

Education Scotland independent school Quality Improvement and Professional Engagement (QUIPE) visits

Briefing note for headteachers of independent schools

This briefing note explains the purpose and nature of the visit and what is required to make it as productive as possible. It aims to answer some of the questions you may have regarding the visit and administrative arrangements.

1. What can you expect from a QUIPE visit?

The QUIPE visit is part of Education Scotland's approaches to working with schools in the independent sector.

QUIPE visits complement the general programme of inspections. They allow us to maintain our knowledge of schools in the independent sector throughout Scotland; to work with them in bringing about continued improvement in meeting the needs of all learners; and to provide assurance to parents that schools have the capacity to continue to improve.

The visit will be based on the school's own self-evaluation and the priorities they have identified for improvement. We hope you will find that discussion and engagement with inspectors will provide an additional perspective and will be helpful in the ongoing process of school improvement. The evidence arising from the visit to your school will equally contribute to our knowledge of developments across the independent sector.

Arising from the visit a short letter for parents, offering our view on the school's capacity to report accurately on its strengths and aspects for development will be posted on the Education Scotland website. A fuller record of the professional discussions will also be made available, initially in confidence to you and the Chair of the Board of Governors for later use in helping to take school improvement forward.

2. What should the school do in advance of the visit?

This note sets out in more detail the nature of the visit and what would be useful for the inspectors to have before the visit, to inform them about the school's key strengths and priorities for future development.

We hope you will be able to provide us, in advance of the visit, in whatever format is readily available:

- the school improvement plan (or equivalent)
- the most recent annual report (or equivalent) to parents and/or Board of Governors;
- analyses of any stakeholder questionnaires (or equivalent) that you have gathered in the last two years;
- a brief explanation of your self-evaluation processes;
- evidence of impact of self-evaluation and professional learning on outcomes for children and young people;
- the contact details of your Chair of the Board of Governors (or equivalent);
- a staff list;
- the current school roll; and
- timing of the school day.

By focusing on this information, the first meeting with the inspectors will be interactive, productive and offer an opportunity for establishing priorities for activities for the rest of the visit. Our administrator for the visit can respond to any queries you might have and will discuss with you the address and timescale for the receipt of this information. In addition, our administrator will offer guidance on the issuing of questionnaires to your children and young people, parents and staff.

3. What should the school expect at the initial meeting?

The opening discussion with the inspectors provides an important opportunity to learn from each other and build on the information you have sent in advance. We anticipate that this discussion would take approximately an hour. You may want to involve other members of staff to make best use of the time available to agree priorities for more detailed attention. *You should not prepare a presentation, as the discussion will link closely to the features contained in your school improvement plan.*

Discussions are likely to include:

- The impact of self-evaluation on highlighting the school's strengths and aspects for development;
- the impact of improvement planning and professional learning on improving learning, teaching and outcomes for children and young people.
- focus on particular groups of learners (e.g. young people with additional support needs – including high-achieving young people, young people engaged in a particular kind of learning at the time of the inspection); and
- arrangements for safeguarding and ensuring the care and welfare of children and young people, including those who may be boarders.

4. What happens thereafter?

After the initial meeting, we will engage in an agreed programme of activities, related to the features set out above. These are likely to include interviews with key staff and groups of young people; observations of learning and teaching. Where there are key documents explaining important aspects of school improvement we will review these in partnership with your staff. At a convenient time during the visit, we would like to talk to a representative of the Board of Governors. This will be a brief conversation to gather views from the Board and can be conducted over the telephone. When parents complete the questionnaire, they are asked to indicate if they would be willing to meet with a member of the inspection team at a specified time. Our administrator will contact parents who express an interest in meeting with an inspector and will confirm those who can attend. All activities will be planned to reflect the range of practice highlighted in the initial discussions. Towards the end of the visit, we will share our views with you orally.

5. What engagement will young people and staff have with the team?

The team will engage with children, young people and staff throughout the visit, through learning walks, individual and group discussion and the use of focus groups. The discussions will be related to the arrangements made by the school for ensuring the quality of learning and teaching throughout the school and for ensuring the safeguarding, health and wellbeing of children and young people within the school. Discussion with staff will include the arrangements for professional learning and the approaches used by the school for its self-evaluation. The inspectors will be particularly interested in the impact of such self-evaluation on continued improvement for learners.

6. What happens after the professional engagement visit?

The QUIPE visit will be drawn together in a letter to parents and other users about the arrangements within the school for quality improvement and continued development. The letter will be published online. We will provide you and the Chair of the Board of Governors with a draft copy of the letter. You and the chair of the board will be asked to provide any comments on the draft letter. A more detailed professional record of the visit will also be made available to you and the Chair of the Board of Governors when the letter is published, as a contribution to the overall process of school improvement. The managing inspector will discuss with you the nature and extent of any further engagement with Education Scotland.

If you have any further questions arising from this briefing note, please feel free to contact the administrator dealing with this visit.

Appendix A

QUIPE Visit - A Suggested Timetable

Time	Day 1		Notes
	HMI 1	HMI 2	
12:00	Arrival and introductions		
13.30	Initial scoping meeting		This should be firmly based on the school's improvement plan and annual report (or equivalent) and establish key impacts which can be tested by the inspectors.
14.30	Learning walk with pupils	Brief classroom observations	The learning walk should focus on learning and teaching, establishing where young people feel the best learning takes place. The classroom observations should be guided by the scoping discussion.
15.30	Review of evidence Organise Day 2 meetings		There should be a clear rationale for wanting to speak to particular staff and pupils.
	Day 2 AM		
8.30	Focus on faculty/ cognate departments / stage.		Discuss and test out the impact of self-evaluation, professional learning and improvement planning. Meet with CP co-ordinator to discuss approaches to safeguarding. Meet HT to share results of ES questionnaires.
11.00	Safeguarding		
12.00	Feedback to HT on questionnaires		
	Day 2 PM		
13.00	Meeting with DHT(s)/senior managers	Meeting with pupils	Part of the meeting with pupils should focus on learning and teaching and pupils' role in self-evaluation. The meeting with DHTs should cover their role in self-evaluation and may cover key messages emerging.
14.00	Meeting with group of staff	Lesson observation alongside member of school staff.	The staff meeting should explore the impact of self-evaluation and improvement planning. The inspector's role in the lesson observation is to evaluate the effectiveness of the observation and any discussions which follow.
15.00	Meeting with parents	Follow up to lesson observation	Meeting with parents to discuss how well the school informs them of improvements.
16.00	Review of evidence Writing		



Time	Day 3	
8.30	Review of evidence Writing	
11.00	Sharing of findings	
13.00	Inspectors depart	