

# Conducting school inspections

Guidance for the inspection of schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 from January 2012

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This guidance is to assist inspectors in carrying out section 5 inspections of schools. It sets out the main activities to be undertaken from the time the school is notified that it is to be inspected until the publication of the report.

Schools can use this guidance to see how inspections will be conducted.

The schools subject to section 5 inspections are:

- community, foundation and voluntary schools
- community and foundation special schools
- maintained nursery schools
- academies (sponsor-led academies, academy converter schools, academy special schools, free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs), 16–19 academy schools and studio schools)
- 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.

**Age group:** 0–19

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**Published:** January 2012

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**Reference no:** 090097



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## Introduction

1. This guidance sets out the main activities undertaken from the time the inspection is announced until the publication of the report. It should be used in conjunction with *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of maintained schools and academies*<sup>1</sup> and *The framework for school inspection*.<sup>2</sup> Inspectors will consider **all** the guidance in this document.
2. For boarding and residential special schools, an inspection of the boarding/residential provision will be integrated with the school inspection wherever possible. The inspection of the boarding/residential provision will follow the guidance *Conducting inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools*.<sup>3</sup>

## The engagement of school staff with inspectors

3. 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 below.

### Inspectors' code of conduct

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 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 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.

<sup>1</sup> *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of maintained schools and academies* (110127), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110127](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110127).

<sup>2</sup> *The framework for school inspection* (110128), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110128](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110128).

<sup>3</sup> *Conducting inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools* (100180), Ofsted, 2010; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100180](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100180).

4. Ofsted also expects schools to play their part by ensuring that inspectors can conduct their visit in an open and honest way, and evaluate the school objectively. Ofsted expects school staff, including governors, 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
  - liaise 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.

## **Before the inspection**

5. The time from the inspection service provider (ISP) notifying the school of its inspection and providing all the information the school requires, to the arrival of the inspector(s) is very short: up to two working days. During this time, the school must be prepared for what is expected of them. The lead inspector must start to build a working relationship with the school. The inspection must be planned and the team briefed, and the school must be helped as necessary to manage the various requests made of it. These transactions must be businesslike, but the spirit in which they are conducted sets the tone for the inspection and establishes the desired climate of helpful professionalism.
6. The ISP should use a standard approach to notifying the school of its inspection. After this, lead inspectors will follow up as they think is best and with regards to this guidance. They must be sensitive to the context of the school and its ability to respond to a range of requests in the time available.

## **Notification and introduction**

7. The ISP informs the school that it is to be inspected, giving no more than two working days' notice.
8. The ISP must ask the school to provide the desired pre-inspection documentation. They will ask the school for a summary of its self-evaluation and will provide instructions regarding the arrangements for the parents', pupils' and staff questionnaires. The initial contact should be followed as soon

as practicable by sending the school a written confirmation of the information and requests.

### **Documentation requested from the school**

The school should be asked to provide no more than the following documents (as electronic copies) and other information, if available, before the inspection:

- a summary of the school's self-evaluation
- the current school improvement plan
- school timetable information, staff list and times for the school day
- any information about the school's (pre-planned) interruption to normal routines.

The following should be available in the school at the start of the inspection:

- the single central register, which summarises the checks and vetting of all staff working with pupils
- all logs that record exclusions, incidents of poor behaviour, racist incidents and incidents of bullying
- records of any routine monitoring of the quality of teaching
- reports of any other external evaluation of the school.

9. The lead inspector will, whenever possible, contact the school within 24 hours of it being notified of an inspection and speak to the headteacher or, in the headteacher's absence, the most senior member of staff. The purpose of this contact is to: confirm arrangements for the inspection; clarify the main points from the summary of the school's self-evaluation; explain the importance of observation of teaching and feedback to staff; and answer any queries raised by the school.<sup>4</sup> The lead inspector should record matters agreed with the school and confirm these during the initial discussion with the headteacher at the start of the on-site inspection.

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<sup>4</sup> If the school is using a telephone answering machine, the lead inspector should leave a message and state the time at which the message was left. Where the telephone remains unanswered, the lead inspector should persevere, keeping a note of the times at which s/he tried to make contact with the school.

## **Matters to be discussed by the lead inspector with the school in setting up the inspection**

The lead inspector must:

- confirm the time and date of the inspection and the identities of the team
- check the availability of the pre-inspection documentation and information and indicate that inspectors may ask to see some of the school's existing documents, such as evidence of internal monitoring of teaching and governors' minutes
- confirm the management arrangements for any childcare provision or out-of-school care run by the school, and make sure the school is aware that any such provision managed by the governing body will be inspected as part of the section 5 inspection, unless it involves holiday play schemes for under-five-year-olds (inspectors should explain that provision that is voluntarily or independently managed will be inspected under separate arrangements)
- confirm that the school must:
  - inform all parents, carers and pupils that the inspection is taking place
  - distribute and collect parents' questionnaires, including questionnaires sent to, and collected from, parents and carers who may be more reluctant or less able to engage in this form of response (for example parents not living with their children)
  - place a notice in the entrance to the school and on the school's website indicating when the inspection is taking place
  - inform the governing body or appropriate authority that the inspection is taking place
  - distribute and collect pupil questionnaires and, if used, staff questionnaires
  - inform the lead inspector if any alternative provision is provided by the school for particular pupils
- ask:
  - the headteacher to arrange, if possible, a meeting between the lead inspector and one or more representatives of the governing body
  - whether the school wishes to nominate a senior member of staff to liaise with the inspection team
  - about domestic arrangements (such as an inspectors' room, parking, meals, refreshments) and indicate when inspectors will be on site
- explain:
  - that in primary schools, and in some secondary schools, inspectors will want to hear some children read
  - where relevant, such as in the case of larger schools, that not all teachers will be observed and that in some cases teachers may be observed more than once
  - how the school's summary of its self-evaluation will influence the work of inspectors
  - the arrangements for feeding back to teachers.

## Preparation for the inspection: analysis, briefing and planning

10. The ingredients of successful inspection include preparation, professionalism and teamwork. The lead inspector must analyse the evidence available before the inspection to make brief, evidence-informed hypotheses about the school's quality, performance, strengths and weaknesses in relation to the inspection requirements. This is recorded in the pre-inspection briefing note.
11. The briefing is essentially for the inspection team but should be shared with the school (ideally by 4pm on the day before the inspection) and the ISP. The pre-inspection briefing should include, where relevant and available, an evaluation of:
  - data from RAISEonline and the sixth form performance and assessment (PANDA) report
  - the school's summary of its self-evaluation
  - the previous inspection report and any recent Ofsted survey reports and/or monitoring letters
  - information from Parent View
  - information from any qualifying complaints about the school.
12. The lead inspector should also visit the school's website and have regard for any other relevant material provided electronically by the school.
13. Any additional queries posed by an initial analysis of the pre-inspection evidence should normally be deferred until the on-site visit, because of the weight of other matters that the headteacher will be concerned with before the inspection.<sup>6</sup>
14. Where possible, the lead inspector should produce an outline inspection deployment plan for other inspection team members, at least for the first day. This should indicate any particular patterns of lesson observations planned by the lead inspector and any meetings with pupils and/or staff.
15. Lead inspectors may deploy their inspection team members as they see fit. All members of the inspection team must contribute to the evaluation of the main issues and the four key judgements and come to a view about the quality of the education provided by the school.
16. Inspectors should plan sufficient time for team meetings and any feedback arrangements, especially at the end of the second day of the inspection, in order that the inspection and any subsequent feedback can be concluded in good time.

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<sup>6</sup> Inspectors should use their judgement as to whether to make further telephone calls to the school. The school should be able to contact the lead inspector during the working day before the inspection.



## Involving the headteacher or their representative in aspects of the inspection

17. Lead inspectors should meet the headteacher during the inspection so as to:
  - update the headteacher on emerging issues and enable the headteacher to provide any further relevant evidence
  - inform the headteacher whether any inadequate teaching or outstanding practice has been observed after first giving feedback to the teacher
  - allow the headteacher to raise any concerns, including those related to the conduct of the inspection or the conduct of individual inspectors
  - alert the headteacher to any serious concerns that may lead to the school being placed in a category of concern.
18. The outcomes of any meetings with the headteacher should be recorded on an evidence form.
19. The school can benefit from close engagement in the process of inspection: in giving the headteacher or other staff greater insight into how judgements are arrived at; and to the inspection through the provision of additional evidence such as the capacity of the headteacher or others to evaluate performance. While retaining ultimate discretion in the extent of involvement of the school, the lead inspector is encouraged to invite the headteacher **or** a nominated senior member of staff to:
  - observe and contribute further information to meetings of the inspection team (unless there are compelling reasons not to do so, for example if the leadership of the headteacher is a concern) and discuss the recommendations of the team
  - participate in one or more joint observations of lessons and/or scrutiny of pupils' work.
20. The headteacher is at liberty to choose whether or not to accept such opportunities. The extent to which the headteacher engages with the inspection team must **not** influence inspection judgements. All judgements are made by inspectors and the inspection team.

## **The participation of the headteacher or senior staff in joint lesson observations**

If joint observations are to be undertaken, the lead inspector and headteacher should agree which lessons to select. If a teacher does not agree to a joint observation, this should not go ahead.

After a joint observation, the inspector and headteacher or member of senior staff should discuss their views about the quality of teaching and learning observed in the lesson. If the headteacher or member of senior staff offers a written record, the inspector can look at this. Any differences in the analysis of the lesson and the judgements made should be explored.

Prior to offering any feedback, the inspector and headteacher or member of senior staff should discuss their observations and findings and agree how the feedback to the teacher should be managed, who should provide it and when this should take place. Where appropriate, inspectors should consider observing the member of staff offering feedback to the observed teacher. This evidence is important in determining how effective previous opportunities for professional development have been.

Following a joint observation, the inspector should write up an evidence form on the lesson in the usual way. Comments about the quality of the headteacher's or member of senior staff's evaluation should be included on the inspector's evidence form or written on a separate evidence form. Any notes taken by the headteacher or member of senior staff should remain in the school; they are not included within the evidence base for the inspection.

The headteacher or member of senior staff should be invited to take part in joint lesson observations so that inspectors can:

- collect evidence so that specific recommendations can be made about further improvements to teaching and learning
- determine the effectiveness of the school's professional development programme for teachers and other staff
- help the headteacher to understand how the quality of teaching is judged and how it might be improved
- assess the accuracy and quality of the school's monitoring and evaluation of teaching.

The lead inspector should be mindful of not 'overloading' the headteacher and/or senior staff member. In small schools, however, the headteacher may wish to conduct joint observations throughout the inspection or undertake only one or none at all.

## During the inspection

### The start of the on-site inspection

21. To start the inspection effectively, the initial meetings should normally consist of **no more than**:
- a brief meeting with the headteacher and/or senior leadership team to:
    - receive an update on staff absence and replacements, pupils who are out of school and other practical issues
    - consider whether there are any reasons why a teacher should not be observed, for example if they are subject to capability procedures where the use of observations by Ofsted may compromise those procedures<sup>7</sup>
    - ensure that the school understands the key issues identified in the short pre-inspection briefing
  - a short briefing for staff, if appropriate, at the discretion of the headteacher
  - a brief initial inspection team meeting to check deployment arrangements, update the team and plan lesson observations and other evidence gathering.
22. In small schools, the need for such meetings may be reduced further. Precise arrangements should be made at the discretion of the lead inspector, having regard for the views of the headteacher.

### Inspecting the quality of teaching and its impact on learning

23. Inspections must focus fully on teaching and how well pupils are learning and making progress. Inspectors should spend as much time as possible in classes, observing lessons, talking to pupils about their work, gauging their understanding and their engagement in learning, and their perceptions of the school. The deployment of inspectors should be purposeful but flexible, and combine focused observations of particular lessons with more random sampling of the school at work.
24. Inspectors must take *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of maintained schools and academies*<sup>8</sup> into account when exercising their professional judgement.
25. Talking to pupils about their work, and gauging the extent of their understanding, is crucially important. It is the inspector who should decide which pupils to sample, recognising that information from the teacher is valuable when identifying a cross-section of pupils with particular characteristics. Scrutiny of the

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<sup>7</sup> Where relevant, make sure the headteacher is aware that Ofsted's evidence from lesson observations, whether joint or otherwise, cannot be used as evidence in competency/disciplinary proceedings.

<sup>8</sup> *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of maintained schools and academies* (110127), Ofsted, 2012; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110127](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110127).

standard and content of pupils' current and past work, evidence of assessment and feedback, and enquiry into how teaching is matched to the needs of individual pupils as well as to the class are among the fundamental techniques employed by all inspectors.

26. Inspectors should work as far as possible with the flow of the lesson and the dynamics of the school, aiming to avoid disturbing either as far as is possible. Dialogue with the staff of the school helps inspectors understand the work of the school and allows a sharing of views on what is working well or what could be even better. It may be helpful to compile an on-going 'running evidence form' to note the outcomes of a series of observations, for example on the teaching of phonics.
27. The focus on teaching also provides a basis for judging behaviour, exploring matters such as the progress of particular individuals and groups, such as the most disadvantaged or vulnerable pupils, and considering the influence and impact of leadership at all levels.

### Hearing children read

28. Inspectors must listen to, among others, lower attaining pupils reading during the inspections of infant, junior, primary and middle schools and should discuss their reading with them. Inspectors will hear the weakest readers in Year 1 and Year 2. There may be occasions when inspectors may also wish to hear lower attaining pupils read in Year 7 and Year 8 in secondary schools. This is to find out how effectively the school is teaching reading and, in particular, how well the school is teaching its weakest readers.
29. Inspectors – and not the school – should decide which pupils they will listen to, taking into account the school's progress data on reading and other information such as lesson observations. However, inspectors should make a point of checking with teachers whether any pupil would be unduly nervous about reading with an inspector and should consider this information when selecting pupils.
30. Wherever possible, inspectors should listen to children reading within a classroom or in an open area that pupils are familiar with. It is important that the pupils feel at ease. However, the area should be quiet enough for inspectors to listen closely to what pupils read and say.

### Inspecting behaviour and safety

31. Inspectors **must** make their judgements by drawing on evidence that they have directly observed during the inspection along with evidence that provides a view of what behaviour and safety are normally like. This will include the views of pupils, parents and carers on behaviour in the school. Inspectors should consider a broad range of evidence including, for example: that relating to bullying; pupils' understanding and response to risk; their attitudes to learning; pupils' behaviour

in lessons observed and over time; the level of respect they show for each other; and pupils' attendance and punctuality.

## **Meetings with pupils, parents, staff, governors and other stakeholders**

32. Meetings with pupils, parents, staff, governors and other stakeholders must take place without the headteacher or staff present. When inspectors meet pupils, parents, staff, governors and other stakeholders, every endeavour must be made not to disclose the source of comments made by individuals 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 activities are involved.

## **Recording evidence**

33. Only evidence that has been documented is useful and acceptable. Inspectors must record their evidence clearly and legibly on evidence forms (EFs), ensuring that all relevant sections of the form are completed for all evidence-gathering activities. EFs are also used for recording analyses of data and the evidence that underpins key judgements, and for summarising the main points of discussion when feeding back to senior management.
34. EFs, including those known as 'running EFs', are the main record of what evidence has been considered in the inspection and may be scrutinised for retrieval, for quality assurance monitoring and in the event of a complaint. It is important that inspectors accurately record the time spent gathering the evidence on the EF. Inspectors should highlight or identify any information that was provided 'in confidence'. Under certain circumstances, EFs are released if requested.

## **Dialogue and feedback**

35. The quality and professionalism of inspectors' interaction with the staff of the school is essential to developmental inspection – a process that is valued for the insights it provides – and is integral to the code of practice. People whose work is being evaluated expect and deserve to know the inspector's observations.

36. Inspectors should be receptive to the effect of their presence in the classroom and school.

### **Principles governing inspection feedback to teachers**

The inspection team should work to a protocol for feedback arrangements, which the lead inspector has explained to the school. Inspectors must be proactive in offering feedback to teachers. For all observations of 25 minutes or more, inspectors should offer to arrange feedback with the teacher concerned. There may be occasions when feedback is offered for observations of less than 25 minutes, for example short reading/phonics sessions. The feedback arrangements for these sessions should be explained to the teacher prior to, or shortly after, the observation.

Feedback dialogue should address the main strengths and weaknesses of the activity observed, focusing on:

- pupils' learning and the teacher's contribution to it
- the quality of what was seen
- how it could be improved

and including where possible:

- the context and content of the lesson
- where it fits into a sequence or programme of lessons
- other teaching and learning activities that the teacher uses
- professional development experience related to teaching
- the extent to which leaders monitor teaching and provide pedagogical guidance and support for teachers
- the nature and impact of performance management.

37. Feedback arrangements should be pragmatic, for example, after a tour of lessons accompanied by a senior member of staff, feedback should be given to that person and/or the headteacher. When visiting a series of groups during a phonics session, the appropriate recipient of feedback might be the reading leader or coordinator.

38. Inspectors should be proactive about giving feedback. Not all feedback, however, will be concerned with lessons. Discussion of other aspects of the school's quality, work or performance should involve the person responsible for that aspect, although inspectors will not provide feedback after each interview with a member of staff.

### **Secondary evidence: obtaining the views of registered parents<sup>9</sup> and other stakeholders**

39. Once notified of the inspection, the appropriate authority<sup>10</sup> for the school has a duty to 'take such steps as are reasonably practicable' to notify parents of the inspection and invite them to give Ofsted their views about the school. The appropriate authority is **required** to send Ofsted's letter, questionnaire and information leaflet to all parents of registered pupils on the school's roll. The duty therefore includes registered parents of pupils who have been excluded or are away from school. This is particularly important when a large number of pupils are absent, for example on a field trip or work experience programme.
40. The letter informs parents about the inspection and invites them to complete the short questionnaire provided by Ofsted. The completed questionnaires are confidential to the inspection team. Schools should be instructed not to open returned questionnaires so as to maintain the respondents' confidentiality.
41. Inspectors must **not** accept a recent survey of parents by the school in lieu of Ofsted's questionnaires. In all cases, the notification letter, questionnaires and information leaflet must be distributed by the school. However, inspectors should take account of any results of surveys carried out by the school or commissioned by the school **in addition to** those from the Ofsted survey.
42. When a parent makes a request during an inspection (by letter or indirectly via the ISP) to speak with the lead inspector, all reasonable efforts should be made to contact the parent, even if the request arrives after the end of the inspection. It is important to make arrangements to meet or talk briefly on the telephone with any registered parent or carer who contacts the lead inspector. A guide for parents is available on Ofsted's website.
43. All questionnaires received before the final team meeting constitute part of the inspection evidence base and must be reviewed during the course of the inspection to inform further evidence gathering. Inspectors may sometimes receive questionnaires after the inspection has finished. These must be checked for safeguarding issues but, otherwise, late questionnaires can not be used to inform the inspection and should not be included in the inspection evidence base. However, in addition to the inspection, and as a matter of course, registered

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<sup>9</sup> 'Parents' refers to mothers, fathers and/or carers.

<sup>10</sup> For section 5 inspections this is likely to be the governing body but may be the proprietor, management committee, interim executive board or local authority for certain schools. In practice, the school itself will inform parents, but in law the duty lies with the appropriate authority.

parents may also follow the procedures described in *Complaints to Ofsted about schools: guidance for parents*<sup>11</sup> to record any concerns.

44. If several registered parents express similar concerns, or similar levels of satisfaction, with particular aspects of the school's work, these should be reflected in the inspection report. Where individual parents raise serious issues these should be followed up with the school. All parents' questionnaires **must** be checked for safeguarding issues.
45. Inspectors must use the views of parents, carers, pupils and staff as important evidence when making their judgements. However, inspectors should not reach any final conclusions on the basis of questionnaire survey data alone or the views indicated in the Parent View survey. Any data from surveys of parents, pupils or staff should be corroborated with other evidence.
46. Inspectors may wish to speak to key partners who work with the school. Inspectors should contact by telephone those institutions where pupils are taught off site to help judge their standards of behaviour, safety, attendance and the school's quality assurance arrangements.

## Inspection team meetings

47. The team should meet **briefly** at different points during the course of the inspection. In particular, the team should:
  - meet at the end of day one to discuss emerging findings
  - meet at the end of day two to finalise judgements and identify areas for improvement
  - record the outcomes of all team meetings on evidence forms.
48. By the end of the first day, inspectors are likely to have arrived at a provisional view about the quality of the school and the four key judgements. By the start of the final inspection day, inspectors are likely to have begun identifying emerging areas for improvement so that these issues can be tested and confirmed. The final day's inspection activities may be planned at this meeting. The meeting should be kept short and focused.
49. If, by the end of day one, there is evidence that the school is giving some cause for significant concern, the lead inspector should warn the headteacher of the possibility that the school's overall effectiveness may be judged inadequate. It must be emphasised that final judgements are not made until the final team meeting.

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<sup>11</sup> *Complaints to Ofsted about schools: guidance for parents* (080113), Ofsted, 2008; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/080113](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/080113).



## Conclusion of the on-site inspection: final judgements

50. Inspection activity, including lesson observations, should continue throughout the second day with sufficient time for the team to meet to consider the evidence available and make its final judgements. Final judgement grades should be recorded and key points for feedback should be identified as the meeting progresses. The team should also ensure that time is set aside to complete any feedback to staff on lesson observations and to prepare for the final team meeting and the final feedback.
51. Before leaving, the lead inspector must ensure that the school is clear about:
- the grades awarded for each key judgement and that the grades may be subject to change and should, therefore, be treated as confidential until the school receives a copy of the final inspection report
  - the main findings of the inspection and that the main points provided orally in the feedback will be referred to in the text of the report
  - the recommendations for improvement
  - the procedures leading to the publication of the report
  - the complaints procedure
  - the school inspection survey
  - where relevant, the implications of the school being deemed to require special measures or a notice to improve, including the process of moderation
  - the possibility of a monitoring visit if the school's overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory.
52. Attendees at this feedback meeting should include at least one representative from the governing body and may include, at the discretion of the lead inspector, other senior staff not present at the final team meeting. If it is appropriate, representatives from the local authority or the designated responsible body may also be invited by the headteacher.
53. The lead inspector should explain to those present that the purpose of the feedback session is to share the main findings of the inspection and how the school can improve further. Governors and local authority representatives may seek clarification about the judgements, but discussion should not be lengthy. Any feedback or comments should be in the form of professional and objective language and should not include informal remarks that may be personally damaging to the reputation of a member of staff or to the professionalism of the inspectors. An evidence form should be completed by an inspector summarising the key points raised at the feedback.

54. In the event that the headteacher has declined the opportunities to engage with the inspection team, the lead inspector should prepare a more extended formal feedback meeting. In such circumstances, the lead inspector should inform the headteacher of the main findings in advance of the extended formal feedback meeting.

## Schools causing concern

55. All schools whose overall effectiveness is inadequate will be placed in one of the formal categories of concern and will require either significant improvement or special measures.

### Significant improvement

56. A school requires significant improvement if it is, for example:
- failing to provide an acceptable standard of education because the standard of education is not acceptable: either behaviour and safety, teaching or achievement is graded four, but demonstrates the capacity to improve. In this circumstance, leadership and management may be judged at least satisfactory. However, weaknesses in other aspects of the school's performance that contribute to the leadership and management judgement may result in this being inadequate, even though capacity to improve is secure

or:

- providing an acceptable standard of education, but performing significantly less well than it might, in all reasonable circumstances. An example of this can be where achievement, behaviour and safety and teaching are all at least satisfactory, but leadership and management are inadequate because they do not demonstrate the capacity to improve the school further.

Schools requiring significant improvement are issued with a notice to improve.

### Special measures

57. A school requires special measures if it 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.

## Deciding on a category of concern

58. Inspectors must decide whether a school requires a notice to improve or special measures. The process set out below is also set out graphically in Annex A.

59. A school that has inadequate overall effectiveness and is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education will require:
- a notice to improve if its leaders, managers and governors demonstrate the capacity to make the necessary improvements
  - special measures if its leaders, managers and governors do not demonstrate the capacity to make the necessary improvements.
60. To demonstrate the necessary capacity to improve, the leaders, managers and governors of a school need to show that their actions have had a significant impact in achieving clear and sustained progress. Good intentions and an aspirational outlook, or a recent change of headteacher following a period of poor leadership, do not in themselves provide sufficient proof of the capacity to achieve improvement.
61. Inspectors should confirm that there is convincing evidence of: thorough self-evaluation, including rigorous analysis of performance data; effective strategic planning; rigorous and robust monitoring of standards and the quality of education; and action that has had a demonstrably beneficial impact.
62. The school's leaders, managers and governors are unlikely to be demonstrating the capacity to make the necessary improvements, where any of the following apply.
- Improvements to teaching, other provision and outcomes since the last inspection are fragile even though some small areas of weakness have been remedied, perhaps quite recently.
  - Self-evaluation lacks rigour and is wide of the mark in its conclusions so that leadership and management are inadequate.
  - The leaders and managers are ineffective in tackling important and/or endemic weaknesses and securing improvement so that leadership and management are inadequate.
63. There are circumstances where one or more inadequate judgements are made but where leadership and management are demonstrating the capacity for improvement so that a notice to improve is appropriate. These may include circumstances where:
- the achievement of most pupils is satisfactory or better but achievement is judged inadequate because of poor progress by one particular group of pupils or in one key subject, while improvements have been clearly demonstrated elsewhere
  - teaching is judged inadequate because it is weak in some specific, key areas but is not beset by endemic weakness as the majority of teaching is satisfactory or better and there is compelling evidence about other improvements

- attitudes to learning and general behaviour in lessons and around the school are satisfactory or better but behaviour and safety is judged inadequate because of persistent bullying of a particular group of pupils
- leadership and management are judged inadequate for a specific reason, such as the curriculum not meeting the needs of a particular group of pupils, but there is evidence of secure improvement in other areas of the school's work.

## Procedures for placing a school in a category

64. If by the end of the first day of the inspection the lead inspector thinks it is possible that the school's overall effectiveness will be judged inadequate, s/he is strongly advised to ring the schools causing concern helpdesk via Ofsted's National Business Unit (NBU).
65. To ring the helpline at the NBU, inspectors should use the hotline number 0300 123 4234. When the call is answered, the lead inspector should use the following form of words: 'I am an inspector leading an inspection in a school and I would like to talk to the schools causing concern duty HMI'. The lead inspector will be asked for her/his name and the name and unique reference number (URN) of the school, and will then be put through to the duty HMI, with whom s/he will be able to talk through the situation.
66. During the second day of the inspection, the lead inspector may contact the helpline again to discuss emerging findings. When the inspection team has made the final judgement, and if it is that the school requires special measures or a notice to improve, the lead inspector must telephone the helpline prior to the oral feedback and use the form of words indicated in the previous paragraph. The lead inspector should be prepared to explain briefly the reasons for the judgement.

## The inspection report

67. The report should be written by the lead inspector, usually the day after the inspection. A short letter should also be drafted for pupils, thanking them for their involvement and providing information about the main outcomes of the inspection.
68. The school is required to distribute the inspection report to parents and the report is published on the Ofsted website. The lead inspector should inform the school of the following arrangements.
  - The ISP forwards the report to the school for a factual accuracy check within five working days of the end of the inspection. The school has one working

day to respond. The lead inspector responds to the school's comments about factual accuracy.<sup>12</sup>

- The school receives an electronic version of the report, including the letter to pupils, within 15 working days of the end of the on-site inspection. Schools have five working days to distribute the report to parents and carers, including the letter to pupils. After that time, the report is published on Ofsted's website.
- If a school is placed in a category of concern, the time to publication is extended so that the judgements can be moderated by senior HMI and, in the case of those schools judged to require special measures, confirmed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI).

### **Reporting rubric for satisfactory and inadequate schools**

Where a school is reported as satisfactory (grade 3) in its overall effectiveness, the report must include the following text at the end of the 'Main findings' section of the report:

'Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.'

Where the school requires significant improvement and is given a notice to improve, the following statement must be included in the oral feedback and the written report, at the beginning of the 'Main findings' section:

'In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to... [state clearly the areas in which significant improvement is required].'

Where inspectors find that the school requires special measures, the following statement must be included in the oral feedback and at the beginning of the 'Main findings' section of the written report:

'In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it 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.'

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<sup>12</sup> In the unlikely circumstances where there is a grade change or the text of a report has been subject to significant amendments made after the school has completed its factual accuracy check, the lead inspector should talk this through with the headteacher.

## Telling the story of the school

69. Detailed guidance for inspectors on the content of the report can be found in the reporting template. Inspectors should make appropriate professional judgements about the extent of the detail needed to 'tell the story of the school', depending on the complexity of circumstances. Inspectors should explain clearly in the report any apparently stark differences in the main grades from one inspection to the next. This is to ensure that readers are clear about aspects of the school's work that change significantly between inspections. It is also to ensure that readers do not confuse such changes with a lack of consistency in judgements. This is particularly important when inspections are more frequent than the statutory maximum, for example when a school has been issued with a notice to improve.
70. The letter to pupils provides a brief summary of the report. It should be tailored to the age of the audience so that it is easy to read for younger pupils. It is intended that teachers explain the letter to very young children. It should avoid patronising older pupils. The text should be aimed at the older pupils in the school or, where the school has a sixth form, at Key Stage 4 pupils. Sixth formers may be expected to read the full report. The letter should:
- convey the main inspection judgements
  - tell the pupils what is going well and where improvements could be made; inspectors should ensure that this is done in a way that does not undermine staff and must avoid identifying individual members of staff, except for the headteacher
  - state how the pupils themselves can contribute to the school's improvement.

## Quality assurance of inspections

71. Responsibility for assuring the quality of the inspection and the subsequent report lies with the lead inspector in the field, and with the ISP and with Ofsted internally. The lead inspector is expected to set clear expectations for the team and ensure that those expectations are met. The lead inspector **must** ensure that all judgements are supported by evidence and that the way in which the inspection is conducted meets the expected standard.
72. Some inspections are subject to external quality assurance by HMI. There is no set pattern to the external quality assurance. It might consist of a telephone call to discuss progress, or perhaps a site visit. When an external quality assurance visit is scheduled, the lead inspector should explain clearly the purpose and likely format of the visit during the initial telephone conversation with the headteacher.

## Handling concerns and complaints during the inspection

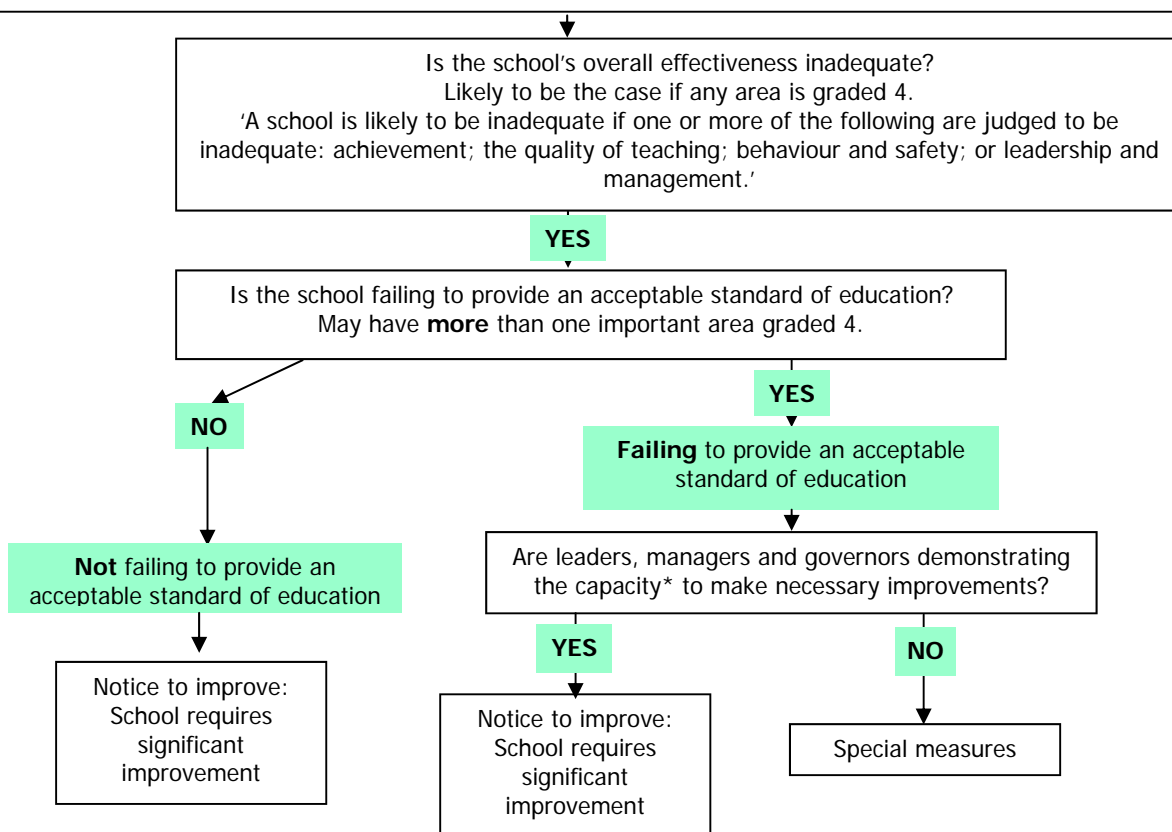
73. If a school raises a concern during the course of an inspection, the lead inspector should assess its validity. If the concern is justified, the lead inspector should do all that is possible to remedy the problem. The complaints procedure encourages schools to speak to the lead inspector where they have a concern. It is often easier to resolve issues on the spot and this helps to avoid formal complaints later.
74. If the school is dissatisfied with the lead inspector's response, or in any case wishes to take the complaint further, the lead inspector and the ISP should ensure that the school is informed of the complaints procedure.

## Annex A. Flow chart to illustrate the process of placing a school in a category

This flow chart should be used in conjunction with the agreed guidance and procedures. If a school's overall effectiveness is judged to be inadequate, special measures or a notice to improve will be required. If the inadequacy is so severe or widespread that the school is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, the inspection team must consider whether there is clear evidence that the leaders, managers and governors of the school are demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. If they are, the school will be judged to require significant improvement and receive a notice to improve. If the capacity to improve is not demonstrated, the school will require special measures.

### Team meetings

The team should discuss the following question: Are one or more aspects of the school's work inadequate? If the answer is yes, proceed with this flow chart. You should also contact the NBU and ask to speak to the schools causing concern (SCC) duty HMI.



\*To demonstrate the capacity to secure the necessary improvement, the leaders, managers and governors of a school need to show that their actions have had a significant impact in achieving clear and sustained progress. Good intentions and an aspirational outlook, or a recent change of headteacher following a period of poor leadership, do not in themselves provide sufficient proof of the capacity to achieve improvement. Inspectors should confirm that there is convincing evidence of: thorough self-evaluation, including rigorous analysis of performance data; effective strategic planning; rigorous and robust monitoring of standards and the quality of education; and action that has had a demonstrably beneficial impact.