

The framework for school inspection

The framework for school inspection in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, from September 2009



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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, based upon a range of evidence including that from first-hand observation. Ofsted's school inspection reports present a written commentary on the outcomes achieved and the quality of a school's provision (especially the quality of teaching and its impact on learning), the effectiveness of leadership and management and the school's capacity to improve.

2 Ofsted's inspections of schools perform three essential functions. They:

- provide parents¹ with information; this informs their choices and preferences about the effectiveness of the schools their children attend or may attend in the future
- keep the Secretary of State (and parliament) informed about the work of schools. This provides assurance that minimum standards are being met; provides confidence in the use of public money; and assists accountability
- promote the improvement of individual schools, and the education system as a whole.

How does inspection promote improvement?

3 The inspection of a school promotes improvement by:

- setting expectations: the criteria and descriptors set out in the inspection framework and guidance illustrate the standards of performance and effectiveness expected of schools
- increasing the school's confidence by endorsing its own view of its effectiveness when that is accurate, and offering a sharp challenge (and the impetus to act) where improvement is needed

- recommending priorities for future action by the school and, when appropriate, checking subsequent progress
- fostering constructive dialogue between inspectors and the senior leaders and staff of the school
- complementing the school's self-evaluation and promoting its rigour, thereby enhancing the school's capacity to improve.

What is the scope of this inspection framework?

4 The general principles and processes which underpin all Ofsted's inspection and regulatory work are set out in an over-arching framework: *Ofsted inspects: a framework for all Ofsted inspection and regulation*.²

5 *The framework for school inspection* shows how these general principles and processes are applied to inspections of maintained schools and several other types of school³ in England. It sets out the statutory basis for inspection and summarises the main features of the school inspections that are taking place in England from September 2009.

6 More detailed guidance is available on Ofsted's website in *The evaluation schedule for schools* and *Conducting school inspections*. From time to time, further guidance is published to supplement or update these core documents.

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

² *Ofsted inspects: a framework for all Ofsted inspection and regulation* (080121), Ofsted, 2009.

³ See paragraph 12 for a full list of schools covered by Section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

What are the key features of this framework and the school inspection arrangements from September 2009?

7 Under the revised school inspection arrangements from September 2009 inspectors give particular priority to:

- promoting improvement: inspectors make specific recommendations based on their diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses
- evaluating the achievement and wider well-being of pupils as a whole and of different groups of pupils, and assessing the extent to which schools ensure that all pupils, including those most at risk, succeed
- evaluating learning and teaching: inspectors spend a high proportion of their on-site inspection time in the classroom
- assessing how well schools promote equality of opportunity, and how effectively they tackle discrimination
- checking schools' procedures for safeguarding – keeping children and young people from harm
- fostering the engagement of headteachers, schools' staff and governors in the process of inspection so that they understand the judgements made
- gathering, analysing and taking into account the views of parents and pupils
- assessing how effectively schools work in partnership with other providers in order to promote better outcomes for pupils.

8 The revised inspection arrangements also extend the principle of proportionality, in that the frequency of inspection is proportionate to need.

How is this document structured?

9 *The framework for school inspection* has three sections.

- **Part A: The school inspection system.** This section sets out the principles and legal framework for inspection and provides information about the timing and frequency of inspections.
- **Part B: The focus of school inspections.** This section summarises the evaluation schedule – the judgements that inspectors make.
- **Part C: The process of inspection.** This section explains how inspections are carried out.

Part A: The school inspection system

What are the legal requirements for the inspection of schools?

10 Under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, schools are required to be inspected at prescribed intervals and inspectors must report on:

- the quality of the education provided in the school
- how far the education meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school
- the educational standards achieved in the school
- the quality of the leadership in and management of the school, including whether the financial resources made available to the school are managed effectively
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils at the school
- the contribution made by the school to the well-being⁴ of those pupils
- the contribution made by the school to community cohesion.

11 In addition, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires Ofsted to carry out its work in ways which encourage the services it inspects and regulates to:

- improve
- be user-focused
- be efficient and effective in the use of resources.

12 Regulations that apply from September 2009 require all maintained schools to be inspected within five school years⁵ of the end of the school year in which they were last inspected. This inspection framework applies to all maintained schools, including special schools and pupil referral units. It also covers academies,⁶ city technology colleges, city colleges for the technology of the arts and some non-maintained special schools in England. It does not apply to any other independent schools.

13 Some schools are designated by the Secretary of State as having a religious character under section 69(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The content of collective worship and denominational education in such schools is inspected separately under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The governing body, in consultation with its associated faith body, is responsible for arranging the section 48 inspection and can seek to have this coincide with the school's section 5 inspection.

14 Early years registered provision is inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. Where the provision is managed by the school, the section 49 inspection is carried out concurrently with the section 5 inspection and the quality of the provision reported in a single inspection report. However, 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; in these circumstances the inspection is scheduled to take place at the same time as the school's section 5 inspection, whenever possible.

⁴ The term 'well-being' is set out in the Children Act 2004 as relating to: pupils' physical and mental health and emotional well-being; protection from harm and neglect; education, training and recreation; the contribution made by pupils to society; the [pupils'] social and economic well-being (the five Every Child Matters outcomes).

⁵ A school year begins on 1 August for these purposes.

⁶ Academies are all-ability, state-funded independent schools. The same inspection schedule and associated guidance apply to academies as to other secondary schools.

What determines the timing of a school's inspection?

15 From September 2009, Ofsted is varying the frequency of schools' inspections depending upon the results of their previous inspections and an annual assessment of their subsequent performance. The latter involves an analysis of the school's public performance data. It also includes the views of parents, pupils and others, and from 2010, the views of parents will influence the choice of which schools are to be inspected. Where the data are not available or are inconclusive, the school's previous inspection report and its most recently submitted self-evaluation form (SEF) are analysed.

16 From September 2009, schools judged good or outstanding at their previous inspection are inspected at approximately five-year intervals unless:

- the annual assessment of their performance suggests that they should be inspected earlier
- safeguarding and/or welfare concerns suggest they should be inspected earlier
- Ofsted has received and investigated a qualifying complaint⁷ about a school, which, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to bring forward the school's inspection
- they are part of an annual sample selected to ensure that the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) reflects evidence from a cross-section of schools of all types, phases and effectiveness
- they are part of a 'statutory hard federation' or share important aspects of their provision, thereby making it necessary and/or desirable to inspect schools in the 'partnership' at the same time

- they are:
 - a special school
 - a pupil referral unit
 - a school with residential provision
 - a school with registered provision for 0–3-year-old children.

17 If Ofsted decides that a school previously judged good or outstanding is not to be inspected three school years from the end of the school year in which its last section 5 inspection took place, Ofsted will publish an interim assessment. The interim assessment will be published after a factual accuracy check by the school and the school will be required to send the assessment to others (see paragraphs 86–87). It provides a summary of key information about the school and explains why the school will not be inspected for the year following the date of the interim assessment.⁸ This interim assessment may be superseded by the proposed School Report Card.

18 Schools which were judged satisfactory at their previous inspection are inspected within three school years from the end of the school year in which that inspection took place. A significant proportion of these schools will receive monitoring inspections to check on their progress following their last full inspection.

19 Schools judged inadequate in their overall effectiveness continue to receive monitoring visits. They are reinspected after a specific period. (See paragraphs 29–30.)

⁷ Ofsted has specific powers (under section 11A–C of the Education Act 2005, as amended) to investigate certain complaints, known as qualifying complaints. Such complaints may be considered when deciding whether Ofsted should bring forward a school's inspection.

⁸ If concerns are subsequently raised about a school, for example relating to safeguarding or welfare issues, it may be necessary to inspect that school even though it has received an interim assessment.

Part A: The school inspection system continued

20 Inspections can take place at any point after the end of the first complete week of the autumn term. If a primary or nursery school has a new intake of pupils at the beginning of the spring or summer term, Ofsted does not inspect that school in the first full week of the term.

21 In exceptional circumstances specified in Ofsted's 'deferral policy', and following a request by the school, an inspection might be cancelled or deferred after it has been scheduled. Normally, however, if pupils are receiving education in the school, an inspection goes ahead even if, for example, the headteacher is out of school or building work is taking place.

What are the principles of inspection?

22 The overarching principles of Ofsted's inspection and regulation are set out in *Ofsted inspects*. They apply to all inspections carried out by, or on behalf of, Ofsted. The principles are intended to ensure that:

- Ofsted's statutory duties are carried out efficiently and effectively
- the interests of children, young people and parents are foremost
- the findings of inspection contribute to improvement
- full account is taken of Ofsted's policies on safeguarding, equality and diversity.

23 Ofsted's principles for the inspection of maintained schools set out below are based on those in *Ofsted inspects*.

Ofsted's principles: 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 promotes equality. The following principles apply to school inspection. School inspections will:

Support and promote improvement by:

- adjusting the focus and type of inspection to have the greatest impact
- ensuring inspections are of high quality and rigorous
- identifying precise actions to underpin recommendations.

Be proportionate by:

- adjusting the frequency of inspection according to the outcomes of previous inspection reports and 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 when Ofsted plans and carries out inspections
- drawing on pupils' and parents' views to inform inspectors' judgements and the outcomes of inspection
- minimising the risk to children, young people and adults by evaluating the effectiveness of schools' procedures for safeguarding
- evaluating the work of schools in eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and encouraging good race relations
- encouraging schools to strive to meet the diverse needs of all pupils.

Focus on the needs of schools by:

- providing high-quality and timely communication with schools
- making use as far as possible of the existing 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 and transparent judgements based on sound evidence
- inspecting and reporting with integrity
- having clear success criteria, procedures and guidance which are well understood by schools and users and are readily available.

Be accountable by:

- reporting the outcomes of inspection without fear or favour
- publishing clear, accurate, timely reports which provide parents with an authoritative, independent assessment of the quality of education provided by the school, thereby informing parents' choice of school
- striving to inform inspection activities by gathering the views of pupils and parents and those who have a significant interest in the school.

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?

24 Self-evaluation is now a well-established activity in maintained schools, providing the basis for their planning for development and improvement. Inspection takes account of and contributes to a school's self-evaluation.

25 Schools are strongly encouraged to record the outcomes of their self-evaluation in Ofsted's online self-evaluation form (SEF) for schools, whose structure matches that of the evaluation schedule of judgements for school inspections. They are also encouraged to update this SEF in line with the school's own review process. Additionally, schools are encouraged to submit their SEF each time it is updated.

26 The SEF is used by the lead inspector to plan the inspection. It is the basis for discussion with the school's senior team and, where possible, members of its governing body. Inspectors evaluate the school's self-evaluation and, by doing so, contribute to its further improvement. The quality of self-evaluation is a good indicator of the calibre of the school's leaders and managers and of the school's capacity to improve. The Ofsted SEF may play a valuable role in confirming that the school can receive an interim assessment when published data are inconclusive.

Part A: The school inspection system continued

Who inspects schools?

27 Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) are employed directly by Ofsted. They lead a high proportion of secondary school inspections and a substantial minority of primary school inspections. Other inspections are led by additional inspectors who are recruited, trained, assessed and employed directly, or contracted by, inspection service providers. These are independent commercial organisations contracted by Ofsted to provide inspection services, and they have responsibility 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 that they are required to meet. Ofsted also publishes the names of additional inspectors. Additional inspectors are authorised to conduct an inspection of a school under section 5 where the inspection is supervised by an HMI, or where the additional inspector has previously conducted a section 5 inspection under the supervision of an HMI and to the satisfaction of the HMI. Ofsted also quality assures section 5 inspections (paragraph 73) and all section 5 inspection reports are signed off by HMI (paragraph 80).

What inspection grades are used by inspectors when they make judgements?

28 All school inspections carried out by Ofsted use the same grading scale:

- Grade 1: outstanding
- Grade 2: good
- Grade 3: satisfactory
- Grade 4: inadequate

What happens to schools judged to be inadequate?

29 Many schools emerge with credit from their inspections. A few, though, raise concerns. If inspectors judge that a school's overall effectiveness is inadequate, they must then decide whether it requires special measures or requires significant improvement (commonly known as a notice to improve). These two categories of schools causing concern are defined below:

- Special measures: the school is failing to give its pupils 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 in the school.
- Notice to improve: the school requires significant improvement, because either:
 - it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, but is demonstrating the capacity to improve, or
 - it is not failing to provide an acceptable standard of education but is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

30 These judgements are subject to moderation by senior HMI, and HMCI signs off all judgements of special measures. A school made subject to special measures is not permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers without prior permission from Ofsted.

Part B: The focus of school inspections

What are the key features of the evaluation schedule of judgements for school inspections?

31 What follows is a summary of the key features of the full evaluation schedule of judgements, which is published separately. The full evaluation schedule sets out the aspects of a school's performance and effectiveness that inspectors must evaluate. It provides **outline guidance** about sources of evidence and contains **grade descriptors** for each judgement.

Summary of the evaluation schedule of judgements for school inspections

32 The full evaluation schedule of judgements covers the broad range of a school's work. Inspectors make judgements about outcomes for pupils, the quality of the school's provision, its leadership and management and capacity to improve, and also its overall effectiveness. The judgements as they are reflected in the full evaluation schedule are shown in the shaded boxes below. The first shaded section in the evaluation schedule deals with seven main judgements for pupils' outcomes.

The seven judgements for pupils' outcomes

33 There are seven main judgements about **pupils' outcomes**, which take account of any variation between groups. These are the five Every Child Matters outcomes, pupils' behaviour, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

34 If the **pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning** are judged to be inadequate, the school's overall effectiveness is also likely to be judged inadequate.

The different judgements are as follows.

1. Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

taking into account:

- pupils' attainment
- the quality of pupils' learning and their progress
- the quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress

2. The extent to which pupils feel safe

3. Pupils' behaviour

4. The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles

5. The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community

6. The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being

taking into account:

- pupils' attendance

7. The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Part B: The focus of school inspections continued

The provision

35 The three main judgements about the **effectiveness of the provision** relate to the quality of teaching, including the effective use of assessment, the curriculum, and the care, guidance and support provided by the school.

The provision judgements are as follows.

1. The quality of teaching

taking into account:

- the use of assessment to support learning
2. The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships
 3. The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

Leadership and management

36 Inspectors make eight main judgements that relate to the **effectiveness of the leadership and management** of the school.

37 Where a school is judged to be inadequate in relation to the **quality of the school's procedures for safeguarding** and/or the extent to which the school **promotes equality and tackles discrimination**, inspectors treat these as 'limiting' judgements and the school's overall effectiveness is also likely to be judged inadequate.

The leadership and management judgements are as follows.

1. The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement

taking into account:

- the effectiveness of the leadership and management of teaching and learning
2. The effectiveness of the governing body⁹ in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met
 3. The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents
 4. The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being
 5. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunity and tackles discrimination
 6. The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures
 7. The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion
 8. The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money

10 ⁹ The term 'governing body' means the body responsible for the strategic direction of the school. This includes Interim Executive Boards.

Early Years Foundation Stage

38 Where relevant, inspectors make a judgement about the **effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**, taking important aspects of the school's work into account.

The Early Years Foundation Stage judgements contribute to the other judgements about the school and are as follows.

Overall effectiveness

taking into account:

- outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Sixth form

39 Where relevant, inspectors make a judgement about the **effectiveness of the sixth form**, again taking important aspects of the school's work into account.

The sixth form judgements contribute to the other judgements about the school and are as follows.

Overall effectiveness

taking into account:

- outcomes for students in the sixth form
- the quality of provision in the sixth form
- the effectiveness of leadership and management of the sixth form

Boarding provision

40 Where relevant, inspectors make one judgement about the **effectiveness of boarding provision, including whether the school meets the appropriate National Minimum Standards**.

The boarding provision judgement contributes to the other judgements about the school and is as follows.

The effectiveness of the boarding provision

The final three judgements that are made about a school

41 **The three judgements that follow bring together all the judgements above.** The judgement about the overall effectiveness of the school is the last judgement that inspectors make.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

42 Before making the judgement about a school's overall effectiveness, inspectors make two key judgements. The first is a judgement which brings together the separate outcomes judgements, called **outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**. In making this overall outcomes judgement, inspectors weigh the significance of how well the pupils are doing across all of the seven outcomes judgements for pupils listed above (paragraph 34).

The overall outcomes judgement for individuals and groups of pupils is as follows.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

Part B: The focus of school inspections continued

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

43 The second key judgement is about **the school's capacity for sustained improvement**. This reflects the effectiveness of leadership and management in securing improvement in the past and ensuring the school will continue to make progress. The capacity judgement takes the following into account:

- the school's track record and whether this shows it has maintained outstanding performance or has been successful in improving teaching, other provision and outcomes for pupils since its last inspection
- the school's self-evaluation and whether this provides the school with an accurate appraisal of its effectiveness, and whether its plans reflect what it needs to do to consolidate success and secure further improvement
- the current leaders' and managers' effectiveness in tackling weaknesses and overcoming barriers to improvement.

The capacity to improve judgement is as follows.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Overall effectiveness

44 Before making the **overall effectiveness** judgement, inspectors must take all aspects of the school's work into account. **The overall effectiveness judgement places a particularly strong emphasis on the outcomes for pupils and the school's capacity to improve**. Inspectors must consider the following.

- This is the final judgement, to take into account all of the available evidence.
- Any limiting judgements are considered before the overall effectiveness judgement is made. These relate to the quality of the school's procedures for safeguarding, the extent to which the school promotes equality and tackles discrimination, and pupils' achievement.
- Inspectors should consider fully the main judgements about outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils; the quality of provision, that is, teaching, the curriculum, care, guidance and support; and the school's capacity for sustained improvement, including leadership and management, **before** making the overall effectiveness judgement.
- Any recommendations for improvement.

The overall effectiveness judgement is as follows.

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

Part C: The process of inspection

What happens before the inspection?

When are schools notified of their inspection?

45 Schools receive between zero and two working days' notice of a section 5 inspection. The vast majority receive between one and two days' notice, and the contractor (inspection service provider) informs the school that it is to be inspected. Normally, lead inspectors make contact with the school as soon as possible after notification (and always within 24 hours of notification).

46 HMCI may arrange for an inspection of a school to take place without notice where there are particular reasons, for example, connected to pupils' welfare. Ofsted also inspects without notice where there are safeguarding concerns, where a school's academic standards have shown rapid decline, or where there is a strong 'voice' of concern raised by parents.

47 Monitoring visits are conducted without notice. About 40% of schools judged to be satisfactory and all schools judged inadequate will receive monitoring visits.

What information do inspectors use before the inspection?

48 Inspectors gain an understanding of the school and the issues for the inspection before they begin their work on site, so that they can use their time in school as effectively as possible. Lead inspectors begin by reading and analysing the school's SEF, taking full account of the school's analysis of its own performance. This features strongly when the issues for inspection and plans for the deployment of the team are discussed with the school, although it does not limit the range of the inspectors' investigations should they have concerns about aspects of performance not raised by the school.

49 The lead inspector then prepares a concise pre-inspection briefing for the school and the inspection team using the SEF and additional pre-inspection evidence from the following:

- data from the most recent RAISEonline report
- where relevant, the sixth form PANDA and any Framework for Excellence¹⁰ performance indicators
- the report from the previous inspection
- the reports from any subject or aspect surveys carried out by Ofsted in the school
- the reports from any monitoring inspections carried out by Ofsted
- the reports from any section 48 inspection (see paragraph 13)
- information from any upheld complaints about the school from parents to Ofsted
- the results of any surveys showing the views of both the pupils and their parents
- any additional information the school wishes to bring to the inspectors' attention.

¹⁰ The Framework for Excellence is a performance framework for post-16 providers and is being trialled in a small number of sixth forms from September 2009.

Part C: The process of inspection continued

How do lead inspectors contact the school?

50 Within 24 hours of the school being made aware that it is to be inspected, the lead inspector contacts the headteacher or, in the absence of the headteacher, the most senior member of staff that is available. Pre-inspection activities and telephone contact with the school are intended to ensure that:

- good communication and effective working relationships are established with the school
- senior leaders and all staff are encouraged to engage with the inspection process so they understand the judgements being made
- the demands on the school are kept to a minimum
- pre-inspection evidence is analysed thoroughly and discussed
- the issues for the inspection are identified and discussed
- arrangements for the inspection are agreed (lead inspectors do not normally inform schools which lessons are to be visited, but brief meetings with key staff are agreed as quickly as possible).

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

51 Once informed that an inspection is to take place, schools are required to take reasonable steps to notify parents, including registered parents of pupils who have been excluded or are away from school. Schools are also required to notify the local authority and Young People's Learning Agency. Ofsted provides governing bodies with a standard letter for the purpose of notifying parents. This is available in a range of community languages. The letter includes a brief questionnaire for parents, enabling them to provide their views of the school to inspectors. Responses to the questionnaire are returned, in confidence, to the lead inspector for analysis. Completed questionnaires are gathered by administrators and analysed by inspectors as early as possible in the inspection. If a parent should ask to see an inspector, the team does all it can to accommodate such requests, within the constraints on their time. When parents, pupils and staff meet inspectors, they should be able to do so in private.

52 During the inspection, inspectors talk with pupils including those from different groups and those holding representative responsibilities, for example as members of the school council. In addition, they gather the views of pupils during the inspection via a pupils' questionnaire.

53 Lead inspectors also take account of any external views of the school's performance. This may include the local authority's evaluation of the school's performance against its targets. In all cases the lead inspector asks to see and read the school improvement partner's latest monitoring report (or equivalent).

54 From September 2009 inspectors will be able to gather the views of staff through a questionnaire. However, participation in this type of survey is voluntary. If a staff survey is carried out, individual members of staff can elect not to participate. The views of staff are used to help inspectors plan the inspection but they are not normally reported in the inspection report.

55 Following the start of the new arrangements, surveys will be introduced to gather pupils' and parents' views between inspections, the latter being of vital importance in the new framework. Parents' views will contribute to the information used by Ofsted to plan when schools should be inspected. In time, pupils' views might also be a key element in this process.

What happens during the inspection?

How many days do inspectors spend in the school?

56 Inspections do not normally last longer than two days, but the number of inspectors involved varies according to the size and nature of the school.

How do inspectors use their time during the inspection?

57 The time allocated to on-site inspection is intended mainly for gathering first-hand evidence. It is not usually used for drafting the report. Lead inspectors ensure that:

- sufficient evidence is gathered so that judgements about the school are secure and reliable
- the main judgements about the school are agreed by the inspection team
- teachers receive well-informed and helpful feedback on lessons observed
- staff have opportunities for high-quality professional dialogue with inspectors
- the headteacher and other senior leaders receive well-informed and helpful feedback about the overall effectiveness of the school and the main findings of the inspection
- the school is left with full and clear recommendations for improvement.

58 Much of inspectors' time on site is spent observing lessons, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. The observation of teaching and learning provides direct evidence for most aspects of the inspection judgements. It informs judgements about the outcomes for pupils, the effectiveness of provision, leadership and management and the school's capacity for improvement. It is also a major focus for the inspectors when setting out their detailed recommendations for improvement.

Part C: The process of inspection continued

59 While on site, inspectors may also ‘track’ potentially vulnerable pupils, such as those with special educational needs, those with disabilities, those who are gifted and talented, and children in care. Inspectors give specific attention to the quality of learning for different groups of pupils, both in separate provision and within mainstream lessons. The particular groups to be tracked are identified in the pre-inspection briefing and/or through subsequent discussion with the school and in response to any emerging issues, for example from discussions with pupils.

60 Other first-hand evidence gathered by inspectors includes discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work; scrutiny of school records, documentation and parents’ questionnaires; and meetings with staff, governors and school partners where appropriate. Information held by the school must be made freely available for inspectors, and the school must cooperate in the inspectors’ task of gathering evidence.

How is evidence recorded?

61 During the inspection, inspectors gather, analyse and record evidence and their judgements on evidence forms. The overall judgements made about the school are recorded by the lead inspector on a template included in the inspection report.

62 The evidence forms, together with any briefings, plans or instructions prepared by the lead inspector and the parents’, pupils’ and staff questionnaires, contribute to 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?

63 The lead inspector has the responsibility for ensuring that judgements about the school are corporately agreed by the inspection team, with reference to the grade descriptors in the evaluation schedule, and that they are supported convincingly by evidence. Inspectors identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what it must do to improve. Emerging findings are discussed with the headteacher and, where appropriate, senior staff, at regular intervals. The headteacher is given every opportunity to provide further evidence should s/he wish to do so.

64 The overall judgements reflect all the evidence considered by the inspection team. Final judgements are made only when all first-hand evidence has been collected and considered. Final judgements represent the corporate view of the inspection team. They are subject to moderation prior to publication of the report.

65 At the end of the inspection, the team considers whether the school falls into either of the two categories of schools that are a cause for concern. The requirements are set out in Part A of this document, paragraphs 29–30. The final decision about whether a school is to be placed in a category takes place after the moderation process.

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

66 Inspection has the strongest impact on school improvement when the school understands the evidence and findings that have led to the judgements. The lead inspector therefore ensures that the headteacher and senior staff:

- are kept up-to-date with how the inspection is proceeding
- 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 additional evidence.

67 Headteachers are invited to:

- give their views on the issues for inspection as part of the pre-inspection discussions
- 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
 - discuss the inspectors' recommendations to ensure that these are understood.

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

What is the code of conduct for inspectors?

69 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' code of conduct

Inspectors should:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
- evaluate provision in line with frameworks, national standards or requirements
- base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
- have no connection with the provider which 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 service users
- 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.

Part C: The process of inspection continued

70 When inspectors meet pupils, parents, staff, governors and other stakeholders, every endeavour should be made to protect the origin of individuals' comments if they are used to pursue an issue further. However, there may be circumstances in which it is not possible to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewee. Additionally, inspectors have a duty to pass on disclosures which raise child protection or safeguarding issues and/or where serious misconduct or potential criminal activity is involved.

How should school staff engage with inspectors?

71 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. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct but Ofsted also 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 framework
- provide evidence that will enable the inspector 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 their premises
- maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspector or the inspection team
- draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner
- understand the need of inspectors to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager.

What feedback do inspectors give during the inspection?

72 Inspectors 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?

73 All inspectors are responsible for the quality of their work. Lead inspectors ensure that inspections are carried out in accordance with the principles of inspection and the code of conduct. In addition, Ofsted monitors the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes. Some schools are visited by an HMI or by a representative of the inspection service provider to assure the quality of the inspection. Their assessments are confidential to the inspectors and contractors concerned. In other cases the inspection evidence base may be evaluated.

74 Where an inspection report is judged by Ofsted to be seriously misleading, or an inspection is judged to be seriously flawed, the school is notified and may be re-inspected.

75 All schools are invited to take part in a post-inspection survey so that the views of headteachers, governors, staff and others are obtained and contribute to the development of inspection.

What happens after the inspection?

What feedback is provided to the school?

76 Before leaving the school, the lead inspector is required to 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 recommendations for improvement
- about the procedures leading to the publication of the report
- about the complaints procedure
- where relevant, about the implications of the school being deemed to require special measures, being given a notice to improve, or judged satisfactory overall.

77 After the inspection team has reached its conclusions, the judgements are discussed with a representative of the governing body and the senior leadership team. Any aspects that have been judged inadequate or outstanding (or where the judgement is different from that which the school might have expected) are explained in the feedback.

What are the written outcomes of the inspection?

78 Following the inspection, the lead inspector writes a report about the main findings of the inspection. The findings should be consistent with those explained orally to the school.

79 A brief letter to pupils is provided as an appendix to the report. This is addressed to the pupils and is aimed at the older pupils in the school. For schools with sixth forms, the letter is aimed at pupils in Key Stage 4, as sixth formers may be expected to read the full report.

How is the quality of inspection reports assured?

80 The lead inspector provides a first draft of the report to the inspection provider and, following editing, the inspection provider forwards the report to the school for a factual check. One working day is allocated 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 for comments. The final report is 'signed off' by an HMI. Where a school has been placed in special measures HMCI signs off the report.

When is the report issued?

81 The report is published on Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports) within 15 working days of the end of the inspection.

82 For maintained schools, a copy of the report is sent to:

- the headteacher of the school
- the local authority
- the governing body where the local authority is not the appropriate authority, or proprietor
- 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.

83 For secondary schools with a sixth form, a copy of the report must also be sent to the Learning and Skills Council for England and Young People's Learning Agency.

84 In exceptional circumstances Ofsted may decide that the normal period for completion of the inspection report should be extended.

Part C: The process of inspection continued

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

85 The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must send a copy of the inspection report to all registered parents and carers of pupils at the school within five working days of receiving it. HMCI also expects schools to ensure that all pupils are made aware of the findings of the inspection (see paragraph 79).

86 If a good or outstanding school has received an interim assessment (see paragraph 17), a report is issued. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must send a copy of the interim assessment report to all registered parents and carers of pupils at the school within five working days of receiving it.

87 The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must also make a copy of the inspection report available upon request to members of the public. A charge, not exceeding the cost of reproduction, can be made for copies of the inspection report. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must make one copy of the interim assessment free of charge on request.

How do schools complain about their inspection or inspection report?

88 Any concerns the school has about the inspection should be raised with the lead inspector during the inspection and, where possible, resolved. Concerns may also be raised with a quality assurance inspector should one have been allocated to the inspection. If the concerns are not resolved by these means, or the person expressing the concern does not feel that due weight is being given to the concerns, or an independent view is sought, then the person raising the concern, or someone acting on his or her behalf, should contact the Ofsted helpline on 08456 404040.

89 Similarly, any concerns the school has about the inspection report should be raised with the lead inspector or inspection service provider as soon as possible.

90 If it has not been possible to resolve concerns raised then individuals or schools may decide to lodge a formal complaint. The complaints procedures are available on Ofsted's website.

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