



Becoming a **lay member volunteer** with Education Scotland

Our lay members help greatly during the inspection of schools and settings. Involving lay members in inspections provides an additional external perspective and helps to make sure that the views of those most closely concerned with education services are taken into account.

Lay members gather information and views about aspects of school life, particularly the relationships between staff and pupils and the school's partnerships with parents and the local community. As a lay member, you may be involved in up to five inspections each year, spending one day in the school per inspection. You will make a positive and valuable contribution to improving Scottish education by bringing a new perspective to our work. You will contribute to the overall work of a school inspection team.

We are looking for people from a variety of backgrounds, with different skills, experience and knowledge. You must not have been employed in an education establishment, for example as a teacher, support assistant, lecturer or community education worker. Our lay member team benefits from a membership drawn from a range of life experiences. This is a voluntary role but any expenses you may incur in joining inspections will be reimbursed.

Please visit:



Reflections of lay members



Margaret Irving

I have been a Lay Member for 13 years and thoroughly enjoy the role. I got involved in volunteering while my daughter was at primary school. I helped at school events rather than taking on any formal role on the Parent Council. I enjoyed being part of the buzz of school life so when she moved to high school and outgrew the Girl Guides, I looked for a volunteering role which would use my skills and experience. I saw an advert for Lay Members to work with the Education Scotland inspection team to ensure standards of teaching in Scotland's schools. Following an application and interview, I had some training and then shadowed an

experienced Lay Member on a school visit. After that I was out on my own!

I enjoy being part of the inspection team and I am always made to feel very welcome even although I am only there for one day. It is a busy day gathering information from the parents, children and young people and the non-teaching staff such as office staff and the janitor. All of these interactions provide a picture of the school which helps shape the final report. I enjoy engaging directly with parents and children as it allows me to follow up on any topics highlighted in the questionnaires submitted to Education Scotland as part of the pre-inspection process. I feed back my findings to the Managing Inspector at the end of the day and hand over my notes. It may seem strange but even after all this time I am still learning. That is what keeps the role of Lay Member enjoyable!



Ian Wilkie

Being a Lay Member has been incredibly rewarding. I joined Education Scotland's Lay Member Team in 2016 and have been on just over 30 inspections in that time. Every inspection is different, but I have been assisted and supported by the HMI team every time.

Having spent my entire working life in local authority legal services, I was very keen to give something back during my retirement. I have not been disappointed. It has been a fascinating 7 years. I cannot recommend

it highly enough. I've been on inspection in several local authorities, in primary and secondary schools. I always like to get to school fairly early. It gives you time to get settled in and the school leadership teams have always been very welcoming. There's usually a cup of coffee on offer!!

Every inspection day is busy. I enjoy meeting new people and inspections certainly give you that opportunity. You will meet parents, Parent Council office bearers, pupils and school support staff. You always get an opportunity to chat to the headteacher. It has been an absolute privilege.



Sandy Gunn

I had been involved with school committees/boards/councils for many years when I was asked to think about being a Lay Member. We had good training both in theory and while shadowing an existing Lay Member. The role of Lay Member puts you at the centre of communication as you see the results of questionnaires completed by parents, staff and pupils. While a Lay Member gets an overview of education and community life throughout Scotland, you are not dealing with mere statistics. For example, it has been concerning to listen to individual pupils speaking about the direct impact resulting from their

homes being in areas where there is no broadband. It has been fascinating also to see how communication varies from school to school.

There have been many changes in education over the last 50 years. One great perk of being a Lay Member is that I am able to keep up to speed with the education our grandchildren are having!



Jayne Swanson

I am passionate about being a Lay Member and thoroughly enjoy my role in school inspections. If I could be a full-time Lay Member, I'd jump at the opportunity! Hearing children's excitement about school life, celebrating their achievements, and understanding what matters to them in their learning is a privilege. Speaking with pupils is the highlight for me, as their honesty, openness and interesting turn of phrase make for brilliant and reflective conversations.

I applied to be a Lay Member after serving as Chair of my children's Parent Council. This role provided a real behind-the-scenes look at the challenges being faced in schools and how important it is to ensure pupils have a voice, parents are genuine partners, and every member of the school community is valued. It's this experience that I take into schools.

As a Lay Member, I feel welcomed and valued by the inspection team, bringing a unique perspective to crucial discussions. Conversations with various stakeholders, from parents to support staff, provide deep insights into the working of a school. Being in the role has encouraged me to be inquisitive, helped hone my active listening skills and develop genuine rapport. All skills are transferable and help with the day job. I appreciate the flexibility (and patience) of the deployment team, who understand my request for inspections close to home which allows me to balance full-time work and childcare. I wholeheartedly recommend the role of Lay Member to anyone interested in enhancing educational experiences for our children and young people.