

# **Inspectorate Profile**

## **His Majesty's Inspectorate Education Scotland**

### **November 2024**

#### **1. Overview of the Inspectorate**

##### **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) Scotland**

HMIE are presently part of Education Scotland, as an executive agency of Scottish government. HMIE is responsible for the inspection of, for example, public and private early years, primary and secondary schools. They also inspect further education colleges, community learning, and local authority education departments. They were merged to create Education Scotland in 2011. An HM Chief Inspector, will lead the new education inspectorate, which is expected to become operational in autumn 2025.

##### **Age of inspectorate**

The first HM Inspector of Schools (HMI) in Scotland was appointed in 1840.

##### **Structure of inspectorate**

The inspectorate in Scotland is structured using a clear organogram. HMIE are led by a Chief Inspector, two Strategic Directors, various Heads of Inspection, inspectors and an Inspection Support and Strategy team.

##### **Size**

HMIE has inspectors for primary and secondary schools including independent schools early years and childcare, community learning development and post school inspectors. There is also a large group of other policy, research and administration staff.

##### **Remits**

HMIE is responsible for evaluating and reporting on the quality of education provision across all sectors for the Scottish education system. This includes public and private early years, primary and secondary schools as well as further education colleges, community learning, and local authority education functions.

##### **Unit of inspection**

Schools are inspected on a proportionate basis, using a sampling approach, rather than a cyclical model. We use a set of criteria to select schools to inspect. We use predetermined criteria to select an annual sample of 120 schools to enable us to provide evidence for our [National Improvement Framework \(NIF\)](#) which is an annual report that offers an analysis of

six key drivers for school improvement. The criteria for inspection considers the context and characteristics of schools, including the type of school, deprivation, and balance across local authorities. We also consider other factors, including local circumstances. When selecting schools for inspection, we are placing an increased emphasis on the length of time since the last inspection.

HMIE in Scotland inspects individual education provisions such as primary and secondary schools. We observe the quality of learning and teaching, leadership, health and wellbeing, the quality of attainment and achievement, the quality of curriculum pathways and how school staff engage with parents and partners. We also observe how local authority education departments function. All our inspections are conducted using the set of inspection standards listed below.

### **Purpose of inspectorate**

Inspection and review supports improvement and provides assurance on quality and improvement in Scottish education. We use a set of standards to evaluate and report on quality and improvement in Scottish education. These are set out in a series of quality frameworks. Examples of these are attached below.

[Quality Frameworks \(education.gov.scot\)](http://www.education.gov.scot/quality-frameworks)

[How good is our school? \(4th edition\) \(education.gov.scot\)](http://www.education.gov.scot/how-good-is-our-school)

[How good is our college? \(education.gov.scot\)](http://www.education.gov.scot/how-good-is-our-college)

[How good is our Community Learning and Development? | Inspection frameworks / Inspection and review | Education Scotland](http://www.education.gov.scot/inspection-frameworks)

The Inspection frameworks enable educators as part of their own self-evaluation to ensure educational outcomes for all learners are improving:

- address the impact of inequity on wellbeing, learning and achievement;
- consistently deliver high-quality learning experiences;
- embed progression in skills for learning, life and work from 3-18;
- further strengthen school leadership at all levels;
- improve the quality and impact of career-long professional learning;
- extend and deepen partnerships to improve outcomes for all learners;
- increase learning for sustainability; and
- tackle unnecessary bureaucracy.

### **Relationship with government**

Scottish Ministers' powers relating to inspection of educational establishments and services are set out in legislation. Section 66 of the Education (Scotland) Act 198015 ("the 1980 Act") empowers Scottish Ministers to "...cause inspection to be made of every school..." and "any other educational establishment". This includes public schools; grant aided- schools; early learning and childcare settings; and independent schools. The definition of "educational establishment" in section 135(1) of the 1980 Act applies here. 6.2 Section 9 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 200017 gives similar powers to Scottish Ministers in relation to inspection of education authorities for the purpose of "review[ing] the way in which the authority are exercising their functions in relation to the provision of school education". HM Inspectors carry out these functions on behalf of Scottish Ministers.

## Accountability

Legislation to create a new national qualifications body and an independent inspectorate of schools and other educational providers has been published. The legislation will also establish the office of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland, with enhanced independence, to undertake the education inspection functions which currently sit within Education Scotland. Greater independence for the new inspectorate body will see the power to set the frequency and focus for inspections moving from Scottish Ministers to His Majesty's Chief Inspector. This is a significant change and will increase confidence in the independent role of inspections in assessing and identifying strengths and areas for improvement across the Scottish education system. The Chief Inspector will deliver an annual report on the quality of Scottish education annually.

See [Education reform legislation published - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

## Impact of inspections

Existing inspection impact processes include:

- publication of inspection reports;
- follow-through inspections and implementation of follow-up processes;
- inspection teams analysis of the annual results from each of the quality indicators used and sharing this intelligence in their reports and at conferences. This supports staff to have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development observed in Scottish schools;
- publication of composite inspection data in the Chief Inspector's Report, the Annual Report of the Department of Education, and in thematic reports which inform policy;
- completion of surveys and questionnaires to assess the profession's comments on the quality of their inspection experience.

## Quality assurance of inspections

The Inspectorate uses a range of mechanisms to ensure that its work demonstrates the highest professional standards with judgements that are valid and reliable.

These include:

- internal quality assurance mechanisms and the use of external evidence;
- publication of the standards and procedures in the document HGIOS4 that the Inspectorate uses at present in its work;
- the recruitment of inspectors from among highly qualified, experienced teachers;
- the development of comprehensive training, induction and mentoring programmes to develop and maintain evaluation expertise among serving inspectors; and,
- quality assurance and subsequent editing of inspection reports prior to publication.

## 2. Evaluation process

### Self-evaluation

Staff use the HGIOS4 framework in differing roles across their school and with partners to strengthen their evaluative work. This includes colleges, universities, employers and local authorities. Self-evaluation is based on following the HGIOS4 'Virtuous cycle of

improvement'. This illustrates the key features of evidence-based self-improvement at school and at system-wide levels. It shows how school and system leaders can empower practitioners to interpret nationally shared aims. For example, they use the principles of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence and apply them in their local contexts in ways which are most appropriate to them. The 'virtuous cycle' is relevant to all sectors of education. It can help staff to understand the importance of regular and rigorous evidence-based internal and external evaluation to inform further improvement.

### **Focus of inspection**

Education staff in Scotland use 'How good is our school? 4<sup>th</sup> Version'. (URL detailed below). This document is a toolkit for schools to engage in evidence-based analysis of what is working well, what needs to improve and what can have a greater positive impact on learners. This framework is used by staff in differing roles across a school and with partners including colleges, universities, employers, local authorities. It further strengthens the quality of a school's overall evaluative work.

### **Inspection framework**

HGIOS4 is a framework for schools to use to engage in evidence-based analysis of what is working well and what needs to improve and have greater positive impact on learners. Headteachers have overall responsibility for ensuring the school has a clearly communicated strategic plan for self-evaluation which is ongoing and evidence-based. However, all staff are responsible for ensuring that self-evaluation, in partnership with all stakeholders, is at the heart of school improvement. Self-evaluation should not be seen as an "add-on" or involve lots of additional time and bureaucracy. It should focus on the key work of every school. At present, inspectors focus on the quality of leadership, learning and teaching, curriculum pathways, partnership working with families, ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion and raising attainment and achievement.

See [How good is our school? \(4th edition\) \(education.gov.scot\)](https://www.education.gov.scot/inspections-and-evaluation/inspections/4th-edition)

The framework consists of a set of 15 quality indicators (QIs) designed to help staff answer three questions linked to important aspects of the work and life of their school. The quality indicators are divided into three categories:

- Leadership and Management: How good is our leadership and approach to improvement?
- Learning Provision: How good is the quality of care and education we offer?
- Successes and Achievements: How good are we at ensuring the best possible outcomes for all our learners?

### **Inspection time and resources**

The full inspection model can last for one week. We also use a short model inspection which can last for three days. The size of an inspection team varies to suit the size of a school. A secondary inspection team consists of a managing inspector, depute managing inspector, inspection team members such as full-time inspectors, seconded headteachers, and a health and nutrition inspector. There is also a lay member who is not an inspector but a member of the community who gathers information and views about aspects of school life.

## Frequency of inspections

HMIE in Scotland inspect a sample of at least 120 schools every year. Inspectors do not expect teachers to be doing anything differently in advance of an inspection. Inspectors assume that staff are providing a high-quality provision for children every day and therefore they are happy to observe what staff and learners would be doing on an ordinary day without any special changes for an inspection.

HMIE also carry out national thematic inspections on key aspects of education.

## Non-inspection activities

As well as inspection duties, inspectors also provide clear educational advice to the Scottish Parliament and to school educators both nationally and internationally where this is requested. Inspectors publish case studies covering a wide range of helpful ideas and approaches. Identifying good ideas and approaches is a core part of being an inspector. Sharing inspection activities observed can have a significant impact on children and young people. It helps to recognise successes in Scottish education and support quality and improvement within the sectors inspected, across the country.

## 3. Consequences of inspection

### Reporting

The inspectorate in Scotland publish reports for every establishment they inspect. In addition, they publish a letter for families giving the high-level strengths and areas for developments a school should take forward after the inspection.

See [Find an inspection report | Find an inspection report | Inspection and review | Education Scotland](#)

### Grading

At present, Scottish inspectors use a six-point scale to evaluate the quality of an inspected provision. It is mainly used by Education Scotland, local authorities and other governing bodies for the purpose of national and/or local benchmarking across a number of establishments. It is not necessary for individual schools to measure themselves against the six-point scale although they may choose to do so. It should be noted that, when a grading is applied, it is for the whole quality indicator. Individual themes are not graded. In education, an evaluation can be arrived at in a range of contexts.

### Sharing inspection findings

Inspectors in Scotland, at present, publish their findings on the Education Scotland website.

See [Find an inspection report | Find an inspection report | Inspection and review | Education Scotland](#)

The findings from the use of inspection are also shared through the publication of thematic reports on aspects of educational provision such as, numeracy, and curriculum. These thematic reports play an important role in informing educational policy and ongoing national strategies. They also support improvement through sharing highly effective practice observed while on inspection.

## **What happens following an inspection?**

Further information on how we complete inspection can be seen on the Education Scotland website.

See [What we do and how we do it | Inspection and review | Education Scotland](#)

The inspection team will sign a school off at the end of an inspection where it has demonstrated at least satisfactory strengths. The school not achieving at least a satisfactory overall rating, will be offered additional support visits in partnership with non-inspection colleagues at Education Scotland. The school will be signed off by inspectors only after a further inspection visit when it reaches a satisfactory provision.