



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# A Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools and Special Schools

Inspectorate  
Updated January 2024





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# 1

## Introduction



## 1.1 Inspection

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education works to improve the quality of learning for children and young people in Irish schools, early learning and care settings, centres for education and other learning settings. This is done through the provision of high quality evaluation, analysis and advice.

English and Irish-medium schools are selected for inspection as part of the Inspectorate's annual programme of inspection; these include schools at all levels on the quality continuum, from schools with significant strengths to schools in which significant weaknesses are identified. Evaluation in schools is designed to evaluate key aspects of the work of the school and to promote school improvement while also ensuring accountability.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with Section 7(2)(b) and Section 13(3)(a)(i) of the Education Act 1998 and with the Code of Practice for the Department of Education Inspectorate (2022). If circumstances require, inspection work is undertaken in line with Public Health guidance. During an inspection, a school's board of management and its staff are obliged to afford the inspectors 'every reasonable facility and co-operation' in the performance of their duties (Section 13(7), Education Act 1998).

Separate guides to inspection are available for early learning and care settings and post-primary schools contexts. The full suite of inspection guides is available [here](#).

## 1.2 Purpose of this Guide

*A Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools and Special Schools (2022)*, which was developed in consultation with the education partners, sets out the approach to inspection in primary schools and special schools. It provides a general overview of the approach to inspection and also an outline of each of the inspection types used in primary schools and special schools. This is an updated version of the guide and replaces previous versions.

## 1.3 Evaluation in primary schools and special schools

Responsibility for school improvement rests primarily with the board of management, principal and staff of individual schools. Effective schools are constantly reviewing their own practice and seeking to find ways to ensure school improvement. School management and teachers reflect on the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in their schools. They also consider how well the school is run and how this can be improved.

### *School self-evaluation*

Teachers, principals and boards of management can improve the work of their schools significantly through school self-evaluation (SSE). SSE involves reflective enquiry leading to action planning for improvement that is informed by evidence gathered within each school's unique context. The process enables schools to use this evidence to identify meaningful and specific targets and actions for improvement that focus on teaching and learning practices and outcomes. It enables them to create and implement improvement plans, to measure their progress, and to identify their achievements.

Since 2012, schools have been required to engage with SSE and to use the process to monitor and improve aspects of their teaching and learning in particular. To facilitate self-evaluation as a central component of the work of a school, the Inspectorate has published School self-evaluation: Next steps, September 2022- June 2026, including Circular 0056/2022 for Primary Schools, Special Schools and Post-primary Schools. This publication provides a framework and structure for schools to use in evaluating teaching and learning.

SSE and external evaluation are complementary processes, both focusing on the identification of effective practice and on improvement. The SSE process gives schools a means of identifying strengths, addressing priorities, and of ensuring a whole-school focus on improving specific aspects of teaching and learning and of leadership and management. External evaluations take note of schools' identified priorities and assess their teaching and learning and leadership and management practices. Given this common focus on improvement, the Inspectorate will take account of schools' engagement with, and the outcomes of, self-evaluation in the course of its evaluations while remaining sensitive to the individual context factors of schools at varying stages of SSE development.

### *External inspection of schools*

External inspections of schools also facilitate improvement and change in schools. They provide an external perspective on the work of the school. Inspectors and inspection reports provide judgements on the quality of provision in a school, affirm the aspects of practice that are working well and help to inform and complement SSE. Recommendations in inspection reports provide important direction for the school community as it seeks to bring about ongoing school improvement.

Almost all inspection types focus on the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and pupil achievement. Depending on the focus of the evaluation, they may also focus on the quality of support for pupils, the quality of action planning for school improvement, and the quality of leadership and management.

In a small number of cases, inspections may also have some or all of the following purposes:

- To assess the implementation of guidelines, circular letters, regulations and other directions made by the Minister or other Departments
- To collect information on factors that can be used to identify schools that would benefit from further inspection
- To monitor the progress made by a school in implementing the recommendations of earlier inspections
- To collect information on the operation and effectiveness of schools for research or other purposes, including the provision of information to other sections of the Department or other Departments.

Inspections support co-professional engagement between teachers and the inspector. In most inspection types, the majority of the inspector's time during inspection is given typically to direct observation of teaching and learning at classroom level, with a view to assessing the quality of provision, affirming the work of teachers and pupils, and supporting improvement. The inspector's feedback to the teacher and to the school should enhance professional reflection and self-evaluation, and ultimately improve outcomes for pupils.

Inspections aim to support the educational leadership role of the principal by providing the opportunity for professional dialogue with inspectors on matters of particular interest to the school.

Inspections typically result in the issuing or publication of a report. This report can assist schools to identify strengths in educational provision and facilitate professional reflection on aspects requiring further development.

The Inspectorate acknowledges that, alongside teachers and school management, pupils and their parents<sup>1</sup> are key stakeholders in the school community. Engaging with parents and pupils in the course of inspections is valuable from the perspective of eliciting their views about the work of the school. It enhances the quality of the evaluation and the recommendations for school improvement that emerge. The Inspectorate has developed its processes and resources to support engagement with pupils and parents during inspection and to enhance their participation in the inspection process. Information on inspection for children, young people and parents/guardians is available [here](#).

## 1.4 Inspection types

A range of inspection types is used to gather information on the quality of education provision, and to evaluate schools. These range from one-day, incidental inspections that are typically unannounced, to more intensive whole-school type evaluations, and inspections that follow-through on how schools have implemented recommendations made in previous inspection reports.

Appendix 1 of this guide provides an outline of each of the inspection types used in primary schools and special schools:

- [Incidental inspection](#)
- [Curriculum evaluation](#)
- [Whole-school evaluation - management, leadership and learning \(WSE-MLL\)](#)
- [Whole school evaluation \(WSE\)](#)
- [Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs](#)
- [Evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS schools \(DEIS\)](#)
- [Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres](#)
- [Child protection and safeguarding inspection](#)
- [Supporting the safe provision of schooling](#)
- [Evaluation of remote teaching and learning](#)
- [Follow-through inspection](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this Guide, the term parent is used to refer to a child's father and/or mother and/or guardian(s).

The Inspectorate has developed this range of inspection types so that evaluation and advisory work can be tailored to the needs of individual schools and the school system as a whole. This helps to achieve the aims of encouraging improvement for pupils and of providing an assurance of quality for parents, the public and the education system.

Some inspection types, such as incidental inspections and curriculum evaluations, are quite short inspections that enable the Inspectorate to evaluate the work of the school, and provide feedback for improvement to teachers and school leaders relatively quickly. They are also very useful in monitoring the overall quality of educational provision. Other inspections, such as whole-school type evaluations and DEIS evaluations, take more time and involve more detailed evaluation of the leadership and management of the schools as well as evaluations of teaching and learning. Access to this broad range of inspection types helps the Inspectorate to work with teachers, school leaders and boards of management on specific aspects of their work, such as teaching and learning in a subject or curricular area, provision for inclusion or for children with special and additional educational needs, whole-school management and leadership, or the implementation of specific improvements. Conducting follow-through inspections, which evaluate how schools have implemented recommendations made in previous inspection reports, also helps to increase the impact of inspection for improvement.

Schools work within a very specific context and these context factors are taken into consideration during evaluations. Factors such as size, location, socio-economic circumstances of the pupils and community, pupils' additional and special educational needs and the support they require, and other factors impact on the work of the school.



## 1.5 Key principles that inform inspections

The Inspectorate is focused on ensuring that pupils in schools receive the best possible education in light of their potential and their learning needs. High standards in teaching and in the learning outcomes and experiences of pupils are promoted by the Inspectorate as it strives to enable learning organisations to improve the quality of the education they provide.

Inspectors are committed to carrying out inspections in ways that provide real opportunities to affirm good practice and to provide practical advice to individual teachers, to principals and to boards of management with the ultimate aim of improving learning experiences and outcomes for pupils.

The work of the Inspectorate is underpinned by four key principles:

1. A focus on learners
2. Development and improvement
3. Respectful engagement
4. Responsibility and accountability

These key principles, described in detail in the Code of Practice for the Department of Education Inspectorate (2022) provide the standards that inform, guide and govern its work. They govern the full range of inspectors' evaluation and advisory work in all education settings. They provide a benchmark against which the Inspectorate, and others, can judge the quality of its professional practice.



# 2

How inspections  
are carried out



This section describes the range of activities that the Inspectorate undertakes during its inspections. Inspection types include a combination of some or all of these elements. The combination of activities associated with inspection types may change from time to time. For example, it is important that inspectors take account of the context and circumstances of the setting when they carry out inspections. In light of this, inspectors will, within the guidelines and the principles set out in the Code of Practice for the Department of Education Inspectorate (2022), have reasonable flexibility to exercise professional judgement on the range of activities that will be carried out during inspections.

Records relating to inspections are processed in accordance with the Department of Education records management procedures and its Data Protection Policy.



## 2.1 Before the inspection visit

### Notice

Inspectors give advance notice to schools for most inspection types; for others, they do not. Written notice of a whole-school inspection is typically provided to the principal, the chairperson of the board of management and the patron in advance of the first in-school day<sup>2</sup>. In the case of a school under the patronage of an Education and Training Board (ETB), a copy of the notification is sent to the chief executive of the ETB.

For other evaluations, with the exception of those that are unannounced, the principal is notified by phone and/or email and requested to forward the notification to the chairperson of the board of management and the patron and to advise relevant staff of the notification of the inspection. For all notified inspections, the principal will be contacted by the reporting inspector. The purpose of this contact is to outline the format of the evaluation, and may include arrangements for meetings and the completion of surveys. The inspector may also clarify any specific queries the principal raises regarding the inspection. In all inspections that lead to a published report the school principal is requested to complete a School Information Form ([Appendix 2](#)). Schools are also requested to complete a School Contact Form which provides contact details for the purpose of communication with the school during the inspection process. It should be noted that the contact details provided in the School Contact Form will be used to send the school inspection report to the school.

Typically, no notice is given to a school of an incidental inspection or of an evaluation of schools attached to special care units or children detention centres. Where necessary, the Inspectorate may also conduct unannounced child protection and safeguarding inspections, follow-through inspections and supporting the safe provision of schooling visits.

### Surveys

Parents and pupils are important stakeholders in schools and the Inspectorate values their views on the quality of provision. To capture their perspectives on the work of the school, the Inspectorate administers surveys (in either hard copy or online format) to a sample of parents and pupils during some evaluations.

Where surveys are used during inspections, the inspector makes arrangements with the principal for the administration of parent surveys in advance of the evaluation. They also discuss arrangements for the administration of pupil surveys, where these apply.

Online teacher surveys are administered during some evaluations, including WSE, WSE-MLL and evaluation of schools attached to special care units. In evaluations where teacher surveys are administered, usernames and passwords are provided to the school, and the principal is asked to disseminate these to teachers to enable them to complete the survey in advance of the in-school phase.

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<sup>2</sup> The period of notice and the persons contacted prior to an inspection vary depending on the type of evaluation. Please see the information on each of the inspection types in [Appendix 1](#) of this guide.

Information gathered from surveys may be referred to in the inspection report, but detailed statistical information is not included. A summary of the aggregated data from these surveys is provided to the school and may be discussed at post-evaluation meetings. Completed individual surveys are confidential to the Inspectorate.

## Meetings

WSE and WSE-MLL are examples of inspection types where meetings are held prior to the first 'in-school' day of the inspection. The reporting inspector, in consultation with the principal, arranges to hold meetings (remotely, where necessary) with representatives of the board of management and patron, and with members of the school community as applicable.

Inspectors also meet with representatives of the parents' association where the association is affiliated to the National Parents' Council Primary (NPC-P), or is in the process of affiliating to the NPC-P. Where the school does not have a parents' association, or the association is not affiliated to the NPC-P, the inspectors meet with the parents' representatives on the board of management.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2 During the inspection visit

An inspection visit is conducted by one or more inspectors. The inspection model and the school context determine the length of time the inspection and the activities undertaken in the course of the evaluation will take. Typically, the core inspection activity takes between one and three days and consists of classroom visits, meetings, the administration of surveys, the review of documents and the provision of feedback. The reporting inspector prepares an overall timetable for the evaluation and shares it with the principal on the relevant day of the evaluation. The principal will share the timetable with relevant teaching staff. Where possible, any changes to the timetable are discussed in advance with the school principal.

## Surveys

Where they are used, pupil surveys are administered by the inspector to a sample of pupils on the first day of the inspection.

## Meetings

Meetings are arranged in advance of the inspection visit in consultation with the principal. Depending on the inspection model, meetings may be held with representatives of the board of management, representatives of the patron, representatives of the parents' association (if affiliated with the NPC-P), groups of parents, members of the teaching staff, members of the in-school management team<sup>4</sup>, members of the special education team, special needs

<sup>3</sup> Our practice in this regard is informed by Section 26 of the Education Act 1998 as follows:  
 "(1) The parents of pupils of a recognised school may establish, and maintain from among their number, a parents' association for that school and membership of that association shall be open to all parents of pupils of that school.  
 (2) A parents' association shall promote the interests of the pupils in a school in co-operation with the board, principal, teachers and pupils of a school...  
 (3) The board shall promote contact between the school, parents of pupils in that school and the community and shall facilitate and give all reasonable assistance to parents who wish to establish a parents' association and to a parents' association when it is established.  
 (4) (a) A parents' association shall, following consultation with its members, make rules governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs.  
 (b) Where a parents' association is affiliated to a national association of parents, the rules referred to in paragraph (a) shall be in accordance with guidelines issued by that national association of parents with the concurrence of the Minister.

<sup>4</sup> The in-school management team consists of the principal, the deputy principal(s) and the assistant principal(s).

assistants, other relevant staff and groups of pupils. In the case of whole-school evaluations, some of these meetings may be held in advance of the in-school inspection period. Where appropriate and convenient, some meetings such as those with teachers, parents or representatives of the board of management may be conducted remotely in consultation with, and with the agreement of relevant parties.

Meetings with pupils take due account of the particular ethical considerations that are relevant to the conduct of meetings with children and young people. In accordance with the Code of Practice for the Department of Education Inspectorate (2022), such meetings are also carried out with due respect and sensitivity. Meetings with pupils during inspections are also conducted in accordance with the Department's Child Safeguarding Statement. As appropriate, parental consent and pupil assent are acquired.

From time to time, inspectors may convene additional meetings where necessary, either during inspections or after the in-school phase is complete. These meetings provide the opportunity for inspectors to seek further clarifications or additional relevant information from parties engaged in the inspection in light of the emerging findings from the inspection.

### *Classroom visits*

During the inspection visit, inspectors visit classrooms and other learning settings to observe teaching and learning, to interact with pupils and to review their work. Inspectors' judgements on the quality of teaching and learning, including teachers' individual and collaborative practice, are informed by Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools.

Over the course of the evaluation, teaching and learning may be observed in any learning setting. Observations may include the work of temporary staff and post-graduate students of education who are working in the school at the time of the inspection visit. They may also include the work of external personnel who are employed by the board of management to provide additional tuition/support to pupils during school time.

The inspector considers aspects such as teachers' preparation for teaching and learning<sup>5</sup>, teachers' collective and collaborative practice, the effectiveness of teaching approaches and learner experiences provided, the classroom atmosphere, and how pupils are managed and organised during learning activities.

The inspector evaluates the level to which pupils' knowledge, skills and attitudes are progressed and the extent to which pupils are engaged appropriately in their learning. Assessment practices and the progress made by pupils are also considered. The inspector typically interacts with pupils and reviews samples of their work.

Oral feedback is provided to individual teachers at the end of lessons, or at another time during the in-school evaluation. The feedback relates to the overall quality of teaching and learning, and the quality of pupils' experiences in the lesson. Observed good practice is acknowledged and affirmed, and recommendations for improvement are made as appropriate.

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<sup>5</sup> The evaluation of teacher's preparation for teaching and learning is informed by the Department of Education publication, Preparation for Teaching and Learning - Guidance for All Primary and Special Schools.

## Evaluating professional practice

While inspections clearly involve an evaluation of the professional practice of teachers and the quality of learning facilitated in the classroom, the inspection process is not a professional competence inspection. Procedures are in place under Section 24 of the Education Act 1998 to facilitate schools in dealing with issues relating to professional competence, and the inspection arrangements that are part of the Section 24 procedures are entirely separate from the inspection.

However, where an inspector has serious concerns about the quality of teaching and learning in an individual lesson observed, and/or concerns regarding the wellbeing and safety of pupils, those concerns will be shared with the principal and the teacher as part of the feedback provided.

Where concerns relate to management and/or leadership in the school, they are shared with the principal and the chairperson of the board of management of the school as part of the feedback provided (or, in the case of schools under the auspices of an ETB, with the principal, chairperson of the board and the chief executive of the ETB).

## Review of documents

While external inspection focuses principally on the work of the school as it transacts daily, inspectors will request to see and examine documents relevant to the focus of the particular evaluation model and that schools can reasonably be expected to have available. Appendix 3 outlines the particular documents which schools are typically asked to provide (preferably in electronic format), for each inspection model.

An inspector may also request additional documents or school records. Any such documentation is normally reviewed onsite.

During the course of the evaluation, the inspector considers and may discuss the results of national standardised assessment information in the context of the school, and other assessment information. However, this statistical information is not presented in written reports.



### Unsolicited Communication

Unsolicited communications are pieces of information that have been brought to the attention of the Inspectorate but have not been sought, requested or invited. They may be in written or verbal form, signed or anonymous. The Inspectorate considers and responds to all unsolicited communications received before and/or during inspections in line with its statutory and other procedural obligations if such communications are relevant to the particular evaluation framework or model of evaluation. In responding to unsolicited communications, the Inspectorate is committed to maintaining its objectivity and impartiality and treating those who provide unsolicited communication and those who are the subject of the unsolicited communication fairly. It is also committed to taking account of all sources of evidence and not giving undue weight to any particular source of information. If the unsolicited communication is of relevance to the evaluation, the Inspectorate will share the substance of the communication with the subject of the communication during the evaluation and allow them a reasonable opportunity to provide a response. A record will be kept of all information provided. While the Inspectorate will respect confidences when receiving information, it cannot in every circumstance guarantee the absolute confidentiality of the information provided, or the anonymity of the individual person or persons providing the information because a right of response may necessitate the provision of relevant information to a third party, including the identity of the person providing the information.

### Compliance with Child Protection Procedures

As part of the Department's oversight of the implementation of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, (revised 2023), the Inspectorate checks on compliance with the key aspects of these procedures during all school inspections. The level of checks on compliance depends on the inspection being conducted.

Level one checks	Incidental inspection
	Curriculum evaluation
	Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs
	Supporting the safe provision of schooling
	Follow-through inspection
	Evaluation of remote teaching and learning
Level two checks	Whole-school evaluation (WSE)
	Whole school evaluation – management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL)
	Evaluation of action planning for Improvement in DEIS schools (DEIS)
	Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units and Child Detention Centres
Level three checks	Child protection and safeguarding inspection (This is a bespoke inspection model which focuses in an in-depth way on a school's compliance with the <u>Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, (revised 2023)</u> )

Details of the Level one and Level two checks are provided in Appendix 4.

If a school is not compliant with one or more of the checks conducted during an inspection, the Inspectorate will continue to engage with the school until the school becomes compliant.

### *Implementation of Anti-Bullying Procedures*

As part of all school inspections, the Inspectorate evaluates and reports on the work of the school in creating a school culture that prevents and tackles bullying and/or in implementing key aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (2013). These procedures give direction and guidance to school authorities and school personnel on how to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour, and on how to deal with any negative impact within schools of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.

Details of the aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures that are reviewed during inspections are outlined in Appendix 5.



## 2.3 Following the inspection visit

### *Feedback meetings*

Feedback meetings are typically held immediately or shortly after the completion of the in-school inspection phase. They are an important part of the evaluation process.

During the meetings, the inspector seeks to:

- provide an evaluation of the work of the school
- acknowledge good practice in the school
- provide opportunities to those attending to ask questions and seek clarifications
- gather any additional relevant information
- identify areas for development
- discuss how the school can develop through the implementation of the main recommendations of the evaluation.

### *The inspection report*

Following the feedback meetings, an inspection report is finalised. The inspection report presents the main findings and recommendations of the evaluation. It is processed through the normal quality assurance procedures of the Inspectorate. It is then issued to the school in draft format, initially for factual verification (FV) and later for school response (SR) as prescribed in Guidelines to the Publication of School Inspection Reports (2015).

Feedback following an incidental inspection is generally provided verbally through a professional discussion between the inspector and the principal and other teachers as relevant. For certain aspects of an incidental inspection, a written note of the advice or feedback may be provided to the school.



# 3

## Publication of the inspection report



The finalised report and the school response are published at Inspection Reports on [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie). The detailed arrangements for the publication of inspection reports are described in a separate document, Guidelines to the Publication of School Inspection Reports (2015).



# 4

## Acting on the inspection report



The board of management, as part of its agenda for school improvement, should discuss the findings and recommendations of the report. The in-school management team should then use the inspection findings, along with other types of evidence gathered by the school, to inform its self-evaluation processes. This will involve the in-school management team, in collaboration with the whole school community, planning for and overseeing the implementation of the actions needed to address the report's recommendations in order to improve learning experiences and outcomes for all pupils. In the case of an ETB school, it is suggested that the Chief Executive of the ETB or his/her representative should be a party to such discussions.

While responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the recommendations and improvements in an inspection report rests mainly with the board of management and in-school management team (or with the board of management and in-school management team and the Chief Executive of the Education and Training Board (ETB) in the case of an ETB school), the patron or trustees of the school also have a responsibility to ensure that effective follow-up action is taken. In some cases, schools will need to access the assistance available from school support services and other sources of advice when planning and implementing improvements.

The Inspectorate conducts follow-through inspections to monitor and report on the implementation of inspection recommendations in a sample of schools as part of its inspection programme.



# 5

The quality framework  
for schools





Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools provides a set of standards for the two dimensions of the work of schools:

- Learning and teaching
- Leadership and management

The framework is designed for teachers and for school leaders to promote use of the most effective and engaging teaching and learning approaches, and to enhance the quality of leadership in their schools. Through the provision of a set of standards describing ‘effective practice’ and ‘highly effective practice’, the framework helps schools to identify their strengths and areas for development. It also enables them to take ownership of their own development and improvement. In this way, the framework seeks to embed self-evaluation, reflective practice and responsiveness to the needs of pupils in classrooms, schools and other settings.

The framework is used to inform the work of inspectors as they monitor and report on quality in schools. Different types of inspection draw on the elements of the framework that are most relevant to the focus of the model. In this way, while the framework is used flexibly, it facilitates consistency in Inspectorate evaluations.

Making the framework available publicly helps school communities and others to understand the evaluative judgements in inspection reports. The common language provided by the framework facilitates meaningful dialogue between teachers, educational professionals, parents, pupils, school communities and the wider community about quality in schools.

**Table 1: Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools - Overview**

	Domains	Standards
Learning and Teaching	Learner outcomes	Pupils:
		<p>enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners</p> <p>have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to understand themselves and their relationships</p> <p>demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the curriculum<sup>6</sup></p> <p>attain the stated learning outcomes for the term and year</p>
	Learner experiences	Pupils:
		<p>engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities</p> <p>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>
	Teachers' individual practice	<p>The teacher:</p> <p>has the requisite curriculum knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills</p> <p>selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress pupils' learning</p> <p>selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the intended learning outcomes and to pupils' learning needs</p> <p>responds to individual learning needs and differentiates learning and teaching activities as necessary</p>
	Teachers' collective / collaborative practice	<p>Teachers:</p> <p>value and engage in professional learning and professional collaboration</p> <p>work together to devise learning opportunities for pupils 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>
Leadership and Management	Leading learning and teaching	School leaders:
		<p>promote a culture of reflection, 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 pupil</p> <p>manage the planning and implementation of the school curriculum</p> <p>foster teacher professional learning that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning</p>
	Managing the organisation	School leaders:
		<p>create and maintain a positive school culture and a safe, healthy and purposeful learning environment, and sustain 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	School leaders:
		<p>communicate the 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 parents, with other schools, and with the wider community</p> <p>manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education</p>
	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 pupil participation, pupil leadership and parent participation</p> <p>build professional networks with other school leaders</p>

<sup>6</sup> Pupils in primary schools follow the primary curriculum. Pupils/students in special schools follow an appropriate and differentiated school curriculum. Teachers in these schools may draw on a range of curricula from a variety of sources, depending on pupils'/students' learning needs.

# 6

The quality  
continuum



Inspectors examine the quality of different aspects of the work of the school at the time of the inspection. The quality of each aspect of a 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 school's support for pupils is in need of improvement.

Inspectors use a quality continuum when describing each of the aspects of the school's work during an inspection (Table 2 below). The continuum is designed to assist inspectors to arrive at evidence-based, evaluative judgements and to 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.

**Table 2: The quality continuum**

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Provision that is excellent</b> is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Provision that is very good</b> is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
<b>Good</b>	<b>Provision that is good</b> is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
<b>Requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective

# 7

## Review of inspections



A teacher or a board of management affected by an inspection may seek a review of the inspection using the procedures outlined in Procedure for Review of Inspections carried out by the Department of Education Inspectorate under Section 13(9) of the Education Act 1998 (2022).



# 8

## Publication and revision of this Guide



This Guide has been prepared following consultation with the education partners as required under Section 13(8) of the Education Act 1998.

The Inspectorate is committed to improving the ways in which it carries out its evaluation and advisory work in schools, and the provisions of this Guide are reviewed periodically.

The Inspectorate retains the right to make necessary technical adjustments or updates to the *Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools and Special Schools* from time to time. The most up-to-date version of the Guide will be available at [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie).



# Appendices



## Appendix 1 - Summary of inspection types

This appendix sets out a brief summary of each of the following types of inspection:

(a) <u>Incidental inspection</u>	34
(b) <u>Curriculum evaluation</u>	36
(c) <u>Whole-school evaluation - management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL)</u>	38
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The summaries set out the evaluation focus for each inspection type and the typical



inspection activities conducted at each stage of the inspection process.

## 1. (a) Incidental inspection

### Introduction

During an incidental inspection, the inspector evaluates aspects of the work of a school under the normal conditions of a regular school day. Typically, an incidental inspection focuses on teaching and learning. It also facilitates co-professional engagement between teachers and the inspector. The inspector's time is given to direct observation of teaching and learning at the classroom level with a view to assessing the quality of provision, affirming the work of teachers and pupils, and supporting improvement. An incidental inspection provides opportunities for the teacher to discuss issues relevant to the lesson and to seek advice from the inspector.

An incidental inspection supports the educational leadership role of the principal by providing the opportunity for professional dialogue with the inspector on matters of particular interest to the school. The inspector's feedback can be used to assist schools in identifying strengths in educational provision and facilitating professional reflection on aspects requiring further development and consequently improve outcomes for pupils. In this way, an incidental inspection complements the school's own self-evaluation processes.

The incidental inspection is designed to be flexible so that it can provide information on a number of different aspects of the work of a school. An incidental inspection visit may be used for research purposes to collect information at national level about aspects of schools' work. It may also be used to assess the implementation of guidelines, circular letters and regulations. In these instances, the inspector informs the principal about the purpose of the visit at the beginning of the incidental inspection.

### Evaluation focus

The key focus of an incidental inspection is on teaching and learning. The inspector considers teachers' preparation for the lessons taught, the effectiveness of the teaching approaches used, the classroom atmosphere and how pupils are managed and organised during learning activities.

The inspector evaluates the level to which pupils' knowledge, skills and attitudes are progressed, and the extent to which pupils are engaged appropriately in their learning. Assessment practices and the progress made by pupils are also considered. The inspector interacts with pupils and may review samples of their work. The extent to which whole-school improvement targets are reflected in classroom practice and in pupils' learning is evaluated where appropriate.

## Overview of inspection activities: Incidental Inspection

Before the inspection	Notification	Typically no advance notice given
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Inspector meets with the principal/deputy principal to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outline the format of the inspection</li> <li>obtain copy of school timetable</li> </ul>
		Inspector prepares: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>draft schedule of classroom visits to be shared with principal before visits commence</li> </ul>
	Typically one school day	Observation of teaching and learning and other relevant activities
		Interactions with pupils
		Review of school documentation and records (see <a href="#">Appendix 3</a> for required policies and documents) and samples of pupils' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 1)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Feedback meeting with principal and/or deputy principal
		Typically, no written report issues to the school.
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Written note of advice or feedback provided issued to school (if applicable)



## 1. (b) Curriculum evaluation

### Introduction

A curriculum evaluation focuses on evaluating specific subjects of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (2019)<sup>7</sup>.

The evaluation places a particular emphasis on the quality of pupils' learning in specific subjects and, accordingly, most of the inspector's time is spent in classrooms and other learning settings.

### Evaluation focus

The inspector evaluates and reports in the curriculum evaluation under the following areas of enquiry:

- Quality of pupils' learning outcomes
- Supporting pupils' learning through learning experiences and teachers' practice
- The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

#### *Quality of pupils' learning outcomes*

The inspector considers the extent to which pupils enjoy their learning and are motivated to learn. The inspector enquires into the pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject and how their skills and attitudes in that subject are developing. The extent to which learning in the subject is progressing as pupils move from class level to class level is also considered. In this regard, inspectors consider available records of pupils' learning in the subject, teachers' monthly progress records, school improvement plans or DEIS action plan. In reviewing pupils' learning, the inspector takes account of the expectations for learning outlined in the curriculum.

#### *Supporting pupils' learning outcomes through learning experiences and teachers' practice*

The inspector evaluates the extent to which pupils are engaged in learning, the opportunities they receive to use and apply learning skills, and their involvement in monitoring their own progress in learning. The inspector considers the pupils' engagement in learning, whether they are active learners, if they are learning independently and collaboratively and if they are challenged and supported appropriately in their learning.

The inspector evaluates teachers' preparation for teaching and learning in the subject. The inspector considers how the teaching approaches used align with the approaches promoted in curriculum guidelines. The opportunities that teachers provide to pupils to build on their previous learning in the subject and to return to relevant topics regularly are also considered. How teachers assess learning in the subject and how they use and communicate assessment information are also examined.

<sup>7</sup> In the case of special schools, some adjustments are made to reflect the focus of curricular provision in these schools. For example, language and communication rather than English and Irish as specific curricular areas may be the focus of curriculum evaluations.

*The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE in progressing pupils' learning*

The inspector examines how the planning processes at both a whole-school and individual teacher-level facilitate gainful, curriculum-appropriate learning activities. The extent to which the whole-school plan for the subject provides pupils with a developmental learning programme in the subject and is contextualised to meet the needs of the school is also considered.

## Overview of inspection activities: Curriculum Evaluation

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, five working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outline the format of the inspection</li> </ul>
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Contact Form</li> <li>School Information Form</li> </ul>
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity  Typically one/two in-school days	Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		Meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>principal</li> <li>any teacher involved in leading teaching and learning in the subject being evaluated</li> <li>group(s) of pupils</li> <li>group of parents, where relevant</li> </ul>
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interactions with pupils
		Review of pupils' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Review of documents (See <a href="#">Appendix 3</a> for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 1)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Post-evaluation meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>principal</li> <li>any teacher involved in leading teaching and learning in the subject being evaluated</li> </ul>
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report at <a href="http://www.gov.ie/school-reports">www.gov.ie/school-reports</a>

## 1. (c) Whole-school evaluation - management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL)

### Introduction

The whole-school evaluation - management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) process is designed to evaluate key aspects of the work of the school and to promote school improvement. The WSE-MLL evaluation is intended to complement the school's own development planning and provides the school with opportunities to demonstrate its own self-evaluation processes. The domains, standards and statements of practice in Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools inform the evaluative judgements and recommendations for improvement made by inspectors during a WSE-MLL.

WSE-MLL is strongly focused on the quality of teaching and learning in the school as a whole. Accordingly, most of the time the inspector(s) spend in a school during this evaluation is spent in classrooms and other learning settings. The evaluation is not confined to specific curriculum areas; teaching and learning is evaluated across a range of curriculum areas. In reviewing provision across a range of curriculum areas, the inspector(s) evaluate important aspects of teaching and learning such as teaching approaches, assessment practices, and pupil engagement and learning experiences in a generic rather than a subject-specific way. The inspector(s) also focus on teaching and learning in literacy, numeracy and other generic aspects of teaching and learning, including those that promote active learning, collaborative learning, communication, creativity, enquiry and critical thinking.

The evidence base of a WSE-MLL in a particular school will include, where available, relevant evaluative data on the work of the school gathered through other inspection activity. Where relevant, the WSE-MLL model takes account of a school's progress in respect of recommendations made in previous inspections.

The WSE-MLL may incorporate the evaluation of a specific theme or issue from time to time, for example, the collection of specific data for a national thematic report which may be published by the Inspectorate.

### Evaluation focus

During a WSE-MLL, the inspector(s) evaluate and report under the following areas of enquiry:

- Quality of pupils' learning
- Quality of teaching
- Quality of support for pupils' wellbeing
- Quality of leadership and management
- Quality of school self-evaluation

### *Quality of pupils' learning*

The inspector(s) evaluate the level to which pupils' knowledge, skills and attitudes are progressed and the extent to which they are engaged appropriately in their learning. Assessment practices and the progress made by pupils are examined. Arrangements concerning record-keeping and reporting on pupil achievement are also examined. The team reviews the results of standardised tests and in-school assessments. The inspector(s) may also interact with pupils and review samples of their work.

### *Quality of teaching*

The inspector(s) consider teachers' preparation for the lessons taught, the effectiveness of the teaching approaches used, the classroom atmosphere and how pupils are managed and organised during learning activities.

The extent to which whole-school improvement targets are reflected in classroom practice and in pupils' learning is evaluated where appropriate.

### *Quality of support for pupils' wellbeing*

The manner in which the school manages and addresses the wellbeing of all its pupils is evaluated. The support that the school provides for the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from minority groups is examined. Provision for both classroom inclusion and individual support is assessed. The inspector(s) also consider the provision that the school is making for cooperation between school, home and community. Consideration is also given to the steps the school is taking to create a positive school culture and an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment that supports pupils' wellbeing.



### *Quality of school self-evaluation*

The inspector(s) review the self-evaluation processes currently taking place in the school in accordance with the relevant circulars and guidance issued by the Department. In particular, the inspector(s) evaluate the level of engagement in these processes by the school's stakeholders and how improvement targets are reflected in teachers' practice and pupils' learning. The inspector(s) also evaluate how targets for improvement are set and monitored within the school and the overall effectiveness of the school's strategies for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' achievement.

### *Quality of leadership and management*

The inspector examines the role of the patron and the composition, role and functioning of the board of management, including its communication with members of the school community, its management of resources and its priorities for school development and improvement. The work of the principal and in-school management team is also evaluated. The effectiveness of leadership in the school and the leadership of learning are considered. The school's planning and the effectiveness of the school's engagement in self-evaluation, including, as relevant, school self-evaluation processes, school improvement plans and DEIS action plans, with due regard to the individual context factors of the school are also examined. Where relevant, the school's capacity to improve is also reviewed.

WSE-MLL also enquires into how pupils are managed, including how the school supports pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and from minority groups. It examines how all pupils (including pupils with additional and special educational needs) are included in the work in classrooms and other learning settings. WSE-MLL also focuses on whole-school issues relating to leadership and management, taking into account context factors such as school size and the number of in-school management personnel.



## Overview of inspection activities: WSE-MLL

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, ten working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>outline the format of the inspection</li><li>confirm school timetable information</li><li>schedule meetings</li><li>make arrangements for completion of teacher and parent surveys</li></ul>
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>School Contact Form</li><li>School Information Form</li></ul>
		The principal forwards the following to the inspector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>teacher timetables</li><li>enrolment and admissions policy/procedures</li><li>code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy</li></ul>
Arrangements for online surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>link for online parent surveys is distributed</li><li>usernames and passwords for online teacher surveys are made available</li></ul>		
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		Meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>principal</li><li>senior management and teachers</li><li>group(s) of pupils</li></ul>
		Meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>chairperson of the board of management and two officers (if available)</li><li>chairperson of parents' association and two other officers if affiliated with NPC-P (if not affiliated with the NPC-P meet with the parent representatives on the board of management)</li></ul>
		Typically three/ four in-school days
		Administration of pupil surveys
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interactions with pupils
		Review of pupils' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Review of documents (See <a href="#">Appendix 3</a> for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
	Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 2)	
Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures		
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Collated survey responses shared with school
		Post-evaluation meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>school's staff</li><li>representatives of the board of management/parents/patron</li></ul>
		Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit school response
Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on <a href="http://www.gov.ie/school-reports">www.gov.ie/school-reports</a>	

## 1. (d) Whole-school evaluation (WSE)

### Introduction

A whole-school evaluation (WSE) is a collaborative process involving the evaluation team, the teaching staff, the management of the school, parents and pupils. The patron or trustees of the school may also be involved in the process.

As one of a range of evaluation types used by the Inspectorate, WSE complements other evaluation types. The evidence base of a WSE in a particular school will include, where available, relevant evaluative data on the work of the school gathered through other inspection activity.

Generally, inspectors examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in four subjects, including English, Gaelge, Mathematics and one additional subject determined by the Inspectorate. The board of management of a school may request the inspection team to evaluate a fifth subject selected by the school. The number of subjects or curricular areas evaluated may vary from time to time to facilitate the conduct of WSEs that focus on a particular theme or themes. Where necessary, the Inspectorate may also conduct a WSE involving all curricular areas and subjects.

### Evaluation focus

The inspector evaluates and reports in the WSE under the following areas of enquiry:

- Quality of leadership and management
- Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
- Quality of teaching, learning and pupils achievement
- Quality of support for pupils

In evaluating each of these areas, the inspector also considers how successful the school has been in implementing relevant recommendations made in previous inspection reports and inspection visits, where this applies.

#### *Quality of leadership and management*

The WSE team considers the role of the patron, the composition, role and functioning of the board of management, its engagement in the development of policies and procedures, and its support for school development and improvement initiatives. The physical resources and facilities available in the school to support teaching and learning, the management of pupils, the management of relationships with parents and the community are also examined.

The in-school management of the school, including the role of the principal, the deputy principal(s), and the middle management team in leading learning in the school, is evaluated. The effectiveness of leadership in the school and the leadership of learning are considered.

### *Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation*

The WSE team reviews aspects of the school plan relevant to the evaluation.

The inspector(s) also review the self-evaluation processes currently taking place in the school in accordance with the relevant circulars and guidance issued by the department. In particular, the inspector(s) evaluate the level of engagement in these processes by the school's stakeholders and how improvement targets are reflected in teachers' practice and pupils' learning. The inspector(s) also evaluate how targets for improvement are set and monitored within the school and the overall effectiveness of the school's strategies for the assessment and monitoring of pupils' achievement.

### *Quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement*

The inspector considers teachers' preparation for the lessons taught, the effectiveness of the teaching approaches used, the classroom atmosphere and how pupils are managed and organised during learning activities. Assessment practices and the progress made by pupils are examined. Arrangements concerning record-keeping and reporting on pupil achievement are also considered. The team reviews the results of standardised tests and in-school evaluations.

The inspector evaluates the level to which pupils' knowledge, skills and attitudes are progressed, and the extent to which pupils are engaged appropriately in their learning. The inspector may also interact with pupils and review samples of their work.

The extent to which whole-school improvement targets are reflected in classroom practice and in pupils' learning is evaluated where appropriate.

### *Quality of support for pupils*

The manner in which the school manages and addresses the wellbeing of all of its pupils is evaluated. The support that the school provides for the inclusion of pupils with additional and special educational needs, for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those from minority groups is examined. Provision for both classroom inclusion and individual support is assessed. The inspector also considers the provision that the school is making for cooperation between school, home and the community.

## Overview of inspection activities: WSE

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, ten working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with the principal to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outline the format of the inspection</li> <li>schedule meetings</li> <li>make arrangements for completion of teacher and parent surveys</li> </ul>
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Contact Form</li> <li>School Information Form</li> </ul>
		Board of management confirms that it does /does not wish to have a 5th subject evaluated
		Arrangements for online surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>link for online parent surveys is distributed</li> <li>usernames and passwords for online teacher surveys are made available</li> </ul>
		Pre-evaluation meetings are held with teaching staff, the board of management and parents
Advance in-school day	Inspector communicates timetable of the evaluation in advance	
	Inspectorate activity  One in-school day	Meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>patron's representative</li> <li>board of management</li> <li>teachers</li> <li>principal and deputy principal(s)</li> <li>officers of parents' association if affiliated with NPC-P (if not affiliated with the NPC-P meet with the parent representatives on the board of management)</li> </ul>
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity  Typically three/ four in-school days	Administration of pupil surveys
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interactions with pupils
		Review of pupils' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>principal</li> <li>in-school management team</li> <li>special education team</li> <li>groups of staff, where necessary</li> <li>group(s) of pupils</li> </ul>
		Review of documents (See <a href="#">Appendix 3</a> for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 2)
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Collated survey responses shared with the school
		Post-evaluation meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school staff</li> <li>representative of board of management/parents/patron</li> </ul>
	School activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
		Report reviewed for factual verification
	Inspectorate activity	School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on <a href="http://www.gov.ie/school-reports">www.gov.ie/school-reports</a>

## 1. (e) Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs

### Introduction

During an evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs, the inspectors evaluate a school's provision for

- pupils on stage one of the Continuum of Support who receive support within mainstream classes
- pupils on stage two or stage three of the Continuum of Support who receive support within the mainstream classes and/or in support settings
- pupils in special classes
- pupils with additional educational needs that require support either in mainstream or support settings

This type of inspection aims to ensure that there is consistency and coherence between the evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs, and the special education teaching allocation model for schools which was introduced in September 2017. In this context, particular attention is paid to the school's use of the *Continuum of Support* and its adherence to the principles and actions outlined in Guidelines for Schools: Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Primary Schools (2017).

### Evaluation focus

During an evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs, the inspectors evaluate and report under the following areas of enquiry:

- The quality of learning
- The quality of teaching
- The effectiveness of the school's use of the resources it receives to improve learning experiences and outcomes

The inspectors' evaluation, combined with the school's own reporting of the learning experiences and outcomes, and the school's use of resources, and the structures and systems that it has in place to facilitate inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of pupils, form the evidence base of the evaluation.

## Overview of inspection activities: Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, ten working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>outline the format of the inspection</li><li>confirm school timetable information</li><li>make arrangements for completion of online surveys</li><li>make arrangements for meetings with pupils and parents</li></ul>
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>School Contact Form</li><li>School Information Form</li></ul>
		Arrangements for online surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>link for online parent surveys is distributed</li></ul>
		Arrangements for meetings with parents and pupils are put in place
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity  Typically up to three school days	Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each morning
		School provision plan reviewed
		Observation of teaching and learning in mainstream, support and, where relevant, special class settings
		Interaction with pupils
		Review of pupils' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>special education team</li><li>special needs assistants</li><li>group(s) of pupils</li><li>group of parents</li></ul>
		Review of assessment data and school documents relevant to pupils with additional and special educational needs (see <a href="#">Appendix 3</a> for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 1)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Collated survey responses returned to school
		Post-evaluation meeting with principal and key members of the special education teachers' team
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Review report for factual verification
		School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on <a href="http://www.gov.ie/school-reports">www.gov.ie/school-reports</a>

## 1. (f) Evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS Schools (DEIS)

### Introduction

A DEIS evaluation is a focused evaluation that is carried out in schools participating in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. The evaluation is focused on supporting school improvement and on quality-assuring the work undertaken in schools to deliver equality of educational opportunity for their pupils. A DEIS evaluation examines the school's action planning for improvement across the DEIS themes outlined in DEIS Plan 2017: Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools. These themes are attendance, retention, transitions, literacy, numeracy, partnership with parents and others, (typically other schools, educational providers and external agencies). The quality of support for pupil wellbeing and staff engagement in continuing professional development, as well as the quality of leadership of the DEIS action planning process, are also evaluated.

DEIS evaluations seek to identify and affirm good practice in the school while providing clear recommendations for further development and improvement.

### Evaluation focus

A DEIS evaluation focuses on how schools devise, implement and monitor action plans for improvement for the DEIS themes. It also enables inspectors to evaluate the effectiveness of schools' implementation of specific interventions and initiatives, and to provide up-to-date information to the education system.

During a DEIS inspection, inspectors evaluate and report on the school's action planning for improvement under the following headings:

- DEIS action planning for improvement
- Each of the DEIS themes – attendance, retention, transitions, literacy, numeracy, partnership with parents and others

Inspectors consider the following aspects of planning when evaluating the school's DEIS action planning for improvement – leadership of the action planning process, data analysis and target-setting that informs the selection of strategies and interventions, the alignment of the strategies and interventions to the targets, the implementation of strategies and interventions, and the monitoring and measurement of impact and progress made.

Inspectors review arrangements for, and approaches to, teaching and learning, and the quality of pupils' learning experiences and outcomes. The impact of action planning for improvement on arrangements for, and approaches to, teaching and learning and the quality of pupils' learning experiences and outcomes are key indicators when evaluating implementation and impact.

## Overview of inspection activities: Evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS schools (DEIS)

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, ten working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	<p>Inspector liaises with principal to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outline the format to the inspection</li> <li>confirm school timetable information</li> <li>make relevant arrangements</li> <li>make arrangements for completion of parent surveys</li> </ul>
	School activity	<p>Principal completes and returns to the inspector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Contact Form</li> <li>School Information Form</li> </ul> <p>Arrangements for online surveys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>link for online parent surveys is distributed</li> </ul>
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity  Typically three in-school days	Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		Meeting with school principal/senior management
		Examination of school's current DEIS action plan for improvement and other relevant documentation including, for example, literacy and numeracy plans (see <a href="#">Appendix 3</a> for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
		Administration of pupil surveys
		Meetings with
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teachers and other staff involved in DEIS-related activities and interventions</li> <li>group of parents</li> <li>group(s) of pupils</li> </ul>
		Observation of teaching and learning, particularly in relation to DEIS and School Completion Programme (SCP) initiatives at classroom level
		Observation of other DEIS-related activities and interventions
		Interaction with pupils
		Review of pupils' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Review of assessment data and other relevant documentation
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 2)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Collated survey responses shared with the school
		Post-evaluation meetings with school principal/senior management team and other relevant staff
		Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on <a href="http://www.gov.ie/school-reports">www.gov.ie/school-reports</a>

## 1. (g) Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres

This is a summary of the evaluation of schools attached to special care units and children detention centres. Further information on this type of inspection is available at [A Guide to Inspections of Schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres.](#)

### Introduction

This type of inspection is carried out in the schools attached to special care units and children detention centres. The Inspectorate has committed to a programme of annual inspections of these schools in order to quality assure the education provided for the pupils/students, and to provide advice and support to the teachers, principals and the schools' management bodies.

The inspection is unannounced. The school completes and submits a School Information Form at the beginning of the school year.

The evaluation of schools attached to special care units and children detention centres is designed to fit the particular circumstances pertaining to the provision of education within these schools.

### Evaluation focus

During an evaluation of schools attached to special care units and children detention centres, the inspectors evaluate teaching and learning under the following areas of enquiry:

- Teaching, learning and support for pupils/students
- School organisation and management
- School planning and school self-evaluation

#### *Teaching, learning and support for pupils/students*

The focus in this school inspection is placed on teaching and learning and on the progress made by pupils/students. The inspectors evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed as an indicator of the overall quality of teaching and learning in the school. They consider teachers' preparation for the lessons taught, the effectiveness of the teaching approaches utilised, the classroom atmosphere and how pupils/students are managed and organised during learning activities.

The inspectors evaluate the level to which pupils'/students' knowledge, skills and attitudes are progressed and the extent to which they are engaged appropriately in their learning. Assessment practices and the progress made by pupils/students are also examined. The inspector may also interact with pupils/students and review samples of their work. Information is sought about the support strategies in place in the school to meet the needs of pupils/students in relation to the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.



The inspectors consider the general level of support and guidance available to the pupils/students. They also consider the quality of the links between the schools attached to the special care units or children detention centres and those schools to/from which pupils/students transfer. The provision for the development of pupils'/students' life skills and the care structures in the school are also considered.

#### *School organisation and management*

The inspectors examine the functioning of the board of management, and the quality of the links it has established with the residential centre and agencies supporting the pupils/students and the physical resources and facilities available in the school to support teaching and learning.

The quality of in-school management is assessed. The inspectors look at communication structures in the school, the level of cooperation and collaboration among members of the school community, and the relationship between the school and the residential setting.

#### *School planning and school self-evaluation*

The quality of planning at whole-school and classroom levels, the strengths and challenges for the school, and the agenda for school development and improvement are examined. The school's procedures for monitoring pupil/student attendance, transitions, retention and progression are also reviewed.

Inspectors assess the effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation processes, and how well they are being used to improve learning experiences and outcomes for pupils/students, as well as teaching, leadership and management. Based on the development of the school in recent years and on how plans for improvement have been identified and implemented, the inspectors also consider the school's capacity to implement the recommendations arising from the inspection within an appropriate timeframe.

## Overview of inspection activities: Evaluation of schools attached to special care units and children detention centres

Before the inspection	Notification	No advance notification to school
	School activity	Complete and submit School Information Form (on an annual basis)
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity  Typically two/three school days	Inspector meets with principal to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outline the format of the inspection</li> <li>• make arrangements for teacher surveys</li> <li>• confirm School Contact Form details</li> </ul>
		Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		Meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• group(s) of pupils/students</li> <li>• management of the school</li> <li>• management of the residential centre</li> </ul>
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interaction with pupils/students
		Review of pupils'/students' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Review of documents (See list of documents for inspections of Children Detention Schools on page 5 of <u>A Guide to Inspections of Schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres</u> )
		Child Protection Checks completed (Level 2)
		Monitoring of the setting's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Collated survey responses shared with the school
		Post-evaluation meetings with principal and, where appropriate, staff members
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on <a href="http://www.gov.ie/school-reports">www.gov.ie/school-reports</a>

## 1. (h) Child protection and safeguarding inspection

This is a summary of the child protection and safeguarding inspection. Further information on this type of inspection is available at [Guide to Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections](#).

### Introduction

A child protection and safeguarding inspection focuses in an in-depth way on a school's compliance with key aspects of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools, (revised 2023) (hereafter referred to as the *revised 2023 procedures*). These inspections are carried out in accordance with Section 7(2)(b) and Section 13(3)(a)(i) of the Education Act 1998, Section 9.13.2 of the *revised 2023 procedures* and the Code of Practice for the Department of Education Inspectorate (2022).

Child protection and safeguarding inspections are undertaken to monitor the implementation of the *revised 2023 procedures* and to publish a written report in a sample of schools on an annual basis. A report is also provided to the Schools Division and to the Child Protection Oversight Group (CPOG) of the Department of Education on the extent to which the *revised 2023 procedures* are implemented in the sample of schools inspected. During these inspections, information is gathered to inform the development of child protection and safeguarding requirements by the Department of Education and by other government departments and agencies involved in child protection.





## Evaluation focus

The inspection framework for child protection and safeguarding inspections derives from the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, (revised 2023). Those procedures are designed to ensure that schools provide a safe and secure environment for all children and that, through appropriate curriculum provision, they provide for the incremental development of the life skills that will empower pupils to keep themselves safe.

*The inspection framework consists of ten overarching checks based on the (revised 2023) Procedures*

The main checks relate to requirements around the preparation of a Child Safeguarding Statement and communicating with members of the school community about child protection matters in general and about the Child Safeguarding Statement in particular. They also include checks on the provision of information and relevant training to school personnel and board of management members in respect of child protection; the board of management's awareness of its Garda vetting obligations; reporting about child protection to the board of management; and fulfilling certain reporting and record keeping obligations in relation to child protection matters. School/teachers' planning for the mandatory aspects of the curriculum that are designed to develop pupils' knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours through Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is also evaluated.

*The ten overarching checks are further divided into a number of sub-checks*

These sub-checks are the specific actions that schools are required to take in order to be fully compliant with the main check. The sub-checks for each main check enable the inspector to arrive at a judgement as to the extent to which the school is compliant with the main check.

## Overview of inspection activities: Child protection and safeguarding inspection

Before the inspection	Notification	Between twenty-four and forty-eight hours' notification to school (In some cases, child protection and safeguarding inspections may be conducted without notification.)
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outline the format of the inspection</li> <li>confirm the documentation required</li> </ul>
		Make arrangements for meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>chairperson of board of management</li> <li>group(s) of pupils</li> </ul>
		Make arrangements for parent surveys
		School Contact Form
		Inspector forwards the Vetting Self-Report Form to the school
During the inspection	School activity	Principal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>completes and returns the School Contact Form to the inspector</li> <li>distributes instructions outlining how parents can complete the online survey (Initial child protection and safeguarding inspection)</li> </ul>
		Ensures that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Vetting Self-Report Form is signed and completed</li> <li>all necessary documents are available for the inspection</li> <li>practical arrangements for the meetings are in place</li> </ul>
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector requests class lists and list of school personnel from the principal Review of documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>child protection records</li> <li>minutes of board of management meetings</li> <li>child safeguarding statement, including risk assessment</li> <li>school plan for SPHE and Stay Safe</li> <li>a sample of individual teachers' timetables</li> <li>a sample of monthly progress records</li> <li>Acceptable use policy</li> </ul>
		Meetings with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a sample of school personnel</li> <li>Designated Liaison Person</li> <li>Deputy Designated Liaison Person</li> <li>chairperson of board of management and, if available, other board representatives</li> <li>group(s) of pupils</li> <li>SPHE/RSE co-ordinator (where there is an SPHE/RSE co-ordinator in the school) and/or principal</li> <li>representatives of the parents association (in the Final child protection and safeguarding inspection)</li> </ul>
		Feedback to the principal and DLP (in cases where the DLP is not the principal) The chairperson of the board of management may also attend.
	School activity	Principal makes available any records, documents and arranges meetings
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Collated survey responses shared with the school
		Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit a school response
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on <a href="http://www.gov.ie/school-reports">www.gov.ie/school-reports</a>

## 1. (i) Supporting the safe provision of schooling

This is a summary of the supporting the safe provision of schooling evaluation. Further information on this type of inspection is available at [A Guide to Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling 2021](#).

### Introduction

In 2020, the Department of Education issued the [COVID Response Plan for the Safe and Sustainable Operation of Primary and Special Schools](#). This plan provides detailed guidance to schools as to how to minimise the risk of COVID-19 for staff, pupils, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of sustaining the operation of schools for the health and wellbeing of pupils and of society as a whole.

Safe provision of schooling evaluation visits are designed to support school leaders and boards of management as they implement the *COVID Response Plan for the Safe and Sustainable Operation of Primary and Special Schools*. These inspections also help the Department to understand the challenges of implementation, given the varied context of Irish schools. They provide an assurance that the *COVID Response Plan for the Safe and Sustainable Operation of Primary and Special Schools* is being implemented by school authorities.

A report is provided to the School Governance Section of the Department on the extent to which the *COVID Response Plan for the Safe and Sustainable Operation of Primary and Special Schools* is implemented in the sample of schools inspected. This fulfils the Inspectorate's commitments under [Circular 40/2020](#) and [Circular 41/2020](#) and the Memorandum of Understanding between the Health and Safety Authority and the Department of Education.

### Evaluation focus

During a safe provision of schooling evaluation visit, the inspector monitors and reports on how schools are implementing their COVID-19 response plans. The inspector enquires into ten specific areas of the Department's COVID-19 Response Plan for the Safe and Sustainable Operation of Post-Primary Schools. Each of these areas has a number of indicators that enables the inspector to determine if the school is fully implementing that aspect of the Response Plan. The checks are grouped into four main areas:

- Planning
- Appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR)
- Provision of staff training
- Implementation of control measures

## Overview of inspection activities: Supporting the safe provision of schooling

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, one working day in advance of the evaluation (In some instances, safe provision of schooling evaluation visits may be unannounced.)
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with the principal to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outline the format of the inspection</li> <li>• outline the documentation required and establish if it can be viewed electronically.</li> <li>• e-mail School Contact Form to the school</li> <li>• enquire as to the school's protocols for receiving visitors to the school</li> <li>• assure the principal that the inspector has complied fully with all Department guidelines for visiting schools</li> <li>• e-mail the self-declaration details to the principal</li> </ul>
	School activity	Principal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• completes School Contact Form and returns it to the inspector</li> <li>• prepares necessary documents and arranges required meetings</li> </ul>
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Documentation to be reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The documents outlined in <a href="#">Appendix 3</a> plus the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o COVID-19 Policy Statement</li> <li>o COVID-19 Risk Assessment</li> <li>o school's contact log<sup>8</sup></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		Meetings with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• principal</li> <li>• lead worker representative(s)</li> <li>• selection of staff members<sup>9</sup></li> </ul>
		Observation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• physical distancing arrangements in selection of classrooms, social areas etc.</li> <li>• COVID-19 signage</li> <li>• sanitising units</li> <li>• isolation area</li> <li>• PPE equipment</li> <li>• staff room</li> <li>• a selection of areas outside of classrooms</li> </ul>
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 1)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Complete inspector's contact tracing log
		Feedback on inspection findings to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• principal and lead worker representative(s)</li> </ul>
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on <a href="http://www.gov.ie/school-reports">www.gov.ie/school-reports</a>

<sup>8</sup> This is checked through the inspector completing the contact log on or prior to arrival at the school

<sup>9</sup> The inspector selects the staff members with whom (s)he will engage and the classrooms and other areas that (s)he will visit

## 1. (j) Evaluation of remote teaching and learning

This is a summary of the evaluation of remote teaching and learning.

Further information on this type of inspection is available at [Guide for the Evaluation of Remote Teaching and Learning](#).

### Introduction

Currently, inspectors evaluate and report on the provision of remote teaching and learning in three contexts:

- Where schools are providing remote teaching and learning for all students when students may not attend school due to health restrictions
- Where schools are providing remote teaching and learning for particular cohorts of students who are unable to attend school in person due to health restrictions
- Where schools are providing remote teaching and learning for other contingency reasons

An evaluation of remote teaching and learning is designed to support continuity in teaching and learning for pupils during periods of full or partial school closure. It can be used in both remote provision contexts and in contexts where provision for teaching and learning contains a blend of onsite and remote provision. The evaluation reports on how the curriculum is mediated in remote contexts. It also provides an opportunity to support schools in ensuring that the learning and wellbeing of all children and young people, especially those with additional and special educational needs and those at risk of educational disadvantage and/or early school leaving, are supported where the curriculum is mediated in a remote environment.

### Evaluation focus

During an evaluation of remote teaching and learning, inspectors evaluate and report on the effectiveness of the school's provision for remote teaching and learning under the four domains of learner outcomes, learner experiences, teachers' individual practice and teachers' collective practice.

In particular, inspectors look at the extent to which pupils enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn and are expected to achieve as learners. They also review the appropriateness of the learning activities provided and pupils' engagement with these activities. Inspectors review the appropriateness of the teaching approaches used and the extent to which teachers devise learning opportunities beyond and across the curriculum. Inspectors also review the leadership of teaching and learning in the remote context.

During the evaluation, inspectors observe a sample of remote teaching, learning and assessment activities and resources. They engage in professional dialogue with school leaders and teachers regarding the school's provision for remote teaching and learning. They also review some relevant documents. Good practice is identified and affirmed.

## Overview of inspection activities: Evaluation of remote teaching and learning

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, five working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with the principal to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outline the format of the inspection</li> </ul>
		Requests required documentation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documents outlined in <a href="#">Appendix 3</a> plus the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the school's plan to support remote teaching and learning (if available)</li> <li>arrangements/timetable for remote teaching and learning</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		Makes arrangements for completion of teacher, pupil and parent surveys
		Makes arrangements for pupil meetings
	School activity	Complete School Contact Form and return to inspector
		Make arrangements for online surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>links for online parent and pupil surveys are distributed</li> <li>usernames and passwords for online teacher surveys are made available</li> </ul>
		Make the necessary practical arrangements for the inspection
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Review of required documentation and other resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school's plan to support remote teaching and learning (if available)</li> <li>arrangements/timetable for remote teaching and learning</li> <li>survey data</li> <li>a range of teaching, learning and assessment resources</li> <li>child safeguarding statement</li> <li>anti-bullying policy</li> </ul>
		Meetings with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>principal / senior management team</li> <li>group of teachers</li> <li>individual teachers</li> <li>group(s) of pupils</li> <li>group of parents</li> </ul>
		Observation of teaching and learning and assessment activities
		Completion of Child Protection Check (Level 1 modified)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Collated survey responses returned to school
		Post-evaluation meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>oral feedback to principal</li> </ul>
		Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on <a href="http://www.gov.ie/school-reports">www.gov.ie/school-reports</a>

## 1. (k) Follow-through inspection

### Introduction

A follow-through inspection evaluates the progress that school leadership, in collaboration with the school community, has made on implementing some or all of the main recommendations made in an earlier inspection. This is facilitated through a consultative, co-professional engagement between the inspector and relevant members of the school community. Any inspection type that results in a written or published report is subject to a follow-through inspection. One or more follow-through inspections may be carried out following the publication or issuing of an inspection report.

The findings from a follow-through inspection add to the school's own information as it engages in self-evaluation and school improvement. The findings of a follow-through inspection may be shared and discussed with relevant sections of the Department, such as the Special Education Section or the School Governance Section.

### Evaluation focus

A follow-through inspection focuses on the level of progress made by a school in implementing some or all of the main recommendations for improvement outlined in a previous inspection report.

During the inspection, the inspector discusses the improvements with the school's leadership team, individual teachers, groups of teachers and others, such as parents and pupils, where appropriate. The inspector also advises school leaders and others on strategies and actions to enable them to fully address recommendations.

At the conclusion of a follow-through inspection, the inspector discusses the overall findings with the principal and/or deputy principal, and, where appropriate, with relevant teachers, representatives of the board of management and parents. The inspector acknowledges the progress made and provides advice on further actions required to ensure the full implementation of each recommendation.

## Overview of inspection activities: Follow-through inspection

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, two working days in advance of the evaluation (The Inspectorate may also conduct unannounced follow-through inspections.)
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>outline the format of the inspection</li> <li>make arrangements for any meeting which may be required and for any documentation which the inspector may wish to view</li> <li>confirm School Contact Form details</li> </ul>
	School activity	Principal prepares any documents and arranges meetings that may be required
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity Typically one school day	Activities that <i>may</i> take place in the course of a follow-through inspection include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meetings with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>principal and/or senior management team</li> <li>members of the in-school management team</li> <li>other relevant teachers/members of staff</li> </ul> </li> <li>observation of teaching and learning and other relevant activities</li> <li>interactions with pupils, including group meetings with cohorts of pupils</li> <li>review of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school documentation and records (see <a href="#">Appendix 3</a> for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)</li> <li>pupils' work</li> <li>action plans and progress reports related to school improvement</li> <li>resources and facilities</li> </ul> </li> <li>communication with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>representatives of the board of management</li> <li>parents</li> </ul> </li> <li>administration of parent, teacher and/or pupil surveys</li> </ul>
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 1)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Discussion of inspection findings with principal, senior management, relevant teachers and, where appropriate, representatives of board of management and parents
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Collated survey responses shared with the school (if administered)
		Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on <a href="http://www.gov.ie/school-reports">www.gov.ie/school-reports</a> Liaison with other sections of the Department, such as special education or school governance, as relevant.

## Appendix 2 - School Information Form and School Contact Form

In order to prepare for an evaluation, the Inspectorate will need to collect information about schools. This information will help inspectors to understand the context of your school better, and may also help you in preparing for the evaluation. The information is collected through a School Information Form. The form that is used for whole-school evaluations and curriculum evaluations seeks general information about the school and includes specific sections that are applicable to more focused evaluations. A separate School Information Form is provided for Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Additional and Special Educational Needs and Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Schools.

The School Information Forms and School Contact Forms are available here, together with instructions on how to complete the forms.

All data gathered as part of an evaluation is processed in accordance with the Department of Education's Data Privacy Notice. Further detail on how the Department of Education processes personal data is available here.

Schools may access these forms at any stage and complete them at a time that is convenient for them. Alternatively, if your school is selected for an evaluation, the reporting inspector will email the School Information Form and School Contact Form to you. You will be asked to complete these forms and return them to the reporting inspector prior to the evaluation.

## Appendix 3 – Review of documents

Inspectors will request to see and examine documents relevant to the focus of the particular evaluation. Many of these are prepared by schools as part of their normal planning and work and should be readily available in the school. The table below outlines the documentation *typically* requested in the course of each particular inspection type. An inspector may also request additional documents or school records relating to specific issues that might arise in the course of the evaluation and/or documents specific to the inspection type.

Inspection type	Acronym
Incidental inspection	II
Curriculum evaluation	CE
Whole-school evaluation - management, leadership and learning	WSE-MLL
Whole school evaluation	WSE
Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs	SEN
Evaluation of action planning for Improvement in DEIS schools	DEIS
Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres	SCU & CDC
Child protection and safeguarding inspection	CPSI
Supporting the safe provision of schooling	SSPS
Evaluation of remote teaching and learning	ERTAL



Document	II	CE	WSE- MLL	WSE	SEN	DEIS	SCU & CDC	CPSI	SSPS	ERTAL
School register (or electronic version)			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Enrolment and admissions policy			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
School attendance policy			✓	✓		✓	✓			
Anti-bullying policy (including evidence of the principal's report to the board of management on incidents of bullying and evidence of annual review of policy)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Code of behaviour			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Child safeguarding statement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Individual teacher timetables (class/ learning setting and number of pupils) including Learning Support/Resource teacher timetable and caseload	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Policy relating to Special Needs Assistants (SNA)			✓	✓	✓					
Special education needs policy		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Curriculum plans for subject(s)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Individual teachers' planning and preparation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Teachers' monthly progress records (cuntais mhíosúla)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Assessment policy		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Pupil records including student support plans (SSP)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Results of standardised tests administered and diagnostic tests in the case of pupils in receipt of additional support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
The school plan			✓	✓		✓				
School self-evaluation reports and school improvement plans OR DEIS Action plan for school improvement (as relevant)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Minutes of three most recent staff meetings			✓	✓			✓			
Minutes of the board of management	✓	✓	✓ <sup>10</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
School planning documents relating to a school's provision for SPHE, including RSE			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Staff deployment policy (if available)			✓	✓	✓	✓				
Acceptable use policy							✓	✓		✓

<sup>10</sup> In the case of WSE-MLL and WSE, the minutes of the five most recent minutes of the board of management meetings will be reviewed.

## Appendix 4 - Child protection checks

Child protection checks undertaken during inspections in primary schools	
Level one	Checks undertaken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incidental inspection</li> <li>• Curriculum evaluation</li> <li>• Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs</li> <li>• Supporting the safe provision of schooling</li> <li>• Follow-through inspection</li> <li>• Evaluation of remote teaching and learning</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li> <li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li> <li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li> </ol>
Level two	Checks undertaken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-school evaluation</li> <li>• Whole-school evaluation - management, leadership and learning</li> <li>• Evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS Schools</li> <li>• Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li> <li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li> <li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li> <li>4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023).</li> <li>5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools (revised 2023).</li> <li>6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, (revised 2023)</li> <li>7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE).</li> <li>8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.</li> </ol>

## Appendix 5 – Anti-bullying monitoring

Anti-bullying monitoring undertaken during inspections in primary schools	
Level one	Checks undertaken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incidental inspection</li> <li>• Curriculum evaluation</li> <li>• Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs</li> <li>• Supporting the safe provision of schooling</li> <li>• Follow-through inspection</li> <li>• Evaluation of remote teaching and learning</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> (2013) or <i>Bí Cineálta</i> (2024) and this policy is reviewed annually.</li> <li>2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils/students.</li> </ol>
Level two	Checks undertaken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-school evaluation</li> <li>• Whole-school evaluation-management, leadership and learning</li> <li>• Evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS Schools</li> <li>• Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools</i> (2013) or <i>Bí Cineálta</i> (2024) and this policy is reviewed annually.</li> <li>2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils/students.</li> <li>3. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment in line with their current policy.</li> <li>4. All teachers visited report that they have read the school's current policy on anti-bullying and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and tackling bullying.</li> </ol>

