



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

The Role of the Inspectorate of the Department of Education in Supporting the Office of the Inspector of Prisons in the Evaluation of Schools in Prison Settings

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline the role of the Inspectorate of the Department of Education (DE) in supporting the Office of the Inspector of Prisons (OIP) on inspections of education, training and progression in prison settings. It has been developed following consultation with the OIP. It also draws on the DE inspectorate's expertise in evaluating education in a range of settings and their work with inspectorates in other jurisdictions, including, Education Training Inspectorate (ETI), Northern Ireland, and the Welsh Inspectorate Estyn, who have responsibility for evaluating education in prisons.

1.1 Shared Responsibilities

Both the Department of Education and the Department of Justice have responsibilities for the provision of education in prison settings. The Irish Prison Service, which operates under The Department of Justice, is responsible for providing supports to education, such as accommodation and security support. Teaching resources, necessary for running the prison schools are provided to the Education and Training Boards (ETB), who manage the education provision in the prison schools.

The OIP is the statutory, independent office with responsibility for carrying out regular inspections of prisons in Ireland and for presenting a report on each institution inspected as well as an annual report to the Minister for Justice.

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education is responsible for the evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of the provision of education in a range of early learning and care (ELC) settings, schools and centres for education; including schools attached to Special Care Units and Oberstown Children Detention Campus. DE inspectors also provide advice on a range of educational issues to the communities working in and served by schools, centres for education and other learning settings, to policy makers in the DE and to the wider educational system.

The OIP is responsible for all aspects of the inspection of schools in prisons. The role of the DE Inspectorate is to support the OIP in fulfilling this responsibility; primarily through participating in inspection teams.

1.2 The Inspection Programme of the OIP

The OIP undertakes inspections carried out under [*A Framework for the Inspection of Prisons in Ireland*](#). It is committed to carrying out four types of inspections in prisons; General Inspections, Thematic Inspections, Functional Inspections and Follow-Up Inspections. The DE Inspectorate is committed to participate in any of these inspections on request from the OIP.

The DE Inspectorate will conduct evaluations in prison settings primarily under the Rehabilitation and Development focus area of the OIP's Framework for the Inspection of Prisons in Ireland which can be found at www.oip.ie. The Inspectorate will also conduct evaluations in other focus areas of the OIP's framework at the request of the OIP.

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1.3 Legal Basis for the Inspection of Education, Training and Progression in Prison Settings

An inspection of education, training and progression in prison settings is conducted by the OIP under the established OIP models of inspection.

The functions of the DE Inspectorate are set out in Section 13 of the Education Act 1998. The inspection arrangements outlined in this note, are underpinned by the provisions of Section 13 (3) (b) of the Education Act 1998.

A memorandum of understanding has been agreed between the DE and OIP. This memorandum sets out how the Inspectorate of the Department of Education will support the work of the Office of the Inspector of Prisons by evaluating primarily the provision of education in prisons in Ireland.

1.4 Principles of Inspection

The work of the inspection team is guided by the following principles:

- A focus on education and training experiences for learners, supports in place for post-release education and training, and outcomes in these areas.
- A focus on human rights in evaluating the relevant area (e.g. the provision of education and training), and compliance with law, international human rights standards and best practice. A list of relevant links can be found at the end of this document.
- A commitment to engage with the relevant partners operating in the prison on the promotion of improvement in education, training and progression for learners.
- Respectful engagement which acknowledges effective work, progress and achievement and which promotes professional dialogue.
- Accountability, so that both bodies evaluate in accordance with the published *Framework for the Inspections of Prisons in Ireland* and report objectively and fairly on the quality of provision.

In addition the work of the Inspectorate of the DE will be in accordance with the *Code of Practice for the Inspectorate* 2015 which can be found here [Code of Practice for the Inspectorate 2015](#).

2. Overview of Inspection Activity

The following table provides an overview of the typical activities conducted as part of the DE Inspectorate's involvement in the inspections of schools in prison settings. Data for these inspections will be shared, reviewed and managed in accordance with the agreed data protocols.

BEFORE THE EVALUATION	Inspectorate Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice of inspection, if appropriate, will be given according to the OIP's practice • The inspectors on the DE team meet with the OIP team to plan the inspection • DE inspectors review the relevant health, safety and security protocols for the particular prison setting
	Setting Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The head teacher ensures that all necessary documents relating to managing the school, teaching, learning, and assessment are available on site for the visit • The school identifies a representative¹ to facilitate the inspection activities and arrangements • The school makes the necessary practical arrangements for the inspection
DURING THE EVALUATION	Inspectorate Activity	<p>Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • documentation and relevant data <p>Engage with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Training Board Personnel • Irish Prison Service Personnel • Prison Management • Head of school • Selection of staff members • Learners/students • People in prison who are not engaged with education and training • Personnel involved with post-release planning and provision • Any other staff involved in the provision of education, training and progression services e.g. librarian, chaplain, and guidance counsellor <p>Observe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education provision in classrooms and other learning environments • Lessons (for the full lesson or part of a lesson) • Facilities and resources • In-cell facilitates where blended learning takes place • Any other relevant environment or activity where learning is taking place <p>Professional dialogue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide feedback to staff/teachers following lesson observation

¹ Typically the head teacher, deputy head teacher or designated representative

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in other professional dialogues, as appropriate and necessary (for example: discussions around decision making on programmes, timetable or attendance)
AFTER THE VISIT	Inspectorate Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting of the DE inspectors to draft findings and recommendations Meeting between DE and OIP inspectorate teams to agree findings and recommendations Final closeout feedback meeting with school management and presentation to staff/teachers Submit draft education report to OIP Follow up on factual verification issues on DE section of the report.
	School Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up on any aspects highlighted during the feedback Response at factual verification and school response stage, if relevant

The OIP has overall responsibility for the factual verification processes, the publication of the report, and the Irish Prison Service and ETB response to the report.

3. The Quality Frameworks that Guide the Inspection of Prison Schools

In order to deliver the highest standard of evaluation practice and to ensure a cohesive approach to evaluating the prison school within the broader context of evaluation of the overall prison, DE and OIP inspectors will adhere to the following framework documents which provide clear standards and indicators of effective practice.

3.2 A Framework for the Inspection of Prisons in Ireland

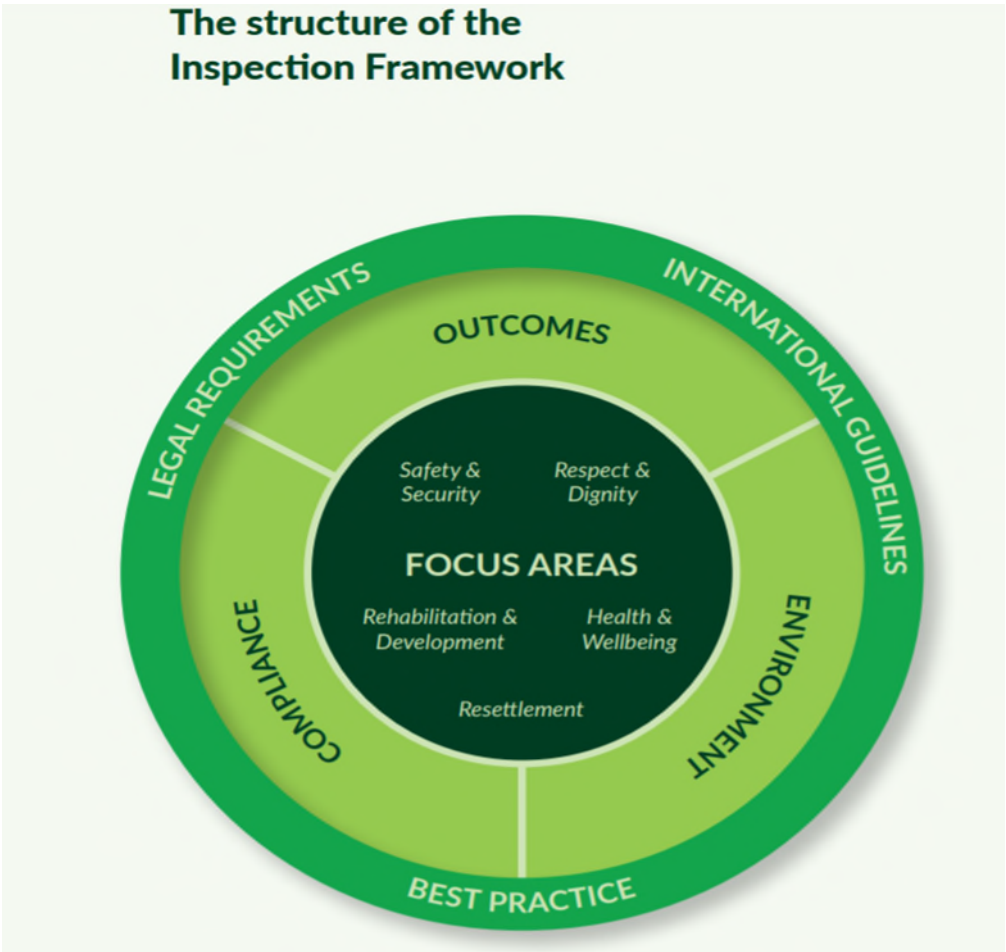
This Framework is informed by the statutory underpinning of the Inspector of Prisons in legislation, national legislation relating to prisons, prisoners' rights, and international obligations owing to prisoners. It also draws upon relevant international human rights standards, in particular the preventive approach and standards set by the Optional Protocol to the [United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (OPCAT).

The Framework sets out the OIP's intention of ensuring a multidisciplinary approach to assessment. This will be achieved by ensuring that inspection teams are independent and comprise individuals with a range of skills, experience and a balance of expertise, including but not limited to, legal, human rights, financial, prisons, education, healthcare including medical. Gender diversity and minority representation will also be taken into consideration.²

The graphic below outlines the structure of the inspection framework showing the five areas evaluated, the focus on outcomes, compliance and environment with judgements grounded in the law, international guidelines and best practice.

² A Framework for the Inspection of Prisons in Ireland, Office of the Inspector of Prisons, March 2020, Section 1.1.3-6, www.oip.ie

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The main focus for DE evaluations in prison settings primarily relates to the provision of education under the Rehabilitation and Development focus area, and any other focus area that the OIP deems relevant. The table below outlines the indicators of effective practice under this focus area and is taken from *A Framework for the Inspection of Prisons in Ireland*.

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3.3 Rehabilitation and Development

Focus Area	Rehabilitation & Development
Indicative Measures	<p><i>Prisoners are able to engage in purposeful activities</i></p> <p><i>Prisoners are supported in developing the capability to contribute positively to society</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prisoners have sufficient time out of their cells with opportunities for meaningful human interaction on a daily basis which is over and above the legal minimum requirement • Prisoners are not subject to a regime amounting to effective solitary confinement (twenty-two hours or more a day in their cell) • Prisoners know about and can access the daily opportunities available to them in terms of association, exercise and purposeful activities • Prisoners are encouraged to access educational opportunities and where necessary, receive extra assistance to do so. Barriers to participation are identified, analysed and addressed to ensure equal access for all • Provisions are in place to promote, facilitate and recognise positive changes made in each individual's journey towards desisting from crime • Paths of progression are developed and the reaching of milestones are met appropriately, for example by transfer to a lower security setting • The Incentivised Regime is accessible in an equitable and fair manner irrespective of prisoner status, category of offence, or individual challenges such as age or disability • Prisoners are actively involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of their sentence plan • There are sufficient opportunities (education/training/work) for the prison population at all levels to engage, in accordance with their abilities • Prisoners have access to a library stocked with materials in formats suited to a range of different abilities, interests, cultural and religious backgrounds. Formal links with local authority libraries are in place and are availed of to support prison libraries access to materials

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3.4 Quality Framework for Evaluating Education Provision

In addition to the indicators above, a set of quality indicators for education provision can be seen below. These quality indicators are taken from *Looking at Our School (2016)* and provide a framework for DE inspectors to evaluate education provision.

Quality framework for evaluation in schools-overview		
Domains		Standards
Teaching and Learning	Learner Outcomes	<p>Students:</p> <p>enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners</p> <p>have the necessary knowledge and skills to understand themselves and their relationships</p> <p>demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the programmes provided</p> <p>attain the stated learning outcomes for each subject, course and programme</p>
	Learner Experiences	<p>Students:</p> <p>engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities, grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive</p> <p>reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning</p> <p>experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning</p>
	Teacher Individual Practice	<p>The teacher:</p> <p>has the requisite subject, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills</p> <p>selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress students' learning</p> <p>selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning intention and the students' learning needs</p> <p>responds to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary</p>

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	Teacher Collective/Collaborative Practice	<p>Teachers:</p> <p>value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration</p> <p>work together to devise learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum</p> <p>collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices</p> <p>contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise</p>
	Leading Teaching and Learning	<p>School leaders:</p> <p>promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment</p> <p>foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each student,</p> <p>manage the planning and implementation of the school curriculum</p> <p>foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and students' learning</p>
Leadership and management	Managing the organisation	<p>School leaders:</p> <p>establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication</p> <p>manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation</p> <p>manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice</p> <p>develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability</p>
	Leading School Development	<p>School leaders:</p> <p>develop and communicate a guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation</p> <p>lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation</p> <p>build and maintain relationships with other schools, the wider community</p>

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		manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education
	Developing Leadership Capacity	<p>School leaders:</p> <p>critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership</p> <p>empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles</p> <p>promote and facilitate the development of student voice, student participation, leadership</p> <p>build professional networks with other school leaders</p>

4. Evaluative Judgements: The Quality Continuum

DE Inspectors examine the quality of different aspects of the work of the prison school at the time of the inspection. The quality of each aspect of the school's work can vary. For example, inspectors could determine that the quality of teaching and learning in a school is at a very high level, while the quality of the management of the school in the prison context is in need of improvement.

DE inspectors use a quality continuum when describing each of the aspects of the school's work during an inspection. The continuum is designed to assist inspectors to arrive at evidence-based, evaluative judgements and describe the quality of a school's provision or aspects of that provision accurately.

The continuum reflects the fact that school quality is evolving and developing constantly, and acknowledges the unique context of each school. It recognises that most schools are at different stages of the school improvement journey in different aspects of their provision

Level	Description	Examples of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a very good standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas

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Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in 11 deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better. specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties

5. Relevant Links

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [Rule 104, Mandela Rules](#)
- [Council of Europe Report on Education in Prison p10](#)
- [Education In Prisons: A Literature Review p 83](#)
- [United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners](#)
- [The Irish Prison Rules 2007](#)
- [Bangkok Rules](#)