

Briefing note for chairs of Parent Council of primary, primary and nursery class, special, secondary and all- through schools

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What are the main features of the inspection?

As chair of the Parent Council, you will be interested to know that HMIE will shortly be inspecting your child's school¹. Following a two-and-a-half-week notification period, a team of inspectors will visit your school. The inspection team may include HM Inspectors from HMIE and team members from schools and other educational organisations. A lay member, someone who is not employed in education, may also be on the team. The lay member will gather views from parents, children and young people about the school.

In all inspections, the team will carry out a range of activity to understand the work of the school. This includes:

- talking with the headteacher and staff, children and young people, parents and partners
- observing learning
- reviewing documentation.

Gathering the views of parents and carers is important to us. We consider your views carefully, as an important part of the evidence we gather. We are particularly interested in what you, as chair of the Parent Council, think about the school and how it is doing and how well the school engages with parents in children's learning. A member of the team (usually the lay member) and possibly one of the other team members will try to arrange to meet with you on the Tuesday of the inspection, to allow for a full discussion of your views.

What happens before the inspection?

Once the headteacher has received their notification, the Inspection Administrator (IA) who is supporting the inspection will contact them to discuss the administrative arrangements.

The headteacher is asked to let the learners, staff, parents and partners know about the inspection and share with them the link to the online survey which we use to gather their views of the school.

¹ Where this note states 'school', it also refers to early learning and childcare settings. Where it uses the term 'headteacher', it includes heads and managers of these early learning and childcare settings.

The information we receive is confidential to the inspection team. We do not tell anyone else where our information comes from, unless there are concerns about the safety and wellbeing of individuals.

Parents and carers will be invited by the school to attend a meeting with the inspection team during the course of the inspection week. The IA will liaise directly with the school regarding times of the meetings, which includes meeting with you as the chair of the Parent Council.

For more information about the inspection and the online survey, please visit our website or speak to the IA.

What happens during the inspection?

The headteacher provides a briefing for the inspection team on the first day of the inspection. The headteacher summarises:

- how well he/she thinks the school is doing
- strengths and areas for development
- any improvements that have taken place
- the differences these have made for children/young people.

The inspection team will look at aspects of the work of the school, taking account of its context and any additional support needs of its children/young people. Inspectors will have discussions with children/young people and staff, observe learning, and may also work with groups of children/young people to explore their learning and progress. We also discuss a statistical summary of the responses to the survey with the headteacher.

The lay member will usually arrange to meet you on the Tuesday of the inspection. Discussions usually last for around 30-40 minutes and focus on:

- how well the school works in partnership with parents and carers
- the involvement of parents and carers in the school improvement plan
- examples of how parents and carers work with the school to support children's/young people's learning
- how well the school consults with the Parent Council and parents and carers.

This meeting forms an important part of the evidence we gather about the school, and will be considered as part of the overall inspection evidence. We will be interested to hear about the difference the Parent Council has made to the school, and what you think the school does well.

The lay member will also meet with a group of parents and carers. These discussions form another important part of the evidence we gather about the school, to complement the survey of parents and carers. Individual comments made in discussions and on the survey are confidential.

What happens after the inspection?

We prepare a draft letter which provides a brief summary of the main strengths and areas for development from the inspection. We send you a confidential draft for your comment usually within 10 working days following the inspection. We also send the draft to the headteacher and the education authority or board of governors, as appropriate. This draft letter is sent to you in strict confidence and you should not share it with anyone else, other than discussing it with the headteacher or education authority or board of governors, as appropriate. You are invited to comment on how the draft letter identifies the strengths of the school from a parental point of view. You are also asked to highlight any important parental concerns. Your comments will be considered, in confidence, along with those invited from the headteacher and education authority or board of governors, as appropriate.

We aim to publish the letter from the inspection, on our website, within 10 working weeks of the end of inspection; the administrator will email the final letter to you. We will publish a fuller document called the summarised inspection findings, which we will send to the school and education authority or board of governors, as appropriate, for an accuracy check before publication. We also publish a statistical summary of the responses to the survey where applicable on our website, except in the case of very small schools where individual members of staff, parents and carers and/or children/young people might be identified.

The Parent Council will wish to consider the outcomes of the inspection, for example by discussing these at a future meeting of the Parent Council, and will normally engage with the headteacher.

We hope this note provides you with all the information you need about the inspection. However, you can find further information about inspections at hmi.gov.scot.

We would also welcome feedback on your views of the inspection, to take into account as we develop our approaches to inspection and review.