

SPECIAL SCHOOL

Inspection Guidance

September 2018

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

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of inspection is to promote the highest possible standards of learning, teaching and achievement throughout the education, training and youth sectors.

Our vision, our mission, is:

‘Promoting improvement in the interest of all learners’.

Further information of the work of the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) including the Charter for Inspection, ETI principles, values and standards and customer service is available on the [ETI website](#).

This handbook describes the main activities undertaken by the ETI during inspections of special schools in Northern Ireland. It sets out the processes before, during and after the various models of inspections and lays out clearly for schools the types of evidence and activities that inspectors use to make their evaluations and on which they report. This guidance document seeks to improve the transparency of the inspection process, promote consistency and dispel any myths around inspection. While promoting consistency, it is important for schools to be aware that this handbook is not a set of rigid inspection models and that the ETI will carry out inspections with flexibility to respond to the individual circumstances of each school.

SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTION PROCEDURES

Pre-inspection

- Inspection Services Team will notify the school.
- The reporting inspector (RI) will undertake a pre-inspection visit.
- The school will be invited to nominate a representative.
- The school will be requested to complete inspection documentation.

During the inspection

- The school will have the opportunity to give an overview to the team.
- Inspectors will visit lessons and hold discussions as required.
- A team meeting will be held at the end of each day, normally attended by the representative.

- A final moderation meeting will be held.
- The RI and deputy reporting inspector (DRI) will provide an oral report back.

Post-inspection

- The school will receive a pre-publication copy of the report
- The final report will be published on the ETI website

ETI also publishes additional guidance and support materials for principals, teachers, parents and governors. This additional guidance is provided for illustrative purposes only and may vary depending on the size and context of the school, emerging findings and evidence as the inspection progresses.

GENERAL INFORMATION: SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTIONS

In order to 'promote improvement in the interest of all learners, the purpose of the special school inspection is, through observation, scrutiny of school documents and professional discussion, to evaluate:

1. Outcomes for learners
2. Quality of provision
3. Leadership and management

A key consideration will be the extent and effectiveness of the processes used by the school to monitor and evaluate its provision. The inspection team will evaluate the school's own process of self-evaluation leading to improvement.

The school's development plan (SDP) is central to planning, development and self-evaluation leading to individual improvement. The ETI will evaluate both the extent to which the priorities in the SDP are appropriate, given the current context and provision of the school, and also the extent to which its action to promote improvement is effective and supportive of individual needs. The ETI will evaluate primarily the extent to which the school understands and is able to demonstrate the value which it adds as the pupils make progress through the school, based on the assessment of their abilities and the effectiveness of tracking and intervention both individually and collectively.

Where appropriate, the ETI may take account of any notes of inspection visits (such as District Inspector (DI) visits and survey visits) made to the school in the years prior to the inspection.

For pupils with more complex needs, ETI evaluates how the school: helps the pupils to experience the world around them to interact and communicate their needs; and initiates actions which affect their well-being and understanding. In doing this, ETI evaluates how well the school is embracing change, working innovatively and where appropriate involving the pupils in the decisions that affect them and their future.

Where applicable, the RI will discuss any arrangements and outcomes for links with other organisations including other schools, for example, shared education.

The size and composition of the inspection team will vary according to the size and context of the school. There will be a RI, DRI and core team. An associate assessor (AA) is deployed on almost all inspections.

In reaching evaluations the ETI uses the quality indicators which are available in the ETI [Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework publication](#) (ISEF).

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE INSPECTION

Inspection Services Team (IST) will notify the school of the inspection by telephone call and issue an email which contains links to the supporting documentation.

This will be followed up through a telephone call by the RI to the principal as soon as possible to discuss the following:

- inform the principal of the composition of the inspection team, confirm the date for the pre-inspection visit, confirm the dates of the inspection and the report-back arrangements;
- outline the availability of guidance material on the ETI website
 - [Safeguarding Proforma](#)
 - [Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework](#)
- explain the [safeguarding proforma](#) must be completed, signed by the chairperson of the board of governors and the principal, and given to the RI at the pre-inspection visit;
- explain the [governor's self-evaluation proforma](#) is to be completed
- introduce the opportunity for the principal to engage in a [joint lesson observation](#) with the RI at the agreement of the teacher;
- the distribution of the teacher, support staff and parental/guardian letters regarding online questionnaires;

- introduce the option for the school to nominate a [representative](#) for the inspection and the associated guidance for this role which is on the ETI website. Draw attention to the representatives agreement that should be signed and outline the procedures including behaviour at the moderation meeting; and
- outline the documentation to be returned to IST and to be made available for the pre-inspection visit.

The RI should be made aware of any issue or event which you think may affect the school or any of the staff before, or at any time during, the inspection.

THE PRE-INSPECTION VISIT

The RI will undertake a pre-inspection visit. During the visit, the principal will brief the RI on the context of the school. The RI will meet with relevant senior and middle leaders and the whole staff to outline and discuss the arrangements for the inspection. During the visit, the school staff will be made aware of the ETI [complaints procedure](#).

Pre-inspection day	Activity
The RI will meet with the principal	<p>Discuss the inspection procedures, including the opportunities for the role of the representative and joint lesson observation.</p> <p>Request background information for the briefing including teacher's timetables (set for each member of the inspection team).</p> <p>Ask to be made aware of any issue/event, which may affect the school or any of the staff before or at any time during the inspection.</p> <p>State that the school should maintain the normal timetabled arrangements.</p> <p>Discuss the arrangements for the team including the use of a base room.</p> <p>Discuss the arrangements for oral report back and whom should attend and times when the board of governors and representative of the employing authority should be available.</p> <p>The school will be invited to nominate a senior leader to undertake the role of the representative; if this invitation is accepted, the representative must read the associated guidance and sign the confidentiality agreement.</p> <p>The school will be requested to complete associated inspection documentation, including the safeguarding proforma.</p> <p>Agree the principal's input to context paragraph.</p>
The RI will meet senior leadership team (SLT)	Discuss SDP priorities and implementation which may include arrangements for links with other organisations and schools for example, shared education;
The RI will meet with staff	Discuss the inspection processes and answer any questions.

QUESTIONNAIRES USED AS PART OF THE SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTION

The ETI provides an opportunity for parents and staff to complete a confidential online questionnaire prior to the inspection. You will receive a copy of the letters for distribution to parents and staff which contain the relevant detail to enable them to register and complete the online questionnaire specific to your school.

If you have any queries about the distribution of parental or staff questionnaires please contact IST.

The RI will report the outcomes of the questionnaire returns to the principal and to a representative of the governors; the RI will discuss any matters that arise in the returns.

ROLE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE ON SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTIONS

Shortly after notification of inspection the RI will request that the school identify a senior member of staff to represent it before, during and after the inspection. The representative will manage the inspection process within the school and will normally be the principal, a vice-principal or a member of the senior leadership team. This role is offered on a voluntary basis and a school may decide not to nominate a representative; furthermore, a representative is free to choose to attend only parts of meetings, as they see fit. It is expected that the representative will attend the oral report back on the last day of the inspection.

Further detail on the role of the representative is contained within the [Role of the Representative](#) document in Appendix 1.

SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTION OUTLINE

- The RI will meet with the inspection team at the beginning of the inspection to provide an overview of the context of the school and any relevant information from the pre-inspection visit.
- Inspectors will visit lessons and hold discussions with relevant members of staff as required. The arrangements for lesson observations and discussions with staff are flexible and subject to change as the inspection progresses.
- Inspectors will not usually give advance notice of visits to lessons. Inspectors will typically arrive at the start of a lesson and stay until the end. However, there may be occasions when inspectors observe the beginning or end of the lesson only.

- Inspectors will give advance notice of discussions with members of staff. A programme of discussions may be agreed with the principal in advance and confirmed at the start of the inspection; however, it may also be subject to change as the inspection progresses.
- Lessons will be observed in order to support evaluations in the area(s) under focus. Usually, inspectors will have a short professional exchange with the teacher at the end of a lesson observation, outlining key strengths and/or areas for improvement; however, there may be occasions when this is not possible and arrangements may need to be made to return at a more convenient time.
- A team meeting will be held at the end of day one and two, normally attended by the school's representative.
- A final moderation meeting will be held during the afternoon of day three, during which performance levels and a conclusion for overall effectiveness will be agreed by the inspection team.
- The RI and DRI (or another team member) will provide an oral report back to the school and representatives from the various stakeholders on the afternoon of the final day of the inspection.

Day one (illustration)

Day one	Activity
	Team arrival; introductions
Period one (or before)	RI gives short team briefing up date RI obtains signed confidentiality form for Role of the Representative Principal gives overview of no more than 15 minutes to the ETI team based on outcomes, provision and leadership and management
Period one (onwards)	Lesson observations RI /DRI meet with the chair of the governors and share questionnaires feedback with chair and principal Select pupils for the discussion group, in consultation with the principal RI/principal arrange joint lesson observation and discussion opportunity if agreed (approximately 45 minutes in total) RI/DRI to attend any additional requested meeting e.g. Parents Scrutiny of the school documentation in the base room throughout the day
After school	Meeting with the designated teacher to discuss safeguarding and the safeguarding proforma Meetings with middle managers/co-ordinators Team meeting; RI/DRI focus on running record overview - representative to attend and identify further sources of evidence where needed; emerging strengths/areas for improvement considered

Day two (illustration)

Day two	Activity
Period one (or before)	RI/DRI meeting with principal update team meeting
Period one (onwards)	Lesson observations Pupil discussions Scrutiny of the school documentation
After school	Team meeting, including representative Meetings with middle management/co-ordinators

Day three (illustration)

Day three	Activity
Period one (or before)	RI/DRI meeting with principal Update team meeting
Morning	Lesson observations Scrutiny of the school documentation
Afternoon	<p>Moderation meeting</p> <p>Team meeting chaired by the RI, attended in full or part by the representative, to collate and discuss the findings from the inspection and to moderate and agree the key strengths and areas for improvement against the indicators outlined in the ISEF.</p> <p>Performance levels will be agreed for the core areas of the inspection, namely outcomes for pupils, quality of provision and leadership and management.</p> <p>It should be noted that: performance levels and the overall effectiveness conclusion shared during the moderation meeting with the school's inspection representative are confidential and subject to quality assurance. As such, they should not be shared with anyone else between the moderation meeting and the oral report.</p> <p>An additional inspector, with responsibility for quality assurance, may attend the moderation meeting as part of the ETI quality assurance process.</p>

Day four (illustration)

Day four	Activity
Morning	Team members write for issue Collate, agree and edit the report
At a time agreed with the school	RI and DRI report orally the key findings of the inspection to the principal, senior leaders, chair/representative of the governors, representative of the employing authority and other relevant stakeholders (in agreement with the RI).

Oral Report back

The purpose of the oral report back is to afford the principal and chairperson the opportunity to seek clarification, where necessary, about the main inspection findings. The representative should be in attendance at the oral report back. The representative will have attended the team and moderation meetings and should already be very clear about the evidence used to make the evaluations.

The performance levels and overall effectiveness conclusion fed back at the oral report back are provisional, and subject to moderation as part of the ETI's moderation and quality assurance process. They are not final until the report is published.

The RI will mediate to the principal any changes to performance levels or overall effectiveness conclusion, as a result of any additional moderation and quality assurance. The final inspection report will contain only a summary of the key evaluations and findings rather than the finer detail shared and discussed during the moderation meeting and final oral report back.

At the oral report back, the provisional overall effectiveness conclusion will be shared with the school. This will indicate clearly to the school:

- the capacity of the school for sustained improvement; and
- the nature and timing of follow-up activity;

Following the oral report back, the school should begin work on any area(s) for improvement identified. Further detail on any post-inspection activity can be found in the ETI document [What Happens After an Inspection?](#)

In exceptional circumstances where it is not possible to report the key findings on day four, the oral report back may be rescheduled after consultation with the managing inspector/assistant chief inspector with responsibility for special school inspections.

INSPECTION OF CARE AND WELFARE AND SAFEGUARDING

ETI's role is to inspect, validate, evaluate and report, based on the first-hand evidence available during inspection on aspects (c) and (e) of the Schedule to the School Development Plan Regulations (2010).

Normally, ETI evaluates first-hand the care, welfare and safeguarding holistically using, for example, lesson observations, conversations with pupils/staff, observations of interactions between adults and pupils across the school and also reports that

the school is monitoring and reviewing safeguarding and welfare at least annually. Schools are recommended in the DE Circular 2017/04 Guide for Schools (Para 4.2) to use the ETI proforma. In full inspections, ETI evaluates and reports on safeguarding based on first-hand evidence available at the time of the inspection. During sustaining improvement inspections (SIIs) ETI triangulates and reports on the school's evidence of assurance that safeguarding reflects or reflects broadly the relevant guidance. It is important to note that all members of the inspection team contribute to the evidence base for the evaluation of care and welfare throughout the school. The arrangements for safeguarding will be included in the inspection and reported on.

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 pupils. 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.

Prior to the inspection, the chair and principal will be asked to complete and sign and date the [safeguarding proforma](#) and give it to the RI; this may be made available to the RI on the day of the pre-inspection visit or at the start of the inspection. Any issues arising with regard to the safeguarding of the pupils will be followed up by the inspection team.

Also prior to the inspection, parents and staff of the school will be given the opportunity to complete an online questionnaire. A summary of the responses to the parental and staff questionnaires, including any written comments, will be reported orally to the principal and representatives from the governors by the RI during the inspection.

A discussion will be held with the Designated Teacher and may include other members of the safeguarding team. Safeguarding will be explored in terms, for example, of: how safe and secure the pupils feel; their knowledge of what to do if they do not feel safe; and the impact of the school's work to help them adopt safe practices and to be secure through the preventative curriculum.

The evidence for the evaluation of the care and welfare of the pupils will be gathered by the team throughout the inspection. Inspection depends upon first-hand inspection evidence which comprises: lesson observation, evaluation of work, conversations with pupils and with teachers and by observation of interactions between teachers and pupils. Inspectors gather evidence by talking to pupils and teachers, both formally and informally. Conversations may be carried out: informally during lessons; around the school between lessons; at break/lunchtimes, and in meetings. Any issues that have

the potential to impact adversely on the care and welfare of the pupils will be followed up by the inspection team.

On day one, the pupils to be included in the discussions with inspectors will be selected; the principal will be asked to make the necessary arrangements to facilitate these meetings. On the morning of day two (where possible), meetings will take place with groups of pupils. Typically these meetings with pupils last for around 20 to 30 minutes.

Members of the inspection team may visit an assembly, registration classes and/or other activities.

MEETING WITH GOVERNORS

Purpose of the meeting:

The purpose of the meeting is to provide the opportunity for the chair of governors (or representative – but not teacher representative) to discuss and expand on the school's self-evaluation report and the governors' pre-inspection proforma.

Guidance for the meeting:

The meeting should last no longer than 45 minutes

The RI will be accompanied by another team member

The RI will report back to chair of governors (or representative **not** teacher rep) the summary of the questionnaire returns

The following discussion points are for guidance only and are not a prescriptive list.

Areas for discussion:

Governance – strategic leadership

- What is your role as governors?
- How are these roles decided? Sub-committees, blend of expertise and skills etc.
- What training have you as governors accessed?
- Is there a designated governor for child protection and are the governors updated regularly on child protection matters?
- How are you involved in helping to lead the school?

- How well do the pupils at this school do?
- How are you informed by the school about the outcomes for the pupils?
- How do you know these outcomes are good enough?
- How well do the pupils develop personally and socially?
- Are the pupils engaging in a shared education experience?
- Can you provide an example of how the governors have provided support or challenge to the staff and the school?

Action to promote improvement

- What is your role in the school development planning process and how were you involved in identifying the priorities?
- Do you talk with pupils, parents and other members of the community when evaluating the effectiveness of the school?
- How do you monitor the outworking of the action plans for improvement?
- Do staff, other than the principal, update you regularly?

Resources

- How do you try to plan in the short and longer term to ensure that the budget is balanced? e.g. managing and resources and accommodation priorities?
- Are you sharing resources with any other school?

Quality of provision

- How are you involved in and informed about the quality of the learning, teaching, and assessment?
- Are you given an opportunity to discuss the curriculum?

Outcomes for pupils

- What is the school doing to help all pupils reach their full potential?

MEETING WITH CO-ORDINATORS

Purpose:

The purpose of the meeting is for the co-ordinator to demonstrate how targets are identified and how the impact of the subsequent actions is evaluated, and has led to improvement in the leadership and management, the quality of provision for learning and the achievements and standards of the children.

Guidance for the meeting:

The meeting is designed to last no longer than 45 minutes.

The co-ordinator should provide supporting documentary evidence, selected from existing documentation and signposted to relevant sections. It is important that the co-ordinator selects **only** the relevant documentation.

Other meetings with the co-ordinator are possible should either the inspectors or the co-ordinators request them during the inspection.

The following discussion points are for guidance and should not be considered as a prescriptive list.

Areas for discussion

- The area of learning is prioritised within the SDP and supported by an action plan which is focused on learning and teaching and improvement in the pupil's standards and achievements
 - How and why were these priorities identified, including the use of qualitative and quantitative data?
 - Are the priorities linked in any way?
 - Where does the action plan fit within the SDP?
 - In the action plan is there a clear focus on learning/teaching/raising standards?

- The co-ordinator provides strategic leadership and clear direction to ensure quality learning experiences for the pupils
 - How is provision structured throughout the school?
 - How is planning agreed and implemented across the school?

- How are staff development needs identified / addressed?
- How is good practice identified and disseminated?
- How is the school targeting high, low and potential underachievement? For example, is the school using target groups, staff deployment and training, homework and after-school clubs, parent volunteers, parent workshops, volunteer intervention programmes?
- Do you link with teachers from other schools to plan or disseminate good practice?
- The co-ordinator uses monitoring and self-evaluation effectively to affect improvement in the provision
 - How effective is the range of strategies for monitoring and evaluating the provision? What has been the impact?
 - How do we know and what improvements have there been in learning/teaching/standards?
 - How does the school know that target groups and intervention programmes are making a sustained difference to pupils' achievements and standards?

SUMMARY OF KEY INFORMATION THAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Documentation to be returned to IST prior to the inspection:

- SDP and associated action plans; (the SDP may be given/sent to the RI prior to inspection by arrangement);
- Statistical Information Sheet; and
- Information on teaching staff.

Documentation to be available for the pre-inspection visit:

- Current SDP, associated action plans and relevant whole school evaluations;
- Safeguarding proforma;
- Copies of teachers' timetables;
- Central timetables for hall, specialist teachers, visits and visitors; and
- Map of the school.

Documentation to be available in the base room during the inspection (including the pre-inspection information above):

- Child protection and pastoral care policies;
- Completed ETI Safeguarding Proforma;
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) register and details of the arrangements for SEN;
- Samples of Individual Education Plans (IEPs)s to show tracking of children's progress;
- Looked After Children Personal Education Plan's;
- Progress of pupils on Education Other Than At School;
- Accreditation;
- Samples of behaviour plans;
- Relevant curricular and pastoral policies;
- Whole school scheme / planning for literacy / numeracy;

- Samples of range of pupils' books/evidence;
- Evidence of self-evaluation processes from co-ordinators (e.g. from book scoops, lesson observations, co-ordinators' evaluations of teachers' planning);
- School's analysis and use of data at whole school, class and individual level;
- School prospectus;
- Annual board of governors report; (most recent copy) and completed questionnaire for the board of governors;
- Class lists for pastoral discussions as agreed at the pre-inspection visit;
- Pupil assessment records and end of year reports to parents; and
- Details of staff professional development.

Documentation to be available in each classroom during the inspection

- Teacher's planning file, including previous planning and evaluations of the learning and teaching;
- Current IEPs/Personal Learning Plan (PLP);
- Sets of progress/achievement books showing work across the curriculum by pupils;
- Pupil pen pictures for class if available; and
- Class assessment information.

Performance data

- Schools are asked to provide an analysis of internal assessment data which they use to track the attainment and progress of the pupils, if appropriate.

NB. It is the responsibility of the school to demonstrate how effectively the pupil's progress, at all ability levels, is identified, and how the impact of targeted support is tracked and analysed.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION SPECIAL SCHOOLS

- 1.1 i. Name: iii. Date of Inspection:
(week beginning)
- ii. DE Reference Number: iv. Nature of Inspection:

1.2

School Year	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Enrolment school				
Enrolment outreach				
% Attendance				
FSME Percentage				
Newcomers				

The enrolment for the current year is the figure on the day of notification of inspection. For previous years, it is the figure in the annual return to the Department of Education.

1.3

		Total Staff	On Outreach Programme
i.	Number of teachers including the principal and part-time teachers: (Full-time equivalent = 25 teaching hours)		
ii.	PTR (Pupil/Teacher Ratio):		
iii.	Average Class Size:		
iv.	Number of Classroom Assistants: Full time		
	Part time		
	Number of general assistants Full time		
	Part time		
	Total number of hours allocated to school for Assistant Support		
v.	Ancillary Support: Number of Hours Per Week:		
vi.	Number of families in school:		
vii.	Number of Looked After Children		

POST-INSPECTION

Approximately four weeks after the inspection, the school will receive a final, quality-assured pre-publication copy of the inspection report for the purposes of checking it for factual accuracy information.

This is the final opportunity to draw any **inaccuracies** in **factual information** to the attention of the RI. This procedure is intended to avoid any factual information being reported inaccurately within the published report. You are **not** being asked to comment on the evaluations or findings within the report. In the interests of publishing the report as quickly as possible, the school should ensure that all factual inaccuracies are identified and reported at this stage, as this is the only opportunity to do so.

The final inspection report is published on the ETI website within six weeks of the inspection.

For schools evaluated as having either a high level of capacity for sustained improvement or the capacity to identify and bring about 'improvement in the interest of all learners', there will typically be a sustaining improvement inspection approximately three years after the original inspection.

For other schools, the ETI will engage in a formal follow-up inspection process. For schools evaluated as needing to address important areas for improvement, this will take place within 12 to 18 months; the follow-up will take place within a two year timeframe for those schools evaluated as needing to address urgently significant areas for improvement.

GENERAL INFORMATION: SUSTAINING IMPROVEMENT INSPECTION

Background

After a school has been evaluated through inspection, by the ETI, as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement, or the capacity to identify and bring about improvement¹, 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 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 typically be conducted by the DI as RI wherever possible, and an Associate Assessor (AA). The inspection will take place over two days. 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 one or two area(s) of focus linked to the priorities identified in the SDP.

The area(s) of focus must be substantive and, in the case of a school previously evaluated as capacity to identify and bring about improvement², may include confirming that any area for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection has been addressed.

During the SII, there will be a scrutiny and discussion of a specific sample of school self-evaluation documents as part of the school development planning process and of first-hand data³ analysis related directly to the area(s) of focus. This will include the

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

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

3 *C2K are **not** engaged in the sustaining improvement inspection: any data must be supplied by the school.*

school's evaluation of: outcomes for pupils; the quality of provision; 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 safeguarding.

What is the focus of a sustaining improvement inspection?

While the ETI will focus on priority areas 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 area(s) of focus 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 receive telephone and email notification two working days prior to the SII⁴.
- Further guidance on the inspection process will be provided by the IST at the time of notification.
- Where possible, the RI will also make contact with the principal of the school by telephone prior to the commencement of the inspection; this should enable any queries to be clarified.
- 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 (if available) to be at the report back at the end of day two, at approximately 3:30pm.
- If available, a base room should be provided for the inspection team.
- The [Complaints Procedure](#) is available on the ETI website.

⁴ There may be occasions, for example, school/public holidays where the notification period will be more than two days.

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 the area(s) of focus linked to the priorities identified in the SDP. Normally, evaluation of the area(s) of focus will lead to an analysis of: learning and teaching; action to promote improvement; actions to address any issues identified during the last inspection; and outcomes for pupils.
- At the meeting the RI and principal will discuss:
 - the outcomes for pupils, including the data trends since the last inspection;
 - how the SDP priority areas were identified;
 - 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 effecting improvement in the pupils' learning and attainment; and
 - the safeguarding proforma.
- The agreed areas 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 work, a copy of the SDP, teachers' planning, available data and pupils' work.
- In addition, the school should provide a copy of the completed safeguarding proforma signed and dated by the chair of the board of governors and the principal; 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 schools internal and external data.

- The RI will scrutinise the documentation, including the school's internal and external performance and the quality of the pupils' work.
- The RI will arrange meetings with key staff, including the principal, members of the senior leadership team and middle leaders as necessary.
- The RI will present an oral report to the principal and chair of the board of governors⁵ (if available) at the conclusion of the inspection.

The quality of arrangements for safeguarding

ETI's role is to inspect, validate, evaluate and report, based on the first-hand evidence available during inspection on aspects (c) and (e) of the Schedule to the School Development Plan Regulations (2010). Where there is insufficient first-hand evidence to make an evaluation, ETI triangulates and reports the school's evidence of assurance that safeguarding reflects the relevant guidance.

Schools should monitor and review safeguarding and welfare at least annually. They are recommended in the DE Circular 2017/04 Guide for Schools (Para 4.2) to use the ETI proforma.

- The ETI 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 pupils.
- The completed proforma (signed and dated by the chair of the board of governors and principal) will indicate to the RI the extent to which the school (based on its own annual review) reflects or reflects broadly 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 evaluation of safeguarding at the point of inspection.
- Should any serious safeguarding issues arise during the course of the inspection, the area of focus may change to that of safeguarding. If the school does not provide evidence that the arrangements for safeguarding reflect or reflect broadly the guidance from the Department of Education, the ETI will return to the school within six weeks to evaluate the progress in addressing the arrangements for safeguarding.

⁵ Or another representative of the governors if the chair is unavailable.

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;
- most recent data from public examinations;
- performance data (qualitative or quantitative data) which forms part of the development plan evaluation and review process, indicating that the actions taken are leading to improvement for the pupils, including interventions for individuals or small groups of pupils;
- individual education plans or personal learning plans;
- teacher timetables and any intervention groups; and
- samples of work which demonstrate that the actions taken are leading to improvements in the outcomes for pupils.

Typically, the SII will last for two 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 one (illustration):

Day one	Activity
9 am	Team arrival; introductions.
Period one onwards	Initial meeting with the principal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review SDP for area(s) of focus. • Completed safeguarding proforma provided to the RI. • Queries clarified. • Timetables obtained to select observations. Lesson observations/scrutiny of relevant documentation. Meetings with teachers/leaders as required, e.g. senior leaders/middle leaders/designated teacher/literacy co-ordinator/numeracy co-ordinator. ⁶
After school	Brief update meeting with the principal.

Day two (illustration):

Day two	Activity
Morning	Brief meeting with principal to confirm arrangements for day/address any issues or concerns arising from previous day. Lesson observation as required. Scrutiny of documentation/class visits as required. Meetings with senior/middle leaders.
Afternoon	Report writing.
After school	Report back to the principal and chair of the board of governors or representative of the board of governors (if available) at 3:30pm approximately. (15-30 minutes maximum)

The RI will discuss arrangements for meetings and the oral report back⁷ with the principal as the inspection progresses. The short report will reference the outcome of original inspection, the area(s) of focus, key findings, the evaluation of safeguarding at the time of the SII and a conclusion as detailed below.

⁶ Throughout the guidance co-ordinator should be taken to mean co-ordinator or head of department/ year/key stage, etc

⁷ The overall inspection 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.

The report

If the school continues to demonstrate a high level of capacity for sustained improvement or capacity to identify and bring about 'improvement in the interest of all the learners', then ETI will report accordingly. If during the SII, the 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 high level or capacity for improvement, and/or if performance has declined, the 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.

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 disclosure⁸ 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.

Conclusion

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 capacity⁹ for sustained improvement in the interest of all the pupils. 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.

⁸ If a disclosure is made the RI will follow the procedures outlined in 'Safeguarding of Pupils, Young People and Vulnerable Adults: A Code of Good Practice for Members of Inspection Teams'.

⁹ From September 2015, the overall effectiveness of a school previously evaluated as outstanding/very good/good will be evaluated as having a high level of capacity for sustained improvement/capacity to identify and bring about improvement.

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 pupils. 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 pupils; this will be reflected in the future inspection arrangements for the school.

The arrangements for safeguarding will also be reported on. If arrangements for safeguarding are unsatisfactory, reference will be made to a six week follow-up visit.

FOLLOW-UP INSPECTION PROCESS

After all inspections there will be follow-up inspection processes. There are four overall conclusions that have individual follow up processes:

The school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

The school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement.

The school needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

The school needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all learners. It requires external support to do so. ETI will monitor and report on the school's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Post-inspection action plans

When the overall conclusion is that the school has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners, the ETI will monitor how the school sustains improvement through district visits. There is no requirement from the School Improvement Team (SIT) in the Department of Education to draw up internal action plans.

When the overall conclusion is that the school demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners, following an inspection, the SIT will ask the school to draw up an internal action plan which will be monitored through district visits.

When the overall conclusion is that the school needs to address (an) important area(s) or address urgently the significant areas for improvement in the interest of all the learners, following an inspection, SIT writes to the school requesting an action plan. SIT forwards the action plan to the ETI for comment. There may be some contact with the school at this point. For example, an optional district visit may be conducted if clarification of the action plan is required. The action plan forms the basis for the follow-up inspection process.

Whole-school interim follow-up visit and follow-up inspection procedures

There is no notification letter for interim follow-up visits; two weeks before the visit, the DI contacts the school to provide notification of the interim follow-up visit and to make arrangements.

Schools receive formal notification of the follow-up inspection from IST approximately two weeks before the inspection. The district inspector will usually be the RI for follow-up inspection activity.

Overall Conclusion	Address Important Area(s) for Improvement	Address Urgently Significant Areas for Improvement
Interim follow-up visit	One day visit led by the district inspector to monitor progress. No written report left with the school.	Up to two days led by the district inspector to monitor progress. A short written report letter is issued to the school and employing authority.
Follow-up Inspection	Typically a one-day visit with up to four team members (depending on specialist areas). A written report is issued and published on the ETI website.	Up to three days with up to four team members (depending on specialist areas). A written report is issued and published on the ETI website.
Timescale	12-18 months from original inspection	18-24 months from original inspection

Interim follow-up visit

At the initial phone call, the district inspector explains that the aim of the interim follow-up visit is **to evaluate the school's progress in addressing the areas for improvement**. It is a matter for the school to demonstrate progress in taking forward the action plan which may take the form of an interim evaluation. The school should be made aware that the evidence gathered during the visit (including lesson observations, discussions, etc.) contributes to the overall follow-up inspection evidence base. A meeting with the employing authority representative may be necessary to determine the nature, extent and impact of the support provided.

An oral report is given to the principal, the chair (or representative) of the board of governors and a representative of the employing authority. In the case of schools

where the overall effectiveness evaluation was that the school needs to address urgently significant areas for improvement the support officer should also be invited, and following the oral report, these schools receive a short written report letter.

Follow-up inspection

IST will notify the school of the inspection by telephone call; this will be followed up through a telephone call by the RI, which will normally be the district inspector, to the principal and an email which contains links to supporting documentation.

The follow-up inspection builds on the evidence base from the interim follow-up visit including lesson observations, discussions etc. It is the responsibility of the school to provide clear, concise, robust evidence of **sustained and sustainable** improvement.

Following notification of the inspection, IST and the RI will contact the principal by telephone as soon as possible to discuss the following:

- the composition of the inspection team, confirmation of the dates of the inspection and the arrangements for reporting to the school;
- the availability of a base room for the inspection team;
- the distribution of the teacher, support staff and parental/guardian letters regarding online questionnaires (at the discretion of the RI); and
- the availability of some governors for a meeting during the inspection.

At the end of the follow-up inspection, an oral report is given to the principal, the chair (or representative) of the board of governors and a representative of the employing authority. In the case of schools where the overall conclusion was the school needs to address urgently significant areas for improvement, the support officer should also be invited.

The school receives a pre-publication copy of the follow-up inspection report for a factual accuracy check which is then published on the website.

Partial inspections

In some instances, for example, inclement weather, or other unique circumstances, the ETI may not be able to complete all aspects of an inspection. Such instances are dealt with by the ETI on a school by school basis, and it is important for the principal and the RI to stay in contact throughout the inspection process.

The underlying procedures adhered to by the ETI in these situations are:

- the ETI will endeavour to complete as much of the inspection as possible;
- the principal (or chair of the board of governors if the principal is unable to be involved) should liaise with the RI, including the provision of information around the extent of any issues;
- the ETI will require access to:
 - the SDP and all related school documentation including departmental planning and action plans, whole-school policies for literacy, numeracy, ICT, pastoral care and safeguarding (including the completed safeguarding proforma), learning and teaching, assessment and so on;
 - groups of pupils for the pastoral care and safeguarding discussions; and
 - the pupils' written work.
- the ETI will consider the inspection as complete and publish a report outlining the progress made on the inspection and any available evaluations, including the adequacy of the school's arrangements for safeguarding; and
- where there is insufficient evidence to reach an overall conclusion evaluation, the school will be considered in the planning for future inspection activities.

Further detail around the arrangements specific to individual schools will be provided through the RI and IST.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Does the principal always take on the role of the representative?

Mostly but not always - if not the principal, the representative should be in a senior leadership position with full and immediate access to the principal. The representative should be able to take actions or make decisions as necessary and be a key member of staff involved in improvement planning after the inspection. It is expected that the representative will attend the oral report back on the last day of the inspection.

Further details about the role of the representative and who is best suited to fulfil it can be found in the ETI document *The Role of the Representative in the Inspection Process* on the ETI website.

The organisation may prefer not to nominate a representative. In this circumstance, the RI will continue to promote the ETI's core principles of openness and transparency and maintain good working relationships with the senior management and staff.

2. What do I do if a problem arises?

It is important that any concerns or issues are dealt with promptly and sensitively. In most circumstances an issue can be resolved at an informal level. In the first instance you should raise any issue with the RI as soon as possible. In the unlikely event that the concern is about the RI, then this should be raised with the DRI in the first instance. The RI/DRI, working with any member of the team as appropriate, will work to resolve the matter as soon as possible, preferably during, or immediately following the inspection.

If it has not been possible to resolve your concerns informally, you may decide to make a formal complaint. A copy of the ETI [Complaints Procedure](#) will have been provided as part of the inspection documentation and can be accessed on the ETI website.

3. What feedback will teachers receive?

The inspector will have a brief discussion with the teacher at the end of the lesson, or, if it is not convenient at this time (for example the inspector only stays for one lesson out of a double), at the earliest opportunity after the lesson. This will outline those aspects of the lesson which went well and also any areas for

improvement that need to be considered. This feedback will typically be short as the inspectors do not want to hold up the next lesson.

4. How do I request the postponement of an inspection?

Inspections are only postponed in the most exceptional circumstances. The chair of the board of governors can write to the chief inspector requesting the postponement of an inspection. The Chief Inspector will consider this request and provide a prompt written response to the chair.

5. If the principal of the school is absent during the inspection period, does the inspection still go ahead?

Yes, in almost all circumstances the inspection will go ahead as planned.

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

The care and welfare of the pupils 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.

7. There are short-term temporary teachers in school. Will their work be observed?

The work of any teacher, except a student 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.

8. 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 staff 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.

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

If the chair of the governors is not available then the deputy chair or a designated member of the governing body may attend. The feedback may go ahead 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.

10. What is the outcome of the SII?

There are two possible conclusions to a Sustaining Improvement inspection.

If the school demonstrates successfully high capacity, or its continuing capacity, to effect improvement then ETI will report accordingly.

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

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 disclosure¹⁰ 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.

¹⁰ Following a disclosure the RI will follow the procedures outlined in 'Safeguarding of Pupils, Young People and Vulnerable Adults: A Code of Good Practice for Members of Inspection Teams'.

**HYPERLINKED LIST OF DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR
SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTIONS:**

[Pre-inspection Questionnaire for Governors;](#)

[The Safeguarding proforma;](#)

[The Role of the Representative;](#) and

[The Joint Lesson Observation](#) (if relevant) guidance

**HYPERLINKED LIST OF SUPPORT MATERIAL AVAILABLE FOR
SPECIAL SCHOOL INSPECTIONS**

[Inspection Self-Evaluation Framework;](#)

[Inspection Self-Evaluation Framework for Governors;](#)

[Information for Parents;](#)

[What Happens after an inspection;](#) and

[Complaints Procedure](#)

SPECIAL SCHOOL Inspection Guidance

September 2018

