

Estyn Framework for LAESCYP (Local Authority Education and Services for Children and Young People) Inspections

2.4 Access and school places

This section looks at access to services and provision from early years and at all key stages

- 2.4.1 the provision of an appropriate range and number of school places**
- 2.4.2 admissions to schools**
- 2.4.3 co-ordination of early years and play to ensure sufficiency**
- 2.4.4 co-ordination of youth support services to ensure access to entitlements**

Issues in inspecting the quality indicator

2.4.1: the provision of an appropriate range and number of school places

Inspectors should judge whether there is enough capacity in both primary and secondary sectors, including Welsh-medium and special education, and whether any school is significantly overfilled or has significant surplus capacity without good reason. Also, you should judge whether the authority has up-to-date knowledge of the capacity of schools including information about overfull schools and numbers of surplus places.

You should judge how well developed and accurate are the systems for forecasting and monitoring the requirements for places across all phases. This could take into account the impact of collaborative arrangements and transformation planning for learners aged 14-19.

You should judge the local authority's asset management planning and the education

capital spending programme. In doing so, you should evaluate whether the authority has accurate, up-to-date information about the condition, sufficiency and suitability of all school buildings. These judgements should be based on whether there is good use of information about local needs and liaison between authority departments, such as housing, planning and social services to link into wider regeneration strategies. You should scrutinise relevant school inspection reports to identify whether facilities are suitable for delivering aspects of the curriculum.

You should judge whether the priorities for investment in school and other education buildings are transparent, whether they are based on an evaluation of their current condition and suitability and have been agreed with the schools involved.

You should evaluate how well the authority plans ahead and evaluates all options to ensure appropriate capital resources are available to deliver its plans. You should consider if funds for repairs and maintenance in school budgets are clearly identified; whether the authority ensures that schools undertake their responsibilities in relation to their premises. You should judge the management of the building programme, including whether emergency repairs are promptly organised. You should consider the authority's plans and its track record of taking decisions in relation to the second overall judgement regarding its capacity to improve.

2.4.2: admissions to schools

Inspectors should judge how local admissions authorities consult each other and co-ordinate their arrangements effectively. You should consider whether the Admissions Forum is effective and whether the information (which should conform to the authority's Welsh Language Policy and may also be in community languages) provided to parents on school admissions is transparent, adequate, clear and understandable and satisfies the Admissions Code of Practice.

You should evaluate whether children coming to live in the authority during the school year, including looked-after children, and children returning from custody who are no longer on a school roll, are accommodated without delay in schools that meet their needs. Also, you should judge whether there are effective arrangements for the re-integration of children who have been excluded from other schools.

Inspectors should evaluate to what extent parents' preferences are met. You should judge whether appeals are dealt with quickly and equitably to enable all pupils to be inducted into their new schools during the summer term before taking up their places in September. Arrangements should comply fully with legislation and guidance related to equal opportunities.

2.4.3: co-ordination of early years and play to ensure sufficiency

Inspectors should judge the authority's audit of provision of "nursery education"⁵ in maintained and non-maintained settings to establish whether the provision is sufficient in their area. You should evaluate whether the authority regularly reviews the sufficiency of nursery education in its area, and the appropriate level of provision for various groups.

You should look at the quality of the plan for the delivery of places in maintained and

⁵ Nursery education means full-time or part-time education suitable for children who have not attained compulsory school age (whether provided at school or elsewhere).

non-maintained settings for the early years and whether it is supported by a clear rationale for the registration of settings.

You should judge how well the authority, in conjunction with its partners, provides support and training for staff working with the early years in both maintained and non-maintained settings. Inspectors should use the local authority's evaluation of its training and support as evidence of this.

You should evaluate the robustness of the authority's quality assurance systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of work with the early years in both maintained and non-maintained settings and judge whether the Children's Information Service provides high quality and effective advice to parents and carers.

Inspectors should judge how effectively the local authority works with other partners to co-ordinate and ensure sufficiency of play provision across the area.

2.4.4: co-ordination of youth support service to ensure access to entitlements

Inspectors should evaluate whether the local authority has worked effectively with partners to ensure an appropriate range of youth support services. Youth support services are those which encourage, enable or assist young persons (directly or indirectly):

- to participate effectively in education and training;
- to take advantage of opportunities for employment; or
- to participate effectively and responsibly in the life of their communities.

You should judge how well the authority works with schools and others to provide a range of youth support services, and the appropriateness of the level of provision. These should provide children and young people with a range of opportunities in line with Extending Entitlement, Learning Pathways 14-19, the Youth Work Curriculum for Wales, the Youth Service Strategy for Wales and local needs. The local authority's audit of youth support services will help inspectors reach judgement about the appropriateness of the range.

You should consider whether the local authority is meeting its statutory responsibilities in relation to those youth services provided, procured or facilitated by a local authority.

Good provision for access and school places

Overall there is enough capacity in all kinds of schools and very few schools are significantly overfilled or with significant surplus capacity. Priorities for investment in the asset management and capital programme are clear, funded and agreed and based upon up-to-date information. The quality of school buildings and other settings is generally good. Admissions arrangements for schools are clear to schools and parents and children moving into the authority are accommodated without delay in schools that meet their needs. A high percentage of parental preferences are met.

Overall, there is an appropriate range of early years, play and youth support services provision which meets the needs and children, young people and their families. The authority regularly audits this provision and provides appropriate support to secure ongoing improvements in quality.

Unsatisfactory provision for access and school places

Although the authority makes some progress in ensuring there is enough capacity in all kinds of schools, a majority of schools are significantly overfilled or have significant surplus capacity. Priorities for investment in the asset management and capital programme are not agreed in consultation with schools and other settings and financial planning does not support these priorities. Significant numbers of schools and settings have serious defects and/or relevant school inspection reports and/or local authority audits indicate that schools lack suitable facilities for delivering aspects of the curriculum. Admissions arrangements for schools are not regularly reviewed and poor understanding or communication means that children moving into the authority often face delays before being accommodated in schools that meet their needs.

The local authority and its partners do not have a good understanding of whether there is an appropriate range of early years, play and youth support services provision which meets the needs of children, young people and their families. Audits of provision are not done regularly and this information of the quality and range of services is not used to plan support and secure improvements.