

2 September 2020

Dear colleagues,

I hope you managed to find some time to take a break over the summer and that the return to school goes smoothly this week. I thought it would be helpful to write to you with a few updates about our work over the autumn term.

### **Thematic review**

You will be aware that Welsh Government have asked us to do a thematic review of local authorities and regional consortia's approaches to supporting learning and vulnerable learners during the COVID-19 period. We will focus this review on the quality and impact of your provision, support and guidance for vulnerable learners and your work to secure schools' implementation of the teaching and learning guidance from September 2020.

The thematic work will include all local authorities and regional consortia. As well as publishing a national summary report in December, local authorities and regional consortia will receive written feedback on their work which will highlight effective practice as well as aspects that need further development. A commentary on the work of regional consortia will also be included, where relevant, in each individual local authority's letter.

We are working with a small group of directors to refine how we approach the review and will write to you with more detail soon. As well as discussions with you and your staff, we will be engaging with schools in your authorities and carrying out some national stakeholder surveys. We will also work with each of you to define what documentary evidence might be readily available to support the review. This might include reports to Cabinet, scrutiny committees and Joint Executive Committees; information captured as part of routine performance monitoring or self-evaluation arrangements; guidance documents provided to schools and feedback captured from any stakeholder surveys. We will not start any direct engagement in relation to the work until after the full return to schools on 14 September 2020 and most of the evidence gathering will take place in late September/early October. We intend that the work to gather evidence will be done remotely.

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Mae Estyn yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Bydd gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn y naill iaith neu'r llall yn cael yr un flaenoriaeth. | Estyn welcomes correspondence in both English and Welsh. Correspondence received in either language will be given equal priority.

The work will focus on two aspects, both of which will consider any bespoke or different support provided for Welsh-medium schools to support the continuity of language development:

- Promoting learning – what quality assurance work has been done to improve the quality of the learning offer and how has this been used to develop further guidance and professional learning? How effective is the early planning and implementation of the ‘catch-up’ learning programmes across schools and what are the next steps for this work?
- Supporting vulnerable learners – how has the local authority targeted services and support to vulnerable learners to support them to engage in learning, what barriers still exist?

The work will also consider how well the overall leadership of the local authority and the regional consortia responded in a timely and proportionate way to the range of challenges and how well you used ongoing learning to inform your actions.

The review will support you by providing feedback and sharing effective practice and approaches which will help planning for the possibility of further local or national lockdowns and future collaboration and work to support education reform. The review will also help identify or mitigate any emerging risks or gaps in activities, and we will work with yourselves and Welsh Government to identify these support needs.

It will be led from your point of view by your link inspectors, who at the appropriate stage will be in touch with more details. We are conscious that these continue to be challenging times and we will continue to keep in touch and work with you to respond to any changes in circumstances.

### **Inspection and follow up work**

We do not plan to carry out any core inspections of local authorities during the autumn term. We will continue to liaise with you through ADEW and the WLGA to consider when we will restart inspections.

We continue to work closely with the local authorities involved to determine the best timing and approach to any follow up activities.

### **Recent publications**

You can find our most recent publications to share insights into how schools and other providers are supporting learning during COVID-19 on our website. This includes the recently published insights into how different schools are planning to support the return to learning in September:

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/inspection/supporting-continuity-learning-children-and-young-people>

Kind regards,



**Jassa Scott**  
Strategic Director  
Estyn