

# School inspection update

January 2019 | Special edition

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## Message from the National Director, Education

Welcome to this very special edition of our school inspection update (SIU). I hope you all had an enjoyable festive period!

This SIU is published at the same time as the launch of our formal consultation for the education inspection framework 2019 (EIF 2019). The proposed framework is an evolutionary change from the current common inspection framework. I believe it is the best-researched, most thoughtfully developed framework that we have ever produced. Part 1 of this SIU explains why we believe there is a need for a new framework at this point in the improvement journey of England's education sector; it also summarises the theory and evidence underpinning the development of the EIF 2019. Parts 2 and 3 focus on some of the main features that we, as inspectors, will look at within the proposed framework. You will recognise much of this from the inspector training over the last year or so. Part 4 summarises how we propose to go about gathering evidence and reporting to users.

Key to this proposed new framework is clarifying that Ofsted's role is to complement, rather than intensify, the focus on performance data and measures. It is really important that pupils achieve good outcomes and that parents can have confidence that they are doing so. It is a positive thing for an education system to be able to track and publish those outcomes nationally, both for attainment and progress. Outcomes matter for young people, and the impact of a good curriculum, well taught, should be that they achieve great outcomes.

But performance measures are not all we should look at and data should not be 'king'. It should not be allowed to create an environment in schools that has them repeatedly and excessively measuring and recording pupil progress and attainment in ways that are not always valid, reliable or useful to teachers and pupils. Ofsted's job is to focus on what matters educationally, looking at a wide range of evidence. Inspectors will use published, national performance data as a starting point in inspection, but data is only ever that, a starting point. If pupils achieve well, they will have qualifications to take into later life. But if the learning that underlies those qualifications is not rich and deep, we have done those young people a disservice. So, it is very important that as Ofsted moves towards the EIF 2019, we view performance measures more in the context of the quality of education provided.

Apologies in advance: this SIU is a long read but a good one. It should be read in conjunction with the draft inspection handbook<sup>1</sup> and the research document<sup>2</sup> that sets out in detail the work underpinning the development of the new framework. I hope you will find this helpful context in understanding the aims of this new framework.

Of course, commentators are right when they say that the implementation of any inspection framework is only as good as our inspectors and the training that they receive. That is why, we have invested so heavily in focusing your training over the last 18 months on curriculum matters and why we have planned the most extensive inspector training programme ever for the commencement of a new framework. I have every confidence that Her Majesty's Inspectors and Ofsted Inspectors, trained in this way and with their knowledge and experience, will be fully equipped and able to inspect under the EIF 2019 with rigour, fairness and humility.

Through inspection at school level, we want to understand and report accurately on the educational experiences of pupils in this country. I believe the EIF 2019 is the way we can best do this in the coming years.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sean Harford'.

**Sean Harford HMI**  
**National Director, Education**

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted inspection handbooks: drafts for consultation, Ofsted, 2019;  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-inspection-handbooks-drafts-for-consultation](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-inspection-handbooks-drafts-for-consultation)

<sup>2</sup> Education inspection framework: overview of research, Ofsted, 2019;  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework-overview-of-research](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework-overview-of-research)

## Education inspection framework 2019: our rationale, and how it will work in practice

### Part 1: the theory and evidence behind the education inspection framework

#### The case for change

1. England's schools have made real improvements over the past two decades. This is a testament to the hard work of teachers and leaders. The accountability system has played a part in this improvement. However, an accountability system that is overdependent on performance data is a barrier to further improvement. There is ample evidence of the extent to which an accountability system that does not look at what pupils are learning, and why they are learning it, diverts schools from the real substance of education. We have seen a 'school improvement' industry develop. The consultants running this industry push approaches to achieving improvements in performance tables in ways that require no improvement in the underlying quality of education. None of this is to say that outcomes do not matter; they matter immensely to young people, and schools should rightly be held to account for them. However, the results that young people achieve are only meaningful if the learning that underpins them is rich and deep. At present, what pupils learn too often comes second to the delivery of improved performance table data.
2. The school culture of defending and managing outcomes has extended into defending against and managing Ofsted inspections. Far too much time, work and energy are spent on preparing everything that Ofsted might possibly expect to see. Over time, the main thrust of the typical inspection conversation has come to be about recent outcomes, assessment of current 'pupil progress' and expectations of future progress. Schools have responded to this with workload-intensive management models that focus on data and prediction. Perhaps, most important of all, these distortions have the greatest negative effect on the pupils we should care about most: the most disadvantaged – the poor and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) – and the least able.
3. We accept that developments in our inspection practice over time have contributed to this imbalance in the accountability system. With the introduction of the EIF from September 2019, we intend to return inspection to its proper role, as originally conceived: complementing rather than intensifying the focus on achievement and progress measures.

## The curriculum

4. Twelve years of education should give children a lot more than a disposition to learn and some ill-defined skills. Yet the evidence from the first phase of our curriculum research last year was that a focus on substance, on the knowledge and skills that we want pupils to acquire, is often lost, with qualifications and test specifications taking the place of real curricular thinking. If pupils' entire school experience has been designed to push them through mark-scheme hoops, rather than develop a deep body of knowledge, they will struggle in later study.
5. The curriculum is the substance of what is taught. It is a specific plan of what pupils need to know and should be able to do. The curriculum shapes and determines what pupils will get out of their educational experience. It is distinct from pedagogy, which is how the curriculum is taught. And, it is distinct from assessment, which is a means of setting out the desired outcomes we wish pupils to achieve and evaluating whether they have achieved those outcomes.
6. Our extensive curriculum research over the last couple of academic years has used a working definition of the curriculum, which recognises that it passes through different states: how it is conceived, how it is taught and how pupils experience it. That working definition is that the curriculum is:
  - the framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and skills to be gained at each stage (**intent**)
  - the translation of that framework over time into a structure and narrative, within an institutional context (**implementation**)
  - the evaluation of what knowledge and understanding pupils have gained against expectations (**impact/outcomes**).
7. That working definition has informed the development of the quality of education judgement, now set out in the draft framework and inspection handbooks. It is now clear that the curriculum covers the intent and much of the implementation, but is distinct from the impact, which is a measure of how well the curriculum has been learned. The curriculum is, therefore, integral to but not the whole of the judgement on the quality of education.

## Curriculum and progress

8. Learning has been defined in cognitive psychology as an alteration in long-term memory: 'If nothing has altered in long-term memory, nothing has been

learned.<sup>3</sup> Progress, therefore, means knowing more (including knowing how to do more) and remembering more. When new knowledge and existing knowledge connect in pupils' minds, this gives rise to understanding. As pupils develop unconscious competence and fluency, this will allow them to develop skills, i.e. the capacity to perform complex operations, drawing on what is known.

9. Given the understanding of the curriculum set out above, progress should not be defined primarily by meeting standards or hitting the next data point. Rather, learning the curriculum itself is progress. If pupils attain within a well-sequenced, well-constructed curriculum, they are making progress.

### Developing knowledge and understanding, not memorising disconnected facts

10. It is unhelpful to think of pupils' minds as 'empty vessels' waiting to be filled with isolated, disconnected pieces of information. People learn new knowledge when new concepts are connected in their minds with what they have already learned.
11. It is more appropriate, therefore, to understand the way knowledge is stored as a complex, interconnected web or 'schema'. Every time a pupil encounters a word they have previously learned, but applied in a new context, it adds to the complexity of their understanding of that concept. In other words, they develop a deeper understanding of that concept and enhance their capacity to use that concept in their own thinking.<sup>4</sup>
12. Where pupils lack prior knowledge, they may find it difficult to learn new knowledge or skills, because their short-term, working memory is likely to become temporarily overloaded. If they are able to draw on their long-term memory and attend to a small number of new features in what they are learning, they are much more likely to learn and make progress.<sup>5</sup>
13. Research shows that we learn by relating new knowledge to what we already know. Therefore, the more pupils know, the more they have the capacity to learn.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> 'Cognitive load theory (Vol. 1)', Springer Science & Business Media, 2011, J Sweller, P Ayres and S Kalyuga

<sup>4</sup> 'A schema-theoretic view of basic processes in reading comprehension', R C Anderson and P D Pearson, in 'Handbook of reading research', 1, 1984, pp. 255–291.

<sup>5</sup> A Baddeley, 'Working memory', in 'Current biology', 20(4), 2010, R136-R140.

<sup>6</sup> D T Willingham, 'How knowledge helps', in 'American Educator', 30(1), 2006, pp. 30–37

## Whose knowledge?

14. All pupils in maintained schools are expected to study the national curriculum. Academies must offer all pupils a curriculum of a similar breadth and ambition as the national curriculum. So long as they remain appropriately within these parameters, academies are free to design and build their curriculum. In doing so, they will face tough choices. Some curriculum content is not particularly controversial – for example, basic English grammar, the process of osmosis, algebra and conjugation of French verbs – but there is also a range of legitimate content choices that are. Schools should make these decisions with real thought and care, and so as to support deep, rich learning.

## Curriculum design and sequencing

15. When a school is planning or designing an effective curriculum, it will need to identify the endpoints that it wishes pupils to reach. Those planning the curriculum will need to consider what key concepts and skills pupils must grasp in order to achieve these endpoints. This is what Ofsted understands by appropriate coverage and content in the curriculum.
16. New knowledge and skills do not exist in isolation, but rather build on what pupils already know and can already do.<sup>7</sup> The order in which knowledge and skills are taught is therefore important. Since knowledge exists in rich schemata, an effective curriculum ensures that pupils are taught concepts and skills in an order that enables them to make useful connections that are not misapprehensions. This is what Ofsted understands by appropriate sequencing in the curriculum.
17. There are serious consequences for pupils when a curriculum is not sequenced or designed effectively. Gaps in pupils' knowledge accumulate as they become layered on top of one another in a curriculum sequence. This accumulation of gaps, known as dysfluency, limits pupils' ability to acquire the complex skills that depend on them, and may even prevent them entirely from gaining those skills. This problem is sometimes called 'cumulative dysfluency'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 'How knowledge helps' in 'American Educator', 30(1), 2006, pp. 30–37, D T Willingham, but see also K A Ericsson, 'An Introduction to The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance: Its Development, Organization, and Content', 2006.

<sup>8</sup> 'Handbook of applied behavior analysis', Guilford Press, 2011, W W Fisher, C C Piazza and H S Roane (Eds).

## Vocabulary

18. The correlation between vocabulary size and life chances is as firm as any correlation in educational research.<sup>9</sup> Vocabulary is important, because it embodies and communicates concepts.
19. There is a substantial disparity between the breadths of vocabulary to which different children are exposed. In the United States, the landmark Hart and Risley study found that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds encountered far fewer words, and heard a narrower range of vocabulary, than their more advantaged peers. Over four years, they heard 30 million fewer words.<sup>10</sup> While the methods used for the Hart and Risley study have been criticised, subsequent studies using different methods have confirmed the findings: the correlation between socio-economic status and volume of caregiver-to-child speech has been replicated consistently and reliably.
20. The considerable majority of vocabulary is only really encountered when reading and is not used in everyday speech. Moreover, not all texts contain the same variety and complexity of vocabulary. Much fiction does not give access to the more academic vocabulary and syntax used for high-level GCSE, A level and beyond. Academic texts provide exposure to complex vocabulary and ideas that must be grasped in order to achieve success.<sup>11</sup>
21. If we want to give all children opportunity, a good place to start is through reading to them frequently, introducing new vocabulary and meaning within contexts that stimulate their thinking. Subsequently, it is important to teach them a range of curriculum subjects that will provide a wide vocabulary and a rich understanding of the meaning of the words encountered.

## Skills

22. It is essential for pupils to develop skills. For example, it is highly desirable that when pupils learn the curriculum they are able to analyse, evaluate and solve problems using what they have learned. There are similarly desirable physical skills and capacities, often resulting in highly technical and specialised performances in sports or other disciplines. In the early years, physical skills such as coordination are essential prerequisites to other learning taking place. Similarly, there are many important vocational and technical skills. It is clear, however, that skills are domain specific; for example, evaluation of evidence in

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<sup>9</sup> 'A wealth of words' in 'City Journal', 23(1), 2013, E D Hirsch.

<sup>10</sup> 'Meaningful differences in the everyday experience of young American children', B Hart and T R Risley, Paul H Brookes Publishing, 1995.

<sup>11</sup> 'What reading does for the mind', A E Cunningham and K E Stanovich, 'American educator', 22, 1998, pp. 8–17

science is not the same as evaluation of evidence in history. Being creative in dance is not the same as being creative in mathematics.

23. That said, a divisive debate has emerged in some quarters that creates an unnecessary opposition between knowledge and skills, suggesting they are separate alternatives. In reality, knowledge and skills are closely interconnected. Ofsted considers a skill to be the capacity to perform, whether cognitively or physically, drawing on what is known. The EIF and school inspection handbook ask inspectors to consider what schools are doing to develop both pupils' knowledge and their skills.

## Social justice

24. It is profoundly important to make sure that all pupils receive a high-quality education, built around an ambitious, well-designed and well-sequenced curriculum. This is a matter of social justice and equity, because it is the most disadvantaged children who are most likely to miss out on the things that a strong curriculum supplies. It is they who are more likely than their peers not to hear the rich vocabulary and encounter the concepts that this vocabulary communicates.
25. The first phase of our curriculum research underlined that it is disadvantaged pupils who are disproportionately affected by the narrowing of the curriculum in key stage 2 and the foreshortening of key stage 3.<sup>12</sup> This means they may not have access to the corpus of knowledge that should be the entitlement of every child – the key historical events that have shaped our nation, how our natural environment has been formed, the key scientific concepts that underpin everyday life, the principles of design, along with an appreciation of great works of art, music and literature, and the principles of design and development. For that reason, if we want to reduce economic and social inequality, a good place to start is the curriculum delivered in the classroom.
26. A double unfairness is created when schools in disadvantaged areas feel pressure to narrow their curriculums in order to focus on headline results. So many disadvantaged pupils may not have access to cultural capital, both in the home and then in their school. Phase 3 of our research showed that we are better able to judge schools in disadvantaged areas on a level playing field if we assess the curriculum rather than just assessing test or examination results.

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<sup>12</sup> Ofsted curriculum review phase 1, October 2017; [www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-commentary-october-2017](http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-commentary-october-2017)



## Part 2: What inspectors will look at under the new framework

27. Since September 2017, inspectors have been trained extensively in the concepts set out in part one of this note. Since October 2018, Ofsted has made this training publicly available through our 'curriculum roadshows' that 3,730<sup>13</sup> people have attended. This material is now available online free of charge at <https://www.slideshare.net/Ofstednews/curriculum-workshop-126193516> and <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLq-zBnUkspPXjODb3PJ4gCqNc2LvfhSh> so that anyone in the school system can access it.
28. As inspectors begin to use the new EIF 2019, their inspection of curriculum and the quality of education will be guided by this understanding. There are some specific curriculum issues that we have highlighted through the training. These are set out below.

### Curriculum flexibility

29. The curriculum is a framework that sets out the aims of a programme of education. It also sets out the structure and narrative for those aims to be implemented, including the knowledge and skills to be gained at each stage. It enables the evaluation of pupils' knowledge and skills against those expectations.
30. Schools taking radically different approaches to the curriculum will be judged fairly. We recognise the importance of schools' autonomy to choose their own curriculum approaches. If leaders show that they have built a curriculum with appropriate coverage, content, structure and sequencing, and it is clear that it has been implemented effectively, inspectors will assess the school's curriculum favourably, regardless of whether, for example, that curriculum is knowledge-based or skills-based. The benchmark for coverage and content will be the national curriculum. Those academies exercising their freedom to do something different should be able to show how they at least meet that benchmark.

### Curriculum design and sequencing

31. It is for schools to decide how to structure their curriculum, and the order in which they teach the content. When inspectors are considering curriculum intent as part of the quality of education judgement, they will seek to establish whether the school understands why it teaches content in the order that it does. They will triangulate many different sources of evidence to support this,

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<sup>13</sup> 4,248 including further education and skills sessions.

including discussions with leaders and first-hand evidence from teachers, pupils, lessons and pupils' work. Inspectors will also consider whether this ordering could reasonably be understood to be a sequence that enables pupils to build their knowledge and skills securely towards the school's intended end points.

## Cultural capital

32. As part of making the judgement about quality of education, inspectors will consider the extent to which schools are equipping pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. Ofsted's understanding of this knowledge and cultural capital matches the understanding set out in the aims of the national curriculum. It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said, and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.<sup>14</sup>

## The foundations: reading and mathematics

33. Inspectors will pay close attention to the extent to which pupils learn to decode text early through systematic synthetic phonics (in line with the national curriculum) and then develop into fluent, confident readers, and whether they gain a secure grasp of mathematical knowledge, concepts and operations.
34. In primary schools, inspectors will pay particular attention to the extent to which school leaders create experts in the teaching of reading. They will consider how well staff know their school's chosen systematic synthetic phonics programme, and use assessment and coaching to ensure that children are provided with the small, repeated steps necessary to ensure success. They will check whether the books children practise reading from, at school and at home, closely match the phonics knowledge they have been taught. They will also check that the school provides sufficient time each day to teach children to read, so that they can read each book fluently and confidently. And most importantly, inspectors will look at whether teachers read aloud to their children regularly in a way that shows the joy that can be gained from reading stories, non-fiction, rhymes and poems – to develop children's comprehension and to widen their knowledge, vocabulary and ideas.
35. In mathematics, inspectors will look at whether primary schools have considered the sequence in which mathematical concepts are taught and if they provide enough curriculum time for children to be able to recall what they have

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<sup>14</sup> National curriculum; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4)

learned with fluency and automaticity. They will consider whether the earliest stages of pupils' learning include learning about the properties of numbers, writing them and sequencing them. They will pay close attention to whether pupils are readily able to remember previously gained understanding of facts, concepts and procedures necessary for subsequent mathematical activities. For example, this would include automatically recalling number bonds of addition and subtraction, times tables, understanding place value and being able to write numbers and symbols appropriate to a given topic accurately.

### Part 3: How inspectors will address inappropriate practices in schools

36. Ofsted has identified that some schools are engaging in practices that, while sometimes being an understandable response to the pressures of data-driven accountability, are not in the best interests of pupils and staff. During the inspection of a school, inspectors will always consider whether there is evidence that these inappropriate practices are present.

#### Curriculum narrowing

37. Ofsted's research into the curriculum has shown that some schools narrow the curriculum available to pupils, particularly in key stages 2 and 3. This has a disproportionately negative effect on the most disadvantaged pupils.<sup>15</sup> It is appropriate that, in key stage 1, teachers focus on ensuring that pupils are able to read, write and use mathematical knowledge, concepts and operations; therefore, curricular breadth and balance are less important at this stage. From key stage 2 onwards and in secondary education, however, inspectors will expect to see a broad, rich curriculum. That includes languages and the humanities, along with the arts and other creative subjects. Inspectors will be particularly alert to signs of narrowing in key stages 2 and 3 curriculums. If a school has shortened key stage 3, inspectors will look to see that it has made provision to ensure that pupils still have the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects in Years 7 to 9. Of course, where pupils in early key stage 3 are identified as needing particular support with English and mathematics, effective focus on these essential subjects will be important, but with the aim of ensuring access to a broad, rich curriculum as soon as possible.
38. At the heart of an effective key stage 4 curriculum is a strong academic core: the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). The government's response to its EBacc consultation, published in July 2017, confirmed that the vast majority of pupils

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<sup>15</sup> Ofsted curriculum review phase 1, October 2017; [www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-commentary-october-2017](http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-commentary-october-2017)

should be expected to study the EBacc. It is therefore the government's ambition that 75% of Year 10 pupils in state-funded mainstream schools (excluding special schools, pupil referral units and university technical colleges) should be starting to study EBacc GCSE courses nationally by 2022 (taking their examinations in 2024), rising to 90% by 2025 (taking their examinations in 2027). It is important that inspectors understand what schools are doing to prepare for this ambition to be achieved and should take those preparations into consideration when evaluating the intent of the school's curriculum. There is no 'set percentage' of EBacc entry expected for different Ofsted grades.

## Gaming

39. Inspectors will challenge leaders and managers about unusual patterns of examination entry that appear to 'game the system', for example entering pupils for courses that are not in their educational best interest. Data provided by Ofsted's analysts will give inspectors areas to investigate where nationally available data may suggest that gaming is taking place. If inspectors uncover evidence that systematic gaming is taking place, leadership and management are likely to be judged inadequate.

## Off-rolling

40. Schools should have an inclusive culture that facilitates arrangements to:

- identify early those pupils who may be disadvantaged or have additional needs or barriers to learning
- meet the needs of those pupils, drawing, where necessary, on more specialist support
- help those pupils to engage positively with the curriculum
- ensure those pupils have a positive experience of learning
- help pupils achieve positive outcomes.

41. Unfortunately, some schools are not following these practices, and are engaged in 'off-rolling' pupils. Ofsted defines off-rolling as:

'The practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the

school rather than in the best interests of the pupil. Off-rolling in these circumstances is a form of 'gaming'.<sup>16</sup>

42. When we find evidence of off-rolling, within our definition, we will always address it in the inspection report. And if inspectors determine the school to be off-rolling according to this definition, the leadership and management of the school are likely to be judged inadequate.
43. If a school has high numbers of pupils moving on- and off-roll, inspectors will always consider whether off-rolling is taking place. However, there may be other reasons for the high turnover of pupils. A school might remove a pupil from the school roll when a pupil moves house or a parent decides (without encouragement or coercion from the school) to home educate their child.
44. Headteachers have the right to exclude pupils and there are legitimate reasons for them to do so. Used correctly, exclusion is a vital measure for headteachers. If a school appropriately removes a pupil from the roll due to a formal permanent exclusion and follows the proper processes, this is not off-rolling. Ofsted will always support school leaders who are forced to use exclusion either in the interests of the child in question or the wider school community.

### **Addressing staff workload and well-being issues through inspection**

45. Inspectors will consider the extent to which leaders engage with staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them, engaging with them realistically and constructively. They will consider whether leaders and staff understand the limitations of assessment and use it in such a way as to avoid creating unnecessary burdens. They will also consider the extent to which leaders protect staff from bullying and harassment. They will report clearly on this at inspection.

### **Burdensome use of assessment**

46. When used effectively, assessment helps pupils to embed and use knowledge fluently, and assists teachers to identify clear next steps for pupils. The information can also help shape development of the curriculum. However, too often, assessment is carried out in a way that creates unnecessary burdens on both staff and pupils, and is done purely because leaders believe it is what Ofsted expects. It is therefore important that leaders and teachers understand its limitations and avoid misuse and overuse.

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<sup>16</sup> As set out in September 2018's special edition of Ofsted's School Inspection Update; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-update-academic-year-2018-to-2019](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-update-academic-year-2018-to-2019)

47. Inspectors will evaluate how assessment is used in the school to support the teaching of the curriculum, while not driving teachers towards excessive individualisation, differentiation or interventions that are almost impossible to deliver without lowering expectations of some pupils and/or driving up teachers' workload.
48. The collection of performance data can also create additional workload for leaders and staff. The report of the Teacher Workload Advisory Group – 'Making data work' – recommends that school leaders should not have more than two or three data collection points a year, which should be used to inform clear actions.<sup>17</sup> Inspectors will look at whether schools' collections of attainment or progress data are proportionate, represent an efficient use of school resources and are sustainable for staff.
49. Schools that choose to collect data more than two or three times a year should have a clear rationale for doing this. They should be able to explain how much time is taken to set assessments, collate, analyse and interpret the data created from these, and then act on the findings. Schools should be prepared to discuss this at inspection. If a school's system for data collection is disproportionate, inefficient or unsustainable for staff, inspectors will reflect this in the reporting on the school.

## Part 4: How inspectors will go about gathering evidence and reporting

50. The ways in which inspectors will gather evidence under the EIF build directly on inspectors' past and current practice, and on what we have learned from our research programme.
51. Inspectors will review a school's overall curriculum plan and how it sets out the sequencing and structure of the implementation of the intended curriculum, by subject, theme, topic or however the school plans its curriculum.
52. While meetings with leaders are important, inspectors' priority will be to collect first-hand evidence during inspections. Discussions with leaders about the curriculum will not just be taken at face value. Inspectors will also observe lessons, scrutinise pupils' work, talk to pupils about their work, gauge their understanding and their participation in learning, and obtain pupils' perceptions of the typical quality of education at their school in a range of subjects.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-workload-advisory-group-report-and-government-response>

53. Inspectors will evaluate evidence of the impact of the curriculum, including on the most disadvantaged pupils, those from poor backgrounds and pupils with SEND. This includes how schools are seeking to close gaps in these pupils' knowledge and experiences. Inspectors will give specific attention to acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills within mainstream lessons, on-site separate provision and evidence of learning in off-site alternative provision. In doing so, inspectors will not review a school's internal performance data for current pupils.
54. Other evidence gathered by inspectors will include discussions with pupils and staff, with inspectors placing a greater emphasis than before on speaking to curriculum and subject leaders within the school. Inspectors will listen to pupils read and look at examples of pupils' work for evidence of progression in knowledge, understanding and skills towards defined endpoints. Inspectors will also scrutinise the school's records and documentation relating, for example, to the welfare and safety of pupils in alternative provision.

### **Inspectors will evaluate the quality of schools' practice, not their mastery of curriculum language**

55. It is important that inspectors' evaluation of schools' curriculum intent reflects the quality of their practice rather than their ability to use the 'right' curriculum language. This matters because it is important that inspectors report favourably on positive practice where leaders are doing the right things but may not necessarily use the 'right' vocabulary to describe it. It is equally important for inspectors to be able to identify where practice is poor even though leaders use the 'right language'.
56. This has been a particular focus of our work as part of phase 3 of the curriculum research. Our experience from this research confirms that it is possible and relatively straightforward for inspectors to do this. Inspectors can recognise where intent appears strong but is not translating into implementation, and vice-versa. In our research, inspectors have been able to look at whether intent and implementation match and recognise different strengths and weaknesses in each.

### **Ofsted will support the sector on a trajectory of change**

57. Inspectors will bear in mind that developing and embedding an effective curriculum take time, and leaders may only be part-way through the process of adopting or redeveloping a curriculum. Indeed, our own research has found that curricular thinking has been significantly denuded in many educational institutions. It will take time to bring it back. For that reason, we will strongly discourage superficial 'quick fixes'. We will encourage schools to do the right things, through specific language in the handbook that recognises many are on a journey.



58. We are aware that a number of educational consultants are already peddling conferences and materials about the new inspection framework or 'how to get your curriculum Ofsted-ready'. We deplore this activity. Schools should not have to spend a penny on consultants to prepare for the new framework. This is why the handbook sets out that, during the first year, inspectors will not always expect to see a 'finished' curriculum but will give due regard to leaders' actions to bring new approaches about. This is also why Ofsted is making all of its curriculum training materials available free-of-charge on our website and running free training events up and down the country.
59. Inspectors will evaluate 'intent' as part of the quality of education judgement, recognising that the 'good' criteria are best fit. Inspectors will view intent favourably where leaders have an accurate evaluative understanding of current curriculum practice in their school, have engaged in meaningful discussions with staff and governors about what is missing, and have identified appropriate next steps to improve curriculum quality and develop curriculum expertise across the school.

### **Inspectors will make a single judgement on the quality of education**

60. Inspectors will not grade intent, implementation and impact separately. Instead, inspectors will reach a single graded judgement for the quality of education, drawing on all the evidence they have gathered and using their professional judgement.

### **Inspectors will not use schools' internal performance data for current pupils as evidence**

61. Inspectors will not consider schools' internal performance data for current pupils during an inspection. Instead, they will use the official Inspection Data Summary Report data as the starting point and see first-hand the quality of education as experienced by pupils and to understand how well leaders know what it is like to be a pupil at the school. This is because:
- internal data for current pupils has its limitations for us: it may not be an accurate representation of the education of pupils at the school and the time pressure of inspection does not allow for inspectors to assess the validity of the data as presented by leaders
  - inspectors will have meaningful discussions with leaders about how they know that the curriculum is having an impact
  - inspectors will gather first-hand evidence of the quality of education in schools.



62. Inspectors will, however, ask schools to explain why they have decided to collect whatever assessment data they collect, what they are drawing out of their data and how that informs their curriculum and teaching.

### **Inspectors will report unfavourably on changes made 'for Ofsted'**

63. We have been consistent over the past four years in communicating the message that we do not expect schools to prepare for inspection. This message has been backed by the successful and popular myth-busting campaign and the 'clarification for schools', which set out all the things that we do not expect schools to do.
64. With any inspection change, some schools will be tempted to do something different to prepare for Ofsted inspection and, in some cases, this will be counterproductive or create additional workload for staff. As part of the draft handbook, we have refreshed the clarification for schools to address this and we will renew our myth-busting campaign. Most significantly, the handbook sets out that, when inspectors uncover that schools have made such changes, inspectors will report explicitly and unfavourably on them. Our experience is that the school system as a whole is highly responsive to things that Ofsted specifically and directly criticises in reports. So, we expect this to have a significant impact.

### **Reporting directly to parents**

65. Working with experts in public engagement, we have conducted substantial research into the style and content of reporting that parents most want to see from Ofsted. As a result, we intend to revise the front page of our inspection reports to focus on the issues that matter most to them:
- what it is like to be a child at the school, and what is distinctive about the school
  - what the school does well and what the school does badly
  - behaviour.
66. Parents have a high level of trust in Ofsted's grading, and we plan to retain our current grading structure. Through our annual YouGov survey, parents tell us that they expect our reports to be as up-to-date as possible. They are particularly troubled when they learn that some outstanding schools have not been inspected in 10 to 12 years. This is why we are committed to working with the Department for Education to reintroduce the routine inspection of outstanding schools at the earliest possible opportunity.

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