

**Section 1: People involved in inspection**

School inspections involve a range of people who each play an important role. HM Inspectors lead the inspections. Teams can also include associate assessors. Associate assessors are experienced school leaders, middle leaders or local authority staff who join inspection teams.

Members of the public who are not education professionals are also sometimes involved in inspection teams - these people are called lay members. They are trained by HM Inspectors and provide a lay person's views on areas such as the school's links with parents and the local community.

To build a well-rounded understanding of the school's work, HM Inspectors meet with learners, staff, school leaders, parents and carers, local authority representatives/proprietors of independent schools, and partner organisations.

**We would like your views on the range of people involved in inspection and the value they bring.**

**1.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that having associate assessors in inspection teams strengthens inspection?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

**1.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree that lay members should be part of inspection teams?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

**1.3 Senior leaders in schools are invited to join parts of the inspection process, such as observing learning alongside inspectors or taking part in professional discussions with the inspection team.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that this strengthens inspection?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

**1.4 To what extent do you agree or disagree that local authority staff/proprietors of independent schools should contribute to school inspections by sharing relevant knowledge about the local context, including existing partnerships and support available to the school?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

**1.5 Inspectors already gather the views of children and young people through questionnaires, focus groups, and direct conversations.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that children and young people should have increased opportunities to contribute to inspection?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

**If you answered 'strongly agree' or 'agree', what approaches would ensure children and young people can meaningfully share their views during inspection?**

**1.6 Inspectors already gather the views of staff through questionnaires, focus groups and direct conversations.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that school staff should have increased opportunities to share their views during inspection?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

**If you answered 'strongly agree' or 'agree', what approaches would ensure school staff can meaningfully share their views during inspection?**

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

**1.7. Inspectors already gather the views of parents and carers through questionnaires, focus groups and meeting the Chair of the Parent Council.**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that parents and carers should have increased opportunities to share their views during inspection?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

**If you answered 'strongly agree' or 'agree', what approaches would ensure parents and carers can meaningfully share their views during inspection?**

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## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

### Section 2: Inspection frequency and selection

There are around 2,500 schools in Scotland. Currently, there is no fixed cycle for inspections. HM Inspectors carry out around 250 inspections each year, using a national sampling approach. Schools can also be selected for inspection as a result of risk. This means that, on average, a primary, secondary or special school may be inspected once every 10 years, although some schools may wait longer. Some people feel that not being inspected for a long time can lead to uncertainty or create anticipation and a sense of pressure when inspection does occur.

Under the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#), Scottish Ministers will be required to set a minimum frequency for school inspections by regulation. The Chief Inspector of Education will then be responsible for determining how often inspections happen in practice, provided the minimum is met.

**We would like your views on how often school inspection should take place and whether all schools should be visited within a defined period.**

**2.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the current sampling model, where around 10% of schools in Scotland are inspected each year, should continue?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

**2.2 In your view, how should schools be selected for inspection?**

- ☐ Sampling-based: schools should continue to be selected using a national sampling approach, based on levels of risk, performance or context
- ☐ Fixed-cycle: every school should be inspected within a fixed national cycle (e.g. every 5-7 years)
- ☐ Combined approach: a combination of a clear cycle for all schools, with additional inspection based on risk
- ☐ No preference

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

**2.3 In future, how often do you think each school should be inspected?**

- ☐ At least once every 10 years
- ☐ At least once every 7 years
- ☐ At least once every 5 years
- ☐ Only when there is a concern
- ☐ None of the above
- ☐ No preference

**Do you have a different view on how often inspections should take place?**

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## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

### Section 3: Use of grades in inspection

HM Inspectors currently use a six-point grading scale to provide a high-level summary of how well a school is performing in key areas.

Grade	What it means
Excellent	Outstanding and sector-leading
Very good	Major strengths
Good	Important strengths, with some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak	Important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory	Major weaknesses

Grades are published in the school's inspection report and are intended to provide a clear and consistent way of reporting findings.

**We would like your views on the use of the six-point grading scale to summarise how good a school is and whether this approach should be kept.**

**3.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that using grades helps provide a clear overview of how well a school is doing?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

**3.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree that grades help schools, parents, and local authorities/proprietors of independent schools understand what needs to improve?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

**3.3 To what extent do you agree or disagree that grades can oversimplify what is happening in a school?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

**3.4 Do you think school inspections should continue to use grades to summarise how well a school is performing?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

**3.5 If grades continue to be used, what should happen to the current six-point scale? Please select the one option that best reflects your view.**

- ☐ Keep the current six-point scale
- ☐ Keep the six-point scale, but change the meaning of each grade
- ☐ Use a shorter grading scale with fewer points and descriptions



## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

**3.6 If school inspection no longer used grades to evaluate and report on key areas, how should inspection reports show the quality of education in a school?**

**Please select all options that apply.**

- ☐ A clear written summary explaining the strengths and areas for improvement
- ☐ A statement about how effective the school is overall
- ☐ A statement showing how confident inspectors are that the school can keep improving
- ☐ Other (please comment in the box below)

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

### Section 4: Notification of inspection

Currently, a school is given two-and-a-half weeks' notice of an inspection. This enables the inspection team to plan the inspection activities alongside the headteacher and to give staff time to complete pre-inspection paperwork. It also provides time for parents, pupils, staff and partner organisations to complete pre-inspection questionnaires and for the inspectors to collate and analyse responses.

**We would like your views on whether the current notification period is appropriate.**

#### 4.1 How much notice do you think should schools receive before an inspection?

- ☐ About 2 days' notice (the minimum needed for planning)
- ☐ About the same as now (around 2.5 weeks)
- ☐ 3 to 4 weeks' notice
- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ Other (please comment in the box below)

**Section 5: Pre-inspection**

Before an inspection takes place, HM Inspectors ask the school's senior leadership team to complete a self-evaluation summary using selected quality indicators from [How Good Is Our School? \(4th Edition\)](#).

This summary highlights the school's own view of what it does well, how it knows this and what it is working to improve. Schools are also asked to share pre-inspection questionnaires with learners, parents, staff, and partners. The responses go directly to the inspection team. These steps help inspectors understand the school's context, performance, and the views of its community before their visit begins.

**We would like your views on what happens in the time before an inspection takes place.**

**5.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the self-evaluation summary helps make sure that inspection starts with the school's own view of its strengths and development areas?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

**5.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree that schools should be able to use existing documents - like their Standards and Quality Report and their School Improvement Plan - instead of writing a separate self-evaluation summary for inspection?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

5.3. How important is it to gather views from each of the following groups before an inspection?

Group	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important	Not sure
Children and young people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School staff, including support staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parents and carers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Organisations and partners who work with the school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Section 6: Design and content of a school inspection framework**

HM Inspectors use a framework, [How Good Is Our School? \(4th Edition\)](#), to ensure a consistent approach to evaluating the quality of education in schools, including primary, secondary, and special schools. Inspectors also use [How Good Is our School? \(4<sup>th</sup> Edition\)](#) alongside the [Advice on Gaelic Education](#) when inspecting Gaelic Medium Education. The same framework is also used by schools to support their own self-evaluation, helping them reflect on what they do well and where they can improve. This shared approach ensures a common understanding of what high-quality education looks like across the education system. The framework includes a set of 'quality indicators' that cover key areas such as learning and teaching, leadership, wellbeing, and raising attainment.

[How Good Is Our School? \(4th Edition\)](#), has not been updated since it was launched in 2015.

**We would like your views on the format, purpose and content of a new school inspection framework.**

**6.1 Which of the following best describes your view on the format of a new school inspection framework?**

- ☐ Single framework for all schools
- ☐ Different frameworks for different types of schools (e.g. primary, secondary, special)
- ☐ One main framework for all schools with guidance that can be adapted for each different type of school
- ☐ Not sure

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

### 6.2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about a school inspection framework?

Statement	Agree strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	Not sure
It is helpful to use the same framework for both inspection and self-evaluation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Annual (or more regular) updates to the framework would help schools use it more effectively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Including examples of effective practice would make the framework more useful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The list below shows some of the key areas that could be included in a future school inspection framework. The framework sets out what matters in evaluating the quality of education and helps ensure consistency across schools. Not every inspection will cover every area of the framework. Inspectors may draw on any areas in the framework when planning and conducting an inspection, depending on the focus of the visit.

### 6.3. How important do you think each of these areas is for inclusion in a school inspection framework?

Key area (listed alphabetically)	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important	Not sure
Attendance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Curriculum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Digital technologies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health and wellbeing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inclusion, equity, equality and diversity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learner achievement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learner attainment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learner progress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

Key area (listed alphabetically)	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not at all important	Not sure
Learner transitions and planning for progression to positive post-school destinations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learner, staff and parent voice in shaping and evaluating school improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning, teaching and assessment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meeting educational support needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Outdoor education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Partnerships with communities, other services and organisations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Partnerships with parents/carers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relationships and behaviour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safeguarding and promoting welfare	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School culture and ethos	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Senior phase pathway planning and vocational learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skills development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff wellbeing and professional learning culture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of evidence to support school improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Do you think anything is missing from this list? Please suggest any other areas you consider important.

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

### Section 7: Reporting on the outcome of inspections

We are reviewing how inspection findings are reported and shared following school inspections. Currently, HM Inspectors publish:

- a short letter for parents and carers, summarising strengths, areas for development, and inspection grades
- a separate, detailed report for the school, setting out the full findings
- collated results from the pre-inspection questionnaires

This section asks questions about whether this approach continues to meet the needs of different audiences, or whether it should change. We want to understand:

- whether inspection findings should be presented differently for different audiences
- how inspection findings can be made more accessible and useful to children and young people
- how reporting can better support the purposes of inspection as set out in the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 2025](#)

**Your views will help us decide whether to retain the current reporting model or introduce changes to improve clarity, accessibility, and impact.**

#### 7.1 How should inspection findings be presented to different audiences?

**Please select the option which best reflects your view.**

- ☐ A single inspection report for all audiences (e.g. schools, local authorities/proprietors of independent schools, parents and carers)
- ☐ Two inspection reports – one with detailed information for schools and local authorities/proprietors of independent schools, and a shorter, easy-to-understand version for parents and carers
- ☐ Other (please comment in the box below)



## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

**7.2 What do you think are effective ways of sharing inspection findings with children and young people?**

**7.3 What makes an inspection report useful to you?**

**Please select all that apply.**

- ☐ Language and content which reflects the context of the school
- ☐ Clear summary of strengths and areas for development
- ☐ Timely publication after the inspection
- ☐ Clear explanation of any inspection grades if these are part of the inspection
- ☐ Examples of effective practice
- ☐ Recommendations for improvement
- ☐ Clear explanation of what the school / local authority / proprietor of independent schools is expected to do next
- ☐ Indication of the support needed to make improvements
- ☐ Any planned follow-up activity by HM Inspectors
- ☐ Other (please comment in the box below)

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

7.4 From the list below, which three features of inspection reporting do you think matter most?

- ☐ Language and content which reflects the context of the school
- ☐ Clear summary of strengths and areas for development
- ☐ Timely publication after the inspection
- ☐ Clear explanation of any inspection grades if these are part of the inspection
- ☐ Examples of effective practice
- ☐ Recommendations for improvement
- ☐ Clear explanation of what the school / local authority / proprietor of independent schools is expected to do next
- ☐ Indication of the support needed to make improvements
- ☐ Any planned follow-up activity by HM Inspectors

**Section 8: Inspecting nursery classes**

Some schools include nursery classes. These are inspected using the new, separate [Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sector](#) developed by HM Inspectors and the Care Inspectorate. This framework is in use from September 2025. If a nursery class has been inspected by the Care Inspectorate within the last 18 months, it may not be included in the school inspection. This arrangement will continue.

When HM Inspectors do include a nursery class as part of a school inspection, it currently receives a separate grade and summary of inspection findings.

We are not consulting on the new joint framework or inspection arrangements.

**We would like your views specifically on whether nursery classes should continue to receive separate grades and summary of findings when included in a school inspection.**

**8.1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that, when a nursery class is included in a school inspection, its evaluation should be reported separately from the rest of the school?**

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Not sure

## School inspections are changing: shape what's next

### Section 9: Inspection follow-up

School improvement is based on the principle that schools continuously evaluate their own work, set priorities, and take action where improvement is needed. This process is supported by local authorities/proprietors of independent schools.

Currently, as part of inspection, HM Inspectors consider how well a school can lead its own improvement independently and/or supported by the local authority/proprietors of independent schools. Where an inspection team identifies that a school is not providing a sufficient quality of education, HM Inspectors continue to engage with the school. This may include a follow-up inspection.

**We would like to hear your views on how HM Inspectors should engage with schools after an inspection.**

#### **9.1 In what circumstances do you think HM Inspectors should engage with a school after an inspection?**

- ☐ Only when a school is not providing a sufficient quality of education
- ☐ When HM Inspectors establish that a school needs support to make improvements
- ☐ All schools should receive some form of follow-up
- ☐ Other (please comment in the box below)