

Relationships and behaviour in schools and settings

Inspection advice from January 2024

This advice note sets out how HM Inspectors will strengthen the evidence we gather and report through early learning and childcare and school inspections about behaviour. It also explains how we will do this. We will begin this for schools/settings inspections notified in January 2024.

Background

The Scottish approach to behaviour in schools has evolved to focus on building relationships that promote positive behaviour. The increased focus on the promotion of children's rights and [getting it right for every child](#) remain core underlying principles.

There are concerns about the increase in reports regarding behaviour and its impact on staff and learners in recent months.

The Scottish Government commissioned the National Centre for Social Research to conduct the Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research (BISSR). The latest [report](#) indicates that the majority of pupils are still well behaved, however low-level and more serious disruptive behaviours have increased in Scottish schools, including physical violence and aggression, since 2006.

We have always looked at behaviour and relationships during inspection and this advice note does not signal a change in our inspection approach. However, we will now enhance the evidence we gather and the commentary we make about behaviour and relationships. We want to work with you to understand the approaches to creating and maintain positive relationships and behaviour and its impact on children and young people. We will also want to learn from you about any challenges you are facing. This note explains what HM Inspectors will do on every inspection to report on evidence in a consistent way.

What we will do

We will continue to use your self-evaluation as the starting point to help us understand your context. We will listen to what you and your staff tell us about current priorities and ongoing challenges in your school around relationships and behaviours. We will also listen carefully to the views of learners, parents, partners and staff.

We will ask you to reflect on how effective your arrangements are in promoting positive relationships and behaviour and how well you are recording and responding to any instances of disruptive behaviour. This will be captured in an updated child protection and safeguarding self-evaluation form (part a).

HM Inspectors will gather and evaluate evidence as normal regarding behaviour and relationships and we will continue to plan our approaches alongside you. We will

explore with you in more depth your arrangements for promoting positive relationships and behaviour through the following activities:

- As part of the self-evaluation discussion, HM Inspectors will explore with you and your local authority representative how effective your arrangements for promoting positive relationships and behaviour are. We will also ask about local authority approaches to supporting your school/setting.
- We will explore views how behaviour and relationships with staff, pupils, parents and partners during focus group discussions.
- We will review how you record behavioural incidents and explore the approaches you use to respond to and support those who present with or who have experienced the impact of any disruptive behaviours.

We will continue to be proportionate and responsive as we gather our evidence.

We aim to carry out our inspections in a way that reduces burden on staff and keeps paperwork to a minimum. We are not asking for any additional pre-inspection paperwork to be created or submitted in advance of the inspection regarding relationships and behaviour. We will ask that a copy of your relationships/behaviour policy is available for the inspection team to access during the inspection week.

How we will do this

During inspections, we will report more explicitly on how the school/setting creates and maintains positive relationships and behaviour and the impact this is having. We will continue to focus on the experiences of all learners.

HM Inspectors will include in the summarised inspection findings, specific examples of the approaches, interventions and actions that are making a difference for children and young people. HM Inspectors will also report on trends or changes in behaviour over time.

We will continue to use the quality improvement framework 'How Good Is Our School?' (4th Edition). There are no changes to the existing quality indicators (QIs). We will use the Quality Improvement Framework for the early learning and childcare sectors as the basis for our inspections.

Inspection findings relating to behaviour and relationships will largely be reported within QI 2.3, learning, teaching and assessment. However, we may include findings in other QIs or in other sections of our reports, where appropriate.

Whilst we are reporting in more detail on behaviour, there will be no change to the way we will grade quality indicators. During the pilot ELC inspections in September and October 2025, we will not be grading the ELC quality indicators.