

Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills

For use from September 2012

The *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills* is in two parts.

Part one is *Conducting further education and skills inspections*. It is guidance for inspectors and providers on the preparation for, and the implementation and conduct of, inspections.

Part two is the *Evaluation schedule for the inspection of further education and skills*. It provides the main considerations for evaluation under each of the Common Inspection Framework's principal criteria, and the grade characteristics for each aspect and for Overall effectiveness.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

1. This handbook is published by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) for providers, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and Additional Inspectors to support the implementation of the Common Inspection Framework for the further education and skills sector.
2. The handbook has two parts.
 - Part 1. *Conducting further education and skills inspections* is guidance for inspectors and providers on the preparation for, and the implementation and conduct of, inspections
 - Part 2. *Evaluation schedule for the inspection of further education and skills* provides guidance on how inspectors will use the Common Inspection Framework to award the main and contributory grades.
3. This handbook is available to providers and other organisations to ensure that they are informed about the process and procedures of inspection.

It seeks to balance the need for consistency in inspections with the flexibility required to respond to the individual circumstances of each provider. It should not be regarded as a set of inflexible rules, but as an account of the procedures that normally govern inspection.

Part 1. Conducting further education and skills inspections

How do we inspect?

4. The *Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills: for use from September 2012*¹ was devised by HMCI in line with the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It sets out the judgements that inspectors will make during inspection and the principles that apply to further education and skills inspections under Part 8 of the Act.²

Purposes of inspection

5. The overall aim of inspection is to evaluate how efficiently and effectively the education and training provision meets learners' needs.
6. Inspection arrangements – together with other government initiatives – are intended to speed up improvement in the quality of the further education and skills sector.

¹ *Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills: for use from September 2012* (120062), Ofsted, 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120062.

² Education and Inspections Act 2006; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>.

7. The main purposes of inspection are to:
- provide users with information about the quality of provision in England; to help inform them about the providers they use or about the providers they may use in the future³
 - help bring about improvement by identifying strengths and areas for improvement, highlighting good practice and judging what steps need to be taken to improve provision further
 - provide the relevant secretaries of state and other stakeholders with an independent public account of the quality of education and training, the standards achieved and how efficiently resources are managed.

How does inspection promote improvement?

8. The inspection of a provider promotes improvement by:
- setting expectations; the criteria and characteristics set out in the inspection framework and evaluation schedule illustrate the expected quality and effectiveness of the provision
 - increasing the provider's confidence by evaluating its own view of its effectiveness, and its accuracy, and offering a professional challenge (and the impetus to act) where improvement is needed
 - recommending priorities for the provider's future action and, when appropriate, checking subsequent progress
 - fostering constructive dialogue between inspectors and the provider's senior leaders and staff
 - evaluating the provider's self-assessment – its impact and rigour – to enhance its capacity to improve its provision
 - identifying best practice, both through inspection and survey reports, which can be shared with the sector.

Principles of inspection and regulation

9. The principles of inspection and regulation reflect Ofsted's values and ensure that our statutory duties are carried out efficiently and effectively. The principles focus on the interests of service users: children, young people, parents and carers, adult learners and employers. They promote improvement in the services we inspect or regulate, and they promote value for money. They also take full account of our policies on equality and diversity.

³ As defined in the Ofsted user and stakeholder strategy and deriving from section 117(4) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006: 'those who benefit, either directly or indirectly, from the services that Ofsted inspects or regulates: children and young people, parents and carers, adult learners and employers.'

10. All inspections carried out by Ofsted must comply with the following principles.

Further education and skills inspections **will**:

- support and promote improvement
- be proportionate
- focus on the needs of users
- focus on the needs of providers
- be transparent and consistent
- be accountable
- demonstrate value for money.

What is the code of conduct for inspections?

11. Inspectors will uphold the highest professional standards in their work and treat everyone they encounter during inspections fairly and with respect. The code of conduct assures these standards.

Inspectors' code of conduct

12. 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 rigorous evidence
- have no connection with the provider that 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
- try 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.

Confidentiality

13. Short verbal feedback to a member of staff after a graded observation of learning or assessment will be given by an inspector in confidence. This will take place directly after an observation, or if not possible then, at the nearest convenient time. Written judgements made from a number of observations contribute to the inspectors' overall judgement about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
14. When conducting inspection interviews, inspectors must explain and make clear that, if requested, they will make every effort to protect the origin of the individual's comments when using them to form judgements. However, inspectors should also make clear that in some circumstances, it may not be possible to guarantee the interviewee's anonymity. For example, other factors may make it easy to identify which individual has shared particular evidence.
15. Inspectors also have a duty to pass on disclosures either that raise safeguarding issues, and/or in circumstances where serious misconduct or potential criminal activity is involved.

How should the provider's staff engage with inspectors?

16. For inspection and regulation to be productive and beneficial, inspectors and providers should establish and maintain a working environment based on courtesy and professional behaviour.
17. Inspectors must uphold the code of conduct but Ofsted also expects providers to:
 - be courteous and professional
 - 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 provision objectively against the framework
 - provide evidence that will enable the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
 - work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
 - ensure the health and safety of inspectors while on their premises
 - maintain a purposeful dialogue with the inspector or the inspection team
 - draw any concerns about the inspection to the attention of inspectors promptly and in a suitable manner
 - respect the fact that inspectors will need to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager or registered person.

How are providers selected for inspection?

Annual selection of providers for inspection

18. Ofsted takes a risk-proportionate approach to inspection so that we can focus our efforts where we can have the greatest impact. The risk-assessment process has two stages.
 - Stage one is a provider assessment based on an automated analysis of publicly available data.
 - Stage two is where further analysis is necessary and the provider receives a desk-based review from an HMI.
19. We will use a broad range of indicators to select providers for inspection in the following year.

Where available, these will include a college or provider's previous inspection record; self-assessment reports; performance data (including trends over the last three years); change of leader; concerns raised by a funding body, employers, parents and carers or learners; and the views of learners, parents and carers, and employers, gathered through online questionnaires.

Indicators may also include any information on significant changes to the type of provision and learner numbers.

Other aspects we will take into consideration are:

- We will normally inspect providers awarded a grade of satisfactory for overall effectiveness prior to September 2012 within two years.
- From September 2012, we will normally inspect providers awarded a grade of 'requires improvement' for overall effectiveness again within 12–18 months.
- We will normally re-inspect providers awarded a grade of inadequate for overall effectiveness within 12–15 months.
- Providers awarded a grade of good for overall effectiveness at the previous inspection will normally have up to six years between inspections, unless their performance drops.
- Providers awarded a grade of outstanding for overall effectiveness at their previous inspection are exempt from a full inspection unless their performance drops.⁴

⁴ Please note that the following types of provision are **not** exempt from inspection when judged outstanding for overall effectiveness: higher education institutions offering further education; local authorities; independent specialist colleges; dance and drama programmes; and learning and skills provision in prisons.

20. Any provider where the above does not apply will be included in the inspection selection process at Ofsted’s discretion. In addition, Ofsted may conduct unannounced inspections and monitoring visits at any time.

When are providers notified of their inspection?

21. Learning and skills providers will normally be notified up to two working days before a planned inspection. This applies to all types of inspection activity and inspection can take place at any time of the year when learning is taking place.
22. The inspection services provider will contact the provider to inform them of the inspection and will email the notification letter to them. The inspection services provider will contact the lead inspector between 8.30 and 10.30am to confirm the inspection.
23. The lead inspector will normally telephone the provider by 12 noon to confirm arrangements and start the inspection process.

What are the types of inspection activity?

24. The following table sets out the frequency and type of inspection. The type of inspection activity will be proportionate to risk and selected according to the provider’s level of performance.

Inspection type	Criteria	Aims and publication arrangements
Inspection	Depending on the results of the annual selection process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ providers graded as requiring improvement overall will normally be inspected within 12–18 months of their previous inspection ■ new providers will normally be inspected within three years of the start of the funding contract ■ good providers will normally have up to six years between inspections ■ outstanding providers whose performance drops may be inspected. 	To inspect the provider’s Skills Funding Agency (SFA)- and Education Funding Agency (EFA)-funded provision, including that which is subcontracted by the main contract holder, against all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework 2012. To inspect with an increased emphasis on teaching, learning and assessment, including in a sample of sector subject areas. To publish a report on the Ofsted website.

<p>Survey inspection visits</p>	<p>Survey inspection visits will take place at a selected number of providers each year, including those judged outstanding or good.</p>	<p>To explore a specific aspect of a provider's work as part of a programme of surveys based on topics linked to national priorities. Such visits may be added to a routine inspection. In these circumstances, the inspection team will take account of the survey visit evidence in arriving at their inspection judgements and in drafting the final inspection report.</p> <p>Where discrete survey inspection visits take place as part of the planned annual survey programme, a report in the form of a letter will be sent to the provider and published on the Ofsted website.</p> <p>The exception to this is where the purpose of the survey visit is solely to collect evidence of good practice. In this case, there would be no published letter.</p> <p>Ofsted would not normally expect to carry out more than two survey visits to the same provider in any one year.</p>
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Inspection for providers graded as 'requires improvement'

Inspection type	Criteria	Aims and publication arrangements
<p>Full inspection</p>	<p>Requires improvement in the overall effectiveness grade.</p> <p>Takes place 12–18 months after the last full inspection.</p>	<p>To inspect the provider's SFA- and EFA-funded provision against all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework 2012.</p> <p>To publish a report on the Ofsted website.</p>

Re-inspection for providers graded as 'inadequate'

Inspection type	Criteria	Aims and publication arrangements
<p>Re-inspection monitoring visit</p>	<p>All providers judged to be inadequate for overall effectiveness at their previous inspection.</p> <p>These normally take place 6–8 months after the last full inspection and will be followed by a full re-inspection within 12–15 months.</p>	<p>To inspect themes identified through the previous inspection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ the three core themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – outcomes for learners – teaching, learning and assessment – the provider's self-assessment and improvement-planning processes ■ additional themes that might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – progress towards improving inadequate subject areas and other areas for improvement – progress in implementing recommendations identified in the previous inspection report. <p>To make one of three judgements – significant, reasonable or insufficient progress – against each of the themes mentioned above, on a provider's progress since the previous inspection.</p> <p>To publish a report on the Ofsted website.</p>

Full re-inspection	<p>Inadequate overall effectiveness grade.</p> <p>Normally takes place 12–15 months after the last full inspection and follows a re-inspection monitoring visit.</p>	<p>To inspect the provider's SFA- and EFA-funded provision against all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework 2012.</p> <p>To publish a report on the Ofsted website.</p>
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How will consortia, partnerships and subcontracted provision be inspected?

25. Skills Funding Agency (SFA)- and Education Funding Agency (EFA)-funded provision that a provider is directly and wholly responsible for falls within the scope of their inspection.

Ofsted will select the provider that is directly contracted with the funding agency, including a lead of a consortium, for inspection. However, subcontracted provision of the direct contract holder is also included in the inspection. Subcontractors are providers that are, for example, non-lead members of a consortium, or subcontractors of a managing agent or national provider.

26. As part of the inspection, inspectors may sample:

- any provision carried out on behalf of the directly-contracted provider through subcontract(s) or partnership(s)
- subcontractors to the main contract holder that hold additional direct contracts of their own.

27. Inspectors will not include:

- provision that the directly contracted provider provides under subcontract arrangements to other directly contracted providers.

28. Visits to subcontractors that are in scope will typically include the inspection of arrangements to quality assure and improve the provision by the direct contract holder. The direct contract holder will need to demonstrate the performance of the subcontractor(s). Inspection will include the observation of provision, including teaching, learning and assessment, delivered by the subcontractor(s).

Full-cost provision

29. Full-cost provision is where a course or courses, tutor and facilities are fully paid for by learners and/or employers.

30. Provision identified by the provider and confirmed by the lead inspector as full-cost provision will be out of scope of inspection.

How will residential provision in colleges be inspected?

31. Ofsted inspects residential accommodation in colleges against the national minimum standards for the accommodation of students under 18. The standards apply to further education colleges as defined by section 91 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.⁵
32. The residential provision in each college is inspected at least once in each three-year period or cycle, and the current cycle started in April 2011. The inspections are undertaken by Ofsted social care inspectors. Since April 2012, Ofsted has stopped conducting inspections of the education and residential provision at the same time.
33. Where a college is registered as a care home, the accommodation is inspected by the Care Quality Commission.

What happens before the inspection?

Selecting sector subject areas and aspect roles for inspection

34. There are 15 sector subject areas classified by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).
35. Most of the sector subject areas have a number of secondary subject areas or tiers. For example, sector subject area seven (retail and commercial enterprise), covers warehousing, hospitality, hairdressing and beauty therapy, as well as retailing. In providers that offer second-tier subjects, the area for inspection may well be at that level and not the whole subject area.
36. Provision formerly referred to as 'adult and community learning' will now be referred to as 'community learning'. Within this provision, family learning and community development are categorised as well as the Ofqual-classified 15 subject areas.
37. A provider may deliver a combination of provision, such as: community learning, apprenticeships and courses where a qualification is the main learning aim. If this combination of learning occurs in one sector subject area, it will be inspected as one subject area. The different types of learning will be considered for the overall subject area grade and highlighted in the subject area report.

⁵ Further and Higher Education Act 1992; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/13/contents>.

38. Where two second tiers of a sector subject area are very different and a significant number of learners are following learning programmes in each, they may both be selected and inspected individually.
39. In addition to a specialist subject area inspection, inspector(s) will be allocated roles to make overall judgements on outcomes for learners, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the effectiveness of leadership and management. These inspectors, as well as considering the aspect overall and collecting a range of evidence, will also collect evidence from the provider's other sector subject areas that are not being directly inspected by a specialist inspector.
40. Sector subject areas for inspection and grading will be chosen according to the following criteria:
 - previous inspection grades (where available)
 - self-assessment grades (where the self-assessment report is made available to Ofsted)
 - scrutiny of available data on learners' outcomes
 - vulnerability of learners
 - a representative coverage across the provider
 - coverage of subject areas across all inspections.
41. The number of days allocated to an inspection of colleges or local authorities that are contracted to provide more than one type of provision will take account of the need to cover all types of its provision. The lead inspector will ensure that the inspection reflects the provider's range of provision. This may include inspection of one or more of the following:
 - learning for qualifications
 - apprenticeships
 - employability programmes
 - community learning
 - Foundation Learning programmes
 - other work-based learning.
42. Apprentices who are placed with employers and training providers by an Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA) are in scope but the agency itself is out of scope.
43. Any provision that is part of a pilot scheme funded by the EFA or SFA is out of scope for inspection.

44. Any provision not funded by the EFA or SFA is out of scope. However, inspectors may encounter education and training provision funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). Ofsted only inspects and reports on ESF-funded provision that supports mainstream Skills Funding Agency (SFA)- or Education Funding Agency (EFA)- funded programmes such as apprenticeships, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) in the workplace and Foundation Learning. We will not inspect and report on standalone ESF-only funded providers, or standalone/discrete ESF-funded provision within providers.
45. Inspections will normally be led by an HMI, assisted by other HMI and/or Additional Inspectors. The nominee will receive inspectors' professional profiles and should contact the inspection services provider if they have any concerns about possible conflicts of interest between the provider and any member of the inspection team.

For what reasons should an Additional Inspector or HMI declare a conflict of interest?

46. An inspector should consider that he/she has a conflict of interest where:
 - the inspector has worked for the selected provider, either directly or indirectly, including in a consultancy capacity.
 - the inspector has any personal relationship with any of the provider's employees.
47. If an Additional Inspector is unsure whether there is a conflict of interest, he/she should consult with their inspection services provider. HMI should declare any conflict of interest to Ofsted.

How do the lead inspector and team plan for an inspection?

48. The lead inspector will plan the inspection to ensure that the maximum amount of first-hand evidence is collected from learners and the activities they are engaged in. The inspection team will want to capture evidence from as many forms of learning as possible in order to make sound teaching, learning and assessment judgements.
49. Although observations of teaching, training and assessment are key sources of this evidence, other methods of capturing learning and assessment on inspection are equally important. Therefore, the lead inspector will plan other activities such as: observations of assessments and progress reviews; discussions with groups of learners; scrutiny of how learning materials and assessment are promoted and communicated to learners through technology; live demonstrations by learners to discuss their work; case studies; shadowing assessors; evaluation of on-the-job training; and demonstrations of responsibilities and skills in the workplace and by learners. They will also plan opportunities to scrutinise the quality of learners' work and how they participate in learning tasks.

50. Inspectors will plan visits to observe members of the provider's staff and, if applicable, subcontracted staff carrying out learning or assessment activities with learners. These visits will also allow the inspector to interview the learner(s) and the employer. Inspectors may visit learners and employers to discuss their learning programmes, for example, or to look at portfolios. They may also carry out interviews using technology where available.
51. A **short** pre-inspection team briefing letter provides an outline for the inspection and a list of themes. Its purpose is to provide direction to the inspection team and inform the provider of the inspection. It will be sent to the provider and inspection team before the start of the inspection.

The inspection team will use the identified themes as the basis for their inspection activities. Sector subject area inspectors will partially complete an evidence form on learners' outcomes in preparation; they may also add additional themes based on their pre-inspection preparation that they consider important.

52. The lead inspector prepares the pre-inspection briefing letter for the provider and other members of the inspection team using some or all of the following pre-inspection evidence:
- the provider's most current self-assessment report
 - the provider's development/quality improvement plan, including those in place for subcontractors
 - performance data including: learner recruitment data; success rates; any available value-added data; destinations data; and employment rates, where applicable, for the last three years from the college/provider performance report
 - feedback from learners, parents and carers, and/or employers from online questionnaires
 - the report from the previous inspection or re-inspection
 - the reports from any subject or aspect surveys carried out by Ofsted
 - the reports from any monitoring visits carried out by Ofsted
 - any additional information the provider wishes to bring to the attention of the inspection team.

Please note that some of the above may not be available until the provider has been notified.

53. Inspectors will take full account of the provider's analysis and evaluation of its own performance. They will consider these in the pre-inspection briefing, themes for inspection, and plans for the deployment of inspectors, and they will discuss them with the provider.

54. Inspectors will select the learning activities, learners and employers to be seen during the inspection. The choice of learners and employers depends on a number of factors:

- number of sites
- number of subcontractors
- the value of the provider's contract(s) with funding agencies
- geographical spread of learners
- mode of delivery and attendance
- demographics of the learner group.

To assist inspectors with their planning, the nominee will provide a timetable of group and individual learning sessions, including tutorials, assessments and reviews, that take place at the provider's and employer's premises during the inspection period. Inspectors will not normally indicate which sessions they plan to see.

55. The focus of any planned inspection activity must be on teaching, learning and assessment. The planning of sector subject area or aspect inspection activities will vary according to the provider. Where the provider has a mix of provision such as A-levels, apprenticeships and community learning, the lead inspector or sector subject inspector may, in the course of their planning:

- select/sample learners to visit at their place of work
- identify external venues and subcontractors to observe activities such as coaching, assessment, feedback or review, and teaching sessions where possible
- identify a number of lessons they may want to visit on the main site, without sharing these with the nominee
- identify learners they wish to use as case studies.

56. To assist with this process, the nominee will supply information about planned activities to be carried out by the provider's staff for the duration of the inspection, along with a list of learners, including (where applicable) learners who are not normally based at the provider's main sites and those who receive additional learning support. The nominee should identify learners who may not be available and any significant issues that may affect the choice of a particular learner or employer.

However, the inspection team reserves the right to visit any learner or employer and may cancel a planned visit or add additional ones to ensure that appropriate evidence is collected.

57. Inspectors will need to see completed work as well as work in progress. The lead inspector will agree with the nominee the most appropriate method for ensuring that learners' work is available.

This should include:

- inspectors identifying the work of specific learners
- asking all learners to have their current work with them during inspection
- requesting samples of work from a particular programme or group of learners.

How do providers prepare for their inspection?

58. The lead inspector will confirm the range of documents that will be required for the inspection.

59. However, as soon as the provider has been notified that they will be inspected, they should have ready for planning⁶:

- information about the provider day, timetable and work-based activity
- the number and type(s) of sector subject areas they deliver teaching/training in
- information about current volumes and types of learners
- timetables/schedules of assessment or learning sessions
- information about the provider organisation with staff names and responsibilities
- location and numbers of subcontractors
- names and email addresses of any employers whose premises the inspection team intends to visit; this should be submitted to the inspection team on the first inspection day or agreed during the planning phone call.

60. By lunchtime on the first day of the inspection, the provider should give the inspection team:

- evidence of internal monitoring and evaluation processes, including for subcontractors where appropriate, and how the findings are used
- evidence of improvement planning and subsequent progress
- findings and use made of performance management processes
- evidence of the work of governors and their impact, where applicable
- details of any changes to normal routines.

⁶ See also page 21 paragraph 74

61. Inspectors will also need:
- access to the single central register, where appropriate, which summarises the checks and vetting of all staff working with learners
 - access to the logs that record complaints, incidents of poor behaviour, racist incidents and incidents of bullying.
62. The evidence should consist of working documents, not information prepared specifically for the inspection. As inspection is based on collecting first-hand evidence, documentation is kept to a minimum.

The lead inspector will use the planning call/meeting to agree how the following documents will be available to inspectors:

- strategic and operational business plans
 - development/quality improvement plans, operating statements, subject area plans, staff development plans and action plans arising from inspection, programme review or self-assessment
 - details of staff qualifications and experience and of staff development activity over the last two years
 - anonymised information on performance management of staff
 - evidence of compliance with the relevant safeguarding requirements, for example an up-to-date list of Criminal Records Bureau checks
 - reports from internal and external verifiers
 - a range of learners' work
 - records of observations of teaching, learning and assessment or information and advice sessions
 - timetables and schedules of activity involving learners (showing locations and staff)
 - complete and up-to-date data on learner numbers and learners' achievements
 - minutes from key meetings
 - evidence of the effectiveness of learner support activities.
63. The provider will inform all subcontractors (where applicable), staff, current learners, employers and other users about the forthcoming inspection, emphasising that inspectors may visit any sessions involving learners either on the provider's premises or at other locations, including learners' workplaces.
64. Inspectors will have previously identified a number of off-site learners and employers to observe and/or interview and the nominee should ensure they are notified of this. Inspectors may also have identified other users and partners of the provider they wish to meet, who will also need to be notified.

65. The provider should inform inspectors if any learner, employer, member of staff or partner has any communication support needs, or of any sensitivities or issues affecting individual learners or staff.

What is the role of the nominee in the inspection?

66. Inspection has the strongest impact on improvement when the provider understands the findings that have led to the judgements. Each provider is invited to nominate a senior member of staff to act as the provider's main link with the inspection team.

The nominee attends all meetings of the inspection team. By taking part in the discussions about evidence collected during the inspection, a nominee can ensure that all appropriate evidence is taken into account, and report back to the provider's staff on the progress of the inspection. The nominee does not contribute to the decisions on grades for the inspection.

67. The nominee should:
- have a detailed understanding of the provider's programmes and operations including, where appropriate, for subcontractors
 - be sufficiently senior to ensure the cooperation of staff at all levels before, during and after the inspection
 - have authority to carry out the role with autonomy.
68. Training for nominees is offered at specially focused 'preparation for inspection events'. There are details of these events at: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/18970.
69. The lead inspector will give the nominee the opportunity to hear the evidence that inspectors have based their judgements on. The nominee should raise any concerns about the evidence base with the lead inspector as soon as they occur.
70. The lead inspector will keep both the nominee and the Chief Executive or Principal informed of emerging findings as the inspection proceeds. The nominee should respect the same conventions of confidentiality as all team members.
71. The nominee's responsibilities include:
- providing information to the lead inspector to enable them to plan the inspection
 - briefing the provider's staff about inspection arrangements
 - informing all learners and employers about the inspection

- attending all team meetings, including the final meetings to moderate judgements (nominees may **not** participate in discussions that are directly related to grading decisions)
- coordinating feedback arrangements during and after the inspection
- liaising with the lead inspector about the team's use of the provider's facilities, for example, photocopiers and base room
- ensuring that staff are available for meetings as scheduled and that the necessary documents are available for inspectors.

What contact should lead inspectors make with the provider?

72. The inspection services provider will normally telephone the provider to give the required notice of their inspection between 8.30 and 10.30am two working days before the start of the inspection.
73. The lead inspector will then contact the provider to plan the inspection by 12 noon where practical, or the following morning at the latest. The lead inspector should make sure that:
 - good communications and effective working relationships are established
 - the arrangements for the inspection are established and identified at the planning meeting/call
 - arrangements for the inspection are agreed.
74. To ensure that the lead inspector has a clear understanding of the scope and range of provision, the nominee will send the following information:
 - current numbers of learners in the following age groups: 14–16; 16–18; 19+; and in sector subject areas
 - current overall number of full-time learners (excluding apprentices) at level 1 or below, level 2, level 3 and level 4
 - where applicable, the current number of intermediate, advanced and higher-level apprentices
 - where applicable, the current number of part-time learners
 - where applicable, the current number of learners following employability skills learning programmes
 - where applicable, the number of foundation learners
 - the total number of learners in the previous contract year
 - lists of learning programmes and/or courses at each level
 - geographical spread of training premises and learners, particularly work-based learners
 - location and names of employers

- where applicable, the names and location of subcontractors and post codes.

Planning the inspection with the provider

75. To ensure that the provider understands the inspection process, the lead inspector will hold a pre-arranged planning meeting with the nominee/most senior member of staff, usually by telephone or conference call. Other senior managers may take part.

The agenda for the meeting should include:

- introductions
- update on recent developments at the provider
- inspection team members and their responsibilities, including the nominee
- scope of the inspection, including the key issues/themes
- in providers with identifiable learner representatives, arrangements for the lead HMI to have a discussion with them before or at the start of the inspection about the inspection process
- arrangements to inform all learners and employers about the inspection through:
 - posters and letters/emails
 - systems already established through the provider’s learner involvement strategy
- arrangements to collect the views of learners, parents, carers, employers, and external partners during the inspection, and to feed back findings, including:
 - open meetings for learners or learner representatives
 - online questionnaires for learners, and parents and carers
 - visits/phone calls to learners and employers at work
 - informal meetings or individual interviews arranged by inspectors during the inspection
 - after the inspection, the expectation for the provider to ensure the availability for users of the summary report that forms the front part of the published report
- arrangements for the lead inspector to have information on:
 - numbers participating at the time of the inspection and their geographical distribution, by sector subject area or subcontractor, where appropriate
 - lists of learners, for example, on work-based provision, with details of place of work and employers’ telephone numbers

- schedules/timetables of all learning activities, including subcontractors
 - arrangements for observing teaching, learning and assessments
 - arrangements to review learners' work
 - pre-arranged meetings with key members of staff/management for sector subject area inspectors and Common Inspection Framework aspects
 - arrangements to confirm the location of inspectors, where applicable
 - confirmation of the data table on success or outcome rates to support judgements on outcomes for learners
 - documents to be made available during the inspection
 - team meetings and feedback meetings – times and venues
 - domestic arrangements, such as base rooms, refreshments and car parking
 - health and safety of inspectors
 - final feedback, evaluation and reporting arrangements
 - arrangements, where applicable for any intended additional visitors/observers during the inspection.
76. A separate phone call or meeting will be arranged with learner representatives before or on the first morning of the inspection. These meetings will normally be held by telephone, but may be face to face.
77. Pre-arranged meetings with learners and key staff, and visits to learners at work or external sites should be agreed as quickly as possible. However, the lead inspector will not tell the provider which teaching or training sessions will be visited in any part of the inspection.
78. Where appropriate, the lead inspector will also arrange to talk to learner representatives before the inspection to explain the purpose of the inspection, and to identify any key issues from their perspective and the most appropriate ways of collecting learners' views.

How do inspectors seek the views of learners, parents and carers, and employers about the provider's work before and during the inspection?

79. Learners' views are central to inspection. As inspectors will not have the opportunity to speak to all learners during an inspection, it is important that all learners, regardless of their mode or place of attendance, have the opportunity to express their views to inspectors about the provider. This also applies to employers and any other key users. We will consider the views of learners, parents and carers, and employers: as part of the risk assessment process; in advance of the inspection; and during the inspection.
80. We have online questionnaires to gather the views of learners, parents and carers, and employers. The online questionnaire for learners is called Learner

View and is on the Ofsted website. Respondents will be able to complete these short questionnaires at any time during the year.

Providers will give learners, parents and carers, and employers the links to the relevant questionnaires. When we notify a provider of their inspection, we will also ask them to tell learners, parents and carers, and employers about the inspection, and to remind them about the questionnaire, giving them a further opportunity to complete it by the end of the second inspection day.

81. Surveys of learners' views carried out by the provider, funding bodies or other organisations can also provide additional evidence for the inspection, and may indicate themes for further exploration.

They do **not** replace dialogue with learners during the inspection or views collected through Learner View.

82. Inspectors will talk with learners from different groups, including those from minority groups, and for example, with group representatives, the provider's learner governor(s), and the National Union of Students or other learners' fora.
83. Inspectors will take account of views expressed to them by learners, employers, parents and carers, governors, the nominee and staff. Staff and learners must be able to speak with inspectors in private to ensure that their responses are not influenced by the presence of the nominee or senior staff. A number of meetings will be arranged during the inspection for learners to meet inspectors, including meetings with samples of learners selected by inspectors and open invitation meetings.
84. The provider should be encouraged to seek the views of any of their significant partners and to reflect these in its self-assessment.
85. The lead inspector will take account of any external views on the performance of the provider against its targets: for example, in briefings from commissioning and funding bodies.

What happens during the inspection?

How many days does an inspection take?

86. A full inspection will normally last between three and five days on site, although the number of inspectors involved in the inspection will vary according to the size and nature of the provider.
87. Monitoring visits will last between one and two days, depending on the scope of the visit and size of the provider.
88. The inspection start and end times will be discussed during the planning meeting.

Who will be on the inspection team?

89. The inspection team will consist of inspectors who will focus on the key aspects of the Common Inspection Framework (aspect inspectors) – namely outcomes for learners, teaching, learning and assessment, and leadership and management – and sector subject area inspectors who will focus on the sample of provision selected for inspection.

How do inspectors use their time during the inspection?

90. Sector subject area inspectors will focus on teaching, learning and assessment and the quality of learners' work.
91. Sector subject area inspectors will normally join the inspection team for part of the week. The lead inspector will decide the exact duration.
92. The lead inspector and team will moderate judgements on sector subject areas in the presence of the nominee at a grading meeting.
93. Before leaving the provider, subject area inspectors will give the lead inspector their evidence forms, a summary of inspection findings and the teaching, learning and assessment text for the subject area.
94. Aspect inspectors will collect evidence on which to base their judgements from a range of sources, including:
 - sampling of the sector subject areas not being inspected and being graded separately
 - evidence for the aspect concerned collected from sector subject area inspectors
 - meetings, observations and learners' work
 - discussion and examination of evidence from learners and staff.
95. The lead inspector will ensure that the grades and judgements for the aspects are based on the full range of inspection evidence.
96. The time allocated to inspection will be used mainly for collecting first-hand evidence. The lead inspector will ensure that:
 - sufficient evidence is gathered so that judgements about the provider are secure and reliable
 - all inspectors record evidence on evidence forms
 - the main judgements about the provider are agreed by the core inspection team
 - members of staff receive well-informed, helpful feedback on any teaching, training and assessments observed and graded by inspectors

- the nominee, together with other relevant individuals, including learner representatives where appropriate, receives well-informed and helpful feedback about the overall effectiveness of the provider and the main findings of the inspection.
97. Below are some example outline inspection schedules for four- and five-day inspections. These are only guides as schedules for each inspection will differ according to circumstances.

Schedules should allow time for a lunch break, comprise reasonable working hours and reflect the provider's operation.

For a five-day inspection

Example A

Monday	Activity
10.30	HMI and Additional Inspectors arrive (day one)
11.00	Initial meetings/briefings – inspectors and nominee, learner representatives
11.30	Meetings with key member of senior management team for each aspect inspector and with relevant link/manager for subject inspectors
12.00	Inspection activity
Tuesday	Activity
08.00	Meet with the CEO/Principal as appropriate; subject inspectors meet with link/manager for interim feedback
09.00	Inspection activity
17.00	Feedback meeting(s)
Wednesday	Activity
09.00	Meet with the CEO/Principal as appropriate; subject inspectors meet with link/manager for interim feedback
09.30	Aspect inspectors hold further meetings with key senior managers
	Feedback to learner representatives
17.00	Inspection activity
	Meeting to identify emerging judgements
Thursday	Activity
09.00–11.00	Meet with curriculum links; inspection activity by subject inspectors
15.00	Subject inspectors finish record of inspection findings/evidence forms
16.00	Grading meeting to propose and establish subject grades and discussion of aspects' findings
17.00	Feedback to subject link/manager
	Subject inspectors depart
Friday	Activity
09.00	Final aspect inspector inspection activity if needed
11.00	Grading meeting for aspect team
14.00	Formal feedback to the provider's staff and learner representatives and depart

Example B

Monday	Activity
10.30	Aspect inspectors arrive, and plan and start inspection activity Lead inspector plans activities for subject inspectors, arriving on day two, with the nominee
Tuesday	Activity
10.00	Subject inspectors arrive day two; where provision is off site they may travel directly after a planning call with the lead Inspection activity
17.00	Meeting to identify emerging judgements
Wednesday	Activity
09.00	Meet with the CEO/Principal as appropriate; subject inspectors meet with link/manager for interim feedback
09.30	Aspect inspectors hold further meetings with key senior managers Feedback to learner representatives Inspection activity
17.00	Meeting to identify emerging judgements
Thursday	Activity
09.00	Meet with the CEO/Principal as appropriate; subject inspectors meet with link/manager for interim feedback
09.30	Aspect inspectors hold further meetings with key senior managers Feedback to learner representatives Inspection activity
17.00	Meeting to identify emerging judgements
Friday	Activity
09.00	Meet CEO/Principal
11.00	Grading meeting for all the team
13.00	Agree final judgements for grading Hand in evidence base to the lead/administrator
14.00	Formal feedback to the provider's staff and learner representatives and depart

For a four-day work-based inspection

Tuesday	Activity
10.00 10.30	HMI and Additional Inspectors arrive (day one) Initial meetings/briefings – inspectors and nominee, learner representatives
11.00	Meetings with key member of senior management team and with relevant contact for visits
17.00	Inspection activity, including workplace visits, portfolios, case studies Feedback meeting(s)
Wednesday	Activity
08.00 09.30 17.00	Meet with the CEO; subject inspector link with contact for visits Inspection activity Feedback meeting(s)
Thursday	Activity
09.00 09.30 17.00	Meet with the CEO/Principal as appropriate; subject inspectors meet with link/manager for interim feedback Inspection activity Meeting to identify emerging judgements
Friday	Activity
09.00–10.00 10.00 13.00 14.00	Subject inspectors finish record of inspection findings/evidence forms Grading meeting to propose and establish subject and aspects' grades Hand in evidence base to the lead Formal feedback to the provider's staff and learner representatives and depart

Collecting and using evidence

98. Most of the time on and off site is spent collecting first-hand evidence, through observation of teaching, training and assessment in a variety of ways. Observations will take place, as appropriate, wherever learners are receiving teaching, training or assessment.
99. Inspectors may monitor case studies of learners, including potentially vulnerable learners such as those with learning difficulties and those with disabilities, and young people in care. They may ask the provider to arrange meetings with members of staff who work with one learner who receives additional learning support in each of the subject areas being inspected. This may then be used as a case study for additional learning support.
100. Inspectors should ensure that observations include specific attention to the quality of learning for individuals and different groups of learners, either in

individual or in group sessions. The specific groups should be identified in the pre-inspection briefing and/or through subsequent discussion with the provider and in response to any emerging issues: for example, from discussions with learners.

101. Other first-hand evidence includes: discussions with learners and analysis of their work; analysis of provider records, documents, and learner and employer questionnaires; and meetings with learners, employers, staff, governors, councillors, trustees and the provider's partners where appropriate.
102. Where meetings take place, the key focus will be the impact on learning and/or outcomes.
103. The provider must make any information they hold freely available for inspectors, and cooperate in the task of collecting evidence.

Inspection of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment

104. Inspection of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the impact it has on the quality of learning, provides direct evidence. Inspectors will capture evidence from a variety of learning activities, such as through: direct observation; evaluation of learning materials and their use by learners; the use of technology to deliver and assess learning; and examining what learners can understand, do and make as a result of their learning.

Inspectors may accompany an assessor to a number of employers to observe learners' skills development on-the-job. They may assess how the learner is progressing compared with their starting point.

105. Inspectors will also conduct formal observations of teaching, training or assessment activities. These should be of sufficient length to ensure the inspector has enough evidence to form clear judgements and give a grade. The inspector will usually provide feedback to the person observed. This will normally include the grade awarded, with a short summary of the strengths and areas for development. Other forms of learning activity that are not teaching or assessment sessions may be graded; for example progress reviews.
106. Inspectors will conduct short, focused observations of activities. These will usually last approximately 15 minutes and have a specific focus, for example learner support, the use of information and learning technology, attendance, or personalised learning. Inspectors will not normally give feedback to the person observed following these sessions.
107. The lead inspector will give the provider overall feedback on the quality of teaching, training and assessment, but they will not produce a profile of the grades awarded.

108. The lead inspector may, in discussion with the provider, select one or more learning sessions or assessments for a joint observation. A joint observation comprises an HMI or Additional Inspector and a member of the provider's own observation team. The inspector will observe the learning session jointly with the provider's observer.

At the end of the joint observation, the inspector will record a grade but will not share this with the observer or teacher/trainer/assessor. It is the responsibility of the provider's observer to provide feedback to the person observed. After leaving the teaching/training session the inspector will listen to the observer's recorded observations and proposed grade and then feedback to the observer.

The use of data

109. Inspection uses a range of publicly available data about the provider's performance. Inspectors will also use the latest data held by the provider. The source and type of data used vary with different types of provision and provider, but are generally provided via the funding bodies and, where appropriate, the Data Service. Examples of the data used include success rates, value-added measures, minimum levels of performance, and progression to employment.
110. Inspectors evaluate a learner's progress: the rate of learning and acquisition of knowledge and skills leading to the achievement of challenging targets. This may, for example, be how quickly they achieve their learning goals and/or the volume of learning that is successfully completed in a set time.
111. Inspectors will analyse the performance of the provider using the most recent appropriate validated data before and during an inspection. Analysis may be at overall provider level and/or for individual subjects or types of provision.
112. While data alone will not lead directly to judgements, the primary data source, which is the relevant measure of success for each type of provision, will provide key evidence for the judgement on outcomes for learners. Subject inspectors will not make judgements about outcomes when determining the grade for teaching, learning and assessment in the subject area. However, they will make reference to whether teaching, learning and assessment correlate with the subject area's outcomes in their text.

How is the self-assessment report used during inspection?

113. A provider's annual self-assessment report will continue to provide inspectors with crucial evidence to support judgements about the Common Inspection Framework's main aspects both before and during inspection. Inspectors will also use all available self-assessment reports to assess risk, monitor standards and plan for inspection. Where sector subject areas are to be inspected, the report will help the lead inspector to select the areas to inspect. If not

available in advance, a provider must share their latest self-assessment report with the lead inspector when they have been notified.

114. During the inspection, findings will be compared with those in the provider's self-assessment report. Where a report is not available at the risk assessment and planning stage, inspectors are required to rely on a range of data sources.
115. Ofsted does not require a provider to produce a self-assessment report in any prescribed format. However, thorough self-assessment and effective action planning is essential to tackle identified areas for improvement, including provision that requires improvement, and should be an integral part of an organisation's quality improvement arrangements.

How is evidence recorded?

116. During inspection, inspectors will collect, analyse and record evidence and their judgements on evidence forms.
117. The evidence forms, together with any briefings, plans or instructions prepared by the lead inspector, and responses from learners and employers, either in hard copy or in emails, 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 agreed?

118. The lead inspector will ensure the inspection team agrees the judgements about the provider. The judgements are referenced to the grade characteristics in the evaluation schedule (part two of this handbook).
119. The evidence base must support the judgements convincingly and identify the key findings and what the provider should do to improve. Inspectors will discuss emerging findings with the nominee and, where appropriate, senior staff at regular intervals. If the provider wishes, the nominee will have the opportunity to provide further evidence during the evidence-collecting stages of the inspection.
120. The overall judgements will reflect all the evidence considered by the inspection team.

What meetings are held during inspection?

121. To secure the judgements, the inspection team holds a number of team meetings. The nominee is a full participant at all of these meetings, although they may not contribute to grading discussions.

The meetings may include:

- where appropriate, an initial team meeting to brief the inspection team on the shape of the inspection, clarify any issues relating to their roles and receive a brief update from the provider⁷
- where appropriate, an initial meeting with learner representatives
- if appropriate, an initial briefing from the provider's managers with responsibility for key aspects of the inspection
- daily meetings for the nominee to hear the emerging judgements and identify any additional evidence opportunities
- a grading meeting to determine a grade for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment for each sector subject area inspected. These will usually be held on the penultimate day of the inspection **but** could be included as part of the final grading meeting on the last day. The aims are to:
 - agree the key findings for teaching, learning and assessment for the sector subject area
 - propose a grade for the sector subject area.
- a final grading meeting on the last day of inspection to arrive at accurate and secure judgements about the provider. The main purpose of the meeting is to:
 - confirm or award the grades for the sector subject areas
 - use the evaluation schedule in part two of this handbook to award overall grades for outcomes for learners, quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and effectiveness of leadership and management
 - grade the overall effectiveness and the adequacy of the provider
 - complete the inspection grades for all age groups, provision and aspects and record them on the record of main findings
 - agree the key findings, improvements needed and recommendations.
- a feedback meeting to the provider and invitees to hear the key messages from the inspection, before publication of the report.

How do we assure the quality of an inspection?

122. All inspectors are responsible for the quality of their work. The lead inspector must ensure that inspections are carried out in accordance with the principles of inspection and the code of conduct.

⁷ Please note that not all inspectors will necessarily attend this meeting.

123. Ofsted also monitors the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes. Some providers are visited by an HMI who assures the quality of the inspection, and in other cases we evaluate the inspection evidence base.
124. Inspection services providers monitor the work of the inspectors they employ as part of their quality assurance procedures. Assessments are confidential to the inspectors and contractors concerned.
125. All providers are invited to take part in a post-inspection evaluation so that their views about the inspection can contribute to inspection development.

What happens after the inspection?

What feedback is provided to the provider?

126. Before leaving the provider, the lead inspector should ensure that the provider is clear:
 - about the grades awarded for each judgement required under the Common Inspection Framework
 - that the grades awarded are provisional and, although this is unlikely, may be subject to change through moderation
 - that the main points provided in the feedback will be referred to in the text of the report
 - about the key findings, improvements needed and recommendations for improvement
 - about the procedures leading to the publication of the report
 - about the complaints procedure
 - where relevant, about the implications of the provider being deemed to require improvement or to be inadequate overall.
127. Following the inspection, the lead inspector will write a report summarising the findings of the inspection. Part of the report is for the provider; part is for distribution to learners attending courses or learning programmes at the provider.
128. The lead inspector provides a first draft of the report to the inspection services provider after the inspection. The inspection services provider edits the report and then forwards the report to the provider for a factual accuracy check. Two working days are allocated to the provider to comment on the draft. The lead inspector is responsible for considering any inaccuracies suggested by the provider and making any necessary changes. They will consult Senior HMI where appropriate.
129. Where providers are outstanding or inadequate for overall effectiveness, the report will be subject to further scrutiny by a Senior HMI. This will include: a

review of the evidence base to ensure judgements are secure; the checking of data in the report to ensure they are accurate and reflected in the grades awarded; and detailed reading of the text to ensure that all grades awarded are representative of the findings in the report.

130. When expressing proportions in words, particularly relating to data, inspectors will use language that relates approximately to a proportion range. For more information, please refer to the *Guide to Ofsted's house style*.⁸

When is the report issued?

131. The report is normally published on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports) within 25 working days of the end of the inspection.
132. The relevant funding body is notified when the reports are published. In exceptional circumstances, Ofsted may decide that the normal period for completion of the inspection report should be extended.

How do providers complain about their inspection?

133. Any concerns the provider has about the inspection should be raised with the lead inspector during the inspection and resolved where possible. Concerns may also be raised with a quality assurance inspector, should one be present at the inspection.

If the concerns are not resolved, the person raising the concern, or someone acting on his or her behalf, should contact the Ofsted helpline on 0300 123 4666. Ofsted's National Business Unit will then refer the caller to an appropriate person with the required knowledge of further education and skills inspections, who will try to help resolve the issues.

134. If it has not been possible to resolve concerns in the manner described, then individuals or providers may decide to lodge a formal complaint. The complaints procedure is available on our website.⁹
135. Ofsted investigates and sends the complainant an informative response that aims to answer all of the points of concern within 20 working days. Ofsted also includes details of how to ask for further internal and independent review if the complainant is not satisfied with the complaint resolution.

⁸ *Guide to Ofsted's house style* (080230), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/080230.

⁹ *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* (070080), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/080230.

Part 2. Evaluation schedule for the inspection of further education and skills

Introduction to the evaluation schedule

136. The *Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills*¹⁰ is devised by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) in line with section 133 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.¹¹ It takes account of the Education Act 2011¹² and informs all of Ofsted's further education and skills inspections.
137. The Common Inspection Framework sets out the criteria that inspectors make judgements against when they inspect education and training in England for learners aged 14–16 attending a college course or learning programme and for learners over the age of 16 except for those in school sixth forms or higher education.
138. Inspectors will use this evaluation schedule when they inspect further education and skills provision under part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. They should interpret the evaluation schedule in the context of each provider being inspected.
139. The evaluation schedule includes:
- the main considerations for evaluation under each of the Common Inspection Framework's principal criteria
 - the illustrative grade characteristics for each aspect and overall effectiveness.

Section A. Background to the evaluation schedule

The key judgements made during inspections

140. Inspectors will make three key aspect judgements:
- outcomes for learners
 - quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - effectiveness of leadership and management.
141. In making these judgements, inspectors must evaluate the evidence for each against the grade characteristics. For each one, inspectors will use the following grading scale:

¹⁰ *Common Inspection Framework for further education and skills* (120062), Ofsted, 2012; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120062.

¹¹ Education and Inspections Act 2006; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/contents>.

¹² Education Act 2011; <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/contents>.

- Grade 1: outstanding
- Grade 2: good
- Grade 3: requires improvement
- Grade 4: inadequate.

142. In making their judgements, inspectors must consider which descriptor best fits the evidence available. When evidence indicates that any of the bullet points in the grade characteristics for 'inadequate' applies, then that aspect of the provider's work should be judged inadequate.

Overall effectiveness

143. Inspectors will finally judge the quality of education and/or training provided – the provider's overall effectiveness – taking account of:

- the three key aspect judgements
- the extent to which the education and/or training meets the needs of the range of learners at the provider and, in particular, the needs of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

144. In judging overall effectiveness, inspectors will take account of the full range of evidence, including the three key aspect judgements, and will then decide whether the provider's overall effectiveness is outstanding, is good, requires improvement or is inadequate.

Providers that will be inspected

145. Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the following providers will be inspected:

- further education colleges, sixth-form colleges and independent specialist colleges
- independent learning providers
- community learning and skills providers, including local authorities, specialist designated institutions¹³ and not-for-profit organisations
- employers
- higher education institutions where they provide further education
- post-16 academies wholly or partly funded by the current Skills Funding Agency and/or the Education Funding Agency to provide education and/or training for those aged 16 and over.

¹³ Special designated institutions have specially designated educational status under section 28 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

Please note that the school inspection framework covers the inspection of provision for university technical colleges (UTCs), free schools and maintained schools.

The different types of provision inspected include:

- provision where the main learning aim is to achieve a qualification
- access to apprenticeships, and apprenticeships
- National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) offered in the workplace
- community learning (that may lead to a qualification)
- advice and guidance provision post-16
- learning provision in the judicial services
- Foundation Learning programmes
- employability programmes.

Groups of learners

146. Primarily, inspection evaluates how individual learners benefit from their courses and learning programmes. We must test the provider's response to individual needs by observing how well it helps all learners to make progress and fulfil their potential, especially those whose needs, dispositions, aptitudes or circumstances require particularly perceptive and expert teaching and, in some cases, additional support. Depending on the type of provider, such learners may include:

- disabled learners, as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and those who have special educational needs¹⁴
- boys/men
- girls/women
- groups of learners whose prior attainment may be different from that of other groups
- those who are academically more or less able
- learners for whom English is an additional language
- minority ethnic learners
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller learners
- learners qualifying for a bursary scheme award
- looked after children

¹⁴ HMCI has a statutory duty to report on the outcomes and provision for disabled pupils/learners and those who have special educational needs.

- lesbian, gay and bisexual learners
- transgender learners
- young carers
- learners from low-income backgrounds
- older learners
- learners of different religions and beliefs
- ex-offenders
- women returners
- teenage mothers
- other vulnerable groups.¹⁵

English, mathematics and functional skills

147. 'English, mathematics and functional skills' is a general term that applies to all learning that aims primarily to improve a learner's skills in these core subjects. For some learners this will be entry level literacy and numeracy; for others it will be the application of these core skills in a vocational context. For others, it might be achieving a GCSE at grade A*–C in English and/or mathematics.

148. In this handbook, English, mathematics and functional skills includes:

- literacy and numeracy at entry level and higher
- functional skills at levels 1 and 2
- GCSEs in English and mathematics.

¹⁵ In this handbook, the term 'groups of learners' are groups included in this list.

Section B. The evaluation schedule and grade characteristics

Outcomes for learners

Outcomes for learners include: achievements that take account of learners' attainment and their rate of progress; progress by different groups of learners; the quality of learners' work; skills development; and progression, including into employment, further or higher education.

Inspectors will consider the main purpose of the particular type of provision when they prioritise the impact that each of the criteria will have on the outcomes for learners' grade.

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All learners achieve and make progress relative to their starting points and learning goals

149. To make this judgement, inspectors will consider the extent to which:

- learners attain their learning goals, including qualifications, and achieve challenging targets
- learners' work meets or exceeds the requirements of the qualifications, learning goals or employment
- learners enjoy learning and make progress relative to their prior attainment and potential
- learners make progress in learning sessions and/or in the work place, and improve the quality of their work
- learners attend, participate in, arrive on time and develop the right attitudes to learning.

Further guidance

150. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- important learning objectives that are additional to learners' qualification aims
- social and personal development, including employability skills
- achievement data in different settings
- the quality of learners' work and their ability to demonstrate knowledge, skills and understanding, with particular attention to the level of skills reached by different groups of learners.

Achievement gaps are narrowing between different groups of learners

151. To make this judgement, inspectors will evaluate:

- any significant variations in the achievement of different groups of learners
- learners' progress during their programme compared with their starting points, with particular attention to progress by different groups of learners.

Further guidance

152. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- how well the achievement, including progress, and progression data of different groups are collected, analysed and used to set targets to improve the performance of underachieving groups
- data relating to social and economic deprivation, prior attainment, minority groupings and any other identifiable groups
- local and national performance data.

Learners develop personal, social and employability skills

153. To make this judgement, inspectors will consider:

- the development of English, mathematics and functional skills required to complete learners' programmes and progress
- the achievement of additional qualifications and/or experience gained in the workplace
- broader skills relevant to learners' progression and career aims, such as communication, teamwork, leadership, taking responsibility, reflective thinking, problem solving, independent enquiry and employability.

Further guidance

154. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- financial literacy/capabilities and competence
- learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- learners' effectiveness in the workplace, including their knowledge and understanding gained through training
- learners' understanding of their rights and responsibilities at the provider and at work, and as citizens and consumers in the community
- learners' development of skills in, and knowledge and understanding of, sustainable development.

Learners progress to courses leading to higher-level qualifications and into jobs that meet local and national needs

155. To make this judgement, inspectors will consider:

- how well learners progress to further learning and employment or gain promotion
- how well learners develop an understanding of careers and progression opportunities, and their ability to benefit from training and development opportunities
- learners' acquisition of qualifications and the skills and knowledge that will enable them to progress to their chosen career, employment and/or further education and training
- learners' progression routes, and the extent to which these meet local and national priorities
- the extent to which learners with severe and complex learning difficulties gain skills and progress to become more independent in their everyday life.

Further guidance

156. Inspectors should take into account:

- learners' understanding of their intended progression route
- where learners are employed, opportunities to undertake more demanding roles to extend their knowledge and skills.

Grade characteristics: Outcomes for learners

Please note that the grade characteristics are for guidance only and should not be used as a literal checklist.¹⁶

<p>Outstanding (1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learners and groups of learners are achieving very well and are making better than expected progress given their starting points. Some are making exceptional progress on their learning programmes and at work. ■ They learn exceptionally well and, as a result, acquire knowledge quickly and develop a thorough understanding of a wide range of different aspects of their learning programmes. Learners' attendance and punctuality are consistently good. ■ They apply skills and background knowledge to great effect, including: personal, social, English, mathematics and functional skills, and practical vocational skills that will prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage in their education, training or employment. ■ The success rates of most groups of learners are likely to be at least in line with similar groups of learners nationally, with the majority well above the norm. In exceptional circumstances, where success rates of any group of learners are below those of all learners nationally, the gap is closing rapidly, as shown by a wide range of success indicators. ■ The large majority of learners progress to higher-level qualifications and/or into jobs that meet local and national needs.
<p>Good (2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learners and groups of learners are achieving well and make at least the progress expected of them; the majority are making better than expected progress on their learning programmes and at work given their starting points. ■ Learners acquire knowledge and understanding quickly that will prepare them well for the next stage in their education, training or employment. Attendance and punctuality are good. ■ They develop and apply a good range of skills well, including: personal and social skills, English, mathematics and functional skills, and practical vocational skills. ■ The success rates of the large majority of groups of learners are likely to be in line with or above similar groups of learners nationally, with the majority above. Where success rates of any group of learners are below those of all learners nationally, the gap is closing. In exceptional circumstances, where the performance of groups of learners is low overall, it is improving at a faster rate than nationally. ■ The large majority of learners progress to higher-level qualifications and/or into jobs that meet local and national needs.

¹⁶ There is further guidance on expressing proportions in words in the *Guide to Ofsted's house style* (080230), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/080230.

<p>Requires improvement (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learners and groups of learners are achieving and making satisfactory progress; a small minority make less than satisfactory progress given their starting points. ■ Learners generally learn well on most courses, with no major weaknesses identified. As a result, they are acquiring adequate knowledge and understanding to prepare them for the next stage in their education, training or employment. Attendance and punctuality are mostly at an acceptable level. ■ Learners develop and apply a range of skills adequately, including: personal, social, English, mathematics and functional skills, and practical vocational skills. ■ The success rates of the majority of groups of learners are likely to be in line with similar groups of learners nationally. Where the performance of some groups of learners is below those of all learners nationally, the gaps are closing overall. ■ The majority of learners progress to higher-level qualifications and/or into jobs that meet local and national needs.
<p>Inadequate (4)</p>	<p>Outcomes for learners are likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learners' achievement and progress overall, or the learning and progress of particular groups, is consistently below those of all learners nationally given their starting point. ■ The learning and quality of work of learners is poor and there are weaknesses identified. As a result, learners are deficient in certain aspects of their study for the next stage of their education, employment or training. Attendance and punctuality rates are generally low. ■ Learners' development and application of a range of skills, including personal, social, English, mathematics and functional skills, and practical vocational skills, are insufficient. ■ Success rates are consistently low, too variable or in significant decline. ■ The numbers of learners that progress to higher levels of qualifications and/or jobs are in the minority.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

The most important purpose of teaching is to promote learning and improve outcomes for learners. A rigorous and informative assessment process is essential to successful learning, as is the support learners receive.

Inspectors will consider the main purpose of the particular type of provision when they prioritise the impact that each of the criteria will have on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment grade. Inspectors will make reference to outcomes when considering an overall judgement on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

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Learners benefit from high expectations, engagement, care, support and motivation from staff

157. To make this judgement, inspectors will consider:

- how well teaching and learning methods – including training, coaching and mentoring – inspire and challenge all learners and enable them to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding
- the extent to which teaching, training and coaching encourage and develop independent learning
- whether high but realistic expectations are used to motivate learners

- how well learners are cared for and supported to achieve their learning goals
- whether procedures to monitor learners' participation, progress and attendance lead to prompt action to address identified problems.

Further guidance

158. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- how the different needs of groups of learners are met
- the effectiveness of learning outside learning sessions through technology, reviews and tutorials
- care and support in their broadest forms, both in and between learning sessions.

Staff use their skills and expertise to plan and deliver teaching, learning and support to meet each learner's needs

159. To make this judgement, inspectors will consider:

- how learning is planned to meet individual learners' needs and makes best use of staff knowledge and skills
- how effectively and creatively staff use resources, including accommodation, equipment and technology, and specialist advice and guidance, to promote and support learning
- the relevant qualifications, training and experience of teachers, trainers, assessors, coaches and support staff
- the attention that is paid to the quality and safety of learning resources, particularly in specialist areas and practical settings
- how effectively learning is monitored during sessions, including where learners are receiving additional learning support
- the promotion and development of independent learning skills, for example, through the use of a range of technologies, including a virtual learning environment.

Further guidance

160. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- how staff reflect upon and evaluate the success of learning sessions
- how well learning programmes develop learners' skills and knowledge, are up to date and relevant, and meet external requirements
- how learning materials are used during and outside learning sessions, including those available in a virtual learning environment

Staff initially assess learners' starting points and monitor their progress, set challenging tasks, and build on and extend learning for all learners

161. To make this judgement, inspectors will consider how well:

- learners' additional support needs are identified quickly and accurately early in their programme through effective initial assessment, leading to appropriate planning and support throughout the duration of their programmes
- staff work with learners to develop individual learning plans that are informed regularly by ongoing assessment
- learners are set challenging short- and longer-term learning goals that are reviewed and updated regularly
- staff assess learners' performance and progress, and monitor assessment practices to ensure they are timely, regular, fair, informative and reliable
- planned assessment/assignment activities build on previous knowledge and extend learning for all learners.

Further guidance

162. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- the context of assessment in relation to the learning objectives
- the use of technology in assessment
- the assessment of personal, learning and thinking skills
- the effectiveness of procedures to monitor learners' participation and attendance, and whether staff take prompt action to address any identified problems appropriately and bring about changes and improvements based on challenging yet realistic targets
- how well achievements towards learning goals and qualifications are celebrated, recorded and accredited
- how well assessment, verification and moderation procedures follow regulatory body requirements.

Learners understand how to improve as a result of frequent, detailed and accurate feedback from staff following assessment of their learning

163. To make this judgement, inspectors will evaluate:

- the extent to which learners understand their progress towards their learning goals and what they need to do to improve
- how well learning objectives are understood by learners and progress is recorded in feedback to learners

- the feedback on learners' work, such as the accuracy and consistency of marking, and the correction of spelling, grammatical errors and inaccuracies
- learners' understanding of what they have to do to improve their skills and knowledge, which is checked and reflected in subsequent tasks and activities.

Further guidance

164. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- how well the provision enables learners to build on what they have already achieved and experienced before starting their programme
- how learners improve their skills and understanding through the review and checking process
- whether parents, carers and employers are kept informed of the progress and attendance of learners under the age of 19 (and vulnerable adults up to the age of 25).

Teaching and learning develop English, mathematics and functional skills, and support the achievement of learning goals and career aims

165. To make this judgement, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- teaching and learning support learners to develop the English, mathematics and functional skills they need to achieve their main learning goals and career aims
- learners' progress in English, mathematics, language and functional skills is monitored and reviewed, and their work is marked carefully
- learners appreciate the importance of improving their English, mathematics and functional skills as appropriate, in the context of their learning goals and life ambitions.

Further guidance

166. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- the success of different strategies used for improving the English, mathematics, functional and language skills of different groups of learners
- whether staff have the qualifications, experience and skills needed to teach English, mathematics and functional skills.

Appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance supports learning effectively

167. To make this judgement, inspectors will consider the effectiveness of:

- timely information, advice and guidance provided to learners on their next steps in training, education and employment
- the provider's pre-course information and advice and that provided through links with other relevant organisations
- guidance and induction to introduce learners to the structure and demands of their programme, and their rights and responsibilities as a learner
- planning to provide coherent progression routes for learners.

Further guidance

168. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- the extent to which timely information, advice and guidance enable individuals to gain greater learning autonomy and decrease dependence on others
- the availability and quality of advice and guidance on learning and personal issues
- whether staff have the necessary qualifications, experience and skills to give information, advice and guidance.

Equality and diversity are promoted through teaching and learning

169. To make this judgement, inspectors will evaluate how well:

- teaching, learning and assessment promote equality, support diversity and tackle discrimination, victimisation, harassment, stereotyping or bullying¹⁷
- staff use materials and teaching methods that foster good relations and are sensitive to and promote equality of opportunity
- staff are aware of and plan for individual needs in teaching or training sessions.

¹⁷ In this handbook, 'bullying' includes cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to special educational need, sexual orientation, sex, race, religion and belief, gender reassignment or disability.

Further guidance

170. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- whether learning activities motivate and engage all learners, whatever their age, ability and cultural background, and that they are suitably demanding
- the impact that teaching has in promoting the learners’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- how well staff plan sessions to meet fully the needs of different groups of learners
- how well staff maximise opportunities in sessions and all learning contexts to promote equality of opportunity and awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Grade characteristics: Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Please note that the grade characteristics are for guidance only and should not be used as a literal checklist.¹⁸

Outstanding (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Much teaching, learning and assessment for all age groups and learning programmes is outstanding and rarely less than consistently good. As a result, the very large majority of learners consistently make very good and sustained progress in learning sessions that may take place in a variety of locations, such as the classroom, workplace or wider community. ■ All staff are highly adept at working with and developing skills and knowledge in learners from different backgrounds. Staff have consistently high expectations of all learners and demonstrate this in a range of learning environments. ■ Drawing on excellent subject knowledge and/or industry experience, teachers, trainers, assessors and coaches plan astutely and set challenging tasks based on systematic, accurate assessment of learners’ prior skills, knowledge and understanding. They use well-judged and often imaginative teaching strategies that, together with sharply focused and timely support and intervention, match individual needs accurately. Consequently, the development of learners’ skills and understanding is exceptional. Staff generate high levels of enthusiasm for participation in, and commitment to, learning. ■ Teaching and learning develop high levels of resilience, confidence and independence in learners when they tackle challenging activities. Teachers, trainers, and assessors check learners’ understanding effectively throughout learning sessions. Time is used very well and every opportunity is taken to develop crucial
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¹⁸ There is further guidance on expressing proportions in words in the *Guide to Ofsted’s house style* (080230), Ofsted, 2010; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/080230.

	<p>skills successfully, including being able to use their literacy and numeracy skills on other courses and at work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Appropriate and regular coursework contributes very well to learners' progress. High quality learning materials and resources including information and communication technology (ICT) are available and are used by staff and learners during and between learning and assessment sessions. ■ Marking and constructive feedback from staff are frequent and of a consistent quality, leading to high levels of engagement and interest. ■ The teaching of English, mathematics and functional skills is consistently good with much outstanding. Teachers and other staff enthuse and motivate most learners to participate in a wide range of learning activities. ■ Equality and diversity are integrated fully into the learning experience. Staff manage learners' behaviour skilfully; they show great awareness of equality and diversity in teaching sessions. ■ Advice, guidance and support motivate learners to secure the best possible opportunities for success in their learning and progression.
<p>Good (2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teaching, learning and assessment are predominantly good, with examples of outstanding teaching. All staff are able to develop learners' skills and knowledge regardless of their backgrounds. As a result, learners make good progress. ■ Staff have high expectations of all learners. Staff in most curriculum and learning programme areas use their well-developed skills and expertise to assess learners' prior skills, knowledge and understanding accurately, to plan effectively and set challenging tasks. They use effective teaching, learning and assessment strategies that, together with appropriately targeted support and intervention, match most learners' individual needs effectively. ■ Teaching generally develops learners' resilience, confidence and independence when tackling challenging activities. Staff listen perceptively to, carefully observe and skilfully question learners during learning sessions. Teaching deepens learners' knowledge and understanding consistently and promotes the development of independent learning skills. Good use of resources, including ICT, and regular coursework contribute well to learners' progress. ■ Staff assess learners' progress regularly and accurately and discuss assessments with them so that learners know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. ■ The teaching of English, mathematics and functional skills is generally good. Teachers and other staff enthuse and motivate most learners to participate in a wide range of learning activities. ■ Equality and diversity are promoted and learners' behaviour is managed well, although some work is still needed to integrate aspects of equality and diversity into learning fully. ■ Advice, guidance and support provide good opportunities for learners to be motivated and make the necessary connection between learning and successful progression.

<p>Requires improvement (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teaching, learning and assessment require improvement and are not yet good. They result in most learners, and groups of learners, making progress that is broadly in line with that made by learners nationally with similar starting points. However, there are weaknesses in areas of delivery, such as in learning or assessment. ■ There is likely to be some good teaching, learning and assessment and there are no endemic inadequacies in particular courses, across levels or age groups, or for particular groups of learners. Staff work with and develop skills and knowledge in learners from different backgrounds satisfactorily. Staff expectations enable most learners to work hard and achieve satisfactorily, and encourage them to make progress. Due attention is given to the careful initial assessment and ongoing assessment of learners' progress, but these are not always conducted rigorously enough, which may result in some unnecessary repetition of work for learners, and tasks being planned and set that do not fully challenge them. ■ Staff monitor learners' work during learning sessions, set appropriate tasks and are capable of adjusting their plans to support learning. These adaptations are usually successful but occasionally are not timely or relevant, and this slows learning for some learners. ■ Teaching strategies ensure that learners' individual needs are usually met. Staff deploy available additional support carefully, use available resources well and set appropriate coursework for learners. ■ Learners are informed about the progress they are making and how to improve further through marking and dialogue with staff that is usually timely and encouraging. This approach ensures that most learners want to work hard and improve. ■ The teaching of English, mathematics and functional skills is satisfactory overall. ■ The promotion of equality and support for diversity in teaching and learning are satisfactory. ■ Advice, guidance and support help to motivate learners to succeed in their learning and progress.
<p>Inadequate (4)</p>	<p>Teaching, learning and assessment are likely to be inadequate where any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ As a result of weak teaching, learning and assessment over time, learners or groups of learners are making inadequate progress and have been unsuccessful in attaining their learning goals. ■ Staff do not have sufficiently high expectations and, over time, teaching fails to excite, enthuse, engage or motivate particular groups of learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. ■ Staff lack expertise and the ability to promote learning. ■ Teaching of English, mathematics and functional skills is inadequate and a significant proportion of learners do not receive appropriate support to address English, mathematics and language needs.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learning activities and resources are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of learners and, as a result, they make inadequate progress. ■ Staff show insufficient understanding and promote equality and diversity insufficiently in teaching sessions.
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Effectiveness of leadership and management

The main focus in judging the effectiveness of leadership and management is how successfully it has an impact on improving outcomes and teaching, learning and assessment for all learners.

Inspectors will consider the main purpose of the particular type of provision when they prioritise the impact that each of the criteria will have on the effectiveness of leadership and management grade.

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Leaders and managers demonstrate an ambitious vision, have high expectations for what all learners can achieve, and attain high standards of quality and performance

171. To make this judgement, inspectors will consider:

- the clarity of vision, corporate mission and strategic direction demonstrated and implemented by leaders and governing or supervisory bodies (if

applicable) that aspire to excellence, sustain improvement and raise expectations for all users

- how well leaders promote the ambition of high achievement for all learners
- how well leaders raise standards through clear and realistic strategies for planning, developing and improving learning programmes and services
- whether demanding targets are set and met throughout the organisation, and quality and performance are monitored rigorously
- how well staff at all levels demonstrate high ambitions for all learners and a commitment to securing sustained improvement.

172. Where there is a governing or supervisory body, inspectors will consider their effectiveness, including how well they:

- know the provider and understand its strengths and weaknesses through appropriate involvement in self-assessment
- support and strengthen the provider's leadership and contribute to shaping its strategic direction
- provide challenge and hold the senior leader and other senior managers to account for improving the quality of learning and the effectiveness of performance management systems
- work efficiently, including through having a systematic approach to meeting statutory duties and approving and monitoring priorities that are focused on improving teaching, learning and assessment.

Further guidance

173. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- the extent to which staff understand their role in, and contribution to, achieving the strategic direction
- how well leaders and other staff work with external stakeholders to ensure that the provider's strategic objectives and targets respond to local and national priorities
- whether the provider has an appropriate management structure and sufficient staff and other resources to carry through its plans
- the extent to which governors and/or supervisory bodies have the skills and experience to fulfil their duties and to ask challenging questions to raise or maintain high standards and secure positive outcomes for learners
- how well the provider continues to make and sustain improvements by developing the capacity of leaders and managers.

Leaders and managers improve teaching and learning through rigorous performance management and appropriate professional development

174. To make this judgement, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- strategies are effective in improving the standard of teaching, learning and assessment
- leaders and managers review and develop constantly the performance of teachers and trainers through dialogue, coaching, mentoring and support and training
- systematic and rigorous performance management is effective, including using appropriate procedures for tackling underperformance
- leaders, governors and supervisory bodies (where appropriate) monitor the quality of the experience provided for learners and their outcomes
- leaders seek out and share best practice, contributing to a coherent programme of professional development
- resources, including staff, accommodation, facilities and technologies, are developed and used to support learning
- managers ensure that staff have the experience and skills needed to carry out their roles.

Further guidance

175. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- the use of comprehensive arrangements to monitor and evaluate the quality of all aspects of the planning and implementation of learning activities
- how well leaders, managers and teachers analyse and evaluate the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on learners' outcomes
- the effectiveness of strategies to engage with parents and carers, local schools and external agencies to ease transition to the provider, particularly for learners with significant barriers to learning.

Leaders and managers evaluate the quality of the provision through robust self-assessment, taking account of users' views, and use the findings to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement

176. To make this judgement, inspectors will consider whether:

- the provider has a sound track record of improvement and has developed the capacity to sustain improvement
- leaders and managers evaluate the quality of any subcontracted provision through rigorous self-assessment, taking account of users' views, and use the findings to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement

- there are effective arrangements for quality assurance that maintain high standards and identify and tackle underperformance
- the provider's self-assessment process is rigorous and the subsequent evaluations are appropriately detailed and accurate
- learners are fully engaged in reviewing, reflecting on and improving provision
- the analysis and evaluation of data on learners' performance, progress and progression are used effectively to improve standards
- quality improvement plans include ambitious and realistic targets, and associated actions that show how the provision will be developed for learners
- the implementation and impact of actions to improve quality are monitored and evaluated.

Further guidance

177. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- the extent of involvement of staff from across the organisation, including franchised and subcontracted provision, and their understanding of their role in securing improvement
- the involvement of learners, local schools, community groups and employers in the design, review and evaluation of the provision
- the extent to which the provider has effective processes for monitoring and evaluating performance and tackling weaknesses
- the effectiveness of arrangements to gather the views of all learners and ensure representation on decision-making groups, regardless of individual circumstances, mode of attendance and geographical spread
- whether learners are confident about their contribution to the improvement of the provider, and evidence of their views being listened to.

Leaders and managers successfully plan, establish and manage the curriculum and learning programmes to meet the needs and interests of learners, employers and the local and national community

178. To make this judgement, inspectors will consider:

- how well data and information on learners' and employers' needs, and local and national priorities, are used to review and plan the provision
- whether learning programmes are accessible in terms of timing, location, mode of delivery and duration, and are structured to provide a coherent and substantive course of study at different levels with a variety of interesting and useful activities to meet learners' individual needs, including for those

under-represented in learning and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

- whether learning programmes contain appropriate attention to improving learners' English, mathematics and functional skills and ensuring development of their employability skills
- the effectiveness of curriculum management in ensuring that the range, content and flexibility of the learning offer provides all learners with choice and opportunities for progression to higher levels of study and employment
- the extent to which learners are on the appropriate courses or learning programmes
- how well learning programmes are planned and managed
- the flexibility of arrangements for training and assessment to suit learners' and employers' needs.

Further guidance

179. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- how the provider considers employers' views and information on performance, skills and labour demand to identify training needs
- the extent to which the range and content of learning programmes and services are relevant to local communities and national priorities
- whether learning programmes, including those developed with schools, local authorities, employers and others, are effective in encouraging participation by young people who are at risk of leaving or who are not in education, employment or training
- how partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others enable learners to develop new skills and gain knowledge and qualifications
- how effectively curriculum planning meets learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development needs.

Leaders and managers actively promote equality and diversity, tackle bullying and discrimination, and narrow the achievement gap

180. To make this judgement, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- equality and diversity aspects are built into the provider's strategic plans, the impact of plans is monitored and follow-up action is taken to tackle areas for improvement
- appropriate policies and procedures are implemented to actively promote equality and diversity among staff, learners, employers and other partners
- training in equality and diversity is effective and leaders, managers, governors or supervisory bodies (where appropriate), staff and learners

understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity

- challenging targets are set, the performance and destinations of different groups of learners are monitored carefully and appropriate action is taken to close any identified gaps
- the impact of a provider's work in relation to equality and diversity is assessed thoroughly and appropriate actions are taken in response
- learners and staff are protected from harassment, bullying and discrimination, including those based with employers and at other sites external to the provider
- incidents and complaints specifically about equality, diversity and bullying are managed and acted upon proactively, including, where appropriate, providing counselling and support
- arrangements to ensure all learners can participate in learning, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, work well and learners have opportunities to give their views on the provision.

Further guidance

181. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- where the provider is a public body, how well it has taken action to fulfil its responsibilities under legislation
- whether effective action is taken to ensure that the ethnic profile of staff and governors broadly reflects that of the learner population
- the arrangements for reporting on the promotion of equality and diversity to governors or supervisory bodies
- the effectiveness of arrangements to protect learners from bullying, harassment and discrimination, including training for learners, teaching and support staff, and governors/supervisory bodies on equality and diversity
- whether learners are referred effectively to counselling and support and, where appropriate, both are offered.

Leaders and managers safeguard all learners

182. To make this judgement, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which:

- safeguarding arrangements are in place and regularly reviewed to keep all learners aged 14–18 safe
- staff, leaders, governors and supervisory bodies (where appropriate) and volunteers receive appropriate training on safeguarding, which is updated regularly

- leaders, governors and supervisory bodies (where appropriate) fulfil legislative requirements, such as those for disability, safeguarding, and health and safety
- appropriate arrangements for health and safety protect staff and learners from harm
- those in need, or at risk of significant harm, are identified effectively and appropriate action is taken.

Further guidance

183. Where relevant, inspectors should take into account:

- whether providers have a single, central record of all checks on staff and volunteers where appropriate
- the provider’s compliance with its statutory duty to assist local children’s services departments on child protection matters and, as appropriate, to liaise with the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- whether the provider takes appropriate action when a learner reports concerns
- whether there is a designated senior member of staff in charge of safeguarding arrangements who has been trained to the appropriate level
- whether the provider has contact details for a parent, carer or person acting in loco parentis¹⁹ for learners aged up to 18 (and up to age 25 for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities)
- whether policies on bullying and discrimination are implemented effectively
- the extent to which all learning and development sites provide a safe learning environment, and safe working practices are promoted in training and at work
- whether thorough risk assessment and checks on staff across the provision provide the basis for a provider’s safeguarding policy and plans.

¹⁹ Coming from the Latin for ‘in place of a parent’, this refers to the legal doctrine under which an individual assumes parental rights, duties and obligations without going through the formalities of legal adoption.

Grade characteristics: Effectiveness of leadership and management

Please note that the grade characteristics are for guidance only and should not be used as a literal checklist.

<p>Outstanding (1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All of the provider's activities demonstrate the pursuit of excellence through innovative responses to local and national need, and, over a sustained period of time, an uncompromising ambition to improve performance constantly, or maintain the highest levels of performance, for all learners, including those in subcontracted provision. ■ All leaders and managers, including the governing body or supervisory body (where appropriate), have high expectations of learners and the organisation as a whole; they lead by example. Governors hold leaders and managers to account effectively for all aspects of the provider's performance. Actions are based on the provider's self-assessment processes that provide a deep and accurate understanding of data and performance, and of staff and learners' skills and attributes. ■ Leaders and managers take actions that focus relentlessly on improving teaching, learning and assessment, which are likely to be outstanding and at least consistently good. Professional development is underpinned by highly rigorous performance management that encourages, challenges and supports staff to improve. ■ The provider has highly successful strategies for engaging with learners, employers and parents and carers to the very obvious benefit of all learners. The curriculum, learning programmes, and recruitment are planned thoroughly and exceptionally well implemented. Learners' needs are exceptionally well matched to learning programmes and meet the needs of the local and national community. ■ The provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet statutory requirements and it manages any potential risks to learners appropriately. ■ Equality and diversity are promoted actively, resulting in a learning environment where bullying and discrimination are not tolerated. There are likely to be no achievement gaps between different groups of learners.
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<p>Good (2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leaders and managers, including the governing body or supervisory body (where appropriate), consistently communicate high expectations and ambition. Governors challenge leaders and managers systematically to account for the provider's performance. ■ They model good practice and demonstrably work hard to monitor, improve and support teaching, learning and assessment through effective performance management and professional development. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment are improving and likely to be good. ■ Planned actions to address weaknesses, based on reliable data, rigorous quality assurance systems and accurate self-assessment, have been concerted and effective, including in subcontracted provision. As a result, outcomes for learners have improved or previous good performance has been consolidated. ■ The provider has good relationships with learners, parents/carers and employers, whose views clearly influence improvements. The curriculum and learning programmes are well planned and organised and provide imaginative and effective opportunities for learners of all abilities, and meets the needs of the local and national community. ■ The provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet statutory requirements and risk is managed appropriately. ■ Equality and diversity are promoted actively, resulting in a learning environment where bullying and discrimination are not tolerated. There are very few achievement gaps between different groups of learners.
<p>Requires improvement (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A number of aspects of leadership and management require improvement. However, the leaders and managers, including the governing body or supervisory body (where appropriate), demonstrate the capacity to tackle the necessary improvements, including in subcontracted provision. ■ Planned actions have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that very little is inadequate and a minority is good or better, but much remains satisfactory. Managers receive accurate data and use it effectively to manage and improve their provision. Capacity to improve is demonstrated by a trend of at least modest improvement in learners' performance and attitudes to learning, although a few significant weaknesses remain. Essential systems, including self-assessment, are embedded sufficiently to enable the provider to continue improving; these do not depend solely on individuals. ■ The provider usually works well with learners, parents/carers and employers, and their views are used to evaluate the provision. The curriculum generally matches learners' needs, interests and aspirations locally and nationally. However, some curriculum areas do not meet the needs of the learners. ■ The provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners meet statutory requirements. ■ Equality and diversity are promoted adequately, resulting in no serious instances of bullying or discrimination. The achievement gap for all groups of learners is narrowing.

<p>Inadequate (4)</p>	<p>Leadership and management are likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The ability to make further improvement is limited because leaders and managers have been ineffective in securing essential improvements, including in subcontracted provision. ■ Outcomes for learners are inadequate and/or not improving. ■ Leaders and managers are not taking effective steps to secure good or better teaching for all groups of learners. ■ Self-assessment lacks rigour and is inaccurate in its evaluation of the provision. Despite remedying a few small areas of weakness, perhaps recently, self-assessment is not effective and improvements are insecure, too slow or depend too much on external support. ■ Governors are insufficiently rigorous in holding the provider to account for the quality of the provision. ■ Weak curriculum planning results in a lack of choice and coherence in learning programmes that do not meet individual needs or the needs of the local and national community. ■ The provider's strategies for engaging with learners, parents/carers and employers are weak so that they are not involved sufficiently in influencing changes and improvements. ■ The provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners do not meet statutory requirements and give serious cause for concern. ■ Equality and diversity are not promoted, unlawful discrimination is not tackled and achievement gaps between particular groups are not being closed.
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Overall effectiveness

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Grade characteristics: Overall effectiveness

<p>Outstanding (1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding. Outcomes for learners and the effectiveness of leadership and management are likely to be outstanding. ■ In exceptional circumstances, where outcomes for learners are good, they are improving rapidly. ■ The provider's teaching and learning consistently reflect the highest aspirations for learners and expectations of staff. It ensures that best practice is applied extensively in a drive for continuous improvement. Learning is outstanding. Leadership and management play an exemplary role. ■ The curriculum and learning programme offer is highly relevant and contributes to learners' needs. ■ The provider's promotion of equality and diversity enables learners to achieve and fulfil their potential. Consequently, learners and groups of learners have excellent experiences at the provider, ensuring that they are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. ■ Overall, quality and performance have improved exceptionally or previously outstanding standards have been securely maintained.
<p>Good (2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The quality of teaching, learning and assessment will be at least good. Outcomes for learners and the effectiveness of leadership and management are likely to be at least good; some aspects may be outstanding. ■ The provider takes effective action to enable most learners to reach their learning goals. Attitudes to learning are very positive, learning and outcomes for learners are at least good. Leadership and management play a significant role. ■ The curriculum and learning programme offer is relevant to learners' needs. ■ The provider has taken deliberate and some highly effective actions to promote equality and diversity, which have helped to create an inclusive learning environment. ■ A positive climate for learning exists. Learners and groups of learners have highly positive experiences at the provider, and are well prepared

	<p>for the next stage in their education, training or employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Overall quality and performance have improved greatly, or have consolidated or improved on previously good performance.
<p>Requires improvement (3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the effectiveness of leadership and management require improvement, although there may be some good practice. ■ In certain circumstances, outcomes for learners may be improving or in decline. ■ The provider takes reasonable steps to ensure that all learners develop the skills and personal qualities needed to achieve their potential. ■ Attitudes to learning are satisfactory; learning and outcomes for learners require improvement. Leadership and management play a satisfactory role. ■ The curriculum and learning programme offer is relevant to learners' needs. Action taken to create an inclusive learning environment by promoting equality and diversity requires further improvement. ■ Learners have a generally positive experience while at the provider and most are able to move onto the next stage of their education, training or employment. ■ There may be a trend of improvement in overall quality and performance, despite a few remaining weaknesses.
<p>Inadequate (4)</p>	<p>Overall effectiveness is likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Outcomes for learners are inadequate. ■ The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate. ■ There are important weaknesses in the provider's promotion of equality and diversity that impair learners' or groups of learners' ability to succeed. ■ Legislative requirements for safeguarding are not met.

Glossary of terms

Activity	One of the range of activities that a learner may take part in, including taught sessions, training, assessments, reviews of progress, coaching and job search, both on and off the provider's premises.
Aspect	Term used to describe one of the main areas of the Common Inspection Framework. These are: Outcomes for learners; Quality of teaching, learning and assessment; and Effectiveness of leadership and management.
Employability programmes	Short learning programmes aiming to help unemployed learners into work. Terms used for unemployed people on benefits include: work-related activity group (WRAG), jobseekers allowance (JSA) and employment support allowance (ESA).
Employer-based provision	Employer-based provision includes apprenticeships, and NVOs delivered wholly or partially in the workplace.
Foundation Learning	Programmes that support achievement and progression through entry level and level 1 towards level 2 or, as appropriate, towards other destinations such as open, supported or voluntary employment, further education or training and increased levels of independence.
Inspection services provider	Inspection services providers are external organisations contracted by Ofsted to provide Additional Inspectors, administrative support on inspection, the collation of pre-inspection information for inspectors via a portal, quality assurance and production of reports, and post-inspection evaluation by providers.
Learner	A person seeking information or advice on learning opportunities or employment, and taking part in education, training and development programmes or activities, including student, apprentice, participant, client and customer.
Learning programmes	Learning programmes cover further education programmes in school sixth forms, colleges and other providers for learners above the compulsory school-leaving age, who have not yet reached 19 years of age at the start of an academic year, where the main aim is a vocational or academic qualification.
Learning	Gaining of knowledge and understanding, and development of skills and attributes that lead to the attainment of learning goals, including qualifications.
Nominee	The nominee is a senior member of staff from the provider who is the key link between the provider and the inspection team.
Provider	Any organisation, including consortium or partnership, involved in providing information and advice services, education, training or development programmes or activities, including colleges, independent training providers, local authorities, voluntary organisations and employers.
Provision	The range and type of learning programmes available.
RARPA	A process for recognising and recording progress and achievement for non-accredited learning.
Record of main findings	A template for recording grades awarded for the aspects of the Common Inspection Framework, the provision as a whole and for the different types of provision. The record of main findings is published as part of the inspection report.
Safeguarding	In the context of inspection inspectors will check the arrangements a provider has made to meet safeguarding statutory requirements; safeguarding arrangements are required by law to minimise any risk of, and protect young people from, harm

	and abuse while they are following learning programmes or courses at the provider.
Tariff for inspection	The tariff for inspection refers to the number of inspector days allocated to that inspection. It consists of preparation days for HMI, on-site days for HMI and Additional Inspectors, and post-inspection days for report writing.
User	Young people, adult learners, employers, and parents and carers.