



COUNCIL – 1ST OCTOBER 2024

SUBJECT: ESTYN INSPECTION OF CAERPHILLY EDUCATION SERVICES, JUNE 2024

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To highlight to members the findings and recommendations of the Council's recent Estyn Inspection of its Education Service and provide Members with the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the Inspection Report

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, inspects all local government education services on a rolling cycle. Caerphilly Education Services were last inspected in 2012. The most recent inspection took place in June 2024 and the report was published by Estyn on the 2nd of September 2024.
- 2.2 The inspection team included a range of His Majestys' Inspectors (HMI), peer inspectors from other Welsh Local Authorities and a representative from Audit Wales. The inspection team was on site every day through the week of the 24th June and, on top of the pre inspection week surveys and interviews with key stakeholders, carried out interviews with around 100 interviewees during Inspection week.
- 2.3 The Council's approach to education was tested robustly throughout the inspection process and the report received that has been received is very positive. The report highlights many strengths, a number of cameos of notable practice as well as a case study on the Council's approach to ALN. Two recommendations were also made:

R1 - Focus evaluation and improvement planning of education services more consistently on their impact on learners' outcomes and their value for money.

R2 - Improve the processes and strategies to support and challenge schools to reduce the rates of fixed-term and permanent exclusions.

2.4 The report in full is attached as Appendix 1.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Members are asked to:

- 1) Note the contents of the Estyn Inspection report, ask any questions or provide pertinent comment on the Inspection findings.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To ensure that Full Council is aware of the inspection outcomes for Caerphilly, the excellent work that has been done in support of our learners as well as the focus of future work.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 The local authority's last inspection was in July 2012, with follow up visits in October 2013, and January 2014.

5.2 The most recent inspection took place in June 2024. There were preliminary visits on the 5th and 6th of June 2024, for interviews with stakeholders. Safeguarding was also inspected over these two days and included interviews with stakeholders and officers. A larger team of inspectors returned for the main inspection, from the 24th to the 28th of June 2024.

5.3 Estyn will undertake inspections in accordance with the following principles:

- ensure that inspection is of high quality and responds to the needs of all learners
- ensure that judgements are secure, reliable and valid
- involve the local authority fully in the inspection process, including the use of nominees
- use the local authority's self-evaluation and improvement planning work as the starting point for the inspection and to inform questions about education services
- include peer inspectors in the inspection process
- keep to a minimum any requirements for documentation and preparation by the local authority
- evaluate evidence about the perspective of children and young people and other stakeholders Guidance for the inspection of local government education services
- apply the principle of equality for Welsh and English to all our inspection

work, providing bilingual services in line with the practices of the local authorities inspected.

- be constructive in identifying and supporting local authorities with important areas for improvement
- contribute to joint assessments and reports with other inspection, audit and regulatory bodies as required by Welsh Government legislation.

5.4 The Inspection considers three core Inspection areas:

Inspection area 1 – Outcomes

Standards and progress overall
Standards and progress of specific groups
Well-being and attitudes to learning

Inspection area 2 – Education Services

Support for school improvement
Support for vulnerable learners
Other education support services

Inspection area 3 – Leadership and management

Quality and effectiveness of leaders and managers
Self-evaluation and improvement planning
Professional learning
Safeguarding arrangements
Use of resources

5.5 Within inspection area 2, Education Services, Estyn also form a number of Local Inspection Questions (LIQs) which are unique to the Local Authority being inspected. There were five local inspection questions considered as part of Caerphilly's Inspection:

- How well does the local authority support and effect school improvement?
- How effective are the processes and strategies for improving attendance and reducing exclusions?
- How well does the local authority work to alleviate the impact of poverty on educational attainment?
- How well is the local authority supporting the implementation of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018?
- How effectively does the local authority plan for school reorganisation and federation arrangements?

5.6 The report was published on the 2nd of September 2024. Following publication of the inspection report, the local authority now has to update plans to address the recommendations and to take account of any shortcomings identified through the inspection process. The local authority must update its plans within three months of the publication of the inspection report.

Conclusion

- 5.7 The report highlights many strengths and a number of areas of good practice have been identified, resulting in two cameos and a case study. The two recommendations made will be addressed within future plans.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in relation to this report. The process outlined by Welsh Government is being adhered to ensure transparency, balanced and open decision making.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 No Integrated Impact Assessment is necessary as the report highlights the outcome of the recent Estyn Inspection of the Local Education Authority.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no personal implications.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 All the views of the consultees have been embedded within this report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 Education (Wales) Act 2014

Author: Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer
Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services
Councillor Carol Andrews, Cabinet Member for Education and Communities
Sue Richards, Head of Transformation
Sarah Ellis, Lead for Inclusion and ALN
Sarah Mutch, Early Years Manager
Paul Warren, Strategic Lead for School Improvement
Jane Southcombe, Financial Services Manager
Steve Pugh, Corporate Communications Manager

Background Papers:

Appendix 1: The report, published 2nd September 2024