

Meeting	Stakeholder Forum 3 – Inspection framework and models - Minutes
Date	27/02/2025
Time	10:00-11:30
Venue	Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Organisation	Name	Attendance
Inspectorate: Head of Inspection	Louise Turnbull CHAIR	✓
Inspectorate: Strategic Director	Patricia Watson (PW)	✓
Inspectorate: Head of Inspection	Lesley McEwing	✓
Inspectorate: HM Inspector	Fraser Forsyth	Apologies
Inspectorate: HM Inspector	Gillian Frew	✓
Inspectorate: Programme Management Office	Isabella Morrison Anna Steele Rachel Still Diana Haliti Euan Nugent	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)	Victoria Smith	✓
The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) Scotland	Rod McCready	Apologies
The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) Scotland	Mike Corbett	✓
Association of Directors of Education	Lyndsay McRoberts	Apologies
School Leaders Scotland	Kirsty Ayed	Apologies
Comann nam Pàrant	Magaidh Wentworth	Apologies
Bord Na Gaidhlig	Jennifer McHarrie	✓
Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES)	Barbara Coupar	Apologies
Children in Scotland	Chris Ross	Apologies
Scottish Government	Judith Tracey	✓
Scottish Government	Tracy Manning	✓
Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)	Christina Fleming	✓
Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA)	Seamus Searson	Apologies
Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association (SSTA)	Catherine Nichol	✓
Education Scotland	Heather Robertson	✓
Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES)	Paul McWatt	✓
Association of Headteachers and Deputes in Scotland (AHDS)	Tim Wallace	✓
Education Scotland	David Burgess	✓

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair (LT) welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked members to introduce themselves as they spoke. LT covered the agenda for the meeting and members requested that the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) document was brought forward.

2. Terms of Reference – update following last meeting

LT informed members of the additions to the draft TOR intended to address concerns previously raised that the purpose, remit and decision-making of the forum needed clarification. Additional text confirmed that members will help to provide options and recommendations that will then be communicated back to HMCI to aid decision making. LT encouraged members to share ideas and proposals throughout the phases of stakeholder engagement

PW confirmed that there are key themes coming from engagement that we need formal consultation on. This will happen as we move into the next phase of engagement. Key messages from the forum, and stakeholder engagement will be used to provide advice to HMCI.

Members wanted to ensure there will be collaboration in view gathering as what is presented to HMCI might not accurately reflect the views of each individual organisation. Want to make sure there will also be individual consultation. PW outlined that views may differ across different organisations. PW confirmed that advice to HMCI will have taken consideration of the wide ranging views gathered. There will be opportunity for individual and collective views to be submitted as part of the consultation.

Members voiced that the Inspectorate needs to utilise the experience from members of the Forum and accept critical challenge from expertise and knowledge from the organisations represented. This was widely accepted and encouraged as a critical part of this Forum.

Next step – circulate final TOR with the minutes of the meeting.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Members were asked if they had any additions to the minutes of the previous meeting. One missing point was raised as the Forum held discussion on what inspection would look like for denominational settings and how we ensure we have the expertise and training to undertake evaluative activities in denominational settings. Ensure this is considered in framework developments. Members were reassured that stakeholder engagement was wide ranging and included through the lens of the denominational sector. LT also advised that there is engagement with national multifaith groups as part of stakeholder engagement.

Next step – amend previous minutes to reflect missed discussion point and re-issue.

4. Brief high level overview of progress and next steps

LT provided an update on stakeholder engagement conducted to date since the previous forum and outlined further upcoming engagement. This included, as examples:

Stakeholder engagement

- Headteacher focus groups
- Local authority central officers
- Roman Catholic sector engagement
- Senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers from schools inspected in last 18 months
- Associate assessors – all sectors
- ADES Performance and Improvement Network (PIN)
- Lay members
- Engagement with Professor Melanie Ehren, University of Amsterdam

Children and young people engagement (CYP)

- Children's Commissioner Young Advisors
- Local Authority CYP groups
- Gaelic Medium Education CYP groups
- CYP from special and independent schools
- Scottish Catholic sector – various Diocese
- Various meetings with organisations representing children and young people e.g. CELCIS, Children in Scotland, YouthLink Scotland, The Promise, LGBT Youth

LT also noted the planned next steps for further engagement in the coming weeks.

Members of the Forum as about any specific ASN support groups being looked at. It is confirmed that some groups from local authorities are included but there is need for more focus on this as we move forward with engagement.

Next step – Consideration of ASN specialists to be included in Forum. Members to email suggested named contacts to LT.

5. Overview of current practice in Estyn

LT provided an overview of the work of Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. LT provided an overview of strategic objectives, values and the principles of school inspection.

Key points:

- Estyn have a cyclical approach, every 6 years – every school will receive a core inspection and an interim visit.
- Collaborative approach with schools.
- Notice period is 10 days for core inspection, 5 days for interim visit.

- HMI and peer inspectors. Peer inspectors are equivalent to Scotland's Associate Assessors.
- Estyn do not provide grades or evaluative judgements.
- Reports outline key strengths, weaknesses and provide recommendations.
- Statutory follow-up where significant improvement is required.

Members queried how Estyn determine whether the interim visits 'work'? What is their evaluation approach. LT advised that the interim visits is a new piece of work for this session and therefore, evaluation of impact has not yet taken place.

Members noted that there is already crossover with Wales as their approach is based on self-evaluation.

6. Small group discussions and feedback

The following themes and points were discussed in small group discussions.

Reflections from Estyn – what interested you? Is there anything that is worth us exploring further?

- Estyn's approach to complete full inspections within a four-day period - is this unrealistic given the scope of criteria they want to address?
- How would Estyn's approach fit into the Scottish System; how financially and structurally is it viable?
- There is a lot to cover within 3 broad areas – what does this mean for the school staff not having a self-evaluation framework sitting behind this? Huge agenda to cover.
- What would the potential workload for staff using this system entail? Are there unintended, unreasonable expectations?
- What's the role of the Local Authority (LA) within this new approach? How do they ensure their localities are improving?
- Estyn is currently not reporting on attainment – this raises questions for us and if we should continue looking at it? Particularly, in the secondary sector, we spend lot of time reporting back to schools on attainment journeys and measurers which is a useful key measure. There are core elements of the improvement journey that would have been missed without it.
- Interested in the 6-year cycle with interim visit included. However, there is a challenge around this in relation to current capacity (both internal to inspectorate and externally in local authorities) – we do need more regular opportunities for reflection, external view, opportunities to discuss progress etc.
- The reduced number of quality indicators is supportive. Rationalising the volume of QIs would make self-evaluation more manageable for schools – how do we rationalise what elements should stay?
- Positives from Estyn, 3 big areas made it very clear what inspection teams would look at.

- Value the approach of removal of gradings – consideration should be given to removing the grading system in Scotland.
- Can see the benefits of a nominated person for inspection that is within the school/ setting staff in Estyn model. This allows for relationship building between inspectorate and setting – someone that can champion inspection in the setting, facilitate learning of inspection process, expectations etc in-house.
- There is room for more senior leaders, subject specialists on curricular areas to become associate assessors (AAs).
- Inspection should be seen as something good for the school – shorter focussed inspections that are ongoing across different areas would improve relationships, rather than one inspection many years apart as presently.

Questions over Estyn model for Gaelic medium in Scotland

- Every school has Welsh language as part of their inspection criteria in Estyn, however there is not a current expectation of Gaelic provision in every school in Scotland.
- '1+2 policy' for learning and immersion education process for parents to request Gaelic education along with standard curriculum in Scotland.

Should we be considering different frameworks and/or models for different sectors? What are the benefits/disadvantages/risks?

- Do localised inspections focused on learner's experience provide a greater impact? What does this feedback on the national picture?
- Secondary education - want to endorse a more specific framework to ensure it aligns with pathways on offer/qualifications for tertiary education.
- Should be one framework for all but allow establishments to decide how they approach the framework in their own setting. We should not have separate frameworks for sectors.
- We should have one framework but with flexibility within the approach. There should also be more consistency around inspection models.
- Common model/framework with flexibility depending on contexts. Framework and model can be the same with reflections on what can be different. Local authorities can support guiding this.
- Attendance is currently a big issue. Instead of a thematic inspection, could we make a decision if an inspection could be more flexible. Adaptability for adding to inspection on a national scale and based on rising issues/themes in schools - prevents the school being targeted but would help to develop policy more quickly.
- The focus on particular quality indicators (QIs) could be applied to curricular areas to support the curriculum improvement cycle.
- A quicker turnaround model of inspection would be very useful to guide evidence for policy on national issues. Thematic inspections take a long time – instead have more flexible model with specific QIs for each school. Deep dives should be implemented on special issues on a national scale.

- Grading cause inspections to be reductive and takes away from the complexity of inspections and each schools unique context. Going through the documents and feedback is more important than grading.
- Grading is all people look at. It provides an easy way to criticise or highlight.
- Reductives view of grades. We should have clearly stated values and principles of what inspection is about so that can be agreed.
- Inspection should be something that drives improvement, not a judgement that can be created by grading system.
- Less focus on grading would be more supportive and reflective of continuous improvement- focussed approach from inspection, rather than a test for schools.
- Moving away from grades could benefit relationship building between HMIE and schools/school leaders – less fear of inspection and ‘us v them’ relationship that grading can contribute to.
- We need to use inspection better for the purpose of improvement and not judgement of a school. Inspection is an important tool to support improvement.
- We need to look at other countries’ inspection models continuously.
- Need clear review cycle to look at models. What is working well? Keeping it refreshed to ensure it is having positive impact.
- More PR and information from inspectorate about what inspections include and what expectations are. Sometimes local authority guidance is different from HMI guidelines which causes confusion.

What areas of content should we be focusing on regardless of the structure of a new framework? How do we ensure that a new framework is future proofed?

- We need to solidify the purpose of the new framework - what do we hope to gain from the outcomes? Need to establish evaluation process and outcomes from the onset.
- Wellbeing of staff needs to be at the forefront of the conversation.
- Engage with other religious groups/BME/minority communities.
- Schools tend to focus on QIs that are looked at during inspection. This is an unintended consequence as schools’ focus should not be determined by inspection requirement. A reduction or simplified set of QIs could change this perception.
- Statutory complaints, leadership of change and outcome for young people should be in focus. There should be more partnership with parents, a greater focus on wellbeing, and we need to demonstrate compliance with legislations.
- The pre-inspection build-up is worse than the actual inspection. Some feelings that we should consider unannounced inspections to reduce the stress and workload that is internally put upon staff. However, there also needs to be consideration from an equalities perspective, particularly neurodivergence and ASN. Is there a compromise to reduce the perception of increased workload without causing undue stress turning up on day one of inspection?
- There’s an ever-growing number of children/young people with ASN in Scotland (almost at 50% now) - would be useful to have something specific for inspecting ASN support in schools – special and mainstream?

8. AOB and date of next meeting (consideration of next meeting in person on 27 March 2025)

LT confirmed that there will be a poll circulated for the next meeting date and a poll to confirm a date for an in-person meeting.

Conclusion

Next meeting (if applicable): Change of meeting – poll for alternative meeting

Summary of next steps/actions (if applicable):

- Poll for next meeting
- Poll for in-person meeting when and how

The Chair thanked all for their contributions and discussions.

Meeting end.