# Inspectorate Supporting Schools and the Department January-March 2021

Briefing for Education Partners

19 January 2021

# Overview

The aims of the presentation are to:

- ✓ Provide partner organisations with information on the range of ways in which inspectors are engaging with schools in Quarter 1, 2021
- ✓ Provide opportunity for questions and clarifications
- ✓ Equip partner organisations to address any queries that members of partner organisations may have
- ✓ Provide opportunity for Inspectorate to listen to views of partners

# Context

We have to bear in mind the context in which we are all working:

- ✓ School leaders, teachers, other school personnel, boards and wider school communities have faced enormous challenges in periods of school closure and school opening
- ✓ School leaders have faced and continue to face particular challenges
- ✓ These include the incidence of Covid in schools, consequent staff absences, lack of substitution and the challenges for teachers working at home
- ✓ School closures have impacted negatively on learners, and on some more than others
- ✓ All of us want to minimise adverse impact on students and maximise their opportunities for learning, personal growth and well-being
- ✓ Department's Inspectorate wants to support schools, encourage safe school operation, and help to ensure best outcomes for young people

# Circulars 40/2020 and 41/2020
# Inspection arrangements 2020/21 year

Working consistently within health advice….

- Normal programme of whole-school evaluations and other inspections set aside
- Advisory work
  - ✓ *Through telephone calls/online meetings/visits where possible*
- Research work
  - ✓ *Identifying areas of good practice/challenges identified in schools, especially in context of school reopening; informing guidance and policy*
- Implementation of safe return to schooling –
  - ✓ *Collaboration with Health & Safety Authority – SSPS visits*
- Inspection
  - ✓ *Completion of inspections in train in March 2020*
  - ✓ *Urgent inspections, e.g. child protection / urgent follow-through inspections*
  - ✓ *Gradual re-establishment of inspection programme in 2021*

# Advisory work

Work completed

- ✓ Advisory phone calls, online meetings and visits completed on Continuity & Resumption of Schooling in 2020:
  - ✓ *4661 engagements at primary level*
  - ✓ *1293 engagements at post-primary schools*
- ✓ Captured important information on successes and challenges of remote learning in Spring 2020 and in relation to return to schooling/sustaining schooling in Autumn
- ✓ Informed advice and guidance published by the Department throughout 2020
- ✓ Contacted individual schools where concerns/queries raised about online provision

# Advisory work, Q1 2021

Work planned

- ✓ A dedicated advice service for queries on teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum implementation
- ✓ Department of Education COVID Helpline 057-9324461 Mon - Fri from 9am to 5.30pm or by email to inspectorateadvisory@education.gov.ie
- ✓ In addition, we will continue to contact schools offering advisory service/collecting information about their experiences
- ✓ Complements work of other advisory services, such as PDST, JCT, NEPS, NCSE, etc.

# Supporting HSE School Support Teams

- ✓ Evidence emerging from contact with schools showed need for additional support for schools and EY settings when Covid cases arose
- ✓ Collaborated with HSE Public Health
- ✓ Approx. 55 inspectors are assigned for 50% of their time to the HSE School Support Service – has operated since early November, through Christmas/New Year period and will continue at least to Easter 2021
- ✓ Deployed in some of the HSE areas – as required by HSE
- ✓ Inspectorate contribution will be increased temporarily when schools reopen
- ✓ Weekly Inspectorate-HSE meetings to coordinate

# Research and evaluation

Aim:

- To collect information about how well the system is adapting to the challenges that it faces
- To inform the guidance produced by the Department and the advice offered to school leaders and teachers
- To impact on the supports that need to be provided to schools
- To help to ensure best opportunities for learners

# Research and evaluation to date

- ✓ Surveys of principals, teachers, students and parents in Autumn 2020
- ✓ Focus groups of students in Autumn 2020

# Research and evaluation to date- findings of surveys, Sept-Dec 2020

- ✓ Parents, principals and teachers were overwhelmingly in agreement that the reopening of schools had been successful and that pupils and students had settled well into school.
- ✓ Principals and teachers reported that their schools were running effectively and that they were coping well in their respective roles
- ✓ Principals experienced difficulties accessing substitute cover for absent teachers.
- ✓ Schools have gone to great lengths to put additional supports in place for the wellbeing of learners and high levels of satisfaction among teachers with parents about the wellbeing supports that were in place
- ✓ While the majority of principals and teachers indicated that they felt safe in school, some teachers who responded expressed disagreement and uncertainty about feeling safe in their schools.

# Research and evaluation to date- findings of surveys, Sept-Dec 2020

- ✓ Teachers were happy with how their work was going in classrooms and lessons.
- ✓ Teachers and parents were satisfied that pupils/students were engaging well in lessons and that learning was going well. Pupils and students were enjoying their learning experiences and were satisfied with how their learning was going.
- ✓ The surveys indicated very positive findings with regard to the availability and use of digital technologies in schools
- ✓ Almost all post-primary schools and most primary schools agreed that they had arrangements in place to ensure that pupils and students could continue their learning in the event of a partial or full school closure
- ✓ All primary principals and almost all post-primary principals with very high risk students agreed that they had measures in place to ensure that these students could continue their learning.

# Research and evaluation

Published

- ✓ Return to School Autumn 2020: Report on analysis of data from principals Phase One – September 2020

Forthcoming

- ✓ Return to School Autumn 2020: Report on focus groups with students Phase One- October 2020
- ✓ Return to School Autumn 2020: Report on Inspectorate Surveys Phase One- October 2020

- ✓ Resumption of Schooling Autumn 2020: Report on analysis of data from principals Phase Two – October and November 2020
- ✓ Return to School Autumn 2020: Report on focus groups with students Phase Two- November 2020
- ✓ Return to School Autumn 2020: Report on Inspectorate Surveys Phase 2- December 2020

# Research and evaluation, Q1 2021

Work underway in Q1, 2021

- ✓ Surveys of principals – first of 2021 last week
- ✓ Principals reported:
  - *Almost all schools and centres for education have a plan in place to support remote teaching and learning*
  - *Most primary, special schools and Youthreach centres are in daily or almost daily contact with learners*
  - *Students have been provided with a timetable for remote teaching and learning in all post-primary schools and all Youthreach centres.*
  - *Special education teachers are in daily or almost daily contact with the learners on their caseloads in most schools*
  - *Arrangements in place to provide feedback  in most schools*
  - *Most schools  have communicated plans for remote teaching & learning to parents*
- ✓ Survey of parents in collaboration with the NPC-P planned
- ✓ Student focus groups planned

# Research and evaluation, Q1 2021

Learning in online/remote provision

- Students and schools working in blended environment in 2021
- We want to learn more about the quality of remote provision
- Identifying & affirming good practice; identifying potential improvements
- Want to work with schools in collaborative research project on quality of online provision – define what good practice should look like
- Will be inviting small number of schools to participate/assist us in development pilot in January-February 2021
- Outcomes/reports confidential to schools and Inspectorate in pilot project stage
- Would welcome suggestions of schools that might like to be involved

# Inspection

As signalled in Circulars 40/2020 and 41/2020, when schools were/are open:

- Where possible, we have completed inspections that had commenced in March 2020 but were unfinished when first lockdown commenced; reports have been processed/issued
- Small number of Follow-Through Inspections being undertaken
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspections are continuing
- Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling visits (SSPS) took place in Term 1 and will recommence when schools reopen
  - ✓ *High standards of compliance reported last term to HSA*

# Safe Provision of Schooling visits (SSPS)

| SSPS visits to schools<br>1st September – 21st December 2020 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Schools** | **Fully compliant** | **Not fully compliant** |
| **Primary** | **416** | **404** (97%) | **12** (3%) |
| **Post-primary** | **303** | **294** (97%) | **9** (3%) |
| **Completed SSPS visits** | **719** | **698** | **21** |

# Other activities

Other activities that will impact on schools will include:

- Working with Schools Division on guidance to schools
- Working with the Curriculum & Assessment Policy Unit and the State Examinations Commission on June examinations
- Recommencing consultation/development work with partners on school self-evaluation as soon as feasible
- Communications to schools:
  - ✓ *Circular letter* — *Will issue week beginning 18 January*
  - ✓ *SSE website* — *www.schoolself-evaluation.ie*
  - ✓ *Twitter* — *@Education_Ire*
  - ✓ *Easinet* — *www.easinet.ie*

# Go raibh míle maith agaibh