

# Types of independent schools

Section 162A independent school inspection guidance

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This document provides information and guidance about the specialist aspects of some of the types of non-association independent schools inspected by Ofsted.

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# Contents

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<b>General information</b>	<b>4</b>
First inspection after registration	4
Preface to faith school inspections	4
<b>Faith schools</b>	<b>4</b>
Schools within the Christian tradition	4
Evangelical Christian independent schools	5
Seventh Day Adventist schools	6
Christian Schools Trust	6
Accelerated Christian Education schools	7
Focus schools	9
Church Communities early years education	11
Jewish schools	11
Muslim schools	15
Sikh schools	21
<b>Tutorial colleges</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Stage and theatre schools</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Steiner education</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Montessori schools</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Foreign national schools</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Special schools, pupil referral units and children's homes providing education</b>	<b>45</b>
Special schools	45

## General information

This guidance is intended to provide inspectors with some useful background information to each type of independent school and some of the sensitivities involved. Even in faith schools that follow the same religion there may be slight differences to etiquette. With this in mind it is important at the point of making contact with the school that such issues are explored.

### First inspection after registration

It is important to note that the first inspection after registration will always be conducted by Ofsted.

### Preface to faith school inspections

#### Expertise of the team

If you are inspecting a school where Religious Studies is taught in another language please ensure that your team includes someone who is qualified to inspect this area. This is part of the inspection service providers' contracts and they should ensure that the team has a specialist on the inspection in such circumstances.

#### Gender issue

In Muslim and Jewish schools in particular it is likely that the gender of the team members will need to be considered. Please ensure that in your initial phone conversation with the school you clarify what the school position is on this matter.

## Faith schools

### Schools within the Christian tradition

#### Inspection summary

1. Ofsted currently inspects well over 100 independent schools that fall into this category. With any religion there are different interpretations of religious text and variations in daily practice. Christianity is no exception to this and consequently inspectors will find a range of practice in schools.
2. One common element that can be found in these schools is a desire to promote a 'Christian ethos'. How this is promoted can vary according to the particular practice of the religious community. In some schools Christian ethos can be seen through displays and acts of collective worship. In other schools it is distinctive through every element of school life, the curriculum, school policies and lessons taught. In these schools direct reference will be made to Jesus whenever possible. For example you may discover that number bonds and letters of the alphabet are taught by making direct links to sections and stories from the Bible. For example: 'There is one God the father' may well be a

song/story children are told when learning about the number one. In understanding how a school chooses to promote its Christian ethos inspectors might find it helpful to consider 'why was this particular school established?'

## **Evangelical Christian independent schools**

### **Background**

3. Historically, England is a Christian country, and many of its institutions and traditions are rooted in the Christian faith. This is particularly true of its schools. Within the maintained sector most voluntary aided or voluntary controlled schools have such a Christian basis, primarily Church of England or Roman Catholic. There are also a smaller number of schools with a Free Church background. In the independent sector there are also many schools that claim to have a Christian foundation or to be promoting a Christian ethos. The majority of these schools offer provision which is broadly mainstream, and in which religious education is simply one part of the curriculum. However, a significant number of schools are consciously Christian in their approach, and seek, throughout the curriculum and the life of the school, to promote Christian belief and practice. These are referred to as 'Evangelical Christian Schools'.
4. The first such school was established in the mid-1970s in order to reject 'secularism' and 'liberalism' and promote a return to 'traditional Christian values'. Since then the number of schools has grown significantly and there are now about 150 of these schools. Although, these are grouped for ease of reference as 'Evangelical Christian' schools, there are some significant differences between them. They can be classified into several main groups:
  - Seventh Day Adventist schools
  - schools belonging to the Christian Schools Trust
  - accelerated Christian Education schools
  - Bruderhof schools.

In addition, a small number of schools do not fit into any of these groups.

### **Inspection summary notes**

5. The following notes are intended as a quick guide for inspectors working in Evangelical Christian schools. They provide key summary points to bear in mind during an inspection of such schools. There are essentially two types of Christian school: those which offer an Accelerated Christian Education curriculum, and those which offer a more conventional curriculum with a clear Christian ethos.
  - As the curriculum and ethos of the school is based on the Bible it may promote a creationist view and reject an evolutionary view of the world.

- Typically, no or low fees are charged, enabling access for all families in the Christian community, but this may restrict the resources or accommodation available to the schools.
- Bruderhof schools follow a modified American curriculum from kindergarten.
- Christian Trust Schools have usually been established by independent evangelical churches, or groups of churches, many of which are charismatic.
- Accelerated Christian Education schools aim to provide 'a God-centred curriculum', and provides individualised pupil materials known as PACES (Packages of Accelerated Christian Education).

## **Seventh Day Adventist schools**

6. The Seventh Day Adventist Church believes in Jesus Christ's second coming and was founded in the USA in the 19th century. With the Evangelical background the style of worship may well be linked closely to that of a 'Gospel style'. The church has grown significantly in the United Kingdom over the past half century, largely because of immigration from Caribbean countries. It now has several schools, one of which is a maintained school in Haringey, and an independent school in Watford, which has boarding facilities. Of the others, one is located in Grantham, where the church has its publishing house, but the others are in inner-city locations and often have a majority of children of Afro-Caribbean background. The educational provision in the schools is based broadly on the National Curriculum.
7. Nationally, the schools form a type of local authority, with an education office and a director based at the church's headquarters in Watford. This selects headteachers and staff, maintains buildings, and advises on curriculum and related matters. It also makes regular advisory and inspection visits to the schools. It organises a regular programme of in-service training and professional development. You may discover the church is represented on the governing body and this individual may also be a member of staff responsible for the pastoral care of students.
8. Inspectors and schedulers should note, both when contacting schools and planning inspection days, that some of these schools usually close at lunchtime on Friday. This is so that staff and pupils can be home in order to prepare for the Sabbath, which lasts from sundown on Friday until sundown on Saturday.
9. Pupils attending these schools may not be practising members of this faith.

## **Christian Schools Trust**

10. The Christian Schools Trust is an agency for cooperation and mutual support, which links around 40 independent Evangelical Christian schools, but each school keeps its independence. It has an advisory programme, has organised

regional and national courses and conferences, and has produced a range of curriculum materials and discussion papers.

11. Broadly speaking, these schools have been established by independent evangelical churches, or groups of churches, many of which are charismatic in origin, in order to provide a Christian education. Although the majority of pupils in these schools come from church families, most of the schools have open entrance policies, conditional only on parents or guardians subscribing to their aims and ethos. Some pupils may have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
12. The schools usually refer to the National Curriculum and make use of GCSE and other recognised examinations. Some of the schools have a fundamentalist understanding of Christianity, which means that they reject some scientific principles, such as those that use an evolutionary understanding of the world rather than a creationist one.
13. Some of these schools may not charge fees and are under funded, so the staff are often volunteers who are paid a nominal salary. This lack of resources may limit the curriculum across all subjects, or throughout the wide age range that is often present, and it may mean that the accommodation is inadequate.
14. Inspectors should note that since September 2008 the Christian Schools Trust, working with the Association of Muslim Schools United Kingdom, has set up its own inspectorate to inspect those schools which belong to these organisations and which meet all the regulations that apply to a light-touch inspection. This inspectorate, the Bridge Schools Inspectorate has been approved by the Secretary of State, and Ofsted is responsible for monitoring the quality of its work. Most of the Christian Schools Trust schools now come into the Bridge Schools Inspectorate's inspection remit. This list of schools is approved by the DfE and is updated on a termly basis. Where schools are causing concern or have failed to meet a number of regulations, they remain within Ofsted's remit until deemed suitable by the DfE to be moved to the Bridge Schools Inspectorate. New Christian schools receive their first inspection from Ofsted.

### **Accelerated Christian Education schools**

15. Accelerated Christian Education is a system promoted by an international organisation based in the USA known as the 'School of Tomorrow', and its aim is to provide 'a God-centred curriculum'. There is an Accelerated Christian Education headquarters in the United Kingdom in Swindon, called 'Christian Education Europe'. The organisation does not itself own or maintain schools, but it provides materials for use in institutions which subscribe to its philosophy. These schools operate a non-standard curriculum, delivered in a very distinctive way which many inspectors will find unusual. There is no specific dress code that inspectors need to adhere to.
16. Among the distinctive features of the school are as follows:

- An individualised learning style that makes use of printed packages of materials known as PACES (Packages of Accelerated Christian Education), which are intended to ensure that pupils can advance at their own speed rather than as part of a year group.
- Pupils are expected to complete 12 PACES per year per subject. There are pre-school PACES available for the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is mapped to the Early Years Foundation Stage early learning goals.
- A table showing the relationship to the equivalent English NC years is available in schools and this provides a useful guide to age-related expectations. Pupils in year 1 follow the PACES ABC's. Then the full curriculum starts in Year 2, with PACES 1001 to 1012.
- the use of an examination called the 'International Christian Certificate of Education' in place of GCSE, AS or A levels. These start at PACES level 1085. These are not recognised qualifications but they are listed on the National Framework and range from Foundation to level 3.
- ACE schools normally revolve around the 'learning centre', of which there may be more than one in a school. The learning centre is usually a large room which has 'offices' around its walls. These are rather like a modern version of a monk's cell in a medieval monastery, and are where pupils work for most of the day. There is a supervisor's desk, a scoring station where pupils can mark their own work at regular intervals, and a table for the tests which must be done at the end of each unit of work. Adults do not have the title of teacher, but there are 'supervisors', who are responsible for answering pupils' questions, and other adults known as 'monitors' who have received training from Christian Education Europe and who participate in regular in-service training. Teachers also have access to a manual, which provides considerable details about the Accelerated Christian Education course and how it is implemented and managed.
- Accelerated Christian Education schools have a compulsory core curriculum of five subjects: English, word building (formal grammar), mathematics, social studies (history and geography) and science. There are also optional PACES available in additional subjects such as Spanish, and at secondary-age level there are a number of 'elective' subjects which pupils can choose.
- Pupils work at their own speed through the PACES in the main curriculum areas, but they are expected to plan their own work each day by setting themselves goals in terms of the number of pages that they aim to complete. In case of difficulty they are able to ask for help from adults by raising a flag on their learning station. At frequent intervals, pupils mark ('score') their own work, and at the end of each unit of work there is a supervised test in which they must achieve a score of 80% before they can move on to the next PACE. Pupils who fail to get a satisfactory grade have to re-take the unit. There are very few opportunities for pupils to write at length or for a range of purposes, and when creative writing is undertaken it



often follows the distinctive language style and beliefs of the materials. In addition to the PACES, there are structured video programmes available to support some work, particularly in early reading and science.

- Not all schools follow the Accelerate Christian Education system completely. Some of the longer established schools have modified the system and will, for example, teach some lessons in a conventional way and enter pupils for public examinations. You may find that teaching appears to be weaker in these subjects because teachers do not have the experience to set clear learning objectives or sequence tasks. Pupils enjoy the interaction but may not always have the self-discipline to manage their behaviour in these more relaxed lessons.
  - The PACES were originally written so that they could be used by children who are being schooled at home, and it is not uncommon to find such children attending Accelerated Christian Education schools two or three days a week.
17. An important feature of Accelerated Christian Education schools is preparing for the Annual Convention, which takes place in July near Oswestry. In the weeks before this, pupils will spend a lot of time preparing for competitions which cover such areas as public speaking and sporting events.
  18. One area in Accelerated Christian Education schools which may be controversial is the International Christian Certificate of Education. This is used to measure the achievement of older pupils who have successfully completed a given number of PACES in the core and optional subjects that they have studied. This certificate is not officially recognised in the United Kingdom, although individuals and institutions have sometimes recognised it as adequate evidence of achievement. It is important that schools should point out that the International Christian Certificate of Education is a non-standard qualification whose acceptability depends on the individuals or institutions concerned.

## Focus schools

19. Focus schools are owned by the Focus Learning Trust and run by local Exclusive Christian Brethren communities. These schools used to cater primarily for secondary-aged pupils but there is a move to extending the age range and schools may make provision for pupils of primary age as well as post-16 students. Although many of these schools are purpose built, a minority are found in unusual settings, for example in parts of business premises. In general, the schools are well funded, well organised and employ teachers who are well qualified and experienced. Many schools rely on part-time staff, but the situation is changing as there is a desire to recruit more full time teachers. The schools offer GCSE courses in most subjects and some AS and A2 levels. There are an increasing number of vocational courses being offered in Focus schools. Students do not generally go on to attend universities or polytechnics, but a

range of tertiary courses in a supported distance learning style programme are available.

20. A significant change to the curriculum has been the carefully controlled introduction of ICT in order to ensure computer literacy. Schools are connected to a network run by the Focus Learning Trust and can use software licensed by the Trust. They may also make use of video conferencing to other Focus Learning Trust schools to extend opportunities within the curriculum. Pupils do not have any access to television or radio.
21. Inspectors should note that since September 2006 the Focus Learning Trust has engaged the services of an independent inspectorate to inspect these schools. The Secretary of State has approved this inspectorate, the School Inspection Service, and Ofsted is responsible for monitoring the quality of its work.

### **Sensitivities**

- In order to not cause offence it is important that female inspectors wear skirts rather than trousers and dress modestly when inspecting Brethren schools.
- Brethren schools are very hospitable, and will offer you refreshment, but they will expect you to consume it on your own. You should be aware that Brethren will not be able to eat or drink with those outside their fellowship. Most schools are small and do not serve food on the premises: children bring packed lunches from home and it is best not to disturb them during meal times. Inspectors are advised to bring their own lunch. Very few staff are members of the Exclusive Brethren community, so it may be possible to talk to the headteacher at coffee or lunchtime.
- When talking to the children, it is important to be careful not to touch on subjects that are linked to the television or popular culture, the internet or media in general. Children do not have access to television, radio or internet at home.
- Girls in the Exclusive Brethren community do not cut their hair and will usually wear a head scarf or 'token'. Boys do not wear ties.
- Although pupils are often taught together, in lessons such as physical education, games, dance or swimming pupils are taught in separate gender groups. There is also a more traditional approach to technology, with the emphasis being on practical subjects such as cookery, needlework and woodwork.
- Cookery, current affairs, Bible studies and needlework are usually taught by members of the community who may well not be qualified teachers.
- The community traditionally shunned information communication technology, but this is now more widely in use for subjects such as business studies. Access to the internet is controlled: the Exclusive Brethren wish to protect their young people from potentially harmful aspects of the media.

22. The Focus Learning Trust is a forward-looking organisation, which is keen to provide a good quality education for the pupils in its schools. As such there are generally detailed schemes of work, and homogenous policies and procedures which operate throughout the group. There is, for example, a detailed citizenship programme which operates in most schools ensuring that pupils are able to develop a knowledge and understanding of other cultures. This is important as while Brethren have a lot of interaction within their own communities, many have little or no contact with people 'outside the following'. The impact of this is that pupils may well have a very limited experience of people outside of their community. Some schools will attempt to address this issue by ensuring that pupils are taken on school trips to educate them about the wider world.
23. Due to family values within this community, schools will often start early and finish earlier than is usual. Some lunch time clubs are in place, but there are no after school clubs because there is a strong belief that children need to spend as much time as possible with the family. Most families attend an evening meeting each day and as children also travel significant distances to get to school their lives outside school are very busy.

### **Church Communities early years education**

24. Inspectors inspecting Church Communities early years education provision should refer to the guidance document *Church Communities UK Early Years* which is available in the Useful information section of the inspection handbook.

### **Jewish schools**

#### **Inspection summary notes**

25. The following notes are intended as a quick guide for inspectors who inspect Jewish schools. There are many kinds of Jewish school, ranging from those in the maintained sector offering a standard National Curriculum with some additional Jewish studies, to the strictly orthodox Haredi schools, most of which are independent.
- Jewish schools seek to promote a love of Jewish life and learning: therefore the regulations on the curriculum may be met differently than in mainstream independent schools.
  - In most Jewish schools, there are two curriculum strands: Limmudei Kodesh (religious studies) and Limmudei Chol (non-religious studies), sometimes with less time for the non-religious studies. Religious studies are usually taught by rabbis or specialist teachers.
  - Haredi schools promote strict adherence to Jewish law. Haredi families are large traditional Jewish families where Yiddish is often spoken. Many of these families find influences in the outside world a matter of concern.

- Haredi schools often have a different curriculum for boys and girls. Boys' schools are heavily biased towards religious studies, with limited time for non-religious studies covering English and mathematics, since it is argued that religious studies cover the other key areas via the study of the Talmud, which certainly offers intellectual challenge.
- In some Haredi schools boys leave at 12 or 13 for yeshivot (Talmudical institutions), while others continue with secular studies and go on to yeshivot at 16 or 18.

## Background

26. Although there was a Jewish community in medieval England, this was expelled by Edward I in 1290. A Jewish presence was re-established during the time of Oliver Cromwell, and since then there has been much immigration into the country, most notably between 1880 and 1910, and in the period before and after the Second World War. After peaking at about 400,000 in the period after 1945, the community has declined and now numbers around 300,000. The drop in numbers is primarily due to low birth rates, but emigration (to Israel, the USA or elsewhere) and assimilation may also be factors.
27. However, there has recently been some growth within the most observant sector of the community, sometimes known as 'strictly orthodox'. They refer to themselves as 'Haredi'.
28. Historically, there is a distinction between Sephardi Jews, whose roots lie in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world, and Ashkenazi Jews, who come from Northern, Central and Eastern Europe. Although the first Jews in Britain today during the time of Oliver Cromwell were Sephardi, the majority of Jews in Britain today are Ashkenazi.
29. The Jewish community in Britain is not homogeneous, and there are several denominations, which reflect different levels of religious observance and adherence to tradition. The centre ground is occupied by the orthodox, represented in London primarily by synagogues affiliated to the United Synagogue, headed by the Chief Rabbi, who is often seen as the figurehead for the whole community. In reality, his authority is limited and is not accepted by the groups to the 'right' or 'left'.
30. To the right of the United Synagogue is the Federation of Synagogues, and further to the right are the strictly orthodox, most of whose synagogues in London are affiliated to the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations. The strictly orthodox community can be further divided into a large number of groups and sects.
31. To the left of the United Synagogue is a small movement known as Masorti, (meaning 'traditional'). Further left are the movement for Reform Judaism, and further left again is Liberal Judaism.

32. The main centres of Jewish population are North London, the Home Counties and Essex, South and North Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool, Glasgow and the south coast, especially the Bournemouth and Brighton areas. In other provincial centres the communities are declining. The areas of most rapid growth are those with strictly orthodox communities: Stamford Hill (Hackney), Golders Green, Hendon and Edgware (Barnet), Broughton Park (Salford) and Gateshead.
33. The Jewish community has always placed great emphasis on education and on the provision of schools. Its oldest school in Britain, Jews Free School in London, dates back to the 18th century. There has been an explosion in the number of schools that have been established since the early 1960s, and there are 38 maintained schools (voluntary aided) and about 60 independent schools. There are also numerous early years settings and supplementary education centres and a small number of mainstream orthodox schools, but the vast majority are schools which have been established by the Haredi communities.

### **Mainstream Jewish schools**

34. In mainstream independent Jewish schools, the curriculum is easily recognisable, but it is very full and learning is intensive: there can be difficulties fitting in the two traditional strands of Limmudei Kodesh (religious studies) and Limmudei Chol (non-religious studies), and this can cause some pressure on secular studies. Where schools have a good curriculum every endeavour has been made to make as many cross-curricular links as possible between the secular and non-secular studies. One or two schools are close to Zionism and have close contacts with Israel. The connection to Israel is expressed through celebrations and the teaching of Hebrew as a modern foreign language.

### **Haredi schools and the curriculum**

35. Many of the Haredi schools provide for families which are economically disadvantaged. Families are large (10 to 12 children can be typical) and parents want their children to be educated traditionally, which keeps them away from modern values which might conflict with traditional beliefs. Many of these families are Yiddish speaking and the children have no access to radio, television, the internet or secular newspapers. Schools have very few resources unless they are supported by private sponsors. Although there are purpose-built schools, many are in converted houses. Religious studies are almost always taught by rabbis; non-religious studies may be taught by qualified teachers (sometimes non-Jewish), rabbis or unqualified staff.
36. There is a significant difference in the curriculum of the girls' and boys' schools. Girls often have a more balanced curriculum at both primary and secondary phase, whereas the boys' schools are heavily biased towards religious studies. Girls will often take GCSEs or the equivalent in a range of subjects whereas boys at this stage will be completely focused on the religious studies part of

learning. The school week for boys can be long (sometimes over 40 hours), but the non-religious curriculum may only be six or seven hours and mostly covers English, mathematics and some general knowledge; the argument for this put forward by these schools is that much of non-religious studies is covered in religious studies. This argument may be worthwhile, since the study of the Talmud, which is a major feature of religious studies, can involve an enormous range of subject matter, as well as considerable intellectual challenge and the development of skills in language, logical thinking and mathematics. Inspectors will need to consider how the religious studies part of the curriculum promotes the secular studies through natural references within the religious studies learning. A good religious studies curriculum will endeavour to make as many links as possible when opportunities to explore music; art; geography; personal, social, and health education; citizenship; health education; history and speaking and listening arise.

37. However, it can be difficult even for experts to decipher the curriculum, which is often not documented, and therefore to understand how Limmudei Kodesh furthers non-religious knowledge. The Jewish community has in recent times begun to widen the curriculum available to boys in ultra-orthodox schools, and to describe how the Limmudei Kodesh covers the knowledge, skills and understanding required to enable children to learn and make progress in the areas of learning required by the independent schools regulations. Schools must provide written curriculum documentation, and the onus is therefore on a school to demonstrate to the inspector that it meets the curricular requirements of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010.<sup>1</sup>
38. At 16 and 17 boys and girls will leave school to attend religious seminaries. Here they will further develop their understanding of Jewish Studies and may return to their original secondary schools to teach the religious studies part of the curriculum. Many of these teachers do not hold qualified teacher status although some students may have gained this qualification.

### Sensitivities

- Female inspectors will need to wear a skirt (longer than knee length) rather than trousers and a blouse that covers their arms just below the elbow. If possible any blouse worn should cover the collar bone.
- Food eaten on site needs to be kosher. It is probably acceptable to take in fruit or vegetables as snacks but all other food should either be eaten off the school site or obtained through the school if that is possible.
- Gender. In a small school where one inspector is deployed it is important in single sex schools for this inspector to reflect the gender of the pupils. In larger schools a mixed team is acceptable but it is important to be aware of

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<sup>1</sup> [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/schedule/1/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/schedule/1/made).

some of the restrictions that may occur during the inspection. Female inspectors may not be able to inspect some subjects in a boys' school and male inspectors may not be able to inspect some subjects (such as physical education) in a girls' school. Generally, however, male inspectors are acceptable in a girls' school, but only male inspectors should be deployed to an orthodox boys' school.

- Specialist knowledge. In all inspections it is important to have a member of the team who specialises in the Jewish studies element of the inspection. This inspector will need to be able to read Hebrew and understand Yiddish if this is the language of instruction.
- Physical contact is forbidden between the sexes (other than close family members) in an orthodox environment – it is important that inspectors never offer their hand to shake, to someone of the opposite sex.
- Prayer (Davening). Religious Jews are required to pray three times a day. Morning prayer is between sunrise and mid-morning, afternoon prayer is between 12.30am and 4pm and evening prayer is before sunset. Lead inspectors should note that it may be appropriate to set aside some time for the team member to carry out their prayers, and that students may have set times during the day put aside for these prayers.
- The Jewish community are alert to any anti-Semitism and will ensure that all students are aware of any possible dangers. On arrival it is usual to be met by security personnel, this is simply part of the security common in Jewish schools.

## Muslim schools

### Inspection summary notes

39. The following are notes intended as a quick reference guide for inspectors in Muslim schools. Muslim schools rarely mix boys and girls except at primary level, and can be boarding or day, or cater for both boys and girls. Schools are typically mixed gender at primary age and single sex subsequently.
- These schools are consciously Muslim and seek throughout the curriculum to promote an Islamic ethos.
  - Although most pupils are British Muslims originally from the Indian sub-continent, a significant number are converts or from abroad. There is a growing Somali community in the UK, and these pupils may be in the majority in some schools.
  - There are a number of boarding schools for boys or girls, often called Darul Uloom, which offer theological degrees, often to become Hafiz (memorising the Qur'an) or religious teachers. The non-religious curriculum can be narrow and is usually taught in the afternoons. Darul Uloom schools can also be day schools. Islamic studies in these schools may be in Urdu, Bengali and/or Arabic.

- Modern foreign languages provision is usually a choice between Arabic, Bengali, Turkish or Urdu. Arabic is often taught at primary level.
- Art is often restricted and music is not usually taught but pupils are involved in singing nasheeds (Islamic songs but not composition) and tajweed (recitation of the Qur'an).
- For physical education, older girls will tend to wear tracksuits and cover their heads.
- Daily prayers (Salat) five times a day will often dictate the shape of the school day, so timetables are usually adjusted in the autumn and spring terms to accommodate the midday and afternoon prayers.
- Some traditional schools adhere to the practice of sitting on the floor or on low benches, and thus appear sparsely furnished.
- Many schools are affiliated members of the Association of Muslim Schools in the United Kingdom. Many of these are now inspected by inspectors' employed by Bridge School Inspectorates. See paragraph 14 for further information.
- In a mosque or at a prayer room, shoes need to be removed (slippers can be worn). Female inspectors may find it advisable to cover their arms and legs, and have a scarf to cover their head. Inspectors should be prepared to remove their shoes in more traditional schools.
- There is usually no physical contact between males and females. Some girls' schools can only be visited by women.
- Ofsted does not inspect part-time provision. Therefore, where a Madrassah is run on the premises of a Muslim school, but is not part of the school's registration, it is not part of the school inspection. However, inspectors should include the Madrassah in the inspection if it is included within the school's registration and is providing part of the school's curriculum for the pupils of the school.<sup>2</sup>

## Background

40. Currently there are around 150 independent Muslim schools in England. There is also a significant number who now provide Early Years Foundation Stage provision. A small number of Islamic schools have received funding as voluntary aided schools within the last few years.
41. Islamic independent schools have existed since the 1970s and were set up to serve the needs of the various Muslim communities in the United Kingdom. They are mainly located in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Nottingham,

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<sup>2</sup> A madrassah offers part-time instruction in Islamic studies to Muslim children. Madrassahs generally operate after school.



Derby, Sheffield, Luton and northern towns and cities such as Bolton, Blackburn, Dewsbury, Bradford, Rochdale, Nelson and Lancaster. More recently others have opened in several shire counties. The number of schools has increased significantly over the last decade. Islamic schools are a diverse group of institutions. They grow out of the communities' and parents' demand for an Islamic education for the next generation. Parents often voice the opinion that the local maintained school does not provide moral guidance for their children. Pupils often express the view that they feel safe in an environment where they can practise their religion without fear.

42. Most pupils are British Muslims with a heritage from India, Bangladesh or Pakistan. The vast majority of the pupils are second or third generation United Kingdom nationals. A significant minority are children of converts to Islam. More recently, Muslims from Africa, particularly Somalia, North Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe are attending these schools. A few pupils from Western Europe and the USA or Canada attend the boarding schools.
43. Some Sunni Muslim schools where the Hanafi School of Law is followed may have affiliation with the Deobandis movement. There are six different strands within the movement with different views. These six strands are known as Nadwa, Madani, Saharanpuri, Tablighi Jamaat, Pakistani and Juhai Deobandism. In some strands their views positively support curriculum development and engagement with the modern world. Other strands such as Saharanpuri have more conservative views which may have some issues with some aspects of UK democratic values. Inspectors may need to consider these when making judgements on spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Of prime concern is that inspectors judge whether the school is meeting regulations 5(d) and 5(e) in particular. While it is important for parents placing their children in a faith school that they acquire knowledge, understanding and respect for their own culture, it must be delivered in such a way that pupils also learn to respect and appreciate other cultural traditions in British society.
44. Muslim independent schools cover the full age range, including day and boarding. They range in size from around 20 to nearly 600 pupils. The day schools are mainly primary, with mixed gender up to eight years old, or secondary, which are single sex. However, some have the full age range, but will separate boys and girls at the beginning of Key Stage 2. The boarding schools, of which there are about a dozen, include four that are girls' schools. The main focus in these schools is on the religious curriculum, with some National Curriculum subjects taught.
45. Muslim independent schools cover a wide range of Islamic religious thought. Well-known groups include Sunni or Shia Muslims. A few are founded by overseas governments, for example Saudi Arabia. Recently, Nation of Islam groups have opened primary schools, and follow the American leader Louis Farrakhan.

46. Islamic Seminaries are known as 'Darul Uloom' and have a major focus on the Islamic religion. Students study for a 'theological degree', lasting about six years, and intend to become either Hafiz (that is, to have memorised the Qur'an) or religious teachers or leaders within their communities. This curriculum is known as Ders-e-Nezami. The curriculum is offered in mixed-aged classes according to students' abilities and needs. In larger institutions the programme is divided into different sections. The Qur'anic studies section offers tajweed (Qur'anic recitation), in its full version with tahfeez, (memorisation). Within this there is also a section on tafsee (interpretation and commentary). The study of the hadith takes into consideration the accounts of what the Prophet did, said or approved. Alongside this students learn about the history, manners and beliefs surrounding Islam. Some boys go on to further study overseas (for example in Egypt or Saudi Arabia) in order to become Imam or 'priests'. In these schools the 'secular' curriculum, that is subjects other than the directly religious, is sometimes narrow and given limited time. There are, however, a few boarding schools that have broadened the range of subjects.
47. About two thirds of the schools belong to the Association of Muslim Schools, now based in Birmingham. The Association of Muslim Schools is setting up a regional base for meetings and in-service training.
48. Inspectors should note that since September 2008, the Association of Muslim Schools, working with the Christian Schools Trust, has set up its own inspectorate to inspect those schools which belong to these organisations and which meet all the regulations that apply to a light-touch inspection. This inspectorate, the Bridge Schools' Inspectorate has been approved by the Secretary of State and Ofsted is responsible for monitoring the quality of its work.

## Curriculum

- The curriculum varies according to the views of the Trustees and the Islamic tradition followed. English is usually the medium of instruction, except in some Islamic studies lessons where Urdu, Bengali or Arabic may be used.
- The well-established day schools generally follow much of the English National Curriculum, and enter pupils for end of key stage assessment tests and GCSE. However, even in these schools, some subjects, such as art, will follow the teachings of Islam and figurative art will be absent. In most schools music will not be taught.
- In theory the 'religious' and the 'secular' are not divided. In practice, in many schools these are taught separately. The balance of the curriculum, even in some day schools, may be weighted towards religious studies and Arabic from the primary age. The traditional pattern in boarding schools is for Islamic studies to be taught in the mornings and non-religious subjects in the afternoon.

- Usually the modern foreign languages taught are Urdu, Arabic, Turkish and Bengali or Gujarati depending on the main group within the school. Very few schools teach a European foreign language. Arabic text is most often learnt through the recitation and memorisation of the Qur'an, but pupils may not be able to translate the text into English. However some students do go on to take these subjects to GCSE level and are taught it as a modern foreign language.
- Music is not usually taught. The use of the drum, an un-tuned instrument, and chanting of prayers and other religious songs are allowed in some traditions. The traditionally creative subjects are often under-represented, so inspectors must look carefully at what the school provides in its total curriculum to ensure that creative experiences are being provided that meet the regulations.
- Health and sex education will be taught within Islamic studies unless required by an examination syllabus such as GCSE science. Some schools require it to be taught only by Muslim teachers of the same gender as the pupils.
- For physical education, older girls will be covered, changing into a tracksuit with headscarf. Boys too will usually cover their legs at least down to the knees rather than wear shorts. Provision for physical education is often restricted by the premises and lack of specialist knowledge.
- Religious education is usually confined to a study of Islam. However, some schools are now changing and are beginning to offer RE as a discrete subject in order for pupils to learn about world religions. A few established schools include elements of multi-faith education. More day schools are looking at the citizenship curriculum, humanities and social studies to provide a broader base. This is also used to cover history and geography, two subjects that are often lacking in many schools. Islamic studies include aspects of Islamic world history, moral education, behaviour and procedures for religious practice and daily prayers 'Salat'. The required five daily prayers will control the structure of boarding schools, but less so in day schools. Day pupils often do the afternoon prayer when they get home. The Islamic year is based on a lunar calendar, so holidays can vary from other schools. This in turn decides the timing of the daily prayers.
- History. In primary schools, the Islamic studies curriculum often includes some early Islamic history. Inspectors should check the balance between British and world history within the school's curriculum as part of the judgement on the breadth and balance of the curriculum and check whether skills are taught in Islamic history. The same applies to secondary schools, except that the picture can be more complex as the history curriculum may not be sufficiently broad and balanced in Key Stage 3 to enable pupils to take the subject successfully at GCSE level.

- Geography. Most school adapt the National Curriculum for geography at both primary and secondary schools. History and geography are sometimes taught as Humanities.

### **Premises and accommodation**

- Apart from very few schools, the premises are not purpose built and can be terraced housing. As many of the premises have dual use, the use of display and facilities for learning can be restricted.
- Limited resources often mean that the standard of accommodation in some schools is unsatisfactory. Specialist facilities for science, physical education and technology are often absent or very restricted. Information and communication technology facilities are usually better.
- Some school adhere to the tradition of sitting on the floor at low benches for lessons and meals. The low benches are used for Qur'an lessons.
- The accommodation will include facilities for 'wudu', the required ritual washing before prayers and meals. This is done by sitting on a fixed stool before a tap, so that feet, hands and parts of the head can be washed under running water. These ablution areas may be separate from toilets, which may be 'western' or 'eastern' style. Where space is limited, troughs with several taps are provided as washbasins. In boarding schools no baths are used, only showers, so that the body is not immersed in water.
- Most schools have a uniform for boys and girls. Most often it is the traditional Asian style dress of loose trousers, long over-dress or shirt. Girls will cover their head with the 'hijab' or scarf after puberty; however, some schools make the scarf part of the uniform whatever the age of the girls.. Boys often wear a small cap. Female staff often cover their heads; some wear the full-face covering.

### **Sensitivities**

- Schools are often part of a mosque; if so, visitors should remove their shoes at the door. This does not always apply in schools that are not part of a mosque, but some schools will still do this. However, in the prayer room shoes must always be removed. Some school staff change into slippers. Inspectors are advised to bring slippers or wear thicker socks. Shoes that are easily removed are the most practical.
- Muslim greet each other with 'As-salamu Alaykum' – 'peace be on you'. The reply is 'Wa' Alaykum As-Salam' – 'peace be also on you'. If used respectfully on entering a class, the children will respond.
- Female inspectors are advised to wear a trouser suit or longer skirt and jacket to cover their arms and a top that reaches the neckline. This is to show respect but is also for practical purposes. In some Muslim schools pupils sit on the floor for lessons and meals. A chair will often be provided for visitors, but it is not always practical when sharing a meal, talking to

children and looking at their work. Female inspectors are also recommended to carry a scarf in case they enter the prayer room or a mosque when they will need to cover their head.

- There is usually no physical contact between males and females who are not part of the same family. Muslim men do not usually shake hands with women, and Muslim women do not shake hands with men, so the best policy is not to offer to shake hands unless someone offers their hand to you.
- The hospitality for visitors is usually very generous and an important part of Islam. It is good to eat with pupils, which can be 'traditional style' on the floor, without cutlery, but this is less usual in day schools. School staff will usually provide a spoon. Food will be Halal, which means animals are killed according to Islamic requirements.
- In all-girls' schools, men are usually not employed as teachers, and male teachers do not go into areas of the school used by women. This is the case in girls' boarding schools. Such schools should only be visited by female inspectors. It is possible for female inspectors to visit boys' boarding schools, but it is best for them to be with a male colleague.
- It is important to check with the school the etiquette regarding male inspectors entering the classroom of female teachers. In some schools time will need to be given so that the female teacher can cover her head and/or face from the male inspector. Inspectors also need to be aware that they may find themselves providing feedback from a lesson to a teacher that may be wearing a full 'Niqab' (face and head cover).
- Schools are often pleased if an inspector asks to attend the daily prayer. It is good to see pupils on these occasions. It is sensitive to sit at the back. Female inspectors should cover their head in the prayer room. If the school is in a mosque, and this is used for the prayer, there will be a separate women's area, often upstairs. In these cases, often the local community will be attending.

## Sikh schools

### Background

49. There are currently four schools within the maintained sector, and two within the independent sector. The independent schools provide education for pupils ranging between three and 19 years. Guru Gobind Singh Kahlsa College has students aged from 3–19 while Nishkam Primary School admits five- to seven-year-olds. Both of these schools are based on the religious teachings of Guru Nanak – the founder of Sikhism. However, Guru Gobind Singh Kahlsa College admits students from a range of faiths.

## Curriculum

- These schools follow the full national curriculum providing the same breadth and experience that is offered in a maintained school.
- Sikh studies will be taught through the stories in the Guru Granth Sahib. In addition the school teaches about world religions.
- Boys and girls are taught in mixed gender groups for most of the curriculum. Occasionally girls will be separated from boys when being taught physical education and games.

## Sensitivities

- Both male and female inspectors will need to carry a scarf or hat to cover their heads in some areas of the school. The school has various rooms for prayer. The school has its own Gurdwara so that Sikh pupils can go and pray during assembly times.
- As Guru Gobind Singh Kahlsa College is multi-cultural, it also provides special rooms for Muslim and Christian students to use for prayer.
- When entering areas being used for prayer, inspectors will need to remove their shoes and cover their heads. Within the Gurdwara, boys and girls will sit on separate sides of the hall during prayer and assembly times.
- Inspectors taking food into these schools should ensure that it is vegetarian.

## Tutorial colleges

50. This guidance supports the overall guidance for inspecting independent schools (section 162A) from January 2007.

## Background

51. The kinds of institution under this heading are diverse in nature and in the courses that they offer. Tutorial colleges with five or more students of compulsory school age must be registered as independent schools. Only a relatively small proportion of existing colleges are registered as independent schools.
52. Tutorial colleges may be members of one or more associations. The main associations are the Conference for Independent Further Education (CIFE)<sup>3</sup> and the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education (BAC).<sup>4</sup> BAC undertakes accreditation inspections of colleges – five-year cycle

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<sup>3</sup> Conference for Independent Further Education: [www.cife.org.uk](http://www.cife.org.uk).

<sup>4</sup> British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education: [www.the-bac.org](http://www.the-bac.org).

plus short mid-term interim inspection. Colleges may also be members of the British Council.<sup>5</sup>

53. A small minority are affiliated to the Independent Schools Council<sup>6</sup> and are therefore inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate<sup>7</sup> for accreditation and regulatory purposes. Those colleges affiliated to CIFE are inspected by the newly approved CIFE inspectorate for accreditation and regulatory purposes. Those colleges not affiliated to either CIFE or the Independent Schools Council are inspected by Ofsted.
54. The age range of students may be wide and can extend from 11 to 29 and older. Most registered colleges take students from 14 to 15 years of age. It can be difficult for colleges to provide adequately for the social and general welfare of the youngest students. Pre-16 students have frequently dropped out of conventional maintained and independent schools for a variety of reasons. As well as offering GCSE, GCE and other recognised academic qualifications, colleges may run foundation or other courses linked to particular higher education institutions.
55. Colleges also cater for varying numbers of foreign students who want to learn or improve their English, take GCSEs and GCEs, and enter the British or perhaps the American higher education system at various levels. In a minority of colleges, students are prepared for the International Baccalaureate. During the summer, colleges often use their premises for summer school language tuition. Tutorial colleges will sometimes have links to language colleges. Summer courses are not normally the subject of Ofsted inspection.
56. The main focus of Ofsted's inspection is on the provision for pupils of compulsory school age, so it is useful for inspectors to get a list of compulsory school age students, with their dates of birth and a copy of their individual timetables, before visiting. The timetable will help inspectors to see the balance/continuity of compulsory school age students' learning experience and their time in college each day.
57. Tutorial colleges also often take students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Occasionally students have statements of special educational needs. Foreign students present particular challenges to colleges as there is frequently no available record of their previous attainment or learning needs. It is likely that any British compulsory school age students will have been underachieving (for a range of reasons) at their previous schools and have been moved to the college by their parents.

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<sup>5</sup> British Council: [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org).

<sup>6</sup> Independent Schools Council: [www.isc.co.uk](http://www.isc.co.uk).

<sup>7</sup> Independent Schools Inspectorate: [www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net).

58. The provision for 16 to 19-year-old students is integral to a tutorial college as in a school and should be inspected, although registration with the Department for Education (DfE) depends on the provision for students of compulsory school age. Wider aspects of the provision should be inspected, but inspectors should consider carefully what to include in their judgements.
59. Tutorial colleges often accept students from other parts of the country and from overseas. Where they do so, inspectors must look into the arrangements made for residential accommodation for the students. If the accommodation is not arranged or provided by the college, but has been organised by the student or their parents, this is not part of the inspection. Where there is a boarding house belonging to the college, this will be inspected as a normal boarding school. Where the college has arranged accommodation for its students in local families, for example, it is responsible for ensuring that the accommodation and facilities and so on are suitable and that the adult members of the host family have been checked as suitable in the same way as school or college staff.
60. The social care inspector will look into the accommodation arrangements for the students and write a paragraph for the published report. This will include some home visits, and the college should make host families aware of this. As with other boarding settings, inspectors should take a view on how effectively the care and education aspects link up to promote students' personal development and what the boarding element contributes to their education. Any security concerns should go in a separate note to the DfE and not appear in the published report. Safeguarding concerns should be reported through Ofsted's normal procedures.

### **Quality of education provided**

61. Teaching styles should suitably reflect the age and attainment range of students. Inspectors should consider the quality of discussion. Does the instruction of foreign students fully address problems that may relate to their depth of understanding of English? Colleges need to ensure that teachers' skills are effectively developed to meet this need. What do teachers know of their students' previous attainment and educational experience?
62. Are any special educational needs and/or disabilities recognised and how well are they supported? Have any compulsory school age students been placed in the college by local authorities? Such students may have been school refusers or victims of bullying. Are there individual education plans for students with statements of special educational needs and if so does the local authority carry out annual reviews? If in the judgement of the inspectors the college is unable to support the needs of particular students, the report should say so carefully, given that there are likely to be only small numbers of compulsory school age students and individuals may be easily identified. Foreign students with special educational needs and/or disabilities can be hard for colleges to spot.



63. Lessons are usually in small groups. Behaviour is usually good, but what about attitudes to learning? Inspectors need to consider the factors that influence learning, such as the quality of learning environments and their impact on teaching and learning for pre-16 students. There is often mixed-age teaching. How effectively do grouping arrangements work?
64. In deciding whether the main guidance is met, inspectors need to bear in mind the individual nature of tutorial colleges and the choice made by parents in meeting their responsibilities. Key Stage 3 students should be expected to follow more than a narrow programme of selected subjects. There should be physical education (timetabled) provision for personal, social and health education, and careers advice for students of compulsory school age. The local leisure centre is often used for physical education and issues related to supervision and staffing need to be checked. Judgements about the breadth and balance of curriculum provision often require the application of common sense, including, for example, when students are in the United Kingdom to learn English. A maximum of two terms is generally acceptable in the case of narrow educational goals resulting from a concentration on learning English. Progression to GCSE or International GCSE usually depends on the progress of the individual student.
65. Choices made at Key Stage 4 will be influenced by students' previous history. For pupils in the final year of compulsory education, it may be unreasonable for them to follow a full range of GCSE courses, and inspectors should remember that the independent schools regulatory requirement that students should have experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education does not mean they should be taking a GCSE in all the subjects implied.
66. Individual timetables should be examined. Colleges often refer to their ability to tailor the curriculum to students' individual needs and ability. How well does the college succeed in this? Students sometimes repeat the same GCSE course in both years in Key Stage 4 and this must be judged against each particular case. Occasionally a compulsory school age student may attend a specialist course, for example music, at another educational establishment. The DfE accepts this as part of a full-time education. Inspectors should ensure that such an activity is timetabled as part of their full-time education.
67. It is reasonable to expect a college to provide an optional range of extra-curricular activities, at least for boarders, but common sense and professional judgement should be the guide. Where there are residential foreign students, does the college provide them with opportunities to gain an insight into British culture? How do extra-curricular activities contribute to the students' range of educational experiences?
68. The requirement for spiritual, moral, social and spiritual development could be a challenge for some colleges. As with any school, examples will hopefully be

found in lessons and a range of activities. Several colleges have understood the need for setting a room aside that can be used for quiet reflection or prayer during religious festivals. Inspectors need to consider how colleges provide the opportunity for developing multicultural awareness and promoting tolerance, harmony and community cohesion. They must also look carefully at the opportunities they are providing for all students to gain an understanding and knowledge of public institutions in Britain and an awareness of British culture, in line with regulation 5(d).<sup>8</sup>

## Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

69. Admissions registers should reflect changes in student intake in meeting regulations. For example, many foreign students join colleges in January. It is therefore appropriate to encourage colleges to produce a print-out of the admissions register once a term, although the requirement is once a year. Information should be clear. If all required information is kept on a computer, it is reasonable that it should be brought together in a single document for ease of reference.
70. Particular attention should be given to how attendance is recorded and monitored. Colleges might be encouraged to use the 'published form' of register for compulsory school age students. Inspectors should check if parental permission is given for compulsory school age students to leave the college during the day, for example at lunchtime. Consider the level and rigour of supervision, for example when compulsory school age students may be required to move between sites. College guidelines for supervision, set up primarily for post-16 students, may need review for the compulsory school age group.
71. Tutorial colleges pride themselves on meeting individual needs, and it is reasonable to expect students to have appropriate counselling and pastoral support. Do pre-16 students have a personal tutor? What mechanism is in place to support the personal, social and health education programme for compulsory school age students? How is careers information provided? The social environment for younger students, but particularly those of 14 and younger, can sometimes be a concern, for example where boarders have limited contact with students of their own age. Inspectors need to judge if the youngest students are being isolated both socially and emotionally.

## Boarding

72. A tutorial college will count as a boarding school if it receives fees, or pays fees on behalf of a parent, and accepts responsibility for arranging the residential accommodation of any students under 18 years of age. Tutorial colleges may

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<sup>8</sup> The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/schedule/1/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/schedule/1/made).

arrange accommodation in halls of residence or with host families. When there is no inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection running at the same time as Ofsted's, inspectors should make sure that checking and monitoring at the college is in place and properly maintained. Inspectors need to identify who monitors host families and carries out regular checks of personnel and accommodation. Boarding accommodation on college premises should provide an appropriate separation of younger students from older, and in some cases, mature students.

### **Suitability of proprietors and staff**

73. Inspectors need to determine the ownership of tutorial colleges before the inspection, as it varies from the sole proprietor/principal model to those owned by large companies.
74. Tutorial colleges often employ a large proportion of part-time staff. In some cases the turnover of staff is high. Inspectors should ensure that appropriate staff checks have been made on all members of staff through the Criminal Records Bureau, and that the college has robust systems for checking other details of staff before employing them.

### **Premises and accommodation at colleges**

75. Premises should be suitable for the education of students of compulsory school age. It is not easy for some colleges to provide 'playgrounds', but as an alternative they might reasonably be expected to provide for the social interaction of these students at break/lunchtimes within the college. Colleges that have no space for physical education on the premises should be expected to have made alternative arrangements, perhaps with a local leisure centre. Classrooms are often small. Inspectors should consider their suitability for pre-16s, but particularly students younger than 14. The provision of sufficient toilets can present difficulties, particularly where premises are leased. Are toilets designated for both male and female students and is there separate provision for staff and students? Where there are students who are well beyond compulsory school age, for example 19 years or older, the college should be encouraged to provide separate toilets for those under and over 19 years.

## **Stage and theatre schools**

### **Background**

76. There are eight independent non-association stage and theatre schools providing full-time education for pupils of compulsory school age across the country; half of them are in London. They provide an academic curriculum, as well as professional studies. The main difficulty for stage and theatre schools is balancing the academic and perceived professional needs of the pupils. Most of the schools develop skills across a range of theatrical arts, but a few specialise

in dance/ballet. Please note, however, that there are other specialist schools which are members of associations joined to the Independent Schools Council and will be inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. These include, for example, all English choir schools.

77. Sometimes young children appear in television commercials and in stage shows, and the school must avoid exploitation. It is worth noting how many pupils actually obtain professional work and checking to ensure that pupils do not work for more than the allowed number of working days in a year. The local authority gives licenses to adults nominated by individual schools, who go with pupils while they work. Some stage schools also admit pupils who have struggled in mainstream schools. Inspectors should look carefully to make sure that the school has sufficient expertise and resources to meet the pupils' specific needs.
78. Many stage schools have grown from Saturday classes and some owners are also the headteachers but have no formal training in teaching academic subjects. The owner-proprietor usually takes an active role in the organisation and management of the school, and in several cases also runs their own theatrical agency attached to the school. Professional artists are used in the majority of schools as teachers; they are usually part time and sometimes the timetable is planned to fit in with their work. Teachers of academic subjects are also likely to be part time and will often 'block' their time in an individual school because of work elsewhere, and inspectors should make sure that timetabling does not affect pupils' progress.

## **Curriculum**

79. Inspectors must check that a broad and balanced curriculum meets the regulations, bearing in mind that the time spent on drama, music and dance may put pressure on the timetable. Subjects like religious education, art, information and communication technology and design and technology are often cut short. Inspectors must not insist that a school covers particular subjects, but must check that the areas of experience in the regulations are covered. Science teaching may have limited accommodation and resources.
80. Curriculum coverage needs checking because teachers may be the only ones planning and evaluating their lessons. Academic work can be delayed by auditions and professional engagements, so pupils' books and records should be checked for continuity. Some schools divide the week into days for academic and professional studies; others run a mixed timetable throughout the week. The time for the normal curriculum, the balance of subjects within the curriculum and the timetable all need to be checked.

## **Teaching and learning**

81. The quality of teaching can vary and there is not always a system for regular checks of teaching. Many teachers are part time so some subjects will be taught

to the same group by more than one teacher. The ways that the school ensures consistency should be investigated. Classes often have pupils of mixed ages, as well as different abilities. In some cases one class may have pupils from two key stages and may require very different teaching. Pupils' learning may be patchy because of the difficulty of giving enough time to the competing demands of subjects. Assessment is often undeveloped. Levels of attainment can vary considerably between pupils of similar ages but schools should aim for national levels so pupils' educations are not poor. Inspectors also need to check how pupils' education is maintained while they are working professionally.

### **Personal development**

82. Pupils' behaviour can sometimes seem insecure, perhaps due to more extrovert personalities or the competitive environment, but also because of the long hours that pupils may work, especially when doing shows or taking out-of-school classes in vocational subjects. This affects younger pupils particularly. Inspectors should look carefully at the methods schools have for dealing with poor behaviour, and the help given to pupils for managing stress.

### **Welfare, health and safety**

83. Particular attention should be given to how attendance is recorded and monitored, especially around the number of days which pupils of a given age may work professionally: 40 days for pupils under 14; 80 days for pupils over 14. Pastoral care is important as pupils may have many teachers who do not routinely meet to discuss the different aspects of a student's work. Weaknesses in assessment and record-keeping may make this problem worse.

### **Premises and accommodation**

84. Premises are rarely purpose built. The provision for vocational subjects needs to be carefully inspected to make sure that, for example, there is adequate space for music and drama and sprung floors for dance. Some accommodation may also be heavily used for classes for students who are not pupils, and some of this may take place during the school day. Given the nature of the school, inspectors should ensure that the school has proper changing areas and showers for pupils to use. A few schools offer boarding facilities, and the usual criteria need to be used when inspecting such accommodation – please refer to the 'Guidance for inspectors' section of the, *Independent, boarding and residential special schools inspection handbook* – 'the inspection handbook'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Education-and-skills/Independent-schools](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Education-and-skills/Independent-schools).

## Steiner education

### Background

85. Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) was an Austrian scientist and philosopher. The first Steiner school was set up in Stuttgart in 1919 to meet the needs of workers in the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory, hence the dual Steiner/Waldorf name. The movement grew and there are now approximately 1,000 schools worldwide and many more early childhood settings not attached to schools. Steiner's philosophy is known as anthroposophy, working towards social, cultural and spiritual renewal. The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship (SWSF), a registered charity, represents Steiner schools in the United Kingdom. Their council is made up of representatives from each established member school and maintains links with the worldwide movement. There is also a European Council for Steiner Waldorf Education made up of representatives of some 24 Steiner national associations. Each school is self-governing and independent. Schools are organised with a collegiate structure, without a formal headteacher. The Collegiate or 'College of Teachers' makes decisions on educational policy, while general school governance is handled by Trustees – all United Kingdom schools are charitably registered companies. Financial administration, developmental planning and public relations are usually undertaken jointly by teachers and parents working in council with an administrator for day-to-day matters.
86. The Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship has 35 member schools in United Kingdom and Ireland: 25 registered with the DfE in England; three in Scotland; one in Northern Ireland; three in Ireland (two as National schools); and one in Wales. Of these, the Steiner Fellowship recognises 33 schools, of which 22 are full members of the Fellowship, 13 are 'sponsored' or 'provisionally sponsored' as members, with an additional 16 registered independent early years centres, a number of which receive the DfE nursery grant. A number of the schools are linked to Camphill Communities, which support young people and adults with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Such schools do not necessarily have larger than usual proportions of children with special needs, but serve the families of workers in the communities as well as local families.
87. Some Steiner schools, principally those in the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, have, since September 2009, been inspected by the School Inspection Service, which has been approved to do so by the DfE. Ofsted monitors a proportion of these inspections. Please see paragraph 14 for further details.
88. Schools based on the Steiner principles of education flourish in most countries in Europe, particularly in Germany, Holland, Austria, Sweden, Norway and Finland. Schools in some countries receive state funding. In the United Kingdom, the Steiner Academy, Hereford, received its first funding in September 2008. As well as the schools within the Steiner Fellowship, there are a number of others that aspire to join. The Fellowship operates an accreditation

process for institutional membership and an advisory service to provide support. In order to be recognised for membership of the Steiner Fellowship, an aspiring school has to find a full member school to be its sponsor; understandably, established schools are very careful when taking on this role. It is generally the aspiring institutions that have problems, often because of under-funding or varying pupil numbers because of their small size.

89. Training is required for Steiner teachers. In England specific training for Steiner education is provided by the University of Plymouth's Faculty of Education, including a BA in Education Studies, and a Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Education and Care (Early Years). Emerson College in West Sussex has a number of Steiner students, some of whom are from overseas, and offers two part-time courses, which are run at Emerson College and in Bristol for students almost entirely from the United Kingdom. The London Waldorf Teacher Training Seminar also offers part-time training and the London Kindergarten Training Seminar also provides part-time training for early childhood practitioners.
90. Educational practice in Steiner schools is based on the founder's views that there are three stages in a child's intellectual, emotional and spiritual development. For example, in the first seven years, the nature of this early learning is self motivated, associated with the surroundings. Learning is primarily 'enactive', via engagement through active feeling, touching, exploring and imitating, in other words, through doing. Through experiential, self-motivated physical activity the small child 'grasps' the world in order to understand it – an essential prerequisite for the later activity of grasping the world through concepts. Only when new capabilities appear, at around the seventh year, is the child considered physically, emotionally and intellectually ready for formal instruction.
91. In the kindergarten – roughly three to six years – children are encouraged to master physical skills before abstract intellectual ones. Cognitive, social, emotional and physical skills are accorded equal value in the kindergarten and many different competencies are developed. Activities reflect the concerns, interests and developmental stages of the child and the carefully structured environment is designed to foster both personal and social learning. The kindergarten is designed to be a warm and friendly place with a homelike environment and the importance of a happy, smooth transition from home to school and close liaison between parents and teachers is encouraged at all times.
92. At this stage, teaching is by example rather than by direct instruction and is integrated rather than subject-based. Adult activities stimulate direct responses in the young child and teachers carry out their daily tasks in such a way as to be worthy of imitation. The curriculum is adapted to the child. In recognition of its vital role in early education, children are given time to play. Emphasis is given to regular patterns of activity during the day and over the week, both

teacher-led and child-initiated. A cyclical pattern is reflected in themes of work related to seasons of the year and there is a strong emphasis on the oral tradition of telling stories, as well as a combination of domestic and artistic activities, which are practised within the weekly routine.

93. Many of the schools in membership of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship are now inspected by the School Inspection Service.

### Early Years Foundation Stage

94. The skills of listening and speaking are very well developed by Steiner education. However, the formal skills of reading and writing are taught to children in Steiner schools at a much later stage than is the case in other independent and maintained schools. Steiner schools also have their own way of assessing and recording the developments pupils make, which does not match exactly to the Early Years Foundation Stage profile. For this reason, Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship has sought to explain the Steiner curriculum to the DfE, Ofsted and others by providing a helpful 'read across' document comparing the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework with the Steiner Waldorf curriculum. A statement of position is also available from the Fellowship and settings may give a copy to inspectors at the start of their inspection.
95. Some Steiner schools, mostly those which accept pupils under the funded nursery scheme, may foster some early reading and writing skills; other Steiner schools do not include these skills in their learning programme for the Early Years Foundation Stage. However children may develop some literacy skills naturally through play. Some of the Steiner schools, while making their own assessment of children's developments, are against the Early Years Foundation Stage profile, as required by the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. It is likely that the Early Years Foundation Stage provision in those Steiner schools without any kind of literacy programme and profile assessment will therefore not meet important requirements of aspects of the learning and development programme in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework. However, Steiner schools may apply for an exemption from those Early Years Foundation Stage requirements which they cannot meet for philosophical and pedagogical reasons. In such cases inspectors should refer to the guidance on handling exemptions in the document *Guidance for inspecting Early Years Foundation Stage in independent schools*.<sup>10</sup>

### Stage Two

96. Formal aspects of the curriculum begin in Class 1, which pupils usually enter at around the seventh year. The class in which the child is placed depends broadly

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<sup>10</sup> *Inspecting the Early Years Foundation Stage* (090056), Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090056](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090056).



on chronological age. Streaming is rarely used in the lower classes, which can include mixed age groups, especially in new or small schools. Approaches to reading and writing are very different from maintained school practice and focus on the chosen narrative through which pupils learn to recognise words and to copy simple short sentences. During this stage, seven to 14 years, pupils are encouraged to develop their cognitive powers through artistically-structured activities. The later start means that, in literacy, pupils' attainment will typically be up to two years behind their peers until the age of 10 or 11. The Steiner curriculum and its methodology are radically different from maintained schools' practice, especially in the early years, but the less pressured curriculum may have advantages in social terms. It appears to have little adverse effect on ultimate educational attainment, although some national examinations may be taken a year later.

97. The strong philosophical basis of the education produces some unusual principles; for example, teachers during these 'middle years' of childhood may keep their class for seven years. In practice, this works in slightly over half of the classes, often due to staff turnover. Teachers are paid very low, agreed, rates of pay. Resourcing of schools can be poor and may depend greatly on fundraising. This is partly because Steiner schools, although private, do not select children on academic capability or ability to pay. As a result many schools struggle financially, surviving through the wholehearted commitment of parents and teachers.
98. Some special features include:
  - For the first two hours each day a 'main' (or 'Morning') lesson is given. This is an extended project for linking learning across subject areas. Main lessons focus on a particular subject for four weeks, such as history, mathematics or biology.
  - Foreign language teaching, usually German and/or French, is given throughout the school in regular sessions every week from the age of about six, sometimes through games in kindergartens.
  - The school doctor (anthroposophical) discusses with the teacher the classroom work of each child as well as their medical and pastoral needs.
  - Both in each lesson and in the shape of each day, a balance is sought between scientific and intellectual work, social experience and creative, artistic activity.
99. As an alternative educational system, Steiner schools attract many parents who choose alternative styles of life. Steiner schools have often succeeded with children who have failed to thrive in normal schools. Because expectations of pupils are geared to different age-related stages, it is useful to compare standards of achievement across Steiner schools and to expect that, in comparison with National Curriculum expectations, pupils' attainment will be up to two years behind at Key Stage 2, narrowing at Key Stage 3. This is a

complex issue as some aspects of subjects will be well developed, whereas others are less so; any blanket statement about attainment levels needs to be treated with caution. Thus in English, speaking and listening skills are likely to be in advance of mainstream schools, while reading skills may be similar to mainstream by age 11. However, writing for a wide range of purposes is less specifically developed by the Steiner curriculum by the end of Key Stage 2.

100. It is important for inspectors to note any specific issues affecting the school. For example, turnover of staff is sometimes high and recruitment sometimes includes foreign nationals with little or no knowledge of wider curriculum expectations in England.
101. Pupils who have failed to thrive in other schools are included in the population of all Steiner schools. Some pupils have considerable special educational needs and/or disabilities and schools are not always equipped to meet their needs. The Fellowship is well aware of the issue of the proportion of pupils with special needs and advises schools to maintain an appropriate balance within each class or group. Overall, policies promote integration wherever possible across the whole curriculum.

## **Instruction**

102. Schools follow the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, which should direct the practice of individual teachers and ensure continuity and progression. It provides detailed guidance on both content and delivery of the curriculum.<sup>11</sup>
103. The planning in many classes is often minimal and care needs to be taken to check what the curricular experience of pupils is like from year to year across particular subjects – the Steiner Waldorf curriculum does provide this overall structure if it is properly followed. In addition, inspectors need to consider whether pupils moving into the maintained sector for any reason would be able to transfer at an appropriate level without gaps in their knowledge and experience. Attainment should be judged against the requirements of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum, which is broad and balanced. It is related to national levels of expectation, especially, where possible, in English and mathematics.
104. Teaching should be expected to follow the Steiner model and, while records are often limited, teachers should be expected to have written planning which records the learning needs of the class. The Fellowship provides advice and support for teaching staff in lesson planning, and outline planning forms are

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<sup>11</sup> M. Rawson and T. Richer (eds.), *The educational tasks and content of the Steiner Waldorf curriculum* (ISBN 190016907X), Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship, 2003. This is a translation and revision of a German document. Inspectors should be familiar with it.

included in their publications.<sup>12</sup> Usually extensive notes, sometimes called 'child studies', are kept on all aspects of individual pupils' progress and these should guide the content and pace of work.

105. The main lesson covers most of the curriculum and so should have an appropriate balance of subjects across the term and year. Teaching style reflects a whole class approach and tends to take a single task set for all pupils so that particular care needs to be taken to ensure that the needs of the most and least able are being met.
106. There is often a wide range of ability in each class and, particularly in the primary phase, pupils enter with very different previous experiences. Most classes will include pupils with special needs who have not done well in other schools. Assessing the quality of learning is sometimes difficult but since most classes are relatively small, it is usually possible to talk to pupils without disrupting the lesson.
107. Behaviour is usually good, but in some cases adversely affected by pupils with special needs whose behaviour, or need for support, can prevent progress and attainment of other pupils in the class.
108. It is worth noting that information and communication technology is not taught at primary level. It is increasingly taught at Key Stage 3, although not universally, while all schools with Key Stage 4 teach it. Television is regarded as likely to restrict the imagination so is not used in schools; parents are often discouraged from letting their children, especially younger ones, watch it.
109. The amount of taught time has been an issue at Key Stages 1 and 2 in some schools, with pupils spending much less time in school than children in maintained schools. Inspectors should check taught time and recommend extra time if pupils' attainment and progress show that this might be necessary.

### **Proprietor and management**

110. Schools that carry the name Steiner Waldorf are members of the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship but each school is independent. The collegiate organisation of schools without a formal management structure or headteacher can lead to some lack of direction since no one person has authority to make decisions and direct or monitor practice. Best practice here involves collegial, or group, leadership where individuals take on specific areas within the schools. Management may be helped or held back by the involvement of many parents in school life, whether as teachers or in support roles. This enables weaknesses to be quickly identified, but can delay radical action while staff are being supported to improve.

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<sup>12</sup> K, Avison, *A handbook for Waldorf class teachers*, SWSF Publications 2002.

111. In some schools, good systems exist for supporting and monitoring teaching, especially for newly qualified teachers, but this is not always so. Staff checks are usually very well done for United Kingdom teachers. Many schools have foreign nationals and, with advice from the Fellowship, schools are now generally much clearer about getting relevant checks for these staff members. In-service training is offered through the Steiner Fellowship Advisory Service, which runs courses regularly, and also through visits from the Fellowship's advisers.<sup>13</sup> This has been a key change in the last decade.

### **Premises and accommodation**

112. This requires careful judgement as premises often 'grow around' an original site which can vary from the outbuildings of an organic farm to a cricket pavilion. Longer-established schools have some purpose-built accommodation. Inspectors should notice health and safety issues such as the general condition of the accommodation, size of rooms, and areas for outside play and learning (ponds, logs, wild areas, bread ovens or horticultural plots).

113. Attention to fire checks and health and safety issues is particularly important because of high staff turnover. While the administrator does not usually change, the Chair of the College of Teachers usually does so. Schools accept advice despite very limited funding.

### **Welfare**

114. Admissions and attendance registers should meet requirements. Schools may need to be reminded about notifying the local authority if pupils' absence is a concern. Attendance should be formally monitored. Where children of compulsory school age attend the kindergarten, the Fellowship and HMI have advised schools to obtain from parents a written statement that when the child is not at school, they are being home educated. Such children are usually at school for between 18 and 20 hours a week, if they come for five sessions.

115. Schools should have admissions policies. This is particularly important since they are likely to have pupils applying who have struggled in other institutions. In some cases the schools do now plan well enough for how these children will affect the learning of other pupils.

### **Boarding**

116. Schools tend to place students from abroad, or outside the locality, with host families who are often the parents of other pupils. None of the schools offer formal boarding provision. Where small numbers of pupils stay with families, strong use of the premises regulations is not useful. The measure should be

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<sup>13</sup> [www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk](http://www.steinerwaldorf.org.uk).

what is acceptable in a good family environment, supported by appropriate health, safety and welfare monitoring by the school.

## Montessori schools

### Background

117. The primary goal of the Montessori approach to education is to help each child reach its potential in all areas of life. It is based on the work of an Italian doctor, Maria Montessori, who formulated the principles of this approach during her work with children with special needs and subsequently in her first nursery, The Children's House. This was established in 1907 for three- to six-year-olds with a curriculum based on self-motivated activities within a carefully considered and prepared environment. The Montessori approach to education may now be found in many countries and is an internationally recognised teaching method. As a result inspectors may find Montessori teachers who have been trained overseas.
118. Most Montessori schools in the United Kingdom began as nurseries offering both sessional and full day care. Some have grown and offer Montessori education for children up to the age of eight or 11, and a handful also provide secondary education up to GCSE level. Schools accredited to either of the two national organisations, Montessori Education United Kingdom or the Montessori Schools Association, will have staff many of whom are Montessori trained. Other non-accredited schools will not necessarily have Montessori trained staff. The Children's Workforce Development Council provides a comprehensive list of acceptable Montessori qualifications for working with children. Training can be full time, part time or by distance learning. Some Montessori school principals are Montessori teacher trainers and/or mentors. The numbers of Montessori practitioners educated to degree and master's level is growing strongly, and many come from a wide variety of previous experience in education or non-education environments.
119. Initially Montessori teachers train for two years to work with all ages from birth to six years old. There is no formal standardised entry requirement. A second course trains them to work with six to 12 year olds. Much of the training focuses on the teaching of abstract concepts using concrete materials.

### Main principles of Montessori education

- Children develop in unique stages – birth to six, six to 12, 12 to 18. Each stage has its own characteristics, requiring different approaches and environment.
- Children are to be respected as different from adults and as individuals who differ from each other. They require a different approach and environment.

- The child is an active learner, with the sensitivity and intellectual ability to absorb and learn from his/her environment that is different from that of the adult, both in quality and capacity. Every child learns at a different rate.
- Montessori education favours a child-centred approach, starting from what the child can do and gradually building their skills, knowledge and understanding of the world.
- The most important years of a child's growth are the first six years of life. This time is characterised by 'sensitive periods' (periods of time when the child is absorbed by one aspect of the environment in order to help their development). These are: movement, language, order, refinement of senses and attention to social and cultural aspects of the environment.
- Self-discipline is strongly encouraged. The Montessori philosophy identifies that by taking part in spontaneous activities, children are encouraged to become independent. This independence leads to self-direction and self-reliance and growing self-awareness and confidence.

120. Children in Montessori classes are generally placed in multi-age groups based on periods of development. The most usual groupings are: birth to three years, three to six years, six to nine years, nine to 12 years, 12 to 15 and 15 to 18 years.

### **Teaching and learning planning**

121. The Montessori curriculum is represented by the range of materials organised on open shelves and grouped according to areas of learning as listed under the following heading: 'What activities are you likely to see?'
122. These materials, activities and occupations are presented to children either by the teachers or their peers. Children are encouraged to engage in these activities either alone or with their friends.
123. It is the teacher's role to introduce these materials to individual children, and to provide enough opportunities for the child to explore and investigate these materials and, in repetition of the activity, to develop a specific skill.
124. The teacher continues to observe children as they are involved in these tasks and may offer further help, record the child's progress, or plan new activities in keeping with the skills and interests of the child.

### **Activities**

125. The environment is organised so that children learn through all five senses. They take part in specific tasks using practical concrete materials designed to develop manipulative skills. All Montessori learning starts from real experiences or is rooted in real experiences. In a Montessori setting, five distinct areas usually make up the prepared environment.

- **Practical life** activities are to help children develop the ability to organise tasks and to assist cognitive development through developing and refining skills of movement. Children learn care of self and care of the environment. They learn to lay the table, pour drinks from a jug and polish with dusters. They take part in exercises of grace and courtesy which help to develop personal and social skills. Other activities are planned to improve their physical coordination, for example children learn to manage their own clothes through using dressing frames to practise fastening zips and buttons.
- The **sensorial** area aims to help the child to order, classify and describe their sensory impressions in relation to length, width, temperature, mass, colour, pitch and so on.
- **Mathematics** is based on the use of Montessori manipulative materials which provide the child with concrete experiences of quantities, such as spindle boxes, number rods and golden beads. The aim is to help the child understand concepts of number, symbol, sequence, number operations, and gradually to memorise basic facts. Geometry is introduced in the sensorial area of the classroom where children have opportunities to manipulate solid objects and explore a wide range of flat shapes.
- **Language and literacy** includes the development of language, listening skills, writing, reading, grammar, creative dramatics and children's literature. Basic skills in writing and reading are developed through the use of sandpaper letters and alphabet cut-outs. The aims of these materials are to encourage children to link sounds and letter symbols, in a phonic approach, and to express their thoughts through writing.
- **Cultural** studies focus on knowledge and understanding of the world in the broadest sense, aiming to expose children to basics in geography, history and life sciences such as zoology and botany. Children use globes and puzzle maps to develop their understanding of other countries and cultures. They use picture and name cards to match and name aspects of the natural world. Music, art and movement education are part of an integrated cultural curriculum.

### The teacher's role

126. Teaching methods aim to promote children's independence, initiative, perseverance and concentration. The main tasks of the adult in the Montessori setting are to:

- prepare and maintain the environment
- observe each child and know the right moment to become involved in their learning; these observations study the level of concentration of each child, the introduction to and mastery of each piece of material, their social development and their physical health

- be the link between the children and the materials
- introduce children to the wider environment.

## Equipment

127. Materials are generally arranged on low, open shelves according to the area of learning. They are often made of natural materials and intended to be multi-sensory and used in order. Each item has a permanent storage place. The aim is to help children become independent as they learn to collect their own resources, choose their activities and put them away for the next person.
128. Adults introduce the materials/tasks associated with each area in a systematic way linked to the child's level of understanding. Children are intended to learn at their own pace and according to their own choice of activities. They are normally free to move around the room, and to continue to work on a piece of material with no time limit.
129. Much of the equipment can be used with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## Additional points for inspectors

130. Inspectors may find schools which plan by the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning along with the Montessori curriculum. The DfE has published curriculum guidance written by the National Strategy and the Montessori Schools Association. A complication is that the 'Children's House' class can contain under three-year-olds up to six-year-olds, that is, Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The emphasis is on children learning by independently selecting activities appropriate for their learning from open shelves. The sessions of learning, without timetables or adult-led group activities, are two and a half to three hours' long and are called the 'work cycle'. During any one work cycle a child will cover a range of activities.
131. It is a principle of Montessori work that the planned environment should be a calm setting where the adults are not dominant. Montessori schools believe that the adult should not interact with the children unless necessary, so that concentration and independent activity are not broken. Montessori felt that dominant adults can hold back children's discoveries.
132. Many settings have an oval line on the floor. This is generally used for 'walking on the line' activities, designed to help children develop gracefulness as well as the sense of balance. It may also be used for group activities such as the 'silence game', where children practice sitting without making a sound. In many settings this is used as an introduction to meditation.
133. Montessori believed that children find it more rewarding to use real life materials and situations (practical life activities), such as using a duster to clean a table, than to use similar materials in imaginative play. Children's imaginative



play is the key to Montessori daily activities rather than being arranged in separate and distinctive role play areas. Inspectors should find that children begin their own imaginative play, for example in topic related areas, using cultural items such as dressing up clothes/hats or in their free play. Self-expression and individuality is often enriched by specialist teachers of music, drama and art.

134. The best performing schools have evolved Montessori's ideas and they offer potentially outstanding education. Common features are independence in learning, coupled with an emphasis on social development, sharing and cooperating. Children often follow their own learning interests. In keeping with the Early Years Foundation Stage teachers see observations of children as central to promoting children's learning and development. Dependent on the likely destinations of the children, Key Stage 2 SATs may be used, or children are prepared for examination entry into senior independent schools. Formal testing and assessments are often not used. Often a foreign language may be taught from the Early Years Foundation Stage and simple design technology may be developed, especially in Key Stage 2, where homework is often set. The schools also aim to develop very close links with parents, with social events and parent education programmes, creating a sense of the wider school community.

## Foreign national schools

### Background

135. The United States of America, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Iran, Japan, Norway, Spain and Sweden all have their own national schools in this country, mostly based in London. The schools mainly serve the foreign communities, who may not all be permanent residents in this country. Some of the pupils may have parents who work for an embassy for a fixed number of years, or have a short term contract with a multinational company in the United Kingdom. Such schools also accept pupils who are permanently resident in the United Kingdom but have dual nationality, where, for example, one of the parents comes from the country concerned.
136. The age range of pupils in these schools is wide and extends from one to 19 years depending on the school. These typically offer the national curriculum of their own country; this offers continuity of education to pupils who are in the United Kingdom for a variable period of time. It is worth noting that the American schools do not have a national curriculum as this often differs from state to state, and that the German School in London caters for pupils from all German-speaking countries.
137. The foreign national schools are classified as independent because United Kingdom government funding does not maintain them. However, they often receive funding from the governments of their countries of origin and usually have strong links with their embassies. The American schools are the exception.

138. Teaching is conducted in the home language, and key documents such as teachers' planning, school policies and the curriculum are usually in a language other than English. It is therefore important that members of the inspection team are moderately fluent in the language used by the school. Where this cannot be guaranteed, the use of a translator may be required for the inspection. In such instances, it is the responsibility of the inspection service provider to engage a suitable translator.
139. All but the Japanese schools in this country are inspected by their own national inspectorate, but the systems for inspection vary considerably and do not cover the regulations in place for independent schools in England. In some cases, for example in French schools, individual teachers are inspected rather than the whole school. It is, however, advisable to read any available inspection reports. Inspectors must ensure they have sufficient evidence to support judgements which do not concur with those made by a school's own inspectorate.
140. If schools have a specific religious affiliation a dress code is likely. For more information, please refer to the guidance on inspecting Muslim schools in the inspection handbook.
141. Inspectors are asked to respect the following cultural sensitivities.
- It is forbidden for staff and pupils in French schools to wear any form of religious apparel including jewellery and headdress. These schools are likely to take offence at inspectors who do not observe this.
  - In Japanese schools it is customary to remove your shoes when entering from the outdoors. Inspectors are advised to bring a pair of indoor shoes or slippers to change into.

### **The quality of the curriculum**

142. Foreign national schools are diverse in nature and in the curriculum that they provide. Nevertheless, every school must have a reasonably broad curriculum which conforms to the regulations for registration of independent schools in England. There must be some written plans and schemes of work, although these may not be devised by the school itself, and could be foreign national documents. In judging whether the plans and schemes of work are appropriate, inspectors must be sensitive to other ways of curriculum planning and will need to take account of what happens in practice.
143. The requirement to offer full-time education for pupils of compulsory school age is a difficult issue, as pupils in other countries often start full-time education later than in the United Kingdom. Five-year-olds in Germany are still in the kindergarten, for example, and may go home at lunchtime. In these circumstances, the DfE is prepared to be tolerant and acknowledge cultural differences.

144. In schools where English is not the main language of instruction there must be lessons in written and spoken English. The foreign national schools do not have to do this if all pupils are temporary residents in the United Kingdom and are following the curriculum of another country.
145. The teaching of religion or any form of religious observance is not allowed in French schools. Nevertheless, the curriculum includes learning about the world and other cultures. Regulations 2(2)(f) and 2(2)(j) may present a challenge for some schools, as they will not offer a personal, social and health education programme as such. As with any school, examples should be sought in the range of activities they provide, including science, the arts and music.

### **Quality of teaching and assessment**

146. Teaching styles should reflect the age and ability of pupils. As with all schools, inspectors should consider the level of pupils' engagement and the ways teachers meet the needs of all pupils. Inspectors should make sure that the teachers are challenging the highest ability pupils and appropriate support for the lower ability pupils. The teachers' planning and teaching should show an understanding of pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment.
147. The schools should have a framework to measure the progress of pupils. This should include internal assessment and external accreditation where appropriate. These schools may offer British and international examinations as well as their own national accreditation.
148. Teachers should be aware of the code of practice for special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspectors will need to check that schools meet the principles of the code of practice and that the special educational needs and/or disabilities of individual pupils are being met.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

149. As with other independent schools, inspectors may need to look carefully to see where regulations are being met. Most schools will provide similar opportunities as British schools to help pupils to develop self-confidence, but inspectors will have to look critically at both the curricular and extra-curricular provision. In meeting the regulation for 5(d), foreign and national schools should offer pupils the opportunity to learn about British institutions and services to prepare them for living in this country, even on a temporary basis. It is important, also, that pupils in these schools do not become isolated, and that the school is taking seriously its duties under regulation 5(e), by promoting community values both

in its curriculum and in opportunities for the pupils to mix into the host country.<sup>14</sup>

### **Welfare, health and safety**

150. The admission registers should meet regulations even where systems in a school differ from those in this country. Particular attention should be given to how attendance is recorded and monitored.
151. The policies for the welfare, health and safety of pupils used by the schools need not refer specifically to DfE guidance but they must express the spirit of it. Inspectors should not assume anything about fire checks, records, health and safety issues, and other regulatory matters. Where appropriate, schools might be reminded that compliance with regulations protects the school as well as their pupils.

### **Suitability of the proprietor and staff**

152. It is important to be aware of ownership before the inspection. For some schools their own government has complete ownership of the school, while in others they are only responsible for the buildings and premises or just paying the salaries of the teaching staff. The majority of American schools are privately owned by boards of trustees. The schools which are not privately owned usually have either a board of trustees or a parents' association which provides a useful link between parents and the school management and on occasion the associated embassy.
153. Where a foreign national is either the owner of the school, or is employed as a member of staff, and for whom a Criminal Records Bureau check is inappropriate, that person is subject to checks for overseas teachers set out in DfE guidance *Child protection: preventing unsuitable people from working with children and young persons in the education service*.<sup>15</sup>
154. In the case of British nationals employed in these schools – for example teachers of English, sports coaches, caretakers, secretaries and so on – inspectors must ensure that the school has run Criminal Records Bureau checks at the appropriate level on these staff.

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<sup>14</sup> The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010; [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made).

<sup>15</sup> *Child protection: preventing unsuitable people from working with children and young persons in the education service* (0278/2002), DfE, 2002; [www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/2172/ChildProtect.doc](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/2172/ChildProtect.doc).

## **Premises and accommodation**

155. As with all independent schools, the premises and accommodation should meet the regulations and be suitable for the education of pupils of compulsory school age.

## **Provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled**

156. Many of the foreign national schools will be following the regulations set out by their own governments and they may not know that they have to meet our regulations as well. Most of the schools will have a prospectus of sorts, but they may provide this information to parents in another form. In some cases, inspectors may find that schools need how to understand how they can meet the regulations. The schools usually have their own methods of dealing with complaints, but they may not be used to informing parents about procedures.

## **Special schools, pupil referral units and children's homes providing education**

### **Special schools**

157. There are approximately 1200 independent schools which are inspected by Ofsted. Nearly 40% of these are registered with DfE as independent schools catering wholly or mainly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including day schools, residential special schools, and approximately children's homes which are dually registered as schools.

158. Special schools in the independent sector can be run as not-for-profit organisations or as profit-making businesses. Some are part of larger groups which may also provide care for children and/or adults. In general these schools are small: the majority have fewer than 10 on roll and less than 5% have more than 100 on roll. They typically cater for a broad range of needs, including for example learning difficulties, behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties, or autistic spectrum disorders. Their registration specifies what kind of special educational needs and/or disabilities the schools cater for.

159. Since September 2009, the category of 'approved' special school no longer exists. This means that local authorities will no longer need to seek the Secretary of State's consent to place any pupil with special educational needs and/or disabilities in an independent school. The DfE maintains a list of independent schools which cater wholly or mainly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as providing guidance, and this is available on the teachernet website:

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/schools/independent/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/schools/independent/).

160. Pupils in **residential special schools** are very likely to have a statement of special educational needs and all, or nearly all, will have been placed by their local authority. Because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities, many of the pupils in residential special schools are vulnerable, often more so because they are away from home for much of the year, sometimes placed at some distance from their home area. The schools generally provide education and residential provision for all pupils during term time only.
161. The educational provision in residential special schools is inspected against the section 162A independent school inspection framework once every three years. This is usually planned to be integrated with one of the annual social care inspections of the residential provision.
162. If a residential special school provides residential accommodation for over 295 days in a year, it must be registered with Ofsted as a children's home. There are, therefore, some registered children's homes which work and feel more like schools. These establishments cater for very vulnerable pupils who often have severe disabilities which prevent them from living at home. Therefore the schools sometimes operate for 50 to 52 weeks per year.
163. **Children's homes which provide education:** children's homes are registered with Ofsted and inspected by one of their social care inspectors twice a year. Where children's homes are providing full-time on-site education for one or more children of compulsory school age with a statement of special educational needs or who are looked after, they are required to register that provision as an independent school with DfE. Most pupils are funded by their local authority children's services, but on occasions there is a financial contribution from the local health authority.
164. Most of these children's homes are small, with no more than 10 children in them: some have only one child. Many of the pupils will have been excluded from mainstream education or have been the subject of a court order which prevents them living or receiving education with other pupils. Many of these children's homes are owned by commercial groups which provide a range of care and education throughout the United Kingdom. Some of these groups have a number of children's homes in a particular area and establish a day school which their pupils attend. Some of the pupils who live in the children's homes attend local maintained schools. In children's homes which provide education, the educational provision is inspected once every three years under section 162A arrangements and will be planned to take place at the same time as one of the social care key inspections.
165. There are around 26 independent **pupil referral units**. Most belong to large organisations, but some are individual establishments. They are registered as independent schools and are required to meet all independent school regulations. They are inspected once every three years under the section 162A arrangements. They offer full and part-time placements, mainly for KeyStage 4

pupils without statements of special educational needs who have been excluded from a mainstream school or are at risk of being excluded.

166. **Other types of special schools** include those providing for particular needs. A small number of schools provide specifically for abused and abusing children. Also a very small number of schools include or educate only pupils who are forbidden to have contact with their parents and whose parents are kept unaware of the location of the schools.
167. For details on organising and conducting inspections of all the different types of independent special schools please refer to the guidance *Inspecting independent special schools*.<sup>16</sup>

### Boarding schools

168. In addition to the residential provision in residential special schools and children's homes providing education, described in previous section, there are three categories of boarding school.
169. Boarding schools may be maintained, non-maintained or independent. Where they are maintained or non-maintained special schools, their educational provision is inspected by Ofsted in accordance with section 5 inspection arrangements. An inspection occurs every three years. This inspection is integrated with an inspection of welfare and boarding provision.
170. Independent boarding schools are registered with the DfE and provide weekly or termly boarding for all or some of their pupils. This may be on different sites. The schools can provide for primary or secondary-aged pupils, but are more likely to educate older pupils. Fees are likely to be paid by parents. Some of the schools may be faith schools, such as Muslim schools, for example Darul Uloom, where there is a major focus on Islamic theology and students study for a 'theological degree' lasting about six years.
171. Provided that there are no major issues of concern, independent boarding schools are inspected by Ofsted as part of an integrated inspection once every three years using the national minimum standards for boarding schools.<sup>17</sup>
172. For details on organising and conducting an integrated inspection of a boarding school, please refer to the guidance *Conducting inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools*.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Inspecting independent special schools (110097), Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/110097](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/110097).

<sup>17</sup> [www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools](http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/a00192112/boarding-schools).

<sup>18</sup> *Conducting inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools* (100180), Ofsted, 2011; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100180](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100180).