HMIE | His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland
Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba

Principles of inspection and review

Introduction

This document outlines the principles which HMIE is committed to following in the design and implementation of our approaches to inspection and review. These principles provide a key point of reference to inform the development of any new approaches to inspection or the review of any of HMIE's existing approaches. Beneath this set of principles, HMIE will develop and maintain specific inspection and review guidance which describes how we work in particular sectors or areas of provision. These show how our inspection and review principles are being put into practice in the particular sector/area concerned. The full set of inspection and review guidance will be placed in the relevant sector/ area sections of our website.

Our approaches to inspection and review focus on the ability of an establishment or service to evaluate itself (referred to as 'self-evaluation'). We use these findings to take forward the institution's plan to improve. We focus on the impact of the establishment or service on users and the quality of leadership and management in helping staff achieve the best outcomes for users. We observe and evaluate practice at first hand and gain a view of what learners or other users experience.

The rest of this paper provides further information on the ten principles.

Our ten principles

What do the principles mean in practice?

Independence, impartiality and accountability

This means that, in all our inspection and review frameworks, we will:

- listen carefully to the views of service providers and users but reach our own professional, evidence-based judgments;
- ensure an independent focus on raising educational standards, stimulating improvement and supporting the delivery of national and local outcomes;
- provide impartial and professional evaluations of the quality of educational provision in ways which give Scottish Ministers and users of our services assurance, accountability and a high degree of confidence in our work;
- establish clear standards and criteria against which establishments/services can be evaluated;
- maintain an objective stance, testing assumptions, checking evidence and building up a picture of provision before evaluating;
- apply inspection and review guidance to allow us to report clearly on the quality of provision nationally and where appropriate, to national reporting systems;
- ensure staff in establishments are aware of our feedback, comments and complaints policy, which sets out how establishments or individuals can respond to their inspection or review and what will happen with their complaint;
- have clear lines of accountability; and
- comment impartially on the influence, impact and outcomes of policies to Scottish Ministers and users of services.

Having all learners and users at the heart of inspection and review

This means that, in all our inspection and review frameworks, we will:

- give priority to the experiences of all learners and users and evaluate how their learning needs are being met;
- give priority to the interests and health and wellbeing of all learners and the outcomes they achieve;
- listen to and act upon the feedback from learners, users and other relevant stakeholders during inspections and reviews;
- report the findings of inspection and review in ways that are clear, concise and meet the needs and expectations of the users; and
- continue to develop ways to increase the involvement of learners or users in all inspection and review models in line with our duty in legislation to have a substantial focus on and involvement of service users.

Equality and diversity

This means that, in all our inspection and review frameworks, we will:

- model good practice in eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and diversity and addressing inequity, leading to positive outcomes for all children, young people and adult learners, regardless of their background;
- be aligned to legislative requirements and take account of the Equality Act, 2010 which places a duty on public authorities to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations;
- • seek information and views from a diverse range of learners, participants, staff and communities, including those from protected characteristic groups, looked after children and care leavers;
- explore how the establishment or service responds to the requirements of equality legislation and statutory duties;
- look at the extent to which the establishment or service identifies key individuals and groups who may experience barriers to learning and progress, and take action to meet their needs; and
- identify and share effective practice, within and across sectors, in eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and diversity, and addressing inequality.

Transparency and mutual respect

This means that, in all our inspection and review frameworks, we will:

- give priority to building relationships and being open about our processes and evaluations;
- involve staff being inspected or reviewed appropriately in the inspection or review process to ensure our work and evaluations are transparent;
- base our inspections and review on frameworks that support self-evaluation and have been developed in partnership with key stakeholders;
- promote professional dialogue about the data which helps us to reach judgments about performance; and
- provide clear and well-evidenced evaluations and public accounts of our findings to inform stakeholders about the quality of provision in the establishment or service.

Observing practice and experiences directly: focusing on outcomes and impact

This means that, in all our inspection and review frameworks, we will:

- gather and analyse evidence based on first-hand experience of learners and/or users of services, interacting directly with learners, staff, parents and other stakeholders;
- engage in dialogue with practitioners about the quality of learning and teaching, training or service delivery that we have observed;

- review the outcomes for all learners and focus on those who are underachieving; and
- continuously review how to achieve greatest impact from the knowledge of effective practice which is gained through inspections, reviews and other evaluative activity.

Building on self-evaluation

This means that, in all our inspection and review frameworks, we will:

- start by understanding the establishment or service's self-evaluation;
- work with staff in establishments or services to identify key themes from self-evaluation which will help to focus inspection or review activity;
- explore the effectiveness of the establishment/service's self-evaluation arrangements and, where we believe these are of good quality, place added reliance on the evidence produced by the establishment/service itself to streamline the inspection process; and
- report on the establishment or service's capacity to improve.

Working in partnership with users of our services and other providers/ inspection bodies

This means that, in all our inspection and review frameworks, we will:

- work constructively in partnership with providers in designing our frameworks and to develop consistency through shared protocols, training and agreed ways of working;
- actively seek to develop and enhance, where appropriate, joint activity which puts into practice our 'duty to cooperate' with other audit, inspection and regulatory bodies as laid out in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act, 2010;
- inspire confidence in those being inspected/reviewed through partners working together in a joined-up, consistent way;
- ensure that activity is founded upon and responsive to professional engagement; and
- follow the PRAISE framework to ensure all inspections and reviews are conducted in a positive, professional and constructive manner.

Improvement and capacity building

This means that, in all our inspection and review frameworks, we will:

- give priority to supporting improvement through constructive professional dialogue;
- promote a learning approach in order to learn from the knowledge and experience of others and share our knowledge and experience;
- encourage staff to share their innovative and highly effective practice and promote innovation during inspection and review activity;
- where appropriate, identify recommendations for improvement;

- make a professional judgment about an establishment's or service's capacity to improve and provide assurance or intervene in cases of weak service provision;
- continue to engage in follow-through activity to support improvement where necessary;
- train and include current serving practitioners (e.g. professional associates) in inspection/review teams as a way of spreading knowledge and skills in evaluation across the education and children's services workforce; and
- seek to bring about improvement in standards and quality through supporting government policy-making with our evidence and advice.
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Proportionality, responsiveness and assessment of risk

This means that, in all our inspection and review frameworks, we will:

- apply more proportionate and responsive approaches in order to provide public assurance and report confidently on the quality of provision nationally at appropriate intervals;
- gather enough intelligence on a sector or a sample of provision within the sector to report on best practice;
- work with those establishments/services (or areas/aspects of provision) which are judged to be highest risk in terms of their potential adverse impact on learners or users;
- make effective use of inspectors'/reviewers' and staff/providers' time during inspection and review;
- • place the minimum necessary demands on providers that we are inspecting/reviewing prior to, during and after inspection and review and give the shortest appropriate notice of inspection and review to help avoid excessive preparation;
- ensure that the size of team takes account of the nature of the establishment or service; and incorporate approaches to following through on inspections and reviews that are appropriate and proportionate to the potential seriousness of the specific areas for improvement.

Best value

This means that, in all our inspection and review frameworks, we will:

- promote best value in our inspections and continually review them to ensure they are efficient and effective and take action to modify or stop them if they are no longer necessary;
- continually review our approaches to ensure that we help others to benefit more fully from the most effective practice that we find, in ways that will have the greatest impact;
- deliver benefits in proportion with costs and take corrective action where the evidence suggests improvements can be achieved; and
- seek out and capitalise on opportunities to work together with other inspection bodies, organisations and agencies on shared and cross-cutting themes in the interests of greater cost effectiveness.

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