

**Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc
ac Addysg**

**Children, Young People
and Education Committee**

Owen Evans
HM Chief Inspector, Estyn

03 April 2025

Questions following annual scrutiny session

Dear Owen,

Thank you and your colleagues for appearing before Committee on 5 March. We were grateful for your time in relation to both the annual scrutiny session and the evidence gathering session for our 'routes into post-16 education and training' inquiry.

During the annual scrutiny session you agreed to provide a note on the latest numbers of schools in follow-up, the two statutory categories of requiring significant improvement and in special measures, and some characteristics about the schools (including which regions of Wales they are concentrated in, and any relevant pupil demographics).

During the second session your colleagues agreed to provide further information about the support that is provided when compulsory school age ends, including examples of where there are specific problems and examples of what is working well.

We did not have time to ask you all of our planned questions during the annual scrutiny session. We also have some further questions that we would like to ask you as a result of our private discussions. I would therefore be grateful if you could respond to the following in writing.

Curriculum and ALN reforms

1. For a number of years now, developing a shared understanding of progression has been highlighted by Estyn, and acknowledged by the Welsh Government, as an area of difficulty in implementing the new curriculum. Why is this still the case, given the guidance and direction that has been issued by the Welsh Government, and are things going in the right direction or not?

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2. You say in your foreword that schools have made good progress in implementing the new Additional Learning Needs system and complying with the legislation. However, Estyn has also said that implementation is inconsistent and pupils with ALN are not always supported well enough. Can you give us, on balance, a frank assessment of whether the needs of pupils with ALN are being identified and met?

Post-16 education and training

3. Your reports states that the proportion of learners in further education colleges achieving higher grades in both vocational and A-level programmes was too low. Why is this and what needs to be done, and by whom, to address this issue?
4. The issue of completion rates of apprenticeships has come up in this year's report, as it did last year, with concerns about the health and social care sector in particular being raised both years. What, if any, improvements have you seen this year from last year? What factors do you think are causing this issue and who needs to be doing what to address this?
5. Your report notes the challenges apprenticeship providers have faced due to funding cuts and states this has caused a reduction in the number of apprentices. How strongly did this come across during your inspections and what actions are providers having to take to address the reduction in funding?

Other

6. During the evidence session you spoke about what the school system is doing well, and where it needs to improve. On reflection, what do you believe are the three most important priorities for the school system as a whole at this point in time?
7. You told us during the evidence session on 5 March that the Welsh Government has a role in ensuring that school leaders are held to account for how well they share good practice. Do you also believe that local authorities also have a responsibility in this area, and, if so, how can they be held to account for doing so, and by whom?

Thank you again for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely,



Buffy Williams MS
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.