

17 June 2016

Directors of Education
Head teachers and Managers Schools, Nurseries and Early Learning settings
By email

Dear colleague,

Changes to Education Scotland inspections in August 2016

Alastair Delaney, in his role as Director of inspection strategy within Education Scotland wrote to you in August 2015 and in February and April of this year to keep you informed about the work he has been leading to develop new approaches to inspection and review. As you know, he led an extensive programme of engagement with teachers, learners, parents, local authorities, and other stakeholders, including children and young people, before we tried out some new approaches to inspection and review over the course of 2015-16.

We have evaluated the experience and evidence of these 'try-outs' and I am now pleased to let you know that new approaches to inspection will be introduced from August 2016, as outlined below.

We are introducing a range of new inspection models to suit particular circumstances and contexts. This will enable us to respond with greater agility and flexibility as key educational policies and priorities develop. The inspection models to be introduced in a phased approach from August 2016 are:

- Full inspection model
- Short inspection model
- Localised thematic model
- Neighbourhood model

These inspection models will use the new Quality Indicators included in *How Good is Our School?* (4th edition) (HGIOS4) which was published in September 2015. It is expected that schools are already using these indicators for self-evaluation and planning for improvement.

The HGIOS4 Quality Indicators to be evaluated on the six-point scale in full school inspections have been re-focused to align with the new National Improvement Framework, which we have been directly involved in developing with Scottish Government, partners and stakeholders across the education system. They are:

- 1.3 Leadership of Change
- 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement
- 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.

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 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.

A further QI will also be negotiated with the school. This will enable school staff and inspectors to focus on a particularly challenging issue or new initiative with the aim of bringing about improvement through professional dialogue. This QI will not be evaluated on the six-point scale.

In inspections of nursery classes and early learning and childcare centres, we shall use the equivalent QIs from *How good is our early learning and childcare?*

A further improvement that I am particularly pleased to announce is that changes are being made to improve how we can better communicate inspection findings to parents. From August, a new format of report will be introduced. This will be a short letter which will highlight strengths and aspects for development. It will include a table indicating the QI grades against the six-point scale. I am very pleased that both the National Parent Forum and the Scottish Parent Teacher Council have worked with us on this approach and are very supportive of these changes.

We will now also publish online the inspection evidence we gather during the inspection process in a new and clearer format.

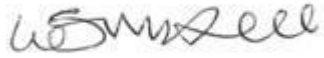
A key priority in developing these new models is to ensure that inspections do not result in unnecessary extra work for teachers and learners. In addition, as indicated above, these models are firmly in alignment with the National Improvement Framework and the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

We are committed to continuing to review and develop our approaches to inspection, and to continuing to work with our External Reference Group of key stakeholders. We are doing more trial work on matters such as shortening the length of notice and intend to adapt our approaches accordingly when fully evaluated.

We will also be engaging further with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education And Skills how to meet his commitment to strengthen further the role of inspection as a positive driver within the Government's overall approach to driving improvement in quality and performance across the Scottish education system. We will keep you informed of further changes to inspection arrangements that flow from these discussions in due course.

Education Scotland is issuing information on these changes through a wide range of channels. If you require further information to assist in explaining these changes to your staff then please contact your Area Lead Officer.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Maxwell". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Bill Maxwell
Chief Executive