**WRITTEN STATEMENT**

**BY**

**THE WELSH GOVERNMENT**

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| **TITLE** | **Evaluation and Improvement – a new accountability system to raise standards for all** |
| **DATE** | **19 February 2019** |
| **BY** | **Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education** |

Today I am publishing details of our draft Evaluation and Improvement arrangements. This coherent package of measures has been co-constructed with the profession and the wider system. These arrangements will apply to schools, local authorities, consortia and indeed Welsh Government.

**The Case for Change**

There is a consensus for change. We all accept that the current model is not working as well as it should. It is based on a curriculum and learning that is too narrow, inflexible and overcrowded.

Secondary schools in particular have been driven to focus on trying to get pupils to achieve a ‘pass’ in a small number of qualifications, rather than providing a broad and balanced education that supports the progress of all learners.

**Every Child Counts**

In our reformed system, every child will count and schools will be evaluated according to the difference they make to the progress of every child. This will help schools focus on teaching and learning, the well-being of pupils and teachers, and reduce unnecessary bureaucracy. Excellent schools will be able to work towards the goal of greater autonomy.

This is a culture change. We are moving from a system based on compliance and bureaucracy to a model of evaluation and improvement more in line with high performing education systems across the world. What remains constant is our focus on raising standards and attainment for all.

The changes will be phased in over a period of years to provide greater support schools to adapt to the new curriculum whilst maintaining, and raising, standards.

**A Learning Inspectorate**

Estyn, with my support, commissioned an independent review of their future role. ‘A Learning Inspectorate’ has made recommendations for how inspection could be refocused to support improvement in standards. We will now move forward with its recommendations, supporting Estyn with these reforms.

An effective Inspectorate is one that provides assurance that standards are being met, whilst also supporting schools to maintain improvement. That is the focus of these reforms.

In advance of the new curriculum being introduced, Estyn have agreed to play a greater role in supporting schools to prepare for the changes. To enable this, we will be consulting on extending the current inspection cycle from 7 to 8 years so that there would be a partial suspension in school inspections for 2020-2021. However, schools causing concern would continue to be monitored by Estyn and inspection will still take place in schools where there are identified concerns during this time as will inspections of local authorities and independent schools. To support schools causing concern, I have asked officials to work with key stakeholders to strengthen our collective approach. This change will also provide the opportunity for a much-needed focus on supporting schools that continue to under-perform.

**Public Confidence**

Revised inspection arrangements will start to be phased in from September 2021. However, before introducing new arrangements, Estyn will consult fully with stakeholders. Some of the proposals that Estyn will consider include removing the current report headline judgements. As the review states, headline judgements too often “over simplify” and “mask areas that are important”. They would be replaced with detailed evaluations of a school’s work providing better information for parents, governors and schools about the performance of a school, its strengths and areas for development. In line with ensuring a greater focus on, and support for, schools that under-perform, the categories of Significant Improvement and Special Measures will remain.

A fundamental weakness of current inspection arrangements is the frequency of inspections within a 7 year cycle. It is therefore proposed that Estyn would inspect and validate a school’s self-evaluation process more than once within the seven-year cycle.

This would allow Estyn to give more frequent assurance to parents and the wider community about the standards being achieved and about priorities for further improvement.

In the new evaluation and improvement arrangements there will be a greater focus on school self evaluation. Estyn and the OECD are developing, with the profession, a self evaluation toolkit that will be used by all schools to ensure consistency. National School Categorisation, which indicates the level of support schools need from the system to improve, will need to evolve into a more sophisticated process that looks at a broader range of indicators, such as pupil well-being. It is expected that this will evolve into an ongoing process of authentication of a school’s self-evaluation and priorities for development.

Governing bodies will remain the first line of accountability for schools. Their duties include monitoring their school’s performance and reporting to parents. They are integral to the success of Our National Mission and we will engage them to ensure they understand the new system, which will include a training package.

The whole system will mobilise to support schools and their leaders. Together with the regional consortia the National Academy for Educational Leadership will look at practical ways of supporting heads to adapt to the new system. In April, we will publish the Evaluation and Assessment Framework alongside the draft new Curriculum for Wales.

<https://beta.gov.wales/evaluation-and-improvement-accountability-arrangements>