

Policy statement for inspecting new schools and schools that undergo a change in status

1. This statement sets out how Ofsted will select new schools for inspection. It includes initial inspections of different types of academy schools, including free schools, which are likely to account for the majority of new schools. It also applies to academy converters (i.e. existing schools that have been approved to voluntarily convert to become an academy and, therefore, have a new legal status as a new school).
2. The first inspection of new schools, including academies, will usually take place within three years of opening.¹ In most instances, we will not select new schools for a first inspection until they are in their third year of operation.²

Academy converters

3. Certain types of schools judged outstanding before conversion to academy status are exempt from routine section 5 inspection, unless there are concerns about their performance.³ Outstanding special schools and pupil referral units that convert to academy status are not exempt from routine inspection, but will be eligible for a short inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. Regulations provide that new academy converters, whose predecessor schools were most recently judged good, are also eligible for a short inspection under section 8 of the Act.⁴
4. In line with other good schools, as well as outstanding special schools and pupil referral units, the short inspections of academy converters will be carried out approximately every four years. However, in the case of the first short

¹ 16–19 academies and 16–19 free schools are inspected under the Further education and skills inspection handbook from September 2015, Ofsted, 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015.

² These arrangements apply to all new schools that are yet to have their first section 5 inspection, including new maintained schools.

³ See exemption regulations: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/1293/made. All exempt schools remain subject to Ofsted's risk assessment process.

⁴ The Education (School Inspection) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2015; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/1639/made.



inspection of a new academy with a good predecessor school, Ofsted will consider the inspection history of the predecessor school to decide the timing of the inspection. For example, where the last inspection of the predecessor school took place some time before academy conversion, Ofsted may deem that the school would benefit from an earlier short inspection.⁵

Schools that undergo a significant change

5. If a school judged good at its previous inspection subsequently undergoes significant change, for example through merging with another school or by adding a new phase or a key stage, its next inspection will normally be a section 5 inspection instead of a short inspection.⁶ Thereafter, if the expanded school is judged good, it will be eligible for a short inspection approximately four years later. This process also applies to pupil referral units and special schools that were judged good or outstanding at their previous inspection and subsequently undergo significant change.
6. Where an exempt school undergoes significant change, the school will receive a section 8 'no formal designation' inspection within three years of the change.

Sponsor-led academies

7. Maintained schools that become sponsor-led academies, and whose predecessor schools were most recently judged good or outstanding, are treated as new schools for inspection purposes and are subject to a section 5 inspection as their first inspection; this will normally take place within three years of the school becoming a sponsor-led academy.
8. Ofsted may conduct a section 8 'no formal designation' inspection of any new school at any time, including within three years of opening, where information we hold or receive causes sufficient concern.
9. This policy does not apply to fee-paying independent schools, which are covered by separate inspection arrangements, further details of which can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/being-inspected-as-a-non-association-independent-school.

⁵ Further details on the policy for short inspections are included in the School inspection handbook – section 8; www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-short-monitoring-and-unannounced-behaviour-school-inspections.

⁶ The reference here is to a situation where the good school remains open and incorporates another school which closes, and where the good school retains its Department for Education establishment number and unique reference number (URN), so is not legally a new school.