



A Guide to  
**Whole-School Evaluation  
in Primary Schools**

Revised June 2010



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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

INSPECTORATE

# A Guide to Whole-School Evaluation in Primary Schools

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Enhancing quality in primary schools

Whole-school evaluation (WSE) is a process of external evaluation of the work of a school carried out by the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills (DES). The process is designed to evaluate key aspects of the work of the school and to promote school improvement. WSE is carried out in accordance with section 7(2)(b) and section 13(3)(a)(i) of the Education Act 1998. (See Appendix 1). The act places an obligation on the board and staff of a school to accord inspectors every reasonable facility and co-operation in the performance of their duties.

## 1.2 Evaluation teams

A regional assistant chief inspector nominates the reporting inspector and the evaluation team for each whole-school evaluation. The number of inspectors who work on the evaluation team depends on the size of the school. The reporting inspector has overall responsibility for the organisation and coordination of the WSE.

## 1.3 First steps: pre-evaluation meetings

Whole-school evaluation 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. At various stages during the WSE process, members of the school community have opportunities to interact with the evaluation team to discuss their work, their role and their vision for the school. These interactions provide the evaluation team with insights into the structure and dynamics of the school.

## 1.4 In-school evaluation

During the whole-school evaluation, management and planning, teaching and learning and supports for pupils are evaluated. This enables the evaluation team to identify and affirm the strengths within the school and to make clear recommendations on areas for development and improvement.

## 1.5 Post-evaluation meetings

Following the in-school evaluation phase of the WSE, the evaluation team facilitates a meeting with members of the teaching staff to discuss the findings and recommendations of the evaluation. The reporting inspector also convenes a meeting to which board members, the patron's representative and a representative (normally the chairperson) of the parents' association, if affiliated to the National Parents Council Primary (NPC), are invited. During these meetings the work of the school is discussed and the findings of the evaluation are outlined. Strengths and areas for further development are presented.

## 1.6 The whole-school evaluation report

The WSE report is concerned with the work of the school as a whole. It affirms positive aspects of the school's work and suggests areas for development. The WSE report provides an external view on the work of the school and it is intended that the report's findings and recommendations will facilitate development and improvement in the work of the school and school self-evaluation. The report is issued to the school and is published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills.

## 1.7 School self-evaluation

Schools contribute significantly to improving quality through school self-evaluation. To facilitate self-evaluation as a central component of the continuous planning process the Inspectorate published *Looking at our School – An Aid to Self-Evaluation in Primary Schools* (2003). This publication provides schools with a framework for supporting an internal review of school policies and procedures and for promoting school effectiveness and improvement in the broad areas of management, planning, learning and teaching and supports for pupils. This framework is also used by the Inspectorate in conducting whole-school evaluations and as a basis for other external evaluations of the work of schools and centres for education. (See Appendix 2).

## 1.8 The role of the Inspectorate

Section 13 of the Education Act defines the functions of the Inspectorate and clarifies the roles of members of the Inspectorate in relation to evaluation. (See Appendix 1). The Inspectorate is committed to evaluating schools and teachers in a spirit of professional collaboration and in accordance with the highest professional standards. The *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting for the Inspectorate* (2002) sets out general principles and guidelines under which members of the Inspectorate engage in the process of evaluation and reporting. The general principles of the code are that inspectors will be consistent, fair and courteous, and will work with members of the school community in a climate of mutual respect. Inspectors are also committed to basing their judgements on first-hand evidence and to applying evaluation criteria objectively and reliably.

## 1.9 Reviewing evaluations and inspection reports

In accordance with section 13(9) of the Education Act 1998, the Inspectorate has published a *Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers* (2006). Under the review procedure, a teacher or the board of a school may request the Chief Inspector to review any inspection carried out by an inspector that affects the teacher or the school. The review procedure applies to all inspections affecting schools or teachers, including all reports arising from such evaluations, other than those required under existing procedures for teachers experiencing professional difficulties.

### **1.10 The purpose of this guide**

The procedures and criteria contained in *A Guide to Whole-School Evaluation in Primary Schools* have been determined by the Minister for Education and Skills following consultation with patrons, school management organisations, recognised trade unions and staff associations representing teachers and such other persons as the Minister considered appropriate as required by section 13(8) of the Education Act, 1998.

The guide sets out the practices and procedures involved in all aspects of the WSE process. It clarifies the process for all participants and places whole-school evaluations within a legislative and regulatory framework.

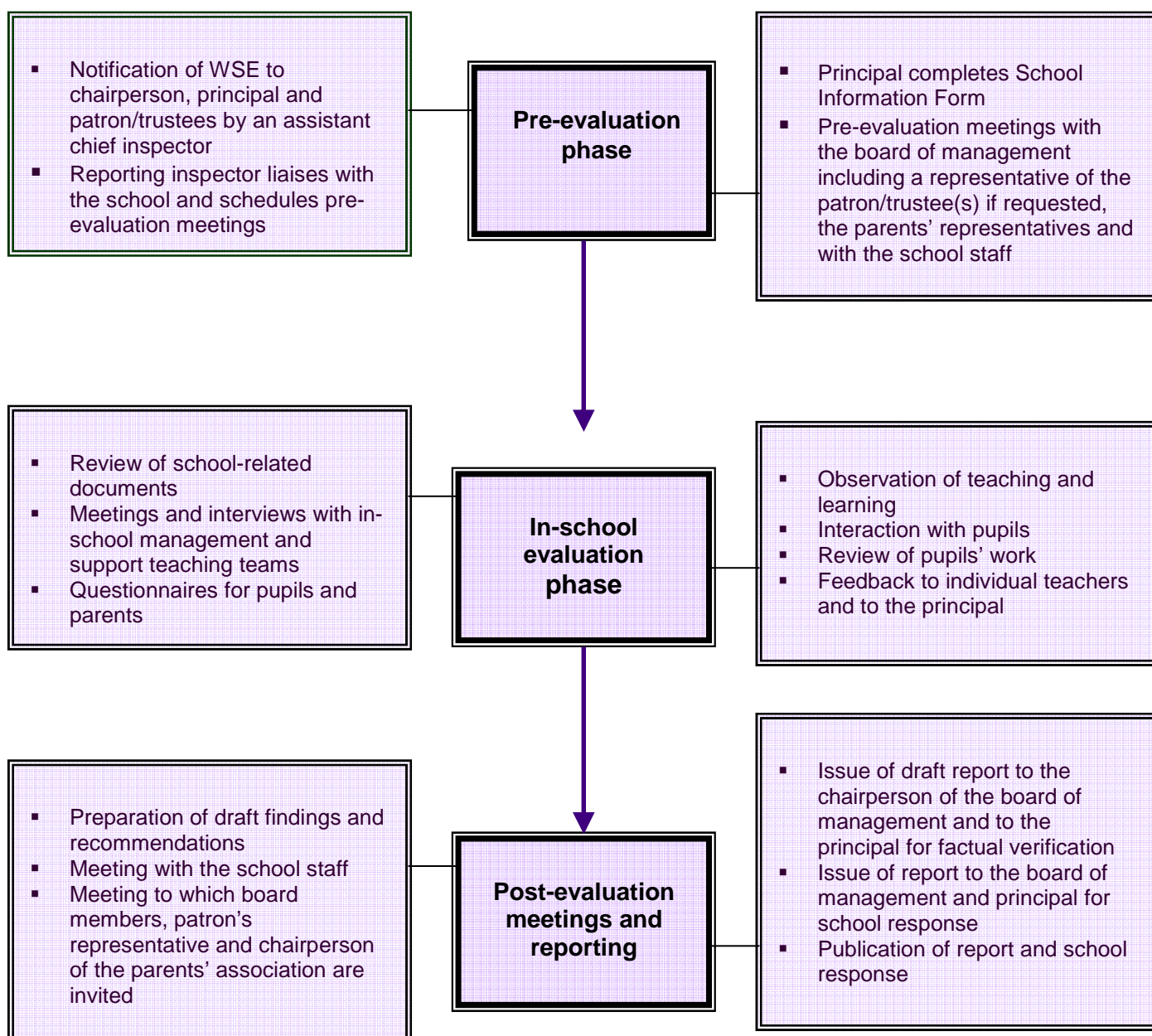
The contents of *A Guide to Whole-School Evaluation in Primary Schools* will be subject to review from time to time in the light of experience and in consultation with the education partners.

## 2 The WSE procedures and processes

The WSE process is divided into three phases:

- Phase 1 – the pre-evaluation phase
- Phase 2 – the in-school evaluation phase
- Phase 3 – the post-evaluation phase.

An outline description of the principal activities during each phase is presented in the following diagram:



## 2.1 Pre-evaluation phase

### Notification of the WSE to the school community

An assistant chief inspector writes to the school, informing the chairperson of the board of management and the principal that a whole-school evaluation will be conducted. Written notifications issue to schools five weeks (excluding school holidays) in advance of the commencement of the in-school evaluation phase.

A copy of the notification letter is issued to the patron or trustees of the school, normally at the school address. A representative of the patron or trustees may attend the pre-evaluation and post-evaluation meetings with the board. If the patron of the school is a vocational education committee, the chief executive officer of the VEC may attend the meetings.

Whole-school evaluations do not take place during the first two weeks of the school year, the week preceding or succeeding the Christmas holidays or the last two weeks in the school year. However, it is recognised that in some instances pre-evaluation and post-evaluation meetings in relation to WSE may take place during these periods to facilitate the operation of the overall inspection programme or when this is necessary to complete the WSE process in a school during a particular school year.

### Contact with the school principal

Normally within five school days of the date of issue of the notification letter, the reporting inspector contacts the principal to outline the format of the evaluation, to arrange meetings and inspection visits, and to clarify any specific issues.

## 2.2 Request for school documents

### School information form

The school principal is requested to complete a school information form (*foirm eolais*). This form is sent by the reporting inspector to the school principal by e-mail shortly after the letter of notification is sent to the school. The form is designed to collect background information regarding school context, enrolment, attendance patterns, the allocation of teaching staff and the process of school planning and self-evaluation in the school.

In order to avoid unnecessary duplication of paperwork, information already available in the school, such as class lists and staff details, may be sent as separate attachments to the reporting inspector by e-mail along with the completed form; there is no need to enter the information on the form. The school principal is requested to ensure that the form and related documents are returned to the reporting inspector within ten school days of the date of issue of the school information form.

Current school information forms for WSE can be downloaded from the website of the Department of Education and Skills ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)).

### Other information and documentation

In addition, the reporting inspector requests a limited number of background documents from the principal in advance of the evaluation. These documents, which typically include the documents listed below, should be provided to the inspector within ten school days of the date of issue of the school information form.

#### Copies of documents to be enclosed with school information form

- The school's enrolment and admissions policy
- The school's attendance strategy
- The school's procedures for reporting and managing child protection concerns

During the in-school evaluation phase the reporting inspector will examine a selection of other school documents that are pertinent and relevant to the WSE process. This helps to inform the evaluation team regarding the context of the school and to identify areas for discussion during the in-school evaluation stage. The documents requested during this phase may include the following:

#### Documents reviewed during the in-school evaluation phase

- The minutes of the three most recent meetings of the board of management
- A selection of documents from the school plan including curriculum policy documents for the subjects being evaluated
- Relevant documents arising from the school's self-evaluation process which could include the school's action plan or statement of current school improvement strategies
- The teachers' monthly progress records (cuntais mhíosúla) for the current school term and the two previous school terms
- The school's policy and practice in relation to the assessment of pupils including the outcomes of standardised tests used in the school
- Documentation relating to the school's support for pupils
- Any documents or school records relating to specific issues that arise in the course of the evaluation.

### Analysing assessment data

The inspectors may discuss the results of standardised tests and other assessment information with the school management and staff during the course of the evaluation. However, this statistical information is not presented in the WSE report. The analysis of these results will help to give a further insight into the school context and into achievement throughout curricular areas.

### 2.3 Initial meetings

The reporting inspector discusses arrangements for the pre-evaluation meetings with the school principal. The reporting inspector convenes three initial meetings:

- meeting 1: with the board of management and patron's representative
- meeting 2: with representatives of the parents' association affiliated to the National Parents Council Primary (NPC—P); alternatively, if the association is not affiliated to the NPC—P a meeting is held with the parent representatives on the board of management
- meeting 3: with the teaching staff.

These meetings will normally be convened on the same day. The reporting inspector or another inspector on the inspection team will chair the meetings. All meetings are conducted in line with the *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting for the Inspectorate* (2002) and in a manner that will be transparent and supportive of the school community. In all cases the inspector or inspectors will wish to gather information and discuss issues relevant to the context of the whole school.

#### Initial meeting with the board of management and patron's representative

The meeting with the board of management and patron's representative outlines the whole-school evaluation process, and the procedures and operation of the board are discussed. Notes taken at these meetings form part of the record of evidence for the WSE and inform the WSE report. The board of management may also use the meeting to raise and discuss issues relating to the WSE.

During the inspection meeting with the board of management, the reporting inspector also seeks confirmation that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools* (DES, September 2001) in line with Department Primary Circular 0061/2006. The board is also asked to confirm that these child protection procedures have been brought to the attention of management, school staff and parents; that a copy of the procedures has been provided to all staff (including new staff); and that the board of management has ensured that all staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed. The reporting inspector will also seek confirmation that a designated liaison person (DLP) and a deputy DLP have been appointed in line with the requirements of the guidelines.

### **Agenda for initial meeting with the board of management and patron**

1. Welcome
2. Discussion of the following whole-school matters:
  - the context of the school
  - the strengths and areas for school development identified by the board
  - the involvement of the board in supporting the work of the school including the board's involvement in and views regarding
    - management of the school
    - school planning and self-evaluation
    - teaching, learning and pupil achievement
    - support for pupils
  - the implementation of child protection procedures in the school
3. Matters agreed for discussion
4. Close

### **Meeting with parents**

Where a parents' association, affiliated to the National Parents Council Primary, has been formed, the association is invited to nominate three representatives to meet with the WSE evaluation team. The purpose of the meeting is to obtain the views of parents on matters of a whole-school nature. At the meeting, issues relating to the WSE framework, and other matters agreed in advance, are included on the agenda for discussion. The work of individual teachers is not discussed at this meeting. Where the school does not have a parents' association or the association is not affiliated to the National Parents Council Primary, the inspectors will convene a meeting with the parents' representatives on the board of management.

A record of this meeting is made available to the board of management and any issues raised by the officers that are pertinent to the day-to-day running of the school will be referred to the principal or board of management for comment.

### **Agenda for meeting with the parents' association**

1. Welcome
2. Discussion of the following whole-school matters:
  - the work of the parents' association
  - parents' perspective on the work of the school
  - parents' involvement in the life of the school
3. Matters agreed for discussion
4. Close

### **Initial meeting with the teaching staff**

This meeting provides an opportunity for all members of the teaching staff to meet with the inspector or inspectors and to discuss the whole-school evaluation process. Members of the teaching staff have the opportunity to discuss any issues that refer particularly to the WSE process in the context of both the classroom and the whole-school. They will also have the opportunity to outline and discuss the context of the school within the wider community.

## **2.4 Evaluation teams**

A regional assistant chief inspector nominates the reporting inspector for each whole-school evaluation. For large primary schools an evaluation team comprising the reporting inspector and supporting inspector (or inspectors) is nominated to undertake an evaluation. The number of inspectors who work on the evaluation team depends on the size of the school.

The reporting inspector has overall responsibility for the WSE including the allocation of team roles, the choice of inspection approach, the arrangement of meetings and the compilation of the final report.

## 3 In-school evaluation

### 3.1 The evaluation phase

Typically, the in-school evaluation stage of the WSE will not exceed five school days. The reporting inspector prepares an overall schedule for the evaluation. Members of the evaluation team visit the school on the days indicated to the principal by the reporting inspector when he/she contacts the principal following the issue of the letter of notification to the school. While the evaluation team makes every effort to work within the agreed timetable for the WSE, unforeseen events may extend or alter this period somewhat. Any changes will be discussed with the school principal in advance, where possible.

During a whole-school evaluation the work of the teaching staff is evaluated. This involves inspection visits to all or a sample of teachers. Staff members involved in programmes for the support of pupils, for example those pupils with special educational needs or those from disadvantaged or minority groups, are also involved in the evaluation.

### 3.2 The evaluation framework

The WSE team evaluates and reports on the operation of the school under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

- the quality of school management
- the quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
- the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
- the quality of support for pupils

These areas of enquiry reflect the aspects outlined in *Looking at our School – An Aid to Self-Evaluation in Primary Schools* (pages xii – xv). The evaluation framework is further outlined in Appendix 2.

### 3.3 Evaluation activities

WSE involves a wide range of evaluation methodologies including the following:

#### A review of school documentation

The WSE team examines relevant school-related documents including those associated with the school planning and self-evaluation process, assessment records, curriculum plans and documents associated with particular curricular programmes.

#### Meetings and interviews

During the in-school evaluation phase, meetings and interviews may be held with members of the in-school management team and with the support teachers for pupils with additional learning needs. These interviews provide information and evidence to inform the WSE.

### **The observation of teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning in a range of curriculum areas and subjects are observed throughout the school. This includes the work of temporary staff and support teachers that may be based in other schools. It may also include the work of external personnel who are employed by the board of management to provide additional tuition to pupils during school time.

Generally, the inspectors examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in four subjects, including English, Gaeilge, 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 whole-school evaluations that focus on a particular theme or themes. Where necessary the Inspectorate may also conduct a WSE involving all curricular areas and subjects.

When evaluating teaching and learning, the WSE team looks at methodologies, classroom management, classroom atmosphere, learning and pupils' achievement. The team also evaluates evidence of planning for teaching and learning. Feedback is provided to individual teachers and to the principal teacher during the evaluation.

### **Interaction with pupils**

The inspectors interact with pupils in classrooms and learning areas. This interaction involves engagement with the class as a whole and may involve targeted or open questioning, the provision of appropriate tasks or the evaluation of skills. In classes where pupils are engaged in practical tasks or in group work, the inspector may also engage with groups or individuals as the lesson progresses. These interactions provide the inspector with first-hand insight into the level of pupils' learning and achievement and an understanding of the context of the individual class.

### **Reviewing pupils' work**

The inspectors will review samples of pupils' work in notebooks, copybooks, folders, workbooks, portfolios, and displays of project work. These samples of pupils' work give the inspector an insight into the teaching processes in the classroom, the pattern and quality of homework, and of the quality of pupils' learning.

### **Views of pupils and parents**

Inspectors may collect information on the views of pupils and parents on the work of the school. For example, information may be obtained from a focussed discussion with the committee of the students' council (where this exists in the school) or through a discussion with a group of pupils selected by the inspectors. A teacher (or other adult) proposed by the school is invited to be present when the inspector meets the students' council or the focus group of pupils.

Evidence for the evaluation may also be obtained from questionnaires administered to selected classes or groups of pupils, and from questionnaires to parents. A copy of any questionnaire to be used in the school will be provided to the principal and the chairperson of the board of management. Questionnaires to pupils, if used, are administered during the evaluation under the supervision of an inspector and in the presence of the relevant teacher or teachers. The questionnaires for parents are distributed to parents with the assistance of the school and are returned in sealed envelopes to the school for the attention of the reporting inspector. The information from these questionnaires may be used in aggregated format to gain an insight into the opinions of pupils and parents on the work of the school as a whole or on a specific whole-school subject or theme. A copy of the aggregated numerical data from the questionnaires is provided to the principal and board of management.

Questionnaires do not seek information regarding individual teachers and any unsolicited comments regarding individual teachers are disregarded in the writing of the WSE report. Completed individual questionnaires are confidential to the Inspectorate. The questionnaires identify the school from which they come but individual parents or children are not identifiable from the questionnaire.

### **3.4 The evaluation team and how it operates in the school**

The reporting inspector decides on the evaluation approach to be adopted in the school. The approach employed reflects factors such as the school size, the context of the school and the focus of the evaluation.

## 4 The post-evaluation phase

The post-evaluation phase takes a number of weeks culminating in the issuing of the WSE report to the school principal and the board of management, and the publication of the WSE report on the website of the Department. During this period the evaluation team drafts the whole-school evaluation report, in accordance with the evidence collected. The reporting inspector assumes overall responsibility for the drafting of the report. When a draft report is prepared, the reporting inspector contacts the school principal to arrange the dates and times for the post-evaluation meetings. During the post-evaluation phase two meetings are held:

- Meeting to which school staff members are invited
- Meeting to which board members, patron's representative and chairperson of the parents' association are invited

Typically, both post-evaluation meetings are scheduled for the same date.

### 4.1 Post-evaluation meeting with the school staff

At the meeting with the school staff, the reporting inspector and members of the evaluation team present the main findings and recommendations of the WSE. The inspectors present the report under its component headings and sub-headings. (See Section 5). Members of the staff are encouraged to discuss the outcomes of the evaluation and to clarify any information with the WSE team.

### 4.2 Post-evaluation meeting with board members, patron's representative and chairperson of the parents' association

Following the in-school evaluation phase the reporting inspector invites the members of the board of management, the patron's representative and a representative of the parents' association (normally the chairperson), to meet with the evaluation team to discuss the main findings and recommendations of the WSE. Time is allocated for discussion, and the issues raised are recorded. A record of the issues discussed at the pre-evaluation meeting with the parents' association is provided to the board. The agenda for the meeting, issued in advance to the chairperson, is similar to that of the pre-evaluation meeting with the board:

#### **Agenda for the post-evaluation meeting with the board, patron's representative and representative of the parents' association**

1. Welcome
2. Discussion of the main findings of the WSE under the following headings
  - the quality of management
  - the quality of school planning and self-evaluation
  - the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement
  - the quality of support for pupils
3. Record of the parents' association meeting
4. Summary comments
5. Close

## 5 The WSE report

The WSE report reflects the WSE evaluation framework and the focus of the evaluation. The text of the report contains a balance between description, in the form of evidence based on the particular area of enquiry, and evaluative statements identifying both strengths and areas that are recommended for development. No person will be named in a WSE report. The primary purpose of the report is to present an evaluation of the quality of provision in the school.

### 5.1 The structure of the whole-school evaluation report

The structure of the WSE report (and the order of sections) may vary depending on factors such as the range of subjects evaluated, school context and school size, and the focus of the evaluation. In general, however, the report contains headings such as the following:

#### **Introduction**

This section contains comment on the context of the school and the evaluation carried out

#### **Summary of findings and recommendations for further development**

This section provides a summary of the strengths of the school and areas for development

#### **Quality of school management**

This section contains comment on:

- The work of the board of management
- The work of the in-school management team
- The management of resources

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

This section contains comment on:

- The school planning and school self-evaluation process
- Implementation and impact of school planning and self-evaluation

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

This section may include comment on

- The general quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement, and/or
- The quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in specific subjects or areas of the curriculum

#### **Quality of support for pupils**

This section may include reference to:

- Policy and provision for pupils with special educational needs
- Policy and provision for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Policy and provision for pupils from minority groups
- Home-school partnership

## 5.2 Finalisation and publication of the WSE report

When finalised, the WSE report is published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)). The detailed arrangements for the publication of reports are described in a separate document, *Publication of School Inspection Reports—Guidelines* (2006) which is available on the DES website.

## 5.3 Dissemination of the whole-school evaluation report

The WSE report is issued to the chairperson of the board of management and the school principal. Copies are also provided to the patron and the chairperson of the parents' association.

It is recommended that the board of management, as part of its agenda for school improvement, discuss the findings and recommendations. The board should also make the report available to all staff members, including any staff members who may have left the school in the period between the evaluation stage and the issue of the WSE report. It is open to the chairperson to provide a copy of the report to other members of the staff; for example, in special schools this may include members of multi-disciplinary teams working in the school.

## 5.4 Evaluation, self-review and continuing improvement

The members of the school community should reflect upon the report and give equal consideration to the strengths identified and to the recommendations for further development. The outcomes of external evaluation such as WSE should help to inform and complement the outcomes of a school's self-evaluation and should be used by the school community to improve the quality of the school's work. The recommendations in WSE reports can provide important direction for the board of management of the school, its patron and trustees, and to the principal and staff as they seek to bring about ongoing improvement in the school.

Responsibility for the implementation of recommendations and improvements rests mainly with the board of management and the principal of the 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 may wish to access the assistance available from school support services and other sources of advice when planning and implementing improvements. The Inspectorate and other divisions in the Department of Education and Skills will monitor the implementation of recommendations in selected schools and in the system generally.

## Appendix 1

# Functions of the Inspectorate and code of practice

### Function of the Inspectorate in respect of WSE

Section 7(2) of the Education Act defines some of the functions of the Minister for Education and Skills. Subsection 7(2)(a) sets out the responsibilities of the Minister regarding the evaluation of schools and centres for education. The Inspectorate's WSE programme is one of the means used by the Minister to carry out this function:

*To monitor and assess the quality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system provided in the State by recognised schools and centres for education....and to publish, in such manner as the Minister considers appropriate, information relating to such monitoring and assessment.*

Section 13(3) of the Education Act defines the function of the Inspectorate as follows:

*To support and advise recognised schools and centres of education and teachers on matters relating to the provision of education...*

The Act also sets out the functions of members of the Inspectorate in relation to inspection and evaluation as follows:

*An Inspector shall visit recognised schools and centres of education on the initiative of the Inspectorate, and, following consultation with the board, parents of students and teachers as appropriate...*

- *Evaluate the organisation and operation of those schools and centres and the quality and effectiveness of the education provided in those schools and centres....*
- *Evaluate the education standards in such schools and centres.*
- *Assess the implementation of regulations made by the Minister*
- *Report to the Minister, or to the board, patron, parents of students and teachers as appropriate...on these matters and any other matter relating to the activities of those school or centres and the needs of students attending those schools or centres.*

Section 13(5) states that where an Inspector has carried out an evaluation

*.... he or she may make recommendations to the Minister in respect of improvements that he or she considers appropriate.*

Section 13(7) states that

*An inspector shall have all such powers as are necessary or expedient for the purpose of performing his or her functions and shall be accorded every reasonable facility and co-operation by the board and staff of a school or centre for education.*

### **The Inspectorate's professional code of practice**

The Inspectorate operates an ongoing system of in-school evaluation within this legislative framework. The Inspectorate is committed to evaluating schools and teachers in a spirit of professional collaboration and in accordance with the highest professional standards. The *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting for the Inspectorate* (2002), developed in accordance with the provisions of section 13(8) of the Education Act (1998), sets out general principles and guidelines under which members of the Inspectorate engage in the process of evaluation and reporting. The code lays down the professional standards to which the Inspectorate works. Among the general principles of the code of practice, the Inspectorate is committed to

- fostering mutual respect, trust, positive professional relations and partnership between the Inspectorate and the school community
- consistent application of evaluation criteria in an objective and reliable manner, and reliance on first-hand evidence based on observation
- consistency and fairness, taking due account of school context factors and taking cognisance of school self-review
- engaging in dialogue with members of school staffs and the education partners and ensuring confidentiality, while having due regard to statutory provisions
- courtesy, respect and sensitivity towards both individual teachers and the school, and clarity in the manner in which findings are communicated
- acknowledging that the pupils are the ultimate beneficiaries of the evaluation process.

## Appendix 2

### Framework for Whole-School Evaluation based on *Looking at our School - An aid to self-evaluation in primary schools*

The WSE team or individual inspector will evaluate and report on the operation of the school under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

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

#### Quality of school management

##### Board of management

The WSE team examines the role of patrons and the composition, role and functioning of the board of management. This area of the WSE also examines the operation of the board of management and its policies and procedures.

##### In-school management

The WSE team examines the in-school management of the school, including the management of pupils, the management of relationships with parents and the community. The evaluation team reviews the allocation of members of the teaching staff and compliance with the requirements of the Department of Education and Skills relating to material and staff resources. The quality of accommodation in the school, including specialist areas and the integration of ICT and teaching resources, is also considered.

##### The management of resources

During the meetings with the school management and during the evaluation phase, the WSE team evaluates the effectiveness of the management and allocation of members of the school staff, the policy and support for professional development, including the induction period, and the management of external personnel such as visiting teachers and tutors. The evaluation team also reviews the management of material resources and the use of DES grants, and evaluates the pupils' and teachers' access to resources in the various areas of the curriculum.

## Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation

### School planning and school self-evaluation

The WSE team reviews the school plan and the school's self-evaluation process. The inspectors examine any outcomes of self-evaluation and how these have informed action planning in the school. They also review the roles and responsibilities of members of the staff within the planning and self-evaluation process.

### Impact of school planning and self-evaluation

Within this theme the team evaluates the impact that the school planning and self-evaluation process has on the quality of the school's work.

## Quality of learning, teaching and achievement in curriculum areas

The WSE team evaluates in detail the quality of learning, teaching and pupils' achievement in specific areas of learning or subjects in the *Primary School Curriculum*. The team examines each of the following aspects of provision:

### Planning and preparation

The WSE team evaluates the level of planning for the teaching of individual curriculum areas and subjects. The team reviews evidence of collaborative curricular planning and the monitoring, review and evaluation of these plans.

### Quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement

The WSE team evaluates methodology, classroom management, classroom atmosphere, learning and pupils' achievement within the lessons observed. Through engagement with the pupils inspectors evaluate the level of pupils' understanding, achievement and enthusiasm for the various curriculum areas and subjects. The team reviews the results of standardised tests and in-school evaluations. Data obtained during WSE are not used to compare schools locally or nationally or to construct any form of national league table.

### Assessment

The WSE team considers the range of assessment modes used in the school as well as arrangements concerning record keeping and reporting on pupil achievement. In particular, the team examines the way in which assessment data, including outcomes of standardised tests, is used to inform teaching and pupils' learning and to contribute to school self-review.

### Curriculum planning and organisation

The WSE team examines curriculum provision with an emphasis on the school planning and school self-evaluation process, breadth and balance in curriculum provision, and how the needs of all pupils are being met.

## Quality of support for pupils

### **Policy and provision for pupils with special educational needs**

The WSE team examines school policy on admission, enrolment and participation of pupils with general and specific educational needs. This aspect of the evaluation considers the numbers involved and the provision for both classroom inclusion and individual support. The team examines the communication and dissemination of information concerning these pupils and the provision of supplementary teaching support.

### **Policy and provision for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds**

The WSE team examines the school policy on the access, admission and participation of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The inspectors evaluate the allocation of resources to meet the needs of these pupils. They also explore the participation of the parents of these pupils in the school and any collaboration with other community agencies supporting pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### **Policy and provision for pupils from minority groups**

The WSE team considers school policy on access, admission and participation of pupils from minority groups. The team evaluates the allocation of resources to meet the needs of these pupils. They also explore the participation of the parents of these pupils in the school and any collaboration with other community agencies supporting pupils from minority groups.

### **Home-school partnership**

The WSE team considers the level of care for pupils in the school and the provision for co-operation between school, home and the community. The involvement of pupils in the organisation of school activities is examined.