



National Education Inspectorate (NEI)

Promoting Excellence through Quality Inspections

Information for the Teachers

1. Introduction

NEI is responsible for making an assessment of the standards attained by the students in our primary and secondary schools at key points during their education and to report on how well they perform or improve, as they progress through their school and learning life. The NEI is also charged with the responsibility to make recommendations to support improvement in the quality of the provision and outcomes for all learners.

NEI will inspect all schools. The inspections will seek to identify what each school needs to do to bring about further improvement.

Inspectors will evaluate the following key aspects of the school's work:

1. How well the students perform in national and/or regional tests and assessments (For infants: in relation to age-related expectations)
2. How much progress the students make in relation to their starting points
3. How well the students develop personally and socially
4. How effectively the school uses the human and material resources at its disposal to help the students achieve as well as they can
5. How well the curriculum and any enhancement programmes meet the needs of the students
6. How well the school ensures everyone's safety, security, health and wellbeing
7. How effectively the teaching supports the students' learning
8. How effectively the school is led and managed by the Board, the Principal and SMT and middle leadership

Inspectors will use a set of Inspection Indicators to help them form their judgements. The Inspection Indicators appear in full in the Handbook for Inspections.

During the visit inspectors will observe lessons, interview members of the school's staff as individuals and in groups, talk to students and look at a sample of their written work. They will study various school documents provided before and during the visit. They will hold scheduled meetings with the Principal, with other senior staff and with other teachers who have specific responsibilities.

The Inspection team will make every attempt to minimise disruption to the school and will ensure that each inspection activity is necessary for forming well-focused, relevant, well-founded judgements. All their activities will focus clearly on the evidence and evaluation required for the inspection report.

2. Visits to lessons

Teachers can expect inspectors to visit lessons at any time during the inspection period. Inspectors will not give advance notice of visits to lessons because they frequently have to change their plans during the course of a day. Inspectors will use the visits to evaluate the students' progress and the overall quality of learning and teaching across the school. They will not make formal judgements about the performance of individual teachers.

There should not normally be more than one inspector in a class at any time unless the class teacher agrees or there is a particular reason for it. It may be, for example, that the lead inspector is monitoring the work of team members.

The number of teachers visited during an inspection will vary according to the size of the school. Not all teachers will necessarily be visited, while some who teach key subjects inspected are likely to be visited more than once.

Inspectors will always behave in a courteous, professional manner towards teachers whose work they observe. On entering classrooms they will acknowledge the teacher and aim to keep to a minimum any disruption to the lesson. Inspectors will not expect the teacher to interrupt the lesson in order to engage in conversation. The inspector will thank the teacher before leaving the classroom.

Inspectors will look at lesson plans and these should be made available. These are helpful for gaining a quick understanding of the content and the purposes of the lesson; but teachers should not feel obliged to provide inspectors with detailed plans for every lesson.

Inspectors may not always join a class at the start of a lesson or stay until the end. This is particularly likely in the case of longer lessons, where visits to two classes may take place within a single timetabled period.

Inspectors will take brief notes during lessons in order to have a written record of their observations. In observing lessons, inspectors will take particular account of the students' learning and the progress they make. They will evaluate the impact of the teaching on what and how much the students learn in the lesson.

Because of the pressure of time on inspection teams, inspectors will only offer teachers brief individual feedback on their lessons if requested.

3. Interviews

The team will wish to interview key members of staff. The Principal will complete the 'Meetings with Key School Personnel' form which will schedule meetings during the visit.

Inspectors may also engage teachers in discussion of professional issues as opportunities arise during the inspection. Following a class visit, they may engage in a brief discussion with teachers about the content of the lesson and the students' responses.

Information from interviews and discussions will be used in making evaluations and in preparing the published report. However, inspectors will not quote individual comments in the report and will not disclose comments from or about identifiable individuals unless that is necessary to prevent or investigate serious concerns about the security or safety of students.