

Briefing note for heads of early learning and childcare settings

Shared inspections

Please share this information with all staff

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What will happen during the shared inspection in my ELC setting?

Your ELC setting will be inspected by both the Care Inspectorate (CI) and HM Inspectors of Education (HMI). Both organisations will work together using the [quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors](#) (QIF).

An inspection team of HMI and CI will visit the ELC setting. The ELC inspection will take place across three days (usually Monday lunchtime to Wednesday lunchtime). An inspection may be extended to allow the CI to respond to risk and evidence gathered during the inspection. If this is the case, it will be discussed with you.

The inspection team will take account of the context and nature of the ELC setting. They will undertake inspection activities only to the extent necessary to provide robust evaluation. The team will work together to plan the inspection carefully to avoid duplication and ensure sufficient time for all activities.

The inspection team will carry out observations and engage with children, a sample of staff, parents¹ and stakeholders. The team will not cover all aspects of your ELC setting's work. It is important that your staff are aware of this.

Your own ongoing self-evaluation is important. We will use this as the starting point of our inspection. This helps the inspection team to take account of the context and nature of your setting.

We are not asking you to provide a self-evaluation paper in advance. Instead, we will base the self-evaluation discussion on your self-evaluation, your improvement plan and standards and quality reports.

The team will use quality indicators (QIs) from the QIF.

The selected QIs for shared inspections are:

¹ Throughout this briefing note, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.

- Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment – Care Inspectorate
- Learning, teaching and assessment – HMIE
- Nurturing care and support – Care Inspectorate
- Children’s progress – HMIE

We will continue to evaluate arrangements for safeguarding. HMI will continue to use existing arrangements to evaluate safeguarding.

The CI has core assurances that they assess during every inspection. Core assurances generally relate to practices that keep children safe. These include child protection practices. If the team has concerns about safeguarding or a particular core assurance, the Care Inspectorate may include an additional QI.

The inspection team will work together to provide a coherent summary of their findings.

Inspection report

The ELC inspection team will produce a single report for the ELC setting. This will include our evaluations, any requirements made by the CI and a statement about safeguarding. If continuing engagement is planned, this will also be outlined in the report.

What should I do in advance of the shared ELC inspection?

We aim to carry out inspections in a way that avoids any unnecessary pressure on staff, and we will keep paperwork required to a minimum.

As part of the ELC shared inspection, we are not requesting a self-evaluation summary for ELC. Instead, we will ask for a copy of your current and previous ELC improvement plans and any standards and quality reports that you provide for parents.

This approach supports a streamlined process, grounded in your existing documentation, and reflects our commitment to proportionate inspection. Please remember that proportionality is a core principle of our inspection approach. This means the ELC inspection team will not cover all aspects of your setting’s work.

For further advice on what to do in advance of the inspection, please read:

Appendix 1. ELC documents to be provided in advance of the inspection

Appendix 2. Documents which can be provided during the shared ELC inspection

Appendix 3. Meetings required during the ELC inspection

Please contact the inspection administrator (IA) should you require any clarification.

What should I expect on the first afternoon of the shared ELC inspection?

The ELC inspection team will usually arrive between noon and 12.30 pm on the Monday of the inspection week. On arrival, the team will usually have a brief team meeting.

Members of the ELC inspection team will lead the introductory discussion while other team members may begin inspection activities. This may include visiting spaces used by children and interacting with and observing children and staff.

What happens from the second day onwards of a shared ELC inspection?

The ELC inspection team will undertake a wide range of activities, building on the introductory discussion. Inspection activities will include visits to the spaces used by children; engaging with groups of children and staff; sampling key documentation; and discussing specific aspects of the ELC setting's work with groups of children, staff and parents.

Sharing our findings from the shared ELC inspection

The inspection team will share messages with the head of setting throughout the inspection visit. At the end of the inspection, we will share our findings with you and the local authority. This will outline the strengths and aspects for improvement identified during the inspection and discuss possible next steps to support continued improvement. Where relevant, the team will

discuss with you and the local authority any proposal for continuing engagement. This may include a further inspection.

What engagement will ELC staff have with the inspection team?

The ELC inspection team will meet with staff for discussions throughout the week.

For senior staff, engagement with the team will usually start with the introductory discussions after lunch on Monday. For some staff, this will begin on Monday afternoon with a visit to the spaces used by children.

Professional dialogue with staff takes place in a range of situations over the week, for example during visits to the spaces used by children and observations and during voluntary discussion sessions.

Meetings will be arranged throughout the course of the inspection with selected members of staff to discuss aspects of your work. The team may also meet with individuals, visiting professionals or members of the local community.

What engagement will children have with the shared ELC inspection team?

The ELC inspection team will engage with children and take account of their individual needs throughout the inspection visit.

What engagement will parents have with the shared ELC inspection team?

The ELC inspection team take the views of parents into account and seek to engage with them in a number of ways. This may include meetings with groups of parents or discussions with individuals, for example, during drop off and collection times. They will review the pre-inspection questionnaire information so that all parents have the opportunity to share their views.

What happens after the shared ELC inspection?

Following the visit, the ELC inspection team will provide you with a confidential draft of the shared inspection report.

After the inspection, we will share a draft of the report with the head of setting and local authority officers to allow you to comment on the draft report.

The final report will be published on both HMIE and the Care Inspectorate's websites. In settings offering Gàidhlig Medium Education, the letter will be available in both Gàidhlig and English.

Appendix 1. Documents to be provided in advance of the shared ELC inspection

Please email only the following items to the IA prior to the inspection. Unless specified, please return them at least six working days before the inspection.

Item	?
The current and previous annual reports which you issued to parents and carers on the standards and quality of the ELC setting's work.	
The current and previous ELC setting's improvement plans.	
Names of all ELC staff and details of their responsibilities.	
Complete practitioners' qualifications form with details of staff registration with other professional bodies such as Scottish Social Services Council and General Teaching Council of Scotland, where applicable.	
Complete the child protection and safeguarding form and send this to the IA.	

Appendix 2. Documents which can be provided during the shared inspection for the ELC setting

If available, please provide the following information in the HMI base on first day of the inspection. There is no requirement to share in advance.

Item	?
Number of children on roll, including a note of those who also attend other settings or who attend on a full-time basis and funded two-year-olds where appropriate.	
Information used by the setting to monitor and evaluate children's progress, including the quality of learning and teaching.	
Sample of children's personal plans/learning journals across the full age range, including any child with ASN.	
Examples of the setting's planning for children's learning.	
If your inspection team includes a specialist HM Inspector for Gàidhlig Education, please provide details of your Gàidhlig provision, including progress, curriculum and immersion, planning priorities for Gàidhlig and how you promote Gàidhlig with parents and their families.	

We may require access to the following confidential documents during the inspection week. These should only be made available at times when the inspection team is in the setting.

List of children with ASN and brief details of support provided.	
Details of children with regular/long-term absence.	
List of children who have experienced care.	
List of children who are on or have been on the child protection register.	
Records on child protection concerns	
Complaints received by the setting	
Accident/incident record	
Children's medication records	

Appendix 3. Meetings required during the shared ELC inspection*

The MI will discuss with you the composition of the inspection team, the days each of the team members will be in attendance and the meetings that will be required during the inspection.

The Managing Inspector may send you a template to complete in advance to schedule any relevant meetings. The inspection team will be flexible and can respond to any necessary changes during the inspection.

The team will speak with staff, parents and children throughout the inspection however, some of the meetings that may need to be included:

Monday

- Introductory ELC focused discussion
- Observations of children and staff
- Possible meetings with members of staff
- Staff professional dialogue. We know that ELC practitioners have different work patterns and will arrange meetings to best suit your setting
- One-to-one meeting with child protection coordinator to discuss the completed safeguarding form

Tuesday to Wednesday

- Meetings with parents
- One-to-one meetings with members of the senior team or appropriate staff
- One-to-one meeting with child protection coordinator to discuss the completed safeguarding form
- Meetings with partners as appropriate
- Discussion of high-level messages on the Wednesday