

The framework for school inspection

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

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

Age group: 0–19

Published: September 2012

Reference no: 120100



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

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

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120100.

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

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 120100

© Crown copyright 2012



Contents

Introduction	4
What is the purpose of school inspection?	4
How does inspection promote improvement?	4
Key features of the framework for school inspection from September 2012	5
What are the legal requirements for the inspection of schools?	7
What determines the timing of a school's inspection?	9
What are the principles of school inspection?	13
What is the relationship between school self-evaluation and inspection?	14
Who inspects schools?	14
The inspection grades inspectors use when making judgements	15
Schools judged to be causing concern	15
Part B. The focus of school inspections	17
The key judgements made during school inspections	17
Overall effectiveness	17
Achievement of pupils at the school	17
Quality of teaching in the school	18
Behaviour and safety of pupils at the school	18
Quality of leadership in, and management of, the school	19
Part C. The process of inspection	21
What happens before the inspection?	21
What happens during the inspection?	22
What happens after the inspection?	25

Introduction

What is the purpose of school inspection?

1. The inspection of a school provides an independent external evaluation of its effectiveness and a diagnosis of what it should do to improve. It is based on a range of evidence available to inspectors that is evaluated against a national framework.
2. Ofsted's inspections of schools perform three essential functions. They:
 - provide parents¹ with an expert and independent assessment of how well a school is performing, and help inform those who are choosing a school for their child
 - provide information to the Secretary of State for Education and to Parliament about the work of schools and the extent to which an acceptable standard of education is being provided. This provides assurance that minimum standards are being met, provides confidence in the use of public money and assists accountability, as well as indicating where improvements are needed²
 - promote the improvement of individual schools and the education system as a whole.

How does inspection promote improvement?

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

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

² Under section 118 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

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

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

Key features of the framework for school inspection from September 2012

5. Inspectors focus sharply on those aspects of schools' work that have the greatest impact on raising achievement. They make a small number of key judgements as set out in paragraph 7.
6. Inspections engage headteachers, school staff and governors⁴. The views of parents, pupils and staff provide important evidence for the inspection.
7. Inspectors are required to report on⁵ the quality of education provided in the school and must, in particular, cover:
 - the achievement of pupils at the school
 - the quality of teaching in the school
 - the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school
 - the quality of leadership in, and management of, the school.
8. When reporting, inspectors must also consider:
 - the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school
 - the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular the needs of disabled pupils⁶ and those who have special educational needs.
9. Inspectors also consider and report on, where relevant, the overall effectiveness of the sixth form.
10. Under this framework:
 - schools cannot be judged as 'outstanding' for overall effectiveness unless they have 'outstanding' teaching
 - an acceptable standard of education is defined as a 'good' standard of education
 - a school that is not yet 'good', but that is not judged 'inadequate', is a school that 'requires improvement'

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

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

⁶ For the purposes of the Equality Act 2010.

- a school that is 'inadequate' overall and that requires significant improvement, but where leadership and management are not 'inadequate', is a school with serious weaknesses⁷
- a school that is 'inadequate' overall, and where leadership and management are also 'inadequate', is a school requiring special measures⁸
- schools that are judged as 'requires improvement' will normally be monitored and re-inspected within a period of two years; the timing of the re-inspection will reflect the individual school's circumstances and will be informed by what inspectors find at the monitoring visits
- if a school is judged as 'requires improvement' at two consecutive inspections and is still not 'good' at a third inspection, it is likely to be deemed 'inadequate' and to require special measures
- inspectors will normally contact the school by telephone during the afternoon of the working day prior to the start of a section 5 inspection
- inspectors will evaluate the robustness of performance management arrangements, and consider whether there is an appropriate correlation between the quality of teaching in a school and the salary progression of the school's teachers.

⁷ A school with 'serious weaknesses' is a school causing concern as defined by section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

⁸ A school deemed to require 'special measures' is a school causing concern as defined by section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

Part A. Inspection policy and principles

What are the legal requirements for the inspection of schools?

11. This framework sets out the statutory basis for school inspections⁹ conducted under the Education Act 2005 (as amended), from September 2012. It should be read in conjunction with the *School inspection handbook*.¹⁰
12. This framework applies to all schools in England that are to be inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended). This includes all maintained schools and state-funded independent schools, and certain non-maintained independent schools. The schools subject to section 5 inspection are:
 - community, foundation and voluntary schools
 - community and foundation special schools
 - pupil referral units
 - maintained nursery schools
 - academies¹¹
 - 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.
13. This framework does not apply to any other independent schools.
14. An inspection of a boarding or residential special school's boarding or residential provision will be integrated with the school inspection where possible. Where inspection cycles do not coincide, integrated inspections cannot be carried out. In such cases, an inspection of the boarding or residential provision only will be conducted.¹²
15. All schools covered by this framework have their own unique reference number (URN). Any institution with a URN that is inspected by Ofsted will receive an inspection report. Those schools that work in partnership with other schools, through federations, managed groups, chains or other collaborative activities,

⁹ School inspections are governed by the Education Act 2005 (as amended), the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

¹⁰ *School inspection handbook* (120101), Ofsted 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120101.

¹¹ This includes all academy family schools: sponsor-led academies, academy converter schools, academy special schools, free schools, special free schools, alternative provision free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs), and studio schools.

¹² The inspection of the boarding/residential provision will be conducted under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools or residential special schools, as appropriate. The boarding/residential inspection will follow the *Framework for inspecting boarding and residential provision in schools* (110095), Ofsted, 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110095.

but have a separate URN, will be inspected as individual schools and separate inspection reports will be published. Ofsted may seek to co-ordinate the inspection of certain groups of schools, where this is possible.

16. Ofsted is required to inspect all schools to which section 5 applies at prescribed intervals.¹³ With the exception of those exempt from routine section 5 inspection, regulations require that each school must be inspected within five school years from the end of the school year in which the last inspection took place.¹⁴
17. The inspection arrangements will ensure that the frequency of inspection is proportionate to the performance and circumstances of schools. This means that some schools will be inspected more frequently than at five-year intervals. Further detail about the timing of inspections is set out below.
18. Certain schools are exempt from section 5 inspection. These schools are known as 'exempt schools'. Regulations specify that maintained primary and secondary schools, and academies, that were judged to be 'outstanding' overall at their most recent section 5 inspection are exempt from future inspection under section 5. This exemption also applies to an academy converter school¹⁵ whose predecessor school achieved an 'outstanding' grade overall at its most recent section 5 inspection.¹⁶ Certain types of schools cannot be exempt schools. These are special schools (including maintained residential special schools and non-maintained special schools with residential provision), pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools.
19. Where Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) or the Secretary of State have concerns about the performance of an exempt school, HMCI has powers to inspect at any time under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended). Such concerns may be identified through the risk assessment process set out in paragraphs 27–34 or when Ofsted becomes aware through other means of concerns about a school's performance or the safety of pupils. HMCI may treat an inspection of an exempt school conducted under section 8 as if it were an inspection under section 5. Under section 8, HMCI may be required by the Secretary of State to conduct an inspection of an exempt school. The Secretary of State may also require that the inspection be treated as if it were also an inspection under section 5.¹⁷
20. Exempt schools (like other schools inspected under this framework) may be subject to inspection as part of a programme of surveys, of curriculum subjects

¹³ Under section 5(1) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

¹⁴ Under regulation 3 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended); a school year begins on 1 August for these purposes.

¹⁵ A school that has been approved by the Secretary of State to convert to become an academy.

¹⁶ [The Education \(Exemption from School Inspection\) \(England\) Regulations 2012.](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1293/made)

(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1293/made>)

¹⁷ Under section 9 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

and thematic reviews, including those focused on best practice. These inspections are conducted under section 8.

21. Schools are able, via the appropriate authority (normally the school's governing body), to request an inspection. If an inspection is carried out in response to such a request, HMCI may charge the appropriate authority for the cost of the inspection.¹⁸ Where HMCI arranges an inspection under section 8, at the request of the appropriate authority, the inspection must be treated as if it were conducted under section 5.¹⁹
22. Ofsted may collect evidence through section 5 and section 8 inspections on other aspects of provision and use this evidence anonymously to inform national reporting.
23. Some schools are designated by the Secretary of State as having a religious character.²⁰ The content of collective worship and denominational education in such schools is inspected separately under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).
24. Early years registered childcare provision is inspected under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. Where the provision is managed by the school, the inspection will not normally be carried out at the same time as the section 5 inspection. The quality of the childcare provision is evaluated and reported on in a separate inspection report. Where registered provision on a school's site is managed by a private, voluntary and/or independent provider, it is inspected separately under the Childcare Act 2006. Where both inspections take place in the same timeframe the section 5 report and the childcare report will be published separately.

What determines the timing of a school's inspection?

25. Inspection can take place at any point after the end of the first complete week of a school's autumn term. If a primary or nursery school has a new intake of pupils at the beginning of the spring or summer term, Ofsted will not inspect that school in the first full week of that term.
26. In exceptional circumstances, as specified in Ofsted's deferral policy,²¹ an inspection might be cancelled or deferred after it has been notified to the school, following a request made by the school. Normally, however, if pupils are receiving education in the school, an inspection will go ahead even if, for example, the headteacher is off site or building work is taking place.

¹⁸ Under section 8(3) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

¹⁹ Under section 9(4) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

²⁰ Under section 69(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

²¹ See '*Deferral of inspections: information for schools*', Ofsted 2012

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/deferral-of-inspections-information-for-schools>.

'Outstanding' and 'good' schools

27. The frequency of school inspections depends on the findings of a school's previous inspection(s). For a school judged at their last inspection to be 'good', the timing of its next section 5 inspection is determined by a risk assessment of its subsequent performance. Exempt schools are also subject to risk assessment. The risk assessment process begins in the third school year after the most recent section 5 inspection, and for 'outstanding' schools is conducted annually thereafter.
28. In conducting a risk assessment, Ofsted analyses:
- pupils' academic achievement over time, taking account of both attainment and progress
 - pupils' attendance
 - the outcomes of any inspections, such as survey inspections, carried out by Ofsted since the last routine inspection
 - the views of parents, including those shown by Parent View, an online questionnaire for parents
 - qualifying complaints²² about the school referred to Ofsted by parents or carers
 - any other significant concerns that are brought to Ofsted's attention.
29. If the risk assessment process raises concerns about the performance of an exempt school it may be inspected at any time after the completion of the risk assessment. If no concerns are raised from the risk assessment the school will not be informed.
30. In addition, exempt schools may be inspected between risk assessments where:
- safeguarding and/or welfare concerns suggest that it should be inspected
 - a subject or thematic survey inspection raises more general concerns
 - Ofsted has received a qualifying complaint about a school, which, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to inspect the school
 - where HMCI or the Secretary of State has concerns about a school's performance.

²² Ofsted has specific powers (under sections 11A–C of the Education Act 2005 (as amended)) to investigate certain complaints about schools, known as qualifying complaints.

31. A school judged to be 'good' at its most recent inspection is inspected within five school years of the end of the school year in which its last inspection took place, **unless**:
- it is a special school (including a maintained residential special school and a non-maintained special school with residential provision), a pupil referral unit or a maintained nursery school. All of these types of school are normally inspected within three school years of the end of the school year in which its last section 5 inspection took place
 - the risk assessment of a school's performance suggests that it should be inspected earlier
 - safeguarding and/or welfare concerns suggest that it should be inspected earlier
 - Ofsted has received a qualifying complaint about a school, which, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to bring forward a school's inspection
 - it is part of any sample selected to ensure that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report reflects evidence from a cross-section of schools of different types, phases and effectiveness
 - it is part of a formal grouping of schools such as a federation or managed group and shares important aspects of its provision, and it is considered appropriate to inspect the member schools in the group at the same time.
32. A maintained nursery school that was judged to be 'good' or 'outstanding' at its last full section 5 inspection will be inspected within three years from the end of the school year in which it was last inspected. This is because currently there are no standardised performance data available on which to conduct a robust risk assessment and because of the vulnerable nature of the very young children who attend such provision.
33. Pupil referral units and special schools (including maintained residential special schools and non-maintained special schools with residential provision) will normally be inspected within three school years from the end of the school year in which the last inspection of the school took place. This is due to the limited performance data available with which to conduct a robust risk assessment and because of the vulnerable nature of the pupils. If a special school or a pupil referral unit has been judged to be 'outstanding' at two consecutive inspections and there has been no change of headteacher since the school's last inspection, it will normally be inspected within five school years from the end of the school year in which the last inspection of the school took place. The decision to defer the inspection will also take account of any significant issues that have been brought to Ofsted's attention, including those raised by the relevant local authority or through a qualifying complaint. Schools will be informed of the deferral in writing.

34. Where Ofsted decides that, following the risk assessment, a school previously judged to be 'good' is not to be inspected, it will publish an interim assessment letter. Interim assessment letters are usually published towards the end of the third year from the end of the school year in which the last section 5 inspection took place. The interim assessment letter explains that the school will not be inspected during the period of a year from the date of publication, unless Ofsted receives information indicating that an earlier inspection is necessary. Those responsible for the governance of the school, such as the governing body, appropriate authority or proprietor, must send a copy of the interim assessment letter to all registered parents of pupils at the school within five working days of receiving it.

Schools that are judged as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'

35. A school that has been judged as 'requires improvement' will be subject to monitoring by Ofsted. It will normally have a full section 5 re-inspection within a period of two years. If at that inspection it is still judged as 'requires improvement', there will be further monitoring, and another full section 5 inspection will take place within a further two years. If at this inspection it is still not 'good', it is highly likely that it will be judged 'inadequate' and deemed to require special measures. This will be because the school is not providing an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. However, there may be exceptions to this. For example, if there is a clear, sustained, upward trend, but the school is not yet 'good' in all areas, inspectors may not judge the school to require special measures.
36. A school judged to be 'inadequate' because one or more of the key areas of its performance require significant improvement, but where leaders and managers have demonstrated the capacity to improve, is likely to be judged as having serious weaknesses. These schools will be monitored under section 8²³ and re-inspected within 18 months of their last section 5 inspection.
37. A school judged to be 'inadequate' and to require special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education, and because leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated the capacity to secure the necessary improvement, will usually receive its first section 8 monitoring inspection within three months of the section 5 inspection that made it subject to special measures. However, where a school's safeguarding arrangements have been judged to be 'inadequate', it is likely that a monitoring inspection will take place earlier. A school may receive up to five monitoring inspections over an 18-month period following the section 5 inspection that placed it in special measures. It will normally be re-inspected within 24 months unless it is removed from special measures at a monitoring inspection which is treated as or 'deemed' to be a section 5 inspection.

²³ Section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Schools judged to be 'satisfactory' or to have received a notice to improve before 1 September 2012

38. A school that was last inspected before September 2012 and judged to be 'satisfactory' is likely to be inspected, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), by the end of the school year 2013/14. It may also receive a monitoring inspection.
39. A school that was last inspected before September 2012 and judged to be 'inadequate' and made subject to a notice to improve will be treated as a school that has been deemed to have serious weaknesses and will normally be inspected between 12 and 18 months of its last section 5 inspection. It may also receive a monitoring inspection.

What are the principles of school inspection?

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

School inspections will:

- support and promote improvement by
 - establishing a clear standard for an acceptable standard of education – only a 'good' school is good enough
 - adjusting the focus and type of inspection to have the greatest impact
 - clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses
 - identifying precise actions to underpin recommendations
 - explaining and discussing inspection findings with those whose work has been inspected
 - monitoring the weakest schools, providing challenge and support to senior leaders, staff and those responsible for governance
- be proportionate by
 - adjusting the frequency of inspection having regard to previous inspection outcomes and risk assessment
 - deploying resources where improvement is most needed, or where inspection can add most value
- focus on pupils' and parents' needs by
 - taking account of pupils' and parents' views in the planning and conduct of inspection
 - drawing on pupils' and parents' views to inform inspectors' judgements and the outcomes of inspection
 - minimising risk to children, young people and adults by evaluating the effectiveness of schools' procedures for safeguarding
 - evaluating the extent to which schools provide an inclusive environment which meets the needs of all pupils, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation

- focus on the needs of schools by
 - providing high-quality and timely communication with schools
 - making use, as far as possible, of the existing data, documentation and systems of the schools inspected and avoiding placing unnecessary burdens on them
 - taking account of schools' self-evaluation
- be transparent and consistent by
 - making clear and transparent judgements based on sound evidence
 - inspecting and reporting with integrity
 - having clear evaluation criteria, procedures and guidance that are well understood by schools and users and that are readily available
- be accountable by
 - reporting the outcomes of inspection without fear or favour
 - publishing clear, accurate, timely reports that provide parents and prospective parents with an authoritative, independent assessment of the quality of education provided by the school
 - gathering the views of pupils and parents and those who have a significant interest in the school to inform inspection
- demonstrate value for money by
 - targeting inspection resources and deploying them effectively and efficiently
 - evaluating the outcomes and processes of inspection and making improvements where necessary.

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

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

Who inspects schools?

41. School inspectors are either Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), employed directly by Ofsted, or additional inspectors employed directly, or contracted, by inspection service providers (ISPs). These are independent commercial organisations contracted by Ofsted to provide inspection services, who are responsible for the administrative arrangements for inspections. Ofsted prescribes the qualifications and experience required by additional inspectors, the initial and continuing training that they should receive, and the standards they are required to meet. Ofsted also publishes the names of additional inspectors. A proportion of additional inspectors are serving headteachers and senior staff from schools on secondment to Ofsted, who may also be national

(NLE), or local (LLE) leaders in education. All inspectors undertake regular training to ensure that they are familiar with changes in inspection frameworks, inspection methodology and developments in educational practice.

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

The inspection grades inspectors use when making judgements

43. When judging the overall effectiveness of the school and when making the four key judgements about the achievement of pupils, the quality of teaching, the behaviour and safety of pupils, and the quality of leadership in, and management of, the school, inspectors will use the following scale:
- grade 1: outstanding
 - grade 2: good
 - grade 3: requires improvement
 - grade 4: inadequate.
44. In judging the school's overall effectiveness, inspectors will consider
- whether the standard of education is 'good' (grade 2), or exceeds this standard sufficiently to be judged as 'outstanding' (grade 1)
 - whether the school 'requires improvement' as it is not yet a 'good' school, because one or more of the four key judgements is 'requires improvement' (grade 3), and/or there are overall weaknesses in the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - whether the school is 'inadequate' (grade 4) and, if so, whether it has serious weaknesses or requires special measures.

Schools judged to be causing concern

45. The definition of a school causing concern is set out in section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).
46. There are two categories of schools causing concern.
- Serious weaknesses²⁴ – where one or more of the key areas are 'inadequate' (grade 4), and/or there are serious weaknesses in the

²⁴ Under section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), a school judged to have serious weaknesses requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, leaders, managers and governors are judged to be capable of securing improvement (this means that leadership and management are judged at grade 3 or above).

- Special measures – where a school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education, and, the leaders, managers or governors are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.²⁵

47. The 'inadequate' judgement is subject to moderation by HMI. HMCI is required to confirm where special measures are required. If a school is judged to require special measures, Ofsted must determine whether the school should be permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers. This decision will be reported in the inspection report. During monitoring inspections, the lead inspector will review this decision in the light of progress made by the school, and confirm or revise the permission.²⁶

²⁵ Under section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

²⁶ Under regulation 8(2) of the Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (England) Regulations 2008, which provides that a teacher's induction period cannot be served in a school that is eligible for intervention by virtue of section 62 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, unless HMCI has certified in writing that s/he is satisfied that the school or part of the school is fit for the purpose of providing induction, supervision and training.

Part B. The focus of school inspections

The key judgements made during school inspections

48. The evaluation schedule, which is published as part of the *School inspection handbook*²⁷, provides guidance to schools and inspectors about the key judgements that inspectors make during the course of an inspection.

Overall effectiveness

49. Inspectors evaluate the quality of the education provided in the school. In doing this, they consider all the evidence gathered to support the judgements they must make.
50. In coming to the judgement about the school's overall effectiveness, inspectors should consider whether the standard of education meets the acceptable standard of 'good', or exceeds it and is 'outstanding'. If it does not meet the acceptable standard, inspectors will consider whether it 'requires improvement' or is 'inadequate'.

Achievement of pupils at the school

51. This judgement deals with academic achievement. Other, broader aspects of achievement, such as those reflected in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, are taken into account in the evaluation of other key areas of the school's work. When judging achievement, inspectors have regard both for pupils' progress and for their attainment. They take into account their starting points and age. Particular consideration is given to the progress that the lowest attaining pupils are making.
52. When evaluating the achievement of pupils, inspectors consider how well:
- pupils make progress relative to their starting points
 - pupils learn, the quality of their work in a range of subjects and the progress they have made since joining the school
 - pupils develop a range of skills, including reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills, and how well they apply these across the curriculum
 - pupils are prepared for the next stage of their education, training and / or employment
 - disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have achieved since joining the school

²⁷ *School inspection handbook* (120101), Ofsted, 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120101.

- gaps are narrowing between the performance of different groups of pupils, both in the school and in comparison to those of all pupils nationally
- pupils attainment, taking into account:
 - the standards they attain by the time they leave the school, including their standards in reading, writing and mathematics and,
 - in primary schools, their attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 1
- pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium have achieved since joining the school.

Quality of teaching in the school

53. The most important purpose of teaching is to raise pupils' achievement. Inspectors consider the planning and implementation of learning activities across the whole of the school's curriculum, together with teachers' marking, assessment and feedback to pupils. They evaluate activities both within and outside the classroom. They also evaluate teachers' support and intervention strategies and the impact that teaching has on the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
54. When evaluating the quality of teaching in the school, inspectors will consider the extent to which:
- the teaching in all key stages and subjects promotes pupils' learning and progress across the curriculum
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils
 - teachers improve the quality of learning by systematically and effectively checking pupils' understanding in lessons, and making appropriate interventions
 - reading, writing, communication and mathematics are well taught
 - teachers and other adults create a positive climate for learning in which pupils are interested and engaged
 - marking and constructive feedback from teachers contributes to pupils' learning
 - teaching strategies, including setting appropriate homework, together with support and intervention, match individual needs.

Behaviour and safety of pupils at the school

55. This judgement takes account of a range of evidence about behaviour and safety over an extended period. This evidence may contribute to inspectors' evaluation of how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

56. Inspectors will also consider the behaviour and safety of pupils attending on-site and off-site alternative provision.
57. When evaluating the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school, inspectors will consider:
- pupils' attitudes to learning
 - pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons, including the extent of low-level disruption
 - pupils' behaviour towards, and respect for, other young people and adults, and their freedom from bullying, harassment, and discrimination²⁸
 - pupils' attendance and punctuality at school and in lessons
 - how well teachers manage the behaviour and expectations of pupils to ensure that all pupils have an equal and fair chance to thrive and learn in an atmosphere of respect and dignity
 - the extent to which the school ensures the systematic and consistent management of behaviour
 - whether pupils feel safe and their ability to assess and manage risk appropriately and to keep themselves safe
 - the extent to which leaders and managers have created a positive ethos in the school.

Quality of leadership in, and management of, the school

58. Inspection examines the impact of all leaders, including those responsible for governance, and evaluates how efficiently and effectively the school is managed. In particular, inspection focuses on how effectively leadership and management at all levels promote improved teaching, as judged within the context of the school, and enable all pupils to overcome specific barriers to learning, for example through the effective use of the pupil premium.
59. Inspectors will consider the extent to which leaders and managers:
- demonstrate an ambitious vision for the school and high expectations of all pupils and teachers
 - improve the school and develop its capacity for sustained improvement by developing high quality teaching, leadership capacity and high professional standards among all staff
 - ensure that all teaching staff benefit from appropriate professional development and that performance is rigorously managed

²⁸ This may include cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying and language related to special educational needs, sexual orientation, sex, race, religion and belief, gender reassignment or disability as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

- accurately evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses and use their findings to promote improvement
 - provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, enables all pupils to achieve their full educational potential and make progress in their learning, and promotes their good behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - engage parents in supporting pupils' achievement, behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - take steps to promote the safety of all pupils and ensure that they are safe in school.
60. Inspectors will also evaluate how effectively governors, or those with a similar responsibility, challenge and hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance.

Part C. The process of inspection

What happens before the inspection?

When are schools notified of their inspection?

61. A school will be notified of its inspection at or after midday on the working day before the start of the inspection. However, HMCI reserves the right to inspect any school without notice where this is judged to be appropriate.

What information do inspectors use before the inspection?

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

How do lead inspectors contact the school?

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

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

64. When a school is notified of inspection, it is required to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to notify all registered parents of registered pupils²⁹ at the school, including those who have been excluded, are placed in alternative provision, or are away from school. Schools are also required to notify relevant bodies, including those providing alternative provision for its pupils, of the inspection.³⁰
65. Ofsted provides a standard letter for the purpose of notifying parents of the inspection, which a school is required to distribute.³¹ The letter provides parents with details and options for providing their views. Parent View will provide the primary source of information for inspectors about the views of parents. Inspectors will also take into account the results of any past surveys carried out by the school or commissioned by the school.
66. During the inspection, inspectors will talk to a range of pupils to ascertain their views on important aspects of the school's work. In addition, inspectors will

²⁹ Under section 6(1) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

³⁰ Under regulation 4 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended).

³¹ Under section 6(2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

take account of external views of the school's performance. This may include any evaluation of the school's performance by the local authority.

What happens during the inspection?

How many days do inspectors spend in the school?

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

How do inspectors use their time during the inspection?

68. Inspectors will spend most of their time observing lessons and gathering robust, first-hand evidence to inform their judgements.
69. Inspectors will evaluate evidence relating to the achievement of specific groups of pupils and individuals. They will give specific attention to the quality of learning within mainstream lessons and on-site separate provision, and evidence of learning in off-site alternative provision.
70. Other evidence gathered by inspectors will include discussions with pupils and staff, listening to pupils read and scrutiny of their work. Inspectors will also scrutinise the school's records and documentation relating, for example, to pupils' achievement and the safety of pupils in alternative provision. They have a duty to have regard to the views of a specified range of people when conducting an inspection under section 5.³²

How is evidence recorded?

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

How are judgements secured?

72. The lead inspector has responsibility for ensuring that judgements about the school are collectively agreed by the inspection team and based on the grade descriptors in the evaluation schedule, and that they are supported convincingly by recorded evidence. Inspectors will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what it must do to improve. Emerging findings will be discussed with the headteacher at regular intervals and, where appropriate, senior staff. The headteacher should be given the opportunity to provide evidence, where it is relevant.

³² Under section 7 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector must have regard to any views expressed to her/him by: the headteacher; in the case of a maintained school, the governing body; in the case of any other school, the proprietor of the school; any person prescribed for the purposes of section 6(1)(b); members of the staff of the school; registered pupils at the school; and the registered parents of registered pupils.

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

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

74. Inspection has the strongest impact on school improvement when the school understands the evidence and findings that have led to the judgements, and what it needs to do to improve. The lead inspector, therefore, will ensure that the headteacher and senior staff:
- are kept up to date about the inspection
 - understand how the inspection team reaches its judgements
 - have opportunities to clarify how evidence is used to reach judgements
 - are given the opportunity to present evidence.
75. Headteachers will be invited to:
- participate in joint lesson observations, as agreed with the lead inspector
 - receive regular updates from the lead inspector
- and, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so
- attend the formal inspection team meetings at the end of each day of the inspection
 - comment on the inspectors' recommendations to ensure that these are understood.
76. The headteacher's participation in inspection activities, such as attendance at team meetings and participation in joint observations, will not be mandatory and s/he may choose whether or not to accept.

What is the code of conduct for inspectors?

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

Inspectors should:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
- evaluate provision in line with frameworks, national standards or regulatory requirements
- base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
- have no connection with the provider that could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
- endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
- act in the best interests and well-being of 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.

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

How should school staff engage with inspectors?

79. To ensure that inspection is productive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and schools establish and maintain an appropriate working relationship based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Ofsted expects school staff to:

- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
- enable inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
- enable inspectors to evaluate the school objectively against the inspection framework

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

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

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

How is the quality of inspection assured?

81. Ofsted monitors the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes. Some schools will be visited by an HMI or by a representative of the ISP to check the quality of the inspection. Their assessments are confidential to the inspectors and the ISPs concerned. As part of quality assurance, a sample of inspection evidence bases will be evaluated.
82. In the rare event that an inspection and/or inspection report are judged by Ofsted to be seriously flawed, the school will be notified that the inspection is incomplete and that a further visit may be necessary, to make sure that enough evidence is gathered to make the inspection judgements secure.
83. All schools will be invited to complete a post-inspection survey so that the views of headteachers, governors and staff are considered and can contribute to the future development of inspection.

What happens after the inspection?

What feedback is provided to the school?

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

- that the main points provided orally in the feedback will be referred to in the text of the report
- about what to do if there are complaints
- 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, have serious weaknesses or 'requires improvement'.

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

What are the written outcomes of the inspection?

86. Following the inspection, the lead inspector will write a report setting out the main findings of the inspection. The findings should be consistent with those explained orally to the school.
87. The lead inspector will provide a first draft of the report to the ISP who, following editing, will forward the report to the school for a factual accuracy check. One working day is allowed to the school to comment on the draft unless the school is placed in a category of concern, in which case five days are allowed. Where a school has been placed in special measures, HMCI confirms the judgement and signs off the report.

When is the report issued?

88. Unless the school has been judged 'inadequate', the report is normally sent to a school within 10 days working days of the end of the inspection, and published on Ofsted's website within 15 working days of the end of the inspection. Where a school has been judged 'inadequate', the report is usually published within 28 working days of the end of the inspection.
89. A copy of the report is sent to:³³
- the headteacher of the school
 - the local authority
 - the appropriate authority or proprietor (for example, the governing body or the academy trust where the local authority is not the appropriate authority)
 - 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)

³³ Under sections 14(1) and 14(2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

- other prescribed persons.

90. For secondary schools with a sixth form, a copy of the report is also sent to the body responsible for funding allocations for post-16 education.³⁴
91. In exceptional circumstances, Ofsted may decide that the normal period for completion of the inspection report should be extended.

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

92. The governing body, appropriate authority or proprietor is required to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that every registered parent of a registered pupil at the school receives a copy of the inspection report within five working days of the school receiving it.³⁵ HMCI also expects schools to ensure that all pupils are made aware of the findings of the inspection.
93. If the inspection of a school which has been judged to be 'good' at its last inspection is deferred as a result of risk assessment, an interim assessment letter is issued. This is not an inspection report and does not contain inspection judgements. The governing body, appropriate authority or proprietor is required to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to secure that every registered parent of a registered pupil at the school receives a copy of the interim assessment letter within five working days of the school receiving it.³⁶
94. The governing body, appropriate authority or proprietor must also make a copy of the inspection report available on request to members of the public.³⁷ A charge, not exceeding the cost of reproduction, can be made³⁸ for copies of the inspection report. The governing body, appropriate authority or proprietor must make a copy of the interim assessment free of charge on request.

How do schools complain about their inspection or inspection report?

95. Any concerns that the school has about the inspection should be raised and, where possible, resolved with the lead inspector (and/or visiting inspector who is carrying out a quality assurance visit) during the inspection.

³⁴ Under section 14(3) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

³⁵ Under section 14(4) (c) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and regulation 6 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005.

³⁶ Under section 14A(4) (c) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

³⁷ Under section 14(4) (a) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

³⁸ Under section 14(4) (b) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

96. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns, then individuals or schools may decide to lodge a formal complaint. The complaints procedures are available on Ofsted's website.³⁹

³⁹ *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* (070080), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/070080.