

# MONITORING INSPECTION GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

January 2017

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ETI: Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners



Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments



## **MONITORING INSPECTION**

### **BACKGROUND**

Key stakeholders generally agree that inspections by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) should be more proportionate to risk with more frequent, shorter inspection activities where that is appropriate. As a consequence, the ETI aims to visit schools (outside of the full inspection or follow-up process) formally approximately every three years either through a Sustaining Improvement Inspection (SII) or Monitoring Inspection (Min). This is in addition to the incidental district visits undertaken by district inspectors.

From January 2017, schools that were evaluated as having the capacity<sup>11</sup> to identify and bring about improvement or better will have a SII. They will receive a SII within approximately three years of the previous inspection.

Schools not having a full inspection, follow-up inspection or SII will have a MIn that will determine the type and timescale of the next inspection activity.

New/amalgamated schools may also have a MIn as a baseline inspection that will inform the timescale of their first full inspection.

Schools that have full inspections will be inspected under current arrangements (with some minor amendments from January 2017) with the appropriate follow-up activity if required.

### **PHASES TO BE INCLUDED IN MONITORING INSPECTIONS**

- Primary
- Post-primary

### **WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE MONITORING INSPECTION?**

The aim of the MIn is to evaluate the extent to which the leadership and management of the school uses self-evaluation effectively to inform the school development planning process to bring about improvement. The inspection will focus on action to promote improvement and its impact on learning and teaching and outcomes for learners, and the school's evaluation of safeguarding. Together these evaluations and the outcome of the inspection will inform future inspection activity as part of ETI's risk-based approach.

### **HOW WILL THE MONITORING INSPECTION WORK?**

#### **NOTIFICATION**

- Schools will be notified by email and telephone two working days prior to the MIn by the Inspection Services Team. (IST)<sup>2</sup>
- Further guidance on the inspection process will be provided by IST at the time of notification.
- Any queries arising during this phone call can be clarified during the initial meeting with the principal on the morning of the inspection; it is not necessary for the principal

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<sup>1</sup> The overall effectiveness conclusions changed in September 2015.

<sup>2</sup> There may be occasions due to school/public holidays where notification will be more than two working days.

to contact the Reporting Inspector (RI) directly (as s/he may be on inspection and may not be able to return a telephone call or email).

- The principal should inform the chair of the board of governors that the MIn is taking place and make arrangements for the report back at the end of day two at approximately 3:30pm.
- If available, a base room should be provided for the RI to work.
- The Complaints Procedure is available on the ETI website.

## **THE INSPECTION**

- The inspection will be conducted by the District Inspector (DI), wherever possible, in the role of RI<sup>3</sup>.
- The inspection will take place over up to two days.
- The RI will identify and agree a line or lines of inquiry from the school development plan. Normally lines of inquiry will support the evaluation<sup>4</sup> of learning and teaching; action to promote improvement; and outcomes.
- An oral report will be provided by the RI to the principal and the chair of the board of governors (or representative if available) at the conclusion of the visit. This will provide: an evaluation of the key aspects of the inspection visit; the outcome; and an outline of the next inspection activity for the school.
- A short report will be published on the ETI website.

### **The quality of learning and teaching**

- A sample of lesson observations should be chosen by the DI in consultation with the principal based on the priorities within the school development plan.

### **Action to promote improvement**

- The three year development plan and the associated action plans; an evaluation of the review and planning process and discussion with the principal and relevant co-ordinators<sup>5</sup>.

### **Outcomes for learners**

- Lesson observations.
- Scrutiny of learners' work.
- Performance data (qualitative and quantitative) held by the school and also the school's evaluation of achievements and standards linked to the school development plan.

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<sup>3</sup> Or a larger team of inspectors in the case of new/amalgamated schools that are having an MIn as a baseline inspection.

<sup>4</sup> This will be informed by the school's evaluation of learning and teaching, and outcomes.

<sup>5</sup> Through the guidance co-ordinator should be taken to mean co-ordinator or head of department/year/key stage, etc.

## The quality of arrangements for safeguarding

- The safeguarding proforma<sup>6</sup> is a key piece of evidence and is designed to help schools establish the extent (ideally on an annual basis) to which they comply with child protection/safeguarding requirements and how their arrangements reflect best practice in all aspects of safeguarding learners.
- The completed proforma will indicate to the RI the extent to which the school may be fully or only partially compliant (based on its own self assessment) in line with the guidance issued by the Department of Education and Section 2 (c) School Development Planning Regulations (2010).
- Schools should note that the signed and dated safeguarding proforma will be held by ETI as record of the school's statement of compliance to statutory child protection requirements at the point of inspection.
- Should any serious safeguarding issues arise during the course of the inspection, the line of inquiry may change to that of safeguarding. This may trigger issuing a six week follow-up visit with the issue of a standard safeguarding letter and will be reflected in future inspection arrangements.

## Documentation

There is no requirement for the school to create additional documentation for the inspection. The key documents required will be:

- the school development plan and associated action plans;
- a list of staff and classes;
- a copy of the completed Child Protection/Safeguarding proforma signed and dated by the chair of the board of governors and the principal;
- long term (whole school) and medium term (year group or class) planning;
- performance data (qualitative or quantitative data) which forms part of the development plan evaluation and review indicating that the actions taken are leading to improvement for the learners including interventions for individuals or small groups of learners;
- individual education plans or personal learning plans;
- timetables for each class/session and any intervention groups; and
- samples of work which demonstrate that the actions taken are leading to improvements in the outcomes for learners.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/Safeguarding-Proforma> (Primary)  
<http://tinyurl.com/Safeguarding-PP-EOTAS-Spec> (Post-primary, EOTAS and Special)

## An illustration of the key activities:

Day 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arrive at the school and introductions as required.</li><li>• Initial meeting with the principal to:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• review school development plan;</li><li>• agree line(s) of inquiry;</li><li>• agree arrangements, for example, for meetings and report back; and</li><li>• select relevant observations from timetables.</li></ul></li><li>• Lesson observations/scrutiny of relevant documentation.</li><li>• Meetings with the co-ordinator(s) relevant to the line(s) of inquiry.</li><li>• The RI may also request a brief meeting with the designated teacher about the school's evaluation of safeguarding.</li></ul>
Day 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A brief meeting with the principal to confirm arrangements for day/address any issues or concerns arising from previous day.</li><li>• Lesson observation.</li><li>• Scrutiny of documentation and class visits as required.</li><li>• Report writing.</li><li>• Report back to the principal and chair of the board of governors (or representative if available) (15-30 minutes maximum) at 3:30pm approximately.</li></ul>

## THE REPORT

The report will contain: an introduction to the model of the inspection; the focus of the inspection including the line(s) of inquiry; a brief summary of key findings; and one of the following two conclusions that will inform the next inspection activity.

## CONCLUSION

At the time of inspection and for the line/lines of inquiry selected the school is identifying and bringing about the necessary improvements in the quality of education. This will be reflected in future inspection arrangements.

Or

At the time of inspection and for the line/lines of inquiry selected (an) area(s) for improvement (has) have been identified. This/These include(s) the need to:

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This/These will be reflected in future inspection arrangements.

If arrangements for safeguarding are not satisfactory, reference will be made to a six week follow-up visit.

The outcome should remain confidential to the staff and board of governors until the report is published on the ETI website. The outcome is provisional, subject to moderation as part of ETI's quality assurance process and is not final until the report is published; the RI will mediate any change of outcome, as a result of moderation, to the principal. The key findings and any areas for improvement outlined orally, and the exact wording thereof, may be subject to change under ETI's quality assurance and editing processes.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **The principal is absent on sick leave. Will the inspection go ahead?**

Yes the inspection will proceed with the members of senior staff who are available.

### **My school/year class is planning a trip on the day of the inspection. What should I do?**

If the trip involves only one or two classes, then the inspection will proceed. If the whole school or the majority of classes are not on school premises for most of the day then the inspection may be rearranged. If agreed, the Inspection Services Team (IST) will inform the Reporting Inspector (RI) and further dates will be arranged.

### **I'm a teaching principal and I have class responsibility on the two days of the inspection. What do I do?**

If you are a teaching principal, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) would appreciate if you could rearrange your teaching principal cover to allow you to be released from the classroom on the first day of the inspection. If this is not possible at short notice, the inspection will proceed, but please leave a copy of the School Development Plan (SDP) and any other relevant documentation as noted in the guidance so that the RI can review these on the first morning and make decisions on the line (s) of inquiry for the inspection.

### **I have several members of staff or a co-ordinator on long-term leave of absence from work. What do I do if the RI chooses their subject as a focus for the inspection?**

The ETI would recommend that a school does not ask any member of staff who is absent to come into school for the duration of the inspection. The principal and other senior staff members should be aware of the actions taking place in the organisation to promote improvement and the RI will discuss these with the staff who are available.

### **My school has a nursery unit, learning support unit, Irish Medium unit. Will the unit be included in the inspection?**

In all likelihood, the line (s) of inquiry chosen from the SDP will impact on the work of the whole school including units, therefore the unit should expect to be included in the inspection.

### **What documentation or evidence will the RI want to see?**

There is no requirement for the school to create additional documentation for the inspection. The key documents required will be:

- the school development plan and associated action plans;
- a list of staff and classes;
- a copy of the completed Child Protection/Safeguarding proforma signed and dated by the chair of the board of governors and the principal;
- long term (whole school) and medium term (year group or class) planning.

- performance data (qualitative or quantitative data) which forms part of the development plan evaluation and review indicating that the actions taken are leading to improvement for the learners including interventions for individuals or small groups of learners;
- individual education plans or personal learning plans;
- timetables for each class/session and any intervention groups; and
- samples of work which demonstrate that the actions taken are leading to improvements in the outcomes for learners.

### **What documentation do co-ordinators need to have available for the inspection?**

Throughout the inspection, there will be on-going professional dialogue between the members of the school community and the RI. One or more of the co-ordinators or a curriculum team may be asked to meet with the RI on the afternoon of the first day of the inspection to explain more fully the actions that have been taken to bring about improvement for the learners. The co-ordinator may wish to bring evidence of action plans, evaluations, performance data, classroom observations and/or learners' work to the meeting, but this is at the discretion of the co-ordinator. Please note that the information provided should be the recent or current work of the co-ordinator.

### **What documentation do teachers need to have available for the inspection?**

Teachers should have available their long term (whole school) and medium-term (year group or class) planning. Individual education plans (IEPs) or personal learning plans (PLP) should also be available and class performance data where available. The RI may wish to see the learners' work in books, files, displays, electronic devices and/or photographs. Teachers should not single out particular books for inspection – the RI will review the work of the learners while in the classroom from whatever is available. If time allows, the RI may ask for evidence of children's work to be brought to the baseroom for further inspection.

### **Do I need to send any documentation to the RI in advance of the inspection?**

No, the RI will look at the documentation on arrival in the school and throughout the inspection.

### **The safeguarding proforma is not completed or is partially completed. Will this affect the outcome of the inspection?**

The care and welfare of the learners is paramount therefore, if the school cannot demonstrate with first hand evidence that all the requirements for safeguarding have been completed by the school, this will be reflected in future inspection arrangements. Should any serious safeguarding issues arise during the course of the inspection, the line of inquiry may change to that of safeguarding. This may trigger a six- week follow-up visit with the issue of a standard safeguarding letter and will be reflected in future inspection arrangements.

### **Will the RI observe all teachers in the school?**

The RI, in discussion with the principal, will choose the lessons which best demonstrate the impact of the actions taken to bring about improvement. This may be in one subject area or within one key stage or across subjects and key stages depending on the line (s) of inquiry.



**There are short-term temporary teachers in school. Will they be observed?**

Any teacher in school during the inspection may be observed. Please let the RI know if the school has beginning or Early Professional Development teachers and the name of the teacher tutor.

**Will each teacher receive feedback on their lesson after observation?**

In line with the normal practice during inspection, the RI will have a brief discussion with the teacher before leaving the room or if this is not convenient, at an arranged time later in the day. The RI will discuss the main strengths of the lesson and any area (s) identified for improvement. The collated evidence of the standards of learning and teaching will be provided to the principal at report back. Should more serious issues arise from learning and teaching, the RI will discuss these with the principal and the teacher at the soonest available time before the oral report back.

**Will the RI ask for the timetables to be changed?**

This will happen rarely but in the event that it is necessary in order to observe aspects of the provision, any changes will be made in consultation with the principal and teacher.

**I have a staff meeting planned for the first day of the inspection. Will I postpone it?**

The RI may need to speak with the principal and some of the key co-ordinators during the afternoon of the first day. Do not postpone your staff meeting but in consultation with the RI, consider if the agenda can be ordered to facilitate any meetings required by the RI.

**What if the chair of the board of governors is not available for the oral report back?**

If the chair of the board of governors is not available then the deputy chair or a designated member of the governing body may attend. In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to go ahead with the feedback without a governor representative but principals should ensure that the governing body are aware of the date and nature of the inspection taking place and the outcome.

**May the vice-principal and/or other senior teachers and other members of the board of governors attend the oral feedback on Day 2?**

The oral feedback will be relatively short and will indicate future inspection arrangements. The key messages will be provided to the principal and chair of governors (or representative) who in turn may inform the school community of the outcome. Outcomes remain confidential to the school until the MIn report is published. This will be six weeks after the MIn takes place.

**Why does the guidance say the inspection may last 'up to two days'? Is there a possibility it will be completed in one?**

The RI has flexibility to use two days for the inspection and this will be seen as the normal duration. However, there may be circumstances where the school is very small or the particular line of inquiry can be evaluated in a shorter space of time. The RI will keep the principal fully informed of the arrangements as the inspection proceeds.

## **What does the term 'future inspection arrangements' mean?**

There are two possible conclusions to a monitoring inspection.

*At the time of inspection and for the line/lines of inquiry selected the school is identifying and bringing about the necessary improvements in the quality of education. This will be reflected in future inspection arrangements.*

This means the school may not have another formal inspection for three years but this does not preclude survey visits or district inspector visits. However, if the ETI has concerns at any time in this period, inspection activity may be brought forward. The next inspection activity may be another MIn.

Or

*At the time of inspection and for the line/lines of inquiry selected (an) area(s) for improvement have been identified. This/These include(s) the need to:*

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*This/These will be reflected in future inspection arrangements.*

This means the organisation will be included in the full inspection schedule at a time to be determined by ETI.

Should any serious safeguarding issues arise during the course of the inspection, the line of inquiry may change to that of safeguarding. This may trigger a six-week follow-up visit with the issue of a standard safeguarding letter and will be reflected in future inspection arrangements.

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