Inspecting maintained schools and academies: a leaflet for maintained schools and academies

This guidance outlines what Ofsted will look at during an inspection of a maintained school or academy.
Introduction

Ofsted’s education inspection framework came into effect in September 2019.

Under the framework, inspectors carry out graded inspections of schools under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. They make the following judgements about schools:

- overall effectiveness
- quality of education
- behaviour and attitudes
- personal development
- leadership and management.

If the school offers early years provision and sixth-form provision, inspectors also make judgements on these areas.

If we judge a school to be good or outstanding, we will normally return to the school once every four years to confirm that it remains good or outstanding and that safeguarding is effective. We call this an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Act. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection.

If we judge a school as requires improvement, we will normally carry out a graded inspection within two-and-a-half years. We may monitor the school before that inspection.

If we judge a school to be inadequate (either because it has serious weaknesses or requires special measures), we will carry out a graded inspection within two-and-a-half years. We will usually monitor the school before that inspection.

Conduct during Ofsted inspections

Ofsted’s code of conduct sets out our expectations about the conduct of our inspectors and our expectation of schools during inspection. At the start of the inspection (usually during the preparatory conversations) the lead inspector will explain these expectations and will ask schools to read the code.

Information to share with inspectors

Schools are not expected to prepare anything extra for inspectors, but the lead inspector will ask the school to provide certain information as early as possible. This will include:

- a copy of the school’s timetable(s), where relevant
- details of any relevant staff absence
- any requests to not visit any specific lesson or lessons (for example, if a teacher is subject to capability procedures).
We will request that the following information is available at the start of the inspection:

- strategic documents about the school, including:
  - anything that sets out school improvement planning or the longer-term vision for the school, such as the school or the trust’s strategy
- for maintained schools, minutes of governors’ meetings and other relevant strategic documentation about governance that the school may have
- for academies, minutes of board of trustees’ meetings and other relevant strategic documentation about the trust that the school may have
- a summary of any school self-evaluation or equivalent
- any reports from any external evaluation of the school
- records and information about behaviour and attendance, including:
  - up-to-date attendance analysis for all groups of pupils
  - records and analysis of pupils taken off roll
  - records and analysis of exclusions and suspensions, incidents of poor behaviour and any use of internal isolation
  - records and analysis of bullying, discriminatory and prejudiced behaviour, either directly or indirectly, including racist, sexist, disability and homophobic/biphobic/transphobic bullying, use of derogatory language and racist incidents
- records and analysis of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence
- records and analysis of any restrictive physical intervention.
- operational documents, including:
  - access to wifi, if it exists, so that inspectors can connect to the internet
  - maps and other practical information
  - the school timetable, current staff list (indicating early career teachers, mentors and induction tutors) and times for the school day, including any planned interruptions to normal school routines during the inspection and whether any teachers should not be visited for any reason.

Safeguarding information

On arrival at the school, inspectors must have secure access to safeguarding information, including:

- the single central record for the school
- a list of any referrals made to the designated safeguarding lead in the school and those that were subsequently referred to the local authority, along with brief details of the resolution
- any referrals made to the local authority designated officer regarding staff or other adults
- a list of all pupils who have open cases with children’s services or social care and all pupils who have a multi-agency plan.

Schools and inspectors must ensure that all actions are compliant with legal requirements on information-handling.
If any of this information is available before the inspection begins, you can upload it onto the inspection portal. We provide instructions for using the portal in the notification of inspection letter.

Inspectors will use a range of technology to gather evidence electronically, including mobile devices, tablets and laptops. They may also request to take photographic evidence, for example of pupils’ work and displays. Inspectors will not take photographs of pupils.

**Inspecting boarding and residential special schools**

When a boarding or residential special school’s graded or ungraded inspection is due in the same financial year as the full inspection of its boarding or residential provision, we will normally carry out an aligned inspection.

Aligned inspections are carried out by two separate inspection teams (education and social care). They result in two sets of graded judgements and two separate published reports. We will also publish on our reports website a summary letter using extracts from both reports.

We make the judgements for boarding or residential provision in accordance with the guidance and grade descriptors in the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF): boarding schools and residential special schools. We carry out the inspection of the education provision under the education inspection framework.

**Inspecting schools that are registered as children’s homes**

A graded or ungraded inspection of the education in a school that is also registered as a children’s home may take place as a stand-alone inspection of the education provision or at the same time as the full inspection of the children’s home. When possible, we will attempt to carry out both inspections at the same time so that inspectors may work together and share evidence.

**Seeking the views of parents, staff and pupils**

Parents will give their views about their child’s school on Ofsted Parent View, which they can access at any time. This includes at the point of inspection, when we will provide them with a link to the Ofsted Parent View website.

Staff and pupils will be encouraged to complete a voluntary online survey, available at the point of inspection.

**More information about school inspections**

The school inspection handbook explains how we carry out inspections and the judgements that inspectors make under graded inspections. It contains the grade descriptors that inspectors use when making their judgements. The handbook also
explains how we carry out ungraded inspections and urgent inspections under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The school monitoring handbook explains how we carry out monitoring inspections of schools that were judged as requires improvement, or as inadequate (having serious weaknesses or requiring special measures) at their most recent graded inspection.

The education inspection framework sets out the statutory basis for schools inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

Gathering personal information on inspection

Inspectors will gather any personal information necessary to assist them in inspecting a school. Our privacy policy sets out what personal information we collect, what we do with it, how long we keep it and individuals’ rights under data protection legislation.

Your views on the inspection

Following your inspection, we will invite you to complete an online inspection survey. The online survey asks for your views on the inspection process, including the impact that the inspection is likely to have in bringing about improvement. We value all survey responses. We use the outcomes to help keep us informed about the quality and impact of inspections and to help guide us in reviewing and improving the inspection process.

Contact us

Address: Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD

Helpline: 0300 123 1231

Online form: contact Ofsted.
The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

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