

## Judging Sufficient Progress in schools and PRUs in 2022

*N.B. The purpose of this guidance is to support inspectors in monitoring the progress of schools and PRUs in a statutory category.*

We recommenced 'normal' follow-up activity in 2021, although the timing, pace and scale of our re-introduction of monitoring visits to providers is always dependent on the COVID-19 situation. Across all sectors, the key focus of any monitoring visit is always whether or not the provider has made **sufficient progress** to be removed from follow-up. Reaching this decision is always a challenge for inspectors, but the unprecedented situation that providers have faced since March 2020 makes it even more difficult.

The purpose of this aide-memoire is to make clear and reinforce the key principles that should underpin inspectors' thinking when deciding whether a provider has made sufficient progress to be removed from follow-up.<sup>1</sup>

- Above all else, our approach should always be **learner-focused**. The progress a provider has made should always be evaluated in terms of how well they have supported and developed the wellbeing, progress and achievement of its learners.
- When evaluating **leadership**, inspectors will clearly wish to consider how well leaders have monitored and supported the wellbeing of staff and learners during the pandemic. However, it is important that inspectors consider the effectiveness of the strategic leadership of teaching and learning as well as the operational management of the COVID-19 crisis.
- When evaluating **self-evaluation and improvement planning processes**, inspectors should be mindful that many providers will have suspended some activities (such as lesson observations) during the pandemic. Providers should not be 'penalised' for having reduced 'formal' self-evaluation and improvement work during this period. However, inspectors should continue to evaluate **how well leaders know the strengths and shortcomings of their provision, including remote learning provision**, and whether all staff have a **clear understanding of the provider's key strategic priorities** and how and by when they are to be achieved.
- When evaluating **learner outcomes**, for example the standards that they achieve or the development of their knowledge and skills, inspectors should be mindful – even more than is usually the case – of the provider's **context**. Providers across Wales have faced a variety of different challenges at different times and at different levels since March 2020 and we do not have nationally verified data to support our evaluation of how well learners are achieving. Inspectors should also be mindful that in many cases learners' skills and knowledge will have regressed during periods of enforced absence, and it will not be appropriate to make direct comparisons with standards at the time of the core inspection. This approach should not represent a 'lowering of the bar', but a realistic and fair evaluation of the standards learners achieve in light of the provider's specific circumstances. When considering **attitudes to learning**, inspectors should be similarly mindful of the negative impact that the pandemic may have had on, for example, learners' resilience, concentration span and ability to work with others.
- It will clearly be inappropriate to compare levels of **attendance** with those at the time of the core inspection. Inspectors should instead focus on how closely the provider monitors learners' attendance and their engagement during periods of remote learning and the impact that their strategies to improve attendance are having, both overall and for targeted groups or individuals.
- When evaluating **teaching and the curriculum**, inspectors should consider how well providers supported learning during those periods where learners were unable to attend. However, evaluating precisely the impact that this provision has had will be extremely challenging. Inspectors should focus clearly on the effectiveness of the classroom practice seen during the monitoring visit, and its impact over time as demonstrated through a scrutiny of learners' work (online or on paper). Leaders may have altered their plans for the development of the **Curriculum for Wales** in light of

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<sup>1</sup> This document refers specifically to 'physical' monitoring visits rather than, for example, desk-based LA reviews for providers in Estyn Review.

the pandemic. When evaluating leaders' approach to curriculum development, inspectors should consider whether decisions made with regard to curriculum change were made for the benefit of pupils' wellbeing and progress.

- When considering **progress overall**, inspectors should remember that there is no 'fixed point' that providers have to reach in order to be removed from follow-up. Progress should be judged in terms of its trajectory and sustainability. The decision to remove a provider from follow up should, as always, be based on whether leaders and other staff have demonstrated the capacity to make and sustain the necessary improvements.