

# Inspecting non-association independent schools

A leaflet for parents and carers

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## Introduction

All independent schools must be registered by the Department for Education (DfE), and they must meet a set of detailed regulations in order to remain registered. However, Ofsted does not inspect all independent schools. About half of them belong to independent school associations and are inspected by independent inspectorates such as the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), the School Inspection Service (SIS) and the Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI). Ofsted inspects all the rest, which we refer to as 'non-association' independent schools.

## Why does Ofsted inspect schools?

We inspect non-association independent schools at the request of the DfE for several reasons: to report on the extent to which schools meet the requirements for registration by checking their compliance with the [independent school standards](#); to provide information to parents and carers; and to promote improvement in the school. We also provide an independent assessment of the quality of education and welfare provision in schools and report on pupils' progress.

## When do inspections happen and how long do they last?

We inspect some independent schools only once in a six year period. These are mainstream independent schools which were judged to be good or outstanding at their last inspection and met all or almost all regulations. Schools which were judged satisfactory are inspected every three years, as are schools which cater for vulnerable children such as those with special educational needs or disabilities or who are in care. We follow up much more frequently inadequate schools which have serious weaknesses. Ofsted gives schools no more than one day's notice of inspection. The inspection usually lasts for two days.

## Who inspects schools?

Her Majesty's Inspectors and additional inspectors carry out the inspections. All inspectors have been trained to, and assessed against, Ofsted's standards, and all are familiar with the independent school standards.

## What happens before an inspection?

Your children's school will be told of the inspection on the day before Ofsted inspector(s) arrive. The school is asked to provide the inspectors with some necessary information and an evaluation of their provision at the start of the inspection.

## What happens during an inspection?

To find out about the school, the inspector will:

- watch lessons to see how teachers are teaching and what pupils are learning
- look at the school's policies, records and procedures and check that these are working well
- look at pupils' work and their results in tests and exams
- talk to staff and pupils
- review what parents and carers have said, and others such as local authorities that have placed pupils at the school
- if the school provides boarding or residential facilities an inspector will come to check how well the pupils are cared for.

Regular feedback will be given to the headteachers and other staff during the inspection. At the end of the inspection, the inspection team will hold a meeting with the headteacher, proprietor and senior staff to inform them of the inspection findings and judgements.

## How can I make my views known?

Parents or carers of children at non-association independent schools and at boarding and residential special schools will be able to make their views known about the education and boarding/residential provision at the school at any time on [Parent View](#). Inspectors will look at the responses before and during the inspection.

Pupils, staff who work in the boarding provision of boarding/residential special schools, and local authorities who place children in independent schools will be asked to give their views every year through an online point-in-time survey. We provide schools with instructions for accessing and completing the surveys, which we ask schools to distribute on our behalf. Ofsted will provide a copy of the point-in-time surveys to schools which do not have access to the internet. The inspectors will refer to the outcome of the survey as part of their inspection preparation and planning. All other staff working in schools will be asked to complete a [questionnaire](#) at the point of inspection. During inspection, inspectors will also talk to pupils and staff about the school.

## Can I speak to the inspectors?

You may have the chance to speak to the inspectors during the inspection, for example at the start or end of the school day. The inspection administrators will be happy to pass on messages to the inspectors and may be able to arrange telephone conversations if you are unable to speak to them in person. The school can provide you with their contact details. Please remember that inspectors cannot deal with complaints concerning individual pupils or settle disputes between you and the school.

## What happens after the inspection?

We give schools an overall grade from 1 to 4:

- grade 1 (outstanding)
- grade 2 (good)
- grade 3 (requires improvement)
- grade 4 (inadequate).

The lead inspector reports their judgements to the headteacher and/or proprietor. The inspectors' findings are published in a report for the school, parents and the wider community. Inspection reports provide information about the effectiveness of the school's work and contain recommendations about what the school should do to improve further. The school should take all reasonable steps to make sure you receive a copy of the report. Reports are also published on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports).

### **What happens if Ofsted judges a school to be failing?**

If inspectors judge that a school is not meeting the independent school standards and/or is inadequate, the DfE will ask the school to submit an action plan for improvement. The DfE may also ask Ofsted to carry out a monitoring inspection to report on the progress the school is making with its action plan. We publish this report on our website. All inadequate schools are monitored closely.

### **What happens if I have concerns about the inspection?**

Complaints are rare, but we treat them very seriously. You can find out more on our website at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk), or by calling our helpline on 0300 123 4234.

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

### **What happens if I have concerns about my child's school?**

If you are concerned about your child's school, you should start by talking directly to the teachers, headteacher or proprietor. If you are not satisfied with the responses you receive then you should raise issues of concern with the DfE who register all independent schools. The DfE may then ask Ofsted to carry out an inspection, or if the matter is serious, to carry out an unannounced emergency inspection. Please remember, though, that inspectors cannot investigate individual concerns.

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

Email: [registration.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:registration.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk)

## Where can I find our more information about inspections?

You can find out more about inspection on our website or by calling our helpline or by writing to the address below.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

**Helpline: 0300 123 4234**  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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