

# The framework for school inspection

Guidance and grade descriptors for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, from January 2012

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This framework sets out how the general principles and processes of inspection are applied to maintained schools and several other types of school in England. It states the statutory basis for inspection and summarises the main features of school inspections carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 from January 2012.

**Age group:** 0–19

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**Published:** January 2012

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**Reference no:** 110128



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## Introduction

### What is the purpose of school inspection?

1. The inspection of a school provides an independent external evaluation of its effectiveness and a diagnosis of what it should do to improve, based upon a range of evidence, including that from first-hand observation by inspectors. Ofsted's school inspection reports present a written commentary on the quality of a school's provision.
2. Ofsted's inspections of schools perform three essential functions. They:
  - provide parents<sup>1</sup> with an expert and independent assessment of how well a school is performing and help inform those who are choosing a school for their child to attend in the future
  - keep the Secretary of State for Education (and Parliament) informed about the work of schools; this provides assurance that minimum standards are being met, provides confidence in the use of public money and assists accountability<sup>2</sup>
  - promote the improvement of individual schools and the education system as a whole.

### How does inspection promote improvement?

3. Ofsted is required to carry out its work in ways that encourage the services it inspects and regulates to improve, be user-focused and be efficient and effective in the use of resources.<sup>3</sup>
4. Inspection acts in a number of ways to drive and support school improvement, for example by:
  - raising expectations through criteria and grade descriptors that illustrate the standards of performance and effectiveness expected of schools
  - offering a sharp challenge and the impetus to act where improvement is needed
  - clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses
  - recommending specific priorities for improvement for the school and, when appropriate, checking subsequent progress
  - fostering constructive dialogue between inspectors and those who lead and work in the school
  - promoting rigour in the way that schools evaluate their own performance, thereby enhancing their capacity to improve.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'parents' refers to mothers, fathers and/or carers.

<sup>2</sup> Under section 118 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Under sections 117(1) and 119(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

## Key features of the framework for school inspection arrangements from January 2012

5. From January 2012, under the revised school inspection arrangements, inspectors are focusing more sharply on those aspects of schools' work that have the greatest impact on raising achievement.

This will involve:

- a reduction in the number of key judgements that are required
  - a further increase in the proportion of inspectors' time in school that is spent observing teaching and gathering evidence of learning, progress and behaviour.
6. Inspections will continue to engage headteachers, school staff and governors in the process of inspection so that they understand better the basis for the judgements that are made. Inspectors will give greater consideration to the views of parents, pupils and staff as important evidence.
  7. Inspectors are required to report on<sup>4</sup> the quality of education provided in the school and must, in particular, cover:
    - achievement of pupils at the school
    - quality of teaching in the school
    - quality of leadership in and management of the school
    - behaviour and safety of pupils at the school.

In reporting, inspectors must also consider:

- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school
  - the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school and, in particular, the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.<sup>5</sup>
8. Schools will be able, via the appropriate authority (normally the school's governing body), to request an inspection. If an inspection is carried out in response to such a request, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) may charge the appropriate authority for the cost of the inspection.<sup>6</sup>
  9. This framework sets out the statutory basis for inspection.<sup>7</sup> It describes the policy and principles that apply to inspections of maintained schools and academies, including free schools, university technology colleges (UTCs), studio

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<sup>4</sup> Under sections 5(5), (5A) and (5B) of the Education Act 2005.

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of the Equality Act 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Under section 8(3) of the Education Act 2005.

<sup>7</sup> School inspections are governed by the Education Act 2005, the Education and Inspection Act 2006 and the provisions in the Education Act 2011.

schools and some non-maintained special schools in England.<sup>8</sup> It should be read in conjunction with *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of maintained schools and academies*<sup>9</sup> and *Conducting school inspections*.<sup>10</sup>

## Part A. Inspection policy and principles

### What are the legal requirements for the inspection of schools?

10. This framework sets out the statutory basis for inspection based on the Education Act 2005, which has been substantially amended by the Education Act 2011. This framework is effective for inspections conducted under section 5 that will take place in England from January 2012.
11. This framework applies to all schools in England to which section 5 of the Education Act 2005 applies. This includes all maintained schools and state-funded independent schools, and certain non-maintained independent schools. The schools subject to section 5 inspection are:
  - community, foundation and voluntary schools
  - community and foundation special schools
  - maintained nursery schools
  - academies<sup>11</sup>
  - city technology colleges
  - city technology colleges for the technology of the arts
  - certain non-maintained special schools approved by the Secretary of State under section 342 of the Education Act 1996.
12. This framework does not apply to any other independent schools.
13. An inspection of a boarding or residential special school's boarding/residential provision will be integrated with the school inspection, where possible. This will not be possible where inspection cycles do not coincide within the same year. In such cases, an inspection of the boarding/residential provision only will be conducted.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See paragraph 11 for a full list of schools covered by section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<sup>9</sup> *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of maintained schools and academies* (110127), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110127](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110127).

<sup>10</sup> *Conducting school inspections* (090097), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090097](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090097).

<sup>11</sup> This includes all academy family schools: sponsor-led academies, academy converter schools, academy special schools, free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs), 16–19 academy schools and studio schools.

<sup>12</sup> The inspection of the boarding/residential provision will be conducted under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools or residential special schools, as appropriate. The boarding/residential inspection will follow the *Framework for inspecting boarding and residential provision in schools* (110095), Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110095](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110095).

14. All schools covered by this framework have their own unique reference number (URN). Any institution with a URN that is inspected by Ofsted will receive an inspection report. Those schools that work in partnership with other schools through federation or other collaborative activities will receive separate inspection reports if they have separate URNs.
15. Ofsted is required to inspect all schools to which section 5 applies at prescribed intervals.<sup>13</sup> Regulations require that each school must be inspected within five school years from the end of the school year in which the last inspection took place.<sup>14</sup>
16. The inspection arrangements will ensure that the frequency and weight of inspection are proportional to the needs and circumstances of schools, so some schools will be inspected more frequently than at five-year intervals. The section below sets out more detail on the timing of inspections.
17. Certain schools are exempt from section 5 inspection; such schools are known as 'exempt schools'. Regulations will specify that maintained primary and secondary schools that were judged to be outstanding at their most recent inspection are exempt from inspection under section 5 in the future. This exemption also applies to an academy converter school whose predecessor achieved an outstanding grade at its most recent inspection.<sup>15</sup>
18. Where HMCI or the Secretary of State has concerns about the performance of an exempt school, HMCI has powers to inspect under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. Such concerns may be identified through the risk assessment process set out in paragraphs 23–27 or where Ofsted becomes aware of concerns about a school's performance or the safety of pupils. HMCI may treat an inspection of an exempt school conducted under section 8 as if it were an inspection under section 5, and is required to do so where requested by the Secretary of State.<sup>16</sup>
19. Exempt schools may be subject to inspection as part of Ofsted's programme of surveys of curriculum subjects and aspects of the curriculum, including surveys focused on best practice in schools. These inspections are conducted under section 8.
20. Where HMCI arranges an inspection under section 8 at the request of the appropriate authority for a school, the inspection is required to be treated as if it were conducted under section 5.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Under regulation 3 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended).

<sup>14</sup> A school year begins on 1 August for these purposes.

<sup>15</sup> Regulations will be made under section 5(4A) of the Education Act 2011 to provide that the duty to inspect a school does not apply to a school that has been judged by Ofsted to be outstanding at its previous inspection.

<sup>16</sup> Under section 9 of the Education Act 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Under section 9(4) of the Education Act 2005.

21. Some schools are designated by the Secretary of State as having a religious character.<sup>18</sup> The content of collective worship and denominational education in such schools is inspected separately under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The governing body, in consultation with its associated faith body, is responsible for arranging the section 48 inspection and can request for this to coincide with the school's section 5 inspection.
22. Early years registered childcare provision is inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. Where the provision is managed by the school, the section 49 inspection may be carried out at the same time as the section 5 inspection and the quality of the provision reported in a single inspection report. However, where registered provision on a school's site is managed by a private, voluntary and/or independent provider, it is inspected separately under the Childcare Act 2006. In these circumstances, the inspection may be scheduled to take place at the same time as the school's section 5 inspection. A separate report is provided for such registered provision.

### **What determines the timing of a school's inspection?**

23. Ofsted varies the frequency of school inspections depending on the findings of a school's previous inspection(s), and a risk assessment of the school's subsequent performance, starting in the third year after the previous section 5 inspection.
24. In conducting a risk assessment, Ofsted analyses:
  - pupils' academic achievement over time, taking attainment and progress into account
  - pupils' rates of attendance
  - any inspection visits carried out by Ofsted since the last routine inspection
  - the views of parents and carers
  - qualifying complaints<sup>19</sup> about the school referred to Ofsted by parents or carers
  - any other significant concerns – such as those regarding safeguarding – brought to Ofsted's attention, including from the relevant local authority.
25. Exempt schools are subject to a risk assessment. The first risk assessment will take place in the third academic year after the date of the exempt school's most recent<sup>20</sup> inspection, and annually from then on.

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<sup>18</sup> Under section 69(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

<sup>19</sup> Ofsted has specific powers (under sections 11A–C of the Education Act 2005) to investigate certain complaints, known as qualifying complaints.

<sup>20</sup> Or, in the case of an academy converter school, the most recent inspection of its predecessor school.



Ofsted's policy is that exempt schools may be inspected in circumstances where:

- HMCI has concerns about the performance of the school as shown by the risk assessment process, including a rapid decline in parental confidence
- safeguarding and/or welfare concerns suggest that it should be inspected
- a subject or thematic survey inspection raises more general concerns
- Ofsted has received a qualifying complaint about a school, which, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to inspect the school.

26. A school judged as good at its most recent inspection is inspected within five school years of the end of the school year in which its last inspection took place, **unless**:

- it is: a special school; a pupil referral unit; a school with residential provision; a maintained nursery school; or a school with registered provision for 0–3-year-old children, all of which are normally inspected within three school years of the end of the school year in which its last inspection took place
- the risk assessment of their performance suggests that it should be inspected earlier
- safeguarding and/or welfare concerns suggest that it should be inspected earlier
- Ofsted has received a qualifying complaint about a school, which, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to bring forward a school's inspection
- it is part of an annual sample selected to ensure that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report reflects evidence from a cross-section of schools of different types, phases and effectiveness
- it is part of a formal grouping of schools, such as a federation, and shares important aspects of its provision, where it is considered appropriate to inspect the member schools in the 'partnership' at the same time.

27. Where Ofsted decides that, following the risk assessment, a school previously judged as good is not to be inspected, we will publish an interim assessment letter. Interim assessment letters are usually published towards the end of the third year from the end of the school year in which the last section 5 inspection took place. The interim assessment letter explains that the school will not be inspected during the period of a year from the date of publication, unless Ofsted receives information indicating that an earlier inspection is necessary. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must send a copy of the interim assessment letter to all registered parents and carers of pupils at the school within five working days of receiving it.

28. A school judged to be satisfactory at its most recent inspection is normally inspected within three school years from the end of the school year in which its last inspection took place. A significant proportion of satisfactory schools will also receive a monitoring inspection to check on their progress following their last full inspection.
29. A school subject to a notice to improve will usually receive a monitoring inspection within six to eight months of its last section 5 inspection. It will usually be re-inspected, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, within 12–16 months of its last section 5 inspection, although the timing of the re-inspection may be influenced by the outcome of the monitoring inspection.
30. A school subject to special measures will usually receive its first monitoring inspection within four to six months of the inspection that made it subject to special measures. However, where a school's safeguarding arrangements have been judged to be inadequate, it is likely to take place at the earliest opportunity. A school may receive up to five monitoring inspections over the two years following the section 5 inspection that placed it in special measures. It will be re-inspected after 24–28 months if it is not removed from a category at a monitoring inspection.
31. Inspection can take place at any point after the end of the first complete week of a school's autumn term. If a primary or nursery school has a new intake of pupils at the beginning of the spring or summer term, Ofsted does not inspect that school in the first full week of the term.
32. In exceptional circumstances specified in Ofsted's deferral policy,<sup>21</sup> and following a request by the school, an inspection might be cancelled or deferred after it has been scheduled. Normally, however, if pupils are receiving education in the school, an inspection goes ahead even if, for example, the headteacher is out of school or building work is taking place.

## What are the principles of school inspection?

School inspection acts in the interests of children, young people, their parents and employers. It encourages high-quality provision that meets diverse needs and fosters equality.

School inspections will:

- support and promote improvement by:
  - adjusting the focus and type of inspection to have the greatest impact
  - ensuring that inspections are of high quality and rigorous
  - clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses
  - identifying precise actions to underpin recommendations

<sup>21</sup> *Deferral of inspections*, Ofsted, 2010; <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/deferral-of-inspections-information-for-schools>.

- explaining and discussing inspection findings with those whose work has been inspected
- be proportionate by:
  - adjusting the frequency of inspection according to the outcomes of previous inspection reports and risk assessments
  - deploying resources where improvement is most needed or where inspection can add most value
- focus on pupils' and parents' and carers' needs by:
  - taking account of pupils' and parents' and carers' views when Ofsted plans and carries out inspections
  - drawing on pupils' and parents' and carers' views to inform inspectors' judgements and the outcomes of inspection
  - minimising the risk to children, young people and adults by evaluating the effectiveness of schools' procedures for safeguarding
  - evaluating the work of schools in eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and encouraging good race relations
  - encouraging schools to strive to meet the diverse needs of all pupils
- focus on the needs of schools by:
  - providing high-quality and timely communication with schools
  - making use, as far as possible, of the existing data, documentation and systems of the schools inspected and avoiding placing unnecessary burdens on them
  - taking account of schools' self-evaluation
- be transparent and consistent by:
  - making clear and transparent judgements based on sound evidence
  - inspecting and reporting with integrity
  - having clear success criteria, procedures and guidance that are well understood by schools and users and are readily available
- be accountable by:
  - reporting the outcomes of inspection without fear or favour
  - publishing clear, accurate, timely reports that provide parents with an authoritative, independent assessment of the quality of education provided by the school, thereby informing parents' choice of school
  - striving to inform inspection activities by gathering the views of pupils and parents and those who have a significant interest in the school
- demonstrate value for money by:
  - targeting inspection resources and deploying them effectively and efficiently
  - evaluating the outcomes and processes of inspection and making improvements where necessary.

## **What is the relationship between school self-evaluation and inspection?**

33. Self-evaluation is now well established in schools, providing the basis for planning for development and improvement. Inspection takes account of, and contributes to, a school's self-evaluation. Schools may present a written summary of their self-evaluation to inspectors.

## **Who inspects schools?**

34. School inspectors are either Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), employed directly by Ofsted, or additional inspectors employed directly or contracted by inspection service providers (ISPs). ISPs are independent commercial organisations contracted by Ofsted to provide inspection services and have responsibility for the administrative arrangements for inspections. Ofsted prescribes the qualifications and experience required by additional inspectors, the initial and continuing training that they should receive, and the standards they are required to meet. Ofsted also publishes the names of additional inspectors. All inspectors undertake regular training to ensure that they are familiar with changes in inspection frameworks, inspection methodology and developments in educational practice.
35. HMI lead a high proportion of secondary school inspections and a small proportion of primary school and special school inspections. Additional inspectors are authorised to lead a school inspection, subject to the additional inspector having previously conducted a section 5 inspection under the supervision of, and to the satisfaction of, an HMI, or where an inspection is supervised by an HMI. Ofsted also quality assures section 5 inspections and all section 5 inspection reports are signed off by HMI.

## **What inspection grades are used by inspectors when they make judgements?**

36. All school inspections carried out by Ofsted use the same grading scale:
- grade 1: outstanding
  - grade 2: good
  - grade 3: satisfactory
  - grade 4: inadequate.

## **What happens to schools judged to be inadequate?**

37. Many schools emerge with credit from their inspections. A few, though, have significant weaknesses and fall into a category of concern.

The two categories of schools causing concern are:

- special measures: the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school<sup>22</sup>
- notice to improve: the school requires significant improvement, because either:
  - it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education but is demonstrating the capacity to improve

or:

- it is not failing to provide an acceptable standard of education but is performing significantly less well than it might, in all the circumstances, reasonably be expected to perform.<sup>23</sup>

If inspectors judge that a school's overall effectiveness is inadequate, they must then decide whether it requires special measures or requires a notice to improve.

38. These judgements are subject to moderation by HMI. HMCI is required to confirm a judgement that a school requires special measures. At the first monitoring inspection of a school subject to special measures, the lead inspector will determine whether the school should be permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers. This decision will be reported in a monitoring letter. On subsequent monitoring inspections, the lead inspector will review this decision in the light of progress made by the school, and confirm or revise the permission.<sup>24</sup>
39. Ofsted subsequently monitors the progress of inadequate schools, as described above. Every year we also conduct monitoring inspections of a proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness has been judged to be satisfactory.

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<sup>22</sup> Under section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Under section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Under regulation 8(2) of the Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (England) Regulations 2008, which provides that a teacher's induction period cannot be served in a school that is eligible for intervention by virtue of section 62 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, unless HMCI has certified in writing that s/he is satisfied that the school or part of the school is fit for the purpose of providing induction, supervision and training.

## Part B. The focus of school inspections

### The key judgements made during school inspections

40. The evaluation schedule, which is published separately, provides guidance to schools and inspectors on the key judgements that inspectors make during the course of an inspection. These judgements cover the broad range of a school's work. Inspectors judge the overall effectiveness of the school, taking account of the four key judgements outlined in paragraph 7. Inspectors also evaluate how well the school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the extent to which the education provided meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular, the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

### Achievement of pupils at the school

41. When evaluating the achievement of pupils, inspectors consider:

- the standards attained by pupils by the time they leave the school, including their standards in reading, writing and mathematics and, in primary schools, pupils' attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave the school
- how well pupils learn, the quality of their work in a range of subjects and the progress they have made since joining the school
- how well pupils develop a range of skills, including reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills, and how well they apply these across the curriculum
- how well disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have achieved since joining the school
- how well gaps are narrowing between the performance of different groups of pupils in the school and compared to all pupils nationally
- how well pupils make progress relative to their starting points.

### Quality of teaching in the school

42. When evaluating the quality of teaching in the school, inspectors consider:

- the extent to which teachers' expectations, reflected in their teaching and planning, including curriculum planning, are sufficiently high to extend the previous knowledge, skills and understanding of all pupils in a range of lessons and activities over time
- how well teaching enables pupils to develop skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics
- the extent to which well judged teaching strategies, including setting challenging tasks matched to pupils' learning needs, successfully engage all pupils in their learning

- the extent to which teachers secure high quality learning by setting challenging tasks that are matched to pupils' specific learning needs
  - how well pupils understand how to improve their learning as a result of frequent, detailed and accurate feedback from teachers following assessment of their learning
  - the extent to which teachers' questioning and use of discussion promote learning
  - the extent to which the pace and depth of learning are maximised as a result of teachers' monitoring of learning during lessons and any consequent actions in response to pupils' feedback
  - the extent to which teachers enthuse, engage and motivate pupils to learn and foster their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning
  - how well teachers use their expertise, including their subject knowledge, to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects and areas of learning
  - the extent to which teachers enable pupils to develop the skills to learn for themselves, where appropriate, including setting appropriate homework to develop their understanding.
43. The most important role of teaching is to raise pupils' achievement. Therefore, inspectors consider the planning and implementation of learning activities across the whole of the school's curriculum, together with marking, assessment and feedback. Inspectors also evaluate activities both within and outside the classroom, such as support and intervention strategies, and the impact that teaching has in promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils at the school**

44. When evaluating the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school, inspectors consider:
- pupils' attitudes to learning and conduct in lessons and around the school
  - pupils' behaviour towards, and respect for, other young people and adults, including freedom from bullying and harassment that may include cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to special educational need, sexual orientation, sex, race, religion and belief, gender reassignment or disability
  - how well teachers manage the behaviour and expectations of pupils to ensure that all pupils have an equal and fair chance to thrive and learn in an atmosphere of respect and dignity
  - pupils' ability to assess and manage risk appropriately and to keep themselves safe

- pupils' attendance and punctuality at school and in lessons
- how well the school ensures the systematic and consistent management of behaviour.

## **Quality of leadership in and management of the school**

45. When evaluating the quality of leadership and management at all levels, including, where relevant, governors, inspectors consider whether they:
- demonstrate an ambitious vision for the school and high expectations for what every pupil and teacher can achieve, and set high standards for quality and performance
  - improve teaching and learning, including the management of pupils' behaviour
  - provide a broad and balanced curriculum that: meets the needs of all pupils; enables all pupils to achieve their full educational potential and make progress in their learning; and promotes their good behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
  - evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses and use their findings to promote improvement
  - improve the school and develop its capacity for sustaining improvement by developing leadership capacity and high professional standards among all staff
  - engage with parents and carers in supporting pupils' achievement, behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
  - ensure that all pupils are safe.

## **Overall effectiveness**

46. Inspectors evaluate the quality of the education provided in the school. In doing this, they consider the evidence gathered to support their evaluations of the four key judgements:
- achievement of pupils at the school
  - quality of teaching in the school
  - quality of leadership in and management of the school
  - behaviour and safety of pupils at the school.

They also consider:

- the extent to which the education provided meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular, those who have a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and pupils who have special educational needs



- how well the school promotes all pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by providing positive experiences through planned and coherent opportunities in the curriculum and through interactions with teachers, other adults and the local community.

## **Part C. The process of inspection**

### **What happens before the inspection?**

#### **When are schools notified of their inspection?**

47. A school receives between zero and two working days' notice of an inspection; most will receive between one and two days' notice. HMCI may arrange for an inspection of a school to take place without notice where this is judged to be appropriate.
48. Some monitoring inspections are conducted without notice. A significant proportion of schools judged to be satisfactory and all schools judged as inadequate will receive monitoring inspections.

#### **What information do inspectors use before the inspection?**

49. A school will be asked to provide Ofsted with a summary of its self-evaluation. This assists the lead inspector in identifying the initial inspection issues, which are discussed with the headteacher and recorded in a concise pre-inspection briefing that is shared with the school. The briefing also draws upon performance data, the school's last inspection report and any other relevant pre-inspection evidence.

#### **How do lead inspectors contact the school?**

50. The lead inspector contacts the headteacher or, in the absence of the headteacher, the most senior member of staff who is available. Pre-inspection activities and telephone contact with the school are intended to ensure that good communication and effective working relationships are established and the issues for the inspection are identified and discussed.

#### **How do inspectors seek the views of registered parents and carers, pupils and other partners about the school's work before and during inspection?**

51. When a school is notified of inspection, it is required to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to notify all registered parents and carers of registered pupils<sup>25</sup> at the school, including those who have been excluded or are away from school. There are requirements for schools to notify relevant bodies of the inspection.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Under section 6(1) of the Education Act 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Under regulation 4 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended).

52. Ofsted provides a standard letter and questionnaire for the purpose of notifying parents and carers of the inspection, which a school is required to distribute.<sup>27</sup> This is available in a range of community languages. The questionnaire invites parents and carers to give their views in confidence on matters relating to the school. Completed questionnaires should be returned to the school in a sealed envelope; the school must forward returns unopened to the lead inspector for analysis.
53. During the inspection, inspectors talk to a range of pupils. In addition, they gather a sample of the views of pupils via a pupils' questionnaire.
54. Lead inspectors also take account of any external views of the school's performance. This may include any evaluation of the school's performance by the local authority.
55. In addition, inspectors may gather the views of staff through a voluntary questionnaire. The views of staff are used to inform the inspection evidence base but they are not normally reported in the inspection report.

## **What happens during the inspection?**

### **How many days do inspectors spend in the school?**

56. Inspections do not normally last longer than two days, but the number of inspectors involved varies according to the size and nature of the school.

### **How do inspectors use their time during the inspection?**

57. The main focus of inspection activity is observing lessons and gathering robust, first-hand evidence to inform inspectors' judgements.
58. Inspectors evaluate first-hand evidence about the achievement of specific groups of pupils and individuals. They give specific attention to the quality of learning for different groups of pupils and for individuals, both in separate provision and within mainstream lessons.
59. Other first-hand evidence gathered by inspectors includes discussions with pupils and staff, listening to pupils' read and scrutiny of their work. Inspectors also scrutinise school records and documentation. Inspectors also have a duty to have regard to the views of a specified range of people when conducting an inspection under section 5.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Under section 6(2) of the Education Act 2005.

<sup>28</sup> As set out at section 7 of the Education Act 2005.

### **How is evidence recorded?**

60. During the inspection, inspectors gather, analyse and record evidence and their judgements on evidence forms. The evidence forms contribute to the evidence base for the inspection. The lead inspector is responsible for compiling and assuring the quality of the evidence base.

### **How are judgements secured?**

61. The lead inspector has responsibility for ensuring that judgements about the school are corporately agreed by the inspection team, with reference to the grade descriptors in the evaluation schedule, and that they are supported convincingly by recorded evidence. Inspectors identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what it must do to improve. Emerging findings are discussed with the headteacher and, where appropriate, senior staff at regular intervals. The headteacher is given every opportunity to provide further evidence should s/he wish to do so.
62. Final judgements are made only when all first-hand evidence has been collected and considered. These judgements, including the overall effectiveness judgement on the school, represent the corporate view of the inspection team. They are subject to quality assurance before the report is published.

### **How do the headteacher and senior staff engage in the inspection?**

63. Inspection has the strongest impact on school improvement when the school understands the evidence and findings that have led to the judgements and what it needs to do to improve. The lead inspector therefore ensures that the headteacher and senior staff:
- are kept up-to-date with how the inspection is proceeding
  - understand how the inspection team reaches its judgements
  - have opportunities to clarify how evidence is used to reach judgements
  - are given the opportunity to present additional evidence.
64. Headteachers are invited to:
- give their views on the issues for inspection as part of the pre-inspection discussions
  - participate in joint lesson observations, as agreed with the lead inspector
  - receive regular updates from the lead inspector
- and, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so:
- attend the formal inspection team meetings at the end of each day of the inspection

- discuss the inspectors' recommendations to ensure that these are understood.

65. The headteacher's participation in such inspection activities as attendance at team meetings and participation in joint observations is not mandatory and s/he may choose whether or not to accept.

### **What is the code of conduct for inspectors?**

66. Inspectors are required to uphold the highest professional standards in their work and to ensure that everyone they encounter during inspections is treated fairly and with respect. These standards are assured through a code of conduct, which is set out below.

Inspectors should:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
- evaluate provision in line with frameworks, national standards or requirements
- base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
- have no connection with the provider that could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
- endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
- act in the best interests and well-being of service users
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests
- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

67. When inspectors meet pupils, parents, staff, governors and other stakeholders, every endeavour should be made to protect the origin of individuals' comments if they are used to pursue an issue further. However, there may be circumstances where it is not possible to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewee. Additionally, inspectors have a duty to pass on disclosures that raise child protection or safeguarding issues and/or where serious misconduct or potential criminal activity is involved.

## **How should school staff engage with inspectors?**

68. To ensure that inspection is productive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and schools establish and maintain an appropriate working relationship based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Ofsted expects school staff to:
- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
  - enable inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
  - enable inspectors to evaluate the school objectively against the inspection framework
  - provide evidence that will enable the inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
  - work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
  - ensure that the health and safety of inspectors is not prejudiced while they are on the school's premises
  - maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspectors
  - draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner
  - understand the need for inspectors to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager.

## **What feedback do inspectors give to school staff during the inspection?**

69. Inspectors offer oral feedback to teachers and other staff about the work they see in order to promote improvement. Constructive dialogue is essential between inspectors and staff, and particularly between the lead inspector and the headteacher.

## **How is the quality of inspection assured?**

70. Ofsted monitors the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes. Some schools are visited by an HMI or by a representative of the ISP to check the quality of the inspection. Their assessments are confidential to the inspectors and the ISPs concerned. In other cases, the inspection evidence base may be evaluated.
71. In the unlikely event that an inspection report is judged by Ofsted to be seriously flawed, the school is notified that the inspection is incomplete and that a further visit may be necessary to make sure that enough evidence is gathered to make the inspection judgements secure.
72. All schools are invited to complete a post-inspection survey so that the views of headteachers, governors and staff are considered and can contribute to the future development of inspection.

## What happens after the inspection?

### What feedback is provided to the school?

73. Before leaving the school, the lead inspector must ensure that the school is clear:
- about the grades awarded for each judgement required under the evaluation schedule
  - that the grades awarded may be subject to change
  - that the main points provided orally in the feedback will be referred to in the text of the report
  - about the recommendations for improvement
  - about the procedures leading to the publication of the report
  - about the complaints procedure
  - where relevant, about the implications of the school being deemed to require special measures, being given a notice to improve, or judged as satisfactory overall.
74. After the inspection team has reached its conclusions, the judgements are presented and explained to a representative of the governing body and the senior leadership team. Any aspects that have been judged as inadequate or outstanding (or where the judgement is different from that which the school might have expected) are explained in the feedback.

### What are the written outcomes of the inspection?

75. Following the inspection, the lead inspector writes a report about the main findings of the inspection. The findings should be consistent with those explained orally to the school.
76. A brief letter to pupils is provided as an appendix to the report. This is addressed to the pupils and is aimed at the older pupils in the school. For schools with sixth forms, the letter is aimed at pupils in Key Stage 4, as sixth formers may be expected to read the full report.
77. The lead inspector provides a first draft of the report to the ISP who, following editing, forwards the report to the school for a factual accuracy check. One working day is allocated to the school to comment on the draft unless the school is placed in a category of concern, in which case five days are allowed for comments. The final report is signed off by an HMI. Where a school has been placed in special measures, HMCI confirms the judgement and signs off the report.

## When is the report issued?

78. The report is normally issued to a school within 10 working days of the end of the inspection, and published on Ofsted's website within 15 working days of the end of the inspection.
79. For schools inspected under section 5, a copy of the report is sent to:<sup>29</sup>
- the headteacher of the school
  - the local authority
  - the appropriate authority or proprietor (for example, the governing body or the academy trust where the local authority is not the appropriate authority)
  - the person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has them (including diocesan or other appropriate authorities in the case of schools with a religious character)
  - other prescribed persons.
80. For secondary schools with a sixth form, a copy of the report must also be sent to the body responsible for funding allocations for post-16 education.<sup>30</sup>
81. In exceptional circumstances, Ofsted may decide that the normal period for completion of the inspection report should be extended.

## What must the governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor where relevant) do when the inspection report or interim assessment is received?

82. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) are required to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that every registered parent of a registered pupil at the school receives a copy of the inspection report within five working days of the school receiving it.<sup>31</sup> HMCI also expects schools to ensure that all pupils are made aware of the findings of the inspection.
83. If a school judged as good has received an interim assessment, a letter is issued. This is not an inspection report and does not contain inspection judgements. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) are required to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that every registered parent of a registered pupil at the school receives a copy of the interim assessment letter within five working days of the school receiving it.<sup>32</sup>
84. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must also make a copy of the inspection report available upon request to members of the

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<sup>29</sup> Under sections 14(1) and 14(2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>30</sup> Under section 14(3) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>31</sup> Under section 14(4) (c) of the Education Act 2005 and regulation 6 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Under section 14A(4) (c) of the Education Act 2005.

public.<sup>33</sup> A charge, not exceeding the cost of reproduction, can be made<sup>34</sup> for copies of the inspection report. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must make a copy of the interim assessment free of charge on request.

### **How do schools complain about their inspection or inspection report?**

85. Any concerns that the school has about the inspection should be raised and, where possible, resolved with the lead inspector during the inspection. Concerns may also be raised with a quality assurance inspector should one have been allocated to the inspection. If the concerns are not resolved in this way, or the person expressing the concern does not feel that due weight is being given to the concerns, or an independent view is sought, then the person raising the concern or someone acting on his or her behalf should contact Ofsted's helpline on 0300 123 1231.
86. Similarly, any concerns that the school has about the inspection report should be raised with the lead inspector or ISP as soon as possible.
87. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns, then individuals or schools may decide to lodge a formal complaint. The complaints procedures are available on Ofsted's website.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Under section 14(4) (a) of the Education Act 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Under section 14(4) (b) of the Education Act 2005.

<sup>35</sup> *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* (070080), Ofsted, 2010; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070080](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070080).