

Briefing note for head of settings/managers of early learning and childcare settings

Please share this information with all practitioners

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1. What are the key features of the inspection of my early learning and childcare setting?

You will be aware that an inspector or inspection team will soon visit your early learning and childcare setting. We may be joined by an inspector from the Care Inspectorate. The team is looking forward to working with you and your colleagues.

This briefing note has been designed to help you to prepare for the inspection. It describes the kinds of activities which will take place during our time in your setting. The note provides answers for some of the questions you may have about the inspection.

Through inspection, Education Scotland aims to:

- promote improvement and successful innovation to enhance learners' experiences and achievements, and
- provide assurance to stakeholders.

We take close account of the context and nature of the setting. We undertake inspection activities only as far as necessary to provide a robust evaluation.

Inspections are informed by the PRAISE framework ([Appendix 1](#)), which we use to help us establish and maintain positive relationships with all involved. We intend that all our discussions and engagements with you and your setting are opportunities to share and develop thinking, and to learn from each other. Throughout the inspection, team members will involve you and your practitioners in professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement.

The administrator supporting the inspection will have already sent your notification email. The email contains the following information:

- the date of the inspection
- where to find further information about the inspection from our website
- guidance and advice on issuing pre-inspection questionnaires to your stakeholders, including the links to the online survey.

The administrator will then follow up with a call to discuss the administrative arrangements, confirm you have the necessary information and respond to any immediate enquiries.

Further information about our work is available from our [Principles of inspection and review](#).

We aim to provide assurance to stakeholders and to promote improvement and successful innovation. This will enhance children's experiences and lead to better outcomes for their learning.

We want to support the setting to improve. To do so, inspectors will focus on the quality of children's learning and achievement. We will have a particular interest in how the setting helps children to develop their skills and understanding in early literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, enabling them to access the highest possible learning within a broad general education and beyond.

Inspectors will use selected quality indicators (QIs) from [How good is our early learning and childcare?](#) (QIs in line with those from How good is our schools? 4th edition). These are:

- QI 1.3 Leadership of change
- QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment
- QI 3.2 Securing Children's Progress
- QI 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

The first three of these QIs will feed directly into the evidence base for the [National Improvement Framework](#).

- **A further QI will also be chosen by the setting.** This could help demonstrate an area for development undertaken that is bespoke to your setting or it could be an area you have begun to work on and you would now like to explore in more depth with the inspection team. The inspection team will not assign an evaluation using the six-point scale to this QI.
- In addition, inspections will incorporate themes from other QIs to ensure we continue to capture the evidence we need to promote improvement and provide evidence to inform national policy development. These themes will be reviewed regularly to ensure they remain relevant.
- We will include the **Learning pathways** theme from **QI 2.2 Curriculum** and we will refer to **QI 2.7 Partnerships in evaluating the impact of parental engagement**.
- We will also continue to have a focus on safeguarding in every inspection.

Should the [Care Inspectorate](#) be involved in a shared inspection of your setting, they will publish their grades based on the following quality themes with supporting statements. This information will be included in the final letter to parents.

- Quality of care and support
- Quality of environment
- Quality of staffing
- Quality of management and leadership

2. What should I do in advance of the inspection?

For advice on what to do in advance of the inspection, please read:

Appendix 2	Guidance on completing the self-evaluation summary form
Appendix 3a	Documents to be provided in advance of inspection
Appendix 3b	Relevant key documents which can be provided during the inspection

Please contact the administrator should you require any clarification.

3. What should I expect on the day?

The team will usually arrive on the Monday afternoon. The introductory discussion, based on your completed self-evaluation summary will take place at a convenient time and should last approximately one hour. Guidance on requirements for the self-evaluation summary form is contained at [Appendix 2](#). You do not need to prepare a presentation as the discussion will focus on what you have already written. You may wish to involve other practitioners in this discussion. However, please remember that time is short and we want to make best use of the time available.

Please invite your link officer or equivalent colleague from your authority to take part in this discussion. Your Managing Inspector will be happy to chair this initial meeting. S/he will invite you and, where appropriate your team, to explain the key improvements you have been making and the progress you have made, including the impact on children's learning. You may also wish to highlight why you selected your possible areas for focused attention as set out in the self-evaluation summary form.

The opening discussion is likely to involve planning for activities for Monday afternoon or Tuesday morning onwards. These will include visiting playrooms to see episodes of children's learning, engaging with children or discussing specific issues with parents/carers or practitioners at a suitable time. These will be chosen to reflect the range of practice highlighted in the opening discussion. This will allow members of the team to engage with learning across the setting. You, or a nominated colleague, may wish to accompany an inspector on one or two of these visits, to allow ongoing professional dialogue about key features of learning and teaching.

Discussions around planning activities might also include:

- gathering evidence of the way in which all stakeholders contribute to improvement across the setting and the impact their involvement has brought about;
- a focus on features of learning, teaching and assessment to ensure children make the best possible progress;;
- how the setting supports and develops children's health and wellbeing, inclusion and equality;
- a focus on the progress being made by particular group of children (for example, children with additional support needs, those who had different patterns of attendance or those who are more vulnerable, including those who are looked after and those who are affected by the poverty related attainment gap);
- parents/carers and their involvement in the early learning and childcare setting; and
- aspects which link to the choice QI agrees prior to inspection beginning.

At an agreed time, the Managing Inspector will meet practitioners to talk with them about the choice QI and their contribution to improvement in their setting.

4. What happens from Monday onwards?

Inspectors will engage in a programme of activities over the course of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and into Thursday. These activities are designed to provide us with information related to the set and choice QIs and themes as well as offer opportunities to support the setting to improve. Inspectors will share the findings of the inspection when ready to do so, usually on Thursday. This timescale will be regularly reviewed throughout the course of the inspection and its conclusion mutually agreed by all parties involved. It will be helpful if your link officer or equivalent colleague from your authority is present when we share our findings.

5. What engagement will practitioners, children and parents have with the team?

Inspectors will engage with children and practitioners throughout the week. Dialogue will continue during playroom visits and, where possible, at a voluntary session for practitioners at an agreed time on Tuesday for discussion and sharing information. Where possible, there will be an opportunity for you to join team discussions to hear what the team has learned and plan for the next set of activities. It is important that all engagement is seen as an opportunity to move thinking on and learn from each other. Inspectors will talk to parents as they bring or collect children from the setting. A meeting time will be arranged for parents to meet as a group.

6. What happens after the inspection?

We aim to provide you with a confidential draft of a letter for parents outlining our findings within seven to ten working days of the end of the inspection. This letter will also contain our QI evaluations. Where a shared inspection has been undertaken with the Care Inspectorate, we will also publish their gradings. At the same time, the education authority will receive the confidential draft of the letter. You and the education authority will be asked to provide any comments or suggested corrections to the letter during the following week. The Managing Inspector may contact the local authority to discuss the draft letter and, where necessary, any matters about continued engagement with the setting. We will publish the letter within ten working weeks of the end of the inspection on our websites. Where applicable, the Care Inspectorate will publish their gradings on their website. The summarised inspection findings (SIF) document will also be published. You and your authority will have an early view of a confidential draft of the SIF to check for accuracy in advance of publication.

If there is no need for additional support for improvement visits or further inspection, the inspection process will be complete. However, the Education Scotland Area Lead Officer will discuss the inspection with the local authority and will continue to monitor the setting's progress as part of their ongoing liaison activities.

You, your practitioners, the chair of the parent group/playgroup and parents, can find more information about inspection on our [website](#).

Appendix 1 The PRAISE Framework

Best Practice Framework for Education Scotland inspections and reviews

The Framework is based on data gathered from: representative samples of experienced inspectors from Education Scotland and heads of organisations that have been inspected; and feedback from post-inspection questionnaires.

The following principles were identified as underpinning best practice.

Purpose – being clear about the overall purpose of the inspection and retaining this throughout. Creating a shared agenda with staff in the organisation and amongst members of the inspection/review team.

Relationships – building and maintaining constructive relationships throughout the process as the basis of a high quality inspection/review.

Awareness – maintaining a high level of awareness of the context in which staff are operating, of their feelings and reactions to the process and of the inspector's own approach and its impact.

Information gathering – careful inquiry to gather and analyse evidence. Retaining an objective stance, testing assumptions and assimilating data before evaluating.

Sharing information – communicating thoroughly throughout the process to prepare and inform staff. Encouraging staff to be open in providing their perspective and providing appropriate feedback as the inspection/review progresses.

Enabling – treating people with respect, engaging them in professional dialogue, recognising their efforts and providing feedback in a constructive way to encourage ownership and learning to take place.

Appendix 2 Completing the self-evaluation summary form

Please return the completed form within six working days before the inspection.

Please use this document to highlight key aspects of the setting's work as a starting point for discussion with the inspection team. You are asked to focus on the three key self-evaluation questions from [How good is our early learning and childcare?](#) p.4 and consider how you triangulate your evidence to ensure your evaluative judgments are robust. Please keep the information as clear and concise as possible using bullet points to indicate high level evaluative messages which can then be teased out during discussion at the start of the inspection. Your practitioners will know the setting's strengths and areas for development. However, you may wish to share the self-evaluation summary form with practitioners so that they are aware of what the setting has submitted.

Self-evaluation summary for early learning and childcare settings: Click here to enter text. , Click here to enter text.			
How well are you doing? What's working well for your learners?	How do you know? What evidence do you have of positive impact on learners	What are you going to do now? What are your improvement priorities in this area?	How would you evaluate this QI using the HGIOELC? six-point scale?
QI 1.3 Leadership of change Developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community Strategic planning for continuous improvement Implementing improvement and change			
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Choose an item.
QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment Learning and engagement Quality of teaching Effective use of assessment Planning, tracking and monitoring			
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Choose an item.
QI 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion Wellbeing Fulfilment of statutory duties Inclusion and equality			
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Choose an item.
QI 3.2 Securing children's progress Progress in communication, early language, mathematics, health and wellbeing Children's progress over time Overall quality of children's achievement Ensuring equity for all children			
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Choose an item.
Additional QI: Click here to enter text.			

Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Choose an item.
QI 2.2 Curriculum: theme 2 Learning pathways			
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Choose an item.
QI 2.7 Partnerships – theme 3 Impact on learners			
The impact of parental involvement on improving children and young people’s learning.			
Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Choose an item.

Appendix 3a Documents to be provided in advance of inspection

Please email only the following items to the Administrator prior to the inspection. Unless specified, **please return them at least six working days before the inspection.**

	Item	✓
1	The most recent and previous annual reports which you issued to parents and carers, on the standards and quality of the setting's work, if applicable. Return as soon as possible please after the initial email notification.	
2	The current and previous setting improvement plans.	
3	Names of all practitioners, and details of their responsibilities. Please indicate any job-sharing arrangements.	
4	Arrangements for any visiting staff and support agencies such as educational psychologists, speech therapists, EAL teachers.	
5	Completed self-evaluation summary form (see Appendix 2)	
6	Complete practitioners qualifications form and return.	
7	You should complete the child protection and safeguarding self-evaluation form but it must be handed to the Managing Inspector at the beginning of the inspection in hard copy format. Please do not email this form.	

Appendix 3b Relevant key documents which can be provided during the inspection

If available, please provide the following information in the HMI base on first day of the inspection week. There is no requirement to share in advance.

Item	✓
Number of children on roll, including a note of those who attend other settings or who attend on a full-time basis and funded two year olds where appropriate.	
Detailed information used by the setting to monitor and evaluate setting and children's progress, including the quality of learning and teaching.	
Evidence on children's progress and wider achievements.	
List of children with additional support needs and brief details of support provided. Details of children with regular/long-term absence.	
List of looked-after and looked-after and accommodated children.	
Sample of children's progress records.	
Sample of letters for parents regarding children's progress in their learning.	
Examples of the setting's communications with parents and the wider community, eg newsletters, prospectus, parent handbook.	
Any guidance for practitioners and a staff handbook (if available).	
List of professional learning carried out during the last session and planned for this session.	
Examples of the setting's planning for learning.	
Outline of arrangements for contacts and visits with other early learning and childcare settings and other educational establishments at points of transfer.	
Brief details of any wraparound care or after-school care.	
Sample of agendas and minutes of Parent Council/Playgroup/Board of Governors meetings and staff meetings.	
Brief details of any established/regular contacts with individuals or organisations in the local community.	
Access to records of complaints, bullying and racial incidents, accidents, administration of medicine and fire log.	
Details of staff registration with other professional bodies such as Scottish Social Services Council and General Teaching Council of Scotland where applicable.	

* Please note that confidential documents should only be made available at times when the inspection team is in setting.