

23. Inspection

This chapter considers:

- The aims of the school inspection process.
- The circumstances in which a school may be inspected; and
- The procedures which the head teacher and governing body are expected to follow prior to and following an inspection.

Background

1. Inspection is intended to help schools to improve by highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, providing them with recommendations for improvement and promoting a culture of rigorous self-evaluation. The publication of inspection reports also provides information to parents and the wider community about the quality of education and whether pupils are achieving as much as they can.

2. Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. It is independent of, but funded by, the Welsh Ministers under section 104 of the Government of Wales Act 1998.

3. School inspections are governed by the Education Act 2005 and related regulations. Inspections must be conducted by teams of inspectors, each led by a registered inspector or HMI, and must result in a written report. Section 28 of the Education Act 2005, says that registered inspectors must report on:

- The educational standards achieved by the school.
- The quality of education provided by the school.
- How far education meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school.
- The quality of leadership in and management of the school, including whether the financial resources are managed efficiently.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school; and
- The contribution of the school to the well-being of pupils.

4. Some schools have a religious character and teach denominational religious education. In these schools, religious education and the content of collective worship are inspected separately under section 50 of the Education Act 2005 and are not included in section 28 inspections.

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5. The following categories of schools are inspected under section 28 of the Education Act 2005:

- Community schools.
- Foundation schools.

- Voluntary aided schools.
- Voluntary controlled schools.
- Maintained nursery schools.
- Foundation special schools.
- Community special schools; and
- Pupil referral units.

6. In the post-16 sector, the Learning and Skills Act 2000 requires the Chief Inspector in Wales to report on:

- The quality of education and training provided.
- The standards achieved by those receiving education and training; and
- Whether the financial resources made available to those providing education and training are managed efficiently and used to provide value for money.

The School Inspection System

7. The current system of regular external inspections started in 1993. All secondary schools were inspected by August 1998 and all primary and special schools by August 1999.

8. The most recent cycle of inspections of primary, special and secondary schools, started in September 2004 and will finish in July 2010. The Education (School Inspection) (Wales) Regulations 2006 require an inspection every six years.

9. Estyn is headed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales (HMCI). Estyn arranges and pays for inspections, most of which are conducted by teams employed by outside contractors and led by a Registered Inspector.

10. All members of an inspection team will have successfully completed Estyn's selection and training procedures. Team inspectors may apply to become Registered Inspectors if they meet the selection criteria. In these cases, they must undertake further training and assessment successfully before becoming a Registered Inspector. All inspectors receive regular training to keep them up-to-date with inspection matters.

11. Estyn monitors a sample of all inspections and inspection reports and provides feedback to inspectors on the quality of their work. Inspectors who fall below Estyn's quality standard may be required to undertake further training and in severe cases may lose their registration.

The Scale of Inspections

12. The inspection of most schools will be more streamlined than those in previous inspection cycles. Schools are inspected according to a risk assessment based on clear and public criteria, which focuses on the following criteria:

- Inspection grades from the last inspection report; and
- Bench marked performance in a key indicator over three years.

13. Estyn undertakes the risk assessment and informs schools and inspection teams of the type of inspection, as follows:

Full inspection: inspection of all areas of the Inspection Framework and all subjects and/or areas of learning at each key stage.

Standard inspection: inspection of areas of the Inspection Framework and six subjects and/or areas of learning at each key stage. A standard inspection involves fewer inspection days. The school's own self-evaluation will help to determine the extent to which some aspects of the seven key questions of the Common Inspection Framework are inspected. It will involve in-depth inspection of fewer subjects and/or areas of learning. When reporting on standards of achievement the report must make clear that the grades apply only to the particular subjects being inspected.

Short inspection: inspection of areas of the Inspection Framework. A short inspection will involve even fewer inspection days and less detailed inspection of some of the seven key questions. The school's own self-evaluation will also help to determine the extent to which aspects of the seven key questions are inspected. There will be no explicit evaluation and reporting of individual subjects and/or areas of learning.

14. Where the circumstances justify it, HMCI retains the right to determine the type of inspection, even if this differs from that which would normally result from applying the relevant criteria.

15. During the current cycle, all nursery schools, special schools, new schools and those previously placed in special measures or significant improvement receive a full inspection irrespective of the risk assessment.

The Inspection Team

16. The composition of the inspection team will depend on the type, age range, linguistic nature and number of pupils on roll as well as the type of inspection identified for the school.

17. The Registered Inspector leads and manages the inspection team and the whole inspection process.

18. A number of independent inspectors will also form part of the team, including a lay inspector who has not been involved in providing or managing school education, apart from voluntary involvement, for example as a governor.

19. Normally, there will be a peer assessor (PA) who acts as a full member of the team. The PA brings the perspective of a current practitioner to an inspection. PAs have been nominated by the school at which they work and have been trained by Estyn. The PA contributes fully to the inspection and corporate judgements.

20. Inspections actively involve schools in the process by inviting a senior member of staff, called the nominee, to work with the inspection team. The exact nature of the nominee's role is agreed with the Registered Inspector before each inspection and confirmed in a statement of agreement. The nominee can take part in a range of inspection activities, including observing lessons and attending team meetings, but cannot take an active part in grading.

21. In order to act as a nominee on an inspection, the member of staff must have attended the one-day Estyn training course before their inspection, except in exceptional circumstances. If the school decides not to have a nominee, this does not prejudice the inspection. The fact that a school does not have a nominee has no impact on the judgements made by the inspection team.

Self-evaluation

22. Inspection starts with self-evaluation. Both inspection and self-evaluation are concerned with providing an accurate assessment of quality and standards and with identifying what needs to be done to improve them.

23. Self-evaluation documents may be presented to inspectors in a variety of formats. There is an optional template for a self-evaluation report based on the Common Inspection Framework on the [Estyn](#) website.

24. Inspectors use the Common Inspection Framework and guidance to test and validate the reliability of the judgements made in the school's self-evaluation with those of the inspection team. Inspectors' judgements on leadership and management take account of the quality and accuracy of school self-evaluation and its outcomes.

Before an Inspection

25. About one term before the inspection, Estyn will award the contract and inform the school that it is to be inspected. The Registered Inspector will contact the school to agree the exact dates of the inspection with the governing body.

26. The governing body in a school with a delegated budget or the LA in relation to a school without a delegated budget is responsible for:

- Informing parents/carers about the inspection.
- Informing the LA (in a school with a delegated budget) that the school is to be inspected.
- Informing the person or body responsible for appointing the foundation governors in voluntary schools, and for voluntary aided schools, the diocesan authority (if different).
- Inviting views from the local community and partners, such as representatives of the local business community in secondary schools; and
- Informing the relevant person within the LA, where there are children 'looked after' by that authority in attendance at the school.

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27. Estyn will send the school a School Information Form, which asks for a range of information, such as details of staffing and curriculum arrangements. The form must be returned to the contractor and copied to Estyn.

28. The governing body must arrange a meeting between the Registered Inspector and parents/carers who have children at the school. All parents/carers (including the LA where there are 'looked after' children at the school) must be invited to the meeting, including those who are members of the school's staff or governing body. Other governors and staff cannot attend. The Registered Inspector will run the meeting. The date and time chosen for the meeting should be convenient for as many parents/carers as possible.

29. The governing body must write to parents giving at least three week's notice of the meeting. The note may enclose a statement from the Registered Inspector explaining the purpose of the meeting. Governors may wish to distribute copies of the Estyn leaflet on 'Inspecting Schools – A Guide for Parents', at the same time. The governing body may combine giving parents notice of the inspection with the notice of the meeting. 'Pupil post' can be used to deliver the letters.

The Registered Inspector's Meeting with the Governing Body

30. The Registered Inspector and a member of the inspection team will arrange to meet with the governing body to gain information about the work of governors. An agenda for this meeting is on the [Estyn website](#).

31. Through the head teacher, the governors should advise the Registered Inspector of any health and safety issues that inspectors will need to be aware of in advance of the inspection. This information will enable arrangements to be made for a risk assessment by the Registered Inspector.

Documentation

32. The Registered Inspector will ask for documents from the governing body to help plan and prepare for the inspection. These documents are listed in the Guidance Handbook for the Inspection of Schools. Registered Inspectors may accept any additional evidence schools wish to provide but cannot ask for any other documentation prior to the inspection. This approach is to reduce the bureaucratic burden on schools.

During an Inspection

33. The type of inspection will determine the length of time inspectors are in a school. Typically, this may be for two days for a short inspection in a primary school, three days for a full inspection of a special school or for up to five days for a full inspection of a secondary school. However, a section 28 inspection must be completed within 2 weeks from the date on which the inspection began. HM Inspectors (HMI) may visit the school during an inspection to monitor the performance of the Registered Inspector and members of the inspection team.

34. The core of the inspection process is classroom observation of learning and teaching. Following lesson observations, inspectors will give feedback to staff on the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching. Inspectors will also observe a range of other activities, such as registration, assemblies and extra-curriculum provision. They will arrange to talk with groups of pupils to gain their views about the school. They will also meet with staff and discuss their work and with governors. They will scrutinise a wide range of school documentation.

35. Governors should take an active and supportive role with staff and inspectors. Under Section 164 (5) of the Education Act 2002, Registered Inspectors and their teams have a formal right to enter any part of the school premises and take copies of documents: wilful obstruction of a Registered Inspector or a member of his or her team is an offence under this Act.

36. If the nominee is not the head teacher, the Registered Inspector will offer the head teacher the opportunity to hear and discuss emerging findings on a daily basis.

37. At the end of the inspection, the Registered Inspector is required to give feedback to the head teacher and staff on the good features and shortcomings in standards and provision and the factors that contribute to these good features and shortcomings.

Inspecting Religious Education and Collective Worship in Voluntary or Foundation Schools

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arrange for the Section 50 inspection also to cover the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school.

39. It is recommended that governing bodies arrange for the section 50 inspection and the section 28 inspection to take place concurrently, or as close as practicable to each other. The section 50 inspection should not normally take place later than the end of the term following that within which a section 28 inspection takes place. Estyn has informal arrangements with a number of faith-groups to facilitate this.

40. An inspection under section 50 is to be conducted by a person chosen by the governing body (or in the case of a voluntary controlled school, the foundation governors) following consultation with the person prescribed in relation to the religion or religious denomination of the school.

41. An inspection report must be prepared within 35 working days of the end of the inspection. The governing body must publish this in the same way as for section 28 inspections, which includes sending a copy of the report to the parents of all registered pupils. A copy should also be forwarded to Estyn for information.

42. The contractual arrangements, including fees, are a matter for the governing body. A grant is available towards the cost of the section 50 inspection from the Welsh Ministers.

43. The Grant will not normally be available if the section 50 takes place in a different academic year from the section 28 inspection. In exceptional circumstances where inspections have not been able to coincide, the governing body should outline the reasons when submitting the claim for the grant.

44. Payment of grant will be made in arrears, following submission of the completed application form (with form PL8), proof of expenditure in the form of a signed receipt from the inspector and a copy of the denominational inspection report to:

Schools Management and Effectiveness Division 5
 Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning & Skills
 Welsh Assembly Government
 Cathays Park
 Cardiff
 CF10 3NQ

After The Inspection

The Registered Inspector's Meeting with the Governing Body

45. After the inspection, the Registered Inspector will meet with governors to present and discuss the main findings and recommendations from the inspection. Normally, governors should invite a representative of the LA to be present at this meeting.

46. The Registered Inspector will invite the school to submit a written response to the inspection findings for inclusion in the written report. The response is sent to the Registered Inspector and published by his/her agreement. The Registered Inspector will negotiate the date for receipt of this response. Guidance on writing the school's response to the report's findings can be found in Annex 5 of the Guidance Handbook for Inspection of Schools.

The Inspection Report

47. The Registered Inspector must produce the report and summary within 35 working days of the last day of the inspection.

48. The contractor will ask the school if the report should be bi-lingual and how many copies of the summary report for parents will be required. Reports are produced in English or bilingually in English and Welsh. Before publication, the school will be sent a late draft copy of the report and have an opportunity to comment on matters of factual inaccuracy.

49. The report will make clear recommendations for improvement, where required, and give providers a clear and specific indication of the shortcomings that they will need to address in their subsequent action plans. Inspectors should write the recommendations in plain English or Welsh and in order of priority.

50. The main findings of the report will reflect the inspection team's judgement on:

- The educational standards achieved by the school.
- The quality of education provided by the school.
- How far education meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school.
- The quality of the leadership and management of the school, including whether the financial resources are managed efficiently;
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school; and
- The contribution of the school to the well-being of pupils.

51. Following receipt of the report and summary, the governing body must arrange for:

- The parents of all pupils to be sent a copy of the summary within ten working days.
- The full report and summary to be available for inspection at such times and place as may be possible by any member of the public who wishes to see it; and
- Copies of the full report and summary to be provided for anyone who asks, taking account of the charging arrangements identified below.

52. The charging arrangements are as follows:

- Single copies of the summary must be provided free.
- Charges can be made for copies of the full report, and for providing several copies of the summary, provided these are not greater than the cost of copying; and
- Charges can also be made where the person seeking a copy of the report or summary (who is not already entitled to receive a copy) lives or works more than 3 miles away from the school. Again the charges levied can not be greater than the cost of copying.

53. Governing bodies may consider placing copies of the report in local public libraries and sending the report or summary to local newspapers and radio stations. The governing body of a secondary school may also send the report to local business representatives whom they told about the inspection.

54. Reports are produced in English or bilingually in English and Welsh. It is for the governing body to consider translating the report or the summary (or both) into other languages.

The Action Plan

55. The governing body must draw up an action plan within 45 working days of receiving the inspection report. 'Working days' does not include weekends or bank holidays or holidays longer than one week but does include half-term breaks of one week or less. The action plan must set out the action to be taken on each of the recommendations identified in the report, with target dates for completion.

56. The findings and recommendations from inspection should contribute towards a plan for school development that defines clear issues on which to work, highlights targets to be achieved, and defines priorities for pupil and staff development. The action plan should be linked to or incorporated into the school's development or improvement plan. The governing body must make sure that the planned action is taken. In schools without delegated budgets, the LA prepares the school's action plan.

57. The governing body in the case of a school with a delegated budget or the LA in relation to school without a delegated budget must send a copy of the action plan to:

- The LA or the governing body as appropriate depending on whether the school has a delegated budget.
- All persons employed at the school and have requested a copy.
- The Welsh Ministers in the case of secondary schools.
- Whoever appoints the foundation governors in voluntary schools, and for voluntary aided schools, the diocesan authority (if different); and
- Parents of pupils at the school (who may be sent a summary version if the governing body so decide).

58. The copies of the action plan must be distributed within 5 working days from the date on which the governing body or LA, as appropriate, completed preparation of the action plan. If the school requires special measures or is in need of significant improvement, the period is 2 working days from the date on which the governing body or LA, as appropriate, completed preparation of the action plan.

59. Copies of the action plan must be made available to members of the public. A single copy must be provided free to anyone who asks if they live within three miles of the school. Other people can be charged for copies (as for the inspection report).

60. In their annual report to parents, the governing body must report progress on carrying out the action plan.

Schools Causing Concern

61. On every inspection, Registered Inspectors must consider if the school is in need of special measures or significant improvement.

62. If an inspection team identifies the school as requiring special measures, HMCI will arrange for a corroboration visit by HMI. When HMI have visited the school and reported on that visit, HMCI will decide whether or not he agrees with that opinion.

63. If an inspection team identifies a school as requiring significant improvement, HMCI or HMI acting on his/her behalf will scrutinise the report to see if he/she agrees with the judgement. Normally, HMI will not undertake a visit to corroborate the judgement of the Registered Inspector but may require additional information from him/her. HMCI will decide whether or not he agrees with that opinion.

64. For schools requiring special measures or significant improvement, the governing body must prepare and issue an action plan within 45 working days of receiving the inspection report or earlier if the WAG determines it must be completed more urgently.

65. The action plan should be devised with the intention of removing the school from special measures or significant improvement as soon as possible. The governing body must send a copy of the action plan to HMCI and to the WAG.

66. For further information on the steps which could be taken in these circumstances, see the following chapter.

In Brief:

The governing body must:

- Tell parents and others about an inspection.
- In voluntary aided, voluntary controlled and foundation schools designated as having a religious character, arrange a separate inspection under section 50, of collective worship and any denominational education.

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- Arrange a meeting between the Registered Inspector and parents.
- Meet with the Registered Inspector to discuss the work of governors.
- Ensure that relevant information is provided for the Registered Inspector.
- Send out the copies of the summary report to parents and the full inspection report to others.
- If the school has a delegated budget, draw up an action plan setting out follow-up action and send information about the actions proposed to parents; and
- Include information in their annual report to parents about their action plan(s) and progress being made.

The Law

The Education Act 2005

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The School Inspections Act 1996 as amended by Schedule 6 to the Education Act 1997, the Deregulation (Provision of School Action Plans) Order 1997 (SI 1997/1142) and Schedules 28 and 30 to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

The Education (School Inspection) (Wales) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006/1714)

The Government of Wales Act 1998

The Further and Higher Education Act 1992;

The Learning and Skills Act 2000

Inspection work also takes account of legislation governing Estyn and educational providers themselves, including, for example, the Welsh Language Act 1993.

Guidance

Schools Requiring Special Measures or Found to have Serious Weaknesses Following Inspection under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 NAfW Circular 28/03

Estyn Publications

Framework for the Inspection of Schools (September 2004)

Guidance on the inspection of educational provision for children before compulsory school age in settings (September 2008)

Guidance Handbook for the Inspection of Schools (September 2008).