

School Inspections in Scotland consultation 2025

Collated responses from participants at the Learning for Sustainability Scotland webinar

Tuesday 18 November 2025

Q1. Who should be involved in school inspections and how?

- Everyone who is already involved in the inspection process should continue to be involved. Children & young people must play a key role in engaging with HMIE pre, during, and post-inspection.
- A holistic approach to capturing the 'totality of experience' of children and young people is required; through a whole-school and whole-community approach. Inspection should involve all those associated with the whole-setting approach of 'community, culture, curriculum and campus' (as per the national Learning for Sustainability 'Target 2030' strategy.)
- Data capture should include video, audio, and image-based formats; as well as written.

Q3. What are your thoughts on the current six-point grading scale?

- A school is a constantly-changing entity. How can we ensure the grading system is a true reflection of a school, rather than simply a 'snapshot' of a very short time-frame?
- There is an issue around consistency of application – how can we apply a single framework across schools with widely-varying socio-economic demographics?
- How can we make this scale less like a 'school report' in order to demonstrate a fuller and more holistic overview of the successes and challenges in each setting? Can the descriptors be more informative and written with an 'assessment is for learning' ethos in mind?

Q5. Pre-inspection: what should happen in the time before an inspection takes place?

- A holistic 'systems-thinking in practice' approach should inform all stages of the inspection process; connecting families, schools, communities, further/higher education and workplaces in order to enable a meaningful approach to ensuring socially, economically, and ecologically-thriving futures for children and young people.
- The views of children & young people must be included through the use of a revised and refreshed How Good is OUR School? Framework. Methodologies based on the Children's Participation Framework need to be employed.
- School development plans need to be included - these should reference Learning for Sustainability as a key element of a whole-setting 'totality of experience' as per the ambitions of the national LfS Action Plan.

Q6 - What should the format, purpose and content of the new school inspection framework look like?

Do you think anything is missing from this list? Please suggest any other areas you consider important

- [Key policy research commissioned by Scottish Government](#) following the 2021 OECD report into Scottish education all make reference to the need for ecological, societal, and economic 'sustainability'-related education. The current Curriculum Improvement Cycle has identified **Learning for Sustainability** (LfS) as one of eleven key cross-cutting themes. How can LfS be evidenced in the inspection process?
- Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is a key driver of Scottish education, and includes [outdoor learning](#) as a key pedagogical approach; rather than 'outdoor education' as proposed in this consultation. LfS must be clearly articulated in national school inspections to meet Scotland's commitment that every 3–18 learner receives their LfS entitlement and every setting becomes a Sustainable Learning Setting by 2030; through a whole-setting approach to LfS delivered through the four areas of curriculum, community, culture and campus as set out in the national [LfS Action Plan, 'Target 2030: A movement for people, planet and prosperity'](#). All settings should be supported to work toward this by strong leadership and regular self-evaluation; and with HMIE inspectors also regularly assessing progress toward Target 2030.
- A diversity of approaches (e.g. videos, interviews, testimonials) should be utilised to effectively gather views from all associated with the school and its wider community.

Q7. Reporting on the outcome of inspections

- A holistic 'systems-thinking in practice' approach should inform all stages of the inspection process; connecting families, schools, communities, further/higher education and workplaces in order to enable a meaningful approach to ensuring socially, economically, and ecologically-thriving futures for children and young people. Reporting should be framed from the perspective of the learner: considering the formal, non-formal, and informal learning that happens across a school setting and its wider community; capturing the 'totality of experience' of children and young people.
- A single inspection report for all audiences is a good approach; accompanied by examples and evidence of activity presented through the use of a variety of media.
- Reports should demonstrate how Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is clearly articulated, embedded, evaluated and supported in each setting; by providing robust, demonstrable evidence of a holistic, whole-setting approach as outlined in the national LfS Action Plan.

Q9. How should HM Inspectors engage with schools after an inspection?

- All schools should receive follow-up support from HMIE; irrespective of outcome; mirroring the 'Assessment is for Learning' ethos practised in schools themselves.
- Any revisit following a less than satisfactory inspection must include recommendations and support for ongoing staff professional learning - as part of ongoing school development planning. School Development plans should as a matter of course include and embed an ethos of Learning for Sustainability across the school community, campus, curriculum, and culture.