

Inspection of residential provision in schools

A guide for independent and maintained boarding and residential special schools

In which schools does Ofsted inspect residential provision?

Ofsted inspects the residential provision made by all independent boarding schools; maintained boarding schools; independent and maintained residential special schools; and children's homes which are also registered as education providers.

How often do inspections happen?

Ofsted conducts an inspection of residential provision in a maintained or independent boarding school once in a three year period. In a residential special school we conduct an annual inspection of the residential provision. Children's homes are inspected twice each year.

Are inspections of residential provision ever combined with the inspection of the school?

Yes. Where the school inspection and the residential inspection are both due at the same time, they are combined into an integrated inspection of the whole school. The timing of inspections varies with the type of school as follows:

- **Independent residential special schools** receive an annual inspection of residential provision, which is combined once in a three year period with the school inspection.
- **Maintained residential special schools** receive an annual inspection of residential provision. It will be combined with the school inspection once in a three year period for schools that were judged to be satisfactory at their previous inspection; and at any time within a five year period for schools previously judged to be good or better.
- **Independent boarding schools which are members of the Independent Schools Council** receive an inspection of residential provision once in a three year period. The education inspection of these



schools is conducted by the Independent Schools Inspectorate. Ofsted will align its boarding inspection with that of the Independent Schools Inspectorate where both are due within six months of each other. A similar system is used for independent boarding schools which are inspected by other independent inspectorates.

- **Independent boarding schools which are not members of schools' associations** receive an integrated inspection of residential provision and education once in a three year period.
- **Maintained and independent children's homes which are also registered education providers** receive two inspections of residential provision each year. The school provision is inspected once in a three year period, and this is integrated with the residential inspection, although two separate reports are produced.

How long do inspections last?

The length of an inspection can vary but it is generally spread over three days in school, which includes up to two evenings. A residential inspection is never longer than three days and may be shorter in a very small school. When integrated with a school inspection the residential inspection starts on the evening before the school inspection starts.

The number of inspectors on a team is also varied to suit the circumstances of the school. More information may be found in our guidance *Inspecting residential provision in boarding and residential special schools* which is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100180.

Who inspects residential provision in schools?

Residential provision is inspected by Ofsted's own inspectors. They are either social care regulatory inspectors or Her Majesty's Inspectors. All inspectors have been trained to our standards and are experienced in the inspection of residential settings.

What happens during an inspection?

Inspectors draw on any school self-evaluation and analyse the views of boarders, parents and carers, and staff or placing authorities (where relevant). They talk to the headteacher, governors, boarding, residential or care staff, and residential pupils. They inspect the quality of the premises and accommodation provided for boarders. They observe mealtimes, before- and after-school routines, extra-curricular activities and arrangements for the healthcare and support of residential pupils.

Inspectors assess whether the school's residential provision meets the national minimum standards relevant for the type of school. Where it does not, they state clearly which standards are not met and what must be done to improve. On an integrated school inspection, inspectors make judgements about the effectiveness of

the boarding provision according to the criteria set out in *The framework for school inspection* and *The evaluation schedule for schools* for maintained schools, or *The framework for inspecting education in non-association independent schools*, as appropriate.^{1,2,3} On a separate inspection of the residential provision alone, inspectors make judgements according to the *Benchmarking guidance on making social care inspection judgements*.⁴ Further information can be found in *Inspecting residential provision in boarding and residential special schools* which is available on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100180.

What happens after the inspection?

The inspection judgement(s) for the residential provision are reported to the headteacher and governors. The inspectors' findings are published in a report for the school, parents and the wider community. This may either take the form of a separate report on the residential provision (where it has been inspected as a separate event) or as part of an integrated report which covers both education and boarding provision. The inspection report provides information about how effective the residential provision is and contains recommendations for improvement. The school is given time and opportunity to comment on the accuracy of the draft report prior to publication. The school must take all reasonable steps to make sure parents and carers receive a copy of the report. The report of an independent school is sent to the Department for Education (DfE), which is the registering authority. Reports are also published on our website at www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports.

What happens if Ofsted judges the residential provision in a school to be 'inadequate'?

If the inspectors judge the residential provision in an independent school to be inadequate this will be made clear in the inspection report. The DfE may serve the school with a statutory notice to improve and ask the school to produce an action plan for improvement within a given timeframe. It is likely that the DfE will ask inspectors to monitor and report on the school's progress. If the school does not make satisfactory progress, the DfE can issue an order to prevent the school from taking residential pupils; in extreme circumstances, the DfE may issue the school with a deletion order from the register of independent schools.

If, on an integrated inspection, the inspectors judge the residential provision to be inadequate in a maintained school, this may cause the school to be placed in a category of concern. Where the residential provision is inspected as a separate

¹ *The evaluation schedule for schools* (090098), Ofsted, 2011; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090098.

² *The framework for school inspection* (090019), Ofsted, 2011; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090019.

³ *The framework for inspecting education in non-association independent schools* (090036), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090036.

⁴ *Benchmarking guidance on making social care inspection judgements* (080042), Ofsted, 2008; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/080042.

event, Ofsted would take account of the inadequacies in deciding the timing of the next full inspection of the school.

What happens if headteachers or others have concerns about the inspection?

Complaints are rare, but we treat them very seriously. You can find out more on our website at www.ofsted.gov.uk, or by calling our helpline on 0300 123 1231.

If you need any more information about our work, please visit our website or call our helpline.

How can parents or carers express concerns about their child's school?

If parents are concerned about their child's school, they should start by talking directly to the teachers or headteacher. Or, if necessary, they can talk to the governing body, proprietor or the local authority (in a maintained school).

In the case of maintained schools, if parents are not satisfied with the responses they receive Ofsted may be able to help.

Concerns about independent schools should be addressed to the registration authority:

Independent and Boarding Team
Department for Education
Mowden Hall
Staindrop Road
Darlington
DL3 9BG.

The registration authority may ask Ofsted to investigate.

Parents can find out more on our website or by calling our helpline.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
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Helpline: 0300 123 1231
www.ofsted.gov.uk

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