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Official Statistics

Further education and skills inspections and outcomes, as at 31 August 2019: main findings

Published 21 November 2019

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Introduction

This release contains:

- provisional data for the most recent inspections and outcomes on 31 August 2019
- provisional data for inspections and monitoring visits carried out between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019
- revised data for inspections and monitoring visits carried out between 1 September 2018 and 28 February 2019

Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, the proportion of general further education colleges judged good or outstanding continued to increase, due to the high proportion that were judged good at their first inspection.

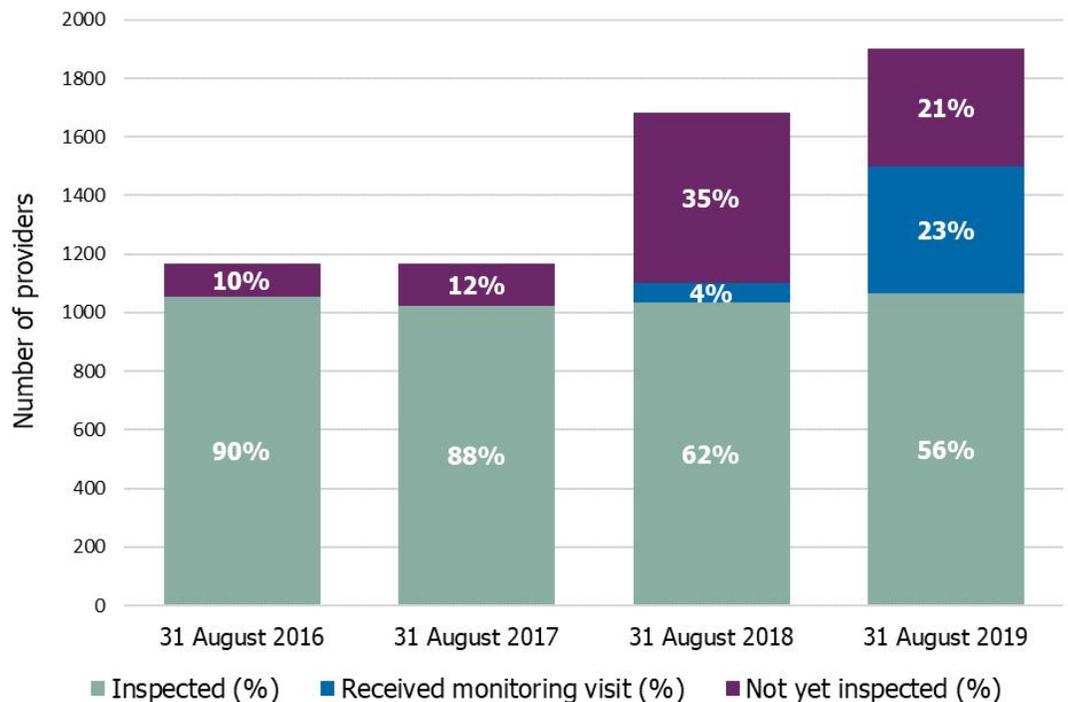
Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, the proportion of providers that had received an inspection or monitoring visit increased from 65% to 79% ([Figure 1](#)).

465 providers were inspected or had a new provider monitoring visit for the first time this year.

As at 31 August 2019, 22% of providers that had received a new apprenticeship provider monitoring visit were judged to have made inadequate progress in at least one area.

Although the proportion of good or outstanding prisons continued to increase, half of prisons were still judged requires improvement or inadequate at their most recent inspection as at 31 August 2019.

Figure 1: Proportion of further education and skills providers inspected or visited, over time



1. Includes providers open and funded as at the date given.
2. Apprenticeship new provider monitoring visits were introduced in February 2018. In March 2019, we introduced new provider monitoring visits for other

- providers, such as those delivering adult education.
3. Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

Providers and inspection volumes

Providers and inspection coverage

The number of further education and skills providers has increased by 63% since August 2017.

On 31 August 2019, there were 1,903 open and funded further education and skills providers recorded on Ofsted's systems. This is 221 more than on 31 August 2018, and 735 more than on 31 August 2017: increases of 13% and 63% respectively.

The increase was largely due to the introduction of apprenticeship funding reforms in April 2017. The funding reforms have mostly affected independent learning providers (including employer providers). The number of independent learning providers (including employer providers) has increased by 143% since 31 August 2017, rising from 491 on 31 August 2017 to 1,192 on 31 August 2019.

The number of general further education (FE) colleges continues to decline due to mergers. Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, there were 11 mergers involving general FE colleges. Five of these were between 2 general FE colleges, and 3 were between a general FE college and a sixth-form college. In addition, there were some 3-way mergers. Activate Learning, Sunderland College, and Havant and South Downs College each underwent mergers with 2 other colleges during the year. As at 31 August 2019, there were 171 general FE colleges.

As at 31 August 2019, 21% of the 1,903 open and funded further education providers had not received a new provider monitoring visit or an inspection: 14 percentage points lower than as at 31 August 2018.

In-year monitoring visit volumes

Monitoring visits accounted for 68% of the total number of inspections this year.

Following the increase in the number of apprenticeship providers, Ofsted introduced new provider monitoring visits in February 2018. A monitoring visit is an interim type of inspection that explores one or more specific themes.

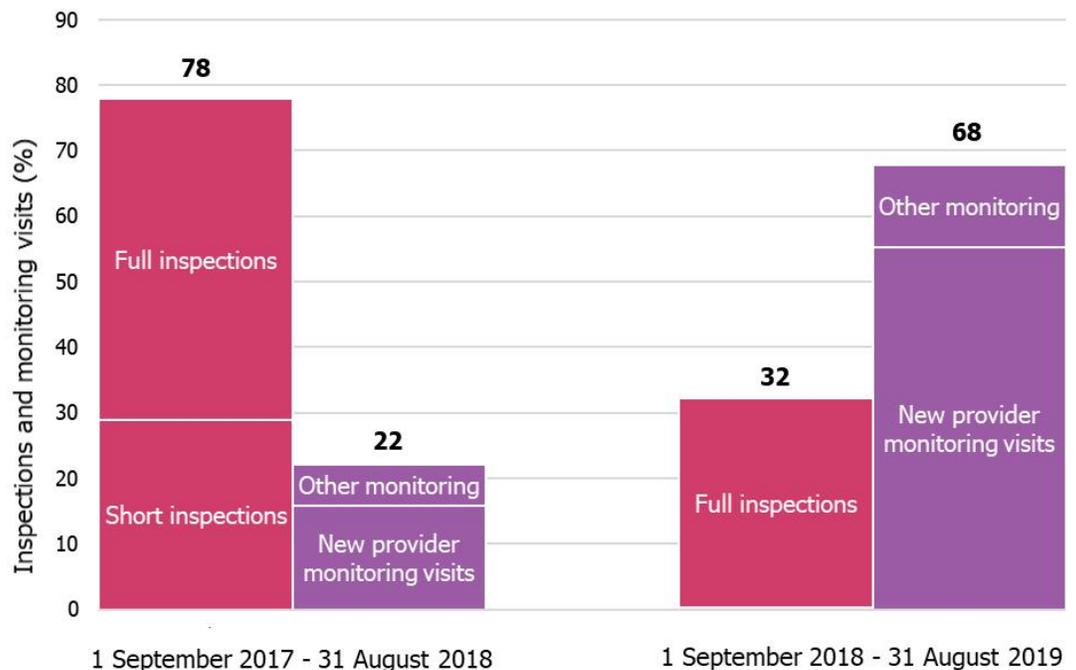
The proportion of inspection activity represented by monitoring visits continues to rise. Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, they accounted for 68% of the total number of inspections.

The 497 monitoring visits can be broken down as follows:

- 334 new provider monitoring visits to providers newly and directly funded for apprenticeships
- 18 safeguarding visits to apprenticeship providers, following an insufficient judgement for safeguarding at a new provider monitoring visit
- 53 new provider monitoring visits to newly funded providers delivering adult education
- 92 other monitoring visits, including visits to providers previously judged requires improvement or inadequate, along with monitoring visits to newly merged colleges

Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, 465 providers received a new provider monitoring visit or were inspected by Ofsted for the first time.

Figure 2: Balance of inspections and monitoring visits, by reporting year



1. 'New provider monitoring visits' includes monitoring visits to providers newly funded through the apprenticeship levy. It also includes monitoring visits to providers delivering adult education, which started in March 2019. 'Other

monitoring' includes all other types of monitoring visits.

In-year inspection volumes

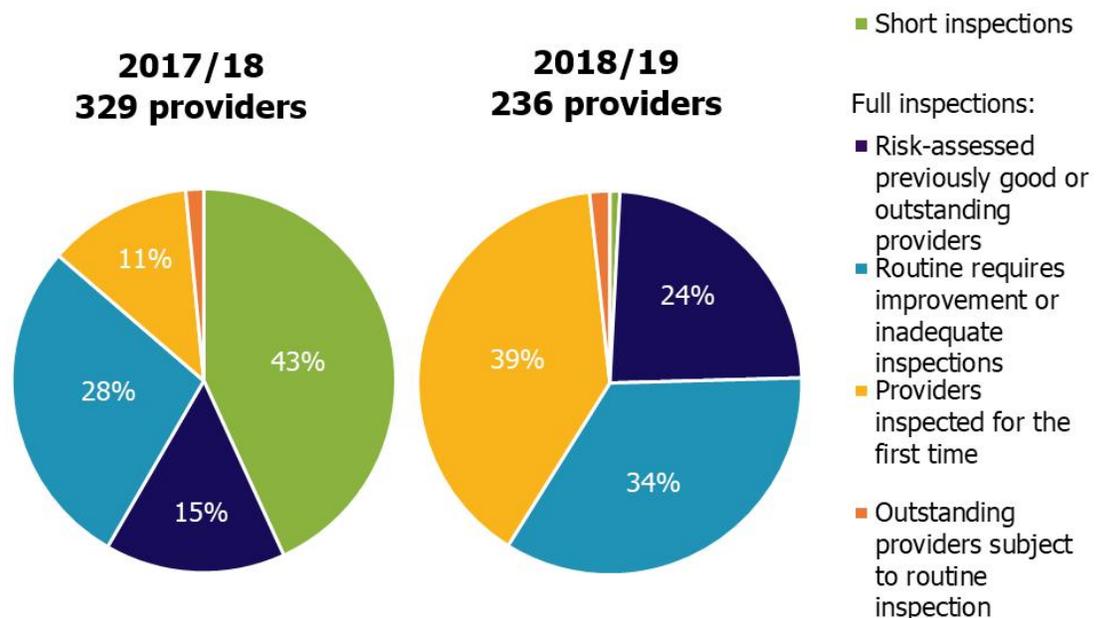
Only 2 short inspections were carried out between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019.

Since the introduction of short inspections in September 2015, full and short inspections have accounted for, on average, nearly 90% of further education and skills inspection activity in any given year. The remainder of the activity was made up of monitoring visits. In March 2019, we introduced new provider monitoring visits for other providers, such as those delivering adult education.

The 3-year cycle of short inspections concluded on 31 August 2018. A policy change from 1 September 2018 meant that providers previously judged good needed to be inspected within 5 years of their latest inspection. This provided the flexibility to respond to the rapid increase of providers in the sector by carrying out a large number of new provider monitoring visits over this reporting year.

These changes have led to only 2 short inspections being carried out this reporting year and therefore, the proportion of full and short inspection activity has reduced to 32%.

Figure 3: Proportion of providers selected for inspection, by inspection type and reporting year



Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, 236 further education and skills providers were inspected. This included 106 independent learning providers (including employer providers), 33 general FE colleges, 26 independent specialist colleges, 25 community learning and skills providers, 20 higher education institutions, 10 sixth-form colleges and 16 other providers.

The 236 inspections can be broken down as follows:

- 81 full inspections of providers previously judged requires improvement or inadequate
- 56 risk-assessed full inspections of providers previously judged good or outstanding
- 93 full inspections of providers which received their first overall effectiveness grade
- 4 full inspections of outstanding providers subject to routine inspection¹
- 2 short inspections of providers previously judged good.

Inspection outcomes

In-year inspection outcomes

The proportion of providers judged good or outstanding was 15 percentage points lower than last year due to the small number of short inspections during this period.

Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, the proportion of providers judged good or outstanding was 55%. This is 15 percentage points lower than during the previous reporting year (1 September 2017 to 31 August 2018).

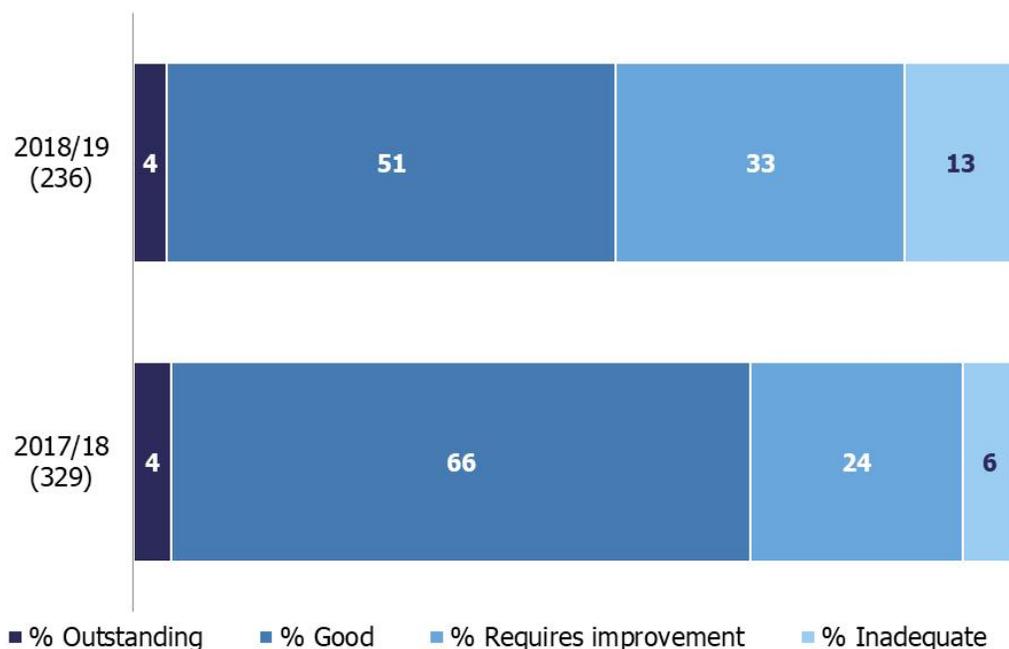
Excluding short and converted inspections, the difference between reporting years disappears. Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, 234 providers had a full inspection, of which 54% were judged good or outstanding. This is 2 percentage points higher compared with last year.

Historically, around 90% of the providers that received a short inspection in any given year (including those that converted to a full inspection) remained good or improved to outstanding. It is therefore not surprising that, without short inspections this year, the proportion of providers judged good or outstanding was much lower.

Figure 4: Further education and skills providers' full and short inspection

outcomes, by reporting year

Number of inspections in brackets



The providers judged to be good between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019 were made up of:

- 46 providers previously judged requires improvement that improved to good
- 42 providers that received a first overall effectiveness grade of good
- 24 providers that were previously judged good and remained good (including 2 following short inspections)
- 7 providers that were previously judged outstanding that declined to good
- 1 provider previously judged inadequate that improved to good

In-year safeguarding judgements

The proportion of providers inspected between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019 that had effective safeguarding arrangements in place was 94%.

Of the 236 providers inspected between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, 223 had effective safeguarding arrangements in place for learners. Thirteen providers were judged not to have effective safeguarding arrangements in place. Four of these providers were previously judged requires improvement and 3 were previously judged good. The remaining 6 were inspected for the first time.

In the providers that did not have effective safeguarding arrangements in place, inspectors found:

- that learners did not know how to keep themselves safe or who to contact should they need to raise a concern
- a failure to implement safeguarding policies and procedures to protect learners
- a failure to ensure adequate risk assessments had been carried out
- a failure to highlight personal e-safety and potential online risks
- that too few learners understood the risks of radicalisation and extremism, especially any significant risks in their local area

In-year monitoring visit outcomes

More than a fifth of apprenticeship providers were making insufficient progress in one or more areas at their new provider monitoring visit.

There were 334 new apprenticeship provider monitoring visits carried out this year. Of these, 322 were to independent learning providers (including employer providers), 11 to higher education institutions, and one to a community learning and skills provider.

Overall, 78% of providers were making at least reasonable progress across all areas that they were assessed on during their new provider monitoring visit. However, this leaves more than a fifth of providers making insufficient progress in one or more judgements.

Table 1: Apprenticeship new provider monitoring visit outcomes, between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019

Number of providers

Progress judgement	Insufficient progress	Reasonable progress	Significant progress
How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?	68	235	31
What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?	63	233	38
How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?	24	282	28

What progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals? ²	1	24	2
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There were also 18 follow up monitoring visits to review safeguarding where the provider had previously been judged to be making insufficient progress. At these visits, all 18 providers were now found to be making at least reasonable progress in safeguarding.

In addition, Ofsted carried out 53 new provider monitoring visits to new providers delivering adult learning programmes. This type of visit was introduced in March 2019. Overall, 89% were found to be making at least reasonable progress in all areas assessed. One provider was found to be making insufficient progress in safeguarding.

Table 2: Adult learning new provider monitoring visit outcomes, by number and percentage of insufficient progress judgements, between 1 March 2018 and 31 August 2019

Number of providers

Progress judgement	Insufficient progress	Reasonable progress	Significant progress
How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering adult learning provision that has a clearly defined purpose?	6	40	6
What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that adult learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals?	6	41	6
How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?	1	48	4

Most recent inspection outcomes

The proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection has remained the same.

On 31 August 2019, 81% of the 1,096 open and funded further education and skills providers that had been inspected were judged to be good or outstanding at their most recent inspection.

The proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection can be affected by:

- providers whose overall effectiveness grade improves or declines at inspection during the year
- new providers receiving their first overall effectiveness judgement
- providers Ofsted no longer reports on because they have merged, ceased to be funded or closed

Providers receiving their first overall effectiveness grade between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019 had an almost equal number judged good or outstanding (47), compared with requires improvement or inadequate (46).

The proportion of newly inspected providers judged good or outstanding this year was 55%. This had a slightly negative impact on the proportion judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection, as at 31 August 2019.

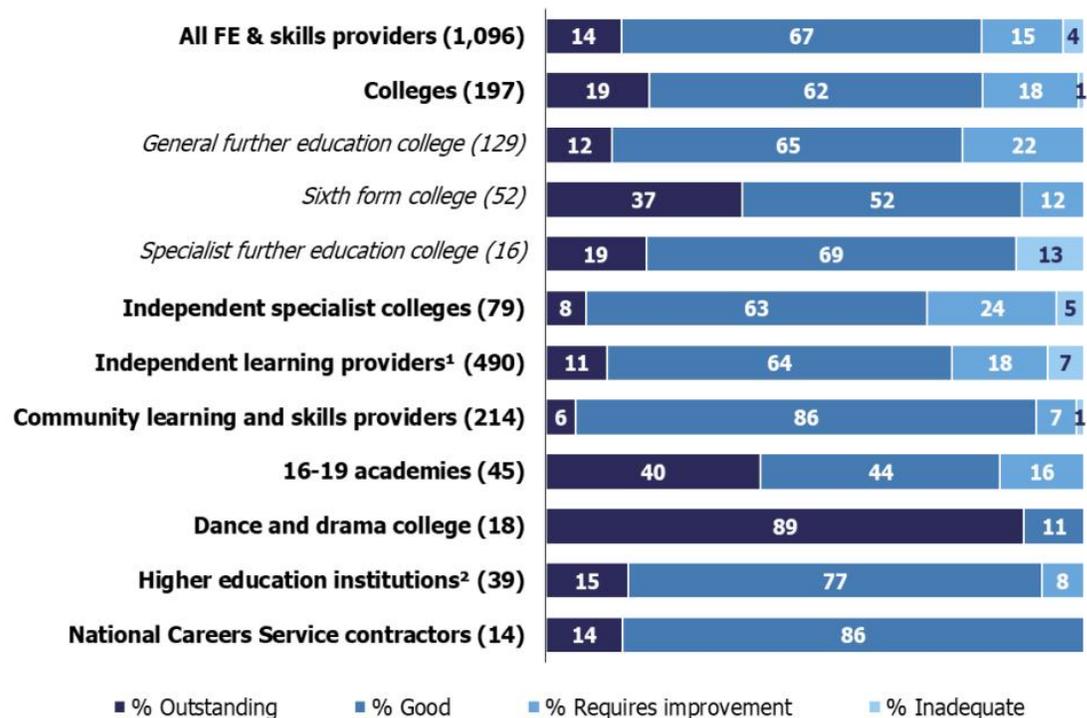
More providers improved to good from requires improvement or inadequate (47) than declined to requires improvement or inadequate from good or outstanding (27). This has a positive impact on the most recent statistics.

There were 52 inspected providers that merged, ceased to be funded or closed between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019. Of these, 62% were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection.

The above factors meant that the overall proportion judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection remained the same as at 31 August 2018.

Figure 5: Overall effectiveness of further education (FE) and skills providers at their most recent inspection, on 31 August 2019

Note: number of providers in brackets.



1. Includes employer providers.
2. Inspection of further education provision only, not provider as a whole.
3. Before 1 September 2012, providers with an inspection outcome of grade 3 were judged as satisfactory.
4. Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100. Where the number of providers is small, percentages should be treated with caution.

Inspection outcomes by provider group

General further education colleges

The proportion of general FE colleges judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection increased by 2 percentage points, due to the high proportion newly inspected that were good or outstanding.

Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, 33 general FE colleges were inspected, with 48% judged good or outstanding. This is 20 percentage points lower than last year, partly as a result of there being no short inspections. However, even if we consider full inspections only, the proportion of general FE colleges judged good or outstanding this year was still 12 percentage points lower than last year.

Nine general FE colleges previously judged good were identified through risk assessment for inspection this year, continuing a decline in the number of previously good colleges inspected (Figure 6). Eight of these declined to requires improvement at inspection. This was a higher proportion than in previous years.

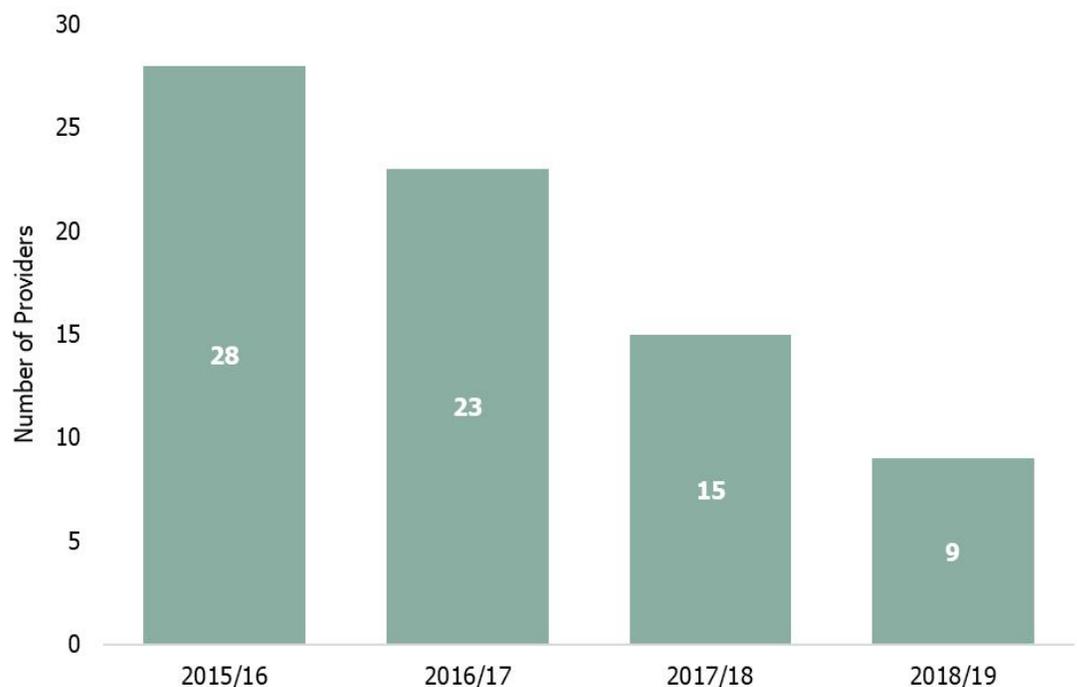
Two previously outstanding providers were inspected. One was judged good and the other requires improvement.

Sixteen general FE colleges previously judged requires improvement received their next routine full inspection. Nine of these colleges were successful in improving to good.

Nine general FE colleges previously good or outstanding declined to requires improvement, and 9 previously judged requires improvement improved to good.

In addition, 6 general FE colleges were inspected for the first time. Five were judged to be good, and only 1 requires improvement. This meant that the proportion of general FE colleges judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection continued to increase, to 78% on 31 August 2019.

Figure 6: Number of risk assessed inspections of general FE colleges previously judged good, over time



Independent learning providers (including employer providers)

The proportion of independent learning providers (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection continues to decline gradually.

Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, 106 independent learning providers (including employer providers) were inspected. Of these, 42% were judged good or outstanding. This is 21 percentage points lower than last year, which was largely caused by the absence of short inspections. However, if we consider full inspections only, the proportion of independent learning providers (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding this year was broadly in line with last year.

Of the 29 independent learning providers (including employer providers) previously judged requires improvement, 12 improved to good. Eleven remained requires improvement and a further 6 declined to inadequate.

There were 7 previously good or outstanding independent learning providers (including employer providers) risk assessed for a full inspection that declined: 4 to requires improvement and 3 to inadequate.

Between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, we inspected 60 independent learning providers (including employer providers) for the first time. Thirty-six of those providers were judged requires improvement or inadequate. Most of these providers had not previously had a monitoring visit because they entered the sector before apprenticeship funding reforms in April 2017, when the policy was introduced.

These inspection outcomes meant that the proportion of independent learning providers (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection declined slightly, to 76% as at 31 August 2019.

Other further education and skills providers

Table 3: Number of inspections by overall effectiveness, for provider types with between 10 and 30 inspections, between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019

Note: number of providers in brackets.

Provider group	Total	Outstanding	Good	RI	Inadequate
Community learning and skills providers (217)	24	0	16	5	3
Independent specialist colleges (97)	26	0	13	9	4
Higher education institutions (69)	20	2	16	2	0

Sixth form colleges (54)	10	1	7	2	0
16 to 19 academies (52)	10	1	7	2	0

Prisons and young offender institutions

The proportion of prisons and young offender institutions judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection has increased to 50%.

On 31 August 2019, there were 114 prisons and young offender institutions (YOIs). All the prisons and YOIs had been inspected.

Ofsted contributed to 45 prison and YOI inspections where the reports were published between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019. One was judged outstanding for overall effectiveness of education, skills and work (overall effectiveness)³, 17 were judged good, 20 requires improvement and 7 inadequate.

For 2 of the 45 prisons and YOIs, this was the first time they had received an overall effectiveness judgement since it was introduced in March 2014. One was judged good and the other requires improvement.

Forty-three of the prisons and YOIs had been inspected before. Eight of those prisons and YOIs improved from requires improvement or inadequate to good and 6 declined from good to requires improvement or inadequate. Of the 17 prisons previously judged requires improvement that did not improve, 13 remained requires improvement and 4 declined to inadequate.

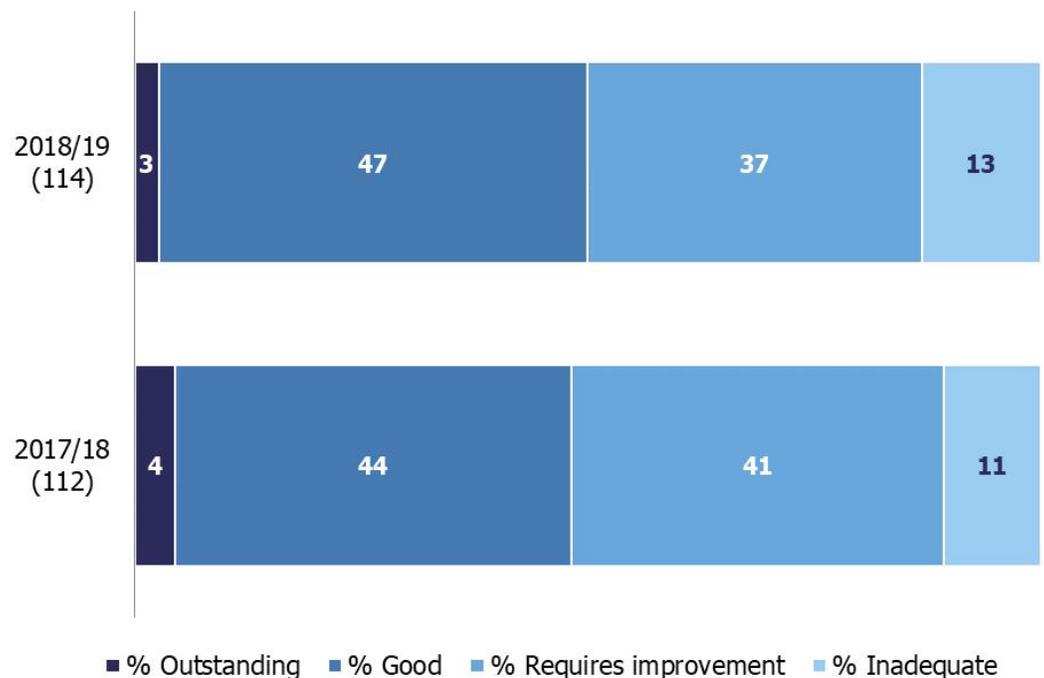
Table 4: The overall effectiveness³ of education, skills and work in prisons and young offender institutions published between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019, by previous overall effectiveness grade

Previous overall effectiveness	Total number of inspections	Overall effectiveness (number)			
		Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Outstanding	3	1	2	0	0
Good	12	0	6	4	2
Requires improvement	24	0	7	13	4
Inadequate	4	0	1	2	1
No previous overall effectiveness judgement	2	0	1	1	0
Total	45	1	17	20	7



Overall, 2 more prisons improved to be good than declined to be less than good. Therefore, the in-year inspection outcomes increased the proportion of prisons and YOIs judged good or outstanding for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection by 2 percentage points, from 48% at 31 August 2018 to 50% at 31 August 2019. However, the proportion judged inadequate increased by 2 percentage points.

Figure 7: Overall effectiveness of education, skills and work in prisons and young offender institutions at their most recent inspection, over time



This year, we joined Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons' (HMIP) independent reviews of progress (IRPs) in prisons that had been identified as performing poorly overall, by carrying out Ofsted prison monitoring visits alongside the IRP but contributing to HMIP's overall IRP report. IRPs are carried out approximately a year after the previous inspection. We carried out 8 prison monitoring visits alongside HMIP's IRPs. We made progress judgements at 5 of these visits, and identified only 2 prisons as having made reasonable progress in all themes covered.

We will continue to work jointly with HMIP on joint prison and YOI inspections. In addition, and from 2020, we may carry out prison inspections on our own in establishments where we have identified the greatest need to improve.

Revisions to previous release

In-year statistics

Alongside these official statistics, we have published a revised provider-level dataset, which includes inspections carried out between 1 September 2018 and 28 February 2019. This is due to our publishing additional inspection reports since the previous iteration of these statistics. These changes do not affect the overall messages of the main findings or the tables and charts as previously reported.

Revisions to data in this publication are published in line with [Ofsted's revisions policy for official statistics](#).

Notes

Full inspections

Providers judged outstanding at their most recent inspection are not normally subject to routine inspection.⁴ However, an outstanding provider may be risk assessed to receive a full inspection if its performance declines or there is another compelling reason, such as potential safeguarding issues.

Providers judged good for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection will usually be inspected within the 5 years from the date of that inspection. This will normally be a short inspection (see below) but may be a risk-assessed full inspection when information suggests that this is the most appropriate course of

action, for example if the provider's performance has declined.

A provider judged requires improvement at its most recent inspection will normally have a full re-inspection within 12 to 30 months.

We monitor providers judged as inadequate and re-inspect them within 15 months of publication of their last full inspection report.⁵

Short inspections

Providers awarded a grade of good for overall effectiveness at their previous inspection will usually receive a short inspection.

A short inspection will determine whether the provider continues to provide a good standard of education/training for learners and whether safeguarding is effective.

A short inspection will not make individual graded judgements and will not change the provider's overall effectiveness grade.

The lead inspector can choose to convert the short inspection to a full inspection when:

- there is insufficient evidence to confirm that the provider remains good
- there are concerns that the provider may no longer be good, which may include concerns about safeguarding
- there is sufficient evidence of improved performance to suggest that the provider may be judged outstanding

If the inspection is converted to a full inspection, inspectors will make the full set of graded judgements. As a result of the converted inspection, the provider could improve, decline or remain the same.

The [quality report for these official statistics](#) contains an explanation of the methodology used and the relevant inspection frameworks, along with other useful information.

Glossary

General further education colleges

General further education colleges offer a range of education and training opportunities for learners aged from 14 years upwards, including adults. They

include tertiary colleges, which specialise in land-based education and training.

Sixth-form colleges

A sixth-form college is an educational institution where students aged 16 to 18 typically study for advanced school-level qualifications, such as A levels, or school-level qualifications such as GCSEs.

Specialist further education colleges

Specialist further education colleges are colleges that specialise in agricultural, horticultural or art, design and technology courses.

Independent specialist colleges

Independent specialist colleges provide education and training for students with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities, whose learning needs cannot be met by their local college or provider.

Independent learning providers (including employer providers)

Independent learning providers are companies that provide government-funded education. The category includes employer providers that only offer government-funded training to their own employees.

Community learning and skills providers

Community learning and skills providers include local authorities, charities, voluntary, not-for-profit companies and community organisations, specialist designated institutions and community interest companies. Their provision is diverse in character and aims to meet the needs and interests of a wide range of communities. Courses include: those that lead to a qualification; programmes leading to qualifications while in employment (such as apprenticeships); provision for informal adult learning; and provision for social and personal development.

Community learning and skills providers were previously categorised as adult and

community learning providers.

16 to 19 academies

These are state-funded, non-fee-paying schools, independent of local authorities, that cater for pupils aged 16 to 19.

Dance and drama colleges

Colleges that specialise in delivering dance and drama courses.

Higher education institutions

If higher education institutions (such as universities) offer further education courses and/or level 4 or 5 apprenticeships, these are subject to Ofsted inspections.

National Careers Service contractors

The National Careers Service provides information, advice and guidance for those aged 13 and over across England. The service is delivered in 12 geographical regions by area-based prime contractors and a national contact centre by one national contractor.

Prisons and young offender institutions

We inspect prisons and young offender institutions in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP). Ofsted inspectors evaluate the quality of education, skills and work in prisons and young offender institutions. Inspection reports can be found on the [HMIP website](#).

Further information

Contact for comments or feedback

If you have any comments or feedback on this publication, please contact Sarah Pearce on 03000 130 632 or Sarah.Pearce@ofsted.gov.uk.

Acknowledgements

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1. The following provider types remain subject to routine inspection when judged outstanding: higher education institutions offering further education, local authority providers, independent specialist colleges and dance and drama colleges. [↵](#)
2. This judgement was only made at new provider monitoring visits to providers offering adult education. [↵](#)
3. Previously known as 'learning and skills and work activities'. [↵](#) [↵](#)²
4. The following types of provision are still subject to routine inspection when they have been judged outstanding: higher education institutions offering further education; local authority providers; independent specialist colleges; dance and drama colleges; and learning and skills provision in prisons. [↵](#)
5. Full re-inspections or re-inspection monitoring visits may not happen in certain circumstances, for example when a provider's funding contract has been terminated. [↵](#)

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