

School inspection update

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Message to inspectors from the National Director, Education

Welcome to the 18th edition of the 'School inspection update' (SIU) and the first since we published the highly anticipated formal consultation for the education inspection framework 2019 (EIF 2019). The full consultation on both the framework and individual handbooks for schools, early years and further education and skills continues to run until **5 April 2019**. After more than a year of hard work from inspectors, the policy teams and research colleagues, it will be an exciting time to draw together the feedback from the consultation and findings from the spring pilot programme, which is trialling the framework in the field.

This edition of the SIU contains important information for inspectors and further clarifies areas that have had a lot of attention in recent months:

- summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts (MATs)
- parent, staff and pupil questionnaires – identifying and following up concerns
- referencing previous inspections when writing the latest inspection report
- inspection timings for good, requires improvement and inadequate schools
- publication of inspection reports when a provider has closed.

This is an important year with the development and commencement of delivery of the EIF 2019, and I want to thank you for your continuous efforts and hard work while also supporting these alongside the day job. I look forward to seeing many of you at the extensive training we have planned over the next six months to prepare us all for the EIF2019.

Best wishes



Sean Harford HMI
National Director, Education

Summary evaluations of MATs

In July 2018, Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), delivered a [speech](#) at the Education Policy Institute conference that set the scene for changes to the way Ofsted reviews MATs. The new 'MAT summary evaluations', which began in January 2019, seek to improve our approach to how we consider the strengths and areas for improvement in MATs, as well as improve the experience for MAT leaders, academies and inspectors. Our programme of summary evaluations of MATs includes MATs that appear to be performing well, as well as those not performing so well. An example of a MAT summary evaluation can be found on [our reports site](#).

This new approach involves a batch of inspections of a number of individual academies under a MAT, taking place over a period of up to two terms. Once all the inspection reports have been published, a small team of inspectors will visit the 'head office' to work with MAT senior leaders to evaluate the quality of education provided by the MAT and leaders' contributions to this. The evaluation will draw on the evidence from inspections carried out, discussions with MAT leaders and visits to some of the schools not inspected in the batch.

Why are we making this change?

- To understand better the way MATs are organised and operate
- To improve our reporting on the impact of MATs
- To make evaluations of MATs more intelligent, in line with our corporate strategy

MATs are integral to the running of their schools. They are legally responsible for the quality of education that is being delivered by these schools. To ensure that we are evaluating the impact of MATs effectively, inspectors who have a deep knowledge and understanding of MATs and how they work are leading these evaluations. We have taken steps to enhance inspectors' knowledge of MAT structures and operations, and to improve the quality of reporting. We have brought on board Ofsted Inspectors who are MAT leaders to act as team inspectors for these evaluations, whenever possible.

We want to be completely open about Ofsted's approach to MAT summary evaluations, so we've published our operational guidance. You can find out more at this link: '[An operational note for Ofsted inspectors who are carrying out summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts](#)'. We want to thank the MAT leaders who have engaged with us during our visits and discussions. They have provided valuable insight through open and honest conversations.

Parent, staff and pupil questionnaires – identifying and following up concerns

In the November 2018 edition of SIU, we reminded inspectors about making sure that all potential intelligence about safeguarding concerns, and the quality of the

school's safeguarding arrangements, are properly reviewed – including pupil, staff and parent questionnaires.

Inspectors should allocate sufficient time during each inspection to ensure that they have checked responses from questionnaires. This includes all free text comments. Inspectors should follow up any safeguarding concerns with the school, including any relevant anonymous concerns.

Referencing previous inspections when writing reports

Inspectors are reminded that, when a school has previously received a section 8 short inspection and the outcome was either good (potentially improving) or good (potentially declining), there is no need to refer to the previous section 5 inspection when writing the report for the latest section 5 inspection. Reference can be made to the section 8 inspection report, which will have set out why the next inspection was going to be a section 5 inspection.

When writing the section 5 report, the 'date of previous inspection' in the 'School details' section of the report should be that of the most recent inspection.

Inspection timings for good, requires improvement and inadequate schools

Following the policy changes made last year to the inspection timings for schools judged good, requires improvement and inadequate at their previous section 5 inspection (as outlined in the [July 2018 edition of SIU](#)), we have been asked to re-state the policy position under the current 'Common inspection framework':

- Schools judged as good will normally receive a one-day short inspection, carried out under section 8, approximately every **four** years, as long as the education remains good at each short inspection.¹
- Schools judged as 'requires improvement' will be re-inspected under section 5 usually within 30 months after the publication of the section 5 report.
- Schools judged as inadequate and not subject to an academy order will normally be re-inspected **within** 30 months after the publication of their previous section 5 report. However, the ambition should still be for inadequate schools to improve and come out of a category of concern – special measures or serious weaknesses – within 24 months. Re-inspecting inadequate schools **at** 30 months should be the exception, but there is

¹ Some of these good schools will automatically receive a full section 5 inspection instead of a short inspection when risk assessment information shows that the quality of provision may have deteriorated significantly, or where the school has undergone a significant change, such as changing its age range.

flexibility for giving schools this bit longer, where appropriate, for example to improve to 'good'.

Publication of section 5 reports following the closure of a provider

We have recently had a few requests to confirm Ofsted's process for publishing reports for closed providers. When a school has been inspected under section 5 and has subsequently closed before the report was published, Ofsted will proceed to publish the report against the URN of the school, as it existed at the time of inspection.

This is in keeping with Ofsted's two-fold duty under section 5 to inspect and to 'make a report of the inspection in writing'. So, a section 5 inspection is not complete until a report has been produced. Ofsted has no power to void an inspection.

When a school closes and it opens as a new academy under a new URN, there is no legal duty on leaders to distribute the inspection report that was made against the previous URN to the registered parents of pupils at the school.

Similarly, if the chair of governors and headteacher of the new school are dissatisfied with the report or other aspects of the inspection process, their current roles do not give them the authority to make a formal complaint through the Ofsted complaints procedure. Regions should seek advice from the policy team on any specific cases where they wish to send the 'notification of the moderated judgement' letter (Form 6) to a chair of governors and/or headteacher who may benefit from the information, in their current role.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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