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A GUIDE TO INSPECTION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS



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INSPECTORATE

A GUIDE TO
Inspection in Primary Schools

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1. INTRODUCTION

a. Inspections and this guide

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills (DES) works to improve the quality of learning for children and young people in Irish schools, centres for education and other learning settings. A sample of all schools and centres for education is selected for inspection as part of the Inspectorate's annual programme of inspection. The sample includes schools at all levels on the quality continuum, from schools with significant strengths to schools in which there are significant weaknesses. Our evaluation work in schools is designed to evaluate key aspects of the work of the school and to promote school improvement.

This guide sets out how we conduct inspections in primary schools and is effective from 01 September 2016. It replaces previous guides which described each inspection model individually. This guide was developed in the light of our experience in schools and in consultation with the education partners.

Our 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 Inspectorate* (Department of Education and Skills 2015) which is available at www.education.ie. During an inspection, a school's board of management and its staff are obliged to accord the inspectors "every reasonable facility and co-operation" in the performance of their duties (section 13(7), Education Act 1998).

b. Evaluation in primary 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). The requirement to engage in school self-evaluation, introduced in 2012, is relatively new but already many schools are using SSE to monitor and improve aspects of their teaching and learning. Circular 0039/2016 reaffirms the requirement on schools to engage in school self-evaluation of teaching and learning and to develop school improvement plans which focus on improving outcomes for pupils. To facilitate self-evaluation as a central component of the work of a school the Inspectorate has published *School Self-Evaluation Guidelines 2016-2020: Primary* (Department of Education and Skills 2016). This publication provides a framework and structure for schools to use in evaluating teaching and learning. Schools should also familiarise themselves with the requirements set out in the current school self-evaluation circular.

School self-evaluation and external evaluation are complementary processes, both focusing on improvement. The school self-evaluation process gives schools a means of identifying and addressing priorities, and of ensuring a whole-school focus on improving specific aspects of teaching and learning. External evaluations take note of schools' identified priorities and assess their teaching and learning 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 also facilitate improvement and change in schools. They provide an external perspective on the work of the school. Inspection reports provide judgements on the quality of provision in a school, affirm the aspects of practice that are working well and assist in confirming the school's judgement about its strengths and priorities for improvement. In this way, they help to inform and complement schools' self-evaluation. Recommendations in inspection reports provide important direction for the school community as it seeks to bring about ongoing school improvement.

All of our inspection models focus on the quality of teaching, learning 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 very small number of cases, inspections may also have any or all of the following purposes:

- To assess the implementation of guidelines, circular letters, regulations and other directions made by the Minister
- 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

Inspections support co-professional engagement between teachers and the inspector. The majority of the inspector's time during inspection is given 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, with the exception of incidental inspections, result in the issuing or publication of an inspection report. This report and, in the case of incidental inspections the oral feedback provided, can assist schools to identify strengths in educational provision and facilitate professional reflection on aspects requiring further development.

The Inspectorate acknowledges that learners and their parents are key stakeholders in the school community. Their participation in school inspections, where appropriate, is a necessary component of a valid, authentic school evaluation process. It enhances the quality of the evaluation and the recommendations for school improvement that emerge. Listening to the voices of pupils and parents, and their opinions on the performance and operation of schools, is an important and integral part of the work of the Inspectorate in schools.

c. Our inspection models

We use a range of inspection models to evaluate schools and other learning settings. These range from one-day, unannounced incidental inspections, to more intensive whole-school evaluations and inspections that follow-through on how schools have implemented recommendations made in previous inspection reports.

This guide provides a general overview of our approach to inspection in primary schools. We use a number of models to gather information on the quality of education provision in schools. In Appendix 1 of this guide you will find an outline of each of the seven inspection models used in primary schools:

- Incidental Inspection
- Curriculum Evaluation
- Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs
- Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Schools
- Whole-School Evaluation-Management, Leadership and Learning
- Whole-School Evaluation
- Follow-through Inspection

We have developed this range of models so that we can target our inspection work more effectively where it is likely to have the greatest impact. This helps us to achieve our aims of encouraging improvement for pupils and providing an assurance of quality for parents, the public and the education system.

Some models, such as the incidental inspections and curriculum evaluations, are quite short inspections that enable us to evaluate the work of the school and provide feedback for improvement to teachers and school leaders relatively quickly. They can be carried out with minimum disruption to the work of the school. They are also very useful in monitoring the overall quality of educational provision. Other more intensive inspections, such as whole-school evaluations and DEIS evaluations, take more time and involve more detailed examinations of the leadership and management of the schools as well as evaluations of teaching and learning.

Using this range of inspection models, varying from very short incidental inspections to more detailed inspections, we can plan our inspections more effectively. For example, if short inspections tell us that the work of a school is progressing well, it may not be necessary to plan an intensive inspection in the school in the near future. Instead, we can focus inspections in other schools where the need for improvement is likely to be greater. Having 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.

Each of our inspection models take into account the particular circumstance of the school, centre for education or education setting. Factors such as size, location, socio-economic circumstance of the pupils and community, pupils' special needs and the support they require, and other factors impact on the work of the school. We recognise that schools work within a very specific context and we take these context factors into consideration when we evaluate.

d. Key principles that inform our inspections

As an Inspectorate we are focused on ensuring that the learners in schools, centres for education and other settings receive the best possible education in the light of their potential and their learning needs. We promote high standards in teaching and in the learning outcomes and experiences of learners in schools, centres for education and other settings. We strive to enable those learning organisations to improve the quality of the education they provide.

Our work is underpinned by four key principles:

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

The four key principles, described in detail in our *Code of Practice for the Inspectorate* (available on the website of the Department of Education and Skills, www.education.ie), provide the standards that inform, guide and govern our work. These principles govern the full range of inspectors' evaluation and advisory work in all settings, including schools, centres for education and a range of other settings.

We are committed to carrying out our 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.

This means that:

1. We are open and transparent about the way we collect and collate evidence for our evaluative judgements:
 - We adhere to our published guidelines as they relate to inspection activity
 - We apply evaluation criteria consistently, drawing on the quality framework in *Looking at Our School 2016*
2. Our evaluative judgements are based on the collection of objective, dependable, high quality data having taken the context of the school into consideration:
 - As part of our evidence-gathering, we engage in dialogue with pupils, teachers, and school leaders in most of our inspections and with other relevant staff, parents and boards of management in some inspections
 - We use the evidence we gather to support our findings and recommendations in a manner which is fair to all concerned
 - We rely on a range of evidence from a number of different sources
 - We conduct post-evaluation meetings to clarify, inform and confirm our findings
 - We provide the school staff with an opportunity to respond to the relevant main findings at the school post-evaluation meeting and we note the comments made
3. We respect the right of individuals to privacy as far as possible and consistent with our duty to report on quality and standards:
 - We are sensitive towards both the individual persons with whom we engage and the school and we are committed to courtesy, respect and fairness in all interactions with individuals and groups
 - Every effort is made to preserve the positive relationships which exist between those involved in managing and leading the school, teachers, parents and pupils
 - Information collected from pupils, teachers and parents on questionnaires is only used in aggregated format and each questionnaire is entirely confidential
 - In certain circumstances, we may receive other information in a manner in which the person providing that information has a reasonable expectation that the information is given in

confidence. While we will respect confidences, we cannot guarantee the absolute confidentiality of the information provided, or the anonymity of the individual person or persons providing the information. However, having due regard to statutory provisions, we will seek to protect the anonymity of the person if we believe that he or she believed it was being given in a confidential manner and that to release the information to others would prejudice the receipt of such information in the future

4. We report objectively and fairly on the quality of education provision:

- We set out clearly and unambiguously the main findings and recommendations of the inspection so as to enhance the motivation and overall capacity of the school community to achieve its goals and to bring about improvement in outcomes for pupils
- Our reports are fair and balanced, particularly where conflicting evidence is presented
- We recognise and acknowledge effective work, progress and achievement
- We provide advice in a supportive and constructive manner and we make recommendations

2. HOW ARE INSPECTIONS CARRIED OUT?

a. Before the inspection visit

Notice

Written notice of a whole-school inspection is generally provided to the principal, the chairperson of the board, the chairperson of the parents' association and the patron in advance of the first in-school day¹. For other evaluations, aside from those which are unannounced, the principal is notified via email and requested to forward the notification to the chairperson of the board of management and the patron. The principal may also be contacted by the reporting inspector to outline the format of the evaluation, to arrange meetings, to arrange for distribution and completion of parent and teacher questionnaires and to clarify any specific issues.

No notice is given to a school of an incidental inspection.

In the case of an Education and Training Board (ETB) school, a copy of the written notification is sent to the Chief Executive of the ETB.

Documents

External inspection focuses principally on the work of the school as it transacts daily, and there is a limited emphasis on documentation. Inspectors will request to see and examine a short list of documents relevant to the focus of the particular evaluation model and which schools can reasonably be expected to have available. The particular documents which schools are asked to provide, in electronic format preferably, are set out for each inspection model in Appendix 2 of this guide.

Questionnaires

Parents and pupils are important stakeholders in schools and the Inspectorate values their views on the quality of provision. We administer questionnaires to a sample of parents and pupils during some of our evaluations, to capture their perspectives on the work of the school.

Teacher questionnaires are available for completion online in the course of Whole-School Evaluations and Whole-School Evaluation-Management, Leadership and Learning in larger schools (eight or more mainstream teachers).

Following notification of an evaluation, where questionnaires are to be used, the inspector will arrange with the principal for the distribution of the parent questionnaires in advance of the evaluation.

In schools where teacher questionnaires are administered, the principal is asked to provide information to the school staff regarding the online questionnaire for teachers in advance of the in-school phase.

Information gained from the analysis of questionnaires may be referred to in the inspection report but detailed statistical information is not included. A summary of the aggregated data from these questionnaires is provided to the school. Completed individual questionnaires are confidential to the Inspectorate.

Meetings

Whole-School Evaluation (WSE) is the only inspection model 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 with representatives of the board of management and patron and with the teaching staff. Inspectors also meet with representatives of the parents' association where the association is affiliated to the National Parents' Council Primary or is in the process of affiliating to the National Parents' Council Primary. Where the school does not have a parents' association, or the association is not affiliated to the National Parents Council Primary, the inspectors will meet with the parents' representatives on the board of management.²

b. During the inspection visit

Inspection visits are conducted by one or more inspectors. The inspection type determines the length of time the inspection takes and the activities undertaken in the course of the evaluation. Typically, the core inspection activity takes place between one and five days and will consist of classroom visits, meetings, the administration of questionnaires, the review of documents and the provision of feedback. The reporting inspector prepares an overall timetable for the evaluation. Any changes to the timetable will be discussed with the school principal in advance, where possible.

Questionnaires

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

Meetings and interviews

Meetings and interviews are arranged by the inspector in consultation with the principal. Depending on the inspection model, meetings may be held with representatives of the board of management and patron, with representatives of the parents, with the teaching staff, with members of the in-school management team, with the special educational needs team and special needs assistants and with other relevant staff. Where appropriate, the inspector will also meet with a focus group of pupils. In the case of whole-school inspections (WSE) some of these meetings are held in advance of the in-school inspection period.

²Our practice in this regard is informed by Section 26 of the Education Act 1998 which provides as follows:

- (1) The parents of students 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 students of that school
- (2) A parents' association shall promote the interests of the students in a school in co-operation with the board, Principal, teachers and students of a school...
- (3) The board shall promote contact between the school, parents of students 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."

Classroom visits

During the inspection visit, the inspector visits classrooms and other learning settings to observe teaching and learning, to interact with pupils and to review their work.

Teaching and learning in any learning setting in the school may be observed over the course of the evaluation. This may include the work of temporary staff and support teachers based in other schools who are working in the school at the time of the inspection visit. In larger schools, this can involve inspection visits to a sample of teachers. It 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 teachers' preparation for the lessons taught, the effectiveness of the teaching approaches utilised, 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 they are engaged appropriately in their learning. Assessment practices and the progress made by pupils are also examined. The inspector(s) may also interact with pupils and review 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 where appropriate.

Documents

The inspection model determines the documents that are examined in the course of an evaluation. These are outlined in Appendix 2 of this guide. An inspector may also request additional documents or school records relating to specific issues that might arise in the course of the evaluation.

The inspector will consider and may discuss the results of standardised tests and other assessment information with the school during the course of the evaluation. However, this statistical information is not presented in written reports.

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).

Compliance with Child Protection Procedures

In September 2011, the Department of Education and Skills issued Circular 0065/2011 and *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2011). As part of whole-school inspections, the inspector(s) will enquire into a school's general compliance with the requirements of these procedures. Prior to the inspection visit, school management is required to complete a Child Protection School Self-

Report Form and, during the inspection visit, the inspector(s) seeks additional confirmatory evidence of the school's compliance with the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2011). The Inspectorate is committed to following up on instances of non-compliance with school authorities.

c. Following the inspection visit

Feedback meetings

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

During the meetings the inspector(s) seek to:

- provide an evaluation of the work of the school
- acknowledge good practice in the school
- provide opportunities for the clarification of any information
- 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 evaluation report

A draft inspection report is finalised following the completion of the feedback meetings except in the case of incidental inspection where no report is issued to the school. The report presents the main findings and recommendations of the evaluation. It is processed through the normal quality assurance procedures of the Inspectorate and is issued to the school for factual verification and later for school response as prescribed in *Publication of School Inspection Reports: Guidelines* (Department of Education and Skills, 2015).

When issued for factual verification, the principal and chairperson of the board have the opportunity to point out to the Inspectorate what they believe to be any errors of fact in the draft report. Subsequently, the report, amended if necessary, is issued to the school for school response. The board of the school has an opportunity to submit a written response to the report, outlining what it will do to address the recommendations for improvement in the report. The report and normally the school response are then published.

3. PUBLICATION OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

The finalised report and the school response are published on the website of the Department of Education and Skills (www.education.ie). The detailed arrangements for the publication of inspection reports are described in a separate document, *Publication of School Inspection Reports: Guidelines* (Department of Education and Skills, 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 and should, along with the school principal, plan for and oversee the implementation of the actions needed to address the report's recommendations. The report along with other types of evidence gathered by the school should also be used by the school to inform its self-evaluation processes and its planning for improvement and development. In the case of an ETB school it is suggested that the Chief Executive of the ETB or his/her deputed officer 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 and principal (or with the board and principal 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 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 of the Department of Education and Skills will monitor the implementation of recommendations in selected schools and in the system generally. The degree to which progress has been made on the implementation of recommendations in an inspection report may be evaluated at a later date by the Inspectorate.

5. THE QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOLS

Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools provides a unified and coherent set of standards for the two dimensions of the work of schools:

- teaching and learning
- leadership and management

It is designed for teachers and for school leaders to use in implementing the most effective and engaging teaching and learning approaches and in enhancing the quality of leadership in their schools. Through the provision of a set of standards describing 'effective practice' and 'highly effective practice', the framework will help schools to identify their strengths and areas for development and will enable them to take ownership of their own development and improvement. In this way, the *Quality Framework for Schools* seeks to embed self-evaluation, reflective practice and responsiveness to the needs of learners in classrooms, schools and other settings.

The *Quality Framework* will be used to inform the work of inspectors as they monitor and report on quality in schools. Evaluation models will draw on the elements of the framework that are most relevant to the focus of the model. In this way, while the framework will be used flexibly, it will ensure consistency in Inspectorate evaluations.

Making *Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools* publicly available will help parents and others to understand the evaluative judgements in inspection reports. The common language provided by the framework will facilitate meaningful dialogue between teachers, educational professionals, parents, pupils, school communities and the wider community about quality in our schools.

Table 1: Quality Framework for Primary Schools – Overview

	DOMAINS	STANDARDS
TEACHING AND LEARNING	Learner outcomes	Pupils: enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners have the necessary knowledge and skills to understand themselves and their relationships demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the primary curriculum achieve the stated learning objectives for the term and year
	Learner experiences	Pupils: engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning
	Teachers' individual practice	The teacher: has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress pupils' learning selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning objectives and to pupils' learning needs responds to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary
	Teachers' collective / collaborative practice	Teachers: value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration work together to devise learning opportunities for pupils across and beyond the curriculum collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	Leading learning and teaching	School leaders: promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each pupil manage the planning and implementation of the curriculum foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and pupils' learning
	Managing the organisation	School leaders: establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability
	Leading school development	School leaders: communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education
	Developing leadership capacity	School leaders: critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles promote and facilitate the development of pupil voice, pupil participation, and pupil leadership build professional networks with other school leaders

6. THE QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspections examine the quality of different aspects of the work of the school at the time of the inspection. Naturally, the quality of each aspect of the school's work can vary. For example, inspectors could come to the view 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 the quality continuum below when describing each of the aspects of the school's work during an inspection. The continuum is designed to assist evaluators to arrive at evidence-based evaluative judgements and to accurately describe the quality of a school's provision or aspects of that provision. It has been used by the Inspectorate for a number of years to help inspectors arrive at realistic judgements about the quality of aspects of a school's provision.

A quality continuum was first introduced to schools for the purposes of self-evaluation in *Looking at Our School* (2003) and was presented again in 2012 in *School Self-Evaluation – Guidelines for Schools*. As part of the process of self-evaluation, schools were encouraged to use the continuum to judge the quality of their provision and to place their practice on a continuum.

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

Table 2: QUALITY CONTINUUM

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE OF DESCRIPTIVE TERMS
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of students' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a very good standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement

LEVEL	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE OF DESCRIPTIVE TERMS
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on students' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties

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 *Procedures for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13(9) of the Education Act (1998), (2015)*. (www.education.ie).

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 will be reviewed periodically.

APPENDIX 1

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

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The summary is intended to provide a brief reference guide to the evaluation framework for each inspection model and to set out the inspection activities conducted at each stage of the inspection process.

Compliance with Child Protection Procedures

As part of all whole-school evaluations, inspectors will enquire into a school's general compliance with the requirements of *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (2011).

1.1. Incidental Inspection

INTRODUCTION

A key focus of incidental inspection is the quality of the educational provision experienced by pupils in every-day school situations. The evaluation takes place against the background of the school's normal work, taking account of school context factors, including the school's own mission statement.

The incidental inspection model is designed to be flexible so that it can provide information on a number of different aspects of the work of a school. In a very small number of cases, incidental inspections may also have any or all of the following purposes:

- To assess the implementation of guidelines, circular letters, regulations and other directions made by the Minister
- To collect information on factors that can be used to identify schools which 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

The inspector informs the principal about the purpose of his/her visit at the beginning of an incidental inspection.

Incidental inspections are evaluations of aspects of the work of a school under the normal conditions of a regular school day. Typically, they focus on aspects of teaching, learning, pupils' achievement and support for pupils. Incidental inspection supports 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. Incidental inspections provide opportunities for the teacher to discuss issues relevant to the lesson and to seek advice from the inspector.

Incidental inspections 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. The inspector's oral feedback can be used to assist schools to identify strengths in educational provision and facilitate professional reflection on aspects requiring further development. In this way, incidental inspections complement the school's own self-evaluation processes. The inspector's feedback to the teacher and to the school should enhance professional reflection and self-evaluation and consequently improve outcomes for pupils.

EVALUATION FOCUS

The focus of the majority of incidental inspections is on teaching and learning. The inspector considers teachers' preparation for the lessons taught, the effectiveness of the teaching approaches utilised, 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 they are engaged appropriately in their learning. Assessment practices and the progress made by pupils are also examined. The inspector may also interact with pupils and review samples of their work.

The extent to which whole-school improvement targets are impacting on classroom practice and on the quality of learning is evaluated where appropriate.

OVERVIEW OF INSPECTION ACTIVITIES: INCIDENTAL INSPECTION

DURING THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	No advance notice given
		Meeting with principal
		Obtain copy of school timetable
		Draft schedule of classroom visits – this is shared with the principal before visits commence
	Typically one school day	Observation of teaching and learning
		Interaction with pupils and review of pupils’ work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Feedback meeting with principal and/or deputy principal
		No written report issues to the school

1.2. Curriculum Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

The Curriculum Evaluation model focuses on specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) and addresses three key questions about the quality of teaching and learning in a particular subject:

1. What is the quality of the pupils' learning in the subject?
2. How is the pupils' learning in the subject supported in the school through;
 - o The learning experiences provided for the pupils
 - o Teachers' practice, including assessment
3. How effective is school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning?

The model places a particular emphasis on the quality of pupils' learning in specific subjects and accordingly most of the time inspectors spend in a school during this evaluation is spent in classrooms and other learning settings.

EVALUATION FOCUS

The inspector evaluates and reports in the Curriculum Evaluation under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

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

The quality of pupils' learning

The inspector will consider the extent to which pupils enjoy their learning and are motivated to learn. The inspector will enquire 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 will consider available records of pupils' learning in the subject; teachers' monthly progress records; school improvement plans or DEIS action plan; and the Primary School Curriculum developed by the NCCA and issued by the Minister for Education and Skills.

Supporting pupils' learning 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
 - o Whether they are active learners
 - o If they are learning independently and collaboratively
 - o If they are given opportunities to return to particular knowledge and ideas regularly
 - o If they are appropriately challenged and appropriately supported in their learning
- The opportunities provided to pupils to use and apply learning skills
- The involvement of pupils in monitoring their own progress in learning

The inspector evaluates teachers' preparation for the subject, including their identification of learning objectives, resources and assessment strategies, and their planning of learning activities. The inspector considers how the teaching approaches used align with the approaches promoted in guidelines that accompany the Primary School Curriculum developed by the NCCA and issued by the Minister for Education and Skills. 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.

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 will also be considered.

OVERVIEW OF INSPECTION ACTIVITIES: CURRICULUM EVALUATION

BEFORE THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Inspector emails notification to school five working days in advance of the evaluation
		Reporting inspector liaises with school and schedules meetings
	School activity	Principal completes school information form (if this has not been done prior to notification)
DURING THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity Typically two school days	Meeting with principal and/or any teacher involved in leading teaching and learning in the subject being evaluated
		Communication of timetable – provided on morning of each day of the evaluation and sets out the schedule for that day only
		Pupil group interviews
		Review of documents
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interaction with pupils and review of pupils' work
		Feedback to individual teachers
		Post-evaluation meeting between the inspector(s) and the principal and, where appropriate, staff members involved in leading provision for the subject being evaluated
AFTER THE INSPECTION VISIT	School activity	Draft report is issued to the principal/chairperson of the board of management for factual verification (five school days) and for school response (ten school days)
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of the final report on the Department website

1.3 Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs

INTRODUCTION

The Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs is a focused evaluation of provision for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream primary schools. It addresses two key questions about the quality of a school's provision for these pupils:

- How good are the outcomes for pupils with special educational needs?
- How well is the school using the resources it receives for pupils with special educational needs to improve outcomes for pupils with special educational needs?

In addressing these two questions, inspectors will use two main sources of evidence:

- The school's own reporting of outcomes and its use of resources
- Inspectors' evaluation of outcomes and the school's use of resources

As the model places a particular emphasis on the quality of learning outcomes for pupils with special educational needs, most of the time inspectors spend in a school during this evaluation is spent in mainstream classes and support settings.

EVALUATION FOCUS

The inspector evaluates and reports in the SEN evaluation under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

- The quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs
- The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs
- The management and use of resources received to support pupils with special educational needs

The quality of learning of pupils with special educational needs

The inspector will enquire into the extent to which pupils with special educational needs are meaningfully included in school and classroom life. Inspectors will also consider the extent to which pupils with special educational needs:

- Participate in purposeful and appropriately challenging learning activities
- Actively engage in independent and cooperative learning activities
- Enjoy their learning and are motivated to learn
- Attain the learning targets established through the learning plan process
- Use and apply the literacy, numeracy and life skills that are necessary to develop their learning

The quality of teaching of pupils with special educational needs

The inspector will examine teachers' preparation for their teaching; particularly the extent to which they establish specific, realistic and challenging learning targets for pupils with special educational needs which are based on appropriate baseline data. Inspectors also consider the effectiveness of the teaching approaches utilised, the classroom atmosphere and how pupils are managed and organised during learning activities. Assessment practices, how assessment information is used and communicated and the extent of the collaboration between mainstream and support teachers are also examined.

The management and use of resources received to support pupils with special educational needs

The inspector will enquire into the extent to which school management shows a clear commitment to the admission and inclusion of pupils with special educational needs. The way in which the school plans for the effective deployment of the resources it receives to support pupils with special educational needs is evaluated. The school's use of resources and its endeavours to ensure that learning environments are accessible, suitable and comfortable for all learners will also be considered. Inspectors will enquire into the structures in place to facilitate sharing of information on pupils with special educational needs with relevant pre-schools and with post-primary schools. They will also consider the extent to which there is meaningful engagement with parents and with external agencies to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs and the provision the school makes for the ongoing professional development of staff in special education.

OVERVIEW OF INSPECTION ACTIVITIES: SEN

BEFORE THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Inspector emails notification to school ten days in advance of the inspection
		Reporting inspector liaises with school and schedules meetings
		Parent questionnaires forwarded
		Selection of pupils for group interview
School activity	Principal completes and forwards electronically the school information form, (if this has not been done prior to notification); the school policy on special educational needs, the assessment policy, the learning support and resource teacher caseloads and timetables (template provided)	
	Principal secures parental permission of pupils selected to participate in group interview	
DURING THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Meeting with principal
		Communication of timetable of activities – this is provided on morning of each day of the evaluation and sets out the schedule for that day only
		Meeting with SEN team
		Meeting with SNAs
	Typically one-three school days	Pupil group interview
		Collection of returned parent questionnaires
		Review of documents and assessment data
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interaction with pupils and review of pupils' work
		Feedback to individual teachers
		Post-evaluation meeting between the inspector(s) and the principal and, where appropriate, staff members
		Post-evaluation meeting with the members of the board of management
AFTER THE INSPECTION VISIT	School activity	Draft report is issued to the principal/chairperson of the board of management for factual verification (five school days) and for school response (ten school days)
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of the final report on the Department website

1.4 Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS Schools

INTRODUCTION

In 2005 the Department published *DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools): An Action Plan for Educational Inclusion*. The aim of the DEIS action plan is to ensure that the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities are met. Primary schools participating in DEIS receive additional supports and resources, including additional staffing, through the School Support Programme, to assist them in achieving the aims of the action plan. DEIS schools also receive support from a home-school-community liaison coordinator (HSCL) and from the School Completion Programme (SCP).

Schools that receive additional support and resources through participation in DEIS are expected to support the DEIS action plan through a systematic planning and monitoring process at individual school level and at school cluster/community level. The involvement of pupils, parents, local communities and agencies operating at local level is an important dimension of the DEIS planning and monitoring process.

Schools are expected to develop action plans for improvement in the following areas (referred to as the DEIS themes): attendance; retention; progression; literacy; numeracy; partnership with parents; partnership with other schools and educational providers, and with external agencies. Principals, boards of management and in-school management teams are expected to support the implementation of the DEIS action plans by preparing three-year improvement plans. The school should regularly monitor its progress in implementing these plans and make necessary adjustments in light of experience.

The DEIS model of evaluation is a focused evaluation which examines the school's action planning for improvement across the DEIS themes. The evaluation is focused on supporting school improvement and on quality-assuring the work undertaken in schools to deliver equality of educational opportunity to their pupils. 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 system.

DEIS evaluations seek to identify and affirm good practice in the school while providing clear recommendations for further development and improvement. A succinct inspection report is provided to the school and to the public at the end of the DEIS evaluation process.

EVALUATION FOCUS

The DEIS evaluation model evaluates and reports on the school's action planning for improvement. It examines how schools devise, implement and monitor action plans for improvement for the DEIS themes: attendance; retention; progression; literacy; numeracy; partnership with parents and others.

Inspectors consider the following aspects of planning when evaluating the school's action planning for improvement: data analysis and target-setting that informs the selection of strategies and interventions; the implementation of strategies and interventions, and the monitoring and measurement of impact and progress made.

DEIS evaluations also consider the quality and effectiveness of the leadership of the DEIS planning process within schools, and the extent to which the school takes a whole-school approach to improvement. Effective co-ordination of strategies and interventions and effective use of the additional resources available to DEIS schools are key indicators when evaluating the quality of leadership. Inspectors consider the impact of school self-evaluation on planning for improved outcomes for learners.

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: DEIS

BEFORE THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Ten days' written notification to school/board/patron/ETB (where relevant)
		Reporting inspector liaises with principal to outline evaluation approach and to make relevant arrangements
		Parent questionnaires issued to the school
	School activity	The principal completes school information form
Parent questionnaires are distributed and returned to school		
DURING THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Meeting with school principal/senior management
		Examination of school's current action plans for improvement
		Administration of pupil questionnaires
		Collection of parent questionnaires
	Typically three in-school days	Meetings with teaching and other staff involved in DEIS-related activities and interventions
		Meeting with focus group of parents
		Meeting with focus group of pupils (as appropriate)
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Observation of DEIS-related activities and interventions
		Interaction with pupils and review of pupils' work and assessment data
		Feedback to individual teachers, other relevant staff and principal
Inspectorate activity	Post-evaluation meeting with principal/chairperson of the board of management/senior management team and other relevant staff	
	Preparation of draft report	
	Communication of collated parent/pupil questionnaire reports	
School activity	Draft report is issued to the principal/chairperson of the board of management/ETB (where relevant) for factual verification (five school days) and for school response (ten school days)	
Inspectorate activity	Publication of the final report on the Department website	

1.5 Whole-School Evaluation-Management, Leadership and Learning

INTRODUCTION

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning asks five key questions relating to the quality of education provision in a school. These are:

1. How good are the learning achievements of pupils?
2. How good is the teaching?
3. How is the wellbeing of pupils supported?
4. How effective are school leadership and management?
5. How effective is school self-evaluation and how well is it being used to improve learning, teaching, leadership and management?

WSE-MLL is strongly focused on the quality of teaching and learning in the school as a whole. Accordingly, most of the time inspectors spend in a school during this evaluation is spent in classrooms and other learning settings. The evaluation is not confined to specific curriculum areas; learning and teaching may be evaluated across a range of curriculum areas.

EVALUATION FOCUS

WSE-MLL 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 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.

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. The WSE-MLL model takes account of a school's progress in respect of recommendations made in previous inspections.

In the course of a WSE-MLL the inspector(s) evaluates and reports under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

- Teaching and learning
- Support for pupils' wellbeing
- School leadership and management

Teaching and learning

The inspector(s) considers teachers' preparation for the lessons taught, the effectiveness of the teaching approaches utilised, 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 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 may also interact with pupils and review samples of their work.

The extent to which whole-school improvement targets are impacting on classroom practice and on the quality of learning is evaluated where appropriate.

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 also consider the provision that the school is making for cooperation between school, home and community.

School 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.

OVERVIEW OF INSPECTION ACTIVITIES: WSE-MLL

BEFORE THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Ten days' written notification to school/board/patron/ETB (where relevant)
		Reporting inspector liaises with school and schedules meetings
		Parent questionnaire issued to the school
		Information for teachers on how to complete an on-line questionnaire
School activity	The principal completes school information form	
	Parent questionnaires are distributed and returned to school	
DURING THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Communication of timetable – provided on morning of each day of the evaluation and sets out the schedule for that day only
		Meeting with principal
		Meeting with principal and staff
	Typically three/four in-school days	Meeting with principal, teachers, board and parent representatives
		Meeting with other groups of teachers if appropriate
		Administration of pupil questionnaires
		Collection of parent questionnaires
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interaction with pupils and review of pupils' work
		Feedback to individual teachers and to the principal
		Review of documents
Inspectorate activity	Post-evaluation meeting with school staff	
	Post-evaluation meeting with representative of board/parents/patron	
	Communication of collated parent/ pupil/teacher questionnaire reports	
	Preparation of report on meeting with parent representatives	
	Preparation of draft report	
School activity	Draft report is issued to the principal/chairperson of the board of management for factual verification (five school days) and for school response (ten school days)	
Inspectorate activity	Publication of the final report on the Department website	

1.6 Whole-School Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

The Whole-School Evaluation model is used to provide whole-school evaluative information, advice and support to the school. 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.

As one of a range of evaluation models employed by the Inspectorate, Whole-School Evaluation complements other evaluation models. The evidence base of a Whole-School Evaluation in a particular school will include, where available, relevant evaluative data on the work of the school gathered through other inspection activity. The Whole-School Evaluation model takes account of a school's progress in respect of recommendations made in previous inspections.

Generally, the inspectors examine the quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement in four subjects, including English, Gaelige, 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 Whole-School Evaluation involving all curricular areas and subjects.

EVALUATION FOCUS

The inspector evaluates and reports in the Whole-School Evaluation under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

- Quality of leadership and management
- Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
- Quality of teaching, learning and pupil 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 examines the role of 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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation processes, and how well they are being used to improve engagement and outcomes for pupils, teaching, leadership and management is examined.

Quality of teaching, learning and pupil achievement

The inspector considers teachers' preparation for the lessons taught, the effectiveness of the teaching approaches utilised, the classroom atmosphere and how learners 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 examined. 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 they 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 impacting on classroom practice and on the quality of 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 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 community.

OVERVIEW OF INSPECTION ACTIVITIES : WSE

BEFORE THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Ten days' written notification to school/board/patron/ETB (where relevant)
		Reporting inspector liaises with school and schedules pre-evaluation meetings
		Timetable for inspection is communicated to the school
		Parent questionnaires issued to the school
		Details of teacher questionnaires communicated to school
		Pre-evaluation meetings are held with teaching staff, the board and parents
BEFORE THE INSPECTION VISIT	School activity	Principal completes school information form
		Parent questionnaires are distributed and returned to school
		Arrangements made for completion of teacher questionnaires
		School's enrolment/admissions, school attendance policy and teacher timetables forwarded to reporting inspector
DURING THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Meeting with principal
		Meeting with in-school management (if required)
		Meeting with SEN team (if required)
	Typically three/four in-school days	Administration of pupil questionnaires
		Collection of parent questionnaires
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interaction with pupils and review of pupils' work
		Feedback to individual teachers and to the principal
AFTER THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Review of documents
		Post-evaluation meeting with school staff
		Post-evaluation meeting with representative of board/parents/patron
		Communication of collated parent/ pupil/teacher questionnaire reports
	School activity	Preparation of report on meeting with parent representatives
Preparation of draft report		
AFTER THE INSPECTION VISIT	School activity	Draft report is issued to the principal/chairperson of the board of management for factual verification (five school days) and for school response (ten school days)
		Inspectorate activity

1.7 Follow-through Inspection

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a follow-through inspection is to evaluate the progress a school has made on implementing main recommendations made in an earlier inspection where a written report has been published or issued to the school. This is facilitated through a consultative, co-professional engagement between the inspector and relevant school management and staff. Inspectors also advise the school on strategies and actions to enable them to fully address recommendations. Any inspection model that results in a written or published report is subject to a follow-through inspection.

Follow-through inspections provide an opportunity for the school to show the progress it has made in improving practice in areas where recommendations were made in previous inspection reports. Inspectors discuss the improvements with individual teachers, groups of teachers and others where appropriate.

At the conclusion of a follow-through inspection, inspectors discuss their overall findings with the principal and/or deputy principal, and, where relevant, with the chairperson of the board of management. They acknowledge the progress made and provide advice on further actions required to ensure the full implementation of each recommendation. The findings from a follow-through inspection add to the school's own information as they engage in self-evaluation and school improvement.

EVALUATION FOCUS

Follow-through inspections focus on the level of progress made by a school in implementing the main recommendations for improvement outlined in a previous inspection report, rather than the overall educational provision that the school makes.

OVERVIEW OF INSPECTION ACTIVITIES: FOLLOW-THROUGH INSPECTION

BEFORE THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	The inspector contacts the principal two days in advance of the inspection Arrangements are made for any meeting which may be required and for any documentation which the inspector may wish to view
	School activity	Principal prepares any documents, arranges meetings that may be required
DURING THE INSPECTION VISIT	Inspectorate activity	Among the activities that may take place in the course of a follow-through inspection are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with principal and/or senior management team • Meeting with members of the in-school management team • Meeting with other relevant teachers/members of staff • Observation of teaching and learning and other relevant activities • Interaction with pupils
	Typically one school day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of school documentation and records, and pupils' work • Review of resources and facilities • Communication with the chairperson of the board of management • Communication with parents Post-evaluation meeting with principal
AFTER THE INSPECTION VISIT	School activity	Draft report is issued to the principal/chairperson of the board of management for factual verification (five school days) and for school response (ten school days)
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of the final report on the Department website

APPENDIX 2

Documentation Requested

Inspectors will request to see and examine documents relevant to the focus of the particular evaluation model. 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 model. An inspector may also request additional documents or school records relating to specific issues that might arise in the course of the evaluation.

TABLE 3: DOCUMENTS TYPICALLY REQUESTED IN THE COURSE OF AN INSPECTION:

DOCUMENT	II	CE	SEN	DEIS	MLL	WSE
School register (or electronic version)				√	√	√
Enrolment and admissions policy			√		√	√
School attendance policy				√		√
The school's code of behaviour and 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)					√	√
The school's child protection policy including the principal's report to the board of child protection concerns and evidence of annual review of policy and Child Protection School Self-Report form	√				√	√
Individual teacher timetables (class/learning setting and number of pupils) including Learning Support/Resource teacher timetable and caseload		√	√	√	√	√
Policy relating to Special Education Needs Assistants (SNA)			√			
Policy on support for pupils (learning support/resource teaching)			√		√	√
Curriculum plans for subject(s) being evaluated		√				√
Individual teachers' planning	√	√	√	√	√	√
Teachers' monthly progress records (cuntais mhíosúla)	√	√	√		√	√
Assessment policy and pupil records including individual education plans (IEPs)		√	√	√	√	√
Results of standardised tests administered and diagnostic tests in the case of pupils in receipt of additional support	√	√	√	√	√	√
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 five most recent meetings of the board of management					√	√
Staff Deployment Policy (If available)			√			

APPENDIX 3

School Information Forms

In order to prepare for an evaluation the Inspectorate will need to collect information from you about your school. This information will help us better understand the context of your school, and may also help you in preparing for the evaluation. The information is collected through a short School Information Form. This form collects general information about the school and includes a specific section which is applicable to the more focused Curriculum Evaluation. A separate School Information Form is provided for Evaluation of Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Evaluation of Action Planning for Improvement in DEIS schools. These forms are available on the website of the Department of Education and Skills (www.education.ie).

These forms can also be accessed by clicking on the hyperlink below.

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 forward to you, via email, the information form. You will be asked to complete this form and return it to the reporting inspector prior to the evaluation taking place.

Please note that the information collected will only be used by the Department to inform inspection planning and reporting.

<http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/>