



Circular: 0029/2022

To: Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teachers in Primary Schools and Special Schools

To: Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR INSPECTORATE ENGAGEMENT WITH
PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND SPECIAL SCHOOLS
April to June 2022**

SUMMARY

This circular:

- Provides information about the Inspectorate's planned advisory, evaluation and research work in schools for the summer term 2022
- Provides an update on the Inspectorate's work to support and monitor the implementation of anti-bullying procedures in schools during this term
- Supersedes Circular 0032/2021

Introduction

Since March 2020, the Inspectorate has adapted its inspection and advisory work in schools to take account of the impact of the pandemic and the challenges faced by schools and pupils. To date this year, the inspection programme has focused mainly on incidental inspections, child protection and safeguarding inspections and sustaining the safe provision of schooling (SSPS) visits. The SSPS visits have now ended.

The Inspectorate is cognisant of the ongoing impact of Covid-19 in schools and also acknowledges the additional work being undertaken by schools to welcome and support the education of children and young people arriving from Ukraine.

In light of the impact of the pandemic and the enrolment of children and young people from Ukraine in our schools, the focus of inspection activity during the final term will be on child protection; support for pupils whose learning has been particularly impacted by Covid-19, including those with special educational needs and those at risk of educational disadvantage; education provision for children and young people from



Ukraine; and ensuring that all pupils are adequately supported in their learning. Further details of the various forms of inspection activity we will be carrying out this term are set out below.

Incidental inspections

During the April to June 2022 term, the Inspectorate will continue to quality assure educational provision for pupils through incidental inspections. Our focus in these inspections is on ensuring that children are supported in their learning and that principals and teachers are supported in their work. These visits will continue to affirm good practice and make recommendations for improvement.

At this point, research available to the Department suggests that some pupils with very high levels of need have struggled to engage meaningfully with learning over the past two school years. Therefore, during incidental inspections in a sample of schools, the Inspectorate will engage with school management to ascertain the extent to which children and young people with very high levels of need have progressed in their learning since the full onsite resumption of teaching and learning.

In addition, a number of incidental visits will be carried out that focus on provision for children from Ukraine and the supports that are necessary to enable these children and young people to adjust to the Irish school system.

As outlined in greater detail below, a proportion of the incidental inspections will continue to have a specific focus on the implementation of anti-bullying procedures in schools.

The 48 hour notification period for incidental inspections that was introduced as a temporary measure during the last school term will be discontinued from 3 May 2022 as the public health restrictions that gave rise to this adjustment are no longer in place. Incidental inspections will revert to being unannounced inspections, as set out in the *Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools*.

Monitoring of anti-bullying

During this term, the Inspectorate will continue to monitor the extent to which schools are implementing the following five aspects of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools (2013)*:



- The extent to which schools have anti-bullying policies in place in line with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)*
- The termly reporting by principals to the board of management on anti-bullying matters as detailed in the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)*
- The recording of incidents of bullying behaviour in accordance with the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)*
- The communication of the schools' anti-bullying policies to all members of the school community (BOM, teachers, learners and parents) either through publication on the school website or by making the policies accessible by other means
- Annual reviews by boards of management of anti-bullying policies and their implementation.

Inspectors will also continue to engage in discussion with principals and other school leaders on the actions that the school is taking to create a school culture and a school climate that prevent and tackle bullying. A short written note will be provided to the school on the Inspectorate findings in relation to the above areas of focus; this note can be used by schools to inform their anti-bullying measures and to take any necessary actions to strengthen these.

Further information on the monitoring of anti-bullying measures in schools can be found in the short webinar developed by the Inspectorate in September 2021 available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/db6f3-arrangements-for-inspectorate-engagement-with-primary-and-special-schools-20212022-school-year/#>

As advised in Circular 0032/2021, the Inspectorate will extend its monitoring and reporting on the extent to which schools are implementing the *Anti-bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools* to other inspection types that are conducted during the April to June 2022 term. In these instances, the monitoring will focus on the requirements to have an anti-bullying policy in place, to report on bullying matters to the board of management and to communicate the school's anti-bullying policy. The inspection report will include commentary on the extent to which the school is meeting these requirements.



A report on the implementation of aspects of anti-bullying measures in primary schools, special schools and post-primary schools, based on incidental inspection findings from the period September to November 2021, will be published shortly.

Other inspections

In addition to incidental inspections, the inspection programme will include the following inspections:

- **Child protection and safeguarding inspections (CPSI)**, which monitor the implementation of the Department's *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary Schools 2017* in fulfilment of the Minister's obligations under the *Children First Act 2015*. These inspections will occur in a small number of schools
- **Evaluations of provision for pupils with special educational needs** that will look in detail at the quality of provision for children with special educational needs in a small number of schools
- **Follow-through inspections** to monitor the implementation of recommendations arising from previous inspections
- **Priority inspections** in a small number of schools as required. The model used in these inspections will depend on the particular context of the school.
- **Curriculum evaluations:** As part of its focus on the impact of Covid on pupils' learning and the work of schools to support pupils particularly impacted by the pandemic, the Inspectorate will be approaching a small sample of schools to arrange a Curriculum Evaluation in the area of literacy or numeracy. Mindful of the ongoing demands on schools arising from Covid, inspectors will engage with each individual school in advance. If, for Covid or other exceptional school context reasons, it is not feasible to conduct the Curriculum Evaluation, it will be deferred to a later date. As these inspections will be conducted for research purposes, the inspection reports arising from these Curriculum Evaluations will be made available to the schools concerned but will not be published.
- **Advisory visits:** These will include advisory visits to schools participating in the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and other advisory visits.



Thematic reports

The findings of the incidental inspections conducted this term will inform a number of thematic Inspectorate reports that will be published during 2022. These will include reports on:

- Implementation of anti-bullying procedures in schools
- Teaching and learning in the context of the impact of Covid
- Education provision for children and young people arriving from Ukraine.

In addition, an overall analysis of inspection findings from the Curriculum Evaluations undertaken this term will be published.

September – December 2022

It is intended that all other types of inspection, including whole-school evaluations and inspections of DEIS action planning will recommence in the autumn term. The inspection programme will be kept under review in the light of public health advice.

School self-evaluation

SSE advisory visits

The Inspectorate will continue to provide school self-evaluation (SSE) advisory visits during the April to June 2022 term. Schools can apply for an advisory session by emailing SSE@education.gov.ie.

Third phase of SSE: 2022-2024

The third cycle of SSE, which had been due to commence in September 2021, will now commence in September 2022. The consultation process commenced in March with Inspectorate surveys of principals in primary schools, special schools and post-primary schools. Surveys of teachers, parents and pupils/students were also conducted in a sample of schools. The Inspectorate thanks all those who responded to the surveys. The responses provided valuable insights from different perspectives on what is working well, what the next focus of SSE could be, and what additional actions could be taken to support the use and further development of SSE in primary schools and special schools. The findings of these surveys will inform the wider consultation about SSE in May 2022. A circular and resources to support SSE will be published following the consultation.



New supports to promote the participation of children, young people and parents in inspection

A new suite of resources about inspection, which includes animated videos, e-leaflets and an e-booklet, will be available very soon for children, young people and parents. The resources support their informed participation in the inspection process. The materials will be published at www.gov.ie .

Harold Hislop
Chief Inspector
oci@education.gov.ie

26 April 2022