

The new framework for the inspection of independent schools

A consultation document

This consultation document sets out Ofsted's proposals for a revised framework for the inspection of independent schools.

We seek the widest possible range of views from those who have an interest in independent schools, so that the new inspection framework takes full account of the needs and circumstances of all interested parties.

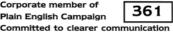
The closing date for the consultation is 17 April 2012.

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Introduction

- 1. Ofsted has a framework for inspecting independent schools to:
 - check and report on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010
 - produce an evaluative report that informs the school, parents, pupils and wider community about the quality and impact of the school's provision
 - bring about school improvement.
- 2. Our current inspection framework has served schools and inspectors well. By taking a rigorous approach to inspecting compliance, we have substantially improved the ability of independent schools to meet the Standards¹ since they were introduced in 2003. This inspection focus, coupled with enforcement action by the Department for Education (DfE) as the registering authority, has dramatically reduced the amount of inadequate practice in independent schools by eliminating the weakest schools or forcing their improvement. Now, around 90% of the independent schools we inspect meet all or almost all of the Standards.
- 3. In 2008, the introduction of grade descriptors for key aspects of the evaluation schedule led to greater transparency and a shared understanding of quality between schools and inspectors. This has given a sharper evaluative aspect to our inspections of independent schools and, over time, it has encouraged schools to go beyond simply meeting the basic requirements of regulations and to strive for improvements in the quality of their provision that benefit their pupils. Around two thirds of schools now offer a good or better quality of education.
- 4. The third cycle of inspecting independent schools brings a change in the frequency of inspection, whereby all mainstream independent schools that have met the Standards and been judged good or outstanding are inspected only once in a six-year period. It is, therefore, more important than ever that inspection is intelligent and thorough, and that inspection judgements are fair, clear and helpful to the school's further development.

How we inspect now

5. Ofsted inspects independent schools under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended. *The framework for inspecting education in non-association independent schools*² informs schools about how we inspect the provision they make for their pupils. It explains how the inspection of independent schools is

¹ Throughout this document, 'the Standards' refers to the Education (Independent Schools Standards) (England) Regulations 2010.

² *The framework for inspecting education in non-association independent schools* (090036), Ofsted, 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090036.



organised, what inspectors look for, and how the Independent Schools Standards are covered by the inspection.

- 6. Currently, inspectors write a report that is organised according to the Independent Schools Standards, which are:
 - quality of education
 - spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
 - welfare, health and safety of pupils
 - suitability of staff and proprietors
 - premises and accommodation
 - provision of information
 - manner in which complaints are handled.
- 7. Whilst reporting under the headings of the Standards, Ofsted also makes the following seven key inspection judgements:
 - quality of education
 - quality of the curriculum
 - quality of teaching
 - pupils' progress
 - spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
 - pupils' behaviour
 - pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- 8. Whilst the Independent Schools Standards will remain, the DfE is revising the regulations that underpin them, which will be the subject of separate DfE consultation. The outcome will inform the specific details of Ofsted's evaluation schedule for the inspection of independent schools.

Why change?

- 9. We propose to change the inspection framework for September 2012 to raise expectations for even greater improvements in the performance of independent schools, which we believe will benefit children and their parents and carers.
- 10. The government is revising the regulations for independent schools so that they will be simpler from September 2012. Ofsted's instruments and guidance for inspectors and schools will take account of these changes.



11. We are proposing the changes to improve our inspection and reporting arrangements. We are aware that independent schools are diverse in size and nature, and we want to hear the views of all interested parties about our proposals.

What we plan to change

- 12. We have taken a fresh look at whether we should continue to make the same key judgements and write a report based on the Independent Schools Standards.
- 13. The inspection report must still make it clear whether or not the school is meeting the Standards, as this information is required by the DfE as the registering authority.

However, we think that it is important that we make our judgements about the elements of an independent school that are fundamental to its success, and that the report should be written about these matters.

14. In making these changes, we aim to bring the inspection and reporting procedures for independent schools more closely into line with *The framework for school inspection*³ for maintained schools, as well as keeping the key judgements that are important in the context of the independent sector. We think this will provide better information for parents, carers and placing authorities, and allow them to compare schools more easily.

The proposed evaluation schedule

- 15. We propose to structure the report under the following headings:
 - main findings: the overall effectiveness of the school*
 - outcomes for pupils (to include pupils' achievement;* and behaviour and safety*)
 - quality of education (to include the quality of teaching;* the quality of the curriculum;* and provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development*)
 - provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety*
 - leadership and management.*

These headings are comparable to a report on a maintained school. The key judgements are marked with an asterisk.

³ *The framework for school inspection* (090019), Ofsted, 2011; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/090019.



Overall effectiveness

16. We propose to introduce a summative judgement for the overall effectiveness of a school. A short consultation conducted in June/July 2011 gave a strong endorsement for the introduction of a summative judgement, and we believe that it will help parents, carers and placing authorities to make more informed comparisons about different types of school in both the maintained and independent sectors. We think that this judgement will also encourage independent schools to aim higher.

This section of the report will contain the main findings of the inspection.

Outcomes for pupils

17. Under the reporting heading of outcomes for pupils we propose to make a separate judgement on pupils' achievement, and on their behaviour and safety.

Achievement

- 18. The current inspection framework for independent schools makes a judgement on pupils' progress. However, we think that pupils' attainment should also be considered in reaching a key judgement on achievement.
- 19. We recognise that pupils in non-association⁴ independent schools have a very wide spectrum of attainment. Many schools are extremely small with fewer than 50 pupils on roll, which can make statistical data on attainment unreliable.

Therefore, in the new framework, we propose to judge pupils' achievement based on inspectors' observations of pupils' work, and taking into account their starting points and the school's records of individuals' progress over time.

20. Where available, public examination data or results of common entrance tests will be taken into account and, where relevant, results will be set against the relative performance of children of similar ages nationally.

Making a judgement on the achievement of pupils in independent schools will provide parents and carers with a clear assessment of how their children are doing in the context of their age and ability.

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that inspectors should make a judgement on pupils' achievement?

⁴ Non-association independent schools are those that are not members of associations affiliated to the Independent Schools Council, or members of the Association of Muslim Schools UK, Christian Schools Trust or Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship.



Behaviour and safety

21. Inspectors currently make a judgement on the behaviour of pupils in independent schools. We think this is a key feature of any school and propose to continue making this judgement. As in maintained schools, the judgement will include the extent of bullying and how safe pupils feel at school.

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that inspectors should make a judgement on behaviour and safety?

Quality of education

22. At the moment, we make a summative judgement about the quality of education, which is made up of separate grades for the quality of teaching and the quality of the curriculum.

We propose to simplify the evaluation schedule and make it clearer by making separate judgements for the elements that contribute to the quality of education. These are the: quality of teaching; quality of the curriculum; and the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Quality of teaching

23. The quality of teaching is a key driver of school improvement. One of the key findings from our inspections this year is that the quality of teaching in non-association independent schools: 'tends to be competent but seldom inspiring'. In the new framework, we will focus more sharply on what makes teaching truly effective. The judgement will also cover the regulations for teaching in Part 1 (Quality of education provided) of the Standards.

Quality of the curriculum

- 24. Independent schools do not have to teach the National Curriculum, but they do have to provide a curriculum that gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetical and creative education. While this brings some freedom, it can also lead to uncertainty and inconsistency, particularly in providing breadth and balance and in the relative weighting of parts of the curriculum in some types of school.
- 25. Because the curriculum offered by independent schools can vary considerably, we think it is important to retain a judgement about its quality. Schools must demonstrate how the curriculum engages the pupils and helps all of them to achieve their best, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, and those with particular gifts and talents.

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should make separate key judgements on the quality of teaching and the quality of the curriculum in an independent school inspection?



Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- 26. We propose to continue making a judgement about pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in independent schools. The judgement includes how well schools meet the Independent Schools Standard for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is an important judgement in the context of independent schools, where a significant number of them serve distinctive faith communities.
- 27. We will report on how well schools equip young people to understand and take their place in modern British multi-cultural society. We will also report on how well the school enables young people to acquire the knowledge, values and skills to develop independence and confidence, participate in society and choose their path in life. The judgement will include schools' compliance with the Standards in Part 2 (Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils).

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that inspectors should make a separate judgement on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

28. Despite strong improvement in the last two years, the biggest single weakness in non-association independent schools remains the high proportion (12%) of schools that do not have sufficiently robust arrangements for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety.

It is important that we continue to rigorously pursue schools that do not get the basics right, so that **all** schools provide a safe environment for children and prioritise keeping them safe.

29. For this reason, we propose to retain a separate judgement in independent school inspections for pupils' welfare, health and safety. It will include safeguarding and welfare, and health and safety, currently in Parts 3 and 4 of the Standards.

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should retain a separate key judgement for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety in an independent school inspection?

Leadership and management

30. Currently, none of the Standards apply directly to how effective a school's leadership and management is. However, all seven of the Independent Schools Standards are related to the work of the school's leaders and managers.

We know from our research that the effectiveness of a school's leadership and management is one of the most important drivers for improvement and success.



31. Therefore, we propose to introduce a new inspection judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management of a school. This judgement will include the drafting and implementation of school policies, and Parts 5 (Premises of and accommodation at schools), 6 (Provision of information) and 7 (Manner in which complaints are to be handled) of the Standards.⁵ It will also challenge school leaders and managers to demonstrate how well they know and monitor their school's performance and that they are effective in driving forward improvements that benefit their pupils.

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should introduce a judgement on leadership and management for independent schools?

Grading scale

32. We will continue to use a four point scale for our qualitative judgements. Our current grading scale is: outstanding, good, satisfactory and inadequate. We propose to replace 'satisfactory' with 'adequate', and to define 'adequate' as 'meeting the requirements of the Independent Schools Standards but still requiring improvement'. This grading scale will apply also to schools with boarding or residential provision, where 'adequate' will be defined as 'meeting the national minimum standards but still requiring improvement'.

We intend to publish grade descriptors to assist inspectors in making the key judgements, as this will help to achieve greater consistency, openness and transparency. We will engage different groups of schools as we develop the grade descriptors to ensure that they are suitable for all types of school. If you would like to make any comments on this proposal, please do so under question 9.

Self-evaluation

33. Self-evaluation has been an important part of our inspections over the last few years, and schools have told us that they value the self-evaluation process, not just for preparing for and contributing to inspection, but also as a school improvement tool.

We no longer ask schools to complete an online self-evaluation form (SIEF), but self-evaluation remains central to inspection. The grade descriptors for our key inspection judgements should support schools' own self-assessment, and lead to a common understanding of quality between schools and inspectors. Inspectors accept schools' evaluation of their own performance in whatever way they wish to present it.

⁵ The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010; http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made.



Notification of inspection

34. At the moment, inspectors give two days' notice of an education inspection in an independent school. In boarding and residential special schools, no notice is given before the day of inspection. We think we should adopt a similar system for the education inspection of independent schools. Seeing the school as it is would give a true picture and would also minimise the preparation a school needs to do for the inspection. We would be interested in your views on this proposal.

Capturing the views of parents, carers and placing authorities

35. We value highly the views of the pupils themselves, as well as parents, carers, staff and local authorities who use the services of independent schools, and we follow up the issues they raise in our inspections. Currently, we ask schools to distribute questionnaires to their stakeholders at the point at which we notify them of inspection. We intend for such surveys to be replaced by an online solution in future.

Additional proposals on children's homes that offer education

36. We will be focussing on the quality of education where it is weakest: for looked after children in independent children's homes that are also registered education providers.

We are aware of the low achievement nationally of looked after children. We also recognise that of children's homes that also provide education there is a comparatively lower proportion that make good or outstanding educational provision.

37. Our new inspection framework will focus on the educational progress and achievements of looked after children and we will look critically at what schools are doing to close the gap between their achievements and those of other pupils.

Groups of children's homes

38. We know that a number of children's homes that are registered education providers have regional or national groups as proprietors. These groups provide, from their head office, a common set of education and care policies and, in some cases, a team of teachers who travel from setting to setting.

We want to consult group providers and inspectors of children's homes about the best way to inspect the educational provision in groups of children's homes. We want to ensure that inspectors give clear, fair and consistent messages, particularly in groups of schools where the policies and teachers are the same but are operating in different settings.



- 39. We consider that more effective inspection might be organised through an initial inspection of the central policies and staff recruitment procedures common to the group. Inspectors could cover all the settings in a group within a short time frame, focussing on the quality of teaching and learning as well as on the requirements of the regulations.
- 40. We do not propose to give notice of inspection to each setting.

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to inspecting children's homes in national or regional group providers, as outlined in paragraphs 37 and 38?

Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to give no notice when inspecting independent schools?

Q9. Do you wish to make any other comments about the proposals for change in this consultation?

Consultation arrangements

Earlier consultation

41. During November 2011, we met with representatives of the various types of independent school we inspect and with associations, independent inspectorates and faith communities. We have taken their views into consideration in producing this consultation document.

Additional consultation

- 42. As well as this online consultation, we will consult others who have an interest in independent schools' inspection in the following ways.
 - Parents and carers: we will hold focus groups with parents and carers whose children attend independent schools.
 - Pupils: we will provide a children's version of the online consultation for pupils. We will also visit some independent schools during the spring term to hear pupils' views of inspection.
 - Schools: proprietors, headteachers, trustees, governors and staff in schools will have the opportunity to take part in the online consultation. Some have already been drawn into key focus groups, which we will consult further on the drafting of the grade descriptors to ensure that they are suitable for all types of independent school.
 - The DfE is represented on our Project Board for the development of the new framework.



43. The online public consultation will run for 12 weeks and closes on 17 April 2012.



- 44. We will conduct pilot inspections during the spring term 2012 to test out our proposed framework and evaluation schedule in a cross-section of independent schools. The pilot inspections will take place alongside scheduled inspections. We welcome the views of schools taking part in these pilots and will take account of them in the final framework document, which we will publish in July 2012.
- 45. The new framework for inspection will come into force to coincide with the introduction of the revised regulations proposed for September 2012.
- 46. We will publicise this consultation by writing to all the independent schools we inspect. We will encourage as wide a range of users and stakeholders as possible to respond to this consultation through articles in *Ofsted News* and other education and social care publications.

What happens next?

- 47. The information from the online consultation will be collated and the key findings will be published alongside an evaluation of the pilot inspections in July 2012. These findings, along with the outcomes of the additional consultations, will be taken into consideration in the further development of the inspection judgements and grade criteria during the spring and summer terms 2012.
- 48. We will publish the new framework in July 2012 and will alert the independent schools we inspect to its publication via an announcement on our website.

Sending back your questionnaire

49. There are three ways to complete and submit the questionnaire in the next section and/or send us your comments.

Online electronic questionnaire

50. Visit our website to complete and submit an electronic version of the questionnaire: www.surveymonkey.com/s/ofsted-isf2012.

Download and email

51. This document can be downloaded and completed on your own computer. When you have completed the questionnaire, email it to: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk. Please put 'Independent schools framework consultation' in the subject line.



Print and post

52. This document can be printed and completed by hand. When you have completed the questionnaire, please post it to:

Independent schools framework consultation Ofsted National Business Unit Piccadilly Gate Store Street Manchester M1 2DW.



Questionnaire for the inspection of independent schools consultation

Confidentiality

The information you provide will be held by us. It will only be used for the purposes of consultation and research to help us to become more effective, shape policies and inform inspection practice.

We will treat your identity in confidence, if you disclose it to us. However, we may publish an organisation's views.

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?

Yes please complete Section 1 and the following questions

No please complete Section 2 and the following questions

Section 1

If you are completing the consultation on behalf of an organisation and would like us to consider publishing the views of your organisation, please indicate this below.

Organisation:

Section 2

Which of the below best describes you? Please choose one option.

I am:

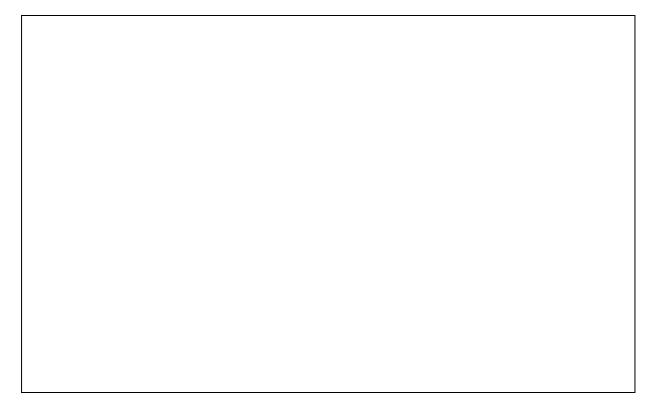
a carer	a proprietor	
a parent	a headteacher	
a pupil in an independent school	a representative of a school or national association	
a representative of a placing authority	an inspector	
a teacher	Prefer not to say	
Other (please tell us)		



Questions

Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that inspectors should make a judgement on pupils' achievement (see paragraphs 18–20)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know





Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that inspectors should make a judgement on pupils' behaviour and safety (see paragraph 21)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know



Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should make separate key judgements on the quality of teaching and the quality of the curriculum in an independent school inspection (see paragraphs 23–25)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know



Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that inspectors should make a separate judgement on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (see paragraphs 26–27)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

1		
1		
1		
1		
1		
1		
1		
1		



Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should retain a separate key judgement on safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety in an independent school inspection (see paragraphs 28–29)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know



Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should introduce a judgement on leadership and management for independent schools (see paragraphs 30–31)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know



Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to inspecting children's homes in national or regional group providers, as outlined in paragraphs 38 and 39?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know



Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to give no notice when inspecting independent schools (see paragraph 40)?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know



Q9. Do you wish to make any other comments about the proposals for change in this consultation?



What did you think of this consultation?

One of the commitments in our strategic plan is to monitor whether our consultations are accessible to those wishing to take part.

Please tell us what you thought of this consultation by answering the questions below.

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know
I found the consultation information clear and easy to understand.				
I found the consultation easy to find on the Ofsted website.				
I had enough information about the consultation topic.				
I would take part in a future Ofsted consultation.				

How did you hear about this consultation?

Ofsted website

Ofsted News

Ofsted conference

Another organisation (please specify, if known)

Other (please specify)



Is there anything you would like us to improve on or do differently for future consultations? If so, please tell us below.

Thank you for taking part in our consultation.



Additional questions about you

Your answers to the following questions will help us to evaluate how successfully we are communicating messages from inspection to all sections of society. We would like to assure you that all responses are confidential and you do not have to answer every question.

Please tick the appropriate box.

1. Gender

Female		Male	
--------	--	------	--

Are you living as the same gender as you were born in?

Yes		0
-----	--	---

2. Age

Under 14	14–18	19–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55–64	65+

3. Ethnic origin

(a) How would you describe your national group?

British or mixed British	Northern Irish	
English	Scottish	
Irish	Welsh	
Other (specify if you wish)		



(b) How would you describe your ethnic group?

Asian	Mixed ethnic origin	
Bangladeshi	Asian and White	
Indian	Black African and White	
Pakistani	Black Caribbean and White	
Any other Asian background (specify if you wish)	Any other mixed ethnic background (specify if you wish)	
Black	White	
African	Any White background (specify if you wish)	
Caribbean	Any other ethnic background	
Any other Black background (specify if you wish)	Any other background (specify if you wish)	
Chinese		
Any Chinese background (specify if you wish)		

4. Sexual orientation

Heterosexual	Lesbian	Gay	Bisexual

5. Religion/belief

Buddhist	Muslim	
Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	Sikh	
Hindu	None	
Jewish	Any other, please state:	

6. Disability

Do you consider yourself to be disabled?	Yes 🗌	No 🗌
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