

**Primary Inspection**  
**Guidance for the Board of Governors**

2018

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ETI: Promoting Improvement in the Interest of all Learners



The Education and Training Inspectorate  
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education  
Department for the Economy  
and other commissioning Departments



## 1. Introduction

Why is the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) strengthening its inspection of governance?

The ETI values the work undertaken on a voluntary basis by the governing bodies of all of the educational institutions we inspect. In his 'Putting Pupils First: Shaping Our Future' speech of September 26, 2011 the Minister outlined his support for governors who set high standards for themselves and for their schools; who are not afraid to challenge; and who put the interests and education of pupils first. He stated his intention 'to broaden and strengthen the existing inspection process to enable the effectiveness of boards of governors to be assessed, so that governors can have feedback on how they are doing and so that good practice can be identified and shared.'

While governors are volunteers, unlike many other types of volunteers, they have statutory responsibilities. The governors' handbook states:

*The role of the Board of Governors is to fulfil its statutory functions in relation to the school and to be accountable for ensuring that its decisions support the best interests of the school and its pupils.*

Inspection is part of that accountability. Significant contact is made already with governors during inspection and the new process is an extension of current practice.

From January 2013, the ETI implemented a phased approach to developing the evaluation of governance. It contains a strong self-evaluation element on the part of the governing body. These arrangements apply to standard inspections in post-primary, focused inspections in primary and special schools at this stage.

## 2. Purpose of this guidance note

This note is to support governors in:

- understanding the strengthened approach ETI is taking; and
- making their own evaluation of the effectiveness of their governance arrangements, particularly the impact of their work in supporting and ensuring the highest quality of learning and teaching in their school.

This guidance for governors should be used along with the:

- Pre-inspection questionnaire for the Boards of Governors; and
- Quality indicators for use in the self-evaluation of governance.

All of these governance documents are available on the ETI website [www.etini.gov.uk](http://www.etini.gov.uk) (Direct Link <http://tinyurl.com/ETI-Governance>)

## 3. Background

The strengthened evaluation of the effectiveness of governance arrangements is now part of the inspections of post-primary, primary (full inspections only) and special schools.

From January 2013, schools will provide the reporting inspector with a self-evaluation document, completed by the Board of Governors, as part of the evaluation of governance. The school may use the document 'Pre-inspection questionnaire for boards of governors'. Additionally, the governors may find the quality indicators for governance helpful for completing their self-evaluation.

#### **4. What happens during the inspection?**

During the inspection, the reporting inspector will be available in the school to meet with the governors at an appointed time. At the meeting with the governors and during the inspection, the ETI will evaluate the quality and accuracy of the evidence provided and use the inspection evidence normally gathered, to verify and quality assure externally the internal self-evaluation of the governors.

The pre-inspection questionnaire completed by the Board of Governors will be used as the basis for the discussion with Inspectors. In this questionnaire, governors will self-evaluate the effectiveness of their work against the quality indicators provided by the ETI set out under the five key headings below.

##### **1. Strategic leadership**

How effective are we in leading, supporting and challenging constructively the school/organisation to provide the highest quality of education for all learners?

##### **2. Action to promote improvement**

How effective are we in monitoring and evaluating the school's/organisation's performance and its development plan (including consultation with users<sup>1</sup>) to set/adjust priorities for improvement?

##### **3. Resources**

How effective are we in ensuring the efficient use of all available personnel, financial and physical resources in improving the outcomes for learners?

##### **4. Quality of the provision for learning**

How effective are we in leading, supporting and challenging the management to ensure the best possible quality of learning, teaching, and assessment, and that the curriculum provision meets the needs of all the learners?

##### **5. Outcomes for learners**

Do we have sufficient knowledge about the outcomes of the learners? Do we use this knowledge effectively to lead, challenge and support the school/organisation to ensure that the learners achieve their full potential?

During the meeting with the governors and during the inspection, the ETI will evaluate the quality and accuracy of the evidence provided and use the inspection evidence normally gathered, to verify and quality assure externally the internal self-evaluation of the governors.

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<sup>1</sup> Users include pupils/children, parents, teachers, staff and members of the community.

## 6. Reporting on governance

At the conclusion of the inspection, the ETI will report one of three confidence levels for governance along with main strengths and any areas for improvement.

The ETI's evaluation is that there can be:

- a **high degree of confidence** in the aspects of governance evaluated
- **confidence** in the aspects of governance evaluated
- **limited confidence** in the aspects of governance evaluated.

Evidence gathered throughout the inspection will be used for the evaluation of the effectiveness of governance arrangements and is relevant to making other judgements.

If relevant, for any subsequent follow-up inspection activity the confidence levels will be re- evaluated and reported on.

## 6. SUMMARY

### Before the inspection

Be familiar with the documents:

- Pre-inspection questionnaire for the Boards of Governors;
- Quality indicators for use in the self-evaluation of governance; and
- Guidance for governors.

### During the inspection

The Reporting Inspector collects the governors' self-evaluation response from the Principal on the first day of the inspection.

The ETI meet with the Chair of the Board of Governors or a nominated representative and Principal to discuss the role of the governors at a pre-arranged time during the inspection.

The ETI use normal opportunities during the inspection to secure a robust evidence.

### End of the inspection

The ETI report back a confidence level and associated bullet points.

A statement of the confidence level on governance will be included in inspection reports.

### **Relevant Websites**

<https://tinyurl.com/ISEF-Governance>

<https://tinyurl.com/Pre-insp-quest-Governors>

## Pre-inspection Questionnaire for Board of Governors

September 2017

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## INTRODUCTION

The Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) values the work undertaken on a voluntary basis by the governing bodies of all the educational institutions we inspect. While governors are volunteers, they have statutory responsibilities. Every School a Good School – The Governors' Role (Department of Education (DE) Circular 2010/18) states:

*The role of the Board of Governors is to manage the school with a view to providing the best possible education and educational opportunities for all of the pupils. This involves:*

- *setting the strategic direction for the school;*
- *taking corporate decisions in relation to the statutory functions of the Board of Governors; and,*
- *a statutory role to safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils at the school at all times when the pupils are on school premises or in the lawful control or charge of a member school staff.*

### Before the inspection

The governing body play a significant role in the school improvement process and as part of full inspections in primary (and nursery units in the context of the primary school), post-primary and special schools, the Board of Governors is requested to complete a pre-inspection questionnaire. This is not required for other models of inspection including: Sustaining Improvement Inspections, Monitoring Inspections and Follow-up Inspections. In this questionnaire, the governors self-evaluate the effectiveness of their work against the Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework (ISEF) for Governance available at <https://tinyurl.com/ISEF-Governance>.

### What happens during an inspection?

During the inspection, the reporting inspector will be available in the school to meet with the Chair or a representative of the governors at an appointed time. At the meeting with the governors and during the inspection, the ETI will evaluate the quality and accuracy of the evidence provided and use the inspection evidence gathered to verify and quality assure the internal self-evaluation of the governors. The completed pre-inspection questionnaire is used as the basis for discussion with the ETI team. The completed proforma need not be lengthy. Concise summary evaluations will suffice and can be expanded upon during the discussion with the ETI team.

In this questionnaire, governors will self-evaluate the effectiveness of their work set out under the following key headings:

1. Outcomes for Learners
2. Quality of Provision
3. Leadership and Management
  - Strategic Leadership
  - Action to promote improvement
  - Effective financial stewardship
4. Care and Welfare

The ISEF for Governors may be used as a reference to guide governors and support them in identifying areas where they are most and least effective, sources of evidence and best practice. It is not expected that governors will use the entire ISEF for Governors to complete this pre-inspection questionnaire. The ISEF for Governors is not a checklist and is for use selectively as part of a wider on-going self-evaluation process.

### **Reporting on governance**

At the conclusion of the inspection, the ETI will report on one of the three confidence levels for governance along with the main strengths and any areas for improvement.

The ETI's evaluation is that there can be:

- A **high degree of confidence** in the aspects of governance evaluated
- **Confidence** in the aspects of governance evaluated
- **Limited confidence** in the aspects of governance evaluated

Evidence gathered throughout the inspection will be used for the evaluation of the effectiveness of governance arrangements and is relevant to making other evaluations. If relevant, for any subsequent follow-up inspection activity the confidence levels will be revaluated and reported on. It is therefore imperative that the Board of Governors contribute to and are fully involved in any follow-up improvement.

Further information on the inspection process is available on ETI website [www.eti.gov.uk](http://www.eti.gov.uk)

Key Question	Effectiveness Level **	Evidence	Ongoing action?
<b>Outcomes for Learners</b>			
<p>Do we have sufficient knowledge about the outcomes for learners? Do we use this knowledge effectively to lead, challenge and support the school / organisation to ensure that the learners achieve their full potential?</p>			
<b>Quality of Provision</b>			
<p>How effective are we in leading, supporting and challenging the management to ensure the best possible quality of learning, teaching, and assessment, and that the curriculum provision meets the needs of all the learners?</p>			



## Leadership and Management

<p><b>Strategic Leadership:</b> How effective are we in leading, supporting and challenging constructively the school/organisation to provide the highest quality of education for all learners?</p>			
<p><b>Action to promote improvement:</b> How effective are we in monitoring and evaluating the school's/ organisation's performance and its development plan (including consultation with users<sup>2</sup>) to set/adjust priorities for improvement?</p>			
<p><b>Effective financial stewardship:</b> How effective are we in ensuring the efficient use of all available personnel, financial and physical resources in improving the outcomes for learners?</p>			

<sup>2</sup> Users include pupils/children, parents, teachers, staff and members of the community

## Care and Welfare

How effectively do we fulfill our statutory role to safeguard and promote the welfare of learners and of staff and governors?			
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*\*\* There are three possible levels to select from in completing the column **Effectiveness Level**. Board of Governors to insert the number 1, 2 or 3 opposite each of the six key questions depending on the evidence they have.*

- 1 Highly effective in the aspects of governance evaluated.
- 2 Effective in the aspects of governance evaluated; a few aspects to review.
- 3 Limited effectiveness in the aspects of governance evaluated; the governors are not sufficiently informed about / acting on these aspects where needed, and need to review their arrangements to deal with these matters.