



Our ref: MA/EM/2188/23

Jenny Rathbone MS  
Chair, Equality and Social Justice Committee  
Welsh Parliament  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

12 October 2023

Dear Jenny

Thank you for your letter of 25 September requesting further evidence for your inquiry on public health approaches to preventing gender-based violence (GBV). I will elaborate on the role of Estyn in monitoring GBV interventions in schools as you have requested.

As part of the inspection process Estyn considers issues relating to bullying and harassment under inspection area 4, 'Care Support and Guidance', and includes speaking to learners on their experiences. This inspection area also includes safeguarding and inspections consider how schools implement their safeguarding policies. In addition, inspection area 5 'Professional Learning' considers the leadership of the school. As part of its remit, Estyn looks to identify and promote effective practice in all areas.

Specifically in relation to safeguarding practice in education settings, it is the ability to safeguard and promote the well-being of children in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance that will inform the inspectorate's judgement of an education setting's overall performance. Performance in this area will not be judged solely on the existence of procedures, but also on their effectiveness in safeguarding children from neglect, abuse and other kinds of harm. Prior to inspection of schools, pupil referral units and funded non-maintained settings, Estyn seeks the views of teachers, support staff, governors, management committees, employers, learners, parents and carers through pre-inspection questionnaires.

Schools and local authorities are expected to have regard to the outcomes and recommendations in Estyn inspections. Estyn has also undertaken thematic reviews in relation to peer-on-peer sexual harassment (*We don't tell our teachers – Experiences of peer on peer sexual harassment among secondary school pupils in Wales, December 2021*); and experiences of LGBTQ+ learners (*Celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion – Good practice in supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender learners in schools and colleges, October 2020*).

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

In addition, specifically in relation to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), from 1 July 2015, schools, PRUs and further education institutions must have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'. This is set out in Section 26 of the [Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#) and the accompanying [Prevent duty guidance](#) under section 29 of the Act.

Estyn play a vital role in ensuring that schools fulfil their legal obligations, including the requirement for staff to undergo mandatory safeguarding and Prevent training, which encompasses issues such as FGM. All staff in schools should be completing the mandatory [e-learning](#) in relation to Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV). [Keeping Learners Safe](#) also has a section on FGM and honour-based abuse and clearly. It identifies the mandatory reporting requirements and details the importance of staff getting to know their community to be alert to any potential risks.

Estyn evaluates whether all school staff are clear about their responsibilities and what they need to do to protect pupils. They also consider whether all staff have received relevant child protection and safeguarding training, including in relation to Prevent duties. While they do not report on individual aspects like FGM, inspections focus on assessing whether schools comply with these legal obligations.

Estyn pre-inspection questionnaires for school staff, governors, parents and pupils serve as a valuable tool for inspectors to gain insight into the training and preparedness of these stakeholders, particularly in areas such as safeguarding, Prevent training on radicalisation and the prevention of issues like FGM. These questionnaires provide valuable information that helps inspectors assess the school's commitment to fulfilling its legal obligations and ensuring the safety and welfare of pupils.

Within these questionnaires, schools are required to outline the training programs that their staff and governors have undertaken. This includes, but is not limited to, child protection and safeguarding training, which covers the various dimensions of safeguarding. For example, we ask staff and governors to comment on "*the school's arrangements to provide staff and governors with appropriate training for safeguarding and child protection including Prevent and VAWDASV training*".

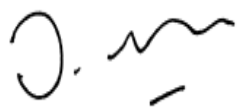
Inspectors use the responses from these questionnaires to gauge whether all school staff are clear about their responsibilities and the actions they need to take to protect pupils effectively. The context of the school will affect the extent to which inspectors consider the provider's work in this area. However, every school and PRU must comply with the duty and inspectors should satisfy themselves that the provider is aware of the duty and acting appropriately.

If during the inspection process, inspectors identify that schools are not adequately ensuring that staff and governors receive sufficient training, they will consider the impact of this shortfall. In such cases, inspectors may decide to make specific recommendations to the school, emphasising the urgent need to enhance training programs and ensure that all staff and governors are well-prepared to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities effectively. These recommendations are intended to guide the school towards addressing the identified shortcomings and improving its safeguarding practices.

When this is the case, inspectors will issue a wellbeing letter to the local authority, drawing their attention to the training deficiencies. This communication serves as a formal notice, prompting the local authority to engage with the school and support them in addressing the training gaps promptly. It emphasises the importance of taking corrective actions to safeguard the well-being of pupils.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**

Gweinidog y Gymraeg ac Addysg  
Minister for Education and Welsh Language