

Meeting of:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 10 November 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Summary of Estyn inspection outcomes for summer term 2025 and update on schools in statutory follow-up.
Purpose of Report:	To update Members on Estyn outcomes of schools inspected during the spring term 2025 and progress of schools in statutory follow-up categories
Report Owner:	Elizabeth Jones, Director of Learning and Skills
Responsible Officer:	Carys Pritchard, Lead Officer for School Improvement
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Councillor Rhiannon Birch, Cabinet Member for Education, Arts and the Welsh Language Morwen Thomas, Head of Standards and Provision
Policy Framework:	The recommendations of this report are within existing policy framework and budget
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estyn inspects quality and standards in education across Wales. A new inspection framework was introduced in September 2024. From September 2024, Estyn will be engaging more regularly with schools. Schools will now have a core inspection and an interim visit within the 6-year inspection period (2024 – 2030). • During the summer term 2025, two schools from the Vale of Glamorgan received a core inspection (Palmerston Primary and St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School). • No follow up work was identified by Estyn in relation to Palmerston Primary. St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School was placed in the statutory follow-up category of significant improvement. • A ‘spotlight’ highlighting interesting or innovative practice is included within the Palmerston Primary inspection report. This highlights the school’s effective family engagement. • During the summer term 2025, one school, Y Bont Faen Primary, received an interim visit. • Pencoedtre High School remains in special measures. The progress of the school is monitored by Estyn on a termly basis. • Fairfield Primary is in the statutory follow up category of significant improvement. The school’s post-inspection action plan (PIAP) was approved by Estyn in July 2025. 	

Recommendations

1. That Members consider the Estyn inspection outcomes for the summer term and congratulate Palmerston Primary on their core inspection with no Estyn follow-up activity.
2. That Members consider:
 - the progress of Pencoedtre High School in addressing their Estyn recommendations.
 - the work that has begun in relation to Fairfield Primary and St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School to address the recommendations within their inspection reports.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. In order that Members are aware of Estyn findings relating to Vale of Glamorgan schools.
2. In order for Members to be aware of the progress that schools in Estyn statutory follow up categories are making in relation to their inspection recommendations.

1. Background

- 1.1 A new inspection framework was introduced by Estyn in September 2024. From September 2024, Estyn will be engaging more regularly with schools. Schools will now have a core inspection and an interim visit within the 6-year inspection period (2024 – 2030).
- 1.2 School inspections are governed by the Education Act 2005 and related regulations. Inspections must be conducted by teams of inspectors, led by an HMI, additional inspector or registered inspector, and must result in a written report. Section 28 of the Education Act 2005, says that inspectors must report on:
 - the quality of education provided by the school
 - how far education meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school
 - the educational standards achieved by the school
 - the quality of leadership and management of the school, including whether the financial resources are managed efficiently
 - the development of the pupils by reference to the four purposes of a curriculum for those pupils
 - the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school
 - whether the provision promotes health eating and drinking
 - the contribution of the school to the wellbeing of pupils

- 1.3** With the new Estyn inspection framework introduced in September 2024, there are three inspection areas. They are:
- teaching and learning
 - well-being, care, support and guidance
 - leading and improving
- 1.4** Inspection reports from September 2024 will also now include a section with additional information at the end of the report. This section will include statements on the following items:
- safeguarding arrangements
 - healthy eating and drinking
 - school funding
 - health and safety issues (safety on the site)
- 1.5** When conducting school inspections, the main forms of evidence considered are:
- samples of pupils' work
- 1.6** discussions with pupils, staff, leaders, managers, governors, parents/carers 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
 - relevant information from the local authority/regional consortium
 - professional dialogue
- 1.7** The reporting inspector is responsible for producing a final inspection report that is clear to a lay audience and helpful to the school. Estyn publishes a report for the school and also a version for parents/carers.
- 1.8** The notice period for a school receiving a core inspection is ten working days.
- 1.9** During all core inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the school needs any follow-up activity.
- 1.10** With the new inspection framework introduced in September 2024, there are two types of follow-up category:
- significant improvement
 - special measures
- 1.11** All follow-up work involves activity by Estyn inspectors. The activity involves increasing levels of intervention in proportion to need.
- 1.12** A new feature of the inspection framework introduced in September 2024 is the interim visit led by Estyn. An interim visit will be a single day for most primary

schools and for most secondary schools, the visit will last two days. For larger primaries, the visit can be extended up to two days.

- 1.13 The notice period for a school receiving an interim visit by Estyn is five working days.
- 1.14 The purpose of interim visits is to support schools with their self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- 1.15 Following an interim visit, feedback will be provided to the headteacher. A short letter will be published on the Estyn website summarising the outcome of the visit. The letter will outline feedback to support the school with the next steps in their improvement process.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 Two schools from the Vale of Glamorgan received a core inspection by Estyn during the summer term 2025: Palmerston Primary and St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School.
- 2.2 A summary of the inspection findings for the four schools is appended to this report (**Appendix 1**).
- 2.3 **Appendix 2** provides an overview of the schools who have received a core inspection by Estyn since the introduction of the new framework in September 2024.
- 2.4 No follow up work was identified by Estyn in relation to Palmerston Primary. St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School was placed in the statutory follow-up category of significant improvement.
- 2.5 As a result of being in a statutory follow-up category, St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School are required to draft a PIAP to address the Estyn recommendations. The plan must be presented to Estyn within 20 working days of the publication of their inspection report. The PIAP sets out the work proposed to enable the school to make sufficient improvement to address the deficiencies identified by Estyn as soon as possible. The local authority has worked closely with the school in devising the draft PIAP. The plan also proposes any actions the local authority will take in light of the inspection report.
- 2.6 Progress in relation to the PIAP will be monitored on a half-termly basis involving representatives from the school, local authority and diocese.
- 2.7 Estyn will be revisiting the school to monitor progress against the recommendations around 12-18 months after the publications of the report. If Estyn consider that sufficient progress has been made, the school will be removed from its category. If insufficient progress has been made, then Estyn will consider whether the school should be judged as requiring special measures.
- 2.8 Where inspectors identify any interesting or innovative practice that is worthy of sharing more widely, Estyn include a short 'spotlight on...' within the report. For Palmerston Primary there is a spotlight included on effective family engagement.

Appendix 3 highlights the spotlights identified in Estyn reports of Vale of Glamorgan schools since September 2024.

- 2.9** One school, Y Bont Faen Primary, received an interim visit during the summer term. The visit focused on two of the school's improvement priorities for the 2024-25 academic year. **Appendix 4** provides an overview of the schools who have received an interim visit by Estyn since the introduction of the new framework in September 2024.
- 2.10** At the start of the summer term, two Vale of Glamorgan schools were in a statutory follow up category: Pencoedtre High School in special measures, and Fairfield Primary in significant improvement.
- 2.11** For Pencoedtre, as a secondary school in special measures, a multi-agency panel has been established that includes an Estyn HMI, representatives from the school, local authority and regional consortia. One meeting of this panel was held during the summer term 2025.
- 2.12** Estyn undertook a monitoring visit to Pencoedtre in July 2025 with a particular focus on:
- Recommendation 2: Improve the provision and strategic approach to supporting pupils' attendance and behaviour
 - Recommendation 4: Improve the strategic leadership and quality of the provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN), and the general oversight of the range of provisions offered to all pupils in need of additional support
- 2.13** Estyn report that the school has begun to take appropriate steps to improve attendance. Roles and responsibilities have been clarified, and the school has adopted a more strategic approach to attendance, including data analysis for individual and groups of pupils.
- 2.14** Estyn recognise that the school's unverified attendance data indicates improvement; however, attendance, particularly of pupils eligible for free school meals, remains far too low.
- 2.15** Estyn note that behaviour at Pencoedtre High continues to improve. The school is developing a range of appropriate strategies and provision to support its most vulnerable learners. Leaders are also beginning to take a more strategic approach to monitoring behaviour. Further work is needed to monitor the impact of these approaches.
- 2.16** In lessons observed, Estyn report that many pupils are punctual, attentive, and settle quickly. A minority of learners are passive in lessons and are overly reliant on teachers. During social times, many pupils behave appropriately and are courteous.
- 2.17** In terms of recommendation 4, Estyn report that the local authority has provided beneficial support to strengthen ALN provision. As a result, the school has started developing appropriate provision for ALN pupils.

- 2.18** New interventions have been introduced, focusing on literacy and communication skills.
- 2.19** The school is building purposeful relationships with partner primary schools to support transition. This collaboration is helping to provide enhanced transition activities for vulnerable pupils.
- 2.20** The school is making suitable progress in implementing the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act (Wales) 2018.
- 2.21** The ALN team has reviewed and revised Individual Development Plans to better reflect pupils' needs. Further consistency is needed in relation to One Page Profiles.
- 2.22** Internal provisions, such as 'Roots' for Year 7 pupils, are having a positive impact on attendance and behaviour. However, there is variation in planning and coordination of these provisions.
- 2.23** Staff have accessed helpful professional learning opportunities to support ALN pupils. However, there is too much variability and inconsistency in strategies across schools.
- 2.24** In relation to Fairfield Primary, their PIAP has been approved by Estyn in July 2025.
- 2.25** New temporary leadership arrangements, an interim executive headteacher and an acting head of school, are in place at Fairfield Primary for this academic year.
- 2.26** Support is ongoing for the school from Central South Consortium in relation to curriculum, teaching and assessment, Mathematics and Numeracy and Welsh. This support aligns closely with the Estyn recommendations.
- 2.27** Progress in relation to the PIAP is being monitored by the LA on a half-termly basis.
- 2.28** The progress made by Fairfield will be reviewed by Estyn 12-18 months following the publication of their inspection report in May 2025.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 ("the 2015 Act") requires the Council to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.
- 3.2** Support for learners contributes to the Council's Wellbeing Objectives drawn from the Corporate Plan 2025-30. There is specific alignment with our wellbeing objective to work with and for our communities to give everyone a good start in life and to support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth.

- 3.3** This report recognises the importance of identifying best practice in learning, provision and leadership in schools which will meet the needs of young people over the long term.
- 3.4** The report recognises the importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the outcome and those people reflect the diversity of the area which the report addresses. All relevant stakeholders have been involved in the consultation process through this report.
- 3.5** This report supports the objectives listed in the Service Plan for Standards and Provision 2025-26.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no climate change and nature implications resulting from this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

Employment

- 5.2** There are no employment implications arising from this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. Background Papers

None.

Appendix 1: School Inspections Summer 2025

School	Palmerston Primary		Headteacher	Sarah Cason
Date	May 2025		Reporting Inspector	Rebecca Barker
Report	Read report here			

Recommendations and context for recommendations
1. Address inconsistencies in teaching to ensure that all pupils are challenged appropriately and develop their independence
Reason/Context for recommendation In a minority of lessons, particularly in the older pupils' classes, there is a tendency for adults to over-scaffold learning, and direct pupils too much. As a result, a minority of pupils are not always sufficiently challenged, and there are too few opportunities for pupils to progress independently in their learning, or to make choices about how they learn.
2. Improve attendance rates
Reason/Context for recommendation The school monitors pupils' attendance diligently. Despite the school's considerable efforts and the support they provide for families around the importance of attending school, the rates of attendance remain too low, and leaders do not account for the rates of persistent absenteeism well enough.
3. Strengthen resource management
Reason/Context for recommendation The school has a significant deficit budget that has increased since last year and currently there are no robust plans in place to manage the school's resources going forwards

Follow-Up Category: No follow up

Have Estyn highlighted any 'spotlights'? Yes

- Effective family engagement

School	St Richard Gwyn	Headteacher	David Blackwell
Date	May 2025	Reporting Inspector	Amranwen Thomas
Report	Read report here		

Recommendations and context for recommendations
1. Improve the consistency of quality teaching across the school
Reason/Context for recommendation in a minority of lessons, teaching lacks the necessary challenge, structure, and responsiveness to meet pupils' needs, particularly for those with weaker skills. This results in a minority of pupils making limited progress.
2. Strengthen the strategic leadership of skills so that pupils have challenging and progressive opportunities to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital skills across the curriculum
Reason/Context for recommendation The school has made some progress in the development of the provision for literacy, but leadership lacks strategic planning and evaluation. The provision for developing pupils' numeracy and digital competence outside of mathematics and information technology lessons is also underdeveloped.
3. Improve the planning and provision for pupils with ALN
Reason/Context for recommendation The provision for pupils with additional learning needs (ALN) includes providing useful support information for teachers. However, the impact of the provision is not evaluated rigorously, and there is insufficient training for staff to enable them to plan effectively for meeting the needs of ALN pupils. Consequently, a minority of ALN pupils do not make sufficient progress.
4. Ensure that school improvement processes focus precisely on the impact of provision on pupils' learning and progress
Reason/Context for recommendation While leaders at all levels participate in self-evaluation activities and improvement planning, processes lack precision and do not focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Strategic planning by senior leaders does not always identify or address the most pressing priorities well enough.
5. Strengthen accountability at all levels
Reason/Context for recommendation Accountability structures across the school are underdeveloped and do not support staff to improve the quality of their work.

Follow-Up Category: Significant Improvement

Have Estyn highlighted any 'spotlights'? No

Appendix 2: Schools who have received a core inspection by Estyn since September 2024

Autumn 2024	
Gwenfo C/W Primary School	<u>Read report here</u>
St Athan Primary School	<u>Read report here</u>

Spring 2025	
Oak Field Primary and Nursery School	<u>Read report here</u>
Ysgol Y Deri	<u>Read report here</u>
Fairfield Primary School	<u>Read report here</u>
Ysgol Gymraeg Gwaun Y Nant	<u>Read report here</u>

Summer 2025	
Palmerston Primary	<u>Read report here</u>
St Richard Gwyn Catholic High School	<u>Read report here</u>

Appendix 3: Spotlights of effective practice identified by Estyn since September 2024

Autumn 2024	
Gwenfo Church in Wales Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership and community working
Spring 2025	
Oak Field Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing effective partnerships with parents to support pupils' learning and well-being • Developing a creative curriculum through a focus on the expressive arts and inquiry-based learning
Ysgol y Deri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality interventions • The provision of assistive technology • Vocational curriculum • Outdoor experiences • Professional learning
Summer 2025	
Palmerston Primary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective Family Engagement

Appendix 4: Schools who have received an interim visit by Estyn since September 2024

Autumn 2024	
Stanwell School	<u>Interim letter</u>

Spring 2025	
Llandough Primary	<u>Interim letter</u>
Whitmore High	<u>Interim letter</u>
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary	<u>Interim letter</u>
Albert Primary	<u>Interim letter</u>
Peterston Super Ely Church in Wales Primary	<u>Interim letter</u>
Sully Primary	<u>Interim letter</u>
Pendoylan Church in Wales Primary	<u>Interim letter</u>
Ysgol y Ddraig	<u>Interim letter</u>

Summer 2025	
Y Bont Faen Primary	<u>Interim letter</u>