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The Educational
Institute of Scotland

www.eis.org.uk

**Education Scotland
INSPECTIONS**



Advice for members

Updated 2012

1. INSPECTIONS - SUMMARY

For inspections by Education Scotland:

- Inspections can take the form of sampled whole-school inspections, 3-18 curricular area inspections or inspections on a generic theme.
- The written notification period of an inspection visit is three weeks for secondary schools and two weeks for primary schools and early years centres.
- Discussions will take place between the inspectors and head teacher about arrangements for the inspection.
- Inspectors will inform the school of any documentation to be available prior to the inspection and on the first day of inspection.
- Schools will be required to complete their self-evaluation summary form and discuss it with the inspection team on the first day of the inspection.
- Confidential questionnaires will be distributed to parents, all staff (teaching and non-teaching) and a sample of pupils (not nursery) prior to the inspection.
- An inspection may last between three and four days (starts Monday lunch, finishing at any time between Thursday and Friday).
- The school will be inspected by a team of inspectors lead by a Managing Inspector who is an HM Inspector of Education.
- Inspectors will observe classroom practice amongst their activities.
- Inspectors will want to engage in professional dialogue at appropriate points during the inspection.
- Special lesson plans for the inspectors are not necessary.
- If inspectors are satisfied with the school's self-evaluation procedures and the outcomes arising from it they may disengage early from formal evaluative activities.
- Within two weeks of the end of the inspection a draft copy of the report in letter format will be provided for comment to the school, the education authority and the Chairperson of the Parent Council.
- The Education Scotland website will publish the report letter along with relevant inspection evidence, e.g. attainment information, within eight working weeks after the end of the inspection.
- Continuing engagement activities with Education Scotland may be required after the inspection.

Nursery schools and schools with nursery provision should note the differences and links between the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland inspections.

2. THE INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

In 2011-12, Education Scotland moved from a generational cycle of inspection (where a school is inspected every six to seven years) to a sampling model where around 240 inspections will take place each year across all sectors.

In addition to the sampled approach, inspections focussing on 3-18 curriculum areas, e.g. Science, and inspections looking at thematic tasks, e.g. Getting It Right for Every Child, will also be carried out. Normally in any year, two of the 3-18 curriculum areas and a generic theme will be looked at.

The EIS wishes to provide practical advice to teachers about what to expect as the inspection framework is implemented. In order to protect its members from excessive demands arising from inspections, the EIS issues monitoring forms to school/centres. Analyses of the information provided by EIS members in these forms indicate that for most teachers the experience is positive. However, there are times when the experience is negative and stressful for a school/centre or an individual member.

The information the EIS receives from this monitoring exercise allows us to have meaningful and evidence based dialogue with Education Scotland about the inspection process and how it can be improved.

The EIS believes that the inspection process should:

- be fair and supportive
- enjoy the confidence of those involved in the process of inspection
- reflect the reality of the situation in which the school/centre functions
- reflect the professionalism of teachers
- reflect and promote the need for collegiality within the school/centre
- recognise local authority and school improvement plans
- recognise local authority and school policies
- recognise local negotiated agreements
- add value to the school/centre and its teaching and learning and
- recognise what are achievable objectives within the above contexts.

The Care Inspectorate also inspects Early Years establishments, looking at Care and Welfare issues – Care and Support, Environment, Staffing and Management and Leadership. Inspections of this nature by the Care Inspectorate are unannounced.

3. SELF-EVALUATION

Education Scotland believes that the inspection process is about how the school/centre uses self-evaluation to take forward its plan to improve.

“Our new inspections provide the opportunity for pre-school centres and schools to show that they know themselves inside out and that they are using self-evaluation to focus on improving all the achievements of young people in line with Curriculum for Excellence. When self-evaluation evidence is robust and convincing, we use it as part of the inspection evidence. It can also help identify good practice and innovation that Education Scotland may wish to look at in more detail as part of our continuing engagement after the inspection has been completed.”

(‘Being ready for inspection’, Education Scotland website - About Inspections)

During an inspection, Education Scotland will be looking to see that evidence gathered from self-evaluation is analysed and used fully to:

- diagnose precisely where strengths and weaknesses lie and the implications for change
- identify the school’s/centre’s key priorities
- plan the action needed to bring about improvement, and
- promote improvement.

Inspectors will look at the extent to which the school’s/centre’s view of itself is supported by evidence and inspection activities. Education Scotland advice “Being ready for inspection” states:-

“Inspection activities may include:

- *looking at the school’s Standards and Quality Report*
- *analysing the questionnaires*
- *looking at self-evaluation data and information and evidence*
- *observing learning and teaching in the classroom (learning episodes)*
- *professional dialogue with staff*
- *discussions with pupils and parents (including the Chairperson of the Parent Council).”*

4. THE INSPECTION PROCESS

Purpose of an Inspection

Education Scotland state that the purpose of a school inspection is to:

- *Promote improvement by supporting the school to continue to improve;*
- *Evaluate and report on a school's capacity to improve;*
- *Provide assurance to users on the quality of education;*
- *Provide evidence for the national overview of Scottish education.*

To evaluate the quality of a school's/centre's provision, inspections will focus on the impact on learners, answering the following questions.

(1) How well do young people learn and achieve?

(2) How well does the school support young people to develop and learn?

(3) How well does the school improve the quality of its work?

This final question will be evaluated by the inspection team and the response will be described as an expression of confidence:

- Confident
- Partially confident
- Not confident

Notice of Inspections

Education Scotland will give written notification of an inspection visit to secondary schools three weeks before the inspection begins and two weeks for primary schools and early years centres. This notice of inspection also applies to 3-18 curricular area and thematic inspections.

In any year, schools/centres to be inspected early in a new school session will not be notified of inspection prior to the summer holidays. In such circumstances, notice to inspect will be sent to centres/schools by mid-August.

Briefing notes have been provided by Education Scotland for Headteachers (These are available by choosing the appropriate sectoral inspection option on the 'About Inspections' side menu at www.hmie.gov.uk/AboutUs/InspectionResources/)

They have advised that these briefing notes be made available to inform all members of staff.

Prior to the inspection

At the beginning of the notification period, a confidential questionnaire will be distributed to pupils, parents, and teaching and non-teaching staff. In a nursery school, a questionnaire will be sent to parents and staff only.

Schools/centres should note that advice about the questionnaires is available on the Education Scotland website ('Headteacher guidance on issuing pre-inspection questionnaires'). (This is available by choosing the appropriate sectoral inspection option on the 'About Inspections' side menu at www.hmie.gov.uk/AboutUs/InspectionResources/)

In the Education Scotland briefing notes, Headteachers are given a list of documentation, including the self-evaluation summary form, required by the inspection team before and on arrival (Appendices 2, 3 and 4). This is available from the Education Scotland website ("Briefing notes for headteachers of <sector>").

Education Scotland has stated that there is no mandatory requirement for the local authority to provide a pre-inspection report on an individual school/centre.

For inspections that focus on 3-18 curricular area, a department/faculty will be asked to complete a self-evaluation proforma.

EIS ADVICE

What happens if I'm not happy about how the questionnaires are distributed and managed or how the content of the questionnaires are kept confidential?

Members should note that the questionnaires are confidential as the following advice to staff from Education Scotland indicates:-

"When you have filled in your form please put it in the prepaid envelope provided, seal it and either return it directly to Education Scotland or to the school office (who will send it to Education Scotland) by <<Insert date here - 6 working days before inspection date>>."

("Your views about the school - Questions for teachers and other staff who work directly with children and young people' Questionnaire: available from Education Scotland website.)

If a member believes questionnaires are not being treated confidentially, they should advise the school representative who can raise the matter with the local association secretary in the first instance.

Members have the right also to advise the Managing Inspector of this concern which should also be indicated on the EIS monitoring form.

How will my workload be affected by preparing for the inspection?

Members are advised to access the Education Scotland website to ensure that they know what information will be required for their particular sector. (Normally - "*Briefing notes for headteachers of... (sector)*": Appendix 4).

The amount of information required by the Inspection Team prior to the inspection is regarded as minimal. However, the information requested should be available in the school/centre at management level as part of its obligations to collect data and as a result of the self-evaluation process. **This requirement for information should not lead to last minute collection of data and information by school/centre staff.**

Where an EIS representative believes that teachers are being expected to produce documentation for inspections which is excessive and beyond what is stated in Education Scotland briefing notes they should seek advice from their local association secretary in the first instance.

What happens if my local authority decides to carry out its own 'mini-inspection'?

The EIS supports the efforts by local authorities to assist schools/centres in their self-evaluation process. However, the EIS is aware of attempts by some local authorities to impose their own models of self-evaluation on schools/centres and conduct a "mini-inspection" prior to an Education Scotland inspection.

The EIS believes that a "mini-inspection" is bad practice and out of kilter with the inspection process as outlined by Education Scotland in its advice to schools/centres.

Should a local authority disregard Education Scotland advice and conduct a 'mini-inspection', the EIS believes this should not lead to additional work in the period before the beginning of the inspection. This work should be able to be undertaken within the parameters of locally agreed working time arrangements.

The Inspection Team

The Education Scotland inspection team will be made known to the school prior to the inspection. It will be led by a Managing Inspector (MI) who will be an HM Inspector of Education. There may be additional permanent HM Inspectors of Education, health and nutrition inspectors (HNI), assistant inspectors or associate assessors.

Education Scotland inspection teams can also include lay members who are members of the public, trained by Education Scotland staff, who have an interest but no professional involvement in education. Education Scotland maintain that the lay member does not focus on professional aspects such as approaches to teaching, attainment or nutrition-related issues, their role is to focus on how a school/centre works from the perspective of relevant stakeholders, e.g. parents, pupils.

Education Scotland state that in small schools/centres (defined as those with more than 30 but fewer than 50 pupils and/or fewer than four classes) one inspector will carry out the inspection.

Inspection visits for subject and thematic tasks are usually carried out by one or two inspectors for a single day. In larger schools, the visit may extend into a second day.

EIS ADVICE

What happens if I think that the size of the inspection team is not compatible with my school/centre?

Members have the right to advise the Managing Inspector of their concern that the inspection team is too large or too small for the size of the school/centre.

The local association secretary should also be advised in the first instance and the concern should be noted in the EIS monitoring form.

The Inspection Week

Education Scotland state that the format of the week is as follows;

Monday

The inspection will normally start at lunchtime on Monday with a visit from the Inspection Team.

The scoping meeting signals the start of the inspection. The meeting should be guided by the school's/centre's self-evaluation summary form. The meeting should last no longer than an hour and a half.

During the afternoon, the Chairperson of the Parent Council, a group of parents and a group of children/young people will meet with the inspection team's lay member. The parents will have been selected by Education Scotland based on their questionnaire returns.

At the end of the school/centre day, a briefing meeting for school/centre staff will be arranged. Attendance by school/centre staff is **voluntary**.

Tuesday

The priority for the inspection team is to get into classes to share the learning and teaching experience which has been informed by the school's/centre's self-evaluation. The inspection team will be particularly interested in learning, teaching, literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing within the context of a broad general education.

A school nominee would normally be invited to accompany the inspectors on some lesson visits to share thoughts and observations. Where staffing arrangements allow, a school/centre might select a teacher to take this role rather than a school/centre manager. The focus of the school nominee role is professional development. Being involved in the learning episodes would enable the individual to develop professional dialogue skills and to support benchmarking of learning and teaching within the school.

The lay member will continue to engage with parents through looking at aspects of their partnership activities with the school/centre.

At the end of the day, a session will be organised to allow staff to engage in professional dialogue with the inspection team. Topics for discussion will concentrate on innovative practice, staff views on the inspection focus areas, school improvement plan, or other areas such as Curriculum for Excellence. Attendance by all staff, either support staff or professional staff alike, is **voluntary**. The session should last no longer than 45 minutes.

Wednesday to Friday

During Wednesday lunchtime, inspectors will be available to talk to staff on any aspect of the school/centre.

During Thursday, or possibly earlier, the inspection team will meet to discuss and agree on the inspection findings.

At the conclusion of the inspection activity, which could be anytime between Wednesday afternoon and Friday, a meeting will be arranged to discuss the findings with the Headteacher and relevant senior managers. A representative from the education authority would also be welcome to attend. This should take no longer than an hour and a half.

At the end of the meeting, agreement should be reached as to how to continue to improve the school. Discussions will have determined any continuing engagement activities that may support the school's/centre's improvement process. In many cases, there will be no need to continue engagement with the school/centre.

Where possible, before leaving the school/centre, a member of the inspection team, will provide feedback on the key inspection messages to pupils and staff.

The findings from any subject or thematic visit will also be shared with the school at the end of the visit. The findings from all visits related to any 3-18 curriculum area or generic theme will be rolled up into a national report. This report will be published as a means of identifying strengths and areas for development in the respective 3-18 curriculum area or generic theme area. Examples of innovative practice seen in individual schools may also be highlighted in these national reports.

EIS ADVICE

What happens if I can't attend any meetings that arise from the inspection process?

Teaching staff will feel under obligation to meet with Inspectors in their own time. The EIS believes it is unreasonable for teaching staff to give up their own time to discuss the findings of the inspection with Education Scotland. An assertion by Education Scotland that it is a voluntary activity does not alleviate this concern.

The EIS advises that members of staff who need to leave school promptly should not be pressurised into staying. Also, the working time arrangements do provide for time for such activities to take place.

Can I be expected to be included in the observation of a learning episode?

All teaching staff should be prepared to be included in observation of learning episodes within the classroom by the inspection team. However, if a member of staff feels uncomfortable with the school nominee being included in the observation of learning, they should register their protest immediately.

Will my participation in professional dialogue with the inspection team be counted as CPD?

It is important that professional dialogue between staff and the inspection team should be viewed as a continuing professional development activity. The EIS advises that locally negotiated working time agreements are adhered to and/or the inspection falls within the time allocated for CPD.

Post inspection

Within two weeks, Education Scotland will provide a draft copy of the report in letter format to the school/centre, the education authority and the Chairperson of the Parent Council. The letter:

- Directly answers the three key questions (See '*Purpose of an Inspection*')
- Provides strengths and aspects for development; and
- Provides an overall expression of statement about the quality of provision.

The Education Scotland website will publish the letter along with relevant inspection evidence, e.g. attainment information. This normally occurs eight working weeks after the end of the inspection.

The Record of Inspection Findings (RIF) contains the evidence on which the letter is based. The RIF is issued to the school/centre and education authority by Education Scotland three days after the letter is published. Within five days the Chairperson of the Parent Council receives the same document from Education Scotland.

EIS ADVICE

I think that I can identify a reference to a colleague from the report, what should I do?

The report should be written in such a way as to keep the identities of individual staff and pupils confidential. The opportunity for the Headteacher, education authority and Parent Council Chairperson to comment on the report should also reinforce this principle. However, it may be possible to identify a teacher or department. If a teacher is concerned about any reference in the report the EIS advises that she/he should contact the local association secretary in the first instance.

I think that parts of the report are not representative of the discussions I had with the Inspection Team, what should I do?

EIS expects the report to reflect the professional dialogue and engagement involved in the inspection activities and the school's/centre's own self-evaluation process. If this is not the case, it should be recorded in the EIS monitoring form.

Why can't I see the RIF?

Education Scotland sees the RIF as a document internal to the school/centre, used to progress the improvement process.

Education Scotland believes that in the spirit of collegiality and to support the improvement process it is entirely appropriate for a Headteacher to share appropriate content within the RIF with staff.

Continued Engagement with Schools

Education Scotland has stated that continuing engagement activities include the following:

1. No further inspection activity

There is satisfaction with the overall quality of provision.

2. Innovative Practice

There is satisfaction with the overall quality of provision and no further inspection activity will be required. However, examples of innovative practice had been identified through the inspection process. Education Scotland will work with the school/centre and local authority to document and share the innovative practice.

3. Additional Support for Improvement

There is satisfaction with the overall quality of provision. With support from local authority or other stakeholders, necessary improvement can be made.

4. Continued Inspection

From the inspection findings, there is evidence that the school/centre needs more support and more time to make the required improvements.

EIS ADVICE

I have views on what's happening post-inspection, but don't feel involved in the post-inspection activities undertaken by the school/centre. What should I do?

EIS believes that if continuing engagement is required, activities should reflect the work of the school/centre in its own self-evaluation process and should not be contrary to its own improvement plans.

EIS also believes the activities should be achievable and realistic and arrived at through discussion with teaching staff. They should reflect the collegiality expected by Education Scotland in its advice and as outlined in SCNT Code of Practice on collegiality (2005):

- *staff should be valued and respected*
- *staff views, expressed orally or in writing, should be fully considered*
- *staff should be able to contribute to decisions on all areas of school life comfortably, openly and with dignity.*

Education Scotland documents "Improving outcomes for learners through self-evaluation" and "Improving our curriculum through self-evaluation" provide detailed guidance for schools. Reference is made in both documents to observing teaching and learning as a key tool in the self-evaluation process. Members should note that observing teaching and learning does not mean a mechanistic 'crit'-style observation or a 'top down approach' but an agreed process.

“Self-evaluation also involves groups of teachers reflecting on their work together. We can do this in a number of ways by:

- *commenting on each other’s work, for example plans and assessments;*
- *engaging in cooperative teaching and discussion; and*
- *visiting each other’s classrooms to see how particular developments are going, to experience different methods of teaching or to confirm our views of learners’ progress.*

This process of peer evaluation is an important professional activity symbolising the professional responsibility of teams of teachers for their work. It complements professional discussion with senior colleagues who might teach alongside teachers or observe practice in classrooms.” (How Good is Our School? 3)

Members should note that there are agreements in many local authorities about classroom observation which reflect good practice. Any follow-through recommendation which suggests classroom observation should follow agreed guidelines.

5. THE INSPECTION EXPERIENCE

Education Scotland believes that the inspection experience should be seen as a positive experience for all concerned.

Education Scotland has created a best practice set of professional principles which support the inspection team in carrying out inspections in a constructive and positive manner. More detail on the PRAISE framework is available from the Education Scotland website ("*Briefing notes for headteachers of <sector>*": Appendix 1).

There is an expectation that Education Scotland will carry out inspections which will;

- ensure that all inspections are conducted in a fair and professional manner;
- adopt a learning approach in order to share our knowledge and experience and learn from the knowledge and experience of others;
- keep in touch with senior staff throughout the process, sharing findings in a constructive way to encourage ownership and learning to take place; and
- ensure that our staff promote good practice in acknowledging diversity, promoting equality and eliminating discrimination.

Education Scotland's 'Principles of inspection and review' detail the importance of transparency and mutual respect through professional dialogue. Building on this, the publication 'Arrangements for inspecting schools in Scotland' states

"We know from practice and feedback that positive engagement can lead to effective and productive professional dialogue which can make a significant difference to a school. We strive to continuously improve our dialogue skills and to maintain high levels of knowledge and expertise to inform that dialogue. We aim to focus opportunities for dialogue where they can have maximum impact for a school's improvement. We will, for example, share views and perceptions on the areas given focused attention during the inspection, the three key questions and other issues arising during the inspection."

In addition, it also states:

"We see inspection as a two-way process and we seek to work with staff in a constructive, positive and professional manner. We assume professional engagement with staff, parents, children and young people involved in the inspection process. Based on this assumption, we expect that staff, parents, children and young people will:

- *work in partnership with us to develop open and constructive dialogue;*
- *provide information to ensure that we can report accurately, fairly and reliably;*
- *work with us to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy;*
- *draw any concerns about the inspection process to our attention promptly; and*
- *understand that we will visit classes and, at times, wish to talk to staff and participants about key issues related to the leadership and management of the school."*

EIS ADVICE

I'm unhappy with the way a member of the inspection team spoke to me, what should I do?

Throughout the inspection week, Education Scotland stresses that professional dialogue will take place with teachers and Headteachers. The EIS advises that members should expect to be treated courteously by the inspection team. Teachers should expect to be able to put forward their view in an assertive but not unprofessional manner. The teacher has detailed knowledge of the pupils, class and context of the school and therefore able to advise inspectors and enter into a genuine dialogue about learning and teaching. Teachers should feel able to disagree or put alternative view points to the inspectors about what is working well and what may require review. They should expect the inspectors to support the school/centre or teacher in improvement of the teaching and learning process.

If any member is dissatisfied with the conduct of an individual inspector they have the right to raise their concern with the Managing Inspector and the Headteacher. They should also advise the EIS representative of their concern. The EIS advises that they should do this as soon as possible, preferably during the inspection period. If the issue cannot be resolved at school/centre level or a teacher/school/centre believes that their concerns have not been taken seriously the school/centre representative should contact the local association secretary in the first instance.

Members are also encouraged to pursue Education Scotland's own complaints procedure <https://education.gov.scot/who-we-are/policies-and-information/Complaints%20handling%20procedure>.

ACTION FOR SCHOOLS BEING INSPECTED:

School Representatives should:

- Inform EIS headquarters that their school is being inspected in order to receive an EIS monitoring form.
- Advise members on any issues that may arise as a result of the inspection.
- Contact your local association secretary if clarification is required on issues that arise during the inspection.
- Complete a single EIS monitoring form outlining the school's experience of the inspection and return it to EIS headquarters.

Members should:

- Access the detailed advice contained in the Education Scotland website - **www.educationscotland.gov.uk** and **www.hmie.gov.uk/AboutUs/InspectionResources/**
- Expect that the process is fair and open.
- Expect to be treated courteously at all times.
- Expect to be visited in their classrooms by inspectors.
- Use the opportunity to engage in professional dialogue with Education Scotland inspectors.
- Ensure that the inspection is viewed as a CPD activity.
- Report any concerns to the Managing Inspector and school representative where necessary.
- Report any concerns to the EIS either through its monitoring form or to the school representative or local association secretary if urgent.

Please note the analysis of the monitoring forms provides the EIS with evidence to submit to Education Scotland in our discussions with them. Education Scotland is appreciative of the feedback from the questionnaires. and acts upon the information provided when required.

The EIS is grateful for your co-operation in completing the questionnaire.