

# Supplementary guidance:

Inspecting schools that  
are lead schools in an  
initial teacher education  
partnership

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Autumn 2023

This guidance is also available in Welsh.

**The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:**

- ▲ nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities
- ▲ primary schools
- ▲ secondary schools
- ▲ all-age schools
- ▲ special schools
- ▲ pupil referral units
- ▲ independent schools
- ▲ further education
- ▲ independent specialist colleges
- ▲ adult community learning
- ▲ local authority education services for children and young people
- ▲ teacher education and training
- ▲ Welsh for adults
- ▲ work-based learning
- ▲ learning in the justice sector

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence

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**What is the purpose?**

To provide inspectors with guidance about inspecting schools which are lead schools in an initial teacher education (ITE) partnership.

**For whom is it intended?**

Inspectors of maintained schools

**From when should the guidance be used?**

October 2023

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## Supplementary guidance

The key Estyn documents that guide inspection activity are the inspection guidance handbooks for each sector. However, we also produce supplementary guidance to help inspectors to consider specific aspects of education and training further.

The supplementary guidance documents set out some key principles, considerations and resources for inspectors. They relate to all sectors that Estyn inspects, unless they state that they are for a specific sector. They expand on certain aspects of education/training (e.g. the inspection of literacy) or on ways of conducting inspections (e.g. the use of learning walks) or specific inspection arrangements (e.g. guidance on inspecting church schools).

The supplementary guidance documents do not aim to be comprehensive. Inspectors are not required to work through them exhaustively when covering any specific aspect on an inspection. However, inspectors may find them useful when responding to specific emerging questions that arise during inspections or when they wish to reflect or investigate further.

The supplementary guidance documents may help providers gain an understanding of Estyn's inspection arrangements. They may also be helpful to providers in evaluating specific aspects of their own provision.

Inspection teams work according to a number of key principles. They:

- take a learner-focused approach to inspection
- always focus strongly on the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning
- consider everything in the inspection framework, but only report on the key strengths and weaknesses
- focus each inspection activities on the specific provider -and adapt their approaches accordingly
- use a range of tailored inspection methods and approaches that are bespoke to the provider's 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

## 1 Introduction

From September 2019, all ITE providers in Wales have been established as partnerships between a higher education institution (HEI) and a group of 'lead schools', which alongside a broader network of schools provide the professional education and development of student teachers. In some partnerships, a regional consortium also works with the HEI and schools.

In accordance with the *Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales* (WG circular no: 001/2018 for programmes accredited to commence prior to 31 August or WG circular no: 002/2023 for programmes accredited to commence from 1 September 2024), providers are required to designate a number of 'lead partnership schools' which will contribute fully to the leadership and management of the programme of ITE, including the design and content of the programme and the selection of students. They will also play a full part in each programme's quality assurance and self-evaluation.

Our inspection of ITE partnerships will examine the quality of initial teacher education provided by lead schools. This will include an evaluation of how well the school takes a leadership role in the partnership. However, school inspectors should consider the impact of the involvement in the partnership of a lead school, particularly on teaching, leadership and professional learning.

## 2 What are the requirements of a lead school?

The following requirements for a lead school are drawn from the *Criteria for the accreditation of initial teacher education programmes in Wales* (WG circular no: 001/2018 / 002/2023):

All lead schools play a key role in the ITE Partnership. They are jointly accountable with the HEI for the quality of the programmes, student experience and outcomes. As such, they contribute fully to the joint leadership, design and delivery of ITE programme/s. Senior school leaders with responsibility for ITE will be members of the partnership's leadership team. They will contribute to setting the strategic direction of the partnership and be involved fully in quality assurance, self-evaluation, and planning for improvement processes. There should be a whole-school approach to supporting student teachers, under the guidance of the senior leadership team and other in-school leaders, including mentors. School-based teacher educators, including senior mentors and mentors, specifically assigned to the Partnership should be given protected time to undertake their responsibilities within it, including time for planning, collaboration, delivery of sessions, assessing student teachers, completing documentation and participating in the governance of the Partnership, where appropriate.

The details of the role of the Lead Partner School within the Partnership should be expressed clearly in a Memorandum of Understanding drawn up and jointly agreed between the Partner Schools and HEI. In some instances, lead schools may work together for example, in a 'lead school alliance' to maximise the expertise of staff or facilities.

Lead Partner Schools should:

- be effective schools that are recognised for high-quality learning and teaching
- have a culture where ITE is recognised as one of their core responsibilities; they should have an openness to examining and debating their own pedagogical and assessment practices in the light of evidence from research and elsewhere
- have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the Partnership structure
- have a full and clear understanding of their role as jointly accountable with the HEI (and the other Lead Partner Schools in the Partnership)
- routinely lead and support other Lead Partner Schools and Partner Schools within the ITE Partnership in their work with student teachers
- routinely lead and support other Partner Schools on their journey to becoming research engaged learning organisations
- be involved and jointly accountable in all strategic decisions and processes; as a group they should be effectively represented on leadership groups across the governance structure
- play a full part in each programme's quality assurance, self-evaluation, and planning for improvement processes • contribute to the design and development of programmes

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- play a prominent part in the Partnership's strategy and plans for attracting applicants to the profession and recruiting student teachers to programmes, working in collaboration when interviewing and selecting student teachers
- have the resources, equipment, and facilities to support student teachers
- have trained, senior staff to lead on ITE within the school; these teachers should coordinate learning experiences and support for students, and monitor mentoring
- provide structured learning experiences for student teachers that are integrated effectively with and form a complement to other components of the overall programme
- ensure that all staff involved in delivering ITE receive on-going professional learning to support them in their role as school-based teacher educators; this should include knowledge and understanding of how student teachers learn; the skills, knowledge and understanding of mentoring; an understanding of how research and other forms of evidence may be used to support student teachers; and a practical understanding of the principles, structures, and content of the ITE programme
- provide professional learning opportunities for HEI staff
- be committed to developing the Welsh language within their school; the vision for Welsh and language acquisition, learning and teaching, should be clear to all

Where Estyn identifies a lead school as requiring follow-up activity following its core inspection, the reporting inspector should notify the inspection co-ordinator by email, copying in the lead inspector for initial teacher education ([sarah.lewis@estyn.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.lewis@estyn.gov.uk)).

Lead schools may work in a variety of ways to support the partnership as a whole, for example, by providing a centre of excellence for a secondary subject, or by supporting student teachers to develop their skills in the Welsh language.

### 3 Possible inspection questions

The following questions may be useful when interviewing leaders in the school:

- What influence has being a lead school had on the strategic direction of the school?
- Is the school's work in ITE a feature of its self-evaluation and improvement processes? If so, how does the school use self-evaluation findings, together with other information, to devise relevant priorities and actions for improvement that reflect its role as a partner for ITE?
- How does the school's processes for self-evaluation link to the ITE partnership's self-evaluation?
- In what ways does being a lead school for ITE make a difference to the school? What impact has this work had on leaders, teachers and pupils? What other benefits does the school gain from the partnership? (e.g. access to research, involvement with projects, etc)
- How does the school ensure that work as a lead school does not impact negatively on pupils' progress?
- What links does the school make between work to improve the quality of teaching and the development of student teachers?
- In what ways does the school work with university partner/s (and regional partners, where appropriate) to ensure that all staff involved in supporting student teachers have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to do so?
- How does the school ensure the best quality mentoring?
- How is the partnership supporting staff to become effective 'teacher educators'? (e.g. How are you developing the research skills of staff, and what difference does this make to teaching and learning?)
- How does being a lead school contribute to developing a culture of professional learning in the school?
- In what other ways does the school work with university partner/s to support the professional learning of staff?
- What are the benefits of linking with other schools in the partnership for the school's staff and pupils?