

# Writing the inspection report

Guidance for inspectors writing a section 5 inspection report

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This guidance applies to the report template for inspections of all schools inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

It should be read in conjunction with the technical guidance on how to complete the section 5 report together with Part 2 of the *School inspection handbook* and the *Subsidiary guidance*.

**Age group:** All

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## Introduction

1. This document provides guidance for inspectors on writing section 5 school inspection reports. All section 5 inspection reports must use the standard report template.
2. Reports must be written in clear, simple language so that the lay reader or parent can understand them. They must be jargon free. The main findings, strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations should be clearly spelled out so that there is no doubt about what the school needs to do to improve, or to maintain already outstanding practice. Avoid the unnecessary regurgitation of the language of the inspection handbook or guidance when writing reports. It adds little and often leads to bland reporting.
3. Lead inspectors may ask team inspectors (where relevant) before the final meeting or feedback to draft in bullets the key points that should be made in the report. This can help to capture lively examples and ensure that the reporting closely reflects the unique evidence gathered in each inspection.
4. Inspectors must use the drop down sections of the report in 'protect' mode before drafting their inspection findings. A separate document provides technical guidance for inspectors on how to manipulate the report template.
5. Above all, the report must tell the unique story of the school and capture its culture or ethos, which is usually linked to the leadership of the school.

## Summary of key findings for parents

6. The front page provides a brief summary for parents and should be plainly and unequivocally stated without jargon. The summary must not extend beyond the front page.
7. The bullet points must make it clear why the school's overall effectiveness has been judged as outstanding/good/requires improvement/inadequate.
8. There must be brief comments about achievement, teaching, behaviour and safety, and leadership and management. These must be explained fully and exemplified in the 'Full report' section.
9. When writing about leadership and management that 'requires improvement', do not obscure the judgement by trying to balance all the negatives with a positive.
10. If the school is judged as 'requires improvement', the first section, (*This school requires improvement. It is not yet good because:*) must be explicit about the weaknesses and why the school is not yet 'good'. For example, if teaching is judged as 'requires improvement' and if leadership and management are also judged as 'requires improvement', this should be noted.

11. If the school is judged to be 'good', the second section, (*This school is not yet outstanding because:*) must be explicit about what the school needs to do to become 'outstanding'.
12. Inspectors must ensure there is an evaluative commentary on the sixth form. It must include the sentence 'The sixth form is outstanding/good/requires improvement/inadequate' (delete as appropriate).
13. Inspectors must provide a brief statement about the impact of leaders, managers and governors on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, making it clear whether or not the school is improving.
14. If the school has boarding or residential provision, inspectors should refer to its overall effectiveness in the key findings of the integrated report, using a separate bullet if needed.

### **Information about the inspection**

15. Include brief comments about the inspection, such as: the number of lessons observed; meetings that took place; the number of responses to Parent View; and any other parents' views taken into account by inspectors.

### **Full report**

#### **Information about this school**

16. Briefly describe the main characteristics of the school and note particularly any significant changes since the last inspection, including if and when the school converted to academy status (see reporting on specific settings below).
  - Include a comment about:
    - the size of the school compared to others of the same type – for example, 'xxx is larger than the average sized primary school', other than for special schools or pupil referral units where there are no comparative data
    - the proportion of pupils supported through school action, and separately, the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, and how the proportions compare with the average, other than for special schools or pupil referral units
    - any other significant groups in the school, including the proportion who are eligible for the pupil premium and how this compares with the national average.
  - Include information about specially resourced provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
  - Include the name/s of any alternative provision that is used by the school.

- Include information about important features, for example, whether the school is part of a children's centre, federation, or has a collaborative sixth form.
- Briefly describe any childcare or boarding provision provided by the school.
- If a section 48 inspection of religious education took place at the same time as the section 5 inspection, then the report should state this.
- Include information about any support being provided to other local schools by the headteacher of this school, and make specific reference if the school headteacher is a national leader of education (NLE), or a local leader of education (LLE).
- Include information about any support that is being provided to the school by a NLE or LLE, and include the name of the school/academy that is supporting the school.
- State whether the school meets the current government floor standards<sup>1 2</sup>.
- Avoid making judgements in this section; for example, do not comment on attainment on entry or attendance.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

17. There should be short, clear, recommended actions for improvement drawn from the most significant weaknesses. Even for schools judged to be outstanding it is highly likely that there will be actions for improvement. The recommended actions for improvement must:
  - be short, clearly articulated, challenging, realistic, and achievable
  - not be too complicated and difficult for the school to act on and monitor
  - be clear for the lay reader to understand.
18. The school's weaknesses should be explained in the 'Full report' section and relate clearly to the key findings.
19. If teaching is not 'good' the first area for improvement must spell out what needs to be done. Inspectors must be precise in specifying which elements of teaching require improvement, and in which subjects or year groups.
20. If leadership and management are judged as 'requires improvement', there must be a clear recommendation. There must also be a recommendation for governors if no action, or ineffective action, has been taken since the previous inspection to improve governance.

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<sup>1</sup> This does not include nursery schools, special schools or pupil referral units.

<sup>2</sup> Inspectors should note that they should not report on school performance against floor standards unless the school has 11 or more pupils and they have published results for all four measures included in the standards.

21. Where a school is judged as 'requires improvement' but leadership and management is judged 'good' or better, and the individual headteacher is deemed to be highly effective, inspectors should clearly report this. This will recognise headteachers and senior leaders working to secure improvement in challenging circumstances.
22. Where governance is weak in a school judged as 'requires improvement' and leadership and management are graded 3, inspectors must include governance in their recommendations for improvement. The form of words to be used is '*An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.*'<sup>3</sup>
23. Inspectors must report on schools' use of the pupil premium. Where the report identifies weaknesses regarding provision and outcomes for pupils eligible for the pupil premium, as may be likely in most 'requires improvement' schools, inspectors should recommend an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium. The form of words to be used is '*An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.*'
24. Where schools are judged to be causing concern because they either have serious weaknesses or require special measures, inspectors will normally recommend an external review of governance and may also recommend an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium.

## Inspection judgements

25. Inspectors must include commentary about each of the main judgements and write these as separate sections under the appropriate header. The suggested length of this section is 1400 words, but inspectors should use their professional judgement in deciding how much detail is required in each section in order to 'tell the story' of the school.
26. The sections must be written in short, sharply written bullet points which explain the judgements and important findings. Unless the school is 'outstanding', it should be clear why the school has not been awarded a higher grade. Inspectors should particularly note the points set out below:

### The achievement of pupils

- If any specific group of pupils has been identified in the 'Information about the school', inspectors must comment on their achievement and explain how well the school is promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.

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<sup>3</sup> Further details on reporting on external reviews of governance are provided in *Subsidiary guidance* (110166), Ofsted, 2014; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110166](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110166).

- When reporting on the use and impact of the pupil premium, it is not enough to state simply that the funding is being well used or not. There has to be a short statement on the attainment, based on average points scores where possible, and progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM) in relation to that for non-FSM pupils, in addition to an evaluation of other evidence used by the school to demonstrate improvements in provision for pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium.
- Inspectors must always report in detail on the progress of the most able pupils and how effectively teaching engages them with work that is challenging enough.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs must be reported on, including any specialist resource provision managed by the governing body.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

- Inspectors must make a clear written judgement about behaviour, and a separate clear written judgement about safety within the inspection report. These should be set out in separate bullet points, and must include the sentences:

*(for behaviour)* 'The behaviour of pupils is outstanding/good/ requires improvement/inadequate (delete as appropriate)'

*(for safety)* 'The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding/good/ requires improvement/inadequate' (delete as appropriate)'

These judgements must be weighed to determine a balanced, graded judgement on behaviour and safety overall. This enables inspectors to make a clear distinction between each area; for example, where behaviour is judged as 'requires improvement', but the safety of pupils is judged to be 'good', inspectors are able to grade behaviour and safety as 'requires improvement' overall, while reporting to parents within the behaviour and safety section of the inspection report that pupils are safe.

- Ensure that reporting on behaviour and attitudes is direct, forceful and lively. For instance, where they require improvement you might use examples like – 'there is litter around the school', 'pupils are slow to settle to lessons', 'work in books is untidy', 'teachers do not set a good example when they arrive late to lessons', 'classrooms are shabby', 'uniform rules are flouted', 'there is gum on carpets', 'pupils drop litter at break and lunch times', 'some pupils dawdle to lessons', 'pupils are slow to settle', 'few bring the right equipment to lessons', 'not all are eager to learn', 'off-task chatter is not discouraged' and so on. Where necessary, link it with wider comments on the leadership, culture and ethos of the school.



### **The quality of teaching**

- Sufficient emphasis must be given to the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and achievement. In reporting on the key judgements, inspectors must give particular attention to the achievement in and teaching of literacy, including reading and mathematics.
- Do not use formulaic statements about teacher-talk dominating lessons, pupils moving to a wide range of activities, matching work to individual needs, or the lack of 'independent learning' and so on. It is perfectly acceptable for teacher talk to dominate lessons if pupils learn well as a result. Being 'passive' is not necessarily always a bad thing for pupils. Focus instead on whether children are being taught knowledge and skills, or being helped to understand.
- Do not focus on the structure but on the content of the lesson and the observations made during it.
- No report that gives the impression that Ofsted has a preference for a particular teaching style will be published. Similarly, do not use unrealistic statements like 'work is not matched precisely to needs to each individual' unless there are few pupils in the class. If you mean 'pupils do not get a dictionary when they come across a new word but guess and so get it wrong' or 'pupils are not made to think for themselves when deciding how to solve a problem in mathematics' then report it like that.
- Where there is alternative provision there must be some evaluation of this in the report.

### **The quality of leadership and management**

- Sufficient emphasis must be given to the quality of leadership and whether there is strong leadership of teaching, effective management, and governance. Make sure you report on the character of the leadership and its impact in creating a culture or ethos in which teaching and good behaviour can flourish.
- Parents need to know if this is a school they can send their children to and what the school stands for. A key question to bear in mind when writing is 'is this a school I would send my children to. If so, why? If not, why? If you answer these questions in the report in a way that a lay person can understand, then it is likely to be a better report. Ensure that this includes comment on the effectiveness of middle leaders, in both primary and secondary schools. There must be specific comments on how well governors know about: the quality of teaching; data on the school's performance; the use of performance management; what is being done to reward good teachers and tackle underperformance.
- A brief comment on the nature of the support of, where applicable, the local authority or academy chain under the section on leadership and management.

- If a school is judged to require special measures, the decision about whether the school should appoint newly qualified teachers will be reported in the inspection report. When inspectors are of the opinion that an academy school which requires special measures is not able to support the induction of newly qualified teachers the following statement should be used: 'Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers'<sup>4</sup>.
- When reporting on the use and impact of the new primary school sport funding, a short statement should be included about participation in PE and sport and its impact on developing healthy lifestyles, better physical wellbeing, and pupils reaching the performance levels they are capable of.

### **Boarding and residential provision**

- In an integrated inspection, there must be a discrete evaluation of the outcomes for boarders/residential pupils and the quality of the boarding/residential provision; all other findings from the boarding inspection are interwoven with the judgements and important findings about the school. Please refer to *Conducting inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools* for further guidance on reporting integrated inspections.<sup>5</sup>

## **Reporting on allegations of child abuse or serious incidents**

27. On a very small number of occasions, inspectors may come across evidence or allegations of child abuse within a school. When such allegations have been made, the lead inspector should report the concerns using the following wording:

*'Concerns raised by some pupils/a pupil/some parents/one parent during the inspection are being examined by the appropriate bodies.'*

28. Where a serious incident concerning the welfare, health and/or safety of pupils has occurred at the school since the last inspection, even if the incident is still under investigation, inspectors should acknowledge this fact in the text of the report in this section. This text should be separated from the main body of the text to ensure that it is clear to the reader:

*'A serious incident that occurred at the school since the previous education inspection is under investigation by the appropriate authorities/has been investigated by the appropriate authorities and is now closed.\* Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind. The welfare provision in*

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<sup>4</sup> The duty to determine whether a school requiring special measures can appoint newly qualified teachers does not extend to academies.

<sup>5</sup> *Conducting inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools* (100180), Ofsted, 2014; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100180](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/100180)

*the school was evaluated against the regulations that are in place and inspection judgements are based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection.'*

**(\*Delete as applicable)**

29. Refer to *Subsidiary guidance*<sup>6</sup> paragraphs 146-148 for a list of serious incidents that should be referred to in a published inspection report and the wording to be used.

## **Reporting on complaints' issues**

30. Where information on a complaint about a school has been retained in the provider information portal for the next section 5 inspection, it is the wider concerns the complaint gives rise to that may be used to inform inspection trails. The complaint only needs to be referred to in the evidence base and no reference to the complaint needs to be made in the body of the inspection report.
31. In circumstances where a section 5 inspection has been brought forward principally due issues arising from a complaint(s), it may be appropriate to make reference to this in the report.
32. Further details can be found in the guidance issued by the National Complaints Team, *Inspector guidance for obtaining complaints and concerns information held by Ofsted in preparation for school inspections*.

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<sup>6</sup> *Subsidiary guidance* : [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110166](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/110166)

## Annex: Additional requirements for specific school settings

### Academy converter schools

33. Inspectors must not refer to the inspection report of the predecessor school of an academy in the main body of the report<sup>7</sup>.
34. If this is the first section 5 inspection of the academy, inspectors should use the 'not previously inspected' option from the drop down box on the front page of the report template next to 'Previous inspection'. The date of the inspection of a predecessor school should not be used.
35. On the 'School details' page, inspectors should type in 'not previously inspected' in the space beside the 'Date of previous school inspection'.
36. On the 'School details' page, beside the 'Local authority', inspectors should type the name of the local authority in which the academy is situated.
37. When reporting for the first time on an academy converter (but **not** for a sponsor-led academy) school inspectors should refer to the predecessor school and its last inspection outcome in the information about the school section of the inspection report. **All** first section 5 inspection reports for academy converter schools must include a factual explanation as indicated below:

*[Insert name of academy] converted to become an academy school on [insert date]. When its predecessor school, [insert name of predecessor school], was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be ...*

### Secondary schools

38. There must be a comment on early entry for GCSE examinations. Where the school has an early entry policy, inspectors must be clear on whether early entry is limiting the potential of the most able pupils. Where early entry is not used, inspectors must comment briefly to that effect.
39. There must be an evaluation of the effectiveness of any alternative provision, even if only small numbers of pupils are involved. If the school does not use alternative provision this should be stated in the information about the school.

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<sup>7</sup> An academy converter school is a new legal entity and it would be misrepresenting its inspection history to refer to an inspection report of its predecessor school. Sponsor-led academies are new schools, even if they were created through an academy order made under the 2010 Academies Act.

## **Special schools**

40. Inspectors should:
- refer to literacy/communication, numeracy or early cognitive skill development and other key aspects appropriate to the pupils' needs
  - not name any commercial schemes such as communication systems (for example Makaton) or pupil performance analysis tools (for example PIVATS).

## **Pupil referral units**

41. In the case of complex pupil referral units where the outcomes and effectiveness of the provision across several sites vary this must be explained clearly in the report.

## **Specially resourced provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in mainstream schools**

42. In the section 'Information about this school' write a brief description of the resourced provision including the nature of the designated special educational need, the number of pupils involved and the age range if it differs from the main school. In the first instance use the term 'specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs' and then subsequently, use the term used by the school.
43. Explain how well the pupils attending the resourced provision are achieving as well as the quality of provision and leadership and management that contribute to pupils' outcomes. In addition, explain any differences in the achievement and provision of pupils attending the resourced provision compared to the achievement and provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in the rest of the school.