

Responses to Ofsted's consultation 'A good education for all' on maintained schools and academies, including free schools – FAQs

When are you publishing the detailed inspection framework and guidance?

We are publishing the detailed documents in the middle of June. We will contact schools to let them know when they have been published and to provide them with a summary of the new arrangements.

Why change the inspection framework so soon after introducing a new one?

Although the majority of schools inspected are judged to be good or better, too many schools are not providing a sufficiently good education and too many pupils do not make enough progress to prepare them for life in a challenging, changing modern world. The inspection framework introduced in January 2012 raised expectations for schools and we now believe that further revision to elements of the inspection framework will promote more rapid improvement in those schools that are not yet good.

How will the new framework be different from the current framework?

The changes set out in Ofsted's consultation response will bring some changes to the timing of school inspections – schools judged to require improvement will be monitored and re-inspected sooner. The full details of the changes to the inspection process – what happens during an inspection and how inspectors make their judgements – will be published in full in June. The key changes are that Ofsted will:

- **require 'outstanding' schools to have 'outstanding' teaching**
From September 2012, schools must have outstanding teaching to be judged outstanding. This will not be applied retrospectively. It does not mean that every lesson seen during an inspection needs to be outstanding. It does, however, mean that over time teaching is enabling almost all pupils to make rapid and sustained progress.
- **define an acceptable standard of education as being 'good'**
All schools can, and should, be 'good' or better, whatever their

circumstances. Our grade descriptors will be clear that a school can be 'good' where pupils' attainment is below average but they are making good progress. We will pay particular attention to how schools are using the pupil premium to improve pupils' achievement.

■ **replace the current 'satisfactory' judgement with 'requires improvement' where schools are not inadequate but are not yet providing a good standard of education**

Inspection reports will be clear about why these schools are not yet good, what these schools need to do to improve, and their strengths.

■ **replace the 'notice to improve' category with 'serious weaknesses'**
Schools which are inadequate overall and require *significant* improvement but where leadership and management are not inadequate are likely to have 'serious weaknesses'.

■ **introduce earlier full re-inspection of schools judged as 'requires improvement'**

We will monitor schools that are not yet good to help them to improve as fast as possible. We will re-inspect schools judged as 'requires improvement' within a maximum period of two years and earlier if required. The timing of the inspection will reflect the individual school's circumstances and will be informed by what inspectors find at the monitoring visits.

■ **usually limit the number of times schools can be deemed to 'require improvement' to two consecutive inspections before they are judged 'inadequate' and deemed to require 'special measures'**

Schools which have been judged to require improvement will be subject to regular monitoring. A school judged to require improvement will have a full section 5 re-inspection within a maximum period of two years. If at that inspection it is still judged to require improvement, there will be further monitoring, and another full section 5 inspection will take place within a further two years. If at this inspection it is still not 'good', it is highly likely that it will be judged inadequate and deemed to require special measures. This will be because the school is not providing an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. However, there may be exceptions to this. For example, if there is now a clear, sustained, upward trend, but the school is not yet good in all areas, inspectors may not judge the school to require 'special measures'.

■ **shorten the notice we give of an inspection**

We will reduce notice periods in order to see schools as they really are. We reserve the right to inspect without notice, but inspectors will normally contact the school by telephone during the afternoon of the working day prior to the start of the inspection. This will allow the school to make practical arrangements, including informing parents that an inspection is to take place, so they can feed back their views to Ofsted using the 'Parent View' facility on our website. We will continue to keep the notice period

under review in the light of the strong support parents gave to completely unannounced inspections.

■ **request that schools provide anonymised information of the outcomes of the most recent performance management of all teachers**

Good teaching, and the leadership and management of teaching, are central to schools' success. Inspectors will evaluate the robustness of performance management arrangements, and consider whether there is a correlation between the quality of teaching in a school and the salary progression of the school's teachers. We will take the necessary steps to ensure that no individual teacher is identified so that confidential information is not revealed.

We will continue to focus on four key aspects of a school's work: achievement; teaching; behaviour and safety; and leadership and management. We will grade on a four-point scale: outstanding (grade 1), good (grade 2), requires improvement (grade 3) and inadequate – serious weaknesses or special measures

Will there be more schools in categories of concern?

It is impossible to predict the outcomes of inspections. We hope that schools will continue to improve and that increasing proportions of schools are judged as good or better. The new judgement of 'requires improvement' which replaces the old satisfactory judgement does not place a school in a category of concern.

Under our revised framework, when a school is judged inadequate and placed in a formal category of concern it will have either 'serious weaknesses' or be deemed to need 'special measures'. The designation of 'serious weaknesses' replaces the current category of 'notice to improve' and applies to a school that requires significant improvement but nonetheless has the capacity to improve. The term 'serious weaknesses' better reflects the important concerns that inspection reveals about such schools.

Why change from satisfactory to 'requires improvement'?

Parents want to send their children to good schools and to have a good education. While we recognise that many schools currently judged satisfactory provide some elements of a good education and that some pupils do achieve well, there are too many pupils in these schools who are not achieving as well as they should. 'Satisfactory' is not good enough and when a school is judged to 'require improvement' we will be signalling that it is not doing sufficiently well.

In addition, 'requires improvement' schools will be re-inspected sooner, that is, within two years of their last inspection, and will be monitored by inspectors.

Why have you decided to replace 'notice to improve' with 'serious weaknesses'?

The new designation of 'serious weaknesses' replaces the current term 'notice to improve'. The term 'serious weaknesses' better reflects the important concerns that inspection reveals about these schools and is clearer in the message it provides for parents and carers. These are schools where there are serious concerns about aspects of the quality of education and where one or more of the key areas of achievement, the quality of teaching and behaviour and safety are judged inadequate (grade 4). These schools do not require special measures, as the school leaders and governors are demonstrating their capacity to improve these schools

How will Ofsted define an acceptable standard of education?

Anything less than 'good' is not an acceptable standard of education. Ofsted expects that in a good school pupils will achieve well, they will be well taught, feel safe and behave well; there will be strengths in their personal development and the school will be well led by senior staff and governors. The indicators for the key judgements are being revised for publication in June. Ofsted will be clear in revised indicators that a school can be good where pupil attainment is below average, if pupils are making good progress.

Do schools need to have a certain proportion of lessons observed during the inspection as 'outstanding' before the school can be judged 'outstanding'?

No – inspectors will consider the full range of evidence and the impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time, before determining the quality of teaching. Inspectors will also consider the context of the situation, taking into account, for example, where schools are supporting teacher trainees. Lesson observations play an important part in reaching judgements about teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and are part of a much wider range of evidence from across the school.

Why didn't Ofsted introduce completely unannounced inspections?

We have taken account of the strong feeling on this matter. We believe that, by reducing the notice from up to two days to no more than half a working day, we have gone a long way to meeting parents' preferred approach. At the same time we have not gone for full 'no-notice' because of practical issues like being sure that parents and governors are informed about the inspection and are able to contribute to the findings, and to enable the headteacher to be available. We will keep the situation with regard to no-notice inspections under review. It should be noted that this decision does not affect the Chief Inspector's powers to authorise completely unannounced inspection of a school at any time. Those inspections which already occur without notice will continue.

How will Ofsted judge progress?

As now inspectors will consider the progress being made by pupils currently in the school and the progress made by pupils over the last three years. Unlike current arrangements this will not be linked to national averages so that provided the pupils make sufficient progress, any school could be judged a good school. We will be publishing full details in June.

How will Ofsted tackle 'stuck' schools?

We recognise that some schools have been judged satisfactory for consecutive inspections and that in some cases the areas identified for improvement are the same. When judging leadership and management, inspectors will take into account where, for no good reason, schools have not improved over a number of years. Where the school's circumstances have not changed and the same leaders and governors are in post, inspectors will need to consider whether the school is demonstrating the capacity to secure improvement. If there is no demonstrable capacity to improve and the school is not providing an acceptable standard of education inspectors will consider whether it requires special measures.

Can schools in disadvantaged areas ever be judged outstanding?

Most certainly – inspectors will evaluate pupils' progress and the quality of their learning as well as their attainment, when judging achievement and the school's overall effectiveness. This means that all schools, regardless of the area they serve, can be outstanding. Some of the very best schools that we inspect are found in the most challenging areas. These schools make a significant difference for their pupils.

Can schools with low attainment ever be judged by Ofsted to be good?

Yes – the evaluation of pupils' progress is central to our judgements about achievement and a school's overall effectiveness. If pupils are learning well and making good progress over time, a school is likely to be judged good for achievement.

How will you keep teachers' performance management and salary information confidential?

We will require schools to provide anonymised data which cannot identify individual teachers. The information will not be required by inspectors in advance, so won't need to be supplied electronically. It will be examined by inspectors on site during the inspection and will not be taken away from the school site either during, or after, the inspection. Inspectors will want to evaluate the robustness of performance management, the correlation between the quality of teaching and teachers' progression through the salary scale and how those responsible for school governance maintain an effective oversight of this.

Will schools judged outstanding at their last inspection be inspected again?

As is the case now, there is still a chance a school previously found to be outstanding will be inspected. Most schools that were judged to be outstanding at their last inspection will be exempt from routine inspection unless concerns are raised about their performance. We conduct an annual risk assessment on these schools starting in the third year after the end of the year in which they were last inspected. We will also inspect some outstanding schools as part of our inspections of subjects and aspects of education.