



The Educational
Institute of Scotland

www.eis.org.uk

**Education Scotland
INSPECTIONS**

SECONDARY



Advice for members

Updated 2019

1. INSPECTIONS - SUMMARY

Inspections are arranged according to four models as follows:

- Full inspection model
- Short inspection model
- Localised thematic model
- Neighbourhood model

This advice relates to the **full inspection model**.

- The **notification period** of a full inspection visit is **two and a half weeks**.
- Full inspection visits are of **a week's duration**, from late morning on Monday until lunchtime on Friday.
- Headteachers receive the notification email, together with an inspection briefing note outlining what can be expected in the course of the inspection. The briefing notes for Secondary can be accessed [here](#).
- On receipt of the notification email, Headteachers are also advised of the evidence that is required to be completed in advance of the inspection- **school self-evaluation, the safeguarding proforma and online stakeholder questionnaires- and of the other existing school documentation to be shared with the inspection team.**
- Schools are required to complete their self-evaluation summary and safeguarding forms and discuss them with the inspection team on the first day of the inspection.
- **Confidential online pre-inspection questionnaires** are distributed to **all parents, all staff (teaching and non-teaching), all pupils** and partners who deliver learning and contribute to the life and work of the school, prior to the inspection.
- Following notification, Headteachers receive a phone call from the Managing Inspector who will lead the inspection to discuss arrangements, including the meetings that will be required, and any relevant contextual information about the school; and to outline the membership of the inspection team.
- The school will be inspected by a team of inspectors led by a Managing Inspector who is an HM Inspector of Education. The team may consist of additional HM Inspectors (HMI), a health and nutrition inspector (HNI), associate assessors (AA) and/or assistant inspectors (AI) and a lay member who may join the team for a day (LM).
- In evaluating the quality of provision in the school, inspectors will use **Quality Indicators (QIs) from '[How good is our school?'](#) (4th edition)**
- **Five main QIs are used in full inspections of Secondary. 4 are mandatory** (1.3 Leadership of change 2.3 Learning, teaching and

assessment 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion.) **The final QI is chosen by the school.**

- **Inspectors will observe learning and teaching in the classroom amongst their activities.** This is likely to be for parts of lessons only.
- **Special lesson plans for the inspectors are not necessary.**
- **Inspectors will want to engage in professional dialogue at appropriate points during the inspection,** sometimes with individual staff members, at other times with groups of staff on a given topic(s) related to aspects of the school's work.
- **Individual members of staff can seek one-to-one professional discussion with inspectors during 'drop-in' sessions** which they make available during the course of the visit.
- On the first day of the inspection visit, **all staff can expect to be invited to a meeting to meet the inspection team,** hear a short briefing and ask any questions that they may have about the process. **Attendance is voluntary.**
- On the final day of the visit, **inspectors will share pre-quality assured gradings of the QIs for the school with the Headteacher, who is asked to keep these confidential, sharing only with the education authority and the senior team within the school, until the draft letter of inspection findings is received.**
- **Headteachers are advised by Education Scotland to share high level messages and key strengths and aspects for development with staff as soon as the visit is complete.**
- **Education Scotland aims to provide to Headteachers, Chair of the Parent Council and the education authority, a confidential draft of the letter** of inspection findings for parents and carers, **within ten working days of the inspection being completed.**
- Comments or suggested amendments to the draft letter are invited from the Headteacher, Chair of the Parent Council and the education authority within one working week of its receipt.
- The Headteacher and the Local Authority also receive a draft of the Summary of Inspection Findings (SIF), and are invited to check for accuracy and return within one working week of its receipt.
- **The letter for parents and carers, and the SIF are then published on the Education Scotland website.**
- Continuing engagement activities with Education Scotland may be required after the inspection.

2. THE INSPECTION FRAMEWORK

Education Scotland moved some time ago from a generational cycle of inspection (where a school is inspected every six to seven years) to a sampling model where around 250 inspections will take place each year across the school sectors and 140 in nursery/ early years settings.

Education Scotland's stated aims of inspection are to:

- Provide assurance and public accountability
- Promote improvement and innovation to enhance learners' experiences and achievements
- Inform the development of educational policy and practice.

ES has developed a Best Practice Framework known as PRAISE which outlines a series of key principles identified as underpinning best practice in establishing and maintaining good relationships in the conduct of inspections by ES teams. It can be accessed [here](#).

[How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#) is the evaluation tool used by inspectors in making judgements about the school's effectiveness in variety of aspects of education delivery.

Five main QIs are used in full inspections:

- 1.3 Leadership of change
- 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment
- 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement
- 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion
- The final QI is chosen by the school. (This is not graded within the HGIOS six-point scale.)

In addition to inspection findings being shared with the schools and local authorities concerned, data gathered is also used to inform reporting by Education Scotland on the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and progress in relation to the Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC).

EIS Advice

The EIS wishes to provide practical advice to teachers about what to expect from inspection. 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, supportive and mutually respectful
- strongly feature professional dialogue between school staff and inspectors
- enjoy the confidence of those involved in the process of inspection
- reflect the reality of the situation in which the school/education setting functions
- reflect the professionalism of teachers
- reflect and promote the need for collegiality within the school/education setting
- recognise local authority and school improvement plans
- recognise local authority and school policies
- recognise local negotiated agreements
- add value to the school/education setting and its teaching and learning
- recognise what are achievable objectives within the above contexts and;
- should not incur additional workload for teachers beyond that set aside for inspection activities within the school's Working Time Agreement.

3. SELF-EVALUATION

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

'Our inspections provide the opportunity for early learning and childcare settings 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 children. 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

In advance of inspection, Headteachers are asked to complete, in consultation with the education authority, a self-evaluation summary form.

At the start of the inspection, Headteachers use the completed self-evaluation summary form to brief the inspection team on the impact of the school's approach to improvement through self-evaluation.

The inspection team seeks to be provided:

- a clear account of an establishment's strengths and aspects for development
- information relating to a school/ education setting's improvement and associated evidence

- identification and availability of the key sources of evidence underpinning the school's/ education setting's knowledge of performance and improvement
- an indication of how the school/education setting prioritises areas for improvement.

Inspectors will look at the extent to which the school's/education setting's view of itself is supported by evidence and by inspection activities which are likely to include:

- looking at the school's Standards and Quality Report
- looking at current and previous school improvement plans
- analysing pre-inspection questionnaires sent to all parents, all staff, all learners, and partners
- 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

Notice of inspections

Education Scotland will give written notification of an inspection visit by email two and a half weeks before the inspection begins.

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.

Headteachers receive the notification of inspection email, together with an inspection briefing note outlining what can be expected in the course of the inspection. The briefing notes for Secondary can be accessed [here](#).

On receipt of the notification email, Headteachers are also advised of the evidence that is required to be completed in advance of the inspection- school self-evaluation, the safeguarding proforma and online stakeholder questionnaires- and of the other existing school documentation to be shared with the inspection team such as the current and recent School Improvement Plans.

Prior to the inspection

At the beginning of the notification period, links to confidential questionnaires to be distributed to all pupils, all parents/carers, and all teaching and non-teaching staff, and any partners involved in education delivery within the school, are provided by Education Scotland.

Schools/education settings should note that advice about distribution of and maximising engagement with, questionnaires is available on the Education Scotland website. This is available by choosing the appropriate sectoral inspection option [here](#).

In the briefing notes for Headteachers, lists of the necessary documentation to be made available to the inspection team before and on arrival, including the self-evaluation summary form, are included as appendices in the 'Briefing for headteachers', appropriate to 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.

EIS ADVICE

Is the content of the staff questionnaire kept confidential?

The Education Scotland website states that it uses an online survey tool, called SmartSurvey, which holds the pre-inspection questionnaires and responses, as follows:

- Education Scotland will then store all responses confidentially on secure servers for a period of five years. Personal information provided by respondents will not be shared with any other third party organisation and will only be used for the purpose it was obtained in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation.
- Education Scotland is subject to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Further information is available on our website..

...It is important that we protect the information that we gather through the pre-inspection questionnaires and that you and your stakeholders understand how we will do this.

- We may use the information for statistical purposes but no individual responses will be identified. We may give you a summary of the results of all the responses we receive.
- Views will remain confidential, unless they raise specific issues, for example in relation to child protection. In these circumstances, they would be shared with you and appropriate agencies.
- We will then store responses confidentially on secure servers for a period of five years.
- Personal information will not be shared with any other third party organisation and will only be used for the purpose it was obtained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. We are also subject to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. Further information is available on our website.

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.

Secondary

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 the Education Scotland briefings, 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. Any associated 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, a health and nutrition inspector (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 in 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/education setting works from the perspective of parents, pupils and other relevant stakeholders.

Education Scotland has advised that the size of the inspection team is dependent on the focus of the inspection, the size of the school and the professional learning

needs of ES staff. For example, a larger team may visit if health and nutrition are to be included within the focus, or if ES is in the process of training a member of their staff who might be included in the team on a shadowing basis.

EIS ADVICE

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

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: full inspection

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

Monday

The inspection team will arrive at the school around 12.30pm, meeting briefly as a team first.

Towards the end of lunchtime or at the end of the school/education setting day, a briefing meeting for teaching and non-teaching staff will be arranged. Staff will receive an outline of the inspection process and will have the opportunity to ask questions. **Attendance by staff is voluntary.**

The Managing Inspector will meet with the Headteacher, members of the senior management team (definitely in the case of Secondary inspections) and the local authority QIO who supports the school/education setting.

The discussion will focus on the self-evaluation and other supporting documentation submitted in advance of the inspection, and on the schools' approaches to safeguarding.

The discussion is also likely to involve planning for inspection activities during the remainder of the visit, taking account of key features of the school/setting and its context, as identified in the course of the discussion. A programme of meetings and visits to classes (though these are not timetabled) will be agreed at the meeting which should last around one hour.

While this meeting is taking place, the remainder of the inspection team will begin inspection activities, including class visits.

During the afternoon, the Chairperson of the Parent Council, usually meets with an inspector and/or the inspection team's lay member.

Where an LM is part of the team she/he may also meet with children and focus groups of parents, from Monday afternoon onwards until the LM leaves the school/setting usually by the end of the day on Tuesday.

Tuesday

The priority for the inspection team is to get into classes to observe and consider the learning and teaching experience in the context of the school's/education setting's self-evaluation.

A school nominee would normally be invited to accompany the inspectors on some lesson visits to share thoughts and observations on the school's/setting's approach to learning and teaching. Where staffing arrangements allow, a school/setting might select a teacher to engage in this professional dialogue with the inspection team rather than a school/setting manager.

The lay member will continue to engage with parents through looking at aspects of their partnership activities with the school/setting, and with focus groups of pupils.

Usually, at the end of the day, a session will be organised to allow staff to engage individually in professional dialogue about features of their work that they wish to share with members of the inspection team. **Attendance by staff is voluntary.**

Wednesday to Thursday or Friday

Inspection activity- class visits, meetings and focus groups- continue according to the principle of proportionality, as stated by Education Scotland, who cannot and do not aim to, cover all aspects of the school's/education setting's work.

At the conclusion of the inspection activity, which could be anytime between Thursday morning and Friday morning, a meeting will be arranged to discuss the findings with the Headteacher and relevant senior managers. A representative from the education authority may also attend.

During the meeting, inspectors will share pre-quality assured gradings of the QIs for the school with the Headteacher, who is asked to keep these confidential, sharing only with the education authority and the senior team within the school, until the draft letter of inspection findings is received.

Headteachers are advised by Education Scotland to share high level messages and key strengths and aspects for development with staff as soon as possible after the visit is complete.

EIS ADVICE

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

Education Scotland's assertion that attendance at the briefing meeting for staff and meetings with inspectors after the end of the school/ setting day for professional dialogue is voluntary, is a matter of concern for the EIS. Teaching

staff are likely to feel under obligation to meet with inspectors during lunch or after school.

The EIS believes it is unreasonable for teaching staff to give up their own time to discuss the purpose of or the findings of, the inspection with Education Scotland. The EIS advises that members of staff who need to leave school promptly should not be pressurised into staying. Working Time Arrangements do make provision for time for such activities to take place. The adequacy of this provision will depend on the timing of an inspection within the school year and the precise scheduling of any staff meeting.

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 CPD activity. With this in mind, the EIS advises that locally negotiated Working Time Agreements are adhered to and/or the inspection falls within the time allocated for CPD.

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 with the Managing Inspector.

Post inspection

Education Scotland aims to provide a draft of the letter for parents/ carers within ten working days to the Headteacher, education authority and Chair of the Parent Council.

The draft letter will provide a statement of Education Scotland's confidence in the school/setting's ability to improve the quality of its work, will highlight key strengths and aspects for improvement, and will indicate whether there will be further engagement with the school/setting by ES.

Comments or suggested amendments to the draft letter are invited from the Headteacher, Chair of the Parent Council and the education authority, within one working week of its receipt.

The Headteacher and the Local Authority also receive a draft of the Summary of Inspection Findings (SIF), and are invited to check for accuracy and return within one working week of its receipt.

Within ten working weeks, the letter for parents and carers, and the SIF, including inspection gradings, are then published on the Education Scotland website.

Continuing engagement activities with Education Scotland may be required after the inspection.

EIS ADVICE

Why can't the initial inspection gradings be shared with staff?

Education Scotland states that the initial gradings have to go through an internal quality assurance process to ensure that the proposed gradings match the inspection evidence gathered. They wish gradings to remain confidential until this process is complete.

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 of the initial discussion on inspection findings with staff.

Why can't staff see the draft letter or SIF?

Education Scotland invites Headteachers, Chairs of Parent Councils and education authorities to provide comments/ suggest amendments and sometimes submit additional evidence, which may result in changes to the drafts. Education Scotland wishes detail related to the drafting to be kept confidential.

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

The letter and SIF 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 these 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.

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/setting. What should I do?

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

The 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.*

Post-inspection activity may involve further observation of learning and teaching during class visits. 'How good is our school?' (4th edition) states:

'Direct observations of practice can take place in a range of learning contexts including during learning which takes place outdoors, in a workplace, at college and during excursions and residential experiences. Observations should be linked to agreed criteria and a shared understanding of their purpose. All stakeholders including staff, learners, parents and partners can engage in these structured observations and give feedback to support self-evaluation.'

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.

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, professional manner. The teacher has detailed knowledge of the pupils, class and context of the school and therefore is able to advise inspectors and enter into a genuine dialogue about learning and teaching. Teachers should feel able to disagree or put alternative viewpoints to the inspectors about what is working well and what may require review. They should expect the inspectors to support the school/setting or teacher in the 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/setting level or a teacher/school/setting believes that their concerns have not been taken seriously the school/setting EIS Representative should contact the Local Association Secretary in the first instance.

Members are also encouraged to refer to Education Scotland's own complaints procedure: <https://education.gov.scot/Documents/ComplaintsProcedure.pdf>

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 what to expect during the course of the inspection.
- Contact their 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.
- 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 any engagement in inspection activity outwith the 35-hour working week is viewed as a CPD activity.
- Report any concerns relating to the conduct of the inspection to the Managing Inspector and EIS School Representative where necessary.
- Report any concerns to the EIS either through its monitoring form, or immediately 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.