



# Framework for inspecting schools

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The current framework *Inspecting schools* was published in May 2003 to implement refinements in the approach to inspection. This consultation on the *Framework for inspecting schools* sets out the requirements for school inspections in England from September 2005. It incorporates significant developments in the policy for school inspections which were set out in *A new relationship with schools*, published in conjunction with the Department for Education and Skills in June 2004, following consultation on the new inspection arrangements in February 2004. These changes are subject to the scrutiny and approval of parliament.

The consultation document also reflects the requirement in the current Children Bill for Ofsted to develop (in partnership with others) a framework for the integrated inspection of children's services with which the school inspection framework must be consistent, so that judgements made in individual inspections can feed into joint area reviews.

The government is committed to bringing forward changes to the statutory basis of school inspection in order to require inspectors to report on the contributions made by schools to the outcomes for children set out in the current Children Bill. Subject to parliamentary approval, these will be reflected in the final version of the framework.

The main features of the new inspections will be:

- shorter, sharper inspections that take no more than two days in a school and concentrate on closer interaction with senior managers in the school, taking self-evaluation evidence as the starting point
- shorter notice of inspections to avoid schools carrying out unnecessary pre-inspection preparation and to reduce the levels of stress often associated with an inspection. Shorter notice should help inspectors to see schools as they really are
- smaller inspection teams with a greater number of inspections led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. Furthermore, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector will publish and be responsible for all reports
- more frequent inspections, with the maximum period between inspections reduced from the current six years to three years, though occurring more frequently for schools causing concern
- more emphasis placed on the school's own self-evaluation evidence as the starting point for inspection and for the school's internal planning, and as the route to securing regular input and feedback from users – pupils, their parents and the community – in the school's development. **To facilitate this, schools are strongly encouraged to update their self-evaluation form on an annual basis**

- a common set of characteristics to inspection in schools and colleges of education from early childhood to the age of 19
- a simplification of the categorisation of schools causing concern. We intend to retain the current approach to schools that need special measures and remove the categorisations of ‘serious weakness’ and ‘inadequate sixth form’, replacing them with a new single category of ‘Improvement Notice’ for schools where there are weaknesses in the progress of pupils or in key aspects of the school’s work.

In the move to adopt a common set of characteristics to inspection across all phases of education, we propose that there will be a **common inspection schedule for schools and colleges** for the inspection of education from early childhood to the age of 19. Where judgements are only required in some settings, because of the nature of their work or the statutory requirements of inspection, this is made clear. We propose to continue to have four key parts to this **common inspection schedule for schools and colleges**, although the requirements within them have been considerably reduced.

We propose to continue with the requirements on inspectors to arrive at an overall judgement on the effectiveness and efficiency of the school and that the judgement should be informed by the capacity of the school to make improvements and to assess accurately the quality of its own provision. In addition, we propose to ask inspectors to make separate judgements, as appropriate, on the standards and quality of the foundation stage and the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form. The proposed draft of the section under ‘Overall effectiveness’ is designed to do this.

As noted above, the proposed inspections of children’s services will require judgements to be made in the course of inspections of individual schools to feed into conclusions about the quality of provision in an area and the outcomes achieved by children and young people. The evaluation requirements in the common inspection schedule for schools and colleges have been revised and cross-referenced to support this.

The proposed introduction of a **common inspection schedule for schools and colleges** has led us to propose that to achieve relevance to this enlarged group, as well as still greater flexibility in its use, non-statutory guidance will be published on the websites of the inspectorates. The guidance for the inspection of schools will be in two parts: guidance on using the schedule and guidance on conducting inspections. These can, if necessary, be amended periodically to keep them relevant to changing circumstances in each setting in which learning takes place.

## Introduction

This framework is for inspections currently carried out under s10 of the School Inspections Act 1996. (The legal framework is to be amended.) It sets out the principles applicable to the inspection of schools. Inspections are carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). It comprises:

- the common inspection schedule
- procedures in the case that the provision is inadequate
- principles of inspection
- code of conduct for inspector
- complaints about inspection.

## Common inspection schedule

This schedule lists the questions inspectors must ask in every institution or setting providing education and training. Most of these questions are applicable to all schools, although a few are more relevant to particular age groups or particular types of provider. It is proposed that there will be separate frameworks for schools and colleges which have a common inspection schedule at their heart, meeting the requirements of:

- School Inspections Act 1996 (to be amended)
- Learning and Skills Act 2000.

All inspections of settings, except those making provision solely for adults, institutions or providers will contribute to the joint area reviews which will be carried out in every local authority area in England over a three-year period. These reviews will evaluate the extent to which each area is meeting the following five outcomes for children and young people:

- staying healthy
- enjoying and achieving
- keeping safe
- contributing to the community
- social and economic well-being.

Each of the evaluation requirements listed below is numbered according to the outcome to which it refers. Most refer to enjoying and achieving, but all five outcomes are covered, to a greater or lesser degree. In judging leadership and management and the overall effectiveness of the provider, inspectors will consider the contribution made to all five outcomes.

## Overall effectiveness

How effective and efficient is the provision of education, training, integrated care and any extended services in schools in meeting the needs of learners and why?

What steps need to be taken to improve the provision further?

Inspectors should evaluate:

- the overall effectiveness of the provision, including any extended services in schools, and its main strengths and weaknesses
- the capacity to make further improvements
- the effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection

and, where appropriate:

- the quality and standards in the Foundation Stage
- the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **1. How well do learners achieve?**

Inspectors should evaluate:

- learners' success in achieving challenging targets including qualifications and learning goals, with trends over time and any significant variations between groups of learners (2)
- the standards of learners' work in relation to their learning goals (2)
- learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential, with any significant variations between groups of learners (2)

and, where appropriate:

- the acquisition of workplace skills (4, 5)
- the development of skills which contribute to the social and economic well-being of the learner (3, 4, 5)
- the behaviour of learners (1, 3)
- the attendance of learners (2, 3)
- the extent to which learners adopt safe practices and a healthy lifestyle (1, 3, 5)
- learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (2, 4)
- whether learners make a positive contribution to the community (4).

## Quality of provision

### 2. How effective are teaching, training and learning?

Inspectors should evaluate:

- how well teaching and training are used to meet individuals' needs and course or programme requirements (2, 4)
- the suitability and rigour of assessment in planning and monitoring learners' progress (2)
- the diagnosis of, and provision for, additional learning needs (2)

and, where appropriate:

- the involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning and development (2).

### 3. How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?

Inspectors should evaluate:

- the extent to which programmes or activities match learners' aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience (2, 5)
- how far programmes or the curriculum meet external requirements and are responsive to local circumstances (4, 5)

and, where appropriate:

- the extent to which employers' needs are met (5)
- the extent to which enrichment activities and/or extended services in schools contribute to learners' enjoyment and achievement (2, 4, 5).

### 4. How well are learners guided and supported?

Inspectors should evaluate:

- the care, advice, guidance and other support provided to safeguard welfare, promote personal development and achieve high standards (1, 2, 3)
- the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance to learners in relation to courses and programmes, and, where applicable, career progression (2, 5)
- the extent to which the provision contributes to the learners' capacity to stay safe and healthy (1, 3).

## Leadership and management

### 5. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

Inspectors should evaluate:

- how effectively performance is monitored and improved through quality assurance and self-assessment
- how effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high-quality care, education and training
- how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential
- the adequacy and suitability of staff
- the adequacy and suitability of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation
- how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money

and, where appropriate:

- how effective are the links made with other providers, services, employers and other organisations to promote the integration of care, education and any extended services in schools to enhance learning
- the extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities.

## Common grading scale for all inspection judgements

A common grading scale will be used in making judgements for institutional inspection and for judgements relating to the five outcomes assessed for joint area reviews.

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Provision causing concern

Inspectors must consider before the end of an inspection whether the provision is inadequate and is failing to give learners an acceptable standard of education. If they believe this to be the case, they must state this clearly in the report. They must also make a judgement on the capacity for improvement and whether a school which is providing an acceptable standard of education is not performing as well as it should be in one or more areas (which might include the quality of the sixth form). It is proposed that there should be two categories of schools causing concern:

- schools which require special measures because they are failing to provide an acceptable standard of education and show insufficient capacity to improve
- those which require significant improvement in one or more areas of activity, which should be served with an Improvement Notice.

## Principles of inspection

The principles below apply to all inspections carried out by or on behalf of Ofsted. They are intended to ensure that the:

- findings of the inspection are valid
- findings of inspection contribute to improvement
- process of inspection promotes inclusion
- inspection is carried out openly with those being inspected.

The principles of inspection are that inspection of providers will:

- have the experiences of learners and outcomes for them at its heart
- provide judgements of provider contributions to outcomes, the quality and value for money of provision, the quality of its management and the prospects for improvement
- assess evidence and make judgements objectively against national standards, where applicable, and other published criteria
- be proportionate to risk and tailored to circumstances and needs
- ascertain and take into account the views of learners and, where appropriate, their parents and carers, and look to involve them in inspections in other ways
- make use as far as possible of the existing documentation and systems of the organisations inspected and avoid placing unnecessary burdens on them
- encourage rigorous self-assessment by the organisations inspected and make use of information from their processes of performance management
- evaluate the work of the inspected bodies in eliminating unlawful racial discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and encouraging good race relations
- report openly, clearly and fairly on the basis of secure evidence

- enable themes of national significance to be pursued and reported
- be designed to promote and support improvement, linking with action to follow up recommendations
- build quality assurance into inspection, respond fairly to complaints, carry out evaluation of the conduct and effectiveness of inspection and seek continually to improve it.

## Code of conduct for inspectors

Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work, and ensure that staff of the provider are treated fairly and benefit from their inspection. These standards are ensured through a code of conduct for inspectors.

The code of conduct requires inspectors to:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and have no connection with the school which could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity
- do all they can to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection, and act with their best interests and well-being as priorities
- 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.

Providers should be courteous and helpful to inspectors.

## Complaints about inspections

Ofsted's complaints procedure sets out how schools can complain about their inspection. Occasionally, schools or interested parties feel dissatisfied with some aspect of their inspection or inspection report. The complaints procedure sets out how schools can complain about their inspection and what will happen with their complaint. (The complaints procedure is under development and will be available in due course on the Ofsted website.)