

# Schools inspection policy: some FAQs

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**361**

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# Schools inspection policy: FAQs

**Ofsted is frequently asked a number of questions about school inspection. We have set out some of the most common questions with brief answers below. Further details can be found in the *Framework for school inspection*, the *School inspection handbook* and *Subsidiary guidance*.**

**Q1:** Does Ofsted have a model lesson?

**A1: No.** Ofsted has no preferred lesson structure or teaching style. The promotion of a particular lesson methodology or teaching style claimed to be modelled on Ofsted's demands is not endorsed by Ofsted. Inspectors evaluate the quality of teaching over time by considering its impact on learning. They are most interested in the standards achieved by pupils and the progress made. The school inspection handbook states: 'Inspectors must not advocate a particular method of teaching or show preference towards a specific lesson structure.'

Paragraph 64, [Subsidiary guidance](#)  
Paragraph 26, [School inspection handbook](#)

**Q2:** Does Ofsted mark lessons down because of a lack of independent learning by pupils?

**A2: No.** Inspectors must not give the impression that Ofsted favours a particular teaching style. Paragraph 64 of the [subsidiary guidance](#) makes this clear: 'Inspectors must not inspect or report in a way that is not stipulated in the framework, handbook or guidance. For example, they should not criticise teacher talk for being overlong or bemoan a lack of opportunity for different activities in lessons unless there is unequivocal evidence that this is slowing learning over time. Do not expect to see 'independent learning' in all lessons and do not make the assumption that this is always necessary or desirable. On occasions, too, pupils are rightly passive rather than active recipients of learning. Do not criticise 'passivity' as a matter of course and certainly not unless it is evidently stopping pupils from learning new knowledge or gaining skills and understanding.'

**Q3:** Does Ofsted expect to see a lesson plan for every lesson it inspects?

**A3: No.** Inspectors do not expect teachers to prepare lesson plans for an inspection, but will expect the delivery of lessons to demonstrate evidence of effective planning. Inspectors do not expect to see any particular lesson structure. However, they will use the evidence gathered from lesson observations to help judge the overall quality of the school's teaching and/or curriculum planning.

**Q4:** What percentage of lessons have to be outstanding for teaching overall to be outstanding - is it true that a school have to have at least 66% of teaching judged good for teaching to be judged good?

**A4: No.** Ofsted doesn't make judgements about individual teachers or lessons. Inspectors observe in lessons, speak to pupils and review pupils' work in order to make a judgement about the quality of teaching in the school overall and over time. They will also, where there is sufficient evidence, evaluate the quality of the teaching seen as they observe in lessons. There is a common myth that a certain proportion of teaching seen in lessons needs to be good for teaching to be judged as good overall. This is not the case – inspectors do not need to calculate proportions to arrive at the overall judgement for the quality of teaching.

Paragraph 26, *School inspection handbook*

**Q5:** Must a teacher meet all of the criteria in the 'outstanding' grade descriptor for teaching to be judged outstanding?

**A5: No.** The grade descriptors refer to the quality of teaching overall, and need not be applied in their entirety to a single lesson.

Paragraph 118 onwards, followed by grade descriptor, *School inspection handbook*

**Q6:** Must a school, or each lesson where an observation of teaching occurs, meet all of the criteria in the 'outstanding' grade descriptor for teaching to be evaluated outstanding?

**A6: No.** The grade descriptors refer to the quality of teaching overall and need not be applied in their entirety to a single lesson.

Paragraph 118 onwards, followed by grade descriptor, *School inspection handbook*

**Q7:** Does Ofsted require governors to undertake lesson observations to make sure they know how good teaching is in the school?

**A7: No.** Ofsted requires governors to know about the quality of teaching in the school. However, there is no requirement for governors to undertake lesson observations.

Paragraph 101, *Subsidiary guidance*

**Q8:** Can I get more information about what Ofsted evaluates when inspecting teaching?

**A8: Yes.** Further information can be found at:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/school-inspection-handbook>

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/subsidiary-guidance-supporting-inspection-of-maintained-schools-and-academies>

[http://community.tes.co.uk/ofsted\\_resources/b/weblog/archive/2013/12/11/five-common-misconceptions-about-teaching-from-ofsted-39-s-annual-report-2012-13.aspx](http://community.tes.co.uk/ofsted_resources/b/weblog/archive/2013/12/11/five-common-misconceptions-about-teaching-from-ofsted-39-s-annual-report-2012-13.aspx)

**Q9:** Can a school be judged good or outstanding if, like many new academies, it does not have three years' worth of performance data?

**A9: Yes.** Inspectors take account of 'up to' three years' worth of data and will use all available data, including a school's own data, when making their judgements.

Paragraph 5, *Subsidiary guidance*  
Paragraph 47, *School Inspection handbook*

**Q10:** Do all pupils have to make a specific number of points progress for the school to be judged good?

**A10: No.** Ofsted's guidance refers to progress made in relation to starting points and also to value added data. Progress is not usually evaluated by referring to a specific number of 'points'. Schools, of course, may set targets of this sort for pupils but they are not required to do so by Ofsted.

Paragraph 18 onwards, *Subsidiary guidance*  
Paragraph 115, 116, *School Inspection handbook*

**Q11:** Does Ofsted take account of the school's own surveys of parents and pupils?

**A11: Yes.** Inspectors will take into account the school's own data provided they are up to date.

Paragraph 57, *School inspection handbook*  
Paragraph 66, *The Framework for school inspection*

**Q12:** Will Ofsted downgrade my school because overall only 25% of Year 6 made expected progress - even though I had just six pupils in Year 6, two of whom had a statement of special educational needs for learning difficulties?

**A12: No.** In schools with small cohorts inspectors should treat the data carefully. In this case inspectors would usually expect the school to explain the progress made by each child. In addition, inspectors would look at how well pupils were progressing in other years in the school and how well different groups of pupils were progressing.

Paragraph 117, bullet 3, *School inspection handbook*  
Paragraph 3, *Subsidiary guidance*  
Paragraph 114, 115, 116, *School inspection handbook*

**Q13:** Can my school be inspected at any time?

**A13:** The intervals for school inspection are set out in *The Framework for school inspection*. The frequency of inspection is proportionate and depends on the findings of a school's most recent inspection. However, the Chief Inspector may inspect a school at any time where he has reason to do so, including where there are concerns about recent performance.

Paragraph 16, 17, *The Framework for school inspection*

**Q14:** Could it be right that a neighbouring school got the same GCSE results as our school but was given outstanding when we were only judged good?

**A14: Yes.** Inspection judgements do not usually rely on one set of examination or test results but take into account factors that may differ between schools with similar headline test and examination results. For example, overall results may mask important differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils such as the more able and those eligible for the pupil premium.

Paragraph 7, 43, 49, *The Framework for school inspection*  
Paragraph 104, *School inspection handbook*

**Q15:** Will inspectors still be expecting schools to use National Curriculum levels from September 2014 onwards?

**A15: No.** The new national curriculum arrangements come into force from 1 September 2014, apart from Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. From 1 September 2014, schools will be able to introduce their own approaches to formative assessment. Inspectors will normally expect, however, that an assessment framework supports the school curriculum, so that teachers can check what pupils have learnt and whether they are on track to meet expectations at the end of the key stage, and so that they can report regularly to parents.

Subject to the outcome of the current consultation on primary accountability, Ofsted will publish more detailed arrangements as to how inspection will take account of the new accountability arrangements later this year.

**Q16. Does Ofsted discourage the use of textbooks to support teaching?**

**A16. No.** Ofsted has no preference as to whether textbooks or other teaching materials are used. Inspectors are interested in the standards achieved by pupils and the progress made by them. Teachers are free to use whatever resources they see fit to prepare for, and teach a lesson including textbooks. Inspection reports rarely criticise the use of textbooks unless they are out of date. Inspection reports are more likely to criticise an over-reliance on worksheets, which may be poorly reproduced, incomplete or insufficiently linked to earlier work.

**Q17. When inspecting a Junior School (Key Stage 2 only school), do inspectors judge progress based only on their pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 1?**

**A17. No.** Ofsted inspectors must take into account a range of evidence, including the prior attainment of pupils as well as the school's view of standards on entry. Inspectors will ask for evidence of how well children were doing when they joined the school in Key Stage 2. In many instances, children transfer with examples of work and this can help ensure that the work set for pupils in Year 3 is at the right standard. Where this does not happen, schools often keep examples of the standard of children's work soon after they arrive and this can be discussed with inspectors.

Paragraph 51, 52, *The framework for school inspection*

Paragraph 47, 48, 116, 117, 118, *School inspection handbook*

Paragraph 8, 24, 34, 52, 170, 171, 172, 173, *Subsidiary guidance*