

Inspecting non-association independent schools

A leaflet for parents and carers

Introduction

All independent schools must be registered by the Department for Education (DfE), and they must meet the requirements of [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) in order to remain registered. Ofsted inspects about half of all independent schools in England, which we refer to as 'non-association' independent schools. The rest of the schools belong to independent school associations and are inspected by one of the independent inspectorates which have been [approved by the DfE](#).

Why does Ofsted inspect schools?

Ofsted inspects independent schools at the request of the DfE. **Standard inspections** are conducted in line with Ofsted's [common inspection framework](#), which came into effect in September 2015.

Under the framework inspectors will report on the extent to which schools meet the [independent school standards](#). They will also make the following judgements:

- overall effectiveness
- effectiveness of leadership and management
- quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- personal development, behaviour and welfare
- outcomes for children and learners.

Where the school offers early years provision and sixth form provision, judgements will also be made on these areas.

The DfE also commissions Ofsted to inspect independent schools for several other reasons.

- In **pre-registration inspections**, inspectors report whether a proposed new school is likely to meet the standards, when it opens, if the DfE decides to register it.
- Registered schools must apply to the DfE to make certain changes to their registration. DfE may commission Ofsted to carry out a **material change inspection**, to report whether the

school is likely to meet the relevant independent school standards if the material change is implemented.

- If DfE has concerns about a registered school, it may commission Ofsted to carry out an **emergency inspection**. Ofsted will report whether the school complies with the standards that relate to the concerns that DfE has about the school.
- Where a school was judged to not meet all of the standards at its previous inspection, DfE may commission Ofsted to carry out a **progress monitoring inspection**. Often, the DfE will require the school to prepare an action plan to set out how it will meet the failings identified at the previous inspection. The purpose of the progress monitoring inspection is to check the school's progress against its action plan, and whether the school now meets the previously unmet standards. Inspectors will also report on the school's progress made in addressing the qualitative issues identified at the last inspection.

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

All schools will have a standard inspection within three years from September 2015. Schools inspected from January 2015 that are judged as requires improvement or inadequate will normally have a standard inspection within two years of the previous standard inspection.

Ofsted will normally contact the school by telephone to announce a standard inspection around lunchtime on the day before the inspection is due to start. The inspection does not normally last longer than three days.

Who inspects schools?

Her Majesty's Inspectors and Ofsted 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 a standard inspection?

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 a standard 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.

For information about the inspection of boarding or residential provision in schools, please refer to the leaflet *Inspections of boarding and residential provision in schools*.
www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-boarding-and-residential-provision-in-schools-guidance-for-schools.

How can I make my views known?

Parents or carers of children at non-association independent 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](#). Parent View asks for your opinion on 12 aspects of your child's school, including the progress made by your child, the quality of teaching, dealing with bullying and poor behaviour. When a school is notified of its standard inspection, a free-text box will also be available on Parent View, which you can use to make additional comments, if you wish. 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 support 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 independent school standards require the school to ensure that a copy of the inspection report is provided to the parents of each registered pupil at the school. The standards also require the school to ensure that a copy of the report is published and maintained on the school's internet website. Reports are also published on our website: <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

What happens if Ofsted judges a school to be failing?

If inspectors judge that a school is not meeting the independent school standards and is inadequate, the DfE will normally ask the school to submit an action plan for improvement.

The DfE commissions Ofsted to carry out a progress monitoring inspection to report on the progress the school is making with its action plan.

Schools that are judged to not meet all of the standards and graded as 'requires improvement' are sometimes required to submit an action plan to the DfE. All schools judged as requires improvement following a standard inspection from January 2015 will usually receive a progress monitoring inspection before their next standard inspection, whether or not they were judged to meet the standards.

All progress monitoring inspections reports are published on our [website](#) and, like standard inspection reports, schools are required to provide a copy to parents, and publish it on their own website.

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.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure, 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
Bishopsgate House
Feethams
Darlington
DL1 5QED

Email: 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.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

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