



Community Services: Education

Argyll House
Alexandra Parade
Dunoon PA23 8AJ

To: Heads of all Educational Establishments

Dear Colleague

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) - inspections and follow-through arrangements

1 Background

Each year, HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) inspects and reports on the quality of education in pre-school centres, primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, community learning and development services, colleges, and residential educational provision. HMIE also inspect the education functions of local authorities and carry out joint inspections of services for children.

HMIE inspections:

- assure the public about the quality of education provided;
- promote improvement and successful innovation;
- contribute to the Scottish Government's measures for improvement in public services.

Inspections and reviews are independent, rigorous, open and fair. They reassure learners and their parents and focus on how learners' needs and entitlements are being met. Inspection reports are concise and meet the requirements of parents and others to whom they are addressed.

Inspections and reviews build on an establishment's self-evaluation, little information is asked for in advance. They promote equality and positive attitudes to social and cultural diversity in all establishments and services that are inspected or reviewed and place a strong emphasis on supporting improvement and positive innovation.

Inspectors and reviewers gather first-hand evidence of learning and its outcomes. All inspections and reviews use questionnaires and face-to-face meetings that gather the views of learners, parents and staff. Inspectors take time to discuss staff's work and its context with them. They give close attention to what staff say and offer advice whenever possible.

Please note that all up-to-date briefing materials in relation to inspections are now on the HMIE website and these should be downloaded for all staff as further information to this education management circular. A school profile is no longer required.

<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/AboutUs/InspectionResources>

2 The inspection process

New inspections, which started in session 2008/09 feature:

- questionnaires for pupils, parents and staff;
- advice on what is expected when presenting school's self-evaluation;
- self-evaluation as the starting point (schools should be open and honest with HMIE teams);
- a significantly reduced requirement for pre-inspection information;
- inspection activity taking place within one week, starting at Monday lunchtime;
- the possibility that inspection activity may conclude early if the school is seen to be operating at a high level in relation to the core QIs;
- a shorter, more concise inspection report that will be finalised much earlier;
- formal reporting on 5 QIs (1.1, 2.1, 5.1, 5.3, 5.9);
- commentary on other aspects without QI evaluation, for example: Curriculum for Excellence and innovation; GIRFEC; equality; achievement; leadership; transitions; teaching and learning; partnerships and community, culture and ethos; vision and values;
- a report structured in 5 main areas of '*Journey to Excellence*'.

3 Curriculum for Excellence

HMIE will look underneath the four capacities to see what is happening in practice.

CfE will be a central feature of the new inspections through:

- engagement in professional dialogue;
- encouraging innovation and disseminating good practice;
- encouraging the 'calculated risk'.

Inspections in 2009/10 will expect to see the 'green shoots' of development of CfE, including:

- a clearly charted course;
- risk assessment, evaluation and review;
- teamwork;
- co-ordination;
- taking account of tides, currents and winds;
- ensuring stability;
- leadership (distributed).

Use of Journey to Excellence for a wide range of professional development packs, eg active learning.

4 The authority's support for schools

4.1 Prior to the inspection

Link quality improvement officers (QIOs) support their schools in areas such as:

- support with self-evaluation processes;
- moderation of the school's self-evaluation;
- provision of external support to subject departments from QIT in discussion with the head teacher;
- attainment analysis/discussion/improvement planning.

Initial preparation will include:

- an inspection seminar;
- monitoring and evaluation guidance;
- guidance on procedures;
- HMIE questionnaires;
- providing hospitality;
- what to provide as background information;
- presenting attainment data;
- 'Click and Go' history reports;
- guidance on preparing staff;
- what happens in classroom visits;
- what planning is required;

- providing important documents: improvement plan; standards and quality report, school handbook;
- presenting attainment groups;
- meeting with pupils and pupil roles;
- focus groups.

Intensive support from link QIO and QIT in consultation with the head teacher might include:

- moderation of school's self-evaluation and supporting evidence;
- support for staff who will be interviewed eg PTs English, mathematics and 2 additional subject areas;
- support for strategic leaders of pupil support;
- preparation for professional dialogue - self evaluation, evidence and planning for improvement;
- supporting staff in understanding attainment data and making valid conclusions eg Fyfe and STACS analyses;
- support with preparation of presentation if required;
- support/advice with compilation of documentation;
- presentation of the school - using your QIO as a 'critical friend'.

4.2 During the inspection

The link QIO will maintain contact with the head teacher in order to provide any support and advice as required. The link QIO will attend the feedback session on day 5 of the inspection and will:

- make detailed notes;
- provide the HT with a word processed copy at the beginning of the next week.

4.3 After the inspection

HMIE will arrange to discuss the draft report with the head of establishment. They also seek comments from the education authority. The draft report is confidential at this stage.

The link QIO will be available to discuss the draft report with the HT and offer advice.

When the full report is published the link QIO will:

- discuss the report with the HT;
- support the HT and senior leaders in developing the improvement/action plan;

- in consultation with the HT, deploy the full resources of the QIT to support the implementation of the plan;
- monitor and evaluate progress with the plan;
- produce a follow-through report to the inspection report.

The level of support will depend on HMIE findings.

Copies of the report in final form will be sent in confidence to the Executive Director of Community Services in advance of the publishing date for the information of the Spokesperson for Education, the local elected member(s) for that establishment, the head of establishment and in the case of a denominational school, the appropriate denominational body.

5 The inspection process (from *A Guide to School Inspection*, HMIE, 2009)

The process begins when an inspection administrator contacts the centre or school to make arrangements about the inspection. It is important that the centre or school is clear about the nature and purpose of the inspection team's visit and about any documents or evidence that may be required.

All staff, as well as some children and parents, will be given questionnaires to find out their views about the centre or school.

The number of inspectors visiting will depend on the size of the centre and the nature of its work. Sometimes Care Commission officers will work with inspectors to look at the quality of care and education jointly.

5.1 The first day

The inspection usually begins with a meeting where the head or management team talk to the inspectors about the centre or school, what it is good at, about some of its important developments and areas of good practice, and about plans for improvement. This meeting lasts about an hour and may also involve discussion about young people's learning experiences, their achievements beyond the centre or school day, and how they may be involved within their local communities.

The centre or school will be expected to provide different types of evidence to show that it is able to recognise its own strengths and areas for development as well as its capacity to make improvements.

How well the centre or school knows itself, through self-evaluation, is one of the most important aspects of the inspection.

5.2 Planning the timetable

The inspection team will meet to discuss what they have learned about the centre or school. They will draw up an inspection timetable and decide what needs to be done

by each member of the team. Some inspectors might arrange interviews with groups of young people, while others will plan to look at particular learner's experiences.

5.3 Briefing the staff

Usually at the end of the first day the managing inspector will meet with the staff to explain the inspection process and what is likely to happen over the following days. Staff will be encouraged to ask questions and share any concerns. Their briefing will not last longer than twenty minutes, and its main aim is to inform and reassure staff about the nature and purpose of the inspection.

5.4 Getting the picture

Inspectors need to be sure that they have the right picture of what is happening in the centre or school. This is done by visiting classes, playrooms or work areas to watch parts of activities or lessons. They might get involved with what pupils are doing, chat to young people about their work or other aspects of the centre or school life. The inspector and the teacher may take a few minutes to discuss what went well and any ideas for improvement.

5.5 Professional dialogue

During the week inspectors will provide opportunities for professional dialogue with staff. This includes a session where staff can discuss aspects of their work, for example, teaching and learning, the care of young people, or national developments such as Curriculum for Excellence. There may also be opportunities to reflect on the work done by other centres or schools on their journey towards excellence. During the inspection time is also set aside for staff to drop in and chat informally with inspectors, share good practice or clarify evidence.

5.6 Heads up

Each day the managing inspector and the head of the establishment will meet to review the findings of the inspectors. This will ensure that all staff are kept up to date with the thoughts of the inspection team. The head may wish to provide additional evidence or let the inspector know what staff are feeling about the inspection, and whether there are any areas of concern.

5.7 Meeting pupils

Inspectors will also meet with groups of young people to find out how they feel about their place of learning and to listen to any suggestions for improvement. Inspectors will ask pupils about their learning experiences and find out about ways they are involved in their local communities.

The lay member's role in the school inspection team is to provide a view of the school through discussions with parents, support staff, members of the community and young people.

5.8 Health and nutrition

Most inspection teams include a health and nutrition inspector. This person makes sure that the health and wellbeing of all pupils is being met. This inspector will meet with pupils, health promotion coordinators, canteen staff, and others, such as school nurses and sports coordinators. The inspector will look at the effects that the school's health programme has on pupils and will observe a range of health activities, as well as lunch and snack arrangement.

5.9 Disengagement

Sometimes inspectors may start observing playroom or classroom work sooner than originally planned. This is called disengagement and it happens if the inspectors are confident that the evidence gathered by the team supports the school's own evaluation of its strengths and aspects for improvement. If this happens the inspection team will offer to work with staff on suitable improvement activities during the remainder of their visit.

5.10 Quality outcomes

Towards the end of the week the inspection team will meet to discuss their findings and to decide how the centre or school is performing in a number of key areas.

They use quality indicators to evaluate:

- improvements in performance;
- learners' experiences;
- meeting learning needs;
- the curriculum;
- self-evaluation.

Inspectors will share their evidence and draw on the centre's or school's self-evaluation to come to an agreed view. Everyone will discuss what they consider to be the key strengths and main areas for improvement.

5.11 Sharing the findings

At the end of the inspection, inspectors meet with centre or school managers and a representative from the local authority to share their findings. The information provided at this meeting is very detailed and it gives a full picture of what the inspection team has found. Afterwards the managing inspector will meet with the rest of the staff to outline briefly the key strengths and areas for development.

5.12 The report

Following the inspection a report is published. The inspection report is short and concise and written in a way that can be understood by everyone. It does not include

all the detail provided on the last day of inspection, but it covers important things about the quality of education in the centre or school.

6 Publication of inspection reports

The Executive Director of Community Services and the appropriate head of service are the members of the education service responsible for the implementation of the procedures associated with the distribution and follow-through for all inspection reports.

Multiple copies of the report will be delivered directly to the school by HMIE. The head of establishment will issue the report to staff, parents, and other interested parties and arrange for copies to be sent to the local library. The head of establishment should also arrange an early closure the day before publication so that the report can be discussed with staff.

The authority is sent the report electronically by HMIE for authority officers, communications team, elected members and other interested organisations or persons.

The parent council chairperson should arrange for the report to be discussed at the next parent council meeting. The parent council should report any issues arising to the appropriate head of service.

The head of service will request an action plan from the head of establishment to address the recommendations made in the report. This action should be sent to the head of service 6 weeks after the publication of the report.

7 Follow-through procedures

The head of establishment and the quality improvement officer in conjunction with the quality standards manager are the key persons in the follow-through procedures. They are involved at the draft stages and will be able to assess the internal and external implications of the report.

The head of establishment is responsible for preparing an action plan within a period of 8 weeks from the date of the publication of the report. This action plan should be designed to address the issues which have been identified in the report and should specify the objectives to be achieved, the staff responsible for each objective, the criteria to be used in assessing progress and the timescale associated with each objective. The action plan should also indicate any external support required for its implementation.

The action plan should be submitted to the head of service for approval. Once approved, a copy is passed to the Quality Standards Manager.

The head of establishment should arrange to discuss the action plan with the parent council once approval for the plan has been given.

HMIE will conduct a follow-through inspection between 12 and 24 months after the publication of the report. The purpose of this inspection is to evaluate the progress made by the establishment and by the education service addressing the main points for action identified in the original report.

The opportunity is provided to the head of establishment, the chair of the parent council and to the appropriate education personnel to comment on the draft of the follow-up inspection report prior to its publication.

The Executive Director of Community Services will issue, in advance of the official publication date, copies of the follow-up report to:

- the head of establishment;
- the Provost, and Education Spokesperson;
- the chair of the parent council;
- the local elected members;
- the local church representative in the case of a denominational school.

Additional copies of the follow-up report will be forwarded to the establishment to allow copies to be made available to staff, parents and other interested organisations or persons.

In instances where an establishment and/or the education service have failed to meet the agreed criteria, a further follow-up inspection may be deemed necessary.

The head of establishment and the area education officer in conjunction with the Quality Standards Manager should undertake any further action required in response to the follow-up inspection.

I hope that you will find the information helpful.

Yours sincerely

Executive Director of Community Services

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