

# Briefing note for headteachers of local authority special schools being inspected from August 2016

Please share this information with all staff

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## 1. What are the key features of the inspection of my school?

You will be aware that an inspection team will visit your school soon. 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 school. 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 school. 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 school are opportunities to share and develop thinking, and to learn from each other. Throughout the inspection, team members will involve you and your staff in professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement.

The administrator supporting the inspection will have already sent your notification email informing you of the date of inspection, where to find further information from our website which includes this briefing note and the online survey links and helpful tips on sharing the survey links with your stakeholders with the closing date of the survey. The administrator will then follow up with a call to you 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](#) area of our website.

Your inspection will involve a visit lasting up to a week from a team comprising of inspectors, and usually a Lay Member (LM). The Managing Inspector (MI) will outline the team to you soon during the first phone call to you.

Inspectors will use selected quality indicators (QIs) from [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#) (HGIOS? 4). These are:

- QI 1.3 Leadership of change
- QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment
- QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement
- 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 school.** This could help demonstrate an area for development undertaken that is bespoke to your school 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.
- From August 2016, 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.

We shall use what we learn about your school to produce a letter to parents and carers. The letter will indicate strengths of the school and aspects which need to be improved. We shall provide a statement of the confidence we have in the school's capacity to improve the quality of its own work. We will also let you know of any further inspection activities we will undertake as continuing engagement with the school.

At the end of the inspection we will produce our Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF). It will summarise our findings from all the evidence gathered during the week of the inspection. The main messages from this will form the basis for our sharing of findings meeting at the end of the week of the inspection. Sometime after the inspection we will return a draft of our SIF to the school and the education authority to provide an opportunity to check for accuracy. We will then publish the SIF on our website.

## 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 paper for primary school inspections

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 first afternoon?

The team will arrive between noon and 12.30 pm on the Monday of the inspection week. The inspection team will gather together and have a brief team meeting. Before any inspection activity begins, the MI will meet staff at the end of lunchtime if possible to introduce members of the inspection team, brief them on the inspection and answer any questions they may have. Attendance at this meeting is voluntary for staff. The MI will discuss this with you during an introductory phone call.

An introductory discussion, based on your completed self-evaluation summary, will take place at a convenient time after your lunch break and should last approximately one hour. Please invite your Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) or equivalent colleague from your local authority to take part in the introductory discussion. Please do not prepare a presentation. The MI will chair this introductory meeting. S/he will invite you and your team to outline your priorities for improvement, the progress you have made with them, along with the evidence of impact on

learners so far. You should think in advance about the main points you wish to make in relation to these areas to the inspection team and include information on:

1. how well your school is raising attainment and achievement and making progress in closing the equity gap;
2. learning, teaching and assessment;
3. important features in the leadership of change; and
4. the agreed additional QI.

The MI and the headteacher will meet at some point on Monday afternoon to discuss your approaches to safeguarding.

The MI will discuss with you the best way to plan the Monday afternoon so that we can build on the information you will send us in your completed self-evaluation summary paper. **The MI will join the introductory meeting whilst other team members begin inspection activities.** Please remember that proportionality is one of our key principles of inspection and **the inspection team cannot and does not aim to cover all aspects of your school's work.**

The introductory discussion is likely to involve planning further for activities on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning, including visits to lessons, working with groups of children/young people, and discussion of specific aspects of the school's work with groups of children/young people or staff. Activities will be planned to reflect the range of practice highlighted in the introductory discussion. Members of the inspection team will wish to engage with learning across, in and beyond classrooms.

The team will prioritise its activities for the remainder of the inspection, drawing on these introductory discussions, responding to key features of the school and its context. The MI will discuss with you any meetings that require to be planned or arrangements that need to be made for the Tuesday and Wednesday, and will agree a programme with you. Your help with these arrangements is greatly appreciated.

#### 4. What happens from Tuesday onwards?

Inspectors will undertake a wide range of activities over Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday if this is required, building on discussion at the introductory meeting on the Monday. Inspection activities will typically include visits to classes, working with groups of children/young people, reading key documentation and discussing specific aspects of the school's work with groups of children/young people and/or staff.

The inspection team often includes a LM. If your inspection team includes one, s/he will be in the school either Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning or all day Tuesday, and will meet with focus groups of parents and carers, and children/young people (usually from P4 and above). The MI may join the LM to meet with the Chair of the Parent Council or groups of parents, if appropriate.

The MI will brief you on meetings that require to be planned and will ask you to compose a programme in advance of the inspection. We have found it most effective where focus groups involve **no more than eight people and last for a maximum of an hour.** Children/young people in focus groups should normally be from P4 and above. LMs require a gap of at least fifteen minutes between meetings to write up their notes and prepare for their next group.

We shall meet with you at the end of the inspection which could be on Thursday or Friday to share our findings and evaluations, outline the strengths and aspects for development we have identified, and discuss possible next steps with you. We suggest you involve one or more of your colleagues at the meeting, typically promoted members from your team. You should also invite your associated QIO or equivalent colleague from your local authority to this sharing of findings.

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

Inspectors will meet with children/young people and staff for discussions throughout the week.

The team will meet groups of children/young people for different purposes. For example, we may discuss with them any issues raised in the pre-inspection survey, or listen to how their views are sought and acted upon.

For senior staff, engagement will usually start with the introductory discussions after lunch on Monday. For some staff, it may begin on Monday afternoon with a classroom visit. However, all staff (teaching and non-teaching) will usually have the opportunity, at some point on Monday, to meet the inspection team, hear a short briefing, and ask questions about the inspection process. Professional dialogue takes place in a range of situations over the week, for example, during class visits, in focus groups, during voluntary discussion sessions and at the final discussion of findings. **On Tuesday, after school, inspectors would like to take the opportunity to meet with staff or groups of staff for professional dialogue around the school's chosen QI.** Meetings will be arranged throughout the course of the week with selected members of the school staff to discuss aspects of school improvement. During the period of the visit, members of the inspection team, including the LM, may also meet with individuals and/or particular groups of support staff or members of the local community. Please take the opportunity to discuss potential individuals and/or groups with the MI. It is important that all engagement is seen as an opportunity to develop thinking further and to learn from each other.

The MI may invite you, or a nominated colleague (promoted or non-promoted), to accompany an inspector on one or more learning visits, to support professional dialogue about key features of learning and teaching. However, this is entirely voluntary.

## 6. What engagement will parents and carers have with the team?

**Our inspections take the views of parents and carers into close account, and seek to engage with them in a number of ways.**

The LM will explore the quality of the school's partnership with parents and carers. The LM usually meets the Chair of the Parent Council whilst s/he is in school. The MI may join the LM at this meeting. Topics for discussion include the Parent Council's impact on supporting and improving the school, the role of parents and carers in their children/young people's learning, and communication with the school. Guided by the MI, the LM may also discuss issues that have arisen from the parental and pupil pre-inspection surveys, whilst strictly safeguarding the confidentiality of individual survey responses.

When parents and carers complete our survey, they are asked to indicate if they would be willing to meet a member of the inspection team, usually the LM. Our administrator supporting the inspection will contact those parents who have indicated that they would like to meet with the inspection team to confirm arrangements. The administrator will, throughout the inspection

be a key point of contact for you, liaise with the school regarding the arrangements for the meetings, for example, times and locations.

The administrator will also share the list of parents and carers attending the meeting with you. At other times the school might wish to ask the LM or other members of the inspection team to meet another group of parents and carers for a particular purpose. It may be appropriate to have meetings with individual parents and carers. Please discuss this with the MI if you believe it would add to the value or effectiveness of the inspection.

Following the inspection, the Chair of the Parent Council will receive a confidential draft of the letter for parents and carers. S/he is asked to confirm receipt of the letter, and is invited to provide feedback, either through yourself, or through a direct response to the administrator.

## 7. What happens after the inspection?

We aim to provide you with a draft of the letter for parents and carers, usually within seven to ten working days of the end of the inspection. This draft letter will provide a statement of the confidence we have in the school's ability to improve the quality of its work, and will highlight key strengths and aspects for improvement. It will also inform parents and carers of what Education Scotland will do as a result of the inspection, for example in terms of any intended continuing engagement. In addition to yourself, the education authority and Chair of the Parent Council receive the draft letter. You, the Chair of the Parent Council and the education authority will be asked to provide any comments or suggested amendments to the draft letter within one working week of its receipt. When finalised, the letter, including evaluations will be published online as part of a range of information which includes analyses of the pre-inspection survey responses, where applicable. We aim to publish the letter within ten working weeks from the end of the inspection. Where relevant, the MI will discuss with you and the local authority any proposal for continuing engagement with the school.

You, and the local authority will receive the SIF after the letter is published. We ask that you check for accuracy and return within one working week to the MI. It will then be published on the Education Scotland website alongside the letter to parents. If there is no plan or commitment to further inspection or other continuing engagement, the inspection is complete. However, the Education Scotland Area Lead Officer will discuss the inspection with the local authority and will continue to monitor the school's progress as part of their on-going liaison activities.

## 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 Guidance on completing the self-evaluation summary paper

### **Please share with the MI on the first day of inspection**

Please use this document to highlight key aspects of the school'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 school? \(4th edition\)](#) p.9 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 staff will know the school's strengths and areas for development. However, you may wish to share the self-evaluation summary paper with staff so that they are aware of what the school has submitted.



<b>Self-evaluation summary for local authority special schools:</b> <a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a> , <a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>			
How well are you doing?	How do you know?	What are you going to do now?	How would you evaluate this QI using the HGIOS?4 HGIOELC? six-point scale?
What's working well for your learners?	What evidence do you have of positive impact on learners	What are your improvement priorities in this area?	
<b>QI 1.3 Leadership of change</b> Developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the school and its community Strategic planning for continuous improvement Implementing improvement and change			
<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>
<b>QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment</b> Learning and engagement Quality of teaching Effective use of assessment Planning, tracking and monitoring			
<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>
<b>QI 3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion</b> Wellbeing Fulfilment of statutory duties Inclusion and equality			
<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>
<b>QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement</b> Attainment in literacy and numeracy Attainment over time Overall quality of learners' achievement Equity for all learners			
<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>
<b>Additional QI: <a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a></b>			
<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>
<b>QI 2.2 Curriculum: theme 2 Learning pathways</b>			
<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>

**QI 2.7 Partnerships – theme 3 Impact on learners**

The impact of parental involvement on improving children and young people’s learning.

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## 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 **five 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 school's work. Return as soon as possible please after the initial email notification.	
2.	The current and previous school improvement plans.	
3.	Names of all teaching and other staff, and details of their responsibilities. Please indicate any job-sharing arrangements.	
4.	School, class and visiting teachers' timetables and those of support agencies such as educational psychologist, speech therapist, EAL teacher.	
5.	Times when partner agencies (educational psychologist, EAL teachers, music VIs, others) are in school.	
6.	Information about how children/young people's achievements (including attainment) are gathered and tracked.	
7.	A draft meetings schedule agreed after initial discussion with MI.	
8.	Completed self-evaluation summary paper (see Appendix 2).	
9.	You should complete the safeguarding proforma but it must be handed to the MI at the beginning of the inspection in hard copy format. Please do not email the safeguarding proforma.	

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

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

Item	✓
Information used by the school to monitor and evaluate the school's performance and children's and young people's attainment and wider achievements.	
Information about children's and young people's progress/performance over time and any available benchmarking data.	
Samples of children's and young people's work in literacy and numeracy, across learning, from each class.	
Information used by the school to monitor and evaluate the quality of learning and teaching.	
Any evidence of strategies or innovative practices which are having a positive impact on learning, teaching, raise attainment and close the gap.	
Information about your curriculum, for example curriculum overview, details of partnerships to enhance the curriculum.	
Access to pupils' progress records (PPRs).*	
Outline of arrangements for contact, visits and sharing information, on children's and young people's achievements and learning needs at points of transfer with mainstream schools and other educational establishments.	
List of children and young people with additional support needs and brief details of support provided. *	
Details of children and young people with regular/long-term absence from education*	
List of children and young people who are looked after at home and away from home.*	
Access to CSPs and IEPs.*	
List of children and young people on shared placements where relevant.*	
Sample agendas and minutes of pupil council meetings and staff meetings.	
List of professional learning activities carried out during last session and planned for this session.	
Samples of moderation activities and resultant impact on progress/overall attainment	
A sample from different year groups of reports to parents and carers on children's and young people's progress/learning.	
Brief details of any out-of-class activities, after-school care and supported study initiatives.	
Approaches to developing young workforce (DYW).	
If your school inspection team includes a Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI), please provide a cycle of menus and nutritional analysis. Your catering service provider will have this.	

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