**Monitoring Inspection**

* Monitoring inspection to ensure a school’s continued compliance with the Independent School Standards

**Responding to a post-inspection action plan**

* HMI advise to Welsh Government on the school’s response to recommendations from a full inspection where the regulations have not been met.

**Post-inspection monitoring of an independent school (Follow up)**

* Post-inspection monitoring of compliance with the registration standards.

**Focused visit**

* Focused monitoring visit to advise the Welsh Government on compliance with specified registration standard(s).

**Application for material change**

* Advise to the Welsh Government on the school’s application to make a material change.

**In an inspection cycle all independent schools will have at least one core inspection (Section 163) and one monitoring inspection**

## Part 1: What we inspect

This section of the guidance sets out what inspectors need to consider when evaluating the three inspection areas in independent schools from 2024. It explains ‘what we inspect’.

The guidance is essential reading for reporting inspectors and all other members of the inspection team, including the nominee.

There is further information about inspections on our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales)

The three inspection areas are set out below.

**Inspection areas**

**IA1 Teaching and Learning**

**IA2 Care, support and well-being**

**IA3 Leading and improving**

### 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 the school’s provision and its impact on pupils’ learning and well-being.

Inspectors will always include clear evaluations in relation to the main foci in each inspection area, as exemplified in this guidance. However, what inspectors report on within each inspection area may differ depending on the relative significance of what they find in each school. Inspectors may report ‘by exception’. This means that they may report on some aspects only where there are particular strengths or weaknesses.

Where inspectors identify any interesting or innovative practice that is worthy of sharing more widely, they will include a short cameo within the report (2 or 3 sentences). We will showcase a range of these cameos on our website.

### About the school

This section of the report will be brief and contain only factual background information about the school. It will not contain any evaluation of the school or its provision. The reporting inspector normally agrees the content of this section with the school during the inspection and during the school’s factual check of the draft report prior to publication. Where 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 contain brief information on:

* the size, nature and location of the school,
* The proprietor status / ownership of the school such as the administration group and /or charitable trust
* the background and circumstances of the pupils
* the linguistic background of the pupils
* any important changes since the last inspection
* any other relevant factors, such as the proportion of pupils with additional learning needs, English as an additional language, or the degree to which pupils leave or join the school during the academic year
* the date of appointment of the headteacher
* the month/year of the school’s previous inspection

### Compliance with the regulations for registration

In this section of the report, inspectors will include an overview of the extent to which the school meets the regulatory requirements for each of the Registration Standards. Inspectors will specify in the report if one or more regulatory requirements is not met.

### Recommendations

Recommendations should come directly from the content of the report, identify what needs to improve and be written in priority order.

### What happens next

The ‘what happens next’ section will set out what the 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.

It should identify any interesting or innovative practice cameos that we have included in the report.

This section will explain if the school requires follow-up because it has not met all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations .

### 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 to the school.

## 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 numbered 1 – 3, but they are all equally important. Within each inspection area, the report will not always cover the aspects in the order they appear in this guidance.

The report on each inspection area will normally be between 250 and 700 words.

There is supplementary guidance on the inspection of various aspects of the work of schools on Estyn’s website: [www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/supplementary-guidance](http://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/supplementary-guidance).

The inspection report will not cover all the aspects in this guidance but will always report on all the main foci but not necessarily in the order below. The main foci for each inspection area are:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. **Teaching and Learning**
 | **2. Care, support and well-being** | **3. Leading and improving** |
| **Focus**How effectively does the school’s curriculum, teaching and assessment support **all** pupils, including those pupils with ALN and pupils who are adversely affected by poverty and disadvantage to:* learn and make progress
* develop their knowledge, skills and understanding
* develop positive attitudes to learning

Compliance with Standard 1 and Standard 2 of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations | **Focus** How effectively does the school’s curriculum, teaching and assessment support **all** pupils, including those pupils with ALN and pupils who are adversely affected by poverty and disadvantage to:* are safe and secure
* attend school regularly
* are respected and fairly treated
* develop leadership skills and take on responsibility
* receive the guidance or support they require relating to the next steps in their development

Compliance with Standard 3 of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations | **Focus** How effectively do leaders:* articulate and realise a clear vision and inclusive ethos that supports the progress and well-being of all pupils
* identify and address areas for improvement
* ensure that professional learning supports school improvement and equips all staff to carry out their roles effectively
* manage the school’s resources, particularly in driving improvement.

Compliance with Standards 4,5,6 and 7 of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations |

The inspection report will not report on each inspection area separately but will make connections between the areas to tell the **unique story** of the provider and its context.

**Across the inspection framework, inspectors will consider the focus areas in relation to the impact they have on all pupils’ learning and well-being.**

|  |
| --- |
| 1. **Teaching and learning**
 |
| **Focus** How effectively does the school’s curriculum, teaching and assessment support **all** pupils to: * learn and make progress
* develop their knowledge, skills and understanding
* develop positive attitudes to learning

   |
| **Inspectors should consider the aspects noted below in light of the difference they make to pupils’ learning.** **Inspectors should consider how well teachers and other practitioners:**  * ensure that **teaching:**
* moves learning along at the right pace and presents pupils with the appropriate level of challenge
* demonstrate high expectations of all pupils
* use questioning and feedback to support pupils’ progress
* respond to pupils’ learning during lessons and activities and adapt their approach accordingly
* help pupils to understand their own strengths and areas for improvement and to develop as effective learners
* make the learning environment stimulating and engaging
* make provision that is well matched for pupils with additional learning needs and based on a secure understanding of their needs
* provide pupils with opportunities to work independently and collaboratively
* provide pupils with opportunities to influence how and what they learn where appropriate
* teachers deploy additional staff to support pupils’ learning
* understand what they want pupils to learn and why by **delivering a curriculum** that:
* provides pupils with a suitable breadth and depth of learning across all areas of learning: linguistic, mathematical, scientific,technological,human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative.
* reflects the cultural, linguistic, and diverse nature of the local community, Wales, and the wider world
* inspires pupils and raise their aspirations around future careers and the world of work
* enables pupils to learn about the history and experiences of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities and LGBTQ+ people
* supports pupils’ creative and artistic development
* supports the development of pupils spiritual, moral, social, and cultural awareness (RVE)
* supports pupils’ personal, social development including their understanding the characteristics of healthy relationships (RSE)
* helps pupils to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to make healthy lifestyle choices and understand the impact of these choices
* **develop pupils’ skills** systematically and progressively so that they:
* acquire the necessary skills in listening and reading, speaking and writing, numeracy and digital to support their work and progress
* have the physical, social and emotional skills to prepare them for later life
* apply their skills at an appropriate level across the curriculum
* develop Welsh language communication skills in formal teaching activities and informal situations and in English-medium, dual stream or bilingual schools pupils’ ability to speak and respond to spoken Welsh, taking into account pupils’ starting points
* support pupils to develop positive **attitudes towards learning**, so that they:
* behave well and participate positively in learning activities
* persevere or look for new solutions when they face difficulties
* foster positive working relationships with adults and their peers
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **2. Care, support and well-being**  |
| **Focus** How effectively does the school provide care, support and guidance so that **all** pupils: * are safe and secure
* attend school regularly
* are respected and fairly treated
* develop leadership skills and take on responsibility
* receive any additional guidance or support they require relating to the next steps in their development

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| **Inspectors should consider the aspects noted below in light of the difference they make to pupils’ well-being and development.** **Inspectors should consider how well staff:** * create and maintain a **culture of safeguarding** including following child protection procedures so that pupils are:
* safe and secure
* respected and treated fairly
* free from bullying and harassment
* free from physical, emotional, and verbal abuse
* ensure that **pupils attend school** regularly, for example by:
* promoting and monitoring attendance including that of specific groups
* challenging persistent absenteeism
* working in partnership for example with educational welfare services, social services, police, and other agencies
* support positive behaviour
* ensure that pupils with a history of exclusion and those educated other than at school demonstrate improved behaviour and attitudes to learning
* coordinate suitable support for pupils with **additional learning needs**, including working in partnership with external agencies when appropriate
* encourage pupils to influence the life and work of the school and to develop leadership skills and take on responsibility
* provide pupils with effective and impartial advice relating to the **next steps in their development**, for example in relation to:
* careers and the world of work
* opportunities, responsibilities, and experiences of adult life
* their transition to the next phase of learning
 |
| **3. Leading and improving**  |
| **Focus** How effectively do leaders: * articulate and realise a clear vision and inclusive ethos that supports the progress and well-being of all pupils
* identify and address areas for improvement
* ensure that professional learning supports school improvement and equips all staff to carry out their roles effectively
* manage and govern the school, including its resources
 |
|  **Inspectors should consider the aspects below in light of the difference they make to pupils’ progress, well-being and development Inspectors should consider how well leaders:** * articulate and realise a **vision and strategic direction** that is suitably focused on improving pupils’ learning and well-being
* ensure that all members of the school community buy into the school’s vision and that leaders develop productive relationships with parents, other schools, external bodies and the wider community
* **evaluate** the school’s provision in light of its impact on pupils’ learning and well-being in order to identify areas that require improvement **and bring about that improvement**
* have appropriate **management and governance structures** in place, for example distribute roles and responsibilities to meet pupils’ needs and bring about improvement in the school’s provision: create a positive working environment, culture, and ethos for staff; manage the performance of staff to improve their practice and address underperformance where necessary; provide effective governance that offers support and challenge
* plan and deliver **professional learning opportunities** for staff that have a positive impact on pupils’ learning and well-being, and contribute appropriately to the school’s improvement and individual staff needs.
* deploy the **school’s resources to** ensure high quality teaching and learning and support pupils’ well-being

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**Part 2: How we inspect – core Inspection arrangements**

**Introduction**

This section is set out in a way that reflects the sequence of work before, during and after a core inspection.

The reporting inspector (RI) is responsible for the conduct and management of the inspection and for the inspection report. While this guidance focuses mainly on the role of the reporting inspector, all team members must comply with the same inspection requirements.

**Principles of inspection**

Inspection teams work according to a number of key principles.

* take a learner-led approach to inspection
* always focus strongly on the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning
* consider everything in the ‘what’ we inspect guidance documents, but only report on the key strengths and weaknesses
* focus each inspection on the specific provider and adapt their approaches accordingly
* use a range of tailored inspection methodologies and approaches that are bespoke to the provider’s unique circumstances, in order to evaluate the breadth of the provider’s work robustly and fairly
* adopt a constructive approach that makes the interaction with the provider a professional learning experience for their staff and the inspection team as a whole.

In addition, inspectors will:

* ensure that inspection is responsive to the needs of all learners
* ensure that evaluations are secure, reliable, valid and based on first-hand evidence
* involve the provider fully in the inspection process, including the opportunity for the provider to select a nominee
* use the provider’s improvement priorities as the starting point for the inspection and to identify key areas for investigation in order to make evaluations on the validity of its findings
* include peer inspectors in the inspection process
* keep to a minimum any requirements for documentation and preparation by the provider
* gain the perspective of learners and other stakeholders
* apply the principle of equality for Welsh and English to all our inspection work

**Inspection mindset**

Estyn’s approach to inspection is:

* **Fair and impartial** – this means that we work to be independent, objective and balanced. We are robust and consistent in our work. We weigh the evidence and its significance to provide an honest, credible and accurate view of the provider’s strengths and areas for improvement.
* **Supportive** – we work to guide providers to implement improvements that benefit learners. We encourage innovation and recognise good intentions. We are friendly but always professional in our approach. We support educational reform. We work hard to develop meaningful relationships with providers and local and regional organisations.
* **Reflective** –we are open-minded. We listen to a wide range of stakeholders and reflect on their responses. We are thoughtful, measured and careful. We plan opportunities to think carefully about the inspection findings and to discuss them with others in the team.
* **Transparent** – we are well informed and communicate clearly, directly and succinctly. We use efficient and effective inspection methodologies to respond to the provider’s unique situation. We plan inspection activity and report on strengths and weaknesses in ways that reflect the particular circumstances of each individual provider. As a result, our actions promote trust and respect.

**Code of conduct for inspectors**

Our code of conduct explains how we embody the inspection mind-set through their actions. Inspectors should uphold the highest possible standards in their work. All inspectors have to meet the standards of Estyn’s code of conduct.

When conducting the inspection, inspectors will:

* be courteous and professional
* carry out their work with integrity and due sensitivity
* evaluate the work of the provider objectively
* report honestly, fairly and impartially
* communicate clearly and openly
* act in the best interests of learners
* respect the confidentiality of all information received during the course of their work

It is important that we evaluate the effectiveness of provision and leadership on their impact and not on the basis of any preferences for particular methods. The key to the evaluations is whether the methods and organisation are fit for the purpose in supporting all pupils to achieve high standards and strong levels of well-being.

Inspectors should inform Estyn of any perceived or actual conflicts of interest as soon as they receive notification that they are part of the provider’s inspection team.

**Expectations of providers**

In order that inspection and regulation are constructive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and providers establish and maintain a professional working environment based on mutual courtesy, respect and professional behaviour. We expect inspectors to uphold Estyn’s Code of Conduct, but we also expect providers to:

* be courteous and professional
* provide evidence that enables inspectors to conduct the inspection in an open, honest and objective way
* recognise that inspectors need to observe practice and to talk to staff, learners and other stakeholders without the presence of a manager or senior leader
* maintain a purposeful dialogue with the reporting inspector and other inspectors
* draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors in a timely and suitable manner through the nominee
* give due regard to the health and safety of inspectors while on the premises
* maintain the confidentiality of meetings and inspection findings until the final publication of the report

At the point of the inspection notification, schools should review the composition of the inspection team. It is the provider’s responsibility to highlight any perceived or actual conflicts of interest prior to the start of their inspection.

**Safeguarding, including health, safety and well-being issues**

Inspectors will carry out inspections in accordance with Estyn’s guidance on inspecting safeguarding. If they observe anything that they think constitutes, in their opinion, a danger to the safety of staff, visitors or pupils, inspectors should alert leaders at the provision.

If an inspector becomes aware of a safeguarding allegation/suspicion in respect of a child, young person or vulnerable adult, they should follow the procedures set out in the current version of ‘[Estyn’s policy and procedures for safeguarding](https://www.estyn.gov.wales/node/13422)’, which is available on our website.

In all cases, inspectors should make a note of the issue and that they have informed managers. Inspectors should report on obvious risks relating to health, safety and well-being under inspection area 2 (Care, support and well-being) and consider any implications for compliance with Standard 3 ‘The welfare, health and safety of the pupils’. Where these risks are a serious concern, inspectors should include a short comment in the report’s text, a recommendation in the report and fail the relevant Standard. When a Standard is failed we **DO NOT** issue a well-being letter. In the unlikely event that a safeguarding, health, safety or well-being issue is raised that does not lead to the failure of an Independent Schools Standard, then a well-being letter will be issued to the proprietor and Welsh Government.

**Approach to inspection**

The number of inspectors and the number of days they spend at the provider may vary according to the size and context of the provider.

We will carry out inspections in line with our [Welsh Language Policy](https://www.estyn.gov.wales/node/13673), available from our website.

**The Virtual Inspection Room**

We will use an electronic system, called the ‘Virtual Inspection Room’ (VIR), for managing many aspects of the inspection. It is a web-based system that allows providers to upload information before the inspection and to download guidance from us about the inspection process. The VIR is also the place where headteachers and nominees can access the post-inspection questionnaires (PIQs).

In addition, all independent schools will be required to place key policy documents in a secure provider area on an annual basis. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure the most up to date documents are uploaded as these documents will be accessed by inspectors prior to any inspection activity.

We ensure the security of information uploaded by subjecting the VIR to penetration testing. This testing evaluates systems security. We identify and implement any actions to prevent unauthorised access. All users of Estyn’s VIR system have a username and password, which are recorded and maintained securely within an active directory. The system also has features to ensure password protection including threat detection and conditional access.

**The inspection team**

There are different roles within the inspection team.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Team member** | **Explanation**  | **Role** |
| Reporting inspector (RI), may also be referred to as the lead inspector  | The RI for an inspection will be:HMI (His Majesty’s Inspector of Education and Training in Wales) – HMI are appointed by the crown. They are civil servants employed directly by Estyn. | The RI leads and manages the inspection team. They liaise with the school and the team ahead of the inspection, and quality assure their team’s work. The RI is the first point of reference for everyone during the on-site part of the inspection process. |
| Team inspectors (TI) | The number of team inspectors is determined by the size of the provider. Team inspectors may be HMI or contracted additional inspectors who have been trained by Estyn. All team inspectors are qualified teachers. | Team inspectors may take responsibility for gathering evidence to inform the team’s evaluation of different aspects of the inspection. The RI directs and manages the team inspectors’ work. |
| Peer inspector (PI) | A peer inspector is a serving senior leader from another school who has completed Estyn’s PI training and assessment. Normally, inspection teams have a peer inspector as a team member. In larger schools, there may be more than one PI on the team.  | PIs also take responsibility for gathering evidence to inform the team’s evaluations. They are an integral part of the inspection team. The RI directs and manages PIs’ work. |
| Premises inspector – independent schools only | In independent schools, to comply with the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999, an appropriately qualified additional inspector who has experience and qualification in premises related issues joins the team. | This additional inspector will normally join the independent school inspection team for one day on a core inspection to judge whether the school meets the relevant standards. |
| Nominee (from the provider being inspected) | We will invite providersto select a senior member of staff, called the nominee, to work with the inspection team. The nominee should have sufficient seniority to act as a link between the provider and the inspection team. In many cases, the nominee is the headteacher of the school. | Providers can access the guidance for nominees on preparing for the inspection from links within the initial contact form (ICF), completed by the inspection co‑ordinator (IC) and available via the VIR. |

**Contacting the provider before the inspection**

The providerwill receive 10 working days’ notice of the inspection. We also inform the Welsh Government of the inspection date.

Following this, the inspection co-ordinator will contact the provider by telephone to set up the arrangements for the inspection. During this discussion, the inspection co-ordinator will:

* explain the purpose of the inspection and discuss an outline programme for the inspection
* discuss the specific information required before the inspection, including the provider’s completion of a safeguarding self-evaluation form (either the Estyn proforma or the school’s template), and make the arrangements for receiving it in electronic form through the Virtual Inspection Room
* ask if there are any issues or risks the team should be aware of and request a general health and safety briefing for the team at the start of the inspection
* establish whether the provider wishes to have a nominee and, if it does, agree the role of the nominee and explain the process for completing the nominee guidance
* provide links and guidance for the completion of the suite of online pre-inspection questionnaires (e.g. learners, parents, staff etc)
* agree arrangements for setting up a meeting with parents/carers
* ensure that there are agreed procedures for addressing any concerns or complaints that might arise during the inspection
* arrange for members of the governing body, or the proprietor to meet inspectors during the inspection period
* organise any domestic arrangements, such as a base for the inspectors, parking and internet access
* set up the arrangements for feeding back the inspection findings
* agree the arrangements for completing the post-inspection questionnaire (PIQ)
* inform the provider in writing, through the initial contact form, of the key inspection arrangements

The inspection co-ordinator will request the following information from the provider through the Virtual Inspection Room as soon as possible after the formal notification of the inspection:

* key background information e.g. names of staff and information about their roles and responsibilities
* a copy of the most recent development or improvement plan
* details of the timetables for the period of the inspection

If the inspection takes place early in the school year, providers may wish to share samples of pupils’ work from the previous year with inspectors, if available.

When we notify providers of the inspection, they will receive information on how to access online questionnaires for pupils, parents/carers and staff. The outcomes of the pre-inspection questionnaires will form part of the pre-inspection evidence and support inspectors to form their evaluations of the school’s work.

An independent school may receive state-funding for pupils, for example those:

* in Early Years placements
* with additional learning needs [ALN]
* who are in the care of the local authority

We will arrange to obtain a briefing on the school from the placing authority. Where provision is also inspected by CIW, we will liaise directly with that organisation in accordance with the protocol.

**Planning the inspection and preparing the team**

The reporting inspector will plan the inspection and allocate responsibilities to members of the inspection team, taking into account the provider’s improvement priorities and any other information.

We require providers to place a full plan of all the activities during the inspection week in the VIR. The reporting inspector will plan the team’s activities based on the information provided.

**During the inspection**

**Initial team meeting**

The initial inspection team meeting is likely to include:

* a health and safety briefing from the provider
* a briefing from the headteacher or teacher in charge about the context of the school
* a brief position statement from the headteacher to set out the provider’s strategic priorities and its current stage of development
* a discussion with the headteacher (led by the RI) about the improvement priorities identified by the provider and the progress to date in its improvement work
* a discussion regarding how inspectors will be able to access important information

The RI will confirm these arrangements with the headteacher during the pre-inspection phone call.

**Gathering and reviewing inspection evidence**

The team will plan the inspection so that they can cover the reporting requirements.. The main forms of evidence are:

* samples of pupils’ work
* discussions with pupils, staff, leaders, managers, governors, parents and others
* observation of teaching and other activities, including evidence gathered through learning walks
* pre-inspection questionnaire responses
* documentary or electronic evidence, e.g. information on pupils’ progress

The team will use direct observation of pupils’ work wherever possible to gather evidence to support their evaluations. Inspectors may select an additional sample of pupils’ work, if required, to support their evaluations of a specific aspect.

Providers should make information available to the inspection team about the standards achieved by pupils, particularly the results of any initial screening tests and other relevant assessments. This will help inspectors to evaluate pupils’ progress, to come to a view about the standards pupils achieve compared to their starting-points and the way teachers use the information from assessment to influence their planning and their lessons.

The team will need to consider stakeholders’ views on the provider and test out the validity of those views during the inspection.

**Recording inspection evidence**

Inspectors will complete their evidence forms electronically as part of Estyn’s digital system for collecting, collating and recording inspection findings.

**Team meetings**

The main purpose of team meetings is to arrive at an accurate, reliable, valid and corporate view of learning and the quality of provision and leadership. Meetings will provide opportunities for inspectors to:

* test the validity of the provider’s self-evaluation processes and priorities for improvement
* discuss emerging issues
* identify any gaps in the evidence base
* consider the main inspection findings and any recommendations

In the very few instances where the nominee is not the headteacher, it is important that the reporting inspector holds a brief daily meeting with the headteacher to clarify inspection issues and the broad, emerging findings of the inspection team.

**Professional dialogue**

Throughout the inspection, inspectors will engage in professional dialogue with practitioners. This dialogue may include meeting with individual teachers, often in their classrooms to discuss their planning and assessment of pupils’ work. Inspectors may want to meet with groups of support staff, to understand the school’s arrangements to support pupils with ALN. Inspectors may decide to meet with leaders, either individually or as a group, to understand the impact of the provider’s leadership on bringing about improvements to pupils’ outcomes.

Professional dialogue enables inspectors to gain first-hand evidence from practitioners that can be triangulated with other sources of evidence. The dialogue will provide emerging, interim findings on aspects of the evidence base. These findings may be amended, on reflection, for example after scrutiny of pupils’ work or talking to pupils or as the result of moderation within the team.

Normally, at the end of a lesson observation, inspectors will have a brief professional dialogue with the member of staff on the learning seen. It may be necessary, in some cases, to conduct this discussion later during the inspection.

At all times, the main focus of the professional dialogue should be on the pupils, the progress they make during the lesson and the standards they achieve. Inspectors should try to focus on any strengths or areas for development in relation to the specific work seen.

Due to the sharply focused nature of learning walks, and the spread of the activity across a number of lessons/classes within a relatively short period of time, inspectors will not be in a position to offer professional dialogue to individual teachers after learning walk activity.

**Formal feedback**

At the end of the on-site part of the inspection, the team will provide oral feedback to senior leaders. In addition:

* in independent schools the proprietor should be invited to attend the meeting
* independent special schools may want to invite representatives from local authorities that place pupils at the school

The feedback should focus on the main findings of the inspection, including the recommendations.

The feedback meeting provides the opportunity for leaders to hear and to reflect on the team’s findings. The feedback should focus on the strengths and areas for improvement and the factors that contribute to them. The reporting inspector should explain to the provider that issues may be raised and discussed, and factual matters may be corrected. The purpose of the meeting is for the provider to understand rather than negotiate the inspection team’s findings.

During the inspection, the team will consider if there is any effective practice that is worth sharing with other providers.

During all inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the provider needs any follow-up activity. The reporting inspector will inform leaders if any follow-up activity is required.

All the evaluations and findings reported during an inspection, including follow-up if appropriate, are provisional and subject to moderation and validation by HMCI. They are confidential to the provision’s staff and governors. They should not be communicated beyond this group, including via social media, until we publish the report on our website.

**Complaints about the conduct of the inspection**

If there are any issues about the conduct of the inspection overall or the conduct of individual inspectors, then the nominee should raise these directly and as soon as possible with the reporting inspector. The nominee should not wait until after the inspection but should raise any issues while the team is on site. Issues occasionally arise due to misunderstandings and these can usually be resolved quickly and satisfactorily, close to the time when they occurred.

There is guidance on our complaints handling procedures on our website.

**After the inspection**

**The inspection report**

The reporting inspector is responsible for producing a final inspection report that is clear to a lay audience and helpful to the provider.

When writing reports, inspectors should take account of Estyn's writing guidance, which is available on our website.

We will publish reports bilingually, where schools have made this request, in line with our Welsh Language Policy.

We base the structure of the inspection report on our inspection framework. The report will take the following form:

|  |
| --- |
| **About the school** **Overview****Recommendations****Compliance with the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations** |

We will produce the report within statutory timescales.

**About the school**

This section of the report will be brief and contain only factual background information about the school. It will not contain any evaluation of the school or its provision. The reporting inspector normally agrees the content of this section with the school during the inspection and during the school’s factual check of the draft report prior to publication. Where 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 contain brief information on:

* the size, nature and location of the school,
* The proprietor status / ownership of the school such as the administration group and /or charitable trust
* the background and circumstances of the pupils
* the linguistic background of the pupils
* any important changes since the last inspection
* any other relevant factors, such as the proportion of pupils with additional learning needs, English as an additional language, or the degree to which pupils leave or join the school during the academic year
* the date of appointment of the headteacher
* the month/year of the school’s previous inspection
* context of the school

**Compliance with the regulations for registration**

In this section of the report, inspectors will include an overview of the extent to which the school meets the regulatory requirements for each of the Registration Standards. Inspectors will specify in the report if one or more regulatory requirements is not met.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations should come directly from the content of the report, identify what needs to improve and be written in priority order.

**What happens next**

The ‘what happens next’ section will set out what the 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.

It should identify any interesting or innovative practice cameos that we have included in the report.

This section will explain if the school requires follow-up because it has not met all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations .

**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 to the school

**The factual accuracy check**

We will give the providera late draft of the report to help check the factual accuracy of the content. The provider will normally have five working days in which to consider the draft report and to identify any errors.

The focus of the check is on resolving any factual inaccuracies in the inspection report. It does not focus on the findings. There is further guidance for providers on the nature and scope of this check on our website.

**Assuring the quality of inspections**

We are committed to:

* effective selection, training, briefing, support and deployment of inspectors, including peer inspectors
* effective training, briefing and support to allow the nominee to play an active role
* regular dialogue with the headteacher during inspection
* criteria and recording systems that comply with inspection guidance
* careful review and analysis of evidence
* providing clear verbal feedback of the team’s main findings and the detail for each inspection area
* producing accurate and well-presented reports

As part of our quality assurance procedures, we invite providers to complete a post-inspection questionnaire (PIQ). The questionnaire will be available in the VIR. Providers should complete the first part of the PIQ as soon as possible after the on‑site inspection and submit it electronically to Estyn through the VIR system. They can complete the second part of the PIQ after the publication of the inspection report, again through the VIR system.

The reporting inspector will quality assure the inspection team’s work in the first instance. We quality assure a sample of inspections through on-site visits. We assure the quality of all written inspection reports before they are published on our website. Our arrangements for assuring the quality of inspections are available on our website [www.estyn.gov.wales](http://www.estyn.gov.wales).

**Follow-up guidance**

**Meeting statutory requirements in independent schools**

The Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003 govern the work of independent schools. We expect independent schools to evaluate how they meet these requirements through their own normal self-evaluation procedures.

Inspectors will use the school’s self-evaluation and other information to identify whether an independent school meets its statutory requirements.

Inspectors will identify in the independent school’s inspection report any failure to meet statutory requirements .

Where a school fails to meet any of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations, the requirement to comply with these regulations will be the first recommendation in the inspection report. The school will be required to submit a post inspection action plan to the Welsh Government to indicate what action will be taken to ensure continued compliance.

Estyn will conduct a review visit, normally within a year to report to the Welsh Government whether the school is compliant with the regulations to ensure their continued registration. When necessary Estyn may provide schools with additional support to plan for and meet the regulations.

If a school continues to fail to meet the standards for registration Welsh Government may decide to:

* de-register the school
* tell the school to cease using any part of the school premises for all purposes or purposes specified
* close any part of the school’s operation
* cease to admit any new pupils, or new pupils of a description specified