



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

A Guide to Inspection in Post-Primary Schools

Inspectorate
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Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1 Inspection	5
1.2 Purpose of this Guide	5
1.3 Evaluation in post-primary schools	5
1.4 Inspection types	7
1.5 Key principles that inform inspections	9
2. How inspections are carried out	10
2.1 Before the inspection visit	12
2.2 During the inspection visit	13
2.3 Following the inspection visit	18
3. Publication of the inspection report	19
4. Acting on the inspection report	21
5. The quality framework for schools	23
6. The quality continuum	26
7. Review of inspections	28
8. Publication and revision of this Guide	30
Appendix 1 – Summary of inspection types	33
(a) Incidental inspection	34
(b) Subject inspection	36
(c) Whole-school evaluation - management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL)	38
(d) Whole-school evaluation (WSE)	42
(e) Programme evaluation	47
(f) Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs	50
(g) Focused evaluation of learning and provision for students with special educational needs	52
(h) Evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS Schools (DEIS)	54
(i) Evaluation of learning and planning for improvement - DEIS	56
(j) Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres	58
(k) Child protection and safeguarding inspection	61
(l) Evaluation of remote teaching and learning	64
(m) Follow-through inspection	66
(n) Promotion of Wellbeing in Schools Evaluation	68
Appendix 2 – School information forms	72
Appendix 3 – Review of documents	73
Appendix 4 – Child protection checks	76
Appendix 5 – Anti-bullying monitoring	77

1

Introduction



1.1 Inspection

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

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

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

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

1.2 Purpose of this Guide

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

1.3 Evaluation in post-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 student achievement in their schools. They also consider how well the school is run and how this can be improved.

School self-evaluation

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

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

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

External inspection of schools

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

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

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

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

Inspections support co-professional engagement between teachers and the inspector. In most inspection types, the majority of the inspector's time during inspection is given typically to direct observation of teaching and learning in classrooms, with a view to assessing the quality of provision, affirming the work of teachers and students, 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 students.

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

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

The Inspectorate acknowledges that, alongside teachers and school management, students and their parents¹ are key stakeholders in the school community. Engaging with parents and students in the course of inspections is valuable from the perspective of eliciting their views about the work of the school. It enhances the quality of the evaluation and the recommendations for school improvement that emerge. The Inspectorate has developed its processes and resources to support engagement with students and parents during inspection and to enhance their participation in the inspection process. Information on inspection for children, young people and parents/guardians is available [here](#).

1.4 Inspection types

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



1.5 Key principles that inform inspections

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

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

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

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

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



2

How inspections
are carried out



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

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



2.1 Before the inspection visit

Notice

Inspectors give advance notice to schools for most inspection types; for others, they do not. Written notice of a whole-school inspection is typically provided to the principal, the chairperson of the board of management and the patron in advance of the first in-school day². In the case of a school under the patronage of an Education and Training Board (ETB), a copy of the notification is sent to the chief executive of the ETB.

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

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

Surveys

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

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

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

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

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

Meetings

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

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

2.2 During the inspection visit

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

Surveys

Where they are used, student surveys are administered by the inspector to a sample of students either on the first day of the inspection or, in the case of a WSE or WSE-MLL, on a day shortly before the in-school inspection period.

Meetings

Meetings are arranged in advance of the inspection visit in consultation with the principal. Depending on the inspection model, meetings may be held with representatives of the board of management, representatives of the patron, representatives of the parents' association (if affiliated with the NPC-PP), groups of parents, members of the teaching staff, members of the in-school management team⁴, members of the special education team, special needs assistants, other relevant staff and groups of students. In the case of WSEs, some of these meetings may be held in advance of the in-school inspection period. Where appropriate and convenient, some meetings such as those with teachers, parents or representatives of the board of management may be conducted remotely in consultation with and with the agreement of relevant parties.

³ Our practice in this regard is informed by *Section 26 of the Education Act, 1998* 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 of management, principal, teachers and students of a school...

(3) The board of management 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.

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

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

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

Classroom visits

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

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

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

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

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

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 students, 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 of management and the chief executive of the ETB).

Review of documents

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

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

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



Unsolicited Communication

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

Compliance with Child Protection Procedures

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

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

Details of the Level one and Level two checks are provided in [Appendix 4](#).

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

Implementation of Anti-bullying Procedures

As part of all school inspections, the Inspectorate evaluates and reports on the work of the school in creating a school culture that prevents and addresses bullying behaviour and/ or implementing key aspects of the [Bí Cinéalta \(2024\)](#) procedures. These procedures replace the 2013 anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools and the requirements of these procedures come into effect from 1 September 2025.

These procedures give direction and guidance to school authorities and school personnel on how to prevent and address school-based bullying behaviour, and on how to deal with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.

Details of the aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures that are reviewed during inspections are outlined in [Appendix 5](#).



2.3 Following the inspection visit

Feedback meetings

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

During the meetings, the inspector seeks to:

- Provide an evaluation of the work of the school
- Acknowledge good practice in the school
- Provide opportunities to those attending to ask questions or seek clarifications
- Gather any additional relevant information
- Identify areas for development
- Discuss how the school can develop through the implementation of the main recommendations of the evaluation.

The inspection report

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

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

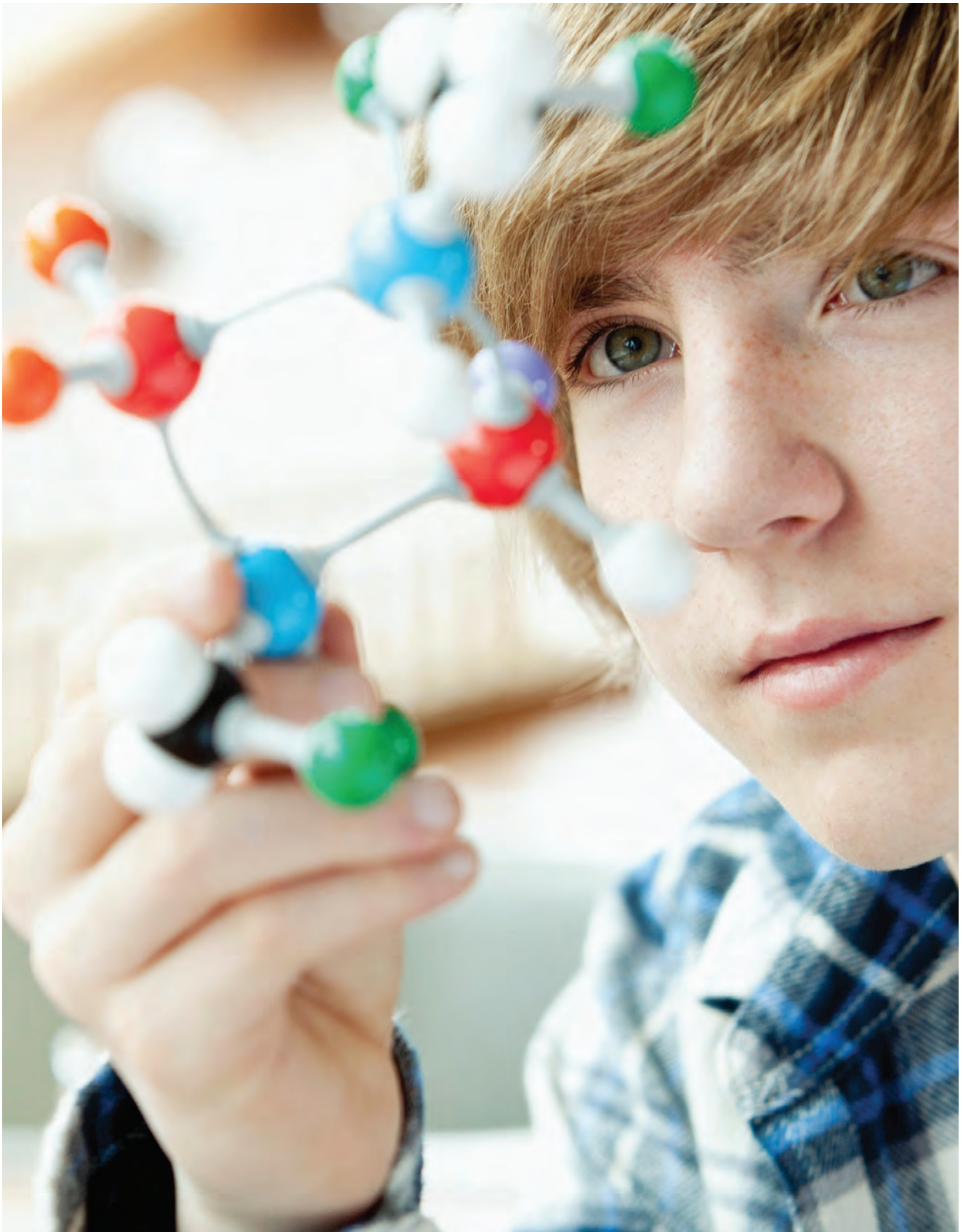


3

Publication of the
inspection report



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



4

Acting on the inspection report



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

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

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



5

The quality framework for schools





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

- Learning and teaching
- Leadership and management

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

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

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

Table 1: Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools - Overview

	Domains	Standards
Learning and Teaching	Learner outcomes	Students:
		enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to understand themselves and their relationships demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the post-primary curriculum attain the stated learning outcomes for each subject, course and programme
	Learner experiences	Students:
		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
Leadership and Management	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 students' learning selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning intentions and to students' learning needs responds to individual learning needs and differentiates learning and teaching activities as necessary
	Teachers' collective / collaborative practice	Teachers:
		value and engage in professional learning and professional collaboration work together to devise learning opportunities for students 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 reflection, improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each student manage the planning and implementation of the school curriculum foster teacher professional learning that enriches teachers' practice and students' learning
	Managing the organisation	School leaders:
		create and maintain a positive school culture and a safe, healthy and purposeful learning environment, and sustain 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
Leadership and Management	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
Leadership and Management	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 student participation, student leadership and parent participation build professional networks with other school leaders

6

The quality
continuum



Inspectors examine the quality of different aspects of the work of the school at the time of the inspection. The quality of each aspect of a school's work can vary. For example, inspectors could determine that the quality of teaching and learning in a school is at a very high level, while the quality of the school's support for students is in need of improvement.

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

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

Table 2: The quality continuum

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

7

Review of inspections



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



8

Publication and
revision of this Guide



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

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

The Inspectorate retains the right to make necessary technical adjustments or updates to the *Guide to Inspection in Post-primary Schools* from time to time. The most up-to-date version of the Guide will be available at www.gov.ie.



Appendices



Appendix 1 - Summary of inspection types

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

(a) <u>Incidental inspection</u>	34
(b) <u>Subject inspection</u>	36
(c) <u>Whole-school evaluation - management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL)</u>	38
(d) <u>Whole-school evaluation (WSE)</u>	42
(e) <u>Programme evaluation</u>	47
(f) <u>Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs</u>	50
(g) <u>Focused evaluation of learning and provision for students with special educational needs</u>	52
(h) <u>Evaluation of action planning for improvement in DEIS Schools (DEIS)</u>	54
(i) <u>Evaluation of learning and planning for improvement - DEIS</u>	56
(j) <u>Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres</u>	58
(k) <u>Child protection and safeguarding inspection</u>	61
(l) <u>Evaluation of remote teaching and learning</u>	64
(m) <u>Follow-through inspection</u>	66
(n) <u>Promotion of Wellbeing in Schools Evaluation</u>	68



The summaries set out the evaluation focus for each inspection type and the typical inspection activities conducted at each stage of the inspection process.

1. (a) Incidental inspection

Introduction

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

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

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

Evaluation focus

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

The inspector evaluates the level to which students' knowledge, skills and attitudes are progressed, and the extent to which they are engaged appropriately in their learning. Assessment practices and the progress made by students are also considered. The inspector

interacts with students and may review samples of their work. The extent to which whole-school improvement targets are reflected in classroom practice and in students' learning is evaluated where appropriate.

Overview of inspection activities: Incidental inspection

Before the inspection	Notification	Typically, no advance notice given
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity Typically one school day	Inspector meets with the principal/deputy principal to: - outline the format of the inspection - obtain a copy of the school timetable
		Inspector prepares: a draft schedule of classroom visits to be shared with the principal before visits commence
		Observation of teaching and learning and other relevant activities
		Interactions with students
		Review of school documentation and records (see Appendix 3 for required policies and documents) and samples of students' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 1)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Feedback meeting with principal and/or deputy principal
		Typically, no written report issues to the school.
After the inspection	Inspectorate	Written note of advice or feedback provided issued to school (if applicable)



1. (b) Subject inspection

Introduction

A subject inspection focuses on individual subject areas within a school with a view to affirming good practice and making recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the area. A subject inspection may be conducted on a stand-alone basis or as part of a WSE.

Evaluation focus

During a subject inspection, the inspector evaluates and reports on provision for the subject under the following areas of enquiry:

- Teaching, learning and assessment
- Subject provision and whole-school support
- Planning and preparation

Teaching, learning and assessment

The inspector considers teachers' preparation for the lessons taught, the effectiveness of the teaching approaches used, the classroom atmosphere and how students are managed and organised during learning activities. The level to which students' knowledge, skills and attitudes are progressed, and the extent to which they are engaged appropriately in their learning is evaluated. The inspector also evaluates the opportunities provided in lessons for students to develop relevant literacy and numeracy concepts and skills. The extent to which whole-school improvement targets are reflected in classroom practice and in students' learning is evaluated where appropriate. Assessment practices and the progress made by students are also reviewed as are the extent of students' involvement in tracking their own progress and taking responsibility for their learning. Achievement in certificate examinations in the context of the school is also considered.

Subject provision and whole-school support

The inspector examines the arrangements in the school to facilitate students' access to and participation in the subject, including assignment to class groups and provision for the subject on the school timetable. The availability of appropriate facilities and resources for teaching and learning in the subject, as well as the support provided in the school for teachers' continuing professional development and dissemination of good practice are also considered.

Planning and preparation

The subject department structures and arrangements in the school to facilitate collaborative planning are reviewed. The subject department plan and teachers' individual planning documentation are evaluated to determine whether they are in line with curricular requirements and the needs and interests of the students. The inspector also considers how the subject department monitors and reviews its own subject planning process and plan, and the extent to which self-evaluation informs teachers' practice in the classroom.

Overview of inspection activities: Subject inspection

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, five working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to - outline the format of the inspection - confirm school timetable information - outline documentation required
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector - School Contact Form - School Information Form Teacher timetables (if required) forwarded to inspector (e-copy)
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity Typically one/two in-school days	Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		Meetings with - principal - subject team/co-ordinator (where possible) - SEN co-ordinator (if required) - group(s) of students
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interactions with students
		Review of students' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Review of documents ⁵ (See Appendix 3 for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 1)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Post-evaluation meetings with - principal - subject team (if possible)
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report at www.gov.ie/school-reports

⁵ Written/digital plan of teachers' work on a termly and yearly basis should be available. (Teachers are not required to prepare individual written lesson plans for the purpose of subject inspection)

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

Introduction

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

A WSE-MLL focuses on whole-school issues relating to management, leadership, planning, learning, teaching and assessment, along with a school's progress in, and capacity for, self-evaluation. The process also looks at the recommendations of previous external evaluations conducted by the Inspectorate, where applicable, for example subject inspections and programme evaluations. It facilitates close examination of the development and improvement in which the school has engaged following these evaluations. A WSE-MLL identifies and affirms good practice in the school while providing clear recommendations for further development and improvement.

The WSE-MLL may incorporate the evaluation of a specific theme or issue on a regular basis, for example, the collection of specific data for a national thematic report which may be published by the Inspectorate. The specific theme(s) to be evaluated will be notified to the school as part of the normal notification process.

Evaluation focus

During a WSE-MLL, the inspectors evaluate and report under the following areas of enquiry:

- Quality of school leadership and management
- Quality of teaching and learning
- Quality of support for students' wellbeing

Within these areas of enquiry, the school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement are also evaluated.

Quality of school leadership and management

The inspection team examines the composition and functioning of the board of management and how it fulfils its statutory obligations. It evaluates the operation of the board of management, the level of consultation with members of the school community and its role in policy development and review. Inspectors evaluate the school's engagement with the self-evaluation process and the establishment of priorities for the development of the school.

The extent to which the school is a learning community is examined. The role of the in-school management of the school, including the role of the principal, deputy principal(s), and the middle management team in leading learning is considered. Staff engagement in school development planning, school self-evaluation, professional development opportunities, communication structures and the level of cooperation and collaboration among the school community are considered.

The school's procedures for admissions, transitions, inclusion, student management and the operation of the student council are evaluated. Strategies to celebrate student achievement, promote the attendance and retention of students, and the general level of support and guidance available to students are reviewed. The school's curriculum and timetable with an emphasis on the breadth and balance in curriculum provision, the arrangements for students' subject choices and how the needs of all students are being met are examined.

Quality of teaching and learning

The inspection team evaluates the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed as an indicator of the overall quality of teaching and learning in the school. When evaluating teaching and learning, the evaluation team looks at methodologies, classroom management, classroom atmosphere, assessment practices, students' engagement in lessons, and the quality of learning and student outcomes. The team also evaluates evidence of planning for teaching and learning, and takes account of self-evaluation relating to work in classrooms. The inspectors may also interact with students and review samples of students' work.

The quality of planning and preparation at individual teacher, subject department and whole-school levels is also reviewed as well as the in-school assessment procedures that are in place. As part of the review of the schools self-evaluation process, inspectors review the school's analysis of data and its use to inform planning at subject and whole-school level. Inspectors also consider the extent to which improvement targets are reflected in teachers' practice in classrooms and in students' learning.



Where applicable, the inspection team examines how successful the school has been in implementing the recommendations of previous inspection visits and reports. The school's level of engagement with the main recommendations regarding the management of the school, staff, students and facilities, and the impact of the implementation of these recommendations are evaluated. The team also reviews how good practice commended in specific areas in previous evaluations has been disseminated to other areas of the school.

Quality of support for students' wellbeing

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

The school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement

As part of the overall evaluation of leadership and management and of teaching and learning the inspection team assesses the self-evaluation processes currently taking place in the school, the level of engagement in these processes by the school's stakeholders and how improvement targets are reflected in teachers' practice and students' learning. The WSE-MLL team evaluates how targets for improvement are set and monitored within the school and the overall effectiveness of the school's strategies for the assessment and monitoring of student achievement.

The inspection team comments on the school's capacity for change and improvement and its capacity to implement the recommendations of the WSE-MLL report within an appropriate timeframe, based on the development of the school in recent years. This includes observations on the leadership of the school development planning and review process and the culture of the school in planning for and responding to the evolving needs of its student cohort.



Overview of inspection activities: WSE-MLL

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, ten working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to - outline the format of the inspection - confirm school timetable information - schedule meetings - make arrangements for completion of teacher and parent surveys
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector - School Contact Form - School Information Form
		The principal forwards the following to the inspector: - teacher timetables - enrolment and admissions policy / procedures - code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy - school calendar for the current year and the previous two years
Arrangements for online surveys - link for online parent surveys is distributed - usernames and passwords for online teacher surveys are made available		
Advance in-school day	Inspectorate activity	Administration of student surveys
	One in-school day	Meetings with - members of the board of management - officers of parents' association if affiliated with NPC-PP (if not affiliated with the NPC-PP meet with the parent representatives on the board of management)
		Review documentation (See Appendix 3 for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		Meetings with - principal - senior management and teachers - group(s) of students
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interactions with students
		Review of students' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Review of documents ⁶
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 2)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Collated survey responses shared with school
		Post-evaluation meetings with - school's senior management team⁷ - teaching staff - members of the board of management
		Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports

⁶ Written/digital plan of teachers' work on a termly and yearly basis should be available.
(Teachers are not required to prepare individual written lesson plans for the purpose of a WSE-MLL)

⁷ Principal and deputy principal(s)

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

Introduction

A whole-school evaluation (WSE) is a collaborative process involving the teaching staff, the management of the school, parents and students. During the WSE process, members of the school community have the opportunity to interact with the inspection team to discuss their work, their role and their vision for the school. The management and planning, teaching and learning, and supports for students are evaluated. This enables the inspection team to identify and affirm the strengths within the school and to make clear recommendations on areas for development and improvement.

Following the in-school evaluation phase of the WSE, the inspection team discusses the findings and recommendations of the WSE with the board of management, principal and deputy principal (or deputy principals), and all members of the teaching staff. Strengths and areas for further development are presented. The WSE report focuses on the work of the school as a whole. It affirms positive aspects of the school's work and suggests areas for development. The report provides an external view on the work of the school and it is intended that the findings and recommendations will facilitate further school self-evaluation and development planning.

Evaluation focus

During a WSE, the inspectors evaluate and report on the operation of the school under the following headings or areas of inquiry:

- Quality of leadership and management
- Quality of school planning and school self-evaluation
- Quality of subject provision
- Quality of teaching and learning
- Quality of support for students

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 inspection team examines the role of the patron, the composition, role and functioning of the board of management, the engagement of the board of management 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 students, 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 inspection team examines the school plan and the school planning process, including the monitoring and review of the school's self-evaluation process. It also examines the action plans, and staff members' roles and responsibilities within the process and it evaluates the implementation, dissemination and impact of the school plan.

Quality of subject provision

The inspection team examines subject planning and provision in the school, with an emphasis on breadth and balance and on how the needs of all students are being met. The team also examines the school timetable and the allocation of staff members.

The inspection team examines the subject and curriculum options available to all students in the school and the subject choice and the provision of guidance, support and advice within this process. The team also explores the involvement of staff members, parents and students in the subject choice process.

The inspection team seeks information relating to co-curricular activities (activities that enhance teaching and learning). Equally, the range of extracurricular activities is considered, as is the extent to which all these activities are inclusive of the whole school community.



Quality of teaching and learning and student achievement

The subject inspectors evaluate the level of planning for the teaching of individual subjects. They look for evidence of collaborative curricular planning within subjects and planning by individual teachers. They evaluate methodology, classroom management and atmosphere, and learning within the lessons observed. They also consider the range of assessment modes, record-keeping, and reporting on students' achievement. Through engagement with the students, they evaluate the level of students' understanding, achievement and enthusiasm for the subject.

Quality of support for students

The inspection team examines the school policy on the enrolment and participation of students with additional and special educational needs (SEN). This aspect of the evaluation considers the number of students with SEN and the provision for both classroom inclusion and individual support. The team examines the communication and dissemination of information concerning these students and the provision of learning support and resource teaching.

The inspection team examines the support strategies that acknowledge the diversity of the school community and the inclusion of all students in the activities of the school. The team examines special initiatives to meet the needs of these students. It also explores the participation of the parents of these students in the school and any collaboration with other community agencies supporting these students.

The inspection team assesses the provision of individual and group guidance, and counselling support in the school. The team examines personal supports for students and liaison with parents and support bodies.

The inspection team examines the pastoral care structure and the operation of the care team in the whole school. It assesses the levels of communication within this structure and the involvement of parents. The team also reviews the code of student behaviour and the roles of the chaplaincy and the students' council.

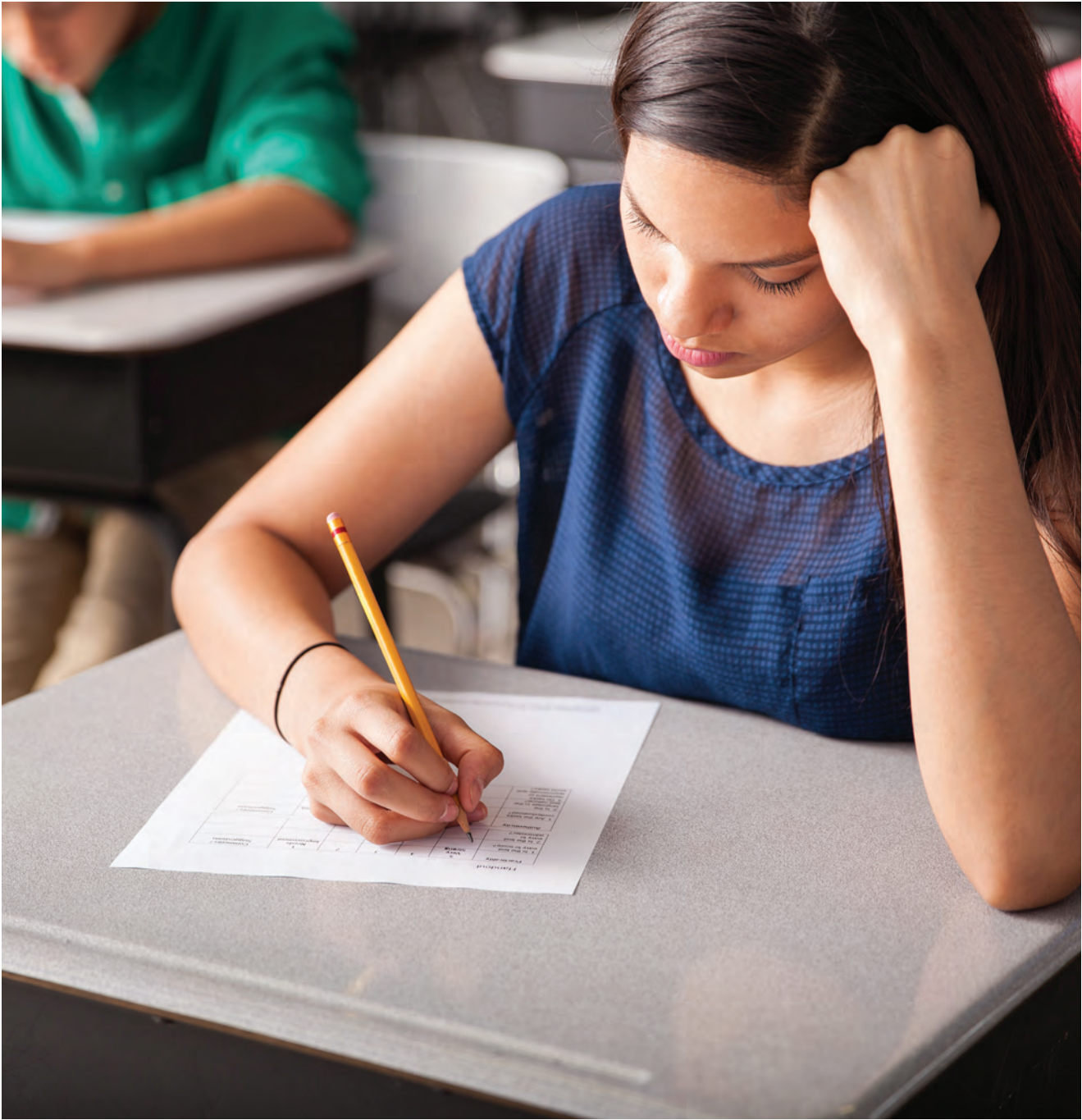
Overview of inspection activities: WSE

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, ten working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with the principal to ● outline the format of the inspection ● confirm school timetable information ● schedule meetings ● make arrangements for completion of teacher and parent surveys
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector ● School Contact Form ● School Information Form
		Subject co-ordinators or subject teachers complete information forms on subjects to be evaluated and they are returned to the inspector
		The principal forwards the following to the inspector: ● teacher timetables ● enrolment and admissions policy / procedures ● code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy ● school calendar for the current year and the previous two years
Advance in-school day	Inspectorate activity	Arrangements for online surveys ● link for online parent surveys is distributed ● usernames and passwords for online teacher surveys are made available
		Administration of student surveys
		Meetings with ● patron's representative ● board of management ● teachers ● principal and deputy principal(s) ● officers of parents' association if affiliated with NPC-PP (if not affiliated with the NPC-PP meet with the parent representatives on the board of management)
During the inspection	One in-school day	Review documentation (See Appendix 3 for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		Meetings with ● principal ● in-school management team ● subject teachers ● school planning, education support and care teams ● other groups of teachers, for example special education team ● group(s) of students
	Typically three/ four in-school days	Observation of teaching and learning
		Interactions with students
		Review of students' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Review of documents ⁸
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 2)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures

⁸ Written/digital plan of teachers' work on a termly and yearly basis should be available. (Teachers are not required to prepare individual written lesson plans for the purpose of a WSE)

After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Collated survey responses shared with the school
		Post-evaluation meetings with • senior management team⁹ • teaching staff • members of the board of management, a representative of the patron/trustee(s) and a representative of the parents' association
		Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports

⁹ Principal and deputy principal(s)



1. (e) Programme evaluation

Introduction

A programme evaluation focuses on provision for specific programmes offered in post-primary schools. A programme evaluation provides an opportunity for teachers and school management to reflect on the rationale for including the programme in the school's curriculum and on the quality of these key dimensions of educational provision in the specified programme. A programme evaluation may be conducted on a stand-alone basis or as part of a WSE.

A programme evaluation may evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the following programmes:

- Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP)
- Transition Year (TY) programme
- Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

A programme evaluation is intended to promote continuing improvement and enhance the programme team's professional reflection, and self-evaluation through the provision of evidence-based feedback.

Evaluation focus

During a programme evaluation, the inspectors evaluate and report under the following dimensions or areas of enquiry:

- Teaching and learning
- Programme provision and whole-school support
- Programme planning, co-ordination and evaluation

Teaching and learning

The inspector considers teachers' preparation for the lessons taught, the effectiveness of the teaching approaches used, the classroom atmosphere and how students are managed and organised during learning activities. The level to which students' knowledge, skills and attitudes are progressed and the extent to which they are engaged appropriately in their learning are evaluated. Assessment practices and the progress made by students are also examined. Achievement in certificate examinations in the context of the school is also considered.

An additional focus of a programme evaluation is to ascertain how effective the teaching, learning and assessment approaches adopted support the underlying key principles of the programme being evaluated. The extent to which whole-school improvement targets are reflected in classroom practice and in students' learning is evaluated, where appropriate.

Programme provision and whole-school support

The inspector examines the leadership and management of the programme in the school. Areas such as the breadth and balance of the curriculum offered within the programme and the school's arrangements for the on-going review and development of the programme are considered. The inspector examines the school's procedures for facilitating student access and participation in the programme, including the arrangements for student selection. Provision for on-going student support and the operation of home-school-community links in the school are also examined. The inspector also considers the school's arrangements for resourcing the programme, including the resources for teaching and learning and the support provided for teachers' continuing professional development.

Programme planning, co-ordination and evaluation

The programme coordination structures and arrangements to facilitate collaborative planning are reviewed. The programme plan and teachers' individual documentation are reviewed to evaluate whether they are in line with programme requirements, and the needs and interests of the students. The inspector also examines how the programme team monitors and reviews its own planning process. The extent to which the outcomes of this review have impacted positively on students' learning experience within the programme are also considered.



Overview of inspection activities: Programme evaluation

Before the Inspection	Notification	Normally, five working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to - outline the format of the inspection - make relevant arrangements - confirm school timetable information
	School activity	Principal/Programme coordinator completes and returns to the inspector - School Contact Form - School Information Form
During the Inspection	Inspectorate activity Typically two in-school days	Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		Meeting with principal and/or programme coordinator
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interactions with students
		Review of students' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Meetings with: - programme team and/or small group of key staff - group(s) of students
		Review of documents ¹⁰ (See Appendix 3 for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 1)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Post-evaluation meeting with the principal and/or the deputy principal and the programme coordinator
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and school response
	School activity	Review report for factual verification
		School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of the final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports

¹⁰ Written/digital plan of teachers' work on a termly and yearly basis should be available. (Teachers are not required to prepare individual written lesson plans for the purpose of a programme evaluation)

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

Introduction

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

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

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

Evaluation focus

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

- The quality of the learning outcomes
- The quality of learning experiences
- The effectiveness of the school's use of the resources it receives to improve learning experiences and outcomes
- The effectiveness of the structures and systems that the school has in place to foster the inclusion, equality of opportunity and holistic development of students.

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

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

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, ten working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to • outline the format of the inspection • confirm school timetable information • make arrangements for completion of online surveys • make arrangements for meetings with students and parents
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector • School Contact Form • School Information Form
		Arrangements for online surveys • link for online parent surveys is distributed
		Arrangements for meetings with parents and students are put in place
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		School provision plan reviewed
		Observation of teaching and learning in mainstream, support and, where relevant, special class settings
		Interaction with students
		Review of students' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Meetings with • special education team • special needs assistants • group(s) of students • group of parents
		Review of assessment data and school documents relevant to students with additional and special educational needs (see Appendix 3 for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 1)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
	Typically up to three school days	Collated survey responses returned to school
	Post-evaluation meeting with principal and key members of the special education teachers' team	
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Review report for factual verification School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports

1. (g) Focused evaluation of learning and provision for students with special educational needs

Introduction

A focused evaluation of learning and provision for students with special educational needs is conducted in post-primary schools and evaluates:

- The quality of the learning outcomes and experiences of students with special educational needs
- The quality of a specific aspect of the school's provision for students with special educational needs

The evaluations identify and affirm good practice in the school while providing clear recommendations for further development and improvement, when required.

Evaluation focus

Learning outcomes and experiences

To achieve good quality educational outcomes, students require engaging, supportive and challenging learning activities and need to experience success and progression in their learning. They also require whole-school and classroom environments that promote a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school. This evaluation will focus on the extent to which:

- Teachers use effective teaching and learning strategies and approaches to support students with special educational needs attain good quality outcomes.
- The learning experiences of students with special educational needs support their engagement, progression and success in learning.

Aspects of the school's provision for students with special educational needs

All schools receive an additional teaching allocation to enable them to provide additional support to students with special educational needs. To help schools ensure that this additional teaching resource is deployed correctly and for its intended purpose, the Department has published *Guidelines for Post Primary Schools: Supporting Young People with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Classes*.

These guidelines provide clear direction to schools on the principles underpinning the special education teaching model, the process for the deployment of special education teaching resources, the roles and responsibilities of school management and staff and the problem-solving process for identification of need, planning, intervention and review of response to intervention.

This evaluation focuses on a specific aspect of a school's provision for students with special educational needs. This may include, for example, the use of the student support file, the implementation of the continuum of support framework or the use of team teaching. The selection of the specific aspect may be determined by the Inspectorate and informed by system priorities or may be discussed with school leadership and informed by the school's own priorities.

Overview of inspection activities: Focused evaluation of learning and provision for students with special educational needs

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, five working days in advance of the evaluation. Schools are notified by phone call, followed by e-mail to the principal
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to - outline the format of the inspection - confirm school timetable information - discuss the area of focus with the principal - arrange times of meetings with students and parents
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector completes and returns the school contact form and the school information form
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity Typically up to three school days	Inspector uses school provision plan to select for student and parent focus groups, and asks principal to arrange for distribution of invitations and consent and assent forms
		Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation each morning
		Evaluation of teaching, learning and assessment in mainstream, support and, where relevant, special class settings
		Interaction with students
		Review of students' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Meetings with all or some of the following: - senior leadership - relevant members of special education team and other teachers as appropriate - group of students - group of parents - group of special needs assistants, as relevant
		Review of assessment data, school provision plan and other documents relevant to the focus of the evaluation
		Completion of Child Protection and anti-bullying checks (Level 1)
		Feedback meeting with principal and key members of the special education teachers' team
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Review report for factual verification School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports

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

Introduction

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

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

Evaluation focus

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

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

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

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

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

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

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, ten working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to - outline the format to the inspection - confirm school timetable information - make relevant arrangements - make arrangements for completion of parent surveys
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector - School Contact Form - School Information Form Arrangements for online surveys - link for online parent surveys is distributed
During the inspection	Inspectorate Activity Typically three in-school days	Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		Meeting with school principal/senior management
		Examination of school's current DEIS action plan for improvement and other relevant documentation including, for example, literacy and numeracy plans (see Appendix 3 for policies and documents that are required during the inspection)
		Administration of student surveys
		Meetings with - teachers and other staff involved in DEIS-related activities and interventions - group of parents - group(s) of students
		Observation of teaching and learning, particularly in relation to DEIS and School Completion Programme (SCP)
		initiatives at classroom level
		Observation of other DEIS-related activities and interventions
		Interaction with students
		Review of students' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Review of assessment data and other relevant documentation
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 2)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Collated survey responses shared with the school
		Post-evaluation meetings with school principal/senior management team and other relevant staff
		Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		Post-evaluation meetings with school principal/senior management team and other relevant staff
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports

1. (i) Evaluation of learning and planning for improvement - DEIS

Introduction

An Evaluation of learning and planning for improvement – DEIS is a focused evaluation conducted in schools participating in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme. The evaluation focuses on:

- The quality of the learning outcomes and experiences of children and young people in the school
- The school's process for planning for improvement in **two** specific aspects of the DEIS programme

The evaluations identify and affirm good practice in the school while providing clear recommendations for further development and improvement, when required.

Evaluation focus

Learning outcomes and experiences

One of the primary goals of the Department's DEIS programme is to support schools improve the educational experiences and outcomes of their pupils/students. To attain good quality educational outcomes, pupils/students require challenging learning activities that enable them experience success and progression in their learning. They also require whole-school and classroom environments that promote a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school. This evaluation will focus on the extent to which:

- The school implements effective teaching strategies and approaches to ensure that pupils/students attain good quality outcomes.
- The experiences of pupils/students in classrooms and other settings support their engagement, progression and success in learning.

The school's process for planning for improvement in two specific aspects of the DEIS programme

The specific aspects may include one of the main themes in the DEIS programme or aspects such as the specific resources the school receives as part of the DEIS programme. The main themes in the DEIS programme are: attendance, retention, examination attainment (post-primary schools only), supporting educational transitions, literacy, numeracy and partnership with parents and others. Schools in the DEIS programme are expected to use these themes as the basis for their school improvement plan. Among the resources a school receives as part of the DEIS programme are access to a Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Coordinator or access to a range of supports under the School Completion Programme (SCP)

One of the two aspects will be selected by the Inspectorate and the school will select the other aspect.

Overview of inspection activities: evaluation of learning and planning for improvement – DEIS

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, five working days in advance of the evaluation. Schools are notified by phone call, followed by e-mail to the principal
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to - outline the format to the inspection - confirm school timetable information - discuss the selection of the aspect for the evaluation - arrange parent and pupil/student focus groups
	School activity	Principal - completes the school contact form and returns to the inspector - distributes the letters for parent and pupil/student focus group Arrangements for online surveys - link for online parent surveys is distributed
During the inspection	Inspectorate Activity Typically, three and a half in-school days	Inspector communicates timetable for each day each morning
		Evaluation of teaching and learning
		Interaction with pupils/students
		Review of pupils'/students' work
		Observation of other DEIS-related teaching and learning activities and interventions under each of the two aspects
		Meetings with - senior management and key staff involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring of each of the two aspects - group of parents - group of pupils/students
		Examination of relevant sections of the school improvement plan (DEIS action plan for improvement) and school data relative to each aspect. Other relevant documents (see Appendix 3) may be requested during the inspection
		Feedback and professional dialogue with individual teachers whose practice was observed
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification and any factual errors notified to Inspectorate School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

Evaluation focus

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

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

Teaching, learning and support for pupils/students

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

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

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

School organisation and management

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

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

School planning and school self-evaluation

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

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



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

Before the inspection	Notification	No advance notification to school
	School activity	Complete and submit School Information Form (on an annual basis)
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity Typically two/ three school days	Inspector meets with principal to: • outline the format of the inspection • make arrangements for teacher surveys • confirm School Contact Form details
		Inspector communicates timetable for each day of the evaluation on each respective morning
		Meetings with • group(s) of pupils/students • management of the school • management of the residential centre
		Observation of teaching and learning
		Interaction with pupils/students
		Review of pupils'/students' work
		Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed
		Review of documents (See list of documents for inspections of Children Detention Schools on page 5 of <u>A Guide to Inspections of Schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres</u>)
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 2)
		Monitoring of the setting's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Collated survey responses shared with the school
		Post-evaluation meetings with principal and, where appropriate, staff members
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports

1. (k) Child protection and safeguarding inspection

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

Introduction

A Child Protection and Safeguarding Inspection (CPSI) is a focused inspection of the implementation of the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (revised 2023) or the *Child Protection Procedures for Schools 2025*. These procedures provide direction and guidance to school authorities and to school personnel in relation to meeting their statutory obligations under the Children First Act 2015. They also provide direction and guidance in relation to the continued implementation of the best practice, non-statutory guidance set out in Children First National Guidance 2017. The procedures are designed to ensure that schools provide a safe and secure environment for all our children.

Child protection and safeguarding inspections are undertaken to monitor the implementation of the procedures and to publish a written report in a sample of schools on an annual basis. During these inspections, information is gathered to report to the Child Protection Oversight Group (CPOG) of the Department of Education and Youth. Information is gathered to inform the development of child protection and safeguarding requirements by the Department and by other government departments and agencies involved in child protection.



Evaluation focus

The CPSI inspection model examines the implementation of the procedures through undertaking six checks on the following:

1. Policy development and review
2. Communication
3. Training
4. Reporting and record keeping
5. Oversight
6. Vetting

The checks are designed to ensure that reporting procedures in line with Children First are in place and that school personnel know how to recognise and report alleged child protection concerns, and that parents/guardians and all school personnel are aware of the school's child protection and safeguarding procedures. The procedures provide for the development of a child safeguarding statement (which includes a risk assessment), and appointment of a designated liaison person and deputy designated liaison person.

In addition, these checks take account of requirements to report retrospective abuse, take account of new legislation in place since the last update of the procedures, and provide guidance on communicating with parents and on record keeping.

The six checks are further divided into a number of sub-checks. These sub-checks are the specific actions that schools are required to take in order to be compliant with the main check. The sub-checks for each main check enable the inspector to arrive at a judgement as to whether the school is compliant with the main check.

Responsibility for ensuring the school is fully compliant with these checks rests with the board of management. The Inspectorate will monitor the board's progress in achieving full compliance.



Overview of Inspection Activities (CPSI)

Before the inspection	Inspectorate activity	• Provide two days' notice of the inspection by phone call. • Send email to the school outlining the details of the inspection. • Outline the documents required for the inspection and the meetings held during the inspection. • Forward the Vetting Self-Report Form to the school. • Provide details of the arrangements for administering the surveys of the parents and of the pupils/students.
	School activity	• Complete and sign the Vetting Self-Report Form. • Share the link to the surveys, provided by the Inspectorate, and the explanatory note with all parents as soon as possible following notification of the inspection. • Facilitate teachers to administer the pupil/student surveys in their classes (third to sixth classes in primary and all class levels in post-primary). • Ensure that all necessary documents are available for the inspection. • Make the necessary arrangements for the meetings.
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Request list of school personnel from the principal to select a sample of ten for interview. Review: Review: • Child protection case files • Minutes of board meetings • Child safeguarding statement including the risk assessment • Annual review documents of the child safeguarding statement • Notifications to parents, parents' association and the patron • The three most recent minutes of board meetings • The completed Vetting Self-report Form
		Hold meetings with: • A sample of school personnel • The DLP and DDLP • The chairperson of the board of management
		Provide oral feedback to the principal and DDLP. While the role of the DLP and the principal are separate, it is expected that the DLP will be the principal. The DLP will be invited to attend this meeting in schools where they are not the principal.
After the inspection	School activity	Principal makes available all child protection case files, documents, notifications and minutes of board meetings, and arranges meetings.
	Inspectorate activity	• Forward data from both surveys to the school • Phone call to school to discuss survey findings and narrative section of the report • Issue draft report for factual verification • Conduct follow-up activity, if necessary • Issue draft report for school response • Publication of the report on the gov.ie website
	School activity	• Analyse and share survey data • Respond at factual verification stage • Implement the action required, if applicable • Respond at school response stage.

1. (I) Evaluation of remote teaching and learning

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

Evaluation focus

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

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

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

Overview of inspection activities: Evaluation of remote teaching and learning

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, five working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with the principal to: outline the format of the inspection
		Requests required documentation: - Documents outlined in Appendix 3 plus the following: - the school's plan to support remote teaching and learning (if available) - arrangements/timetable for remote teaching and learning
		Makes arrangements for completion of teacher, student and parent surveys
		Makes arrangements for student meetings
	School activity	Complete School Contact Form and return to inspector
		Arrangements for online surveys - links for online parent and student surveys are distributed - usernames and passwords for online teacher surveys are made available
		Make the necessary practical arrangements for the inspection
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Review of required documentation and other resources: - school's plan to support remote teaching and learning (if available) - arrangements/timetable for remote teaching and learning - survey data - a range of teaching, learning and assessment resources - child safeguarding statement - anti-bullying policy
		Meetings with: - principal / senior management team - group of teachers - individual teachers - group(s) of students - group of parents
		Observation of teaching and learning and assessment activities
		Completion of Child Protection Check (Level 1 modified)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Collated survey responses returned to school
		Post-evaluation meeting oral feedback to principal
		Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit a school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports

1. (m) Follow-through inspection

Introduction

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

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

Evaluation focus

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

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

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

Overview of inspection activities: Follow-through inspection

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, two working days in advance of the evaluation (The Inspectorate may also conduct unannounced follow-through inspections.)
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to - outline the format of the inspection - make arrangements for any meeting which may be required and for any documentation which the inspector may wish to view - confirm School Contact Form details
	School activity	Principal prepares any documents and arranges meetings that may be required
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity Typically one school day	Activities that may take place in the course of a follow-through inspection include: - meetings with - principal and/or senior management team - members of the in-school management team - other relevant teachers/members of staff - observation of teaching and learning and other relevant activities - interactions with students, including group meetings with cohorts of students - review of: - school documentation and records (see Appendix 3 for policies and documents that are required during the inspection) - students' work - action plans and progress reports related to school improvement - resources and facilities - communication with - representatives of the board of management - parents - administration of parent, teacher and/or student surveys
		Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 1)
		Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of the Anti-Bullying Procedures
		Discussion of inspection findings with principal, senior management, relevant teachers and, where appropriate, representatives of board of management and parents
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	Collated survey responses shared with the school (if administered)
		Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	Report reviewed for factual verification
		School may submit school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports Liaison with other sections of the Department, such as special education or school governance, as relevant.

1. (n) Promotion of Wellbeing in Schools Evaluation

Introduction

The promotion of wellbeing is central to the Department of Education's mission to enable children and young people to achieve their full potential. The Promotion of Wellbeing in Schools Evaluation provides for a more in-depth evaluation of the actions taken by schools to develop and enhance children and young people's wellbeing than is currently feasible under other existing inspection models.

The focus of this evaluation is to take a broad, holistic overview of the whole-school promotion of wellbeing and the school's work in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour. This inspection is informed and underpinned by:

- The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018-2023) Revised 2019
- Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying. Ireland's Whole Education Approach to preventing and addressing bullying in schools (2022)
- Bí Cineálta Procedures to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour for Primary and Post Primary Schools (2024)
- Looking at Our School 2022: A Quality Framework for Post-Primary Schools (updated Jan 2024)

Evaluation focus

During a Promotion of Wellbeing in Schools Evaluation, the inspectors evaluate and report under the following areas of enquiry:

- The quality of the school's work to prevent and address bullying behaviour
- The quality of the school's work to develop and embed a culture that promotes wellbeing
- The quality of the school's work to implement a curriculum that promotes wellbeing
- The quality of the school's work to develop policies and plans that promote wellbeing
- The quality of the school's work to promote wellbeing through relationships and partnerships

Area 1 - The Quality of The School's Work to Prevent and Address Bullying Behaviour

When evaluating a school's work to prevent and address bullying behaviour, the inspection team considers a range of potential areas. The inspection team may assess the school's approach to addressing and preventing bullying by considering several key areas. Inspectors might evaluate the systems in place for reporting and responding to bullying incidents including how efficiently and sensitively the school handles reports from students, staff, and

parents. Additionally, the inspection may review the school's prevention strategies, such as awareness-raising activities, peer support programmes, or social and emotional learning initiatives that foster a respectful and inclusive environment.

The evaluation might also focus on the quality and frequency of staff training on recognising, addressing, and preventing bullying behaviour, as well as the school's efforts to educate students on these issues. Inspectors may consider how effectively the school engages students in bullying prevention initiatives, ensuring their voices are heard in creating a safe and supportive environment. Inspectors might also assess how the school monitors bullying incidents over time, reviews the effectiveness of its prevention strategies, and adjusts its approach based on feedback from the school community.

Additionally, the inspection may evaluate the school's approach to supporting students who have experienced bullying behaviour and the interventions it has in place for students involved in bullying behaviour.

Area 2 - The Quality of The School's Work to Develop and Embed a Culture That Promotes Wellbeing

When evaluating a school's efforts to foster and sustain a culture that promotes wellbeing, the inspection team considers a range of potential areas. These may include the school's mission and ethos, the use of its buildings and grounds, as well as the overall climate and culture of the school. During the evaluation, the team may examine how the school ensures that all members of its community experience a sense of belonging, and feel safe, connected, and supported.

A key aspect of the evaluation would be the extent to which the school operates as an inclusive learning community. This might involve reviewing the role of leadership, including the principal, deputy principal(s), middle management, and student support teams, in promoting wellbeing. The inspection team may also look at staff participation in school development planning, self-evaluation processes, access to professional learning opportunities, and the effectiveness of communication structures that support wellbeing for all.

Collaboration and cooperation across the school community could also be areas for evaluation. The inspection may review the school's procedures for admissions, transitions, inclusion, student management, and the functioning of the student council. Additional areas for consideration might include strategies to recognise student achievements, promote attendance and retention, and provide support and guidance. The evaluation may also assess how well the school supports the voices of students, teachers, and parents in contributing to improvements in the school's culture and ethos.

Area 3 - The Quality of The School's Work to Implement a Curriculum That Promotes Wellbeing

When evaluating curriculum as it relates to wellbeing and addressing and prevention of bullying behaviour, the inspection team may consider a variety of areas, such as teaching methodologies, classroom management, the overall classroom atmosphere, assessment practices, student engagement in lessons, opportunities for active and collaborative learning,

and the quality of learning experiences and outcomes. The inspection may also look for evidence of a whole-school approach to wellbeing, in line with the Department's Continuum of Support, which acknowledges that children and young people may have varying needs at different times.

The evaluation of the curriculum might consider the school's self-evaluation relating to its wellbeing initiatives in classrooms. Inspectors may examine the school's curriculum and timetable, as well as students' access and choice regarding curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that promote their physical, social, and emotional development, which contribute to overall wellbeing.

Teaching and learning about wellbeing and teaching and learning for wellbeing will form core components of the evaluation. Teaching and learning about wellbeing will be evaluated in wellbeing related subjects such as Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Physical Education (PE). Teaching and learning for wellbeing may be evaluated across all subjects.

Area 4- The Quality of The School's Work to Develop Policies and Plans That Promote Wellbeing

When evaluating a school's work to develop policies and plans that promote wellbeing and positively impact children and young peoples' wellbeing, the inspection team considers a range of potential areas. The inspection team may assess the role of school leadership and management in developing and reviewing policies, plans, school self-evaluation (SSE) approaches, and professional learning opportunities related to the promotion of wellbeing.

The evaluation may include an assessment of the whole-school approach to wellbeing promotion and its ability to be reflective and responsive to the needs of the school community.

Area 5 - The Quality of The School's Work to Promote Wellbeing through Relationships and Partnerships

When evaluating a school's work to promote wellbeing through relationships and partnerships, the inspection team considers a range of potential areas. The inspection team may evaluate the quality of supports in place to foster positive relationships and partnerships within the school. This could include a review of how the school promotes positive relationships between students and staff, peer relationships, and how effectively it ensures that children, young people, and their parents are active partners in decision-making processes.

Inspectors might also assess the school's efforts to build cooperation between school, home, and the wider community, as well as its partnerships with other schools, community organisations, and external support services.

The extent to which students, their parents, and external partners are actively involved in wellbeing promotion within the school could be an important focus of the evaluation. Where applicable, inspectors may review how successful the school has been in creating structures that raise awareness among staff of the importance of promoting wellbeing for all.

OVERVIEW OF INSPECTION ACTIVITIES: PROMOTION OF WELLBEING IN SCHOOLS EVALUATION

Before the inspection	Notification	Normally, ten working days in advance of the evaluation
	Inspectorate activity	Inspector liaises with principal to • outline the format of the inspection • confirm school timetable information • schedule meetings • make arrangements for completion of student, teacher/special needs assistant and parent surveys • Make arrangements for the learning walk, focus groups, and wellbeing workshop.
	School activity	Principal completes and returns to the inspector • School Contact Form • School Information Form The principal forwards the following to the inspector: • teacher timetables • relevant policies and plans Arrangements for online surveys: • link for online parent surveys is distributed • usernames and passwords for online teacher and SNA surveys are made available
During the inspection	Inspectorate activity Typically two in-school days (not including feedback session)	The following activities occur during the inspection: • Meetings with senior management, key personnel leading wellbeing promotion in the school, children and young people, teachers and SNAs • Wellbeing Learning Walk • Observation of teaching and learning • Interactions with students and review of students' learning • Feedback to individual teachers whose practice was observed • Wellbeing Workshop • Review of documents • Completion of Child Protection Checks (Level 2) • Monitoring of the school's actions to implement aspects of its Anti-Bullying Procedures (level 2)
After the inspection	Inspectorate activity	• Feedback to school principal and relevant teachers • Collated survey responses shared with school management • Draft report issued for factual verification and for school response
	School activity	• Report reviewed for factual verification • School may submit school response
	Inspectorate activity	Publication of final report on www.gov.ie/school-reports

Appendix 2 – School information forms

In order to prepare for an evaluation, the Inspectorate will need to collect information about schools. This information will help inspectors understand the context of your school better, and may also help you in preparing for the evaluation. The information is collected through a School Information Form. This form seeks general information about the school and includes specific sections that are applicable to more focused evaluations, such as subject inspections and programme evaluations.

The School Information Form and the School Contact Form are available [here](#), together with instructions on how to complete the forms.

All data gathered as part of the evaluation is processed in accordance with the [Department of Education's Data Privacy Notice](#). For further detail on how the Department of Education processes personal data is available [here](#).

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

Appendix 3 – Review of documents

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

Inspection type	Acronym
Incidental inspection	II
Subject inspection	SI
Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning	WSE-MLL
Whole-school evaluation	WSE
Programme evaluation	PE
Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs	SEN
Evaluation of action planning for Improvement in DEIS schools	DEIS
Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units and Children Detention Centres	SCU & CDC
Child protection and safeguarding inspection	CPSI
Evaluation of remote teaching and learning	ERTAL
Promotion of Wellbeing in Schools Evaluation	PWB



Document	II	SI	WSE- MLL	WSE	PE	SEN	DEIS	SCU & CDC	CPSI	ERTAL	PWB
Enrolment and admissions policy			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Documents related to enrolment - School prospectus, leaflets, newsletters, materials provided to parents				✓	✓		✓				
Procedures for enrolment and admissions to specific programmes (Special Classes, JCSP, TY, LCA, LCVP)			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
School attendance policy			✓	✓			✓	✓			✓
Anti-bullying policy (including evidence of principal's report to board of management on incidents of bullying and evidence of annual review of policy)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Code of behaviour			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Child safeguarding statement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Full school timetable and individual teacher timetables together with an explanation of codes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
School calendar for current year and the previous two years with details of opening dates and closures and schedule of meetings, staff days and major school events.			✓	✓			✓				
Subject department plans / Programme plan (including records of subject department/programme team meetings)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Teachers' individual planning documents – on a termly and yearly basis	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Policy relating to Special Needs Assistants (SNAs)			✓	✓		✓					
Special Education Needs Policy		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				
Assessment data and documents relevant to students with additional and special educational needs			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
Assessment policy		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Student support plans (SSP)	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	

Document	II	SI	WSE-MLL	WSE	PE	SEN	DEIS	SCU & CDC	CPSI	ERTAL	PWB
Records of student attainment and assessment data	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Programme coursework-related materials JSCP – Student Profile Folders TY – Portfolios LCVP – Links Module Coursework LCA – Key Assignments and Tasks		✓			✓		✓				
Records relating to work experience (where relevant)			✓	✓	✓						
Information on student transfer and progression							✓				
The school plan			✓	✓			✓				
School self-evaluation reports and school improvement plans OR DEIS Action plan for school improvement		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Minutes of three most recent staff meetings			✓	✓	✓			✓			✓
Minutes of the board of management	✓	✓	✓ ¹¹	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
School planning documents relating to a school's provision for SPHE, including RSE			✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
Staff deployment policy (If available)			✓	✓		✓	✓				
List of extra-curricular activities, clubs and sporting activities		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				
School handbook for staff			✓	✓							
Student journal		✓	✓	✓							
Acceptable use policy								✓	✓	✓	

¹¹ In the case of WSE-MLL and WSE, the minutes of the five most recent minutes of the board of management meetings will be reviewed.

Appendix 4 – Child protection checks

Child protection checks undertaken during inspections in post-primary schools	
Level one	Checks undertaken
• Incidental inspection • Subject inspection • Programme evaluation • Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs • Supporting the safe provision of schooling • Follow-through inspection • Evaluation of remote teaching and learning	1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS. 2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment. 3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.
Level two	Checks undertaken
• Whole-school evaluation • Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning • Evaluation of action planning for Improvement in DEIS Schools • Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units) and Children Detention Centres	1. The name of the DLP and the child safeguarding statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS. 2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment. 3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern. 4. The school's child safeguarding statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023 or the updated procedures 2025. 5. The minutes of the last three board of management meetings contain a child protection oversight report in line with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2023 or the updated procedures 2025. 6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2023 or the updated procedures 2025. 7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE) • Is SPHE timetabled for each year of the junior cycle? • Has the school provided evidence that it provides SPHE in accordance with CL 0028/2023? • Does the school implement a RSE programme for all students, from First Year to Sixth Year? • Are a minimum of five to six timetabled periods per year assigned to RSE in relevant plans? 8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location

Appendix 5 – Anti-bullying monitoring

Anti-bullying monitoring undertaken during inspections in post-primary schools	
Level one	Checks undertaken
• Incidental inspection • Subject inspection • Programme evaluation • Evaluation of inclusive practices and provision for children with special and additional educational needs • Supporting the safe provision of schooling • Follow-through inspection • Evaluation of remote teaching and learning	1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it. 2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and students/pupils. 3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>¹²
Level two	Checks undertaken
• Whole-school evaluation • Whole-school evaluation – management, leadership and learning • Evaluation of action planning for Improvement in DEIS Schools • Evaluation of schools attached to Special Care Units) and Children Detention Centres	1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it. 2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and pupils/students. 3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>.¹⁴ 4. The school has appropriate initiatives in place to promote a positive and inclusive school culture and environment. 5. All staff visited report that they have read the school's <i>Bí Cineálta</i> policy and that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour.

¹² The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at each ordinary board meeting on the number of cases of bullying behaviour reported since the last meeting, the number of incidents ongoing, and the total number reported since the beginning of the school year. The principal updates the board verbally on relevant trends, patterns, strategies used to address incidents, and whether urgent review of the policy is needed.

