

Meeting of:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 23 March 2026
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Start Well Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Summary of Estyn Inspection Outcomes for Autumn Term 2025 and Update on Schools in Statutory Follow-up.
Purpose of Report:	To update Members on Estyn outcomes of schools inspected during the autumn 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
Executive Summary: - 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 autumn term 2025, three schools from the Vale of Glamorgan received a core inspection: Gladstone Primary, Colcot Primary and Ysgol Sant Baruc. - No follow up work was identified by Estyn in relation to three schools that received a core inspection during the autumn term. - A ‘spotlight’ highlighting interesting or innovative practice is included within the inspection reports of all three schools inspected. The inspection report for Gladstone highlights the school’s highly effective enabling environment for younger pupils, as well as its strong partnership working to support pupils and their families. Colcot’s inspection report also notes the school’s effective partnership working and its provision to meet the needs of families. At Ysgol Sant Baruc, the use of a staff charter to support the performance evaluation process is highlighted as a notable feature.	

- During the autumn term 2025, one school, St Helen's Catholic 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 and St Richard Gwyn Catholic High are both in the statutory follow up category of significant improvement. St Richard Gwyn's school's post-inspection action plan (PIAP) was approved by Estyn in November 2025.

Recommendations

1. That Members consider the Estyn inspection outcomes for the autumn term and congratulate Gladstone Primary, Colcot Primary and Ysgol Sant Baruc 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
 - 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.
- 1.6** 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.
- 1.7** The notice period for a school receiving a core inspection is ten working days.
- 1.8** During all core inspections, the inspection team will consider whether the school needs any follow-up activity.
- 1.9** With the new inspection framework introduced in September 2024, there are two types of follow-up category:
- significant improvement
 - special measures.
- 1.10** All follow-up work involves activity by Estyn inspectors. The activity involves increasing levels of intervention in proportion to need.

- 1.11 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.
- 1.12 The notice period for a school receiving an interim visit by Estyn is five working days.
- 1.13 The purpose of interim visits is to support schools with their self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- 1.14 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 Three schools from the Vale of Glamorgan received a core inspection by Estyn during the autumn term 2025: Gladstone Primary, Colcot Primary and Ysgol Sant Baruc.
- 2.2 A summary of the inspection findings for the three 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 the three primary schools inspected during the autumn term.
- 2.5 Where inspectors identify interesting or innovative practice that is worthy of wider sharing, Estyn includes a short 'spotlight on...' section within the inspection report. Four such spotlights have been featured in the inspection reports published during the autumn term. Two appear in Gladstone Primary School's report, focusing on the school's highly effective enabling environment for younger pupils and its strong partnership working to support pupils and their families. The report for Colcot Primary highlights the school's partnership working and its support for the needs of families. At Ysgol Sant Baruc, the use of a staff charter to support the performance evaluation process is identified as noteworthy practice. **Appendix 3** summarises all spotlights identified in Estyn reports for Vale of Glamorgan schools since September 2024.
- 2.6 One school, St Helen's Catholic Primary, received an interim visit during the autumn term. The visit focused on two of the school's recommendations following their core inspection in October 2022. **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.

- 2.7** During the autumn term, three Vale of Glamorgan schools were in a statutory follow up category: Pencoedtre High School in special measures, and Fairfield Primary and St Richard Gwyn Catholic High in significant improvement.
- 2.8** 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 and Local Authority. Two meetings of this panel were held during the autumn term 2025.
- 2.9** Estyn undertook a monitoring visit to Pencoedtre in December 2025 with a particular focus on:
- Recommendation 3: Improve the quality of teaching and assessment
 - Recommendation 5: Improve the provision to develop the standards of pupils' skills.
- 2.10** In terms of teaching and learning, Estyn report that since the core inspection, leaders have fostered a collaborative culture where teachers share practice and engage in professional learning. This is leading to early improvements in classroom practice.
- 2.11** Overall, teachers foster positive relationships, manage behaviour well, and provide clear instructions. However, teachers' use of modelling to support pupils with the structure of their work is inconsistent.
- 2.12** Teachers question well for recall and to check for understanding. However, teachers do not always listen purposefully to responses.
- 2.13** Assessment practices are developing, with emerging use of live and whole-class feedback improving pupil responses. Pupils show positive attitudes, listen well, and sustain concentration, but teachers do not always address passivity well enough, allowing some pupils to remain off task.
- 2.14** Following recent leadership changes, the school has adopted a more focused approach to improving literacy and numeracy.
- 2.15** Dedicated skills lessons have been introduced to support pupils with weaker literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders are beginning to identify key areas for development but remain overly reliant on test data rather than combining this with self-evaluation to pinpoint specific skill gaps.
- 2.16** In literacy, the school has prioritised selected aspects of provision, but the current approach is narrow. Early work to embed literacy across the curriculum is underway, though opportunities for pupils to develop speaking, listening, reading, and writing remains limited.
- 2.17** For numeracy, leaders have started to use a sensible approach to identifying pupils' strengths and weaknesses. This information is used to plan intervention sessions and refine mathematics provision. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact. Across the wider curriculum, authentic and challenging opportunities for progressive numeracy development are limited.
- 2.18** Digital skills development is largely confined to ICT lessons, with few opportunities elsewhere in the curriculum.

- 2.19** In relation to Fairfield Primary, their PIAP has been approved by Estyn in July 2025.
- 2.20** Temporary leadership arrangements are in place at Fairfield Primary for this academic year, involving an interim executive headteacher and an acting head of school.
- 2.21** 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.
- 2.22** Progress in relation to the PIAP is being monitored by the LA on a half-termly basis.
- 2.23** The progress made by Fairfield will be reviewed by Estyn 12-18 months following the publication of their inspection report in May 2025.
- 2.24** In relation to St Richard Gwyn, their PIAP has been approved by Estyn in November 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 Autumn 2025

School	Gladstone Primary	Headteacher	Ceri- Ann Ellis
Date	01:10:2025	Reporting Inspector	Jonathan Bussy
Report	Read report here		

Recommendations and context for recommendations
1. Work with the local authority to address the school's financial challenges
Reason/Context for recommendation Currently, the school is in a very difficult financial situation with a large deficit budget. Leaders are in the process of developing a financial recovery plan to present to the local authority.
2. Improve mathematics teaching for older pupils
Reason/Context for recommendation Leaders have introduced a new approach to teaching mathematics that is beginning to have a positive impact on the ability of younger pupils to understand and use number. In the older classes, teachers do not consider the individual abilities of their pupils well enough and as a result, many older pupils do not receive the appropriate level of challenge or support during mathematics lessons.
3. Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills
Reason/Context for recommendation Most teachers model spoken Welsh appropriately and provide pupils with regular opportunities to rehearse Welsh words and sentence patterns. However, opportunities for pupils to apply this learning in conversation are limited and as a result, most pupils across the school, lack confidence when speaking Welsh.

Follow-Up Category: No follow up

Have Estyn highlighted any 'spotlights'? Yes

- Providing a highly effective enabling environment for younger pupils
- Effective partnership working to support pupils and their families

School	Colcot Primary	Headteacher	Nia Cule
Date	15:10:2025	Reporting Inspector	Jacqui Roome
Report	Read report here		

Recommendations and context for recommendations	
1. Improve staff understanding of child development and pupil engagement to ensure that all adults provide purposeful learning that builds on pupils' skills progressively	
Reason/Context for recommendation In the most effective lessons, teachers plan learning that builds on pupils' prior knowledge and use questioning skilfully to provide challenge and support. However, planning for younger pupils is less effective. This is because activities do not always match the pupils' needs or provide sufficient opportunities to deepen learning through purposeful, play-based experiences. In these cases, the role of teaching assistants tends to be supervisory, and they are not always clear about how to support learning effectively. This means that pupils sometimes miss out on opportunities to deepen or extend their learning.	
2. Strengthen the quality and consistency of feedback to help pupils improve their work and achieve the next steps in their learning	
Reason/Context for recommendation The consistency and quality of feedback remain at an early stage of development. The impact of feedback on pupils' progress varies, with a few teachers focusing more on praise and completion of tasks rather than on improving the quality of pupils' learning.	
3. Improve standards in Welsh	
Reason/Context for recommendation There is a lack of progression in pupils' ability to develop their Welsh language skills beyond a basic level and, as a result, the overall progress that pupils make is limited.	
4. Improve the financial management of the school	
Reason/Context for recommendation Governors are aware of the school's financial challenges and meet regularly to discuss these. The headteacher and governors are working with the local authority to tackle the school's significant budget deficit, but the plans in place are not robust enough to deliver meaningful improvement.	

Follow-Up Category: No follow up

Have Estyn highlighted any 'spotlights'? Yes

- Partnership Working and Supporting the Needs of Families

School	Ysgol Sant Baruc	Headteacher	Rhian Andrew
Date	15:10:2025	Reporting Inspector	Huw Watkins
Report	Read report here		

Recommendations and context for recommendations
1. Continue to refine teaching to ensure that the expectations of all teachers are consistently high
Reason/Context for recommendation In the majority of classrooms, where teaching is at its best, teachers plan purposeful learning experiences that build directly on pupils' previous skills and ensure that they make sound progress. However, in a minority of classes, teachers' expectations are inconsistent. In these classes, pupils' progress is not as good as it could be.
2. Developing pupils' independent leadership roles
Reason/Context for recommendation Although the school has a range of children's committees which represent pupils of varying ages, abilities and backgrounds, staff have a tendency to over-lead them. As a result, pupils' leadership skills have not developed fully.

Follow-Up Category: No follow up

Have Estyn highlighted any 'spotlights'? Yes

- Using a staff charter to facilitate the performance evaluation procedure

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>

Autumn 2025	
Gladstone Primary	<u>Read report here</u>
Colcot Primary	<u>Read report here</u>
Ysgol Sant Baruc	<u>Read report here</u>

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

Autumn 2024	
Gwenfo Church in Wales Primary	Partnership and community working
Spring 2025	
Oak Field Primary	- 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	- High quality interventions - The provision of assistive technology - Vocational curriculum - Outdoor experiences - Professional learning
Summer 2025	
Palmerston Primary	Effective Family Engagement
Autumn 2025	
Gladstone Primary	- Providing a highly effective enabling environment for younger pupils - Effective partnership working to support pupils and their families
Colcot Primary	Partnership Working and Supporting the Needs of Families
Ysgol Sant Baruc	Using a staff charter to facilitate the performance evaluation procedure

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>

Autumn 2025	
St Helen's Catholic Primary	<u>Interim letter</u>