

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Estyn Writing guide

2015

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The purpose of Estyn is to inspect quality and standards in education and training in Wales. Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- nursery schools and settings that are maintained by, or receive funding from, local authorities;
- primary schools;
- secondary schools;
- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- independent schools;
- ▲ further education:
- ▲ adult community learning;
- youth and community work training;
- ▲ local authority education services for children and young people;
- teacher education and training;
- ▲ Welsh for adults:
- work-based learning; and
- ▲ learning in the justice sector.

Estyn also:

- provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of going to press. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publication Section Estyn Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

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Introduction by Meilyr Rowlands, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Our objective is to produce documents which are clear, accurate and in plain English and/or Welsh. It is essential that as wide an audience as possible can read and understand our publications. A clear style of report writing will help to achieve this.

This guidance aims to help writers and editors to achieve a plain and clear style of writing. It will also help to make sure that all of Estyn's publications follow a similar style and format.

This guidance focuses mainly on those aspects of style, vocabulary and grammar which prove troublesome for writers and editors. Writers and editors will need to use their judgement where there is no specific guidance available in this document. In such cases, they should keep in mind the overall objective of writing, that is, to produce clear, plain documents for an interested reader who is not a specialist in education or training.

In order to achieve consistency, writers and editors of Estyn publications should follow this guidance as much as they can.

We are keen to update this guidance in ways that will help writers and editors and we are very happy to receive suggestions about how to improve it. If you have any suggestions or queries about this guide, then please contact Estyn using this email address: communications@estyn.gov.uk.

Meilyr Rowlands HM Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales

Introduction: the need for a writing guide and its role

Why we need a writing guide?

- Estyn publications need to be clear and unambiguous so that a wide-ranging audience can understand what we are saying.
- We write to inform the public about standards and quality in education and training. We should not assume that our readers are all teachers or educationalists.
- Our publications are public documents and they should provide a model of writing that is polished and clear.

What is the role of this writing guide?

- This writing guide aims to help every writer and editor of Estyn publications to improve their work.
- It is designed to help writers and editors to achieve consistency of approach across all of Estyn's written work. It sets out an agreed Estyn house style.
- Writers and editors should follow the guidance even where they may have a different personal view about a preferred style from that set out in this guide.
- The aim is to make the guide easily accessible to everyone with an interest in Estyn's writing.

Writing inspection reports

For the purposes of this guidance, 'report' means the main evaluation sections of the ReportingJF, which then go on to form the sections of the published report.

Who is involved in the writing process?

- The reporting inspector (RI) remains responsible for the report.
- Team members contribute to the report as required by the RI.
- The completed first draft should be as near to a final draft as possible.
- The role of the editor is to assure the quality of the report and the inspection findings through the Quality Assurance of Report (QAR) process.
- The QAR process involves editing, moderating and validating the record of inspection evidence, including the inspection report, prior to publication.
- The quality of the first draft should be such that it does not require substantial rewriting by editors. For HMI reports, the editor is usually the Sector Lead Inspector (SLI) or Assistant Director (AD) or another designated colleague.
- Editors need to strike an appropriate balance in their work by making sure they
 intervene only to ensure that the report is clear, internally consistent and
 conforms to Estyn's house style. If writing requires substantial editing to achieve
 this, then it should be returned as soon as possible to the original writer for
 further work. Writers should be the authors of reports and take responsibility for
 them, not editors.
- For Estyn-led reports, the Strategic Directors (SD) and the Chief Inspector have the right to amend any report before publication.

Where does writing take place?

- Team members should undertake their writing on word processors and submit drafts in MS Word 2007 or above.
- During core inspections, team members will usually write their findings in a Judgement Form so that all members of the team can see their findings. (The Judgement Form is Estyn's IT system for sharing inspection findings.)
- Editing should usually take place using 'Track changes' within the Review tab in Word 2007 or above.
- Colleagues should aim to write their contributions according to the requirements of each inspection and according to agreed timescales.
- Colleagues should edit and quality assure the final, agreed and collated
 Judgement Form that comes out of the inspection as soon as possible after they
 receive the draft and following agreed timescales.

General principles

Every report should be internally consistent and have a strong degree of coherence and stylistic wholeness. The aim should be to have one style throughout the report. Separate sections should not adopt different styles or have different voices so that they jar against each other.

Each section of the report should be clear and in the appropriate place within the report.

Ideally, each paragraph should start with the main point. Where a paragraph contains an evaluation, try to put this at the start rather than in the middle or at the end.

The balance of strengths and shortcomings in a report section should reflect the inspection evaluation awarded.

Make sure that the sentences in a section follow the most logical sequence.

Remove any unnecessary repetition and try to avoid using the same words frequently within the same section.

No sentence or paragraph should contradict another.

Where a section has many uses of 'but' or 'however', there is a need to check that they have not modified a favourable comment in such a way as to cancel it out.

The sections on 'Current performance', 'Prospects for improvement' and 'Recommendations' should contain no new facts. Everything mentioned in these sections should relate to something already mentioned in the main body of the report.

Reports should be concise, but writers should always try to make sure that reports are specific to an individual school and give a flavour of its specific character.

Do not write sentences that appear to advocate or endorse particular approaches or commercial schemes.

On the whole, the report should evaluate the current situation in the school, provider, organisation or partnership. The section on 'Prospects for improvement' should be the only section that takes a view on future prospects. For all other sections, inspectors should avoid suggesting that by following a particular action a specific consequence will ensue.

It is important not to dwell too much on plans for the future when evaluating institutions. There is a need to be careful when making positive comments about the mere presence of plans since having a plan does not in itself guarantee its successful implementation.

Avoid making hidden recommendations. The report should evaluate the provision as

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it is rather than speculate about what needs to be done. In the body of the report avoid phrases like 'There is a need to do x…' or 'Undertaking x would ensure that…'. Inspectors should consider statements on desirable improvements within the section on recommendations.

Avoid personal commendations as in 'The head should be congratulated for...' and other similar phrases.

Try to look again at any writing before submitting a final draft. Try to leave written work for a while before returning to look it over, even if it is just for an hour or so. You will see it with a fresh pair of eyes and you will be far more likely to spot any weaknesses in it.

Before submitting any writing, first consider carefully any spell-check or grammatical indications provided by Word. Also, consider using the readability statistics provided by the program. There is further guidance on readability later in this document.

Guidance on style and format: A-Z

The following guidance on style and format aims to foster clear communication and to make Estyn's publications as readable as possible.

Abbreviations

At the end of this guide there is a list of abbreviations from the fields of education and training. If the abbreviation appears in the list, write it out in full first time and then use the abbreviation after that. Other abbreviations should be avoided wherever possible. An abbreviation should always appear in full unless it is very common, as in UK, GB, USA, EU, MP, AM, MEP, NHS, S4C, BBC and so on.

Do not use full points in any abbreviations. For example, always write GCSE, not G.C.S.E.

Try to avoid using abbreviations in the titles of reports.

To turn an abbreviation into an appropriate plural, just add lower case 's' to the abbreviation, as in NVQs and GCSEs. They do not require an apostrophe.

If you have to abbreviate words which contain hyphens, in most cases use capitals for both elements in the hyphenated word and drop the hyphen in the abbreviation, so 'work-based learning' becomes 'WBL'.

You can start sentences with abbreviations, as in 'GNVQs were designed to resemble NVQs' and 'A level results improved last year'.

An **acronym** is an abbreviation you can say as a word. It is becoming common to see acronyms written as words rather than as abbreviations (as in Nato instead of NATO). However, unless a specific form is listed in this guide, such as Ofsted, please use capitals for all acronyms apart from those that have entered the language in lower case and exist as words in their own right, eg laser and radar.

Active rather than passive voice

The active voice is nearly always more direct and clear than the passive voice. It also identifies more clearly who is responsible for a situation or action. Put the person doing the action first and use an active verb. So, rather than writing 'pupils are assessed formally every term', change this to 'teachers assess pupils formally every term'. Sometimes, the passive is useful, so this is not a blanket rule. However, you should be aware of how you use the passive and know why you are using it. See the section on 'Readability'.

Addresses

Set out addresses in running text like this: Estyn, Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff CF25 5JW. Note there is no punctuation before the postcode.

Adverbs

Avoid putting adverbs in front of verbs, eg 'Teachers effectively plan lessons and fully involve pupils in discussions'. Instead, change this sentence to 'Teachers plan lessons effectively and involve pupils fully in discussions'.

Age ranges

Normally, use the following terms in different phases of education/training:

children = maintained nursery schools and non-maintained nursery settings

pupils = schools (including those with sixth-forms)

learners = post-16 and adult settings

When referring to ages of pupils, be careful to use hyphens correctly. There is a difference between twenty one-year-olds and twenty-one-year-olds! Normally, place a hyphen between all parts of the phrase, as in 'five-year-old children' or 'the provision for five-year-olds is good'.

When referring to age ranges, place a hyphen in all parts of the second age phrase, as in 'five to seven-year-olds' or '14 to 16-year-olds'.

Please note that hyphens are not required when referring to children who are 'five years old' but are required when referring to 'five-year-old children'.

Apostrophes

These probably cause more confusion than any other punctuation mark.

Apostrophes either show that a letter is missing or they show possession.

In inspection reports, it is very unusual to see a need for the first type of apostrophe, as in 'don't' or 'isn't'. The style required in reports means that these would change to a more formal form, as in 'do not' and 'is not'.

The second type of apostrophe, showing possession, causes more difficulty, often because some writers use one where it is not needed.

There is no apostrophe where the word is simply a plural noun that ends in s, and there is no idea of possession.

In the sentence 'Learners enjoy their work', 'learners' is a plural noun and there is no idea of possession, so there is no need for an apostrophe. The same is true of 'Learners achieve well'.

However, an apostrophe is required when there is an idea of possession.

In the sentence 'Learners' portfolios are of good quality', there is more than one learner ('learners'), they 'possess' the portfolios, so there is an apostrophe after the person or persons that possess the portfolios, ie the learners.

As a general rule, the apostrophe goes after the person or thing that possesses the object. So, 'the employers' premises' means the premises belonging to the employers (plural), whereas 'the employer's premises' means the premises belonging to the employer (singular).

Possessive pronouns (such as his, her, its and their) do not take apostrophes.

Audience

Assume that your intended audience is a lay person with a general interest in education or training, but with no knowledge of specialist terms and abbreviations.

Avoid offensive language

Avoid language which may cause any offence. So, use chair, chairperson, or chair of governors, rather than chairman or chairwoman. Use headteacher, not headmaster or headmistress. Use 'they' instead of phrases like 'his or her', 'he or she', or just try to rephrase the sentence. Avoid phrases such as 'Christian name', use 'first name' instead. Use positive language about disability. For example, do not write 'pupils suffering from autism', use 'pupils with autism' instead.

Bullet points

This advice on bullets follows the appropriate conventions.

When using bullets to introduce lists:

- The stem phrase introducing the bullet points should end with a colon
- Introduce the bullet using a stem phrase or sentence and a colon
- Indent bullets at 0.3cm and indent the text at 0.8cm
- Leave the text aligned on the left
- Use single spacing
- Use round bullets
- There is no need for the use of a semi-colon or 'and' after the penultimate bullet
- There is no need for a full-stop at the end of the last bullet

Try not to use bullets within bullets.

It is important to note when to start a bullet with the upper case and when to start with the lower case:

- If the bullet forms a proper sentence in its own right, then it should start in the upper case (as in this bullet and in the list of bullets above)
- If the bullets are a simple list of items that cannot stand as sentences in their own right, then each bullet should start in the lower case

In inspection reports, the bullets are likely to be complete sentences and will therefore start with a capital letter. Their use is most likely in the sections on Current Performance and Prospects for Improvement. In order to ensure consistency, the bullets in these sections should have the following stem phrases to introduce them:

In the Current Performance section of the report - 'The school [or setting or provider] is [judgement] because...'

 In the Prospects for Improvement section of the report - 'The school's [or setting's or provider's] prospects for improvement are [judgement] because...'

By starting these sections in this way, it is more likely to lead to use of the upper case for each bullet.

Here is an example of the use of the lower case for a simple list of items.

Estyn is responsible for inspecting:

- primary schools
- secondary schools
- special schools
- pupil referral units

Do not use bullets for lists of recommendations (in survey/remit reports). See guidance under Recommendations.

Capital letters – use of intial capitals

Use initial capital letters for proper names and titles linked to a specific person or place, eg Janet Davies, Head of Bryn Comprehensive School, or John Jones, Principal of Cwm College. For general titles use lower case, eg principals, headteachers, directors, work-based learning companies.

Use initial capital letters for most titles of qualifications, for example General Certificate of Secondary Education, National Diploma, First Diploma, but note A levels.

Use capitals for languages, eg 'English' and 'Welsh'.

Use capitals when using the terms 'Foundation Phase', 'National Curriculum' and 'Literacy and Numeracy Framework'.

Use capitals when referring to specific Welsh Government funding streams, eg 'Pupil Deprivation Grant'.

Capital letters – use of lower case

Use lower case for the titles of subjects, eg mathematics, geography, physical education. (However, remember to use capitals for languages, eg English, French, German, Welsh.)

Use lower case when referring to 'the phase' or 'the curriculum' and when referring to indicators, eg 'the Foundation Phase indicator' and 'core subject indicator'.

Use lower case for 'nursery' and 'reception' and for other parts of schools/providers, eg 'learning resource base'.

For titles, headings and sub-headings, see above.

If in doubt about the use of capitals, use lower case.

Citing publications

See the section on 'References' later in this document.

Commas

The general rule nowadays is to avoid using too many commas.

However, always use a comma after 'however' when it starts a sentence (as in this sentence). Use commas to separate 'however' from the rest of a sentence when used mid-sentence, as in the following example: 'In Year 3, however, standards are poor'.

Always use a comma before 'but' when it links and contrasts two parts of a sentence, for example: 'Standards are good in Year 4, but they have many shortcomings in Year 5'.

Use a comma before 'for example' or 'eg'.

Use a comma before any qualifying term or phrase at the start of a sentence, as in 'In general,...' and 'Overall,...' and 'As a result,...' and 'Currently,...' and 'In many of the classes inspected, the learners...'

Use a comma when introducing a year group or a subject or learning area at the start of a sentence, for example 'In Year 3, standards are good' and 'In history, standards are outstanding' and 'In performing arts, learners achieve good standards in dance'.

When inserting a sub-clause into the middle of a sentence, use commas on both sides of the clause, or not at all. Remember also that inserting commas can alter the meaning of a sentence. For example, 'The boys, who did their homework, achieved well' means something different from: 'The boys who did their homework achieved well'.

Commercial products

Estyn documents should not appear to endorese commercial products. For this reason, you should be careful when using common terms, such as 'iPad', as this may give the impression that we endorse a particular product in an educational setting. It is especially important not to refer to commercial schemes that schools and providers commonly use, for example specific reading schemes. In these instances, it is enough to refer to a 'commercial reading scheme'.

Common, familiar words

These will often be clearer and more direct, so use 'buy' rather than 'purchase', 'start' rather than 'commence', 'finish' or 'complete' instead of 'finalise'.

Long words can sound pompous and may not be readily understood. This guide contains an appendix on troublesome words and phrases where you may find some useful alternatives to over-complex terms sometimes used in reports. The Plain

English Campaign website also includes an A-Z of alternative words which may be helpful at www.plainenglishcampaign.co.uk.

Dictionaries and spell-checking

If you consult a dictionary, in hard copy or on your computer, make sure it is a British/UK dictionary and that it is up-to-date. Some dictionaries are more generous than others in their acceptance of current usage. A good way to gauge their stance is to look at their attitude to hyphens as these tend to get dropped as words become more current within the language, so 'electro-magnetic' becomes 'electromagnetic'. The same is true of capital letters. You can see both factors at work in the evolution of 'email' from first 'E-mail' to 'e-mail' then 'email'. As a rough guide, go with the more current usage.

Emphasising text

If you have to emphasis something in a text, use bold only. Do not underline text or use italics for emphasis.

Evaluative words

Certain words are more usually associated with certain evaluations than others. The following is a list of words and phrases that may help inspectors to reflect the evaluations they have awarded.

The use of any one word or phrase in the groupings below does not of itself make any specific evaluation inevitable, as this will depend on the balance of strengths and shortcomings overall, but they are here as a rough guide:

Excellent: outstanding, very good, innovative, exceptional, superior, exemplary, superb, very high standard, very high quality, perfect, extensive, highly creative, highly imaginative, well above expectations, highly effective, sector-leading

Good: successful, strong, skilful, worthwhile, beneficial, valuable, able, thorough, useful, powerful, comprehensive, used well, consistently good, effective

Adequate: satisfactory, appropriate, suitable, efficient, competent, relevant, sufficient, enough, valid, solid, sound, average, consistent

Unsatisfactory: insufficient, inefficient, none, no, inappropriate, ineffective, unsuitable, unable, weak, inconsistent, irregular, limited, poor

Font

Use the Arial font at 12 pitch for all main sections of documents that Estyn will publish. This document uses the Arial font at 12 pitch. However, it is advisable to use Arial at 11 pitch or 10 pitch when completing the supporting evidence sections within InputJFs and ReportingJFs.

Footnotes

Do not use footnotes if at all possible. See the section on 'Citing publications' earlier for help with referencing using the Harvard Referencing System.

Foreign words

Use single speech marks to identify foreign words that have not entered the English language. For example, in a report on modern foreign languages, indicate the foreign words as follows, 'Learners understand well which French verbs use 'être' or 'avoir'.

Hyphens

Overall, we tend to use fewer hyphens than in the past. Please note the following hyphenated and non-hyphenated words:

action plan	community-based
action planning	CD-ROM
Advanced level	co-operate
A level	co-operation
asylum seeker	co-ordinate
benchmark	co-ordination
bilingual	co-ordinator
case study	day-to-day
childcare	decision-making
child minder	drop-in workshops
classroom	e-commerce
coursework	e-learning
day release	English-medium
eco committee	extra-curricular
email	first-hand
feedback (noun)	full-time
feed back (verb)	fund-raising
field work	in-house
first aid	inner-city school
flexistudy	in-service
form teacher	long-term
group work	multi-agency
handout (noun)	multi-ethnic
healthcare	newly-qualified
homepage	off-site
interactive	off-the-job
interrelated	on-the-job
jobcentre	one-to-one
key skills	over-emphasis
landbased	part-time
laptop	post-16
Learndirect	post-graduate (adjective)
less able	pupil-teacher ratio

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lifelong purpose-built mixed ability record-keeping more able re-examine motor vehicle re-inspection multicultural role-play multimedia roll-on roll-off school-based newsletter no one

sector-leading (adjective)

noticeboard self-assessment ongoing self-evaluation online self-esteem peer inspector short-term

peer assessment sixth-form (adjective)

starting-points postcode sub-committee postgraduate (noun) rearrange target-setting

rebuild three-digit numbers

reconsider three-quarters (and in all fractions)

reiterate two-digit numbers under-fives restructure

reuse up-to-date schoolchildren vice-principal vice-chairman SureStart vice-president taskforce

teamwork well-behaved (before noun) well-planned (before noun) textbook well-organised (before noun) timescale

Welsh-medium timetable underachievement wheelchair-user underdeveloped whole-school

undergraduate work-based underperform underperformance

website

well behaved (no hyphen after verb)

wellbeing

well planned (no hyphen after verb) well organised (no hyphen after verb)

wheelchair whiteboard word processing

video conferencing

workload workplace work placement worksheet youth work

Do not break words with hyphens at the end of lines if you can help it. In most cases, Word will move words to the next line if they will not fit in the remaining space. If you want to keep two hyphenated parts of a word together then you can add a 'hard' hyphen (Ctrl+Shift+Hyphen) into a hyphenated word. Try not to leave hyphens hanging, as in 'part- and full-time students' or mid- and long-term plans', say 'part-time and full-time learners' and 'mid-term and long-term plans' instead.

Remember to distinguish hyphens ('-') from dashes ('-') which are often used as a substitute for colons.

Try to avoid using multiple hyphens within a phrase. Strictly speaking, there should be hyphens within all compound phrases that act as adjectives before nouns. This is why there should be hyphens in 'free-school-meal pupils' and 'key-stage-2 pupils'. There should also be a hyphen in the phrase 'good-quality resources'. However, these often look rather clumsy. In these cases, it is often more appropriate to write them in a way that does not require hyphens, as in 'pupils eligible for free school meals', 'pupils in key stage 2' and 'resources of good quality'.

-ise and -ize

We use the '-ise form in our publications, as in 'organise'. This extends to nouns as well, so we use 'organisation' with no 'z'.

Line spacing

Use single line spacing for all documents, including lists of bullets and recommendations.

Please ensure that the default setting in your version of Word is set to enable single line spacing. We have received some documents with the default set at 1.15 lines. You can easily check this by right-clicking on relevant text and clicking 'paragraph'.

Monetary values

Express monetary values in as short a form as possible, using 'bn' for 'billion', 'm' for 'million' and 'k' for 'thousand'. This will avoid the use of long numbers. For example, write £1m rather than £1,000,000. Try to use fractions for numbers above a million, as in £1.25m, but below this try to avoid them, if possible, so write £250k (for £250,000) rather than £0.25m.

Numbers, including fractions, and numbered lists

When using numbers within the text of a document:

- Spell out numbers from one to nine, including ordinals (eg 'ninth')
- Normally use number symbols after nine (10,11...999), including ordinals (eg '10th'), but there are important exceptions (see below)
- Try not to mix numbers and words in the same phrase (for example, it is acceptable to write 'There are 124 pupils on roll aged from 3 to 11 years of age' even though numbers from one to nine are usually written in full)
- Put commas in numbers over a thousand (eg 5,432 not 5432)

- Start decimals with a zero if they are less than one (eg 0.75 not .75)
- Write decimals in number format, even if less than 10, unless the decimal is the first word in a sentence, so write 'About 3% of pupils have additional learning needs', but 'Three per cent of pupils have additional learning needs'
- Spell out in full any number if it begins a sentence (even those after nine and including percentages), eg 'Seventy per cent of pupils passed the test'
- Use number symbols to refer to grades, levels, year groups and stages, eg grade 1, level 3, Year 10 and key stage 2.

In numbered lists, use standard number symbols rather than roman numerals, and set them out in line with the body text, with the text indented at 0.8cm like this:

- (1) Use bracketed numerals in line with the main text
- (2) Indent text at 0.8cm.

Remember that some numbers have hyphens, eg twenty-one, one hundred and forty-four.

Fractions take hyphens, eg one-third, three-quarters.

Numbers - page numbers

When you use page numbers, place them at the centre and at the bottom of each page (as on this page).

Numbers – paragraphs

Do not use paragraph numbers in inspection reports. However, they do have a role in remit reports. When used, paragraphs should be numbered consecutively through the text of a remit report. Do not use tiers of numbering for paragraphs in reports, such as 1.2, 1.2.3 and so on. These tend to clog up text and become confusing for readers.

When numbering paragraphs, indent the numbers at -1 and set out the text in line with the body text.

Do not use a full stop or any other symbol to separate the numbering from the text.

Numbers – percentages

When writing percentages, use the number followed by the percentage symbol (%). Also try to use the percentage symbol (%) in tables, even when the legend already indicates that all numbers in the table are percentages.

Never start a sentence with a percentage in number format, for example '70% of pupils passed the test'. Instead, write it out in full, where possible, as in 'Seventy per cent of pupils passed the test'. However, you can start a bullet with a percentage in number format.

Try not to use a detailed fraction, such as 77.6%. In these cases, think about using 'almost' or 'about', as in 'Almost 78% passed the test'.

Remember the difference between a percentage point increase and a percentage increase. An increase from 30% to 33% is a three percentage point increase, not a 3% increase (it is in fact a 10% increase).

Numbers – quantities and proportions

It is important to be careful when writing about various proportions of learners. Terms and phrases linked to proportions may mean different things to different readers. In Estyn reports, please use the following terms and make sure you reflect the broad proportions shown below. However, please recognise that they are indicative relationships only.

nearly all = with very few exceptions

most = 90% or more many = 70% or more a majority = over 60% half = 50%

around half = close to 50% a minority = below 40% few = below 20%

very few = less than 10%

Occasionally, inspectors use phrases such as 'in the best practice' or 'in the most effective lessons' before going on to list the positive features. This type of introductory phrase is generally not very useful unless it comes with a quantifying phrase/term to tell the reader how much of the practice is present in the school/provider. In these cases, it is better to introduce a quantifying phrase first, for example 'In most lessons, teaching is highly effective. In these lessons...'

When presenting benchmarked information, use the following terms to describe quartile positions:

top 25% = quartile 1 higher 50% = quartile 2 lower 50% = quartile 3 bottom 25% = quartile 4

When writing about a school/provider's position compared to an average, for example when reporting on a school's proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, consider using the following as a rough guide:

about average = +/- 5 percentage point = +/- 6 - 9 percentage points

well above/below average = +/- 10 or more percentage points

Try not to use the word 'number' in a vague way, as in 'A number of lessons have many shortcomings'. Be more specific and use a word which gives more of an idea of the quantity of lessons involved.

Use majority and minority in contexts where there is clearly a significant difference between the two. Technically, a majority may be 51% with a minority of 49%, but there is in effect little difference between the two. In this case, it is best to write in terms of half or around half. See above.

Numbers – rounding

Remember to round decimals down when they are below the mid-point and up when they are above the mid-point.

When at the halfway point, round numbers up, so 14.5% can be expressed as 'about 15%'.

As above, expressions such as 'about' 'just above' or 'just below' can be useful when describing rounded numbers.

Where small percentage differnces can be important, as in attendance figures, it is acceptable to round up to one decimal place, but no further. For example, it is acceptable to write 'The overall attendance rate for 2013 was 96.4%' or 'The overall attendance rate for 2013 was just above 96%', but do not write 'The overall attendance rate for 2013 was 96.34%'.

For numbers above a million, round to one decimal place. For example, write 'The population of Wales in 2011 was 3.1 million'.

Plagiarism

You should always acknowledge the source of published material that you use. This means that you should not reproduce other people's material without attribution. See the section on 'Referencing' later in this document.

Plural verbs

Some difficulties arise when sentences contain a singular noun which in itself denotes more than one thing (collective nouns). Words like class, committee, corporation, council, department, government, majority, minority, number and staff fall into this group. Such words may be singular or plural depending on the context and this is an area where it is difficult to set hard-and-fast rules.

The plural verb should follow the most common words for specifying quantities and groups, such as: nearly all, most, many, a majority, half, around half, a minority, a few and very few.

Use the plural verb for proportions and fractions of groups, as in 'Twenty per cent of pupils achieve a high grade at GCSE' and 'a third of students come from deprived wards'.

However, in expressions like 'one in five' and 'one in ten', the 'one' is singular so it takes a singular verb, as in 'One in five learners fails to achieve the qualification'. This is the same as saying 'Out of every five learners, one fails to achieve the qualification'.

Use the singular verb when there is a word that clearly identifies a group, as in 'Each class receives four periods of French' or 'Every council in Wales has a strategic plan'. Use the singular verb for groups like committees and governing bodies, as in 'The governing body monitors the school's finances carefully' (singular verb). However, when focusing on the members of groups, use the plural, as in 'Members of the governign body's finance sub-committee monitor the school's finances well' (plural verb).

The word 'number' is an exception to these guidelines, but try to avoid using the word 'number' anyway and be more specific instead.

Plural verbs should always be used after plural nouns. In this context, note that monitoring and evaluation are two separate things, as are leadership and management. Each of these pairs requires a plural verb, as in 'Leadership and management **are** good'. However, if you put 'quality' in front of two or more items then the sentence takes a singular verb as 'quality' is singular, so 'The quality of leadership and management **is** good'. This correctly has a singular verb because the subject of the verb is a single item (the quality) even though the sentence is actually about the quality of two things (leadership and management).

Readability

This is a feature within Microsoft Word and it can help you to get a feel for how complicated your writing may appear to a reader. It usually comes up when the spelling and grammar check is finished. This is not an exact science, and using a lot of bullet points can confuse Word's calculations. However, it does help to concentrate the mind on making writing clearer. You can also use the highlighting function to look only at a selected piece of text, so you can avoid any bulleted text if you want to.

To use the readability check, you will need to make sure that the program is set to analyse the readability statistics. You can do this by clicking on File then Options then Proofing, and then select 'Grammar and style' in the drop-down window and make sure there is a tick in the box next to 'Show readability statistics'.

You can then access the readability check by clicking on 'Review' and then 'Spelling and Grammar'. You can check a whole document or a selection of text.

The readability check will give you a number of useful statistics. The two most useful are the Flesch scale of reading ease and the information on passive sentences.

The Flesch scale of reading ease runs from 0 to 100. In basic terms, the higher the score, the plainer the writing you have produced. Try to aim for a score of 40-50 at least.

The readability score will also tell you the number and percentage of passive sentences you have used. Aim to use as few as possible.

Recommendations

In the ReportingJF, each recommendation should start with a capital letter, but there is no need to put a full-stop at the end of each one.

In survey/remit reports, list of recommendations should be introduced by a stem sentence followed by a colon. The stem sentence should be a numbered paragraph, but each recommendation should not be numbered as separate paragraphs.

Use 'R' followed by a standard number symbol and set them out in line with the body text, with the text indented at 0.8cm, and with single spacing, like this:

R1 Use R1, R2, R3 and so on in line with the main text

R2 Use single spacing

R3 Indent text at 0.8cm.

The use of 'R' against each recommendation makes it easier to refer to them in any correspondence with providers/schools.

References

Estyn uses the Harvard Referencing System. This means that:

- You must cite sources in the body of the text
- For in-text citations, you must include the author's surname or company name and the year of publication
- You must include a list of full references at the end of the document (no footnotes)

For example:

In the body of a text:

'A recent report (Sylva et al., 2011) stated that' or 'In a recent report, Sylva et al. (2011) stated that' or 'Estyn (2014) reported that'

In the full reference at the end of the document:

Estyn (2014) *Numeracy in Key Stages 2 and 3: An interim report.* Cardiff: Estyn. [Online]. Available from:

http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/337974/numeracy-in-key-stages-2-and-3-an-interim-report-november-2014/?navmap=30,163, [Accessed 06 January 2015].

Sylva, K. et al. (2011) Pre-school quality and educational outcomes at age 11: Low quality has little benefit. *Journal of early childhood research*, **9** (2), 109-124.

For HMI internal use only: Estyn's full guide to the Harvard Referencing System can be found <u>here</u>.

Short sentences and paragraphs

Be prepared to rewrite and simplify any long sentence or paragraph. Often, the longer the sentence or paragraph, the more complex it is for a lay reader. Usually, it is only a matter of creating two or three clearer sentences out of one over-complex sentence.

Spaces after punctuation

Use one space after commas and semi-colons.

Use two spaces after full stops, colons and question marks.

Split infinitives

Make sure you do not put anything between 'to' and the verb it comes with, so do not write 'to effectively assess the work of learners, but write 'to assess the work of learners effectively'.

Tenses

Normally, inspectors should write in the present tense as if they are describing and evaluating the school at the present time, as in 'Pupils achieve good standards in literacy and numeracy'.

Where it is clear that events occurred in the past, then the past tense is appropriate, as in 'The school's previous inspection was in 2010'.

Issues occur when inspectors have to refer to performance data. Generally, if the performance data is the last available set of data, and is therefore the current data for the school/provider, then the sentences about the data should be in the present tense.

If the performance data is historic, ie new data has superseded it, then it is appropriate to use the past tense.

The following example shows the past tense used for the historic dat and the presert tense used for the current data, 'Pupils' performance in 2010-2013 placed the school in the bottom 25% when compared to similar schools. However, its current performance places it in the higher 50% of similar schools'.

Text alignment

Align all main body text on the left, and all headings and sub-headings.

Do not justify any text. Justification alters the distance between words and letters and is less easy to read. It also makes it harder to pick up any spacing errors at the editing stage.

Times and dates

When referring to a specific time, use am and pm after the hours and minutes with no space, as in 9am, 8.15pm. Do not use the 24-hour clock.

Write dates in full in the order of day, month and year, eg 3 September 2001. Do not use ordinals, such as 3rd, in dates.

Always refer to years in full, eg 2013-2014. Do not use any abbreviated forms when referring to years so do not write 2013-14.

Always refer to year periods using a dash not a forward slash, and write the year in full, for example write 2013-2014 but do not write 2013/2014 or 2013/14.

Try not to spread the date across two lines. If it is unavoidable, split the date after the month, not the day.

On rare occasions, it might be important to differentiate between an academic, financial and calendar year. If so, write 'during the year' for the calendar year and add 'academic' or 'financial' when required (for example 'during the academic year 2013-2014'). In most cases, the type of year will be clear from the context.

Refer to decades just by adding 's' to the first year of the decade, eg the 1990s. Note there is no need for an apostrophe.

Titles, headings and sub-headings

For titles of documents, use capitals for the first letters of titles and lower case for any short connecting words, such as 'and', 'of' and 'in'. An example of this is 'The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales'. In hyphenated words, use capitals for both elements if it is the title of a document, as in 'Standards and Quality in Work-Based Learning'. However, use sentence case when used in headings or sub-headings, as in 'Work-based learning' (see below).

For headings and sub-headings, use capitals for the first letter of the first word, but use lower case for all other words. An example of this is the heading for this section.

Titles, headings and sub-headings do not need final full stops. Throughout documents, full stops are only to be used to follow full sentences, containing a subject, verb and object.

Verbs rather than abstract nouns

It is more helpful to use verbs rather than abstract nouns. So, try to write 'pupils use learning resources well' rather than 'pupils make good use of learning resources' or 'the use pupils make of learning resources is good'.

Website addresses

In order to meet the requirements of the Harvard Referencing System, please include the full website address, including http://.

Words and phrases to avoid

Words we use in our everyday language within education and training can appear strange to a lay reader. We may not even recognise such words as jargon. A good example is a word like 'differentiation'. Educational professionals know what they mean by the term, but a lay person may struggle to understand its specific meaning. It may be better to change the sentence to avoid the word or you may have to use a much longer phrase to explain the meaning, for example by writing 'adapting work to meet the individual needs of the learners'.

Writers should avoid words that are ambiguous, sloppy, esoteric, jargon, fashionable, clichéd or patronising.

The following list is not exhaustive by any means, but it is a list of the kinds of words and phrases that writers should generally avoid:

```
'classroom situation'
'meaningful learning situations'
'structured learning experiences'
'meaningful'
'didactic'
'traditional'
'fine motor skills'
'table top activities'
'differentiated input'
'teacher-directed learning'
'teaching input'
'There is a need to...'
"...should be reviewed..."
'proactive'
'seemed', 'appeared'
'It is possible...'
'One might question whether...'
```

Also see the section on 'Language which may cause offence' above and Appendix A: Troublesome words and phrases.

Further guidance on Plain English

'multidisciplinary'

'The Plain English Guide' (Oxford, 1996) by Martin Cutts provides an excellent introduction to the principles of Plain English.

'The Complete Plain Words' (HMSO, 1954) by Sir Ernest Gowers is still very useful and entertaining.

The Plain English Campaign website is a useful source of information: www.plainenglish.co.uk.

Agreed list of abbreviations in inspection reports

This page contains a list of abbreviations that you might reasonably expect an interested lay person to know and understand. Write these in full when they first appear in a publication with the abbreviation in brackets and then just the abbreviated form after that.

All other abbreviations (ie not on this page) should be written in full the first time they appear, unless they are very common and in everyday use, for example UK, GB, USA, EU, MP, AM, MEP, NHS, S4C and BBC.

AM Assembly Member

BTEC Business and Technician Education Council

DfES Department for Education and Skills DWP Department for Work and Pensions

GCSE General Certificate of Secondary Education HMC Headmasters and Mistresses Conference

HMCI Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training

HMI Her Majesty's Inspector

ICT information and communication technology

IT information technology (the National Curriculum subject)

MEP Member of the European Parliament

MP Member of Parliament

NVQ National Vocational Qualification

OCN Open College Network

PGCE Post-Graduate Certificate in Education

WJEC use WJEC only (never in full)

Appendix A: Guidance on troublesome words and phrases

This list sets out the agreed form for particular words and phrases that have caused difficulty for inspectors from time to time. Some words and phrases in this section may not match the preferences of individual writers and editors. Everyone develops their own personal style over the years. However, when you edit or write reports for Estyn, please use the agreed form.

Tell Estyn if you come across a troublesome word or phrase

Please contact communications@estyn.gov.uk if you have any suggestions for this guidance. The most up-to-date guidance document will always be on Estyn's website.

Glossary of inspection terms

There is a glossary of inspection terms available on Estyn's website – glossary of inspection terms.

You may find this useful as it provides plain English explanations of many common educational terms, abbreviations, qualifications, organisations and agencies.

Α

access

many drafts say something like 'Access to ICT is limited'. It is better to say what impact this limited access has on pupils' learning, ie what they cannot do as a result.

accordingly

try 'so' instead

accreditation

sometimes drafts contain the phrase 'students gain accreditation'. Qualifications or courses gain accreditation. Students gain qualifications.

accustomed to

try using 'used to' instead

acting

as in acting principal, acting headteacher

acts of parliament

use capitals and add the year, as in the Government of Wales Act 1998

additional

try using 'extra' or 'more' instead, but note that we always use 'additional' in the phrase 'additional learning needs' address (with the meaning of 'consider') try using 'tackle', 'deal with' or 'consider' instead

Advanced level

(or abbreviate to A level); no hyphen

Advanced Subsidiary level

(or abbreviate to AS level); no hyphen

adverbs

avoid putting adverbs in front of verbs, eg 'Teachers effectively plan lessons and fully involve pupils in discussions'. Instead, change this sentence to 'Teachers plan lessons effectively and involve pupils fully in discussions'.

adviser

not advisor

ahead of

generally avoid this phrase and use 'before' instead

Aids

capital letter; note sentence case and no need to spell out the individual items

alleviate

try using 'ease', 'reduce' or 'lessen' instead

AM

Assembly Member; use AM after the name with no comma, as in Leighton Andrews AM

among

not amongst

apparent

try 'clear' or 'plain' instead

ascertain

try using 'find out' instead

Assembly, the

always use 'National Assembly' instead

autumn, winter, spring, summer term

no capitals, including in such phrases as 'autumn term'

В

Baccalaureate

as in Welsh Baccalaureate, International Baccalaureate

based

remember the hyphen in phrases such as work-based learning

benefited, benefiting

single t

biannual/biennial

biannual means twice a year; biennial means every two years. Use these phrases rather than biannual or biennial, or say twice-yearly or two-yearly

bilingual

no hyphen

billion

a thousand million; use **bn** in headlines and text when referring to financial amounts, as in £1bn

C

careers companies, Careers Wales

cease

try 'stop' or 'end' instead

CD, CD-ROM

century

as in 20th century, 21st century

Christian, Christianity

Christian name

do not use; use 'first name' instead

civil servant, civil service

ColegauCymru

the association of FE colleges in Wales; formerly fforwm

commence

try 'start' or 'begin' instead

common sense noun, commonsense adjective

community-based

compass points

nearly always lower case: north, south, the south-west, north-east Wales, south Wales, north Wales; the same applies to geopolitical areas: the west, western Europe, south-east Asia and so on. However, there are some important exceptions, such as Middle East, Latin America, North America

complete, completed

better than 'finalise' or 'finalised'

comprise

do not use 'comprise of', try to use 'include' or 'consist of' instead

concerning

try using 'about' instead

conducive to learning

try not to use this jargon phrase, consider using 'helps pupils to learn' or something similar

constitute

try using 'make up or 'form' instead

consult

not consult with, and try 'talk to' or 'meet' instead

continue to

avoid introducing a recommendation using 'continue to' as in 'continue to improve standards in Welsh'; use a phrase like 'further' instead as in 'improve further standards in Welsh'

co-operate, co-operation

but no hyphen in 'uncooperative'

co-ordinate, co-ordinated, co-ordination, co-ordinator

but no hyphen in 'uncoordinated'

D

data

now generally treated as singular and therefore takes a singular verb, as in 'The school's data on pupils' achievements shows a large improvement compared to previous years'.

dates

21 January 2002 (no commas and do not use an ordinal, as in 21st); for decades use figures, as in the 90s or 1990s – note no apostrophe

day-to-day

as in 'day-to-day administration is good'

Department for Education and Skills

A department of the Welsh Government. Use the full term first time in a document and then abbreviate as DfES afterwards.

despite the fact that

try to use 'although' or 'despite' instead

determine

try using 'decide' instead

different from

not different to or than

discontinue

try using 'stop' or 'end' instead

disk

(computers), not disc

distributed leadership

avoid this jargon term; instead us a phrase which focuses on the way the school or headteacher has shared leadership roles among staff at all levels

drop-in

as in 'drop-in workshops'

Ε

e-commerce, e-learning

with hyphen; capitalise as normal at the start of sentences, as in 'E-learning has developed well'; but note that email has no hyphen

Early Years

in most cases replace this with the term 'Foundation Phase'

eco committee

lower case; no hyphen

educationalist

not 'educationist'

eg

no full points and introduce with a comma, but consider using 'such as', 'as in' or even 'for example' instead

email

no hyphen

England

take care not to offend by saying England or English when you mean Britain or British

English

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) refers to residents with little or no English who are learning English; English as a foreign language (EFL) refers to visitors/non-residents who are learning English while they are here; in school contexts, use English as an additional language (EAL) to learners of English in either of the above groups.

enrol, enrolling, enrolment

equitable

try using 'fair' instead

establish

try using 'set up', 'create' or 'form' instead

Estyn

always write in this form with a capital E and do not capitalise the whole word

et cetera, etc

avoid the use of both of these. Be specific instead.

EU

European Union (no need to spell out at first mention)

euro

currency; plural 'euros'

European Commission

'the commission' after first mention

evidence

avoid in phrases like 'There is evidence of...'. There is either enough evidence to make an evaluation or there is not. Just make the evaluation.

expenditure

try 'spending' instead

F

facilitate

try using 'help' instead

fair trade or Fairtrade

'fair trade' (two words) is a concept linked to development and sustainability. In Wales, 'Fair Trade Wales/Cymru Masnach Deg' acts as a focal point for taking forward teaching about fair trade in schools; When writing about pupils' understanding of sustainability and development, use 'fair trade' (two words). 'Fairtrade' (one word) is an accreditation and labelling system which certifies that products that bear the Fairtrade mark meet a range of specific criteria. Schools may use Faitrade products or pupils may sell them in school tuck shops in order to become a Fairtrade School. However, in most cases, inspectors should write about pupils' understanding of the concept of 'fair trade' (two words) rather than their use and recognition of the Fairtrade label/brand.

finalise, finalised

avoid, use 'complete'/'completed' or 'finish'/'finished' instead

firstly

prefer first, then second, third and so on

first name

not Christian name

First World War, Second World War

not World War I or World War II

focus, focused, focusing

single s every time

following

usually prefer 'after'

foreign names

The French 'le' or 'de', the Italian 'di' and the Dutch 'van' are all lower case when the name is written in full; English names with 'le', 'de' follow the same rules

foreign words and phrases

Use single speech marks to identify foreign words that have not entered the English language. For example, in a school or FE report on modern foreign languages, indicate the foreign words as follows, 'Pupils understand well which French verbs use 'être' or 'avoir''

Foundation Phase

use initial capitals; now replaces the need to use 'Early Years', but use lower case for 'the phase'

fractions

remember the hyphen in fractions, as in 'three-quarters'

free school meals

use 'eligible for' free school meals and not 'entitled to'; do not write 'pupils in receipt of free school meals' either

full-time

full-time and part-time; do not leave a hanging hyphen as in 'full- and part-time', write 'full-time and part-time' instead

further education college

no hyphen

Future Skills Wales

good quality

avoid putting this phrase before the noun, as in 'good quality resources', but write 'resources of good quality' instead

governing body

lower case; governing body is singular and needs a singular verb, as in 'The governing body is very supportive of the school'; but, if inspectors specify the individuals on the governing body, then it takes a plural verb, as in 'Members of the governing body are very supportive of the school'

government

lower case in all contexts, but note: 'Welsh Government'

Great Britain

England, Wales and Scotland – if you want to include Northern Ireland, use United Kingdom

Gypsy

use 'Gypsy and Traveller' or 'Gypsies and Travellers'; note the use of capitals. This term is used to refer to persons of nomadic lifestyle regardless of their race or origin; it refers to all groups of Gypsies and Travellers, including both traditional ethnic groups and New Travellers.

Н

handicapped

do not use; refer to 'disabled learners' or 'pupils with additional learning needs'

harass, harassment

double s

headteacher

in the maintained, state sector do not use headmaster or headmistress, use headteacher instead. However, in other sectors, use a form which reflects the practice in the institution. For example, in some private schools, the use of the term 'headmaster' or 'headmistress' is acceptable

help

takes 'to' with another verb: eg 'help to decide', not 'help and decide' or 'help decide'

HMI names

always write as 'First Name Last Name HMI', as in 'Bethan Lloyd HMI' with no gender title or other punctuation

hitherto

try using 'until now' instead

ie

no full points, and consider using 'namely' instead

impart

try using 'give', 'pass on', 'tell' or 'inform' instead

implement

try using 'carry out' or 'do' instead

in accordance with

try using 'in line with' instead

increment

try using 'step' or 'increase' instead

initiate

try using 'begin' or 'start' instead

inner city or inner-city

when a noun, it is two separate words, as in 'a school in the inner city'; but when used as an adjective, use a hyphen as in 'an inner-city school'

in order to

try cutting down to just 'to' instead

inquiry

not enquiry

instil, instilled, instilling

institute (verb)

try using 'begin' or 'start' instead

interactive

as in 'interactive whiteboard'

internet, intranet, website, web, world wide web

notice all lower case

iPad

do not use as this is a proprietary term; use 'tablet computer' instead

Ireland, Irish Republic, Republic of Ireland

not Eire

ise

not ize at end of word (except capsize)

J

jobcentre

Jobcentre Plus

jobseeker's allowance

K

key stage

use lower case, as in key stage 2; do not abbreviate to KS

key question

use lower case when talking about key questions in general terms, but upper case when referring to a specific, numbered key question, eg Key Question 1

Koran or Qur'an

equally acceptable; follow the practice at the provider inspected

L

landbased

no hyphen, as in 'landbased studies'

Learndirect

one word

level

as in 'intermediate level', 'NVQ level 2'

liaison

note two uses of I in the word

lifelong

as in 'lifelong learning'; no hyphen

M

magistrates court

no apostrophe

majority

use majority and minority in contexts where there is clearly a significant difference between the two. Technically, a majority may be 51% with a minority of 49%, but there is in effect little difference between the two. In this case, it is best to write in terms of half or around half. See under 'quantification and proportions' in 'Guidance on style' earlier

manoeuvre, manoeuvring

meet

do not write 'meet with', the 'with' is unnecessary

minority

see the entry under majority above

Modern Apprenticeship but modern apprentice

multicultural, multimedia, multimillion no hyphens, but multi-agency and multi-ethnic

Muslim

not 'Moslem'

Ν

National Assembly for Wales, the

it is important to note the important distinctions in the terms that describe the various parts of government in Wales. The **National Assembly for Wales** refers to the corporate body created by the Government of Wales Act. The term **Welsh Government** refers to Cabinet Ministers and their Deputies. This distinguishes the Cabinet from the National Assembly for Wales. The National Assembly for Wales refers to the full 60 elected members. When referring to the policies, work or decisions of Ministers, use the correct collective term, ie Welsh Government. Only use the National Assembly for Wales when referring to the decisions or actions of the full 60-member National Assembly for Wales. The terms National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Government are not entirely interchangeable.

National Curriculum

when referring to the statutory curriculum for pupils of statutory school age

National Traineeship but national trainee

necessitate

try using 'need', 'have to' or 'require' instead

net

avoid when meaning 'internet'; use **internet, website, web** or **world wide web** instead

nevertheless

try using 'even so', 'however' or 'yet' instead

NHS

national health service, but not necessary to spell it out; 'health service' is also acceptable

nonetheless

try using 'even so', 'however' or 'yet' instead

none

usually takes a singular verb

north

eg north-east Wales, north Wales, the north-west

notwithstanding

try 'even if', 'despite', 'still', 'yet' or 'but' instead

number

try not to use this word in a vague way, as in 'A number of lessons have many shortcomings'. Be more specific and use a word which gives more of an idea of the quantity of lessons involved - see entries on quantification and plural verbs in this guide

0

obtain

try 'get' or 'receive' instead

Ofsted

sentence case; no need to spell out

one-to-one

as in 'one-to-one support'

ongoing

try to avoid, note no hyphen; think about using 'continuous' or 'continual' instead. 'Continuous' means that something happens for a period without a break (ie non-stop), and 'continual' means that something happens repeatedly over a period (ie several occurrences with gaps between them)

on-the-job

as in 'on-the-job training'

on to

but into

opportunities

a lot of drafts have comments about the opportunities given to learners. However, just having the opportunity does not guarantee that effective learning takes place. Often it is more important to say how well the learners use the opportunities. It is teachers who provide the opportunities for pupils/learners so such comments may be more appropriate in relation to evaluations on the quality of teaching.

other than

try 'except' instead

out-turn

as in out-turn statement, but often it would be better to make a statement about a provider's financial circumstances without using this jargon term

outward bound

avoid; use 'outdoor adventure' or 'adventure training' instead

overhead

as in 'overhead transparencies' and 'overhead projector', use in full and avoid using OHT and OHP

Ρ

parliament, parliamentary

participate

it is usually not enough just to say that 'students participate well' without saying what it is they participate well in

per annum

Usually it is better to say 'a year' or whatever period is needed. If you must use it, the Latin preposition is usually followed by another Latin word, but there are common exceptions, such as 'per head' (plainer than per capita) and 'miles per hour'.

per cent

two words

percentage

one word

personal and social education

this is the correct term in Wales where there is a personal and social education (PSE) framework; in England, there is a personal, social and health education framework (PSHE); it is important not to confuse the two

plans

As in 'There are plans to...' This is often too speculative. In some parts of reports, the presence of plans is significant, especially when considering strategic management and leadership, estate strategies, and so on. However, there is a need to be careful when making positive comments about the mere presence of plans since having a plan does not in itself guarantee its successful implementation.

plc

not PLC

plurals

letters, numerals and abbreviations form the plural just by adding s, so MPs, AMs, 1990s

PowerPoint

avoid as this is a proprietary term; use 'presentations using ICT' or a similar phrase

practice noun, practise verb

note 'excellent practice case study' and 'sector-leading practice'

principal

first in importance, and head of an FE college; 'principle' means standard of conduct

principality

avoid as this word now sounds old-fashioned

prior to

try using 'before' instead

privy council

but privy counsellor

proforma/proformae

avoid; usually just a posh way to say 'form' or 'forms', which are preferable

program (computer), otherwise programme

note: 'programme of study'

PRU

use 'pupil referral unit' first time then 'PRU'

publicly

not 'publically'

pupil referral unit

see PRU above

purchase

as a noun, perhaps, but use 'buy' as a verb

Q

quality

avoid the phrase 'good quality' before a noun, as in 'good quality resources'. Write 'resources of good quality' instead.

quality manager

avoid and write 'manager of quality assurance', or something similar, instead

quantification

for advice about the terms to use when setting out proportions see the earlier section on 'quantification and proportions' in 'Guidance on style'

re/re-

As a general rule, use re- (with hyphen) when followed by the vowels e or u (not pronounced as 'yu'): eg re-entry, re-examine, re-urge. There is one important exception: re-inspection

Use re (no hyphen) when followed by the vowels a, i, o or u (pronounced as 'yu'), or any consonant: eg rearm, rearrange, reassemble, reiterate, reorder, reuse, rebuild, reconsider

Exceptions: re-read and re-inspection; or where confusion with another word would arise: re-cover/recover, re-form/reform, re-creation/recreation

regarding

try using 'about' instead

re-inspection

with a hyphen

relationships

Many drafts have 'Relationships between teachers and students are good'. This is often the case and is not particularly notable. Avoid using this in the list of good features unless the relationships are excellent and you can say in what precise way they are. Also, always refer to 'working relationships' to avoid any possible confusion.

remuneration

try 'pay', 'wages' or 'salary' instead

reside

try using 'live' instead

role, role-play, role-playing

no accents in 'role'

roll-on roll-off

as in 'roll-on roll-off training'

S

schoolboy, schoolgirl, schoolchildren, schoolteacher

all one word, but avoid where possible and use pupil, boy, girl, children and teacher instead

school council

lower case

school names

as in Estyn Primary School, Estyn Comprehensive School

school subjects

use lower case to refer to school subjects, unless they are languages, as in history, geography, mathematics, but French, Welsh, English (note: modern foreign languages)

seasons

all lower case: spring, summer, autumn, winter

SENCO

avoid using this term in reports and use 'Special Educational Needs coordinator' or 'SEN co-ordinator' instead

sixth form/sixth-form

no hyphen when used as a noun, only when used as an adjective. So, 'The sixth form has 106 students', but 'Sixth-form provision is inadequate.'

SMT/SLT

avoid these abbreviations; use 'senior management team' or 'senior leadership team' instead

some

too vague; editors will nearly always ask you to be more specific (see quantification above)

south

lower case in most instances, such as south-west Wales, south Wales, but note exceptions in names of countries and continents, as in South Africa, South America

span of years

1995-1999 or 'between 1995 and 1999', not 'between 1995-99'; always write the year numerically in full

split infinitives

'to boldly go' is a split infinitive as all Star Trek fans know, but always try to avoid using them. Occasionally, the phrase 'to fully complete' appears in drafts. This is not only a split infinitive, but it is also a tautology (the two words, 'full' and 'complete', indicate the same meaning).

staff

this usually takes a plural verb, or use 'members of staff', or 'senior management team' or a similar phrase to get around any difficulties (see under 'plural verbs')

state

try 'say' instead

straightforward

sufficient

it is often better to use 'enough' instead

summer

supersede

often better to use a plainer phrase such as 'take the place of'

T

talk to

not talk with

target, target-setting, targeted, targeting

teacher

in most school and further education reports, use teacher or teachers instead of tutor, lecturer or staff

terminate

try 'end' or 'stop' instead

three-dimensional shapes

use this rather than '3D shapes'

trades council, trade union, trade unions, but Trades Union Congress

try

use 'to' with try and not 'and'

turnover noun, turn over verb

20th century, 21st century

two-dimensional shapes

use this rather than '2D shapes'

twofold

or use a term like 'double' or 'doubled'

U

unbiased

underdeveloped

editors may change this to 'not developed enough' or may recommend use of a term like 'limited' or 'weak' instead

underperform, underperformance

usually better to say 'have not performed well enough' or something similar

underpinning (as in 'underpinning knowledge')

rather a jargon term within work-based learning, refer to 'the knowledge learners or trainees require to develop their practical skills', or something similar, instead

underused

usually better to say 'not used enough' or something similar

under way

two words; not 'underway'

United Kingdom

England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Universities

use capitals in names, eg Cardiff University

University for Industry

abbreviate as 'Ufl' after first mention

unnecessary

update

up-to-date

note the hyphens

utilise

try 'use' instead



variable

try to avoid using 'variable', as in 'the quality of the work is variable'. Consider whether it is better to say 'the quality of pupils' work varies too much' and go on to explain in what way or why this is so.

W

web, website

well-planned/well planned

use a hyphen when it comes before the noun, eg 'well-planned lessons'. When it comes after the verb, use no hyphen, as in 'The lessons are well planned'

Welsh

Welsh first language, Welsh second language

Welsh Government

it is important to note the important distinctions in the terms that describe the various parts of government in Wales. The term **Welsh Government** refers to Cabinet Ministers and their Deputies. This distinguishes the Cabinet from the **National Assembly for Wales** which refers to the corporate body of 60 elected members created by the Government of Wales Act. When referring to

the policies, work or decisions of Ministers, use the correct collective term, ie Welsh Government. Only use the National Assembly for Wales when referring to the decisions or actions of the full 60-member National Assembly for Wales. The terms National Assembly for Wales and Welsh Government are not interchangeable.

Welsh for Adults

Welsh-medium

as in 'Welsh-medium schools', but on other occasions try thinking about using 'taught in Welsh', 'in the Welsh language' or 'in Welsh' instead

west, west Wales, western, the west, western Europe

wheelchair

write in terms of wheelchair-users or users of wheelchairs, as in 'access to the site for users of wheelchairs is limited'

whilst

avoid and use 'while' instead

whiteboard

winter

withhold

word processing, word processed

no hyphens

work-based

with hyphen

workplace

but work placement

worldwide

but world wide web



Year

as in Year 12; do not abbreviate to Y12; use Years when referring to more than one, as in 'Years 12 and 13' or write 'Year 12 and Year 13'

vears

remember the apostrophe in phrases such as 'in five years' time' and use a hyphen in phrases such as 'a five-year strategy'. When the number involved is more than nine, use the number itself, as in '10 years' time' and 'a 10-year strategy'