

The teacher evaluation system in Wales

1. The process

There are three levels of evaluation and assessment of teacher performance.

Internal school level - schools will have a range of self-evaluation processes that they use to collect evidence about standards and teaching. These will include lesson observation, scrutiny of pupils' work and an analysis of performance data. The primary purpose is to identify areas for improvement in standards, teaching and assessment. They have a second role as a means to identify strengths and shortcomings in the work of individual teachers. The frequency and regularity of these processes varies from school to school. Schools may involve external advisors and regional advisors to support this process.

Statutory framework for performance management - the school is required to carry out a formal assessment of a teacher's work and set, with the teacher, targets for improvement. The evaluation is carried out through formal lesson observations and self-evaluation by the teacher. This is carried out annually.

External evaluation by Estyn - every six years there is a full inspection. This looks at outcomes, provision and leadership. Prior to the inspection, the school provides its own self-evaluation; this will include an evaluation of teaching. During the inspection, the team observes a sample of lessons and carries out scrutiny of pupils' work. This provides the team with evidence about standards and quality of teaching. This is compared with the school's own evaluation. We are looking for accuracy of the schools assessment of strengths and areas for improvement.

2. Outcomes of the evaluation and consequences for those evaluated

Internal school level - schools will have their own arrangements for feeding back the outcomes of self-evaluation activity. The intention is that such evaluation contributes to the professional development of teachers. Therefore feedback is generally supportive and focused on strengths and areas for improvement. If as a result of such activities concerns are raised about the performance of an individual teacher, then the leadership will begin a period of support. If at the end of this period there are still concerns then the school might instigate formal competency or capability procedures.

Statutory framework for performance management - at certain points in a teachers career the outcome of performance management is extremely important. At the end of the first year in teaching the school will decide whether the newly qualified teacher has met the standards for induction. After five years in teaching a teacher can request that they go through a pay threshold that allows them to have higher salaries without necessarily taking on management responsibility. The review meeting and appraisal statement cannot form any part of any formal disciplinary, competency or capability procedure. However, failing to meet targets does have significance at key points.

External evaluation by Estyn

Following a lesson observation the Estyn inspector will have a professional dialogue with the teacher. For individual teachers these observations are developmental.

Our guidance states - at the end of an observation, inspectors should, as far as practicable, have some brief professional dialogue with the member of staff on the work seen. It may be necessary, in some cases, to have a fuller discussion at a later time and, if so, this should be arranged at the end of the session. The member of staff involved should be told that these are emerging, interim findings on one aspect of the evidence and that these may be amended, on reflection, after scrutiny of pupils' work or talking to pupils, or as the result of moderation within the team. For this reason, inspectors should not discuss any provisional overall evaluations, but they should try to focus on any strengths or areas for development in relation to the work seen.

During our team meetings, we discuss the quality of teaching and standards of pupils'. As member of the school's senior staff is present and will hear the discussion. However, there is no formal feedback to the school about the individual observations. The overall judgment for teaching will affect the judgment on the provision. When the inspection report is published, there is a detailed section about teaching and improving quality that provides the school with an overview of the strengths and areas for improvement in these particular indicators. Where the team identifies that there are important areas, requiring significant improvement, there will be additional monitoring following the inspection. This monitoring is carried out by the local authority or Estyn, depending on the number and importance of the areas for improvement.

3. Teachers' feelings/views about the process

Overall, although teachers have some apprehension about inspection or other monitoring activities, the majority of teachers welcome the opportunity for external and internal evaluation to inform and improve their practice. Many teachers, especially those who are in the first few years of teaching are very used to classroom observations and welcome dialogue and discussion.

4. How long has it been in place? Are there plans for a revision of the arrangements? In what time scale?

An inspectorate in Wales has been in place for over 100 years. A cycle of inspections was introduced in 1992. We are now reaching the mid-cycle point of the fourth cycle. Usually during this time, we review the current cycle and make minor changes to the inspection handbook. As we look towards the next cycle or period of inspections, we will consider the frequency of inspections and whether we should reduce the notice period to schools, currently 20 days.

5. Key strengths of the system ≠ points for improvement

The strengths of the current cycle, is the strong focus on outcomes and the impact of provision and leadership on standards. The current common inspection cycle, provides clear guidance to inspectors and providers as to what is expected and the link between quality indicators. Three new types of non-statutory follow-up have been introduced (an invitation to produce a good practice case study when sector-leading practice is identified, local authority monitoring and Estyn monitoring). Local authority and Estyn monitoring provide additional support to those schools that have a small number of adequate judgements.