

# SUSTAINING IMPROVEMENT 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



## SUSTAINING IMPROVEMENT INSPECTION

### BACKGROUND

After a school has been evaluated through inspection, by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement, or the capacity to identify and bring about improvement<sup>1</sup>, ETI will monitor the school's continuing action to sustain and effect improvement; a sustaining improvement inspection (SII) will be used for this purpose.

Typically, schools that were evaluated as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement or the capacity to identify and bring about improvement<sup>2</sup> will receive a SII three years after their last inspection; however, there may be occasions when ETI deem a different model of inspection to be more appropriate.

The SII gives the school the opportunity to demonstrate to ETI that it continues to act effectively to sustain and effect improvement through its school development planning and underpinning self-evaluation processes. The model enables ETI to identify and affirm good practice in self-evaluation leading to improvement.

The inspection will be conducted by the District Inspector (DI) as Reporting Inspector (RI), wherever possible, and an Associate Assessor (AA). The inspection may last up to two days at the discretion of the RI. The AA normally attends for one day. The RI will keep the principal updated on the arrangements as the inspection progresses.

At the beginning of the SII, the RI, in discussion with the principal, will identify (a) line(s) of inquiry linked to the priorities identified in the school development plan (SDP)<sup>3</sup> and will evaluate how the quality of safeguarding has been sustained or improved.

The line(s) of inquiry must be substantive and, in the case of a school previously evaluated as capacity to identify and bring about improvement<sup>4</sup>, the line(s) of inquiry must include the area(s) for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection.

During the SII, there will be a scrutiny and discussion of a specific sample of school self-evaluation documents and of first-hand data<sup>5</sup> analysis related directly to the line(s) of inquiry. This will include the school's evaluation of: the outcomes for learners; the quality of learning and teaching; and leadership and management at all levels. Typically this will involve discussions with relevant staff members and be informed by lesson observations. The purpose of the lesson observations is to provide the school with an opportunity to present first-hand evidence of the impact of improvement work. The SII will include a review of the school's evaluation of safeguarding.

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1 In inspection reports prior to July 2015, the equivalent overall effectiveness outcome was denoted by outstanding, very good or good.

2 In inspection reports prior to July 2015, the equivalent overall effectiveness outcome was denoted by outstanding, very good or good.

3 The Education (School Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland (2010) Schedule for Regulations.

4 Prior to 2015 the equivalent overall effectiveness conclusion was denoted by good.

5 Note for post-primary schools, C2K are **not** engaged in the form of inspection: any data must be supplied by the school.

## PHASES TO BE INCLUDED IN SUSTAINING IMPROVEMENT INSPECTION

- Primary
- Post-primary
- Special

## WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF THE SUSTAINING IMPROVEMENT INSPECTION?

While the ETI will focus on (a) priority area(s) of development and the school's evaluation of safeguarding, ETI's prime interest lies in the strength and effectiveness of the school's capacity to effect and to sustain improvement. The purpose of reviewing the line(s) of inquiry is to determine the extent to which the school is able to illustrate the impact of how its teachers and leaders (supported and challenged by its governors) use first-hand evidence to reflect on, evaluate and act to sustain and bring about improvement in their own practice. It is this **capacity for self-evaluation leading to improvement which ETI will inspect and report upon primarily.**

## HOW WILL A SUSTAINING IMPROVEMENT INSPECTION WORK?

### NOTIFICATION

- Schools will be notified by email and telephone two working days prior to the SII by the Inspection Services Team (IST)<sup>6</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 to contact the 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 SII is taking place and make arrangements for the chair or a representative to be at the report back as agreed with the RI.
- If available, a baseroom should be provided for the RI to work.

### THE INSPECTION

The following inspection activities may take place over the course of the inspection.

- On the first morning, the RI, in discussion with the principal, will identify and agree (a) line(s) of inquiry linked to the priorities identified in the SDP<sup>7</sup>. Normally evaluation of the line(s) of inquiry will lead to an analysis of: learning and teaching; action to promote improvement; and outcomes for learners.
- At the meeting the RI and principal will discuss:
  - the outcomes for learners, including the data trends since the last inspection;
  - how the SDP priority areas were identified;

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<sup>6</sup> There may be occasions due to school/public holidays where notification will be more than two working days.

<sup>7</sup> The Education (School Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland (2010) Schedule for Regulations.

- the key staff involved and their role throughout the school development planning process;
  - the on-going monitoring and evaluation strategies used to measure and evaluate the impact of actions to effect improvement;
  - the school's evaluation of how successful it has been in affecting improvement in the pupil's learning and attainment; and
  - the safeguarding proforma.
- The agreed line(s) should demonstrate to the ETI the capacity of the school to effect continued and sustained improvement or its capacity to identify and bring about improvement.
  - The RI will agree a programme for the inspection with the principal; this programme, however, may change as the inspection activity progresses.
  - The school should make available existing documentation relating to relevant aspects of development, a copy of the SDP, teachers' planning, available data and learners' work.
  - In addition, the organisation should provide a copy of the completed safeguarding proforma<sup>8</sup> signed by the chair of the board of governors and the principal and any issues identified will be followed up by the RI.
  - Lesson observations will be selected through discussion between the principal and the RI; the school may wish to identify particular sessions that best demonstrate the improvements in learning and teaching.
  - The RI will scrutinise the documentation, including the school's internal and external performance and the quality of the learners' work.
  - The RI will arrange meetings with key staff, including the principal, members of the senior leadership team, as necessary.
  - The RI will present an oral report to the principal and chair of the board of governors (or representative) if available at the conclusion of the inspection.

### **The quality of arrangements for safeguarding**

- The child protection/safeguarding proforma 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).

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<sup>8</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/Safeguarding-Proforma> (Primary).  
<http://tinyurl.com/Safeguarding-PP-EOTAS-Spec> (Post-primary, EOTAS and Special). <http://tinyurl.com/Safeguarding-Youth> (Youth).

- Schools should note that the signed and dated safeguarding proforma will be held by ETI as record of the school's evaluation of safeguarding 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 SDP 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. The ETI team may also look at classwork, work in books or portfolios or work on display.

The SII may last for up to 2 days. The following is an illustration of the activities where the full two days are required. On all inspections the RI will agree the timetable with the principal (and this may include a shorter duration):

Day 1
<p>Arrive at the organisation and introductions as required.</p> <p>Initial meeting with the principal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review SDP for line(s) of inquiry.</li> <li>• Completed safeguarding proforma provided to the RI.</li> <li>• Queries clarified.</li> <li>• Timetables obtained to select observations.</li> <li>• Lesson observations/scrutiny of relevant documentation.</li> <li>• Meetings with teachers/leaders as required, e.g. designated teacher/literacy co-ordinator/numeracy co-ordinator<sup>9</sup>.</li> </ul>

<sup>9</sup>Throughout the guidance co-ordinator should be taken to mean co-ordinator or head or department/year/key stage, etc.

Day 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief meeting with principal to confirm arrangements for day/address any issues or concerns arising from previous day.</li> <li>• Lesson observation as required.</li> <li>• Scrutiny of documentation/class visits as required.</li> <li>• Report writing.</li> </ul>
Report back to the principal and chair of the board of governors or representative of the board of governors (if available) (15-30 minutes maximum) at 3:30 approximately.

The RI will discuss arrangements for meetings and the oral report back<sup>10</sup> with the principal as the inspection progresses. The short report will reference the outcome of original inspection, the line(s) of inquiry, key findings, the evaluation of safeguarding at the time of the SII and a conclusion as detailed below.

## THE REPORT

As the school has already been evaluated as having a capacity for improvement, it will not be re-evaluated as a result of an SII. If the school demonstrates successfully the capacity, or its continuing capacity, to effect improvement then ETI will report accordingly. If during the SII, ETI identifies an area for improvement which the school has the evident capacity to address, it will report accordingly. The outcome of the SII will inform the timing and extent of future inspection activity.

If the school does not demonstrate sufficiently to ETI that it has sustained its capacity for improvement, and/or if performance has declined, ETI will report accordingly and the school's next full inspection will be brought forward with an appropriate degree of urgency commensurate with the degree of risk determined by ETI.

If, during the last inspection, the quality of provision in a subject area and/or unit for example, a nursery, Irish medium or learning support, was evaluated as less than good and progress towards addressing the areas for improvement has been subsequently monitored by the ETI, this will form part of the evidence base for the SII<sup>11</sup>.

Should any serious safeguarding issues arise during the course of the inspection, the focus may change to that of safeguarding. This may include identification of an area related to safeguarding in circumstances where the RI deems it necessary to report on such issues, for example, where a safeguarding disclosure<sup>12</sup> is made to a member of the ETI team by a member of staff or a pupil or there are obvious breaches of on-line safety. This may trigger a six week follow-up visit.

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<sup>10</sup> The Inspection performance outcome is subject to moderation through the ETI's quality assurance process and is not final until the report is published. The RI will mediate any changes, as a result of moderation, to the principal.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/what-happens-after-inspection-nursery-schools-primary-post-primary-and-special>.

<sup>12</sup> If a disclosure is made the RI will follow the procedures outlined in 'Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults: A Code of Good Practice for Members of Inspection Teams'.

## CONCLUSION

Either

In the case of a school evaluated as **outstanding or very good** in the last inspection:

[Insert name of school] continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity<sup>13</sup> for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the school sustains improvement.

Or

[Insert name of school] has not demonstrated sufficiently a high level of capacity for sustained improvement; this will be reflected in the future arrangements for inspection of the school.

In the case of a school evaluated as **good** in the last inspection:

[Insert name of school] continues to demonstrate the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will continue to monitor how the school sustains improvement.

Or

[Insert name of school] has not demonstrated sufficiently the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners; this will be reflected in the future inspection arrangements for the school.

If arrangements for safeguarding are unsatisfactory, 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.

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<sup>13</sup> From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as outstanding/very good/good are evaluated as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement/capacity to identify and bring about improvement.

## 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/organisation/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 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 SDP that the RI can scrutinise on the first morning and make decisions on the key focus of 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 a line of inquiry 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 focus 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 do co-ordinators need to have available for the inspection?**

Throughout the inspection, there will be ongoing 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 scrutinise the work of the learners while in the classroom from whatever is available. If time allows, the RI may ask for evidence of work to be brought to the base room for further inspection.

The documentation required should be in regular use by the school and not prepared for the 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. Please discuss any outstanding areas of development in the proforma with the RI. Should any serious safeguarding issues arise during the course of the inspection, the focus 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/departments and key stages.

### **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 usual 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 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 is not available, then the deputy chair or a designated member of the governing body may attend. If a representative of the governors is not available the oral report back will proceed with the principal.

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

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 who in turn may inform the school community of the outcome. Outcomes remain confidential to the school until the report is published. This will be six weeks after the SII takes place.

### **What is the outcome of the SII?**

As the school has already been evaluated as having a capacity for improvement, it will not be re-evaluated as a result of an SII. If the school demonstrates successfully the capacity, or its continuing capacity, to effect improvement then ETI will report accordingly. If during the SII, ETI identifies an area for improvement which the school has the evident capacity to address, it will report accordingly. The outcome of the SII will inform the timing and extent of future inspection activity.

If the school does not demonstrate sufficiently to ETI that it has sustained its capacity for improvement, and/or if performance has declined, ETI will report accordingly and the school's next full inspection will be brought forward with an appropriate degree of urgency commensurate with the degree of risk determined by ETI. This may include identification of an area related to safeguarding in circumstances where the RI deems it necessary to report on such issues, for example, where a safeguarding disclosure<sup>14</sup> is made to a member of the ETI team by a member of staff or a pupil or there are obvious breaches of on-line safety.

If, during the last inspection, the quality of provision in a subject area and/or unit for example, a nursery, Irish medium or learning support, was evaluated as less than good and progress towards addressing the areas for improvement has been subsequently monitored by the ETI, this will form part of the evidence base for the SII.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Following a disclosure the RI will follow the procedures outlined in 'Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults: A Code of Good Practice for Members of Inspection Teams'.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.etini.gov.uk/publications/what-happens-after-inspection-nursery-schools-primary-post-primary-and-special>.

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