



Local government education services

We were unable to provide a full evaluation of outcomes in our inspections during the last year because the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic caused the suspension of inspections of schools and most other education providers since March 2020.

It is also due to the lack of data about outcomes that can be compared over time as the pandemic caused changes to the way that qualifications were awarded and affected most other data that we consider when making evaluations, such as school attendance, school exclusions and post-16 learner destinations.

Our evaluations provided a context by reporting on outcomes before the pandemic or related to more recent outcomes where the evidence base is valid and reliable.

What's going well

- In many local authorities, pupils have valuable opportunities to influence the work of education services.
- In many local authorities, pupils' standards in primary school inspections between 2017 and 2020 were judged to be good or better in many of the schools inspected.
- Our inspections of schools between 2017 and 2020 show that pupils' well-being and attitudes to learning were good or better in most schools in three of the local authorities we inspected this year.

What needs to improve

- In a few local authorities, the standards that pupils in secondary schools achieve are too low.
- Unverified data suggests that there is an increasing trend in persistent absence in secondary schools in many local authorities, following several years of decrease.



Local government **education services** are generally effective in supporting children and young people.

What's going well

- Many local authorities collaborate well with regional consortia to support the work of schools and other providers.
- Local authority youth work services provide valuable support for young people through targeted, outreach, and open access provision and this is effective in providing safe spaces for young people that do not always exist within formal education settings.

What needs to improve

- Many local authorities need to improve aspects of their work to support pupils with additional learning needs.
- In a few local authorities, the pace of improvement in schools in statutory categories is too slow.



Leadership and management of local government education services is sound in many cases.

What's going well

- All local authorities have a clear vision for improving outcomes for children and young people.
- In many local authorities, officers provide good opportunities for pupils to influence the work of education services.
- Local authorities have placed a high importance on ensuring adequate funding for education services.
- Good progress was made by one local authority that had been causing significant concern, and it no longer requires follow-up monitoring from Estyn.
- In many local authorities, the safeguarding of children and young people is a high priority.
- A few local authorities have developed ambitious and aspirational Welsh in education strategic plans.

What needs to improve

- [Self-evaluation and improvement planning processes are not sufficiently robust in many of the local authorities inspected this year, particularly at service area level.](#)
- Many local authorities need to do further work to ensure that Welsh-medium education meets the needs of learners.
- In a minority of local authorities, scrutiny of education services needs to improve.