

## Inspectorate Profile

# The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), England

September 2024

## 1. Overview of the Inspectorate

### Age of inspectorate

Education has been inspected in England since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1 2</sup>

Ofsted was set up by the Education (Schools) Act 1992 to enhance oversight of the education system. The remit and functions of Ofsted and the Chief Inspector have changed several times. The most significant change<sup>3</sup> was the extension of the remit to cover education, children's services and skills under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The 2006 Act established the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) and the roles of His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) and His Majesty's Inspectors (referred to as HMI).

### Structure of inspectorate and size

We are a non-ministerial government department. Inspection is organised through eight regions<sup>4</sup>, with a central support team. Each region is led by a regional director who is responsible for the quality and quantity of inspections in their region. Regional directors head a team of Senior His Majesty's Inspectors (SHMIs) and assistant regional directors (ARDs). The SHMIs and ARDs lead larger teams of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) and Ofsted Inspectors (OIs). Even though inspection delivery is organised by region, the same regulations and standards apply across England.

As at 30 August 2024, we have just over 1900 employees across all professions, remits and regions, including inspectors as well as leadership and administrative and professional support staff. We have about 430 His Majesty's Inspectors and Senior His Majesty's Inspectors across all remits. There are over 500 Regulatory Inspectors and managers in social care and early years. We also contract just under 2,300 Ofsted Inspectors who undertake work on our behalf – most of them are also serving practitioners.

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<sup>1</sup> J Ozga and M Lawn, 'Inspectorates and Politics: the trajectories of school inspection in England and Scotland' in *Revue Française de Pédagogie*, 2014; [Inspectorates and Politics: the trajectories of school inspection in England and Scotland \(openedition.org\)](#); [Review-3v2 \(ioe.ac.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> 'Historical education policy and administration: inspection reports', The National Archives; [Historical education policy and administration: inspection reports - The National Archives](#)

<sup>3</sup> 'School accountability – Children, Schools and Families Committee Contents', Parliament UK; <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmchilsch/88/8807.htm#a11>

<sup>4</sup> East Midlands, East of England, North East, Yorkshire and Humber, North West, South East, South West, West Midlands and London

## Remits

We carry out our role through independent inspection and regulation.<sup>5 6</sup> We have 4 main remits:

- **Early years:** includes both inspection and regulation of a broad range of early year providers who are registered with Ofsted. This includes childminders, nannies and any pre-school or nursery provision that is not registered as part of a school.
- **Schools (ages 4-18):** covers inspection of maintained schools and academies that educate pupils of compulsory school age. We inspect maintained schools, academies, free schools and some independent schools. We inspect mainstream provision, special schools, and registered alternative provision, such as pupil referral units.
- **Further education and skills:** covers a broad range of providers of post-16 education, including sixth-form colleges, independent learning providers, 16-19 academies or free schools, further education colleges, higher education institutions that provide further education and/or apprenticeship training up to and including level 7<sup>7</sup> and prison education.<sup>8</sup> This remit also includes institutions which train teachers and provide teacher development. For example, we inspect initial teacher education (ITE), early career framework (ECF) and national professional qualification (NPQ) lead providers.
- **Social care:** covers inspection across the breadth of children's social care services, such as children's homes, adoption and fostering, inspection of local authority children's services and residential provision in schools and colleges.

In early years and children's social care, we are also the regulator. We have a wide range of tools to assess and respond to risks to children. This allows us to determine whether providers are fit to provide services. We take regulatory action, including enforcement action, against those that are not.

Finally, we also have research, evaluation, statistics, and analysis functions at Ofsted. We evaluate our inspection and regulatory practice and impact, and make best use of insights across our activities. Thereby, we ensure that everything we do is grounded in evidence.<sup>9 10</sup>

**N.B. This document focuses on school inspections, rather than our other remits.**

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<sup>5</sup> 'About us', Ofsted; [About us - Ofsted - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/about-us)

<sup>6</sup> 'Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24', Ofsted, July 2024; [Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

<sup>7</sup> The equivalent of a master's degree

<sup>8</sup> 'Handbook for the inspection of education, skills and work activities in prisons and young offender institutions', Ofsted, February 2024; [Handbook for the inspection of education, skills and work activities in prisons and young offender institutions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-education-skills-and-work-activities-in-prisons-and-young-offender-institutions)

<sup>9</sup> 'Research at Ofsted', Ofsted; <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/research>;

<sup>10</sup> 'Statistics at Ofsted', Ofsted; <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/statistics>

## Unit of inspection

Ofsted inspects the quality of provision in individual schools and other education settings. It does not inspect nor report on individual teachers or practitioners or subject departments, although inspectors observe parts of lessons on inspection.<sup>11</sup>

Groups of schools are not inspected. However, we will work with the government on upcoming legislation to allow us to inspect multi-academy trusts. Currently, inspectors carry out multi-academy trust summary evaluations (MATSEs). These are reviews of the work of multi-academy trusts on a voluntary basis. They do not result in graded judgements.<sup>12</sup>

Sometimes, our different remits come together, and we join with external partners to carry out cross-remit work. For example, schools and social care inspectors work together to carry out inspections of local authority children's services<sup>13</sup>. This work focuses on looked-after children, children missing education and children that are electively home educated. We also work with the Care Quality Commission to jointly carry out area SEND inspections.<sup>14</sup> These are inspections of provision for children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs across the healthcare, social services, and education system in local areas.

## Purpose of inspectorate

Ofsted's role is to make sure that those educating, training and caring for children and young people in England do so to a high standard. Our purpose is to bring about improvement in education provision for learners of all ages, as well as improvement in the help, protection and care of children and young people. The ultimate aims of inspection are to:<sup>15</sup>

- Provide challenge and the impetus to act where improvement is needed.
- Inform parents and other stakeholders about the effectiveness of their child's school. This allows parents to make informed decisions about the schools they choose for their children.
- Help protect children - they not only help ensure pupils get the best possible education, but they also ensure basic regulations are met to protect children from harm.

Even though we do not have a specific school improvement function, we believe that schools can improve because of inspection. Ofsted aims to improve lives by raising standards in education and children's social care. This is reflected in our core values: putting children and learners first and being independent, evidence-led, accountable and transparent.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 'School inspection handbook', Ofsted, April 2024; [School inspection handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121212/school-inspection-handbook-2024.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> 'Summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts', Ofsted, March 2023; [Summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121212/summary-evaluations-of-multi-academy-trusts-2023.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> 'Inspecting local authority children's services', Ofsted, April 2024; [Inspecting local authority children's services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121212/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-2024.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> 'Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook', Ofsted, April 2024; [Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121212/area-send-inspections-framework-and-handbook-2024.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> 'Education inspection framework', Ofsted, July 2023; [Education inspection framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121212/education-inspection-framework-2023.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> 'Ofsted strategy 2022-27', Ofsted, April 2022; [Ofsted strategy 2022-27 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/121212/ofsted-strategy-2022-27.pdf)

For accountability functions, please see 'Accountability' section below.

## What is your strapline/motto?

Ofsted's guiding principle is the following: we are a force for improvement through the intelligent, responsible and focused use of inspection, regulation and insights. Our mission is to improve the lives of children and learners by keeping them safe and raising standards in education and care,<sup>17</sup> especially for those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable.<sup>18</sup> We put children and learners first.

## Relationship with government

Ofsted is a non-ministerial department of His Majesty's government, reporting to the UK Parliament, parents, carers and commissioners. His Majesty's Chief Inspector appears at select committees and is called on to answer parliamentary questions.

We have a legal duty to report on the effectiveness of school provision under the Education Act 2005. We determine when schools are inspected, within the legal requirements set out in the Act. For independent schools, our remit is slightly different: the Department for Education commissions us to inspect some independent schools under the Education and Skills Act 2008. They determine when a school is to be inspected. Our reporting arrangements are the same as above. As the regulator of early years and social care settings, we apply and enforce the regulations set by the Department for Education. We regulate to reduce the risk of harm to children in early years and social care provision and to improve the quality of services.<sup>19</sup>

As an independent body, we publish our own inspection reports, research reports, statistics and analyses without seeking government approval. However, we work closely with the government to give advice and respond to its policy changes. In doing so, we draw on our insight from the remits we inspect and regulate. Sometimes we are commissioned by government departments (e.g. Department for Education) to conduct independent reviews and produce reports and analyses on specific topics of interest, for example on teacher development,<sup>20</sup> <sup>21</sup> careers guidance in education settings,<sup>22</sup> <sup>23</sup> and sexual abuse in schools and colleges.<sup>24</sup>

## Accountability

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<sup>17</sup> 'Ofsted strategy 2022–27', Ofsted, April 2022; [Ofsted strategy 2022–27 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-strategy-2022-27)

<sup>18</sup> 'Hearing feedback, accepting criticism and building a better Ofsted: the response to the Big Listen', Ofsted, September 2024; <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ofsted-big-listen/outcome/hearing-feedback-accepting-criticism-and-building-a-better-ofsted-the-response-to-the-big-listen>

<sup>19</sup> 'Annual Report and Accounts 2023–24', Ofsted, July 2024; [Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/annual-report-and-accounts-2023-24)

<sup>20</sup> 'Independent review of teachers' professional development in schools: phase 1 findings', Ofsted, May 2024; [Independent review of teachers' professional development in schools: phase 1 findings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/independent-review-of-teachers-professional-development-in-schools-phase-1-findings)

<sup>21</sup> 'Independent review of teachers' professional development in schools: phase 2 findings', Ofsted, May 2024; [Independent review of teachers' professional development in schools: phase 2 findings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/independent-review-of-teachers-professional-development-in-schools-phase-2-findings)

<sup>22</sup> 'Independent review of careers guidance in schools and further education and skills providers', Ofsted, September 2023; [Independent review of careers guidance in schools and further education and skills providers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/independent-review-of-careers-guidance-in-schools-and-further-education-and-skills-providers)

<sup>23</sup> 'Independent review of careers guidance in specialist settings', Ofsted, February 2024; [Independent review of careers guidance in specialist settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/independent-review-of-careers-guidance-in-specialist-settings)

<sup>24</sup> 'Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges', Ofsted, June 2021; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-sexual-abuse-in-schools-and-colleges>

Ofsted has legal duties to inspect specified institutions within certain timeframes. For example, we carry out school inspections under section 5 of the Education Act 2005; the Education and Inspections Act 2006; section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008; The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014; and the Childcare Act 2006. All inspections carried out using our education inspection framework meet relevant legislative requirements.<sup>25</sup>

With our bird's eye view of the education and care sector, we provide ministers and select committees with expert advice. We also provide responses to parliamentary questions.

Through Ofsted's annual report and accounts,<sup>26</sup> we report to Parliament on how we carry out our inspection and regulatory functions and how we spend taxpayers' money. We also publish an annual assessment of performance against our strategy. We set out our findings on the strengths and weaknesses of school provision in His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI)'s annual report.<sup>27</sup> We also publish inspection outcomes. This information is provided principally to parents and carers.

## Impact of inspections

We survey leaders in education settings after each inspection to find out about the impact of the inspection. We ask them to report whether inspection will help them improve. We also survey leaders 9-12 months after an inspection to ask whether they have made changes to improve standards and whether they have used inspection findings to inform their improvement planning. We analyse those findings and report them in our Annual Report and Accounts.<sup>28 29</sup>

From our recent 'Big Listen' consultation, we heard mixed messages about the impact of our work from the professionals we work with. Therefore, we have publicly committed to commission regular independent polling to ask professionals across all the sectors we inspect and regulate for their views on Ofsted's culture (openness, organisational integrity, professionalism, empathy, courtesy and respect). The Ofsted Board will scrutinise the data to help us continuously refine and improve our performance.<sup>30</sup>

One of our priorities is to be accessible and engaged with the education sector. The purpose of this is to achieve transparency as well as increase the positive impact of inspections. We do this by:

- Publishing our inspection handbooks for each remit to outline our policies and inspection processes. In the school inspection handbook, for example, this includes a

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<sup>25</sup> 'Education inspection framework', Ofsted, July 2023; [Education inspection framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework)

<sup>26</sup> 'Annual Report and Accounts 2023–24', Ofsted, July 2024; [Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/annual-report-and-accounts-2023-24.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> 'Ofsted Annual Report 2022/23', Ofsted, November 2023; [Ofsted Annual Report 2022/23 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123457/ofsted-annual-report-2022-23.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> 'Annual Report and Accounts 2023–24', Ofsted, July 2024; [Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123456/annual-report-and-accounts-2023-24.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> 'Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills: Annual Report and Accounts 2022–23', Ofsted, August 2023; [Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills: Annual Report and Accounts 2022–23 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/123458/office-for-standards-in-education-childrens-services-and-skills-annual-report-and-accounts-2022-23.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> 'Hearing feedback, accepting criticism and building a better Ofsted: the response to the Big Listen', Ofsted, September 2024; <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ofsted-big-listen/outcome/hearing-feedback-accepting-criticism-and-building-a-better-ofsted-the-response-to-the-big-listen#schools>

section 'Clarification for schools', which corrects common misconceptions about inspection that can result in unnecessary workload for schools.

- Publishing other guidance documents for schools and other providers we inspect and regulate, and for our own inspectors. These can all be found online.<sup>31</sup> We have Ofsted channels on YouTube and SlideShare and we publish blogs and press releases to delve deeper into a particular topic.
- Providing webinars for staff of the providers we inspect and regulate. Webinars give them the opportunity to hear directly from us and to get clarification and reassurance about inspection.

## Quality assurance of inspections

To ensure validity of our inspections and focus on the relevant things, we use our education inspection framework. It is an evidence-based framework, informed by extensive research and our inspection experience.<sup>32</sup>

A range of formal quality assurance processes ensure both validity and reliability of inspection:

- visits to directly observe inspectors' work
- scrutinising the evidence gathered and decisions reached
- reviewing inspection reports before they are finalised and published.

The above processes help ensure that:

- inspections are carried out to a high standard
- evidence supports the inspection findings
- inspection reports are clear and fully explain the judgements awarded.

An important part of quality assurance is considering feedback from a provider on a draft inspection report. This allows us to resolve or clarify most queries without providers needing to submit a formal complaint.<sup>33 34</sup>

All Ofsted's HMI, social care and early years regulatory inspectors, as well as contracted Ofsted Inspectors, undergo rigorous selection, induction and training processes. All have experience and skills relevant to the sectors they inspect.<sup>35</sup>

## 2. Evaluation process

### Self-evaluation

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

<sup>32</sup> 'Education inspection framework - Overview of research', Ofsted, January 2019; [Research for education inspection framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>33</sup> 'Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills: Annual Report and Accounts 2022–23', Ofsted, August 2023; [Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills: Annual Report and Accounts 2022–23 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>34</sup> 'Annual Report and Accounts 2023–24', Ofsted, July 2024; [Annual Report and Accounts 2023-24 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>35</sup> 'The role and performance of Ofsted', Parliament UK; [The role and performance of Ofsted \(parliament.uk\)](#)

We do not require schools to self-evaluate nor do we look at their self-evaluation data on inspection. Inspectors also do not look at non-statutory internal progress and attainment data on school inspection. They put more focus on the curriculum and less on schools' own generation, analysis and interpretation of data. Inspectors are interested in the conclusions drawn and actions taken from any internal assessment information, but they do not examine or verify that information first hand.

Following our recent Big Listen consultation,<sup>36</sup> we decided to introduce rubrics which include clear criteria for inspection. One of the intents behind those rubrics is to support school leaders to self-evaluate their practice. This will help empower providers to improve, but also make the inspection process more collaborative. For example, those detailed rubrics could be used to guide conversations between inspectors and providers about their strengths and areas for improvement.

### **Focus of inspection**

When inspecting schools, we judge:<sup>37</sup>

- the quality of education
- personal development
- behaviour and attitudes
- leadership and management
- early years
- sixth form.

Within the above, we do not look at 'finances', but may explore if certain additional funding is used effectively. We check that those responsible for governance carry out their statutory duties, for example to safeguard pupils, and in relation to the Equality Act 2010.

We inspect the quality of education using a 'deep dive' methodology which explores the intentions, implementation, and impact of leaders' work to ensure a strong quality curriculum is in place and impacting on what pupils know and can do. This involves visiting lessons, but we do not judge or grade individual lessons or subjects.

We judge some aspects of legal compliance when inspecting independent schools. We have regulatory functions in our early years and social care remits.

### **Inspection framework**

Our education inspection framework<sup>38</sup> (EIF) is a quality model. It is evidence-based, informed by extensive research and our inspection experience.<sup>39</sup> The main focus of the framework is to evaluate the quality of education a school provides. The focus is on the substance of learning – the curriculum that pupils receive.

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<sup>36</sup> 'Hearing feedback, accepting criticism and building a better Ofsted: the response to the Big Listen', Ofsted, September 2024; <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ofsted-big-listen/outcome/hearing-feedback-accepting-criticism-and-building-a-better-ofsted-the-response-to-the-big-listen#schools>

<sup>37</sup> 'Education inspection framework', Ofsted, September 2023; [Education inspection framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework)

<sup>38</sup> 'Education inspection framework', Ofsted, September 2023; [Education inspection framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework)

<sup>39</sup> 'Education inspection framework - Overview of research', Ofsted, January 2019; [Research for education inspection framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/404444/education-inspection-framework-overview-of-research.pdf)

Launched in 2019, the framework sets out how Ofsted inspects maintained schools, academies, non-association independent schools, further education and skills provision<sup>40</sup> and registered early years settings<sup>41</sup> in England. It sets out the principles that apply to inspection, and the main judgements that inspectors make when carrying out inspections.

In September 2024, we announced that we will consult on creating a **reformed inspection framework** for schools, early years and further education and skills.<sup>42</sup>

## Inspection time and resources

School inspections are typically four-day events, consisting of a planning day, two days on site, and a writing day. Depending on the size of the school, a team of inspectors spends two days in a school gathering evidence and making judgements. Inspectors arrive at the school around 8am on each day and leave before 6pm. The size of the inspection team will vary according to the size and nature of the school.<sup>43</sup>

As stated in the 'Quality assurance' section, all HMIs have experience and skills relevant to the sectors they inspect. Those who inspect schools are qualified teachers and some have senior leadership or headship experience.<sup>44</sup>

## Frequency of inspections

The summary below represents our practice up to September 2024.<sup>45</sup> With the removal of the 'overall effectiveness' judgment, our practice will change. The section below will be updated in due course.

A school judged good or outstanding at its most recent inspection will normally receive an inspection approximately every 4 years, to confirm that the school remains good or outstanding. This is an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a school would now be better than it was, or that standards may be declining, we will carry out a full inspection with graded judgements. This is called a graded inspection, and it is carried out under section 5 of the Education Act. Usually, graded inspections take place within 1 to 2 years of the date of the ungraded inspection. However, if we have serious concerns about a school, for example in relation to safeguarding, we will turn the ungraded inspection into a graded one immediately.

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<sup>40</sup> 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', Ofsted, 2019;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-eif>

<sup>41</sup> 'Early years inspection handbook', Ofsted, May 2019; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-inspection-handbook-eif>

<sup>42</sup> 'Hearing feedback, accepting criticism and building a better Ofsted: the response to the Big Listen', Ofsted, September 2024; <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/ofsted-big-listen/outcome/hearing-feedback-accepting-criticism-and-building-a-better-ofsted-the-response-to-the-big-listen#schools>

<sup>43</sup> 'School inspection handbook', Ofsted, September 2018; [Ofsted: school inspection handbook \(section 5\) \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>44</sup> 'Ofsted pen portraits of HM Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs)', Ofsted, September 2014; [Ofsted pen portraits of HM Majesty's Inspectors \(HMIs\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>45</sup> 'Inspecting schools: guide for maintained and academy schools', Ofsted, 2019; <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/inspecting-schools-guide-for-maintained-and-academy-schools#:~:text=Schools%20judged%20inadequate&text=This%20means%20that%20we%20judge,then%20become%20a%20sponsored%20academy.>

Some good schools will automatically receive a graded inspection. We use a risk assessment process to ensure that our approach to inspection is proportionate, to focus our efforts on where we can have the greatest impact.

A school judged as requires improvement at its last inspection is a school that is not yet good but overall provides an acceptable standard of education. The school will receive a graded inspection again within a period of 2.5 years.

When we judge a school as inadequate, we place the school in a category of concern, due to serious weaknesses or because it requires special measures. The Secretary of State for Education will issue an order for the school to become a sponsored academy. We will not usually monitor such schools, nor academies judged inadequate that were subsequently re-brokered to a new multi-academy trust. However, we will run monitoring inspections if an academy is judged inadequate and placed in a category of concern, and is not re-brokered to a new multi-academy trust. We will then carry out a graded inspection within 2.5 years of the publication of the academy's previous graded inspection report.

Where a school is judged to have serious weaknesses solely due to safeguarding, we will return within 3 months of the publication of the graded inspection report.

### **Non-inspection activities**

Schools HMI carry out a range of non-inspection work, including pre-registration visits and material change visits. Social care and early years have other regulatory functions.

We also carry out research and publish statistics and insights into children's experiences.

We receive and record complaints about schools and about Ofsted. Complaints about schools might contribute to a risk assessment and a decision to inspect a school if we have serious concerns.

## **3. Consequences of inspection**

### **Reporting**

Reporting is one of our responsibilities as an inspectorate. We publish individual reports of our inspection findings of each provider we inspected so they can be used to improve the overall quality of education and training and inform parents and carers. These published reports are primarily intended for parents and carers. They describe what it is like to be a child in the school, and the things that leaders do well and need to do better. We know that parents value these and use them to make choices on which school they want their child to attend.

Schools use inspection findings to make improvements to the school. There is a wide range of audiences for our reports, including local authorities, multi-academy trusts, parents, other schools, and government.

We use the insights from the collective evidence of all our reports to inform other aspects of our work, such as the reports we write for government and our annual report.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> 'Ofsted Annual Report 2022/23', Ofsted, November 2023; <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-annual-report-202223>

## Grading

We use a four-point grading scale to make judgements about a school:<sup>47</sup>

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

Graded judgements are made for the following criteria:

- quality of education
- behaviour and attitudes
- personal development
- leadership and management

From September 2024, we are discontinuing overall effectiveness judgment<sup>48</sup> for maintained schools and academies. From September 2025, we will replace this with a report card in all areas we inspect, to provide a more nuanced and detailed assessment.<sup>49</sup> We are also making further changes to the consequences of inspection judgments – this can be updated in due course. For more information, please see sections 'Frequency of inspections' and 'What happens following an inspection'.

## Sharing inspection findings

Inspection findings are shared in individual school inspection reports<sup>50</sup> and through our annual report. The annual report provides an overview of the quality of education and other remits we inspect in England.<sup>51</sup> As explained above, we also publish a range of other research, statistics and evaluation that often draw on inspection findings.

## What happens following an inspection?

Please note the changes to school inspections described in the 'Grading' section above.

Previously, outstanding schools were exempt from inspection, but the exemption was lifted due to concerns about the lack of external oversight and performance over time. Strong schools may be inspected less frequently, but within the legal boundaries of 5 years.

The Department for Education (DfE) may choose to act after an inspection.<sup>52</sup> If a school currently has an 'inadequate' judgement, the structure of its leadership and management may change. For schools that 'require improvement', the Department for Education will introduce new regional improvement teams to offer targeted support, addressing the areas

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<sup>47</sup> 'Education inspection framework', Ofsted, September 2023; [Education inspection framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework)

<sup>48</sup> The judgment will continue to be made for providers in our other remits, for now.

<sup>49</sup> 'Building a better Ofsted: the response to the Big Listen', Ofsted, September 2023; <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/building-a-better-ofsted-the-response-to-the-big-listen>

<sup>50</sup> [Find an Ofsted inspection report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/find-an-ofsted-inspection-report)

<sup>51</sup> 'Ofsted Annual Report 2022/23', Ofsted, November 2023; <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-annual-report-202223>

<sup>52</sup> 'Removal of Ofsted single word judgements: what it means for schools and parents', The Education Hub, September 2024; <https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/09/02/removal-ofsted-single-word-judgements-schools/>

where schools need to improve. Some of these schools may be converted to an academy or transferred to a different academy trust.