

# The framework for school inspection

The framework for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

---

This framework sets out the statutory basis for inspections conducted under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) from September 2012. It summarises the main features of school inspections and describes how the general principles and processes of inspection are applied to maintained schools, academies and some other types of school in England. This version of the framework is effective from September 2014.

**Age group:** 0–19

---

**Published:** January 2015

---

**Reference no:** 120100



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, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse 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 <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120100](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120100).

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our website for news, information and updates at [www.ofsted.gov.uk/user](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/user).

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

No. 120100

© Crown copyright 2015



# Contents

---

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
What is the purpose of school inspection?	4
How does inspection promote improvement?	4
Key features of the framework for school inspection	5
What are the legal requirements for the inspection of schools?	7
What determines the timing of a school's inspection?	10
What are the principles of school inspection?	13
What is the relationship between school self-evaluation and inspection?	14
Who inspects schools?	15
Inspection grades used to make judgements	15
<b>Schools judged to be causing concern</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Part B. The process of inspection</b>	<b>18</b>
What happens before the inspection?	18
What happens during the inspection?	19
What happens after the inspection?	22

## Introduction

### What is the purpose of school inspection?

1. The inspection of a school provides an independent external evaluation of its effectiveness and a diagnosis of what it should do to improve. It is based on a range of evidence available to inspectors that is evaluated against a national framework.
2. Ofsted's inspections of schools perform three essential functions. They:
  - provide parents<sup>1</sup> with an expert and independent assessment of how well a school is performing, and help inform those who are choosing a school for their child
  - provide information to the Secretary of State for Education and to Parliament about the work of schools and the extent to which an acceptable standard of education is being provided; this provides assurance that minimum standards are being met, provides confidence in the use of public money and assists accountability, as well as indicating where improvements are needed<sup>2</sup>
  - promote the improvement of individual schools and the education system as a whole.

### How does inspection promote improvement?

3. Ofsted is required to carry out its work in ways that encourage the services it inspects and regulates to improve, to be user-focused and to be efficient and effective in the use of resources.<sup>3</sup>
4. Inspection acts in a number of ways to drive and support school improvement. It:
  - raises expectations by setting the standards of performance and effectiveness expected of schools
  - provides a sharp challenge and the impetus to act where improvement is needed
  - clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses
  - recommends specific priorities for improvement for the school and, when appropriate, checks on and promotes subsequent progress
  - promotes rigour in the way that schools evaluate their own performance, thereby enhancing their capacity to improve

---

<sup>1</sup> The term 'parents' refers to mothers, fathers and/or carers.

<sup>2</sup> Under section 118 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Under sections 117(1) and 119(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

- monitors the progress and performance of schools that are not yet good, and challenges and supports senior leaders, staff and those responsible for governance.

## Key features of the framework for school inspection

5. Inspectors focus sharply on those aspects of schools' work that have the greatest impact on raising achievement. They make a small number of key judgements as set out in paragraph 7.
6. Inspections engage headteachers, school staff and governors.<sup>4</sup> The views of parents, pupils and staff provide important evidence for the inspection.
7. Inspectors are required to report on<sup>5</sup> the quality of education provided in the school and must, in particular, cover:
  - the achievement of pupils at the school
  - the quality of teaching in the school
  - the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school
  - the quality of leadership in and management of the school
8. When reporting, inspectors must also consider:<sup>6</sup>
  - the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school
  - the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular the needs of disabled pupils<sup>7</sup> and those who have special educational needs.
9. Inspectors also consider and report on, where relevant, the overall effectiveness of:
  - the early years provision
  - the sixth form provision.
10. The way these judgements are made, the type of evidence considered and the evaluation criteria are set out in the *School inspection handbook*.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> 'Governors' refers to those responsible for governance in a school. They may be part of a school's local board, committee or governing body.

<sup>5</sup> Under sections 5(5), (5A) and (5B) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>6</sup> Under sections 5(5), (5A) and (5B) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>7</sup> Pupils who have a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010.

<sup>8</sup> *School inspection handbook* (120101), Ofsted, January 2015; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/school-inspection-handbook](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/school-inspection-handbook).

11. Under this framework:

- schools cannot be judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness unless they have outstanding teaching
- an acceptable standard of education is defined as a good standard of education
- a school that is not yet good but that is not judged inadequate is a school that requires improvement
- a school that is inadequate overall and that requires significant improvement, but where leadership and management are not inadequate, is a school with serious weaknesses<sup>9</sup>
- a school that is inadequate overall and where leadership and management are also inadequate is a school requiring special measures<sup>10</sup>
- schools that are judged as requires improvement will normally be monitored and reinspected within a period of two years; the timing of the reinspection will reflect the individual school's circumstances and will be informed by what inspectors find at the monitoring visits
- if a school is judged as requires improvement at two consecutive inspections and is still not good at a third inspection, it is likely to be deemed inadequate and to require special measures
- inspectors will normally contact the school by telephone during the afternoon of the working day<sup>11</sup> prior to the start of a section 5 inspection; however, where appropriate, inspection may be conducted without notice.

---

<sup>9</sup> A school with serious weaknesses is a school causing concern as defined by section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>10</sup> A school deemed to require special measures is a school causing concern as defined by section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>11</sup> 'Working day' refers to any day on which a school is open.

## Part A. Inspection policy and principles

### What are the legal requirements for the inspection of schools?

12. This framework sets out the statutory basis for school inspections<sup>12</sup> conducted under the Education Act 2005 (as amended), from September 2012. It should be read in conjunction with the *School inspection handbook*.<sup>13</sup>
13. This framework applies to all schools in England that are to be inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended). This includes all maintained schools and state-funded independent schools, and certain non-maintained independent schools. The schools subject to section 5 inspection<sup>14</sup> are:
  - community, foundation and voluntary schools
  - community and foundation special schools
  - pupil referral units
  - maintained nursery schools
  - academies<sup>15</sup>
  - city technology colleges
  - city technology colleges for the technology of the arts
  - certain non-maintained special schools approved by the Secretary of State under section 342 of the Education Act 1996.
14. This framework does not apply to any other independent schools.
15. An inspection of a boarding or residential special school's boarding or residential provision will be integrated with the school inspection where possible. Where inspection cycles do not coincide, integrated inspections cannot be carried out. In such cases, an inspection of the boarding or residential provision only will be conducted.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> School inspections are governed by the Education Act 2005 (as amended), the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

<sup>13</sup> *School inspection handbook* (120101), Ofsted 2014; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120101](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120101).

<sup>14</sup> As set out under section 5 (2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>15</sup> This includes all academy family schools: sponsor-led academies, academy converter schools, academy special schools, free schools, special free schools, alternative provision free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools. **Not** inspected under this framework are 16–19 academies, 16–19 UTCs and 16–19 studio schools. They are inspected under the common inspection framework.

<sup>16</sup> The inspection of the boarding/residential provision will be conducted under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools or residential special schools, as appropriate. The boarding/residential inspection will follow the *Framework for inspecting boarding and residential provision in schools* (110095), Ofsted, 2013; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110095](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110095) and the guidance set out in *Conducting inspections of*

16. All schools covered by this framework have their own unique reference number (URN). Any institution with a URN that is inspected by Ofsted will receive an inspection report. Those schools that work in partnership with other schools, through federations, managed groups, chains or other collaborative activities, but that have a separate URN will be inspected as individual schools and separate inspection reports will be published. Ofsted may seek to coordinate the inspection of certain groups of schools, where this is possible.
17. Ofsted is required to inspect all schools to which section 5 applies at prescribed intervals.<sup>17</sup> With the exception of those exempt from routine section 5 inspection, regulations require that each school must be inspected within five school years from the end of the school year in which the last inspection took place.<sup>18</sup>
18. The inspection arrangements will ensure that the frequency of inspection is proportionate to the performance and circumstances of schools. This means that some schools will be inspected more frequently than at five-year intervals. Further detail about the timing of inspections is set out below.
19. Certain schools are exempt from section 5 inspection, although they may be inspected under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended). These schools are known as 'exempt schools'. Regulations specify that maintained primary and secondary schools, and academies, that were judged to be outstanding overall at their most recent section 5 inspection are exempt from future inspection under section 5. This exemption also applies to an academy converter school<sup>19</sup> whose predecessor school achieved an outstanding grade overall at its most recent section 5 inspection.<sup>20</sup> Certain types of schools cannot be exempt schools. These are special schools (including maintained residential special schools and non-maintained special schools with residential provision), pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools.
20. Where Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) or the Secretary of State has concerns about the performance of an exempt school (or any other school covered by this framework) HMCI has powers to inspect at any time under section 8. Such concerns may be identified through the risk assessment process set out in paragraphs 28–34 or when Ofsted becomes aware through other means of concerns about a school's performance or the safety of pupils.

---

*boarding and residential provision in schools* (100180), Ofsted, 2014;  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100180](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100180).

<sup>17</sup> Under section 5(1) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>18</sup> Under regulation 3 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended); a school year begins on 1 August for these purposes.

<sup>19</sup> A school that has been approved by the Secretary of State to convert to become an academy.

<sup>20</sup> The Education (Exemption from School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2012;  
[www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1293/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1293/made) .



HMCI may treat an inspection of such schools conducted under section 8 as if it were an inspection under section 5. Under section 8, HMCI may be required by the Secretary of State to conduct an inspection of an exempt school (or any other school covered by this framework). The Secretary of State may also require that the inspection be treated as if it were an inspection under section 5.<sup>21</sup>

21. Exempt schools (in the same way as all other schools inspected under this framework) may be subject to inspection as part of a programme of surveys, of curriculum subjects and thematic reviews, including those focused on good practice. These inspections are conducted under section 8.
22. Schools are able, via the appropriate authority (normally the school's governing body), to request an inspection. If an inspection is carried out in response to such a request, HMCI may charge the appropriate authority for the cost of the inspection.<sup>22</sup> Where HMCI arranges an inspection under section 8 at the request of the appropriate authority, the inspection must be treated as if it were conducted under section 5.<sup>23</sup>
23. Ofsted may collect evidence through section 5 and section 8 inspections on other aspects of provision and use this evidence anonymously to inform national reporting.
24. Some schools are designated by the Secretary of State as having a religious character.<sup>24</sup> The content of collective worship and denominational education in such schools is inspected separately under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).
25. Early years registered childcare provision is inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. Where the provision is managed by the school, the inspection will not normally be carried out at the same time as the section 5 inspection. The quality of the childcare provision is evaluated and reported on in a separate inspection report. Where registered provision on a school's site is managed by a private, voluntary and/or independent provider, it is inspected separately under the Childcare Act 2006. Where both inspections take place in the same timeframe, the section 5 report and the childcare report will be published separately.

---

<sup>21</sup> Under section 9 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>22</sup> Under section 8(3) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>23</sup> Under section 9(4) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>24</sup> Under section 69(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

## What determines the timing of a school's inspection?

26. Inspection can take place at any point after the end of five working school days in the autumn term. For example, if pupils return to school on a Wednesday, inspection can take place as early as the following Wednesday.
27. In exceptional circumstances, as specified in Ofsted's deferral policy,<sup>25</sup> an inspection might be cancelled or deferred after the school has been notified, following a request made by the school. Normally, however, if pupils are receiving education in the school, an inspection will go ahead even if, for example, the headteacher is off site or building work is taking place.

## Outstanding and good schools

28. The frequency of school inspections depends on the findings of a school's previous inspection(s). For a school judged at their last inspection to be good, the timing of its next section 5 inspection is determined by a risk assessment of its subsequent performance. Exempt schools are also subject to risk assessment. The risk assessment process normally begins in the third school year after the most recent section 5 inspection, and for outstanding schools is conducted annually thereafter.
29. In conducting a risk assessment, Ofsted analyses:
  - pupils' academic achievement over time, taking account of both attainment and progress
  - pupils' attendance
  - the outcomes of any inspections, such as survey inspections, carried out by Ofsted since the last routine inspection
  - the views of parents, including those shown by Parent View,<sup>26</sup> an online questionnaire for parents
  - qualifying complaints<sup>27</sup> about the school referred to Ofsted by parents or carers
  - any other significant concerns that are brought to Ofsted's attention.
30. If the risk assessment process raises concerns about the performance of an exempt school, it may be inspected at any time after the completion of the risk assessment. If no concerns are raised from the risk assessment the school will not be informed.

---

<sup>25</sup> *Deferral of inspections: information for schools*, Ofsted, 2012;

[www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/deferral-of-inspections-information-for-schools](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/deferral-of-inspections-information-for-schools)

<sup>26</sup> <https://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

<sup>27</sup> Ofsted has specific powers (under sections 11A–C of the Education Act 2005 (as amended)) to investigate certain complaints about schools, known as qualifying complaints.

31. In addition, exempt schools may be inspected between risk assessments where:
- safeguarding, including a decline in the standards of pupils' behaviour and the ability of staff to maintain discipline, and/or welfare concerns suggest that it should be inspected
  - a subject or thematic survey inspection raises more general concerns
  - Ofsted has received a qualifying complaint about a school that, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to inspect the school
  - concerns are raised about standards of leadership or governance
  - concerns are identified about the breadth and balance of the curriculum (including where the statutory requirement to publish information to parents is not met)
  - HMCI or the Secretary of State has concerns about a school's performance.
32. A school judged to be good at its most recent inspection is inspected within five school years of the end of the school year in which its last inspection took place, unless it is a special school (including maintained residential special schools and non-maintained special schools with residential provision), a pupil referral unit (PRU) or a maintained nursery school – see paragraphs 33 and 34 below. A good school may be inspected earlier in the five-year period if:
- the risk assessment of the school's performance suggests that it should be inspected earlier
  - safeguarding, including a decline in the standards of pupils' behaviour and the ability of staff to maintain discipline, and/or welfare concerns suggest that it should be inspected earlier
  - a subject or thematic survey inspection raises more general concerns that suggest it should be inspected earlier
  - Ofsted has received a qualifying complaint about the school that, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to bring forward the school's inspection
  - concerns are raised about standards of leadership or governance that suggest it should be inspected earlier
  - concerns are identified about the breadth and balance of the curriculum (including where the statutory requirement to publish information to parents is not met) that suggest it should be inspected earlier
  - it is part of any sample selected to ensure that HMCI's Annual Report reflects evidence from a cross-section of schools of different types, phases and effectiveness

- it is part of a formal grouping of schools such as a federation or managed group and shares important aspects of its provision, and it is considered appropriate to inspect the member schools in the group at the same time
  - HMCI or the Secretary of State has concerns about the school's performance that suggest it should be inspected earlier.
33. A maintained nursery school that was judged to be good or outstanding at its last full section 5 inspection will be inspected within three years from the end of the school year in which it was last inspected. This is because, currently, there are no standardised performance data available on which to conduct a robust risk assessment and because of the vulnerable nature of the very young children who attend such provision. A good or outstanding maintained nursery school may be inspected earlier in the three-year period if any of the circumstances set out in paragraph 32 apply.
34. Pupil referral units and special schools (including maintained residential special schools and non-maintained special schools with residential provision) will normally be inspected within three school years from the end of the school year in which the last inspection of the school took place. This is due to the limited performance data available with which to conduct a robust risk assessment and because of the vulnerable nature of the pupils. If a special school or a pupil referral unit has been judged to be outstanding at two consecutive inspections and there has been no change of headteacher since the school's last inspection, it will normally be inspected within five school years from the end of the school year in which the last inspection of the school took place. The decision to defer the inspection will also take account of any significant issues that have been brought to Ofsted's attention, including those raised by the relevant local authority or through a qualifying complaint. A good or outstanding PRU or special school may be inspected earlier in the three-/five-year period if any of the circumstances set out in paragraph 32 apply.
35. Outside of these arrangements, Ofsted maintains an oversight of the performance of all schools and may decide to inspect a school where it is deemed necessary.

### **Schools that are judged as requires improvement**

36. A school that has been judged as requires improvement will be subject to monitoring by Ofsted although it is not in a formal category of concern. It will normally have a full section 5 reinspection within a period of two years. If at that inspection it is still judged as requires improvement, there will be further monitoring, and another full section 5 inspection will take place within a further two years. If at this inspection it is still not good, it is highly likely that it will be judged inadequate and deemed to require special measures. This will be because the school is not providing an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. However, there may be exceptions to this. For example, if there is a clear, sustained,

upward trend, but the school is not yet good in all areas, inspectors may not judge the school to require special measures.

### Schools that are judged as inadequate

37. A school judged to be inadequate because one or more of the key areas of its performance require significant improvement, but where leaders and managers have demonstrated the capacity to improve, is likely to be judged as having serious weaknesses. These schools will be monitored under section 8<sup>28</sup> and reinspected within 18 months of their last section 5 inspection.
38. A school judged to be inadequate and to require special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and because leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated the capacity to secure the necessary improvement will usually receive its first section 8 monitoring inspection within three months of the section 5 inspection that made it subject to special measures. However, where a school's safeguarding arrangements have been judged to be inadequate, it is likely that a monitoring inspection will take place earlier. A school may receive up to five monitoring inspections over an 18-month period following the section 5 inspection that placed it in special measures. It will normally be reinspected within 24 months unless it is removed from special measures at a monitoring inspection that is treated as or 'deemed' to be a section 5 inspection.

### What are the principles of school inspection?

School inspection acts in the interests of children, young people, their parents and employers. It encourages high-quality provision that meets diverse needs and fosters equal opportunities.

School inspections will:

- support and promote improvement by
  - establishing a clear standard for an acceptable education – only a 'good' school is good enough
  - adjusting the focus and type of inspection to have the greatest impact
  - clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses
  - identifying precise actions to underpin recommendations
  - explaining and discussing inspection findings with those whose work has been inspected
  - monitoring the weakest schools, providing challenge and support to senior leaders, staff and those responsible for governance
- be proportionate by
  - adjusting the frequency of inspection having regard to previous inspection outcomes and

<sup>28</sup> Section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

risk assessment

- deploying resources where improvement is most needed, or where inspection can add most value
- focus on pupils' and parents' needs by
  - taking account of pupils' and parents' views in the planning and conduct of inspection
  - drawing on pupils' and parents' views to inform inspectors' judgements and the outcomes of inspection
  - minimising risk to children, young people and adults by evaluating the effectiveness of schools' procedures for safeguarding
  - evaluating the extent to which schools provide an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all pupils, irrespective of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation
- focus on the needs of schools by
  - providing high-quality and timely communication with schools
  - making use, as far as possible, of the existing data, documentation and systems of the schools inspected and avoiding placing unnecessary burdens on them
  - taking account of schools' self-evaluation
- be transparent and consistent by
  - making clear judgements based on sound evidence
  - inspecting and reporting with integrity
  - having clear evaluation criteria, procedures and guidance that are well understood by schools and users and that are readily available
- be accountable by
  - reporting the outcomes of inspection without fear or favour
  - publishing clear, accurate, timely reports that provide parents and prospective parents with an authoritative, independent assessment of the quality of education provided by the school
  - gathering the views of pupils and parents, and those who have a significant interest in the school to inform inspection
- demonstrate value for money by
  - targeting inspection resources and deploying them effectively and efficiently
  - evaluating the outcomes and processes of inspection and making improvements where necessary.

## What is the relationship between school self-evaluation and inspection?

39. Self-evaluation provides the basis for planning, development and improvement in schools. Inspection takes full account of, and contributes to, schools' self-evaluation. Schools may present a brief written summary of their self-evaluation to inspectors.

## Who inspects schools?

40. School inspectors are:

- Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) employed directly by Ofsted
- Additional Inspectors (known as 'Associate Inspectors') employed directly by Ofsted on a secondment basis for a fixed period
- Additional Inspectors employed directly, or contracted, by inspection service providers (ISPs).

ISPs are independent commercial organisations contracted by Ofsted to provide inspection services. They are responsible for the administrative arrangements for inspections. Ofsted prescribes the qualifications and experience required by Additional Inspectors, the initial and continuing training that they should receive and the standards they are required to meet. Ofsted also publishes the names of Additional Inspectors employed by ISPs. A proportion of Additional Inspectors are serving headteachers and senior staff, who may also be national (NLE), or local (LLE) leaders in education. All inspectors undertake regular training to ensure that they are familiar with changes in inspection frameworks, inspection methodology and developments in educational practice.

41. HMI lead a proportion of inspections. Additional Inspectors, who lead the majority of section 5 inspections, are authorised to do so subject to them having previously conducted a section 5 inspection to the satisfaction of an HMI. Ofsted also quality assures inspections by visiting a sample of schools during inspection and reviewing a sample of inspection reports.

## Inspection grades used to make judgements

42. Inspectors will use the following scale when judging the overall effectiveness of the school and making the four key judgements about the achievement of pupils, the quality of teaching, the behaviour and safety of pupils and the quality of leadership in and management of the school and, where applicable, judging the effectiveness of the early years provision and the sixth form.

- grade 1 – outstanding
- grade 2 – good
- grade 3 – requires improvement
- grade 4 – inadequate.

43. In judging the school's overall effectiveness, inspectors will consider whether:

- the standard of education is good (grade 2) or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as outstanding (grade 1)

- the school requires improvement as it is not yet a good school, because one or more of the four key judgements is judged as requires improvement (grade 3) and/or there are overall weaknesses in the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- the school is inadequate (grade 4) and, if so, whether it has serious weaknesses or requires special measures.



## Schools judged to be causing concern

44. The definition of a school causing concern is set out in section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).
45. There are two categories of schools causing concern.
- Serious weaknesses<sup>29</sup> – where one or more of the key judgements are inadequate (grade 4) and/or there are serious weaknesses in the provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, leaders, managers and governors are judged to be capable of securing improvement (this means that leadership and management are judged at grade 3 or above).
  - Special measures – where a school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the leaders, managers or governors are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.<sup>30</sup>
46. The ‘inadequate’ judgement is subject to moderation by HMI. HMCI is required to confirm where special measures are required. If a school is judged to require special measures, Ofsted must determine whether the school should be permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers. This decision will be reported in the inspection report. In the case of an academy made subject to special measures, the lead inspector will make a *recommendation* on whether or not the academy may appoint newly qualified teachers. During monitoring inspections, the lead inspector will review this decision or (in the case of an academy) recommendation in the light of progress made by the school and confirm or revise the permission<sup>31</sup> or recommendation.

---

<sup>29</sup> Under section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), a school judged to have serious weaknesses requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

<sup>30</sup> Under section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>31</sup> Under regulation 8(2) of the Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (England) Regulations 2008, which provides that a teacher’s induction period cannot be served in a school that is eligible for intervention by virtue of section 62 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 unless HMCI has certified in writing that s/he is satisfied that the school or part of the school is fit for the purpose of providing induction, supervision and training.

## **Part B. The process of inspection**

### **What happens before the inspection?**

#### **When are schools notified of their inspection?**

47. A school will be notified of its inspection at or just after midday on the working day before the start of the inspection. However, HMCI reserves the right to inspect any school without notice where this is judged to be appropriate. Where the inspection is conducted without notice, the lead inspector will normally telephone the school about 15–30 minutes before arriving on site.

#### **What information do inspectors use before the inspection?**

48. Inspectors will use a range of evidence for the initial identification of issues to be followed up in inspection, including performance data, the school's previous inspection report, any recent Ofsted survey reports and/or monitoring letters, and information from Parent View.

#### **How do lead inspectors contact the school?**

49. The lead inspector will contact the headteacher or, in the absence of the headteacher, the most senior member of staff who is available. Telephone contact with the school is intended to ensure that good communication and effective working relationships are established at the start of the inspection.

#### **How do inspectors seek the views of registered parents, pupils and other partners about the school's work before and during inspection?**

50. When a school is notified of inspection, it is required to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to notify all registered parents of registered pupils<sup>32</sup> at the school, including those who have been excluded, are placed in alternative provision, or are away from school. Schools are also required to notify relevant bodies, including those providing alternative provision for its pupils, of the inspection.<sup>33</sup>
51. Ofsted provides a standard letter for the purpose of notifying parents of the inspection, which a school is required to distribute.<sup>34</sup> The letter provides parents with details and options for providing their views. Parent View will provide the primary source of information for inspectors about the views of parents. Inspectors will also take into account the results of any past surveys carried out by the school or commissioned by the school.

---

<sup>32</sup> Under section 6(1) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>33</sup> Under regulation 4 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended).

<sup>34</sup> Under section 6(2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

52. During the inspection, inspectors will talk to a range of pupils to ascertain their views on important aspects of the school's work. In addition, inspectors will take account of external views of the school's performance. This may include any evaluation of the school's performance by the local authority.

## **What happens during the inspection?**

### **How many days do inspectors spend in the school?**

53. Inspections do not normally last longer than two days, and the size of the inspection team will vary according to the size and nature of the school.

### **How do inspectors use their time during the inspection?**

54. Inspectors will spend most of their time observing lessons and gathering robust, first-hand evidence to inform their judgements.
55. Inspectors will evaluate evidence relating to the achievement of specific groups of pupils and individuals, including those eligible for support from the pupil premium. They will give specific attention to the quality of learning within mainstream lessons and on-site separate provision, and evidence of learning in off-site alternative provision.
56. Other evidence gathered by inspectors will include discussions with pupils and staff, listening to pupils read and scrutiny of their work. Inspectors will also scrutinise the school's records and documentation relating, for example, to pupils' achievement and the safety of pupils in alternative provision. They have a duty to have regard for the views of a specified range of people when conducting an inspection under section 5.<sup>35</sup>

### **How is evidence recorded?**

57. During the inspection, inspectors will gather, analyse and record evidence and note their judgements on evidence forms. The evidence forms are part of the evidence base for the inspection. The lead inspector is responsible for compiling and assuring the quality of the evidence base.

### **How are judgements secured?**

58. The lead inspector has responsibility for ensuring that judgements about the school are collectively agreed by the inspection team and based on the grade descriptors in the evaluation schedule, and that they are supported

---

<sup>35</sup> Under section 7 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), HMCI must have regard to any views expressed to her/him by: the headteacher; in the case of a maintained school, the governing body; in the case of any other school, the proprietor of the school; any person prescribed for the purposes of section 6(1)(b); members of the staff of the school; registered pupils at the school; and the registered parents of registered pupils.

convincingly by recorded evidence. Inspectors will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what it must do to improve. Emerging findings will be discussed with the headteacher at regular intervals and, where appropriate, senior staff. The headteacher should be given the opportunity to provide evidence, where it is relevant.

59. Final judgements will be made only when all evidence has been collected and considered. These judgements, including the overall effectiveness judgement about the school, represent the corporate view of the inspection team. They will be subject to quality assurance before the report is published.

### **How do the headteacher and senior staff engage in the inspection?**

60. Inspection has the strongest impact on school improvement when the school understands the evidence and findings that have led to the judgements, and what it needs to do to improve. The lead inspector will therefore ensure that the headteacher and senior staff:

- are kept up to date about the inspection
- understand how the inspection team reaches its judgements
- have opportunities to clarify how evidence is used to reach judgements
- are given the opportunity to present evidence.

61. Headteachers will be invited to:

- participate in joint lesson observations, as agreed with the lead inspector
- receive regular updates from the lead inspector  
and, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so
- attend the formal inspection team meetings at the end of each day of the inspection
- comment on the inspectors' recommendations to ensure that these are understood.

62. The headteacher's participation in inspection activities, such as attendance at team meetings and participation in joint observations, is not mandatory and s/he may choose whether or not to accept.

## What is the code of conduct for inspectors?

63. Inspectors are required to uphold the highest professional standards in their work and to ensure that everyone they encounter during inspections is treated fairly and with respect. These standards are assured through a code of conduct, which is set out below.

### Inspectors should:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
- evaluate provision in line with frameworks, national standards or regulatory requirements
- base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
- have no connection with the provider that could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
- endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
- act in the best interests and well-being of pupils
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests
- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

64. When inspectors meet pupils, parents, staff, governors and other interested parties, every endeavour will be made to ensure that individuals and individual comments are not identified in the further exploration of issues or in the inspection report. However, there may be circumstances where it will not be possible to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewee, for example where a safeguarding issue is disclosed. Inspectors have a duty to pass on disclosures that raise child protection or safeguarding issues and/or where serious misconduct or potential criminal activity is involved.

## How should school staff engage with inspectors?

65. To ensure that inspection is productive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and schools establish and maintain an appropriate working relationship based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Ofsted expects school staff to:
- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
  - enable inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
  - enable inspectors to evaluate the school objectively against the inspection framework

- provide evidence that will enable the inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
- ensure that the health and safety of inspectors is not prejudiced while they are on the school's premises
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspectors
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner
- understand the need for inspectors to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager.

### **What feedback do inspectors give to school staff during the inspection?**

66. Inspectors will offer oral feedback to teachers and other staff about the work they see in order to promote improvement. Constructive dialogue is essential between inspectors and staff, and particularly between the lead inspector and the headteacher.

### **How is the quality of inspection assured?**

67. Ofsted monitors the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes. Some schools will be visited by an HMI or by a representative of the ISP to check the quality of the inspection. Their assessments are confidential to the inspectors and the ISPs concerned. As part of quality assurance, a sample of inspection evidence bases will be evaluated.
68. In the event that, following the onsite inspection, there is a need to gather additional evidence in order to ensure that the inspection judgements are secure, action to complete the inspection may be required. The school will be notified in writing that the inspection is incomplete and that further inspection activity may take place.
69. All schools will be invited to complete a post-inspection survey so that the views of headteachers, governors and staff are considered and can contribute to the future development of inspection.

### **What happens after the inspection?**

#### **What feedback is provided to the school?**

70. Before leaving the school, the lead inspector must ensure that the school is clear:
- about the grades awarded for each judgement required under the evaluation schedule
  - that the grades awarded may be subject to change

- that the main points provided orally in the feedback will be referred to in the text of the report
- about the procedures leading to the publication of the report
- about the complaints procedure
- where relevant, about the implications of the school being judged as requires improvement
- where relevant, about the implications of the school being placed in a category of concern and deemed to require special measures or have serious weaknesses.

71. After the inspection team has reached its conclusions, the judgements will be presented and explained to representatives of those responsible for governance at the school and the senior leadership team.

### **What are the written outcomes of the inspection?**

72. Following the inspection, the lead inspector will write a report setting out the main findings of the inspection. The findings should be consistent with those explained orally to the school.

73. The lead inspector will provide a first draft of the report to the ISP who, following editing, will forward the report to the school for a factual accuracy check. One working day is allowed to the school to comment on the draft unless the school is placed in a category of concern, in which case five days are allowed. Where a school has been judged to require special measures, HMCI must confirm the judgement and sign off the report.

### **When is the report issued?**

74. Unless the school has been judged inadequate, the report is normally sent to a school within 10 working days of the end of the inspection and published on Ofsted's website within 15 working days of the end of the inspection. Where a school has been judged inadequate, the report is usually published within 28 working days of the end of the inspection.

75. A copy of the report is sent to:<sup>36</sup>

- the headteacher of the school
- the local authority
- the appropriate authority or proprietor (for example, the governing body or the academy trust where the local authority is not the appropriate authority)

---

<sup>36</sup> Under sections 14(1) and 14(2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

- the person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has them (including diocesan or other appropriate authorities in the case of schools with a religious character)
  - other prescribed persons.
76. For secondary schools with a sixth form, a copy of the report is also sent to the body responsible for funding allocations for post-16 education.<sup>37</sup>
77. In exceptional circumstances, Ofsted may decide that the normal period for completion of the inspection report should be extended.

**What must the governing body, appropriate authority or proprietor (where relevant) do when the inspection report is received?**

78. The governing body, appropriate authority or proprietor are required to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that every registered parent of a registered pupil at the school receives a copy of the inspection report within five working days of the school receiving it.<sup>38</sup> HMCI also expects schools to ensure that all pupils are made aware of the findings of the inspection.
79. The governing body, appropriate authority or proprietor must also make a copy of the inspection report available on request to members of the public.<sup>39</sup> A charge, not exceeding the cost of reproduction, can be made<sup>40</sup> for copies of the inspection report.

**How do schools complain about their inspection or inspection report?**

80. Any concerns that the school has about the inspection should be raised and, where possible, resolved with the lead inspector (and/or visiting inspector who is carrying out a quality assurance visit) during the inspection.
81. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns, then individuals or schools may decide to lodge a formal complaint. The complaints procedures are available on Ofsted's website.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> Under section 14(3) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>38</sup> Under section 14(4) (c) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and regulation 6 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Under section 14(4) (a) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>40</sup> Under section 14(4) (b) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

<sup>41</sup> *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* (130128), Ofsted, 2013; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130128](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130128).