



Draft evaluation and improvement (accountability) arrangements for Wales

February 2019

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Audience

Primary schools; middle schools; secondary schools; special schools; governing bodies of maintained schools; local authorities; diocesan authorities; regional consortia; challenge advisers; Estyn; teaching unions; national bodies with an interest in education; and members of the public.

Overview

This document sets out draft proposals for new evaluation and improvement (accountability) arrangements to support the realisation of the new curriculum.

Action required

None – for information only.

Further information

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Contents

Introduction	2
Background	3
The new evaluation and improvement arrangements	4
Accountability	7
A learning inspectorate	8
Next steps	9

Introduction

This document, and attached infographics, set out a summary of the draft arrangements that form part of the significant education reform programme that we are undertaking in Wales. These draft arrangements relate to:

- evaluation and improvement
- accountability.

It is important to recognise that these arrangements will be developed and phased in over time and there will be an evolving picture as we make the transition between the current system and future plans.

These arrangements have been developed with the profession and key stakeholders including international experts. We are grateful for their contributions so far and intend to continue working with them.

Background

Since the publication of *Education in Wales: Our national mission* and informed by the OECD review of Welsh education in 2017, the Welsh Government has worked with the teaching profession, local government, consortia, Estyn, unions and international experts to undertake a fundamental review of the current accountability system.

The conclusions from the accountability review are clear. The unintended consequences of the current assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements and performance measures include:

- a narrowing choice of the curriculum at both primary and secondary sectors
- the current Level 2 inclusive measure placing an excessive focus on the GCSE C/D boundary (not recognising the achievements of learners either below or above that threshold)
- the way in which benchmarking is used has driven competition between schools and local authorities rather than encouraging collaboration
- increased and unnecessary workload for teachers and others in the system, without the necessary impact or benefit for learners.

As such, schools are subject to potentially conflicting messages about what matters and this may divert effort from learning, teaching and raising standards towards a culture of compliance and bureaucracy.

The school and school improvement system in Wales is made up of three distinct aspects. Firstly, policy design and development; secondly delivery and implementation; and finally the underpinning accountability and improvement functions which enable us to provide and receive assurance that there is efficiency and effectiveness throughout the system.

We have made significant gains in the policy design aspect because of the ongoing engagement of stakeholders. We envisage receiving feedback over the next few months on this pivotal aspect.

The new evaluation and improvement arrangements

We have been developing new evaluation and improvement arrangements to replace parts of the current accountability system. We have taken care to ensure that the arrangements align with the emerging curriculum. This work is ongoing. We are publishing this draft to support and encourage engagement in the next stages.

These new arrangements will be robust, coherent and transparent. They will bring a new rigour to arrangements, with schools expected to take increasing accountability for their improvement journeys. We understand that this will require significant changes to culture and behaviours across the whole system, and it is not expected that these changes will happen immediately. There will be a transition period.

These new evaluation and improvement arrangements will help to bring about the cultural change needed to support the implementation and realisation of the new curriculum. It will support our aim of raising standards, reducing the attainment gap, and delivering an education system that is a source of national pride and public confidence.

The arrangements are based on the following four key principles. They will be:

- **fair** – they will promote equity, inclusion, choice, individual pathways to learning and never losing sight of the learner
- **coherent** – allowing each part of the system to work together without overlapping, with clear roles and responsibilities
- **proportionate** – ensuring that the implementation of the new arrangements and process is manageable and makes a difference. They will be underpinned by the principle of subsidiarity, allowing responsibility for accountability for schools to be local, led by self-aware schools
- **transparent** – recognising the breadth of learning experience across schools and the value added by teachers in class.

We will bring national consistency in self-evaluation to support high-quality, school improvement work. At the heart of the evaluation and improvement arrangements is robust and continuous self-evaluation for **all tiers** of the education system. This, along with peer engagement will support learning and improvement, embed collaboration, build trust, drive self-improvement and raise standards for all our learners.

We will begin to move away from a disproportionate emphasis on narrow performance measures to a wider range of indicators which better capture the whole learning experience, learner progress and our ambitions for the new curriculum.

[Overview of arrangements](#) shows the evaluation and improvement cycle and provides greater detail of how it will practically apply to each tier of the education system. We are currently working with our colleagues across government, in Estyn, Qualifications Wales and in local government to capture a comprehensive oversight of arrangements and how it will practically apply to each tier of the education system. Rigorous, data rich self evaluation will be a strong feature of future arrangements. Schools, local authorities (and their regional consortia) and Welsh Government will

all be expected to go through a process of self-evaluation, implementation planning and the publication of summary priorities.

- **Self-evaluation**

Self-evaluation will focus on the learner, their achievements, progress and experiences in school. At the heart of this, for example, will be a focus on learning and teaching, leadership, the development of a learning organisation culture, well-being of pupils and staff, equity and inclusion. Self-evaluation should focus on the four purposes of the new curriculum and evaluate the progress the school is making towards realising the new curriculum. The self-evaluation processes should identify areas of strengths and priorities for improvement.

This will be supported through a new national self-evaluation for improvement toolkit which is being developed by the OECD, Estyn and the profession. The evaluation criteria and tools and approaches will provide coherence and a common language for self-evaluation for schools; as well as for local authorities, consortia, Estyn and Welsh Government.

Self-evaluation is not the sole responsibility of senior leaders; it should involve all staff and other stakeholders and is strengthened by the involvement of peers. Schools should also include their learners, parents/carers and governors. It will focus on the four purposes of the new curriculum; and it will be a continuous process and not merely happen at a particular point in time.

To ensure rigour and support, self-evaluation, implementation planning and the summary of priorities will undergo a process of external authentication. For schools, local authorities and regional consortia further rigour will be provided by Estyn who will continue to undertake inspection to validate self-evaluation.

- **Planning for improvement**

The outcome of the self-evaluation process will be the identification of priorities for improvement.

- **Publication of summary priorities and implementation plan**

A summary of the key findings and priorities will be published. This is in line with current expectations for schools as part of the regulations on publishing school development plans, and do not add to workload. Our intention is that for schools, these priorities for improvement will form part of the statutory process of target setting which will need to be agreed by the governing body and approved by the local authority.

It is expected that schools will include peers to support their self-evaluation arrangements.

- **Authentication**

For schools this process of authentication will be undertaken by regional consortia. National school categorisation, which indicates the level of support schools need from the system to improve, will evolve into a more sophisticated

self-evaluation process that looks at a broader range of indicators, such as learner well-being. To ensure rigour and support, local authority, regional consortia and Welsh Government self-evaluations will also undergo a process of external authentication. This will ensure that the self-evaluation is a true and authentic reflection of the institution's strengths and priorities for improvement and match that to an appropriate level of support.

- **Inspection**

Estyn will continue to inspect schools. As a response to the report *A Learning Inspectorate* the nature of inspection will change. Estyn will consult on those arrangements in due course. Estyn will also inspect local authorities and regional consortia and judge the arrangements in place in each region to ensure rigour and consistency.

- **Improvement indicators**

Schools, local authorities, regional consortia and Welsh Government are data rich, but do not always currently use this information to drive improvement. The intelligent use of data is an integral part of self-evaluation. Working with stakeholders, we are currently mapping the range of data which can inform self-evaluation. This will extend further than learner performance alone and include other key measures regarding well-being, learning and teaching and leadership. We envisage that the indicators we use will be wide ranging. They will be non-hierarchical and provide a wider range of both qualitative and quantitative information to support a school's ongoing improvement journey. We will look at system-wide indicators as well as school level indicators. We are taking consideration of workload and bureaucracy, as we plan for the changes necessary culturally whilst maintaining a clear focus on accountability to make sure every learner gets equity in our schooling system.

[Overview of arrangements](#) gives additional clarity on how self-evaluation applies to each tier in the system. We will continue to work with schools and all stakeholders as we develop these arrangements.

[Key planning milestones for schools to 2022](#) provides additional information on the timelines for developing the new evaluation and improvement arrangements and the key products within it, namely: the self-evaluation for improvement toolkit, the authentication process and proposed changes to Estyn inspection.

Accountability

Effective and rigorous accountability arrangements are pivotal to the success of our ambitious reform programme and the high aspirations set out in the *Our national mission*. We will plan appropriately so that we make the best use of each aspect of the system to build proportionate and coherent arrangements.

We will make sure that our policies, guidance documents or legislative changes include safeguards and inbuilt accountability arrangements where appropriate. Schools will continue to be required to publish their improvement priorities, in line with school development plan regulations. We will develop system-wide measures to help us nationally to judge progress in policy implementation. We will avoid the aggregation of school level data.

We will use our delivery mechanism and self-evaluation arrangements for schools, local authorities and regional consortia to drive improvement in an environment where accuracy and transparency is given precedence. School level target setting expectations will remain as will the need for local authorities to approve the process of target setting. It will evolve however, to give schools more flexibility to identify improvement targets appropriate to the school's context. We will expect schools to increase further the range and quality of evidence used to inform their self-evaluation arrangements and improvement priorities. The school improvement functions, which are delivered on behalf of local authorities by regional consortia, will remain. Regional consortia will continue to provide support to schools in proportion to need, and in line with the improvement priorities identified.

National school categorisation, which indicates the level of support schools need from the system to improve, will need to evolve into a more sophisticated process that looks at a broader range of indicators, such as learner well-being. It is expected that this will evolve into an ongoing process of authentication of a school's self-evaluation and priorities for development.

We will also use democratic accountability arrangements at national, regional and local level to support the implementation of our reform programme. Governing bodies will remain the first line of accountability for schools. Their duties will remain. We will develop a training package for governors on the new expectations. Estyn will continue to inspect schools and the work of local authorities and regional consortia. Estyn will continue to produce annual reports and thematic reports. They will also produce a state of the nation report every three years. The Welsh Government will develop and deliver a programme of monitoring performance in the national priorities. The Welsh Government will continue to participate in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) on a three-yearly cycle.

We will also continue to work with the middle tier on the cultural and behavioural changes needed to support these arrangements. We understand that we must also ensure alignment of each aspect of work and take care to avoid conflicting messages, unnecessary bureaucracy and excessive workload.

A learning inspectorate

Estyn will play a key role in the new evaluation and improvement arrangements as set out in *A Learning Inspectorate – Independent review of Estyn*. We fully supported Estyn in undertaking the review and welcomed the report. The Minister for Education has announced that she has agreed to support all the recommendations in the report that required the consideration and approval of the Welsh Government and fully support Estyn in taking forward those recommendations that fall to them as an Inspectorate. We will continue to work closely with Estyn on taking these forward, and there will be a period of consultation before proposals are implemented, but to be clear Estyn will continue to be independent from Welsh Government.

In respect of the recommendations that require the approval of Welsh Government, Estyn's statutory duties remain. Inspection will continue, it will be robust, provide rigour and clear evidence on the quality and standards of education and training provided in Wales.

Schools will continue to be inspected against the provisions that are set out in primary legislation along with the four main questions set out in *A Learning Inspectorate – Independent review of Estyn*.

There will be a partial suspension of inspection from September 2020 to August 2021 to enable the inspectorate to work more closely with schools and consortia on the curriculum reform. This will be achieved through amending current regulations to extend the inspection cycle from seven years to eight years. However, those schools that continue to give cause for concern will be monitored by Estyn during this time and will continue to receive support from their regional consortia and local authorities.

Moving forward Estyn will change the way they undertake their inspections. This will involve the validation of the school's self-evaluation and improvement processes and will take place more regularly than in the current cycle. Estyn will shortly begin a process of consulting with stakeholders on the new arrangements from 2021. This will include inspecting schools more than once within a seven year cycle – giving parents/carers even greater and more frequent clarity of how their child's school is doing. There will be the continued use of statutory categories of 'Significant Improvement' and 'Special Measures'. Working with our stakeholders, Welsh Government will also review and strengthen the approach to support those schools causing most concern.

We have continued to listen to and work with our workforce, and international experts, and it is our view that these arrangements, along with the wider evaluation and improvement arrangements, are the right thing to do for our school system and for our children in schools. Estyn will make a further announcement on the detail of what this means for them shortly.

Next steps

The publication of these draft arrangements is the starting point for discussion and development. We will need to work with the profession and our key partners in the middle tier to develop and provide clarity around the processes, roles and responsibilities and mechanisms sitting behind this proposal.

As we reform the arrangements, we expect to see the following developments inform our work.

- A full review of performance indicators, what they will look like and how they will be used.
- The evolution of the current school categorisation model.
- Clarity on how schools causing concern will be supported.
- Working with our new 'Strategic Education Delivery Group'.
- Greater clarity around roles and responsibilities in the middle tier.
- Clarity on future assessment arrangements and target setting.
- Developments to inspection and the role of Estyn.
- The development of a common self-evaluation for improvement toolkit for schools.

We expect these factors to positively affect system change, increasing collaboration between schools and those in the middle tier, and the development of greater earned autonomy for schools resulting in a mature self-improving system. In turn, the new arrangements will ensure the best possible educational outcomes for all learners.

In April, we will publish the Assessment and Evaluation Framework which will set out the difference between assessment – those activities whose place lies in learning and teaching – and evaluation – those that are for the purposes of self-evaluation, external accountability and national monitoring.

We are sharing the draft evaluation and improvement arrangements now to show how the system is developing and to help you prepare your feedback to us. The assessment arrangements will be published along with the new curriculum in April.