

Meeting of:	CABINET
Date of Meeting:	11 MARCH 2025
Report Title:	OUTCOMES OF ESTYN INSPECTIONS OF SCHOOLS IN BRIDGEND DURING AUTUMN TERM 2024
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CORPORATE DIRECTOR – EDUCATION, EARLY YEARS AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Responsible Officer:	SUE ROBERTS GROUP MANAGER SCHOOL SUPPORT
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the Council's policy framework or procedure rules.
Executive Summary:	This report contains information about the core inspections of five primary schools and one secondary school that took place during the autumn term 2024. The report also provides information on interim visits to three primary schools, one infant school and one secondary school during the autumn term 2024. There is also information on the removal of Caerau Primary School from the Estyn category of special measures.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcomes of the Estyn core inspection visits during autumn term 2024 to the following schools (in order of inspection date):

- Pencoed Comprehensive School;
- Maes yr Haul Primary School;
- Oldcastle Primary School;
- Bryncethin Primary School;
- Mynydd Cynffig Primary School; and
- Pen y Fai Church in Wales Primary School.

1.2 The report will also inform Cabinet of the outcomes of the Estyn interim visits during the autumn term 2024 to the following schools (in order of inspection date):

- Trelales Primary School;
- Porthcawl Comprehensive School;
- Bryntirion Infant School;
- Coychurch (Llangrallo) Primary School; and
- Pîl Primary School.

- 1.3 The report contains information on Estyn's follow-up visit to Caerau Primary School and their removal from the list of schools requiring special measures.

2. Background

- 2.1 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Estyn had suspended inspections across all schools for a one-year period.
- 2.2 During the spring and summer terms 2022, Estyn piloted inspection arrangements that support renewal and reform in education in Wales. Inspection reports no longer included summative gradings, but instead detailed how well providers are helping a child to learn.
- 2.3 In June 2023, Estyn announced they were reviewing how they inspect across all sectors to make sure their work keeps pace with changes in Wales and that learners' best interests continue to be prioritised.
- 2.4 From September 2024, new inspection arrangements were introduced by Estyn, which would allow for more regular visits to primary, secondary, and all-age schools as well as pupil referral units (PRUs).
- 2.5 Maintained schools and PRUs will now have a core inspection and an interim visit within the six-year inspection period. Core inspections will be led by an Estyn HMI (His Majesty's Inspector) or a registered inspector.
- 2.6 During a core inspection, inspection teams will not give overall grades for each inspection area. However, they will make a robust and thorough evaluation of the school or PRU's provision and its impact on pupils' learning and well-being.
- 2.7 The three inspection areas (IA) are set out below:
- IA1: Teaching and learning;
 - IA2: Well-being, care, support and guidance; and
 - IA3: Leading and improving.
- 2.8 Following an inspection, each provider will receive a report. The provider will also receive a parent and carer version of the report.
- 2.9 The key elements of a core inspection report include the following:
- an overview of the school or PRU;
 - a summary of the main points of the inspection report;
 - recommendations that identify what needs to improve;
 - a main evaluation of the three inspection areas; and
 - additional information on safeguarding arrangements, healthy eating and drinking, school funding, and health and safety issues (on-site safety).
- 2.10 Some reports may also contain one or more 'spotlights'. A spotlight is a short paragraph that highlights an innovative practice or area worth sharing.

- 2.11 The main purpose of the interim visit is to support providers with their self-evaluation and improvement plans, to ensure the best outcomes for learners. Interim visits will be led by an HMI.
- 2.12 An interim visit can last up to two days depending on the sector. For example, 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 primary schools, this can be extended up to two days.
- 2.13 Interim visits are not intended to draw overall conclusions about the effectiveness of the school, but they will support leaders to review progress since the last core inspection and consider their next steps for improvement.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 During the autumn term 2024, Estyn visited one secondary school and four primary schools in Bridgend, who received a core inspection using the new approach. The full text of these reports is available on the Estyn website: www.estyn.gov.uk.

Pencoed Comprehensive School

- 3.2 Pencoed Comprehensive School was inspected by Estyn in September 2024 and the report was published on 2 December 2024.
- 3.3 Estyn identified the following spotlights:

Effective distribution of leadership

A strength of the school is the wide distribution of leadership responsibilities. This empowers individuals, ensures ownership of important aspects of the school's work, and contributes successfully to the sense of collaboration. This focus on individual development, and support for staff well-being fosters high levels of motivation and commitment amongst staff.

Improving teaching through professional learning

The school is developing a vibrant culture of professional learning. There is a strong focus on developing teaching based on first-hand evidence of strengths and areas for improvement in practice across the school. A variety of complementary approaches, including coaching, research-informed practice, collaborative planning and reflection, teacher-led workshops and whole school events are supporting the school well in its ambition to strengthen pedagogy. The views of pupils play an important role in this work. The 'Pedagogy Pioneers', a group of pupil leaders have received training to develop a valuable set of skills to work with leaders to inform improvements in teaching and learning approaches.

- 3.4 Estyn also noted the following as strengths of the school:
- The school continues to make strong progress in designing a range of authentic learning experiences that make appropriate use of the local area. As a result of effective planning, the school ensures that pupils develop a broad range of skills that equip them well for learning and life.

- Leaders and staff across the Pencoed Comprehensive School community have successfully established a warm, calm, and nurturing learning environment for all pupils, including those in Tŷ Ewenni. Staff prioritise the well-being of all pupils, especially the most vulnerable.
- The school makes effective use of the views of pupils to support its improvement processes. The Sixth Form Leadership Team are strong ambassadors for the school and model good leadership in their chosen roles. Pupils, including those eligible for free school meals and Tŷ Ewenni pupils, benefit from a range of leadership opportunities such as the Undod (LGBTQ+), Parch (anti-racist) and Amdani (Cymraeg) champions. Representatives from these groups form the school council, which has a strong influence on the quality of experiences for pupils.

3.5 Pencoed Comprehensive School's Estyn inspection report included the following recommendations:

Recommendation number	Recommendation
Recommendation 1	Improve attendance
Recommendation 2	Sharpen self-evaluation to focus more precisely on the impact of provision on pupils' learning and skills

3.6 Estyn inspectors concluded that the school is making sufficient progress, and no follow-up action is required.

3.7 The local authority, along with Central South Consortium, will support the school in drawing up an action plan to show how the recommendations will be addressed.

Maes yr Haul Primary School

3.8 Maes yr Haul Primary School was inspected by Estyn in October 2024 and the report was published on 9 December 2024.

3.9 Estyn noted the following as strengths of the school:

- Leaders have created a positive ethos that promotes well-being, and mutual respect. Staff are supported well to develop their leadership skills, and to meet the needs of nearly all pupils, including those with additional learning needs (ALN). The relationships between all members of the school reflect the positive ethos. Pupils behave exceptionally well and show respect for each other, staff, and visitors. From strong starting points when they join the school, nearly all pupils make appropriate progress with literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
- Teachers provide helpful verbal feedback to pupils that enables them to correct mistakes and to edit and improve their work. Most pupils are proud of their work and value the feedback teachers provide.
- The school has robust systems to monitor pupils' attendance and works closely with external partners to support families in need of additional help and

advice. Most pupils have a good understanding of the importance of attending school regularly.

- Many pupils have appropriate opportunities to take on leadership roles within the school and take their leadership responsibilities seriously. Through the varied leadership groups, they have good opportunities to consider important aspects of school life.

3.10 Maes yr Haul Primary School's Estyn inspection report included the following recommendations:

Recommendation number	Recommendation
Recommendation 1	Ensure learning experiences challenge all pupils sufficiently
Recommendation 2	Review the school's curriculum to ensure it reflects the purposes of Curriculum for Wales
Recommendation 3	Improve pupils' Welsh oracy skills

3.11 Estyn inspectors concluded that the school is making sufficient progress, and no follow-up action is required.

3.12 The local authority, along with Central South Consortium, will support the school in drawing up an action plan to show how the recommendations will be addressed.

Oldcastle Primary School

3.13 Oldcastle Primary School was inspected by Estyn in October 2024 and the report was published on 20 December 2024.

3.14 Estyn identified the following spotlight:

Community engagement

The school's response to the community's needs is highly effective and has a positive impact on learners' engagement in school. Staff offer numerous, valuable activities for pupils and parents that focus on important life skills. These include advice on how to manage finances, cooking healthily on a budget and sessions that enable parents to support their child's development as a reader. The school also provides advice for those who find themselves in challenging circumstances. Parents value these opportunities and feel that they have a positive impact on their well-being and the well-being of their children.

3.15 Estyn also noted the following as strengths of the school:

- The headteacher at Oldcastle Primary School knows the school well and provides effective leadership. The dedicated staff support her ably, and together they work successfully as a team. The school is inclusive, welcoming, and a happy learning environment, with pupils' well-being at its heart.

- From a young age, pupils communicate clearly and, as they move through the school, they become mature and articulate speakers. They listen well to staff and each other in whole class situations or when talking in small groups. Pupils' oracy skills are a strength.
- Governors have a clear understanding of their role and offer a good balance of support and challenge to leaders. They contribute well to school life and to its place within the community. Governors bring a wealth of skills and experiences that support the school's areas for improvement. They work closely with the headteacher to manage school finances and resources carefully and ensure that all decisions support the school well.
- The school values the opinions of pupils. Nearly all pupils show enthusiasm for taking on additional responsibilities such as becoming part of the pupil voice groups. They work closely alongside school leaders to bring about change.

3.16 Oldcastle Primary School's Estyn inspection report included the following recommendations:

Recommendation number	Recommendation
Recommendation 1	Improve opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills and ensure that teaching consistently offers the right level of challenge
Recommendation 2	Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement processes so that they impact more positively on the quality of teaching and learning

3.17 Estyn inspectors concluded that the school is making sufficient progress, and no follow-up action is required.

3.18 The local authority, along with Central South Consortium, will support the school in drawing up an action plan to show how the recommendations will be addressed.

Bryncethin Primary School

3.19 Bryncethin Primary School was inspected by Estyn in November 2024 and the report was published on 9 January 2025.

3.20 Estyn noted the following as strengths of the school:

- Leaders at Bryncethin Primary School are committed to creating a happy school that celebrates its place in the local community and in Wales. This contributes to an important sense of belonging where many pupils feel safe and respected at school.
- Leaders have high expectations of the school's provision for all pupils. The school has a positive approach to managing behaviour. This supports the harmonious way in which most pupils behave when learning in class and during playtimes or moving about the school. Pupils are polite, respectful, and kind towards each other.

- The school hosts a local authority learning resource base. This is a purposeful environment for learning, where relationships are strong, and pupils are well-cared for. In most cases, staff plan learning experiences that match pupils' individual needs well. As a result, many pupils make valuable progress in the development of their learning and well-being.
- Leaders and staff support pupils well in contributing to the life of the school. There are many opportunities for pupils, including those with ALN, to take up leadership roles across school life. For example, groups contribute to the development of internal spaces, such as the school's sensory room. As a result, many pupils feel they have a voice in the school community.

3.21 Bryncethin Primary School's Estyn inspection report included the following recommendations:

Recommendation number	Recommendation
Recommendation 1	Improve leadership at all levels
Recommendation 2	Ensure that monitoring and evaluation processes identify precisely the strengths and areas for development of the school's work most in need of improvement and contribute effectively to school improvement planning
Recommendation 3	Improve the quality of teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress with their literacy, numeracy, digital and independent learning
Recommendation 4	Improve rates of attendance

3.22 However, Estyn inspectors concluded that the school is not making sufficient progress and in accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that 'special measures' are required in relation to this school.

3.23 The local authority, along with Central South Consortium, will support the school in drawing up an action plan to show how the recommendations will be addressed. Estyn will monitor the school's progress usually every four to six months.

3.24 The school has reviewed and refined its leadership structure to ensure there is a clear focus to bring about school improvement and address the recommendations robustly.

3.25 Local authority officers are offering guidance to the school around procedural matters related to the recommendations. Regular meetings to review school progress against the recommendations will be held with local authority and Central South Consortium officers.

3.26 The school has already engaged with a range of professional learning providers to begin addressing the recommendations and securing improvements to the quality of provision.

Mynydd Cynffig Primary School

3.27 Mynydd Cynffig Primary School was inspected by Estyn in November 2024 and the report was published on 16 January 2025.

3.28 Estyn noted the following as strengths of the school:

- Senior leaders have worked collaboratively with staff to develop a broad and balanced curriculum that supports pupils' holistic development successfully. Teachers provide a stimulating variety of learning experiences that build on pupils' existing knowledge and understanding progressively. As a result, most pupils make strong progress in developing their communication, numeracy and digital skills and apply these skills to their wider learning well.
- Nearly all teachers enable pupils to make strong progress in developing their creativity and their expressive skills. For example, they provide good opportunities for pupils to use their imagination and to communicate their ideas and feelings through dance, music and drama. These experiences enrich pupils' learning and enhance their enjoyment of school.
- Leaders work well together to set a strategic direction that promotes equity for all. For example, they use grant funding to ensure that all pupils have access to a rich variety of learning experiences. The school has developed effective relationships with parents that help them to feel informed and included as key partners in their child's progress. As a result of this positive partnership, overall rates of attendance have improved steadily.
- Leaders consider the well-being of staff thoughtfully. They avoid unnecessary demands to ensure staff can manage their workload effectively. They make focused use of performance management and professional learning to support whole-school development. This ensures that staff are clear about their role in delivering improvement and have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to advance pupils' learning and well-being successfully.

3.29 Mynydd Cynffig Primary School's Estyn inspection report included the following recommendations:

Recommendation number	Recommendation
Recommendation 1	Strengthen the role of the governing body in evaluating the school's performance
Recommendation 2	Provide greater opportunity for older pupils to direct their own learning and to contribute purposefully to whole-school improvements
Recommendation 3	Improve opportunities for pupils to develop their skills through outdoor learning

3.30 Estyn inspectors concluded that the school is making sufficient progress, and no follow-up action is required.

3.31 The local authority, along with Central South Consortium, will support the school in drawing up an action plan to show how the recommendations will be addressed.

Pen y Fai Church in Wales Primary School

3.32 Pen y Fai Church in Wales Primary School was inspected by Estyn in November 2024 and the report was published on 30 January 2025.

3.33 Estyn identified the following spotlight:

Early learning provision for younger pupils

Provision for the youngest pupils is excellent and ensures that pupils develop a firm foundation for future learning. Teachers make good use of professional learning opportunities to further develop their understanding of how young children learn. They use this learning well to provide learning environments that encourage pupils to be curious and to explore the world around them. Staff understand the importance of observation and use findings purposefully to plan appropriate activities that extend pupils' learning. For example, recent adaptations to the way numeracy is taught in these environments have resulted in pupils developing a deeper understanding of the concept of number.

3.34 Estyn also noted the following as strengths of the school:

- Leaders have a clear focus on improving outcomes for learners, regardless of their backgrounds and prior learning. This inclusive ethos is a strong feature in the school and is shared by all. As a result, nearly all pupils feel part of this happy and vibrant community.
- School leaders have developed thorough procedures for evaluating the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This enables staff and governors to have a firm understanding of the areas that needs to improve. Shared responsibilities ensure that priorities are manageable and addressed promptly. The headteacher focuses well on building leadership capacity across the school through the provision of worthwhile opportunities for staff to develop leadership skills.
- Adults use positive, supportive language, and encourage pupils to do the right thing. This shared vocabulary and ethos of positivity contributes to pupils' exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- A particularly strong aspect of the school's work is its pupil voice provision. Most pupils have many exciting opportunities to develop their leadership skills, including those with ALN, through a variety of pupil voice groups, which have a positive impact on many areas of school life.

3.35 Pen y Fai Church in Wales Primary School's Estyn inspection report included the following recommendation:

Recommendation number	Recommendation
Recommendation 1	Provide learning experiences that challenge all pupils appropriately so that they make good progress, particularly the more able

- 3.36 Estyn inspectors concluded that the school is making sufficient progress, and no follow-up action is required.
- 3.37 The local authority, along with Central South Consortium, will support the school in drawing up an action plan to show how the recommendations will be addressed.
- 3.38 During the autumn term 2024, Estyn visited three primary schools, one infant school and one secondary school, who received an interim visit. A summary of the visit is provided through a letter to each school, which are available to view on the Estyn website: www.estyn.gov.uk.

Trelales Primary School

- 3.39 On Tuesday 1 October 2024, a team of Estyn inspectors visited Trelales Primary School to consider how the school has progressed in addressing two areas of development identified in the school's most recent improvement plan.
- 3.40 The two areas of development that were identified are:
- Ensure that the planned curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and develops their skills across the curriculum.
 - Improve the quality of teaching and provision for independent learning.
- 3.41 Overall, Estyn concluded leaders and staff at the school have worked well to address these priorities. They have a good understanding of the school's current strengths and areas for improvement and have suitable plans in place to continue to move the school forward.

Porthcawl Comprehensive School

- 3.42 On Wednesday 16 October and Thursday 17 October 2024, a team of Estyn inspectors visited Porthcawl Comprehensive School to consider how the school has progressed since their last core inspection in February 2020.
- 3.43 Estyn focused on the following two priorities during their visit:
- Reduce the variation in the quality of teaching and assessment, in particular with regard to the development of pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum; and
 - Sharpen self-evaluation and improvement planning so that processes focus consistently on the impact of teaching and learning.
- 3.44 Estyn noted they enjoyed the opportunity to meet with the headteacher, staff and pupils, and recognised the improvement work the school has carried out since their last core inspection.

Bryntirion Infant School

- 3.45 On Tuesday 5 November 2024 a team of inspectors visited Bryntirion Infant School to consider how the school has progressed in addressing two of the recommendations from its core inspection in April 2023.

3.46 Estyn focused on the following two priorities during their visit:

- Ensure that activities develop pupils' independent skills successfully.
- Improve the learning environment for younger pupils to ensure that there are greater opportunities for them to develop their skills through play and exploration.

3.47 Estyn noted leaders and staff at the school have made worthwhile progress in addressing these recommendations. The school recognises there are aspects that could improve further and have suitable plans in place to continue to make progress.

Coychurch (Llangrallo) Primary School

3.48 On Wednesday 6 November 2024, a team of Estyn inspectors visited Coychurch (Llangrallo) Primary School to consider the progress the school has made towards the two recommendations from its core inspection in November 2022.

3.49 Estyn focused on the following two priorities during their visit:

- Provide clear feedback to pupils that identifies precisely what they need to do to improve their work and enable them to act on this guidance.
- Provide appropriate challenge, particularly in independent activities, to ensure that all pupils make the progress they are capable of.

3.50 Overall, Estyn concluded that leaders and staff at the school have worked well to address these recommendations, and the school recognises there are aspects that could improve further.

Pîl Primary School

3.51 On Thursday 21 November 2024, a team of Estyn inspectors visited Pîl Primary School to consider the progress the school has made towards two of the recommendations from its core inspection in November 2022.

3.52 Estyn focused on the following two priorities during their visit:

- Sharpen monitoring procedures to focus precisely on the impact of teaching.
- Refine teaching to enable pupils to exercise more independence in what and how they learn.

3.53 Overall, Estyn concluded that leaders and staff at the school have worked well to address these recommendations, and the school recognises there are aspects that could improve further.

Caerau Primary School

3.54 Caerau Primary School was inspected by Estyn May 2023 and the report was published on 26 June 2023. At that time, Estyn inspectors concluded the school

was not making sufficient progress and in accordance with the Education Act 2005, HMCI was of the opinion that 'special measures' was required in relation to this school.

3.55 At that time, the Caerau Primary School report included the following recommendations:

Recommendation number	Recommendation
Recommendation 1	Establish a stable and effective leadership and teaching team.
Recommendation 2	Improve pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills.
Recommendation 3	Improve pupils' attendance and punctuality.
Recommendation 4	Ensure that curriculum and assessment arrangements develop pupils' knowledge and skills systematically and progressively.

3.56 The local authority, along with Central South Consortium, supported the school in drawing up an action plan to show how the recommendations would be addressed and held regular progress review meetings over the course of the year.

3.57 In December 2024, Estyn conducted a follow-up review of the school's progress and judged that Caerau Primary School had made sufficient progress in relation to the recommendations following the most recent core inspection.

3.58 Estyn noted the following findings when reviewing the recommendations:

- Senior leaders provide robust leadership across the school. They are committed to securing high quality teaching and learning for all pupils. They have continued to build leadership capacity across the school by creating teams, led by middle leaders, with responsibility for key improvement areas linked to the school's action plan.
- Across the school, leaders have developed a consistent approach to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, most pupils now make good and, at times, strong progress in these important areas.
- School leaders set aspirational whole school attendance targets and have established a culture where the importance of good attendance is actively promoted. Although pupil attendance remains below the school's target, overall attendance and punctuality has improved steadily.
- School leaders have developed a broad and balanced curriculum that includes a range of interesting and authentic experiences that build on pupils' skills progressively. Staff provide effective support for pupils in the youngest classes to develop their independence in a range of authentic experiences and make good use of the outdoor areas. As pupils move through the school, opportunities to further progress their independent learning skills are developing suitably.

3.59 As a result, His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales removed the school from the list of schools requiring special measures.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty, and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services, and functions. This is an information report; therefore, it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Assessment provides a comprehensive summary of the outcomes expected from the implementation of the service.

Long-term Supports the improvement of standards and outcomes in schools.

Prevention Development of post-inspection action plans or refinement of school improvement plans helped to ensure that recommendations identified are addressed and acted upon to secure school improvement, preventing standards from slipping. The local authority and Central South Consortium will continue to monitor the school's progress.

Integration Monitoring and acting upon school inspection reports is key to ensuring that outcomes for schools are achieved thus helping to support a successful economy.

Collaboration The local authority works closely with schools, Estyn and with Central South Consortium to deliver the well-being objectives related to school improvement. The local authority receives the school inspection reports from Estyn, and this informs the work conducted by Central South Consortium to deliver the support for school improvement services.

Involvement This area of work involves all stakeholders in school improvement. Schools work closely with Improvement Partners from Central South Consortium to refine their improvement plans or post-inspection action plans and to identify strategic support from the local authority, Central South Consortium and elsewhere (as required) reflecting the diversity of stakeholders involved in aspects of school improvement.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications arising directly from this information report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications arising directly from this information report.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this information report.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet notes the content of this report.

Background documents

None.