

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE INSPECTORATE

SEPTEMBER 2015



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

INSPECTORATE

1. Our purpose

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Skills works to improve the quality of teaching and learning for children and young people in Irish schools, centres for education and other settings and to support the development of the Irish educational system. We do this through providing high quality evaluation, analysis and advice.

2. Our Code of Practice

This *Code of Practice for the Inspectorate*¹ sets out the general principles in accordance with which we, as members of the Inspectorate, carry out our work. These principles govern the full range of inspectors' evaluation and advisory work in all settings, including schools, centres for education and a range of other settings. They are important reference points to inform the development of inspection activities and new ways of working. These principles provide a benchmark against which we, and others, can judge the quality of our professional practice.

3. What are our functions?

As an Inspectorate we are focused on ensuring that the learners in schools, centres for education and other settings receive the best possible education in the light of their potential and learning needs. Fundamentally, we strive to improve the learning experiences and learning outcomes of all. Our specific functions are set out in section 13 of the Education Act 1998.² As the statutory definition of our functions makes clear, the core elements of our work as inspectors are the evaluation of the work of teachers, schools and centres for education, and the supply of advice and support in relation to educational provision. In addition, we carry out evaluation and advisory work in a range of other educational settings in accordance with formal agreements between the Inspectorate and other government departments and bodies.

4. How do we evaluate, advise and support educational provision?

One of the central ways in which we evaluate, advise and support is by visiting and conducting inspections in schools, centres for education and other settings. We engage with teachers, principals, parents, learners and boards of management on aspects of educational provision. We disseminate, through discussion and publication, the findings of our evaluations and we publish advice as to how the work of education providers and the learning of pupils/students can be improved. We contribute to the development of education policy and provision, and advise the Minister for Education and Skills accordingly.

¹ This *Code of Practice for the Inspectorate* replaces the previous publication, *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluation and Reporting for the Inspectorate*, published in 2002.

² Section 13 of the Education Act, 1998 is provided in the Appendix.

5. What are the principles underpinning our work?

Effecting improvement in the education of learners is at the heart of our purpose and work. In this regard, we aim to promote high standards in teaching and in the learning outcomes and experiences of the learners in schools, centres for education and other settings. We strive to enable those learning organisations to improve the quality of the education they provide. As a learning organisation, we seek to improve our way of doing things, so that we can more effectively and more efficiently fulfil our functions.

Our work is thus underpinned by four key principles:

1. A focus on learners
2. Development and improvement
3. Respectful engagement
4. Responsibility and accountability

The four key principles, described in detail below, provide the standards that inform, guide and govern our work. We also publish several guides that describe how we conduct different types of inspections. These guides provide further information on the specific standards that apply to our work in each type of inspection. Copies of the various guides that we publish are available on the web site of the Department of Education and Skills (www.education.ie).

Principle 1: A focus on learners

Our focus as an Inspectorate is on learners. This means that we:

- focus on learners' learning experiences and on the educational outcomes and standards they achieve, when evaluating and reporting on the work of teachers, schools and other settings
- keep the observation of teaching and learning in classrooms and other learning settings central in inspection activity
- seek and give due weight to the views and opinions of learners, according to their age and maturity
- report on child protection in schools and other settings, in accordance with departmental procedures for responding to child protection concerns
- evaluate and report on the quality of support provided by schools and other settings for the wellbeing of learners

Principle 2: Development and improvement

We are committed to ongoing development and improvement of education provision. This means that we:

- engage with the communities working in schools and other settings and with the communities they serve to promote improvement in educational provision
- promote and support self-evaluation as a mechanism for improvement in schools and other settings
- affirm and disseminate best practice in education provision
- actively support and promote national priorities and policies to improve learners' educational experiences and outcomes and to raise national education standards
- promote and support the use of the Irish language
- promote equality and inclusion in the education system.

Principle 3: Respectful engagement

We are committed to respectful engagement with others in the course of our work. This means that we:

- work co-operatively and fairly with learners, teachers, school leaders, boards of management, parents, patrons and trustees in a spirit of mutual respect and reciprocity
- work co-operatively and fairly with the education partners and relevant statutory bodies
- are open about our evaluation models, activities, criteria and priorities
- recognise and acknowledge effective work, progress and achievement
- ensure that all communications, oral and written, are clear
- promote professional dialogue
- seek and consider the views of the education partners and others when designing and developing our inspection models and processes
- promote trust in our working relationships with others

Principle 4: Responsibility and accountability

We are concerned with promoting accountability and responsibility in schools, classrooms and other settings, in the education system generally and within the Inspectorate. This means that we:

- provide the public with an assurance of the quality of teaching and learning in publicly funded schools and other educational settings
- report objectively and fairly on the quality of education provision, based on the collection of objective, dependable, high-quality data, having taken the context of the school or settings into consideration
- make the best use of the resources available to us in our evaluation, support and advisory work
- adhere to our published guidelines as they relate to inspection activity
- are open to our work being reviewed and have fair and transparent processes to examine concerns raised about inspections (as set out in *Procedure for Review of Inspections on Schools and Teachers under Section 13[9] of the Education Act [1998]*)
- as a learning organisation, systematically enquire into and report on how we perform our functions, and take the actions necessary to improve our performance

6. Developing and reviewing this *Code of Practice*

This *Code of Practice* has been developed following detailed consultation with the education partners as required under Section 13(8) of the Education Act, 1998, including representatives of school management bodies, teachers, parents and pupils/students, and a range of other bodies with whom we work and co-operate.

This edition of the *Code of Practice* replaces an earlier version published in 2002, which is withdrawn. The Inspectorate is committed to reviewing this *Code of Practice* from time to time following consultation with the relevant stakeholders and in the light of changes that may occur to legislation and/or developing best practice in public services.

APPENDIX

What are the functions of the Inspectorate?

The functions of the Inspectorate are set out in **section 13 of the Education Act 1998 [Number 51 of 1998] as amended by**

**Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007 [Number 9 of 2007]
Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007 (Commencement) Order 2014 (SI No.274 of 2014)
Education and Training Boards Act 2013 [Number 11 of 2013]
Education and Training Boards Act 2013 (Commencement) Order 2013 (SI No. 211 of 2013)**

THE INSPECTORATE

- 13.(1) The Minister shall appoint a Chief Inspector and such and so many Inspectors as the Minister considers appropriate and the Chief Inspector and Inspectors collectively shall be known and are referred to in this Act as the “Inspectorate”.
- 13.(2) The Minister shall include amongst those he or she appoints as Inspectors under *subsection (1)* persons who hold qualifications as psychologists or who have other expertise, including expertise in the education of pupils/students with special educational needs.
- 13.(3) The functions of an Inspector shall be:
- (a) to support and advise recognised schools, centres for education and teachers on matters relating to the provision of education and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, an Inspector-
 - (i) shall visit recognised schools and centres for education on the initiative of the Inspectorate, and, following consultation with the board, patron, parents of pupils/students and teachers, as appropriate, do any or all of the following:
 - (l) evaluate the organisation and operation of those schools and centres and the quality and effectiveness of the education provided in those schools or centres, including the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of individual teachers;

- (II) evaluate the education standards in such schools or centres;
 - (III) assess the implementation and effectiveness of any programmes of education which have been devised in respect of individual pupils/students who have a disability or other special educational needs;
 - (IV) assess the implementation of regulations made by the Minister, and
 - (V) report to the Minister, or to the board, patron, parents of pupils/students and teachers, as appropriate, and as prescribed, on these matters or on any other matter relating to the activities of those schools or centres and the needs of pupils/students attending those schools or centres,
- (ii) *Deleted by Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007, Section 3(a)*
 - (iii) shall advise teachers and boards in respect of the performance of their duties, and, in particular, assist teachers in employing improved methods of teaching and conducting classes, and
 - (iv) shall advise parents and parents' associations;
- (b) to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the provision of education in the State, including comparison with relevant international practice and standards, and to report thereon to the Minister;
 - (c) to conduct research into education and to provide support in the formulation of policy by the Minister;
 - (d) to promote excellence in the management of, teaching in and the use of support services by schools and in the procedures for consultation and co-operation within and between schools and centres for education;
 - (e) to disseminate information relating to –

- (i) the performance by the Inspectorate of the functions provided for in this section, and
 - (ii) successful educational initiatives which have been implemented by schools and centres for education, and promote informed debate on those matters;
- (f) to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching, development, promotion and use of Irish in schools and centres for education and to report to the Minister on those matters;
- (g) to advise the Minister on any matter relating to education policy and provision, including the curriculum taught in recognised schools, assessment and teaching methods, and
- (h) *Deleted by Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007, Section 3(a)*

13.(4) *Deleted by Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007, Section 3(b)*

13.(5) Where an Inspector has carried out an evaluation or an assessment under *subsection (3)(a)(i)*, he or she may make recommendations to the Minister in respect of improvements that he or she considers appropriate.

13.(6) The Minister may, if a teacher and the board consent, second that teacher to the Inspectorate for such period as the Minister shall determine, to carry out any or all of the functions conferred on an Inspector.

13.(7) An Inspector shall have all such powers as are necessary or expedient for the purpose of performing his or her functions and shall be accorded every reasonable facility and co-operation by the board and the staff of a school or centre for education.

13.(8) An Inspector, including the Chief Inspector, shall carry out his or her functions in accordance with such procedures for, and criteria of, inspections as may be determined by the Minister from time to time, following consultation with patrons, schools management organisations, recognised trade unions and staff associations representing teachers and such other persons as the Minister considers appropriate, and such directions as may be given by the Minister from time to time.

- 13.(9) A teacher or the board of a school may request the Chief Inspector to review any inspection carried out by an Inspector which affects the teacher or the school and the Chief Inspector shall review the inspection in accordance with such procedures as the Chief Inspector shall determine.
- 13.(10) A person who immediately before the commencement of this Part holds an office as Chief Inspector, Inspector or Inspector of Guidance Service/Psychologist or who is seconded to the Inspectorate shall on the commencement of this Part continue to hold that office or be so seconded as appropriate and this section shall apply to any such person.
- 13.(11) The Civil Service Commissioners Act, 1956, and the Civil Service Regulation Acts, 1956 to 1996, shall apply to Inspectors.
- 13.(12) The Minister shall appoint Inspectors or second teachers to the Inspectorate, in accordance with this section, with the concurrence of the Minister for Finance.
- 13.(12A) A person who obstructs or interferes with an Inspector in the course of exercising a power conferred on the Inspector by this section or impedes the exercise by the Inspector of such a power commits an offence and is liable—
- (a) on summary conviction to a Class A fine, or
 - (b) on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €100,000.
- 13.(13) The Chief Inspector, with the consent of the Minister, may delegate the performance of one or more of his functions to an Inspector nominated by the Chief Inspector and functions so delegated to such an inspector shall be performable by him or her accordingly.
- 13.(14) The Minister may appoint an Inspector to perform the functions of the Chief Inspector during an period in which the Chief Inspector is temporarily unable to perform his or her functions, whether because of absence, ill-health or for any other reason, and, for the duration of that period, the functions of the Chief Inspector shall be performable by the Inspector so appointed accordingly.