

State-funded schools: inspections and outcomes

Methodology and quality report

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

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Introduction

This paper contains methodology and quality information relevant to Ofsted's official statistics release of state-funded school inspections and outcomes data, which is published three times per year. These releases can be found at the following webpage:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes-official-statistics

This official statistics release reports on the outcomes of state-funded schools¹ inspections that were conducted within the most recent reporting period. This release also includes the most recent inspection outcome of all open schools as at the end of the reporting period, including those schools that have yet to be inspected for the first time. Where an open school has not yet been inspected, we will include the inspection outcome of their predecessor school² to give a more comprehensive view of the sector. This release covers all state-funded schools within England.

Quality

This section is broken down by the five dimensions to statistical output quality in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics,

<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/>:

- Relevance
- Coherence and comparability
- Accuracy and reliability
- Timeliness and punctuality
- Accessibility and clarity.

There is also additional information on meeting user needs.

Relevance

Information in this release has five distinct purposes:

- Media outlets use the key findings from our statistical release to inform the public about the quality of schools across the country and in particular local areas.
- This data allows users to track movement in the education sector and monitor the quality of provision available at a national and local level and across provider types.

¹ Please see the glossary for a definition of state-funded schools

² Where a school closed and re-opened in another form, the closed school is referred to as the predecessor of the open school.

- This accurate picture of the provision influences policy decisions about the location and quality of school provision.
- This data helps identify areas of weak performance. This informs policy development within the Department for Education (DfE), local authorities and multi-academy trusts to address issues and implement strategies to mitigate them.
- Within Ofsted, inspection profiles inform inspection framework development and underpin policies to improve standards. The key messages within the official statistics contribute towards the findings in Ofsted's Annual Report to Parliament.

The data included in the release is generated by Ofsted's regulation and inspection process and is therefore administrative data.

Assessment of user needs and perceptions

These official statistics are regularly reviewed to ensure that they meet users' needs. This has included running several public consultations in the last few years.

In November 2017, Ofsted consulted on proposals to change the way we compile data on schools' most recent inspections. Respondents supported these proposals. Based on these findings, we made all of the changes proposed as part of the consultation. These were applied for the first time in the official statistics published in June 2018. The full response can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/changes-to-ofsteds-statistical-reporting-of-inspection-outcomes-for-maintained-schools-and-academies

Previously, in August 2015, we also published the results of an earlier consultation on this official statistics release. Documents relating to this consultation, which includes a list of resulting changes, can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/publication-of-statistics-on-maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes

Since then a small number of additional tables and fields have been added to the release to reflect the changes made to inspections in September 2015. These provide information on short inspections as well as the new judgements introduced as part of the common inspection framework.

Ofsted welcomes feedback about its statistical releases. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please contact the Schools Data and Analysis team at: inspectioninsight@ofsted.gov.uk.

Coherence and comparability

The tables and charts within the release compare inspection outcomes over the past several years. These tables and charts have all been updated to reflect the changes, since June 2018, to the way we compile data on most recent inspection outcomes.

There have also been a number of framework changes since the first release of statistics and these have been reflected in the publications.

The overall effectiveness judgement has remained comparable across the different frameworks. Other judgements are, where possible, mapped across frameworks when changes occur. This is explained in more detail in the 'frameworks' section below.

When these changes have occurred, users have been alerted via updates in the official statistics introduction and methodology sections of the key findings document. When changes to inspection frameworks or methodological changes have been implemented to improve the output, guidance has been added to footnotes and the key findings document for easy access.

Where inspection reports are published after the final publication date included within a release, the inspection outcomes will be reflected within the next provisional official statistics release.

Some policies within Ofsted and the DfE impact on the comparability of different school types to each other and to schools as a whole. Comparisons between school types should be treated with caution due to the variation in the number of schools included in the different categories.

There is no comparable data published by other producers of official or national statistics for school inspections in England.

In Scotland, inspections are carried out by Education Scotland and can be found at: <https://education.gov.scot/what-we-do/inspection-and-review/reports>

In Wales, inspections are carried out by Estyn and can be found at: www.estyn.gov.uk/

In Northern Ireland, inspections are carried out by Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and can be found at: www.etini.gov.uk/

Ofsted also produces regular management information on the outcomes of school inspections. At present, the methodology used to produce both releases is the same.

Several third parties provide interactive tools displaying publicly available Ofsted inspection judgements. These appear to be collated by using advanced computer techniques to harvest information from published inspection reports. Ofsted cannot comment on the quality of these datasets.

Frameworks

The common inspection framework was introduced in September 2015 following the 'better inspection for all' consultation.³ This consultation initiated various changes to the way Ofsted inspects providers. The common inspection framework can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015

Guidance on the framework and the handbook for inspectors used for inspections up until August 2015 can be found at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141124154759/http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/maintained-schools-inspection-documents-archive>
and

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141115234621/http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/schools/for-schools/inspecting-schools/inspecting-maintained-schools/main-inspection-documents-for-inspectors>

These framework changes have the following impact on current reporting:

- Overall effectiveness: this judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2005 to the current framework.
- Effectiveness of leadership and management: this judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2005 to the current framework.
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment: this judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2005 to the current framework.
- Outcomes for pupils: this judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2005 to the current framework.
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare: A new 'personal development, behaviour and welfare' judgement was introduced in September 2015 and supersedes the previous 'behaviour and safety of pupils' judgement, which is no longer presented in the most recent outcomes data. As such, analysis of this judgement (behaviour and welfare) will only represent inspections since September 2015 and will not provide a comprehensive view of the quality of provision nationally. Users can consult inspection reports or the following management information release should they wish to obtain these outcomes:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-management-information-ofsteds-school-inspections-outcomes>

- Early year's provision: This judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2005 to the current framework, with the

³More information can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/changes-to-education-inspection-from-september-2015.

exception of 2012/13 and 2013/14 academic years when, due to legislation changes, the judgement was not reported. Since September 2015, nursery schools have not received a separate early year's judgement.

- 16 to 19 study programmes: This judgement has been reported broadly consistently since September 2005. However, this judgement was not reported in 2012/13 and 2013/14 due to changes in legislation. Between 2005 and 2012 the judgement was made under the overall effectiveness of the sixth form judgement.

The selection process

Not all schools are inspected with equal regularity. Ofsted must inspect all schools to which section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) applies, within prescribed intervals. The result of this is that the schools inspected in a particular academic year are unlikely to be representative of schools as a whole. This may also affect the comparability of school inspection outcomes between years. This is as a result of the following:

- Schools that were previously judged to be less than good in their most recent inspections are inspected more frequently than good schools.
- As of September 2015, good schools received a short inspection⁴ approximately every three years. As of April 2018, this was changed to approximately every four years.
- Before September 2015, all good schools received a section 5 inspection no later than the fifth academic year, including in cases where they continued to provide the same standard of education. Therefore, users should be particularly cautious if comparing outcomes from 2015/16 or later with previous years.
- Primary and secondary schools previously judged to be outstanding in their most recent inspection are exempt from routine inspection and will not be inspected unless Ofsted has concerns about them. This can include concerns identified through risk assessment, a complaint, a serious safeguarding incident or concerns about the standards of leadership and management.
- Outstanding special schools, nursery schools and pupil referral units are not exempt from routine inspection. These schools receive a short inspection in the same way that all good primary and secondary schools do.
- New schools are usually inspected according to a fixed cycle, so in the majority of cases the timing of this inspection is not determined by performance data of the school.

Accuracy and reliability

Inspections outcome data is extracted from Ofsted's administrative systems. Inspection outcomes are entered onto our systems by the lead inspector. As

⁴ A definition of 'short inspection' is provided in the glossary.

inspection reports undergo a quality assurance process, any errors are likely to be identified at this stage. In addition, a sample of the entries made onto our administrative system is checked to ensure that these match the inspection report. There is a focus on checking those entries where the risk of there being an error is highest. An example of this is where the inspection outcome awarded changes during the quality assurance process. There remains a small chance that some outcomes are entered incorrectly onto our systems.

Ofsted moderates all inspection reports where a school is judged to be inadequate. This may result in some inspection reports being published after the publication cut-off date required for inclusion within the provisional release. Therefore, provisional statistics are likely to under-represent schools being placed in a category of concern. In addition, where there are concerns that further evidence may be required to secure the inspection evidence base, this will delay publication of an inspection report. Further details of these procedures can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gathering-additional-evidence-to-secure-an-incomplete-inspection-ofsted-related-protocol>

Revisions to the data are published in line with Ofsted's revisions policy for official statistics: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics/statistical-notice-ofsted-revisions-policy-for-official-statistics>

Technical production

Technical production of the official statistics publication may also result in manual errors. A rigorous data quality assurance procedure is adopted with the aim of minimising the risk of reporting error. If an error is discovered within the document, a note is placed on the website and a corrected version of the document is uploaded as soon as possible.

More information of the issues relating to the use of administrative data is available here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics

Data obtained from other sources

Data indicating whether schools are opened or closed, their type and phase of education and any links to predecessor schools is obtained from the DfE's Get information about schools (GIAS) database⁵, formerly Edubase.

The quality of data relating to school opening and closures is considered to be good. Changes that occur as a result of schools converting to academy status, re-brokering between academy trusts, or closing to become sponsor-led academies are managed centrally by the DfE's Academies Operations and Strategies team. The process for changes undergoes monthly reconciliation checks against other data systems within

⁵ <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/>

the DfE. Some issues have been identified around the closure, merger and amalgamation of local authority maintained schools. Local authorities do not always inform the DfE of these changes, and therefore these are sometimes identified after the event. These discrepancies are usually identified as part of checks built into other processes.

Official statistics published since April 2016, use the same GIAS data for all charts and tables. For tables and charts showing the most recent inspection of a school, information about the school is based on the position at the end of the period. For tables and charts showing inspections in the academic year, school information reflects the school at the point of inspection. While this represents a small difference in the methodology within the official statistics, the difference between releases is likely to be so small, and affect such a small number of cases, that comparisons can still be made with older releases.

Data obtained from GIAS on the type of education is also considered to be of good quality. Any change to the type of education requires verification from the DfE. The phase of education is not subject to the same verification, local authority maintained schools have some remit to change their age range through a local process. Errors are picked up as part of the DfE's performance table validation process but this may be after the event. The DfE has a requirement for schools to update their record every 90 days.

Timeliness and punctuality

Data is currently published three times a year and includes details of inspections that have taken place and been published in the relevant period. To ensure data is as timely as possible, each release includes the most recent possible full month of inspections.

Data is published at 09:30 on the date pre-announced in the publication schedule: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/statistics#planned-publications>.

Information on any delay in publication can also be found on the publication schedule.

We allow one calendar month after the end of the reporting period as the cut-off date for the inclusion of published inspection reports. This is to allow time for the publication of the majority of inspections that have taken place within the reporting period. The average production time for this release is approximately six weeks. This time includes obtaining and cleaning the data, drafting findings, quality assuring all outputs and uploading the information onto the gov.uk website.

Publications are announced via social media. Pre-release access is given in accordance with the pre-release to official statistics order (2008). Details of this order can be found at:

www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system/legislation/pre-release-access/index.html.

The list of post holders granted pre-release access can be found as a separate document accompanying each release.

Accessibility and clarity

Ofsted releases are published in an accessible format on the GOV.UK website. The information is publicly available and there are no restrictions on access to the published data. Each release includes outcomes from Ofsted inspections that have subsequently been published. The data is aimed at keeping users informed of the progress of the inspection framework and of changes in the state-funded schools sector.

Supporting underlying data in an accessible format accompanies each release to allow users to perform their own analysis. Users may use and re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit:
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/.

Performance, cost and respondent burden

There is no respondent burden in relation to this statistics release as data is a by-product of Ofsted's inspection process. The only cost involved is the internal resource involved in collating the release.

Confidentiality, transparency and security

Where sensitive or personal data is held by Ofsted the disclosure control processes we have in place ensure that this data is not published.

All data releases follow Ofsted's confidentiality and revisions policies which can be found in this location:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics/statistical-notice-ofsted-policy-statement-on-confidentiality-and-data-access>

Methodology

Data in this official statistics series is from inspections conducted under sections 5 and 8 of the Education Act 2005⁶. Further detail on the dates of inspections included can be found within the release. If an inspection report is not published by the cut-off date given in the release then the previous inspection will be reported as a school's most recent inspection where applicable. Data will be presented and analysed in two ways:

- Inspections that have occurred within the academic year being reported where published by the given date.
- The most recent inspection outcome of all open schools as at the end of the reporting period including those schools that have yet to be inspected for the first time. Where an open school has not yet been inspected, we will include the inspection outcome of their predecessor school⁷ to give a more comprehensive view of the sector.

For official statistics, data on inspection outcomes are collected one month after the end of the reporting period. This helps to ensure that the vast majority of inspections undertaken within the reporting period are published and reflected within the official statistics. This is done to minimise bias. For instance, inspection reports of those schools judged inadequate undergo additional moderation checks, and may otherwise miss a shorter reporting period.

Under exceptional circumstances, Ofsted may withhold/withdraw publication of an inspection report. Outcomes of withheld/withdrawn inspection reports are not included in any of the datasets. If this is the case, these are highlighted with footnotes throughout the report.

Warning notice data is included in the school level data for any local authority maintained school receiving a warning notice from a local authority⁸ and for any academy receiving a warning notice from the Secretary of State for Education⁹ during the academic year being reported on. Pre-warning notices given to academies are not included. Any warning notices given by local authorities that are currently under appeal or have been withdrawn have not been included.

In September 2015, Ofsted introduced short inspections (please see glossary for further explanation). Where a short inspection converts to a full section 5 inspection,

⁶ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents

⁷ Where a school closed and re-opened in another form, the closed school is referred to as the predecessor of the open school.

⁸ For further details, see Chapter 4 'Schools causing concern. Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools' Aug 2016

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/640916/SCC_guidance.pdf.

⁹ For further details, see www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-letters-to-academy-trusts-about-poor-performance.

the outcome is reported within the outcomes for full inspections. Additional tables have also been added to the release to show the volumes of short inspections, the proportion that converted to full inspections, and the resulting inspection outcomes. Where a school remains the same grade, for transparency, we also include all short inspections which did not convert, as they have confirmed the grade of the previous full inspection.

Where statements are made about whether inspection outcomes have declined or improved, they refer to the most recent inspection outcome compared to those of the previous inspection outcome. Where a school has not been inspected in its current form, the most recent inspection and/or the previous inspection outcome relate to the predecessor school¹⁰.

Data in this release is also used to update an interactive Ofsted web tool ([Data View](#)).

Schools are included within most recent inspection outcomes if they were open on the final day of the reporting period, or if they closed on that day and they or their predecessor school have been inspected.

Ofsted reports on various phases of education, which include different types of establishment (See glossary for details of phases and types of schools).

Where early years provision is governed by the school or it provides care for children under three, it will be inspected as part of the section 5 inspection and outcomes are included in the schools statistical release.

The welfare provision for boarding and residential special schools is inspected at the same time as the section 5 inspection of education provision, where possible. Inspections of this type are referred to as integrated inspections.

¹⁰ Where a school closed and re-opened in another form, the closed school is referred to as the predecessor of the open school.

Glossary

School types

This data includes four state-funded school types: academy converters, academy sponsor-leds, free schools and local authority maintained schools.

Academy converter

Academy converters are the most common type of academy. They do not have to follow the national curriculum and can set their own term times. They still have to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools. New academy converters retain the local authority establishment number (LAESTAB) and the latest inspection grade of their predecessor school. However as part of a re-brokering process some academy converters lose their LAESTAB, when they join a new multi academy trust. If this happens, if they have not been inspected in their current form, the inspection outcomes shown will relate to their predecessor school¹¹.

Academy sponsor-led

Sponsor-led academies are academies which have sponsors such as businesses, universities, other schools, faith groups or voluntary groups. Sponsors are responsible for improving the performance of their schools. University technical colleges and studio schools are included in academy sponsor-led. Sponsor-led academies are viewed as new legal entities. If they have not been inspected in their current form, the inspection outcomes shown will relate to their predecessor school¹¹.

Free schools

Free schools are funded by the government but are not run by the local authority. They are set-up on a not-for-profit basis by charities, universities, and community and faith groups, among others. Free schools are 'all-ability' schools, so cannot use academic selection processes like a grammar school. They can set their own pay and conditions for staff and change the length of school terms and the school day. Free schools do not have to follow the national curriculum.

Local authority maintained schools

Maintained schools are funded by the government and run by the local authority. They must follow the national curriculum. If they have not been inspected in their current form, the inspection outcomes shown will relate to their predecessor school¹².

¹¹ Where a school closed and re-opened in another form, the closed school is referred to as the predecessor of the open school.

¹² Where a school closed and re-opened in another form, the closed school is referred to as the predecessor of the open school.

Phases

Nursery schools include local authority maintained nursery schools.

Primary schools include converter academies, sponsor-led academies, free schools and local authority maintained primary schools. These include some middle schools that have been deemed to be primary schools because the majority of pupils are primary-age children.

Secondary schools include converter academies, sponsor-led academies, free schools, studio schools, city technology colleges, university technical colleges and local authority maintained secondary schools. These include some middle schools, which have been deemed to be secondary schools because the majority of pupils are secondary-age children. This category also includes all-through schools (usually catering for children aged between 3 and 19).

Special schools include converter academies, sponsor-led academies free school special schools and local authority maintained special schools. It also includes non-maintained special schools inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Pupil referral units include alternative provision academies (converter, sponsor-led and free schools) and local authority maintained pupil referral units.

Short inspections

From September 2015, Ofsted introduced short inspections of schools that were judged good at their most recent section 5 inspection. Short inspections last for one day and take place approximately every four years. A short inspection determines whether the school continues to provide a good standard of education for the pupils and that safeguarding is effective.

These arrangements also apply to special schools, pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools that were judged outstanding at their previous section 5 inspection. These settings are currently not exempt from inspection under section 5 if they are judged outstanding.

A short inspection will **not** result in individual graded judgements. It will **not** change the overall effectiveness grade of the school. If the inspection is converted to a section 5 inspection, then inspectors will make the full set of graded judgements using the four-point grading scale, required under section 5.

From November 2017, primary and secondary schools that were judged good at their previous inspection, may be selected for a full section 5 inspection following risk assessment to determine if they have undergone significant change, such as changing its age range, or where the quality of provision may have deteriorated significantly.

From January 2018, there have been further changes to the way Ofsted conducts short inspections. The purpose of a short inspection is to determine whether the school continues to provide a good standard of education and whether safeguarding is effective.

There are now four possible outcomes for a short inspection.

Outcome 1 – the school continues to be a good school

Outcome 2 – the school remains good and there is sufficient evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school may be judged outstanding if it received a section 5 inspection now. The school will be informed that its next inspection will be a section 5 inspection, which will typically take place within one to two years

Outcome 3 – the lead inspector is not satisfied that the school would receive at least its current grade if a section 5 inspection were carried out now. The school will be informed that its next inspection will be a section 5 inspection within the statutory timeframe, which will typically take place within one to two years

Outcome 4 – the lead inspector has gathered evidence that suggests the school may be inadequate in one or more of the graded judgements under section 5 inspections; there are serious concerns about safeguarding, pupils' behaviour or the quality of education; there are concerns that the performance of an outstanding non-exempt school could be declining to 'requires improvement'.¹³ The short inspection will be converted to a section 5 inspection, usually within 48 hours.

¹³ Non-exempt schools are maintained nursery schools, pupil referral units and special schools.