

The draft framework for school inspection

Guidance and grade descriptors for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, from January 2012

The framework for school inspection shows how the general principles and processes are applied to inspections of maintained schools and several other types of school in England. It sets out the statutory basis for inspection and summarises the main features of school inspections carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 from January 2012.

This is a draft framework and is marked as such because these changes to inspection arrangements are subject to Parliamentary approval when the Education Bill receives Royal Assent.

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Introduction

How have inspections changed?

1. Ofsted reviewed its arrangements for inspecting schools from January 2012 in the light of the 2011 Education Bill and government policy that reflected ‘the importance of inspection focusing even more extensively on the quality of teaching when judging the quality of the school, with inspectors spending most of their time in classrooms’.¹ Inspection will be refocused on the things that really matter, recognising the achievements of the highest performers by exempting them from routine section 5 inspection, helping to address inequality and disadvantage, and to improve standards.
2. Ofsted has built on the strengths of the current inspection system but is focusing more sharply on those aspects of the work of schools that have greatest impact on raising achievement. As is always the case when introducing a new inspection framework, Ofsted intends to raise expectations and contribute more strongly to school improvement.
3. The practical effect on inspections is to:
 - reduce the scope of inspection and the number of judgements that are required
 - further increase the proportion of inspectors’ time in school that is spent observing teaching and gathering evidence of learning, progress and behaviour
 - enable schools, via the appropriate authority, to request an inspection and for Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HMCI) to charge for this²
 - discontinue the expectation that schools complete a standard self-evaluation form, although inspectors will take account of any summary of self-evaluation evidence that they present.
4. Inspections will continue to foster the engagement of headteachers, school staff and governors in the process of inspection so that they understand better the basis for the judgements made. Inspectors will give greater consideration to the views of parents, pupils and staff as important evidence.
5. Inspectors must judge and report on³ the **quality of education provided in the school**, its overall effectiveness, and in particular cover:
 - **the achievement of pupils at the school**

¹ *The importance of teaching – the schools White Paper 2010* (Cm 7980), DfE, 2010; www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/CM%207980.

² Sections 8(3) and (4) of the Education Act 2005, as inserted by clause 39(4) of the Education Bill 2011.

³ Under sections 5 (5A) and (5B) of the Education Act 2005 as substituted by clause 40 of the Education Bill 2011.

- **the quality of teaching in the school**
- **the quality of leadership and management of the school**
- **the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school.**

In reporting, inspectors must also consider:

- the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development at the school
 - the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular the needs of disabled pupils⁴ and pupils who have special educational needs.
6. This framework sets out the **purpose** of school inspections. It refers to the statutory basis for inspection.⁵ It describes the **policy and principles** that apply to inspections of maintained schools, academies, including free schools, university technology colleges, studio schools and some non-maintained special schools in England.⁶ It should be read in conjunction with the *Evaluation Schedule for the inspection of maintained schools and academies*⁷ and *Conducting the Inspection*.

What is the purpose of school inspection?

7. The inspection of a school provides an independent external evaluation of its effectiveness and a diagnosis of what it should do to improve, based upon a range of evidence including that from first hand observation by inspectors. Ofsted's school inspection reports present a written commentary on the quality of a school's provision, as outlined in paragraph 4.
8. Ofsted's inspections of schools perform three essential functions. They:
- provide parents⁸ with an expert and independent assessment of how well a school is performing and help inform those who are choosing a school for their child to attend in the future
 - keep the Secretary of State for Education (and parliament) informed about the work of schools; this provides assurance that minimum standards are being met, provides confidence in the use of public money and assists accountability
 - promote the improvement of individual schools and the education system as a whole.

⁴ For the purposes of the Equalities Act 2010.

⁵ School inspections are governed by the Education Act 2005, the Education and Inspection Act 2006 and the provisions in the Education Bill 2011, subject to parliamentary approval.

⁶ See paragraph 12 for a full list of schools covered by section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

⁷ *The evaluation schedule for the inspection of maintained schools and academies*
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/110127

⁸ The term 'parents' refers to mothers, fathers and/or carers.

How does inspection promote improvement?

9. The government expects schools to be in control of their own improvement and to set improvement priorities.⁹ Ofsted is required to carry out its work in ways which encourage the services it inspects and regulates to improve, be user-focused and be efficient and effective in the use of resources.¹⁰
10. Inspection acts in a number of ways to drive and support school improvement, for example by:
 - setting expectations: the criteria and grade descriptors set out in the inspection framework illustrate the standards of performance and effectiveness expected of schools
 - increasing the school's confidence: by endorsing its own view of its effectiveness when that is accurate, and offering a sharp challenge and the impetus to act where improvement is needed
 - clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses
 - recommending specific priorities for improvement for the school and, when appropriate, checking subsequent progress
 - fostering constructive dialogue between inspectors and those who lead and work in the school
 - complementing the school's self-evaluation and promoting its rigour, thereby enhancing the school's capacity to improve.

Part A. Inspection policy and principles

What are the legal requirements for the inspection of schools?

11. This framework sets out the statutory basis for inspection based on the Education Act 2005, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the forthcoming Education Act, subject to the Education Bill 2011 receiving royal assent. It summarises the main features of school inspections that will take place in England from January 2012.
12. This inspection framework applies to all maintained schools, including special schools and pupil referral units. It also covers academies,¹¹ city technology colleges, city colleges for the technology of the arts and some non-maintained special schools in England. It does not apply to any other independent schools.

⁹ *The importance of teaching – the schools White Paper 2010*, (Cm7980), DfE, 2010; www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/CM%207980.

¹⁰ Section 117(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

¹¹ Academies are state-funded independent schools. The same inspection schedule and associated guidance apply to academies as to other maintained schools. The family of academy schools includes: sponsor-led academies, schools that have converted to academy status under the Academies Act 2010, academy special schools, free schools, university technical colleges, technical academies and studio schools.

13. All schools covered by this framework have their own unique reference number (URN). Any institution with a URN that is inspected by Ofsted will receive an inspection report. Those schools that work in partnership with other schools through federation or other collaborative activities will receive separate inspection reports if they have separate URNs.
14. Regular school inspections are often termed 'section 5 inspections'.¹² The Education Bill before parliament includes a clause whereby maintained primary and secondary schools and Academy converters judged by Ofsted to be outstanding at their previous inspection will be exempt from section 5 inspection subject to their continuing to perform well.¹³ These will be known as 'exempt schools' if the Bill receives parliamentary approval.
15. Schools must be inspected at prescribed intervals.¹⁴ Regulations require maintained schools, other than exempt schools, to be inspected within five school years of the end of the school year in which they were last inspected.¹⁵ The inspection arrangements will ensure that the frequency and weight of inspection are proportional to the needs and circumstances of schools, so some schools will be inspected more frequently than at five-year intervals.
16. Exempt schools will remain eligible for inspection under section 8 of the 2005 Act and so may be subject to inspection as part of Ofsted's programme of surveys of curriculum subjects and aspects of the curriculum, including surveys focused on best practice in schools. Exempt schools may also be inspected under this section in circumstances where HMCI or the Secretary of State for Education has concerns about the performance of the school as identified through the risk assessment process set out in paragraph 19. HMCI is enabled to treat an inspection of an exempt school conducted under section 8 as if it were an inspection under section 5, and is required to do so where requested by the Secretary of State for Education.¹⁶
17. Some schools are designated by the Secretary of State for Education as having a religious character.¹⁷ The content of collective worship and denominational education in such schools is inspected separately under section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The governing body, in consultation with its associated faith body, is responsible for arranging the section 48 inspection and can seek to have this coincide with the school's section 5 inspection.
18. Early years registered childcare provision is inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. Where the provision is managed by the school, the section

¹² Under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

¹³ Regulations to be published by the Department for Education, made under clause 5(4A) of the Education Bill 2011, will provide that the duty to inspect a school does not apply to a school that has been judged by Ofsted to be outstanding at its previous inspection.

¹⁴ Regulation 3 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended).

¹⁵ A school year begins on 1 August for these purposes.

¹⁶ Section 9 of the 2005 Act as amended by clause 39 of the Education Bill 2011.

¹⁷ Under section 69(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

49 inspection is carried out concurrently with the section 5 inspection and the quality of the provision reported in a single inspection report. However, where registered provision on a school's site is managed by a private, voluntary and/or independent provider, it is inspected separately under the Childcare Act 2006; in these circumstances, the inspection may be scheduled to take place at the same time as the school's section 5 inspection. A separate report is provided for such registered provision.

19. Where HMCI inspects a school in response to a request from that school, such an inspection will be treated as if it were an inspection under section 5.¹⁸

What determines the timing of a school's inspection?

20. Ofsted varies the frequency of school inspections depending on the findings of a school's previous inspection(s) and a risk assessment of the school's subsequent performance, starting in the third year after the previous section 5 inspection. The risk assessment is also carried out for schools that were judged outstanding at their previous inspection. In conducting a risk assessment, Ofsted analyses:

- pupils' academic achievement over time, taking into account attainment and progress
- pupils' rates of attendance
- any inspection visits carried out by Ofsted since the last routine inspection
- the views of parents and carers
- qualifying complaints¹⁹ about the school referred to Ofsted by parents or carers
- any other significant concerns brought to Ofsted's attention, including from the relevant local authority.

21. Schools previously judged to be outstanding, which will be exempt from section 5 inspection, will be subject to a risk assessment taking into account the information stated in paragraph 19. The first risk assessment will take place in the third academic year after the date of its last inspection by Ofsted and will be undertaken annually from this date. Exempt schools may be inspected in circumstances where:

- HMCI has concerns about the performance of the school as shown by the risk assessment process, including a rapid decline in parental confidence
- safeguarding and/or welfare concerns suggest that it should be inspected
- a subject or thematic survey inspection raises more general concerns

¹⁸ Clause 39(5) of the Education Bill 2011.

¹⁹ Ofsted has specific powers (under section 11A-C of the Education Act 2005, as amended) to investigate certain complaints, known as qualifying complaints.

- Ofsted has received and investigated a qualifying complaint about a school, which, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to inspect the school
22. Schools judged as good at their previous inspection are inspected within five years of the end of the academic year in which they were last inspected, unless:
- the risk assessment of their performance suggests that they should be inspected earlier
 - safeguarding and/or welfare concerns suggest that they should be inspected earlier
 - Ofsted has received and investigated a qualifying complaint²⁰ about a school, which, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to bring forward the school's inspection
 - they are part of an annual sample selected to ensure that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report reflects evidence from a cross-section of schools of different types, phases and effectiveness
 - they are part of a formal grouping of schools, such as a federation, or share important aspects of their provision, which may lead to inspection of the member schools in the 'partnership' at the same time
 - they are:
 - a special school
 - a pupil referral unit
 - a school with residential provision
 - a school with registered provision for 0–3-year-old children.
23. Where Ofsted decides that, following the risk assessment, a school previously judged as good is not to be inspected, Ofsted will publish an interim assessment letter. Interim assessment letters are usually published towards the end of the third year from the end of the school year in which the last section 5 inspection took place. The interim assessment letter explains that the school will not be inspected during the period of a year from the date of publication unless Ofsted receives information that indicates that an earlier inspection is necessary. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must send a copy of the interim assessment letter to all registered parents and carers of pupils at the school within five working days of receiving it.
24. Schools that were judged as satisfactory at their previous inspection are normally inspected within three school years from the end of the school year in

²⁰ Ofsted has specific powers (under section 11A-C of the Education Act 2005, as amended) to investigate certain complaints, known as qualifying complaints. Such complaints may be considered when deciding whether Ofsted should bring forward a school's inspection.

which that inspection took place. A significant proportion of these schools, for example where the judgement on leadership and management is no better than satisfactory, will also receive monitoring inspections to check on their progress following their last full inspection.

25. Schools judged as inadequate in their overall effectiveness continue to receive monitoring visits. A school with a notice to improve will be re-inspected between 12 and 16 months after the inspection that placed it in this category of concern. A school requiring special measures that has demonstrated sufficient improvement in its monitoring visits may be removed from that category. Any school in special measures that has not demonstrated sufficient improvement will be re-inspected between 24–28 months of the inspection that placed it in that category of concern.
26. Inspection can take place at any point after the end of the first complete week of the school's autumn term. If a primary or nursery school has a new intake of pupils at the beginning of the spring or summer term, Ofsted does not inspect that school in the first full week of the term.
27. In exceptional circumstances specified in Ofsted's deferral policy, and following a request by the school, an inspection might be cancelled or deferred after it has been scheduled. Normally, however, if pupils are receiving education in the school, an inspection goes ahead even if, for example, the headteacher is out of school or building work is taking place.

What are the principles of school inspection?

28. Ofsted's principles for the inspection of maintained schools are set out below

Ofsted's principles: school inspection

School inspection acts in the interests of children, young people, their parents and employers. It encourages high-quality provision that meets diverse needs and promotes equality. The following principles apply to school inspection. School inspections will:

Support and promote improvement by:

- adjusting the focus and type of inspection to have the greatest impact
- ensuring inspections are of high quality and rigorous
- clearly identifying strengths and weaknesses
- identifying precise actions to underpin recommendations
- explaining and discussing inspection findings with those whose work has been inspected.

Be proportionate by:

- adjusting the frequency of inspection according to the outcomes of previous inspection reports and risk assessment
- deploying resources where improvement is most needed or where inspection can add most value.

Focus on pupils' and parents' and carers' needs by:

- taking account of pupils' and parents' and carers' views when Ofsted plans and carries out inspections
- drawing on pupils' and parents' and carers' views to inform inspectors' judgements and the outcomes of inspection
- minimising the risk to children, young people and adults by evaluating the effectiveness of schools' procedures for safeguarding
- evaluating the work of schools in eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and encouraging good race relations
- encouraging schools to strive to meet the diverse needs of all pupils.

Focus on the needs of schools by:

- providing high-quality and timely communication with schools
- making use as far as possible of the existing data, documentation and systems of the schools inspected and avoiding placing unnecessary burdens on them
- taking account of schools' self-evaluation.

Be transparent and consistent by:

- making clear and transparent judgements based on sound evidence
- inspecting and reporting with integrity
- having clear success criteria, procedures and guidance which are well understood by schools and users and are readily available.

Be accountable by:

- reporting the outcomes of inspection without fear or favour
- publishing clear, accurate, timely reports which provide parents with an authoritative, independent assessment of the quality of education provided by the school, thereby informing parents' choice of school
- striving to inform inspection activities by gathering the views of pupils and parents and those who have a significant interest in the school.

Demonstrate value for money by:

- targeting inspection resources and deploying them effectively and efficiently
- evaluating the outcomes and processes of inspection and making improvements where necessary.

What is the relationship between school self-evaluation and inspection?

29. Self-evaluation is now well established in schools, providing the basis for planning for development and improvement. Inspection takes account of and contributes to a school's self-evaluation. Schools may present a written summary of their self-evaluation to inspectors.
30. If available, the school's self-evaluation summary is used by the lead inspector to plan the inspection. This plan should be discussed with the school. Inspectors evaluate the school's self-evaluation and, by doing so, contribute to its further improvement. The quality of self-evaluation is a good indicator of the

calibre of the school's leaders and managers and of the school's capacity to improve.

Who inspects schools?

31. School inspectors are either Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), employed directly by Ofsted, or additional inspectors employed directly, or contracted, by inspection service providers. These are independent commercial organisations contracted by Ofsted to provide inspection services and have responsibility for the administrative arrangements for inspections. Ofsted prescribes the qualifications and experience required by additional inspectors, the initial and continuing training that they should receive, and the standards that they are required to meet. Ofsted also publishes the names of additional inspectors. All inspectors undertake regular training to ensure that they are familiar with changes in inspection frameworks, inspection methodology and developments in educational practice.
32. HMI lead a high proportion of secondary school inspections and a small proportion of primary school and special school inspections. Additional inspectors are authorised to conduct an inspection of a school under section 5 where the inspection is supervised by an HMI, or where the additional inspector has previously conducted a section 5 inspection under the supervision of an HMI and to the satisfaction of the HMI. Ofsted also quality assures section 5 inspections and all section 5 inspection reports are signed off by HMI.

What inspection grades are used by inspectors when they make judgements?

33. All school inspections carried out by Ofsted use the same grading scale:
 - grade 1: outstanding
 - grade 2: good
 - grade 3: satisfactory
 - grade 4: inadequate.

What happens to schools judged to be inadequate?

34. Many schools emerge with credit from their inspections. A few, though, have significant weaknesses. If inspectors judge that a school's overall effectiveness is inadequate, they must then decide whether it requires special measures or requires significant improvement (commonly known as a notice to improve). These two categories of schools causing concern are defined below.
 - Special measures: the school is failing to give its pupils 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 in the school.

- Notice to improve: the school requires significant improvement, because either:

- it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education but is demonstrating the capacity to improve

or:

- it is not failing to provide an acceptable standard of education but is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

35. These judgements are subject to moderation by senior HMI and HMCI corroborates all judgements of special measures. A school made subject to special measures is not permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers without prior permission from Ofsted.²¹
36. Ofsted subsequently monitors the progress of inadequate schools and a proportion of those that are not better than satisfactory.

²¹ Regulation 8(2) of the Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (England) Regulations 2008, which provides that a teacher's induction period cannot be served in a school that is eligible for intervention by virtue of section 62 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, unless the Chief Inspector has certified in writing that s/he is satisfied that the school or part of the school is fit for the purpose of providing induction, supervision and training.

Part B. The focus of school inspections

The key judgements made during school inspections

37. The evaluation schedule, which is published separately, provides guidance to schools and inspectors on the key judgements that are reached by inspectors during the course of the inspection. These judgements cover the broad range of a school's work. Inspectors will judge the overall effectiveness of the school, taking account of the four key judgements outlined in paragraph 5. In addition, inspectors will evaluate how well the school is promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of all disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

The achievement of pupils at the school

38. When evaluating the achievement of pupils, inspectors will consider:

- how well they make progress relative to their starting points
- how well gaps are narrowing between the performance of different groups of pupils in the school and compared to all pupils nationally
- how well current pupils learn, the quality of their work in a range of subjects and the progress they have made since joining the school
- how well disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have achieved since joining the school
- the extent to which pupils develop a range of skills well, including communication, reading and writing and mathematical skills and how well they apply these across the curriculum
- the standards attained by pupils by the time they leave the school, including their standards in reading, writing and mathematics

and in primary schools:

- pupils' attainment in reading by the end of Key Stage 1 and by the time they leave the school.²²

The quality of teaching in the school

39. When evaluating the quality of teaching in the school, inspectors will consider:

- the extent to which teachers' expectations, reflected in their teaching and planning, including curriculum planning, are sufficiently high to extend the previous knowledge, skills and understanding of all pupils in a range of lessons and activities over time

²² Inspectors will also look at any data from screening checks of six-year-olds.

- how well teaching enables pupils to develop skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics
 - the extent to which well judged and effective teaching strategies successfully engage pupils in their learning
 - the extent to which teachers secure high quality learning by setting challenging tasks that are matched to pupils' specific learning needs
 - how well pupils understand how to improve their learning as a result of frequent, detailed and accurate feedback from teachers following assessment of their learning
 - the extent to which teachers' questioning and use of discussion promote learning
 - the extent to which the pace and depth of learning are maximised as a result of teachers' monitoring of learning during lessons and any consequent actions in response to pupils' feedback
 - the extent to which teachers enthuse, engage and motivate pupils to learn and foster their curiosity and enthusiasm for learning
 - how well teachers use their expertise, including their subject knowledge, to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects and areas of learning
 - the extent to which teachers enable pupils to develop the skills to learn for themselves, where appropriate, including setting appropriate homework to develop their understanding
 - the quality of teaching and other support provided for pupils with a range of aptitudes and needs, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that their learning improves.
40. The most important role of teaching is to raise pupils' achievement. Teaching includes the planning and implementation of learning activities across the whole of the school's curriculum, together with marking, assessment and feedback. Teaching includes activities both within and outside the classroom such as support and intervention strategies. Teaching has an important role in promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
41. The judgement on the quality of teaching **takes account of evidence of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.**

The behaviour and safety of pupils at the school

42. When evaluating the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school, inspectors will consider:
- pupils' attitudes to learning and conduct in lessons and around the school
 - pupils' behaviour towards, and respect for, other young people and adults, including freedom from bullying and harassment that may include cyber-

bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to special educational need, sexual orientation, sex, race, religion and belief, gender reassignment or disability

- how well teachers manage the behaviour and expectations of pupils to ensure that all pupils have an equal and fair chance to thrive and learn in an atmosphere of respect and dignity
- pupils' ability to assess and manage risk appropriately and to keep themselves safe
- pupils' attendance and punctuality at school and in lessons
- how well the school ensures the systematic and consistent management of behaviour.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

43. When evaluating the quality of leadership and management at all levels including, where relevant, governors, inspectors will consider whether they:
- demonstrate an ambitious vision for the school and have high expectations for what every pupil and teacher can achieve and set high standards for quality and performance
 - improve teaching and learning including the management of pupils' behaviour
 - provide a broad and balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, enables all pupils to achieve their full educational potential and make progress in their learning, and that promotes their good behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses and use their findings to promote improvement
 - improve the school and develop its capacity for sustaining improvement by developing leadership capacity and high professional standards among all staff
 - engage with parents and carers in supporting pupils' achievement, behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
 - ensure that all pupils are safe.

Overall effectiveness

44. Inspectors will evaluate the quality of the education provided in the school. In doing this, they will consider their evaluations of the four key judgements:
- the achievement of pupils at the school
 - the quality of teaching in the school

- the quality of leadership and management of the school
- the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school.

They will also consider:

- the extent to which the education provided by the school meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school, and in particular the needs of pupils who have a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, and pupils who have special educational needs
- how well the school provides positive experiences for all pupils by promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through planned and coherent opportunities in the curriculum and through interactions with teachers and other adults.

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Part C. The process of inspection

What happens before the inspection?

When are schools notified of their inspection?

45. Schools receive between zero and two working days' notice of a section 5 inspection. The vast majority receive between one and two days' notice, and the contractor (inspection service provider) informs the school that it is to be inspected. Normally, lead inspectors make contact with the school as soon as possible after notification.
46. HMCI may arrange for an inspection of a school to take place without notice where there are particular reasons, for example, connected to pupils' welfare including safeguarding and/or behaviour concerns, where a school's academic standards have shown rapid decline, or where there is a strong voice of concern raised by parents and carers.
47. Some monitoring visits are conducted without notice. A significant proportion of schools judged to be satisfactory and all schools judged as inadequate will receive monitoring visits.

What information do inspectors use before the inspection?

48. Inspectors gain an understanding of the school and the issues for the inspection before they begin their work on site, so that they can use their time in school as effectively as possible.
49. When schools are first informed that they are to be inspected, they are asked to provide Ofsted with a summary of their self-evaluation. Lead inspectors read and analyse the school's summary of its self-evaluation, taking full account of the school's analysis of its own performance. This features strongly when the issues for inspection and plans for the deployment of the team are discussed with the school, although it does not limit the range of the inspectors' investigations should they have concerns about aspects of performance not raised by the school.
50. The lead inspector then prepares a concise pre-inspection briefing for the school and the inspection team, using the school's self-evaluation and additional pre-inspection evidence.

How do lead inspectors contact the school?

51. The lead inspector contacts the headteacher or, in the absence of the headteacher, the most senior member of staff who is available. Pre-inspection activities and telephone contact with the school are intended to ensure that:
 - good communication and effective working relationships are established with the school

- senior leaders and all staff are encouraged to engage with the inspection process so that they understand the judgements being made
- the demands on the school are kept to a minimum
- pre-inspection evidence is analysed thoroughly and discussed
- the issues for the inspection are identified and discussed
- arrangements for the inspection are agreed (lead inspectors do not normally inform schools which lessons are to be visited, but brief meetings with key staff are agreed as quickly as possible).

How do inspectors seek the views of registered parents and carers, pupils and other partners about the school's work before and during inspection?

52. Once informed that an inspection is to take place, schools are required to take reasonable steps to notify all parents and carers, including registered parents and carers of pupils who have been excluded or are away from school. Schools are also required to notify the local authority, where appropriate and, where relevant, the learning and skills council for the area in which the school is located.²³
53. Ofsted provides governing bodies with a standard letter for the purpose of notifying parents and carers. This is available in a range of community languages. The letter provides access to a brief questionnaire for parents and carers, enabling them to provide their views of the school to inspectors. Responses to the questionnaire are returned, in confidence, to the lead inspector for analysis. Completed questionnaires are analysed by inspectors as early as possible in the inspection. If a parent or carer should ask to see an inspector, the inspection team does all it can to accommodate such requests within the constraints on their time. When parents and carers, pupils and staff meet inspectors, they should be able to do so in private.
54. During the inspection, inspectors talk to a range of pupils including those from different groups, for example those from minority ethnic backgrounds, looked after children, those from low income backgrounds and those who have special educational needs. In addition, they may gather the views of pupils during the inspection via a pupils' questionnaire.
55. Lead inspectors also take account of any external views of the school's performance. This may include any evaluation of the school's performance by the local authority.
56. In addition, inspectors may gather the views of staff through a questionnaire. However, participation in this type of survey is voluntary. If a staff survey is carried out, individual members of staff can elect not to participate. The views

²³ Regulation 4 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended).

of staff are used to help inspectors plan the inspection but they are not normally reported in the inspection report.

What happens during the inspection?

How many days do inspectors spend in the school?

57. Inspections do not normally last longer than two days, but the number of inspectors involved varies according to the size and nature of the school.

How do inspectors use their time during the inspection?

58. The main focus of inspection activity is observing lessons and the time allocated to on-site inspection is intended for gathering first hand evidence, in order to provide: robust evidence about the pupils' achievement; the quality of teaching and its impact on learning and progress; pupils' behaviour and safety; the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and the impact of leadership and management. Lead inspectors ensure that:

- sufficient evidence is gathered so that judgements about the school are secure and reliable
- the main judgements about the school are agreed by the inspection team
- teachers receive well informed and helpful feedback on lessons observed
- staff have opportunities for high quality professional dialogue with inspectors
- the headteacher and other senior leaders receive well-informed and helpful feedback about the overall effectiveness of the school and the main findings of the inspection
- the school is left with full, clear and specific recommendations for improvement with appropriate timescales.

59. While on site, inspectors may also 'track' potentially vulnerable pupils, such as those who have special educational needs, disabled pupils, pupils from low income backgrounds, those who are academically more able, and children in care. Inspectors give specific attention to the quality of learning for different groups of pupils and for individuals, both in separate provision and within mainstream lessons. The particular groups and individual pupils to be tracked are identified in the pre-inspection briefing and/or through subsequent discussion with the school and in response to any emerging issues, for example from discussions with pupils.

60. Other first hand evidence gathered by inspectors includes discussions with pupils, including: listening to them read and scrutiny of their work; scrutiny of school records, documentation and parents' questionnaires; and meetings with staff, governors and school partners where appropriate. Information held by the school must be made freely available for inspectors and the school must cooperate in the inspectors' task of gathering evidence.

How is evidence recorded?

61. During the inspection, inspectors gather, analyse and record evidence and their judgements on evidence forms. The overall judgements made about the school are recorded by the lead inspector on a template included in the inspection report.
62. The evidence forms, together with any briefings, plans or instructions prepared by the lead inspector and the parents', pupils' and staff questionnaires, contribute to the evidence base for the inspection. The lead inspector is responsible for compiling and assuring the quality of the evidence base.

How are judgements secured?

63. The lead inspector has the responsibility for ensuring that judgements about the school are corporately agreed by the inspection team, with reference to the grade descriptors in the evaluation schedule, and that they are supported convincingly by evidence. Inspectors identify the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what it must do to improve. Emerging findings are discussed with the headteacher and, where appropriate, senior staff at regular intervals. The headteacher is given every opportunity to provide further evidence should s/he wish to do so.
64. The overall judgements reflect all the evidence considered by the inspection team. Final judgements are made only when all first hand evidence has been collected and considered. Final judgements represent the corporate view of the inspection team. They are subject to moderation before the report is published.
65. At the end of the inspection, the team considers whether the school should be placed in special measures or given a notice to improve. The requirements are set out in Part A of this document. The final decision about whether a school is to be placed in a category of concern takes place after the moderation process.

How do the headteacher and senior staff engage in the inspection?

66. Inspection has the strongest impact on school improvement when the school understands the evidence and findings that have led to the judgements and what it needs to do to improve. The lead inspector therefore ensures that the headteacher and senior staff:
 - are kept up-to-date with how the inspection is proceeding
 - understand how the inspection team reaches its judgements
 - have opportunities to clarify how evidence is used to reach judgements
 - are given the opportunity to present additional evidence.

67. Headteachers are invited to:

- give their views on the issues for inspection as part of the pre-inspection discussions
- participate in joint lesson observations, as agreed with the lead inspector
- receive regular updates from the lead inspector

and, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so:

- attend the formal inspection team meetings at the end of each day of the inspection
- discuss the inspectors' recommendations to ensure that these are understood.

68. The headteacher's participation in such inspection activities as attendance at team meetings and participation in joint observations is not mandatory and s/he may choose whether or not to accept.

What is the code of conduct for inspectors?

69. Inspectors are required to uphold the highest professional standards in their work and to ensure that everyone they encounter during inspections is treated fairly and with respect. These standards are assured through a code of conduct, which is set out below.

Inspectors' code of conduct

Inspectors should:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
- evaluate provision in line with frameworks, national standards or requirements
- base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
- have no connection with the provider which could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
- endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
- act in the best interests and well-being of service users
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests
- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

70. When inspectors meet pupils, parents, staff, governors and other stakeholders, every endeavour should be made to protect the origin of individuals' comments if they are used to pursue an issue further. However, there may be

circumstances in which it is not possible to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewee. Additionally, inspectors have a duty to pass on disclosures that raise child protection or safeguarding issues and/or where serious misconduct or potential criminal activity is involved.

How should school staff engage with inspectors?

71. To ensure that inspection is productive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and schools establish and maintain an appropriate working relationship based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct but Ofsted also expects school staff to:
- apply their own codes of conduct in their dealings with inspectors
 - enable inspectors to conduct their visit in an open and honest way
 - enable inspectors to evaluate the school objectively against the inspection framework
 - provide evidence that will enable the inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
 - work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
 - ensure that the health and safety of inspectors is not prejudiced while they are on the school's premises
 - maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspectors
 - draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner
 - understand the need for inspectors to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager.

What feedback do inspectors give during the inspection?

72. Inspectors offer oral feedback to teachers and other staff about the work they see in order to promote improvement. Constructive dialogue is essential between inspectors and staff, and particularly between the lead inspector and the headteacher.

How is the quality of inspection assured?

73. All inspectors are responsible for the quality of their work. Lead inspectors ensure that inspections are carried out in accordance with the principles of inspection and the code of conduct. In addition, Ofsted monitors the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes. Some schools are visited by an HMI or by a representative of the inspection service provider to check the quality of the inspection. Their assessments are confidential to the inspectors and contractors concerned. In other cases the inspection evidence base may be evaluated.

74. In the unlikely event that an inspection report is judged by Ofsted to be seriously misleading, or an inspection is judged by Ofsted to be seriously flawed, the school is notified that the inspection is incomplete and that a further visit is necessary to make sure that enough evidence is gathered to make the inspection judgements secure.
75. All schools are invited to take part in a post-inspection survey so that the views of headteachers, governors and staff are obtained and contribute to the development of inspection.

What happens after the inspection?

What feedback is provided to the school?

76. Before leaving the school, the lead inspector is required to ensure that the school is clear:
- about the grades awarded for each judgement required under the evaluation schedule
 - that the grades awarded may be subject to change
 - that the main points provided orally in the feedback will be referred to in the text of the report
 - about the recommendations for improvement
 - about the procedures leading to the publication of the report
 - about the complaints procedure
 - where relevant, about the implications of the school being deemed to require special measures, being given a notice to improve, or judged as satisfactory overall.
77. After the inspection team has reached its conclusions, the judgements are presented and explained to a representative of the governing body and the senior leadership team. Any aspects that have been judged as inadequate or outstanding (or where the judgement is different from that which the school might have expected) are explained in the feedback.

What are the written outcomes of the inspection?

78. Following the inspection, the lead inspector writes a report about the main findings of the inspection. The findings should be consistent with those explained orally to the school.
79. A brief letter to pupils is provided as an appendix to the report. This is addressed to the pupils and is aimed at the older pupils in the school. For schools with sixth forms, the letter is aimed at pupils in Key Stage 4, as sixth formers may be expected to read the full report.

How is the quality of inspection reports assured?

80. The lead inspector provides a first draft of the report to the inspection provider and, following editing, the inspection provider forwards the report to the school for a factual check. One working day is allocated to the school to comment on the draft unless the school is placed in a category of concern, in which case five days are allowed for comments. The final report is signed off by an HMI. Where a school has been placed in special measures, HMCI confirms the judgement and signs off the report.

When is the report issued?

81. The report is published on Ofsted's website within 15 working days of the end of the inspection.
82. For maintained schools, a copy of the report is sent to:²⁴
- the headteacher of the school
 - the local authority
 - the governing body where the local authority is not the appropriate authority or proprietor
 - the person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has them (including diocesan or other appropriate authorities in the case of schools with a religious character)
 - other prescribed persons.
83. For secondary schools with a sixth form, a copy of the report must also be sent to the body responsible for funding allocations for post-16 education.²⁵
84. In exceptional circumstances, Ofsted may decide that the normal period for completion of the inspection report should be extended.

What must the governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor where relevant) do when the inspection report or interim assessment is received?

85. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must send a copy of the inspection report to all registered parents and carers of pupils at the school within five working days of receiving it.²⁶ HMCI also expects schools to ensure that all pupils are made aware of the findings of the inspection.
86. If a school judged as good has received an interim assessment, a letter is issued. This is not the same as an inspection report and does not contain inspection judgements. The governing body/appropriate authority (or

²⁴ Sections 14(1) and 14(2) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

²⁵ Section 14(3) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

²⁶ Section 14(4) (c) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) and Regulation 6 of the Education (School Inspection) (England) Regulations 2005 (as amended).

proprietor) must send a copy of the interim assessment letter to all registered parents and carers of pupils at the school within five working days of receiving it.²⁷

87. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must also make a copy of the inspection report available upon request to members of the public.²⁸ A charge, not exceeding the cost of reproduction, can be made²⁹ for copies of the inspection report. The governing body/appropriate authority (or proprietor) must make a copy of the interim assessment free of charge on request.

How do schools complain about their inspection or inspection report?

88. Any concerns that the school has about the inspection should be raised with the lead inspector during the inspection and, where possible, resolved. Concerns may also be raised with a quality assurance inspector should one have been allocated to the inspection. If the concerns are not resolved in this way, or the person expressing the concern does not feel that due weight is being given to the concerns, or an independent view is sought, then the person raising the concern or someone acting on his or her behalf should contact Ofsted's helpline on 0300 123 1231.
89. Similarly, any concerns that the school has about the inspection report should be raised with the lead inspector or inspection service provider as soon as possible.
90. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns, then individuals or schools may decide to lodge a formal complaint. The complaints procedures are available on Ofsted's website³⁰.

²⁷ Section 14A(4) (c) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

²⁸ Section 14(4) (a) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

²⁹ Section 14(4) (b) of the Education Act 2005 (as amended).

³⁰ *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/complaints-procedure-raising-concerns-and-making-complaints-about-ofsted>