

Conducting school inspections

Guidance for inspecting schools in England under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, from September 2009

This guidance is designed to assist inspectors of schools in their work. It indicates the main activities undertaken from the time the school is notified that it is to be inspected until the publication of the report. Schools can use the guidance to see how inspections will be conducted and may find it helpful when carrying out their self-evaluation.

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Introduction

1. This guidance is designed to assist inspectors of schools in their work. It indicates the main activities undertaken from the time the inspection is called until the publication of the report. Schools can use the guidance to see how inspections will be conducted and may find it helpful when carrying out their self-evaluation.
2. Grade descriptors and outline guidance for each of the judgements made during inspection can be found in a separate document: *The evaluation schedule for schools*, hereafter known as *The evaluation schedule*.¹ Outline guidance is provided for each of the judgements in the evaluation schedule. This is intended to identify the range of evidence that inspectors must consider rather than prescribing the evidence which they must take into account. Inspectors should use professional judgement to decide where to place the emphasis in evidence gathering and much will depend on the key inspection issues and the context of the school. Inspectors should not adopt the lists of possible types of evidence included in the outline guidance as checklists to inform their judgements. Such an approach is likely to overburden the school and the inspection team and may not lead to a coherent, overarching view of the school.
3. Further detailed guidance, briefing papers on school inspections, and training materials that contain further advice on inspection are available on Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. There is specific guidance on conducting integrated inspections of schools with boarding provision and it is important that, where appropriate, inspectors take account of this. Other information on inspection and the work of Ofsted is also available on this website.
4. Inspections are carried out in accordance with *The framework for school inspection*.² The principles of inspection and the code of conduct for inspectors are set out in that document. All inspectors should be conversant with these and apply them rigorously.

Before the inspection

Notification

5. The inspection service provider informs the school that it is to be inspected, giving no more than two working days' notice. Lead inspectors make contact with the school as soon as possible after notification.

¹ www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090098

² www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/090019

6. Inspection service providers ensure that the correct pre-inspection documentation is available. They send the school a list of requested documentation together with instructions regarding the arrangements for the parents' and pupils' questionnaires. They also provide evidence forms for inspectors.

Preparation

7. When Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) are leading inspections, they are allocated one day for preparation for a primary school inspection or two days for a secondary school inspection. Inspection service providers are responsible for allocating preparation time for additional inspectors who are leading inspections.
8. **Inspectors should consider all the guidance in *Conducting the inspection*, including the guidance on writing reports, before planning their inspection or contacting the school.**

Contacting the school

9. Subject to the availability of the headteacher, or in the headteacher's absence the most senior member of staff, the lead inspector should make initial contact within 24 hours of the school being notified of an inspection. If the school is using a telephone answering machine, the lead inspector should leave a message and state the time at which the message was left. Where the telephone remains unanswered, the lead inspector should persevere, keeping a note of the times at which s/he tried to make contact with the school.
10. The purpose of the initial telephone call is for the lead inspector to:
 - confirm the date of the inspection and remind the school that the report will be published on Ofsted's website and that the school is required to make a copy available to all parents and carers of pupils registered at the school
 - explain that the inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005
 - confirm the management arrangements for any childcare provision or out-of-school care run by the school and ensure the school is aware that any such provision managed by the governing body will be inspected as part of the section 5 inspection; provision which is voluntarily or independently managed will be inspected under separate arrangements
 - confirm that the school is able to:
 - inform all parents and pupils that the inspection is taking place
 - distribute and collect parents' questionnaires, including questionnaires sent to, and collected from, parents and carers

who may be more reluctant or less able to engage in this form of response (for example parents not living with their children)

- place a notice in the entrance to the school and on the school's website indicating when the inspection is taking place
- inform the governing body that the inspection is taking place
- distribute and collect pupil questionnaires (a sample to reflect the school's population)
- distribute and collect staff questionnaires, at the discretion of the headteacher
- arrange further telephone contact to discuss the inspection arrangements and issues arising from available pre-inspection evidence.

11. In explaining the inspection arrangements, the lead inspector should:

- indicate the likely format of the inspection, including:
 - the start and feedback times
 - the focus on classroom observation and the consideration of the outcomes for different groups of pupils
 - other inspection activities, including the collection of views from specific groups of pupils
- explain the extent to which the headteacher and senior staff can be engaged in the inspection process; **this is an important part of the inspection and following these initial telephone conversations the headteacher should be clear about the extent of her/his engagement in the inspection process.** Headteachers should normally be invited to:
 - discuss the emerging inspection trails
 - participate in joint lesson observations
 - attend inspection team meetings
 - discuss the inspectors' recommendations to ensure that these are understood
- request electronic copies of available school documentation; please note that schools should not be asked for documents in advance of the inspection other than:
 - the most recent school improvement plan
 - school timetable information
 - times for the school day
 - any information about the school's (pre-planned) interruption to normal routines

- a staff list
 - ask if the following can be made ready for the start of the on-site inspection:
 - the single central register
 - the Race Equality Policy
 - any logs that record incidents of poor behaviour and/or racist incidents
 - the most recent School Improvement Partner's report
 - indicate that safeguarding arrangements will be inspected as soon as possible on the first day of the inspection and that inspectors will want to see the single central register when safeguarding arrangements are discussed
 - indicate that inspectors may ask to see some of the school's existing documentation such as governors' minutes
 - request that the headteacher arranges a meeting between the lead inspector and one or more representatives of the governing body
 - ask if there are any other main partners relevant to the inspection trails whom the inspection team should consider meeting
 - explain where relevant, such as in the case of some larger schools, that not all teachers will be observed
 - discuss the arrangements for feeding back to teachers
 - make domestic arrangements (inspectors' room, parking, meals, refreshments)
 - indicate inspectors' intended arrival and departure times. It is recommended that inspectors arrive at the school no earlier than 8am and that they depart no later than 6pm. It should be noted that these times are advisory and that inspectors might arrive later and leave earlier. Inspectors should be mindful of the need to plan sufficient time for team meetings and any feedback arrangements, especially at the end of the second day of the inspection, in order that the inspection and any subsequent feedback can be concluded in good time.
12. If the school is being reinspected after receiving a notice to improve at its previous inspection, the lead inspector must make clear at the start of the inspection that a second 'inadequate' judgement for overall effectiveness will result in the school requiring special measures. Even if the school has remedied the original weaknesses and the inadequate judgement relates to new areas, the school will not have shown sufficient capacity to sustain improvement since its previous inspection.

The pre-inspection briefing

Drafting the pre-inspection briefing

13. The lead inspector should carry out an analysis of the available evidence and begin to draft the pre-inspection briefing. Evidence sources may include:
 - data from RAISEonline and, where relevant, the sixth form performance and assessment (PANDA) report
 - the school's self-evaluation form (SEF), if available
 - national benchmarks for well-being indicators
 - the previous section 5 inspection report and any recent Ofsted survey reports and/or monitoring letters
 - documentation provided electronically in advance by the school (see the note in paragraph 11 above about what may be requested in advance of the inspection).

14. If a school has not completed a SEF, inspectors should consult *Guidance on what to do if a school has not prepared a self-evaluation form*.

The extended telephone call and completion of the pre-inspection briefing

15. Following an initial analysis of the pre-inspection evidence, the lead inspector should make the second, extended telephone call to the headteacher to discuss the available evidence and issues arising from it. The headteacher has the opportunity to update and clarify the school's SEF and to provide any new contextual information. Key points arising from the telephone call should be noted on an evidence form. Inspectors should be mindful that the headteacher will need to accommodate the inspection at short notice while still managing the day-to-day operation of the school.

16. The preparation of the pre-inspection briefing is the responsibility of the lead inspector. The pre-inspection briefing should provide a succinct analysis that provides a focus for the inspection. **It should be kept brief and to the point. There is no need to restate information that is captured elsewhere.** The pre-inspection briefing is then made available to the school, the inspection team and the inspection service provider. The lead inspector should be mindful of any difficulties for the school in marshalling evidence at short notice following the extended telephone call.

17. The pre-inspection briefing template contains instructions for its completion which have been integrated into its structure. In summary, the pre-inspection preparation operates as follows.

- Using an initial analysis of the pre-inspection evidence, the lead inspector has an extended telephone call with the school, after which the briefing will be finalised.
- The pre-inspection briefing should set out clearly and succinctly any apparent areas of strength and weakness, additional evidence which is required, the initial hypotheses, key issues for inspection and provisional inspection trails. It must be made clear that the initial hypotheses are just that. They are **not** pre-inspection judgements.
- The pre-inspection briefing should make clear that any inferences about the school's performance based on the RAISEonline data and analysis of the SEF also reflect initial hypotheses, not judgements. The pre-inspection briefing, together with the SEF, provides the focus for the pre-inspection briefing meeting with team inspectors.
- The school should be provided with the pre-inspection briefing, usually by 4pm on the day before the inspection.
- The lead inspector should produce an inspection deployment plan for other inspection team members. This indicates how evidence will be gathered for key inspection trails, the likely sources of evidence and provides an initial guide for the inspection team.

Team deployment

18. It is useful to assign the evaluation of different aspects of the school's work to particular inspectors. They can then take the lead in gathering and synthesising evidence for those aspects. Generally, all members of the inspection team contribute to the investigation of the main issues.
19. Particular inspection issues or 'trails' might also be provisionally allocated to individual inspectors. It is important that all team members are flexible in their approach because issues may surface that require their redeployment. For example, if behaviour is judged to be inadequate during a lesson observation or around the school, a new inspection trail might be set up to investigate whether this occurs more than very occasionally. If concerns about behaviour arise from the analysis of documentation such as parents' questionnaires, comments by pupils or logs to record incidents of bullying, they should also be investigated.

Planning inspection activities

20. The focus of the inspection reflects the issues raised by the pre-inspection analysis and the initial telephone discussion with the headteacher. There may be further adjustments at the start of the inspection following the initial discussion with the senior leadership team, and as new evidence becomes available.
21. The school should have opportunities to substantiate the judgements it makes in the SEF and to demonstrate that its self-evaluation is effective.

In setting up inspection activities the inspection team should indicate to the school what needs to be tested and ask the school to suggest the best ways of finding the necessary evidence. This is not only likely to be efficient, it also engages the school in the inspection.

22. Inspectors must remember that they need to report against the school inspection judgements in *The evaluation schedule* as well as focusing on key issues arising from the pre-inspection analysis.

During the inspection

The start of the on-site inspection

23. The pre-inspection telephone calls should reduce the need for any extended meetings at the start of the inspection. At the start of the inspection, meetings should normally consist of **no more than**:
- a brief introductory meeting with the headteacher and/or senior leadership team to:
 - receive an update on staff absence and other practical issues
 - discuss the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching and ascertain whether there are pressing and particular reasons why any teacher should not be observed, for example if they are subject to informal or formal capability procedures where the use of observations by Ofsted may compromise those procedures
 - ensure that the headteacher is aware that Ofsted's evidence from lesson observations, whether joint or otherwise, cannot be used as evidence in competency/disciplinary proceedings
 - ensure that the school understands key issues identified in the pre-inspection briefing
 - a brief initial inspection team meeting to check deployment arrangements, update the team and plan observations
 - a short briefing for staff, if appropriate, at the discretion of the headteacher; lead inspectors should give consideration to ways in which staff might be informed about relevant aspects of the inspection, for example by providing a summary of the inspection trails on a notice suitable for the staffroom (with the headteacher's agreement).
24. In small schools, the need for such meetings may be reduced further. Precise arrangements should be made at the discretion of the lead inspector. However, the intention is to get the inspection off to a 'flying start'.

Working with the headteacher and senior staff

25. Inspections have most impact where feedback and interaction between the inspectors and the staff in the schools are of a high quality. Schools value the extra clarity and transparency of judgements which high levels of dialogue between inspection teams and senior staff bring. In order to maximise this approach, the protocols below set out how lead inspectors should invite senior staff to engage with the inspection. The lead inspector should exercise discretion in adapting and extending the approach according to the school's circumstances.

26. Headteachers are invited to:
- comment on the inspection trails at the time of the extended telephone call
 - observe and discuss some lessons with an inspector
 - briefly meet with the lead inspector at various points during the inspection
- and, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so:**
- attend the formal inspection team meetings at the end of each day of the inspection
 - discuss the inspection recommendations.
27. The lead inspector will need to use professional judgement in managing and allocating time for gathering evidence so that both inspectors and school staff have the opportunity to reflect separately on the emerging findings (see also paragraph 48). More detailed guidance on each of the points above is provided in paragraphs 32 to 55. The detailed guidance refers to the engagement of the headteacher but this could be extended to include the engagement of other senior staff where appropriate. Some schools may request that one key member of staff engages with the inspection team in the place of the headteacher.
28. Before the inspection, the school is provided with a summary of the protocols for the engagement of senior staff in the inspection as part of the pre-inspection briefing. The lead inspector should check that the headteacher has read and understood these protocols.
29. Please note that although the lead inspector should offer opportunities for engagement to the headteacher they are not mandatory and the headteacher may choose whether or not to accept. This is particularly relevant for small schools where the headteacher may not be available to interact with the lead inspector due to teaching or other commitments. The extent to which the headteacher engages with the inspection team must **not** influence inspection judgements.
30. The lead inspector and the headteacher may also agree other ways in which the headteacher or her/his representative may wish to engage with the inspection. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for the headteacher to take part in or observe, for example, the inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work.
31. Meetings with pupils, parents, staff, governors and other stakeholders must take place without the headteacher or staff present. When inspectors meet pupils, parents, staff, governors and other stakeholders, every endeavour should be made to hide the source of comments made by individuals if they are used to pursue an issue further. However,

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

Protocols for working with the headteacher and senior staff

Discussing the inspection trails with the headteacher through the extended telephone call

32. Headteachers should be invited to comment on the inspection trails in order to ensure that the inspection takes account of and tests the school's self-evaluation. This helps focus on issues which are important to the school and which help the school bring about further improvement.
33. The lead inspector should discuss the following with the headteacher during the pre-inspection telephone calls:
 - the key inspection trails for the inspection and, where relevant, the methodology used to collect evidence for those inspection trails
 - opportunities for the headteacher and senior staff to engage with the inspectors as outlined in paragraph 26 above
 - the need for the lead inspector and the headteacher to review the level of engagement of the headteacher and senior staff as the inspection proceeds; it may be necessary to reduce, or increase, the level of engagement
 - the likely number of joint observations and who will undertake those observations
 - the pre-inspection evidence that is required and opportunities for the headteacher to suggest and provide further sources of evidence once the inspection has started.

The participation of the headteacher and senior staff in joint lesson observations

34. The headteacher and/or senior staff should be invited to take part in joint lesson observations with inspectors in order to help:
 - inspectors to judge the quality of the school's own evaluation of teaching and learning
 - inspectors to focus on issues arising from the pre-inspection briefing, including how well particular groups of pupils are learning and how well the school understands this

- inspectors to collect evidence so that detailed and specific recommendations can be made about further improvements to teaching and learning (so that, for example, teaching improves from being satisfactory overall to good overall)
 - the headteacher to understand how the quality of teaching and learning is judged and how it might be improved.
35. Generally, the lead inspector should offer to arrange at least two joint observations with the headteacher or appropriate member/s of the senior leadership team. Further joint observations may also be arranged but the lead inspector should not 'overload' the headteacher. In small schools where the headteacher has a significant teaching responsibility, or where there is only one teacher (other than the headteacher), the lead inspector may decide that one joint observation is sufficient or that none is possible.
 36. All joint observations should be agreed between the lead inspector and the headteacher. Other team inspectors should not arrange joint observations independently but may take part in joint observations with the headteacher or other senior member/s of staff as arranged by the lead inspector.
 37. The lead inspector should guide the headteacher on which lessons to select for joint observations. If a teacher does not agree to a joint observation, this should not go ahead.
 38. The headteacher may be offered a copy of Ofsted's evidence form, which s/he might wish to use, but inspectors should not insist that it is completed. The lesson should be observed in the normal way.
 39. After any observation, it is best for the inspector not to convey a view about the lesson initially but to ask the headteacher what s/he thought of the lesson – its strengths, what would have made it better, how good it was overall. If the headteacher offers a written record, the inspector can look at this. The inspector can then discuss the lesson, offering her/his own view of its quality. Any differences of judgement should be explored.
 40. Feedback to the teacher, following a joint observation, should normally be provided by the inspector. Lead inspectors will need to take this into consideration when planning joint observations.
 41. Following a joint observation, the inspector should write up an evidence form on the lesson in the usual way. Comments about the quality of the headteacher's evaluation should be included on the inspector's evidence form or written on a separate evidence form. Any notes taken by the headteacher should remain in the school; they are not included within the evidence base.

42. Paragraphs 63–73 (lesson observations) indicate different strategies for observing lessons. All of these may be applied to joint observations where the protocol outlined above would also operate.

Meetings between the headteacher and the lead inspector

43. Through the course of the inspection, the lead inspector should invite the headteacher to meet her/him **briefly** (in addition to any attendance at formal team meetings) in order to:
- update the headteacher on issues which are emerging – these enable the headteacher to provide any further relevant evidence, for example where the quality of teaching observed does not match the school's evaluation
 - inform the headteacher where any inadequate teaching has been seen or where outstanding practice has been observed – teachers should be given feedback before the headteacher talks to them about judgements made by inspectors; inspectors should exercise caution in planning lesson observations that involve teachers subject to capability procedures, in order not to compromise those procedures
 - allow the headteacher to raise any concerns, including those related to the conduct of the inspection or the conduct of individual inspectors
 - alert the headteacher to serious concerns that may lead to the school being placed in a category.
44. These brief meetings may be held at the most appropriate times. For example:
- in the middle of day one (unless the headteacher has already attended the short midday meeting of the inspection team)
 - at the start of day two to allow further discussion and planning.
45. The outcomes of any meetings with the headteacher should be recorded on an evidence form. It may be helpful to compile an on-going 'running evidence form' to note the outcomes of a series of discussions.

The engagement of the headteacher and senior staff in inspection team meetings

46. The headteacher or another member of the senior staff is normally invited to attend some inspection team meetings. However, this is at the discretion of the lead inspector because there will be occasions where it is inappropriate, for example when confidential issues have been raised by a parent or pupils. The headteacher or another member of the senior staff is invited to attend some meetings in order to:

- act as an observer, in order to better understand how the team uses the evidence to reach judgements
 - provide the headteacher with the opportunity to suggest, where relevant, further sources of evidence
 - provide the headteacher with the opportunity to comment, where relevant, on conflicting evidence
 - reduce the need for further extended meetings with the headteacher
 - reduce the need for extended feedback.
47. As early as the telephone discussion with the headteacher, the lead inspector should make clear that **the judgements made at the team meetings are made by the inspection team**. Judgements cannot be negotiated with the headteacher.
48. When planning joint observations, lead inspectors will need to take into consideration the need for both inspectors and school staff to have time to reflect separately on the evidence gathered. Where the headteacher is present in team meetings, the lead inspector should ensure that full and frank discussion of the evidence takes place.
49. The lead inspector should check that the headteacher is informed about the relationship between the evidence and the emerging and/or substantiated judgements. The lead inspector should ensure that the headteacher understands why the evidence substantiates particular judgements, particularly where the school disagrees with these.
50. In circumstances where aspects of leadership and management are an emerging area of concern, particularly the leadership and management of the headteacher, the lead inspector may discuss with the headteacher whether or not s/he wishes to be present at the team meeting. The lead inspector should consider whether the headteacher's attendance is appropriate.
51. In order to make team meetings manageable there should normally be no more than one, or at most two, school representatives present. Where there are only two inspectors there should be no more than one school representative at inspection team meetings.
52. Where there is only one inspector s/he should consider the emerging judgements and contributory evidence before meeting with the headteacher. The inspector should share judgements with the headteacher, and ensure the headteacher understands why they have been made, allowing the headteacher to seek clarification where necessary. Where appropriate, the lead inspector should discuss any further evidence or changes in the inspection approaches with the headteacher.

Discussion with the headteacher about the recommendations for improvement

53. The lead inspector should ensure that the headteacher understands the inspection team's recommendations for improvement and that s/he has the opportunity to comment on the draft wording of the recommendations.
54. Recommendations for improvement should be precise, specific and detailed. They must include reference to the areas of performance which are hindering the school's improvement. If appropriate, recommendations may also focus on helping schools to maintain and further develop areas of good and outstanding performance.
55. Where aspects of leadership and management, particularly the leadership of the headteacher, are likely to figure in the areas for improvement the lead inspector should consider whether or not it is appropriate for the headteacher to be involved in discussion about the recommendations for improvement. The final decision about such discussion rests with the lead inspector and the reasons for this decision should be made clear to the headteacher.

General inspection activity

56. Generic evidence gathering activities involve: lesson observations; analysis of pupils' work; scrutiny of school records and documentation; analysis of parents', pupils' and, where relevant, staff questionnaires; discussion with staff, pupils, governors and, where appropriate, the school's partners. While some staff interviews are important to provide context, the main focus should be on observing lessons and gathering other first-hand evidence.
57. Similarly, inspectors should use professional judgement to decide on the nature and extent of the evidence that they need to support each of the judgements that they make. Some judgements – including, for example, those about teaching, the quality of pupils' learning and their progress and specific judgements related to key inspection issues – will always require a substantial amount of first-hand evidence gathered through direct observation and discussion. In other cases, lead inspectors may decide that the evidence provided by the school is sufficiently convincing to support a particular judgement. In making their decision inspectors will need to consider:
 - the quality and breadth of evidence provided by the school and whether there is any external corroboration of its accuracy, for example by the local authority
 - the rigour and accuracy of the school's approach to self-evaluation in general – does it have a good track record?

- whether the particular judgement is consistent with other inspection judgements
- whether any evidence gathered during other inspection activities appears to contradict the evidence provided by the school for the particular judgement.

This approach is important in avoiding overburdening the school and the inspection team. Again, much will depend on the lead inspector's professional judgement in determining the focus of the inspection and in deciding exactly what evidence is required.

58. The lead inspector should always ask the headteacher for sight of the school improvement partner's most recent report on the school. It should not normally be necessary for a meeting to take place between the school improvement partner and lead inspector.
59. It is vitally important that inspectors ensure that observations pay close attention not only to teaching but also to the quality of learning for different groups of pupils, either in separate provision or within mainstream lessons. Particular groups of pupils should be identified: in the pre-inspection briefing; through any subsequent discussion with the school; and in response to any emerging issues, arising for example from discussions with pupils.
60. If inspection evidence does not align with statements in the SEF, inspectors should discuss this as soon as possible with the headteacher and provide him/her with the opportunity to present further evidence to support her/his view.
61. Where the early evidence suggests that the school might be placed in a category of concern, the team will want to consider carefully whether it needs to reshape the inspection strategy to extend the range and quantity of evidence in key areas. In such instances, early discussion with the headteacher is usually appropriate but great care should be taken to avoid giving the impression that a decision has already been reached. Before the inspection is complete, the lead inspector should check again with the school to make sure there is no further evidence to take into account.

Recording evidence

62. Separate guidance is provided on completing the evidence form. Inspectors are reminded of the following points.
 - Evidence forms should be clear and legible. They are the main source of evidence for the inspection and may be scrutinised for retrieval, for quality assurance monitoring and used as a source of evidence in the event of a complaint. Inspectors should highlight or identify any information that was provided 'in confidence'.

- Evidence forms can be used for discrete events, such as a lesson observation.
- Evidence forms can be 'open' or 'running', where, for example, a particular theme is pursued across a number of lessons and discussions.
- Evidence forms should be used for recording the main points of discussion when feeding back to senior management and for summarising evidence that underpins key judgements.

Lesson observations

63. The most important source of evidence is the classroom observation of teaching and the impact it is having on learning. Observations provide direct evidence for most judgements and thus enable accurate evaluation of the outcomes for pupils, the effectiveness of provision, leadership and management and the school's capacity for improvement. Inspectors should note that there is an expectation that a major focus of the inspection reports will relate to features of pupils' learning and the impact of teaching.
64. While meetings with some staff are essential, inspection time should not be allocated to meetings unless directly related to a specific inspection trail. It should be noted that safeguarding will always be investigated.
65. The key objectives of lesson observations are to evaluate the quality of learning and the contribution of teaching. Inspectors should identify ways in which teaching and learning can be improved, especially with regard to a reduction in any variation in performance between different groups of pupils. Planning for lesson observations and subsequent discussions with senior staff and teachers should ensure that:
 - inspectors are able to judge the accuracy of the school's evaluation of teaching and learning
 - observations are focused on issues arising from the pre-inspection briefing or from early inspection activity
 - inspectors are able to gather evidence on how well particular groups of pupils, as well as individuals, are learning
 - evidence is collected so that detailed and specific recommendations can be made to improve teaching and learning (for example, from satisfactory to good)
 - evidence gleaned from individual lesson observations and the cumulative evidence gathered from all lesson observations contributes to judgements on outcomes for pupils, provision, and aspects of leadership and management.

66. There are many different strategies for observations. Lead inspectors should not be constrained by a single model of observation but plan a lesson observation strategy that relates to the precise evidence that is required. For example, inspectors may engage in the following:
- part-lesson observations of 25 to 30 minutes – these give inspectors the opportunity to see many or most teachers in primary schools and a substantial minority of teachers in secondary schools
 - tracking of a class/group of pupils to assess pupils' experience of a school day or part of a school day – if possible, inspectors should identify a class or classes which contain one or more pupils from the specific groups identified in the pre-inspection analysis; in this way, their experience, progress and learning can be judged in the context of other pupils' experience
 - long observations of an hour or so – for example, in infant/first/primary schools, special schools and pupil referral units inspectors may wish to conduct long observations in order to assess current standards of attainment through work scrutiny and discussions with pupils about their work; in secondary schools, inspectors may wish to carry out long observations in order to capture the best practice, or to diagnose weaker teaching and provide detailed evidence to underpin recommendations for improvement
 - short visits to a number of lessons, possibly with the headteacher or other senior staff member (see paragraph 71 below for 'short observations').
67. Any of the observation approaches above may be incorporated in the joint observations carried out with the headteacher and/or senior staff.
68. On the first day of inspection, inspectors should try to establish the quality of teaching and learning, mainly through classroom observation which focuses on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils. In keeping with the focus on improvement, however, inspection activity may change during the course of the inspection. Inspectors should seek to diagnose where improvements can be made and make recommendations about how the school might improve across the grade boundaries in different aspects of its work.
69. Inspectors may observe lessons that are managed by teaching assistants or supply teachers if the lines of enquiry being investigated by the inspection team make it desirable to visit those lessons, or if such lessons are a regular part of the school's provision.
70. In some inspections, particularly secondary schools, not all teachers will be observed. In these circumstances the lead inspector should explain why this is the case in order to manage the school's expectations.

71. The lead inspector should agree the pattern of lesson observation with the inspection team and keep the school informed about the rationale. Inspectors should aim for coverage of a range of subjects; lesson observations are also a way of gathering evidence for the evaluation of aspects of the curriculum. The school should not normally be informed in advance about the lessons to be visited.
72. Where a series of short observations are made (less than 20 minutes), a grade should be given for those aspects that it is possible to evaluate, for example the effectiveness of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Judgements made through short observations can only relate to the part of the lesson observed and not to the quality of teaching in the lesson as a whole.
73. When judging the impact of extended services, inspectors observe teaching but may also spend additional time tracking the impact of the extended services on particular groups of pupils and/or individuals and looking at how the school evaluates the impact of its extended services. For example: what is the impact of childcare on outcomes for children in a primary school or of adult learning courses on a school's relationship with parents?

Feedback on lesson observations

74. Feedback on the quality of teaching and learning is an integral and essential part of the inspection. Feedback is valued by schools and is a valuable means of furthering improvement. For any observation of 20 minutes or more, inspectors should arrange feedback with the teacher concerned. In planning lesson observations, inspectors should be mindful of the need to arrange suitable times for feedback. Feedback to individuals should consist of:
 - a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the activity seen, focusing on learning and the contribution made to it by the teaching; there should be a clear focus on how improvement might be achieved
 - the grades for the quality of teaching, learning and any others which are considered pertinent.
75. In addition, inspectors may feed back their general findings to:
 - small groups of staff following a series of short visits
 - key senior staff, for example the head of a key stage and/or senior staff with responsibility for professional development
 - subject leaders, for example specialist subject leaders in secondary schools and foundation subject leaders and/or core subject leaders in primary schools.

Obtaining the views of pupils, registered parents³ and other stakeholders

76. The SEF provides the first source of evidence about the way the school gathers and responds to the views of its stakeholders.
77. Inspections are provided with administrative support on-site to manage the analysis of all questionnaires.
78. Once notified of the inspection, the appropriate authority⁴ for the school has a duty to 'take such steps as are reasonably practicable' to notify parents of the inspection and invite them to give Ofsted their views about the school.
79. The appropriate authority is **required** to send Ofsted's letter, questionnaire and information leaflet to all parents of registered pupils on the school's roll. The duty therefore includes registered parents of pupils who have been excluded or are away from school. This is particularly important when a large number of pupils are absent, for example on a field trip or work experience programme.
80. The letter informs parents of the inspection and invites them to complete the short questionnaire provided by Ofsted. The completed questionnaires are confidential to the inspection team. Schools should be instructed not to open questionnaires on return in order to ensure that the respondents' confidentiality is not compromised.
81. Inspectors may **not** accept a recent survey of parents by the school in lieu of Ofsted's questionnaires. In all cases the notification letter, questionnaires and information leaflet must be distributed by the school.
82. When a parent makes a request during an inspection (by letter or indirectly via the inspection service provider) to speak with the lead inspector, all reasonable efforts should be made to contact the parent, even if the request arrives after the end of the inspection. It is important to make arrangements to meet or talk on the telephone with any registered parent or carer who contacts the lead inspector. A guide for parents is available on Ofsted's website.
83. All questionnaires received before the final team meeting constitute part of the inspection evidence base and must be reviewed during the course of the inspection to inform inspection trails. Inspectors may sometimes receive questionnaires after the inspection has finished. These must be checked for safeguarding issues but, otherwise, late questionnaires

³ 'Parents' refers to mothers, fathers and/or carers.

⁴ For section 5 inspections this is likely be the governing body; but may be the proprietor, management committee, interim executive board or local authority for certain schools. In practice the school itself will inform parents, but in law the duty lies with the appropriate authority.

cannot be used to inform the inspection trails and should not be included in the inspection evidence base. However, in addition to the inspection and as a matter of course, registered parents may also follow the procedures described in *Complaints to Ofsted about schools: guidance for parents* to record any concerns.

84. If several registered parents express similar concerns, or similar levels of satisfaction, with particular aspects of the school's work these should be reflected in the inspection report. In addition, the following information should be recorded in the report:
 - the number of parents that responded to the questionnaire
 - the total number of registered parents
 - an analysis of the responses to each question.
85. All parents' questionnaires **must** be checked in case they raise safeguarding issues.
86. Parents can access the parents' questionnaire in a number of languages from Ofsted's website as well as from schools. An inspector may occasionally receive a questionnaire that has not been completed in English. In such instances it is possible to determine which boxes have been ticked, even if the comments have been made in another language. It is very likely that on receipt of a questionnaire not completed in English, the inspector will need to arrange for the questionnaire to be translated to ensure that there are no child protection issues. It is the responsibility of the inspection service provider to make appropriate arrangements to translate the text and, particularly, to ensure that any safeguarding issues are not overlooked. If at all possible, translation should be undertaken while the inspection is taking place, in order that the lead inspector is made aware of all parents' comments. It may not be possible to translate written text during an inspection, but all such text should be translated at the earliest available opportunity. The lead inspector should contact the inspection service provider for support in such instances.
87. Inspectors should not reach any final conclusions on the basis of survey data alone. Any data from surveys of parents, pupils or staff should be used by inspectors to develop or modify inspection trails and to triangulate judgements. Inspectors use the views of parents to help inform judgements and any significant concerns, even if raised by a minority of parents, should be reflected in the inspection report with reasons why the inspectors do or do not agree.
88. Since September 2009 inspectors have gathered the views of pupils during the inspection via a pupils' questionnaire. Schools receive guidance about how to select a randomised sample of pupils to complete questionnaires. Inspectors can access this guidance in the zip file of

information for schools that is distributed by ISPs, or on the Ofsted website at this [link](#). Ofsted has piloted an online facility to conduct a full census of pupils' views and hopes to develop this work further in the future.

89. When talking with pupils it should be possible to ascertain their perceptions about how well the school seeks and acts upon their views. Pupils are also asked how safe they feel and about the school's effectiveness in improving behaviour, handling different types of bullying and promoting equality. They are also asked for their perceptions about lessons and other aspects of the school's work.
90. Since September 2009, inspectors have been able to gather the views of staff through a questionnaire. However, this type of survey is voluntary on the part of schools. It should be used at the headteacher's discretion and is not mandatory for staff to complete. Staff questionnaires should be used with caution. As with pupils' and parents' questionnaires, judgements should not be made on the basis of the survey alone. The views of staff will not normally be reported in the inspection report.
91. If partnerships are a specific inspection trail, inspectors should ask schools if there are any main partners they would like the inspectors to consider meeting as part of the inspection. In doing so, inspectors should be mindful of time available during the inspection.

Inspection team meetings

92. The team should meet **briefly** at different points during the course of the inspection. For example, around midday on day one the team should meet to share initial findings, discuss hypotheses, corroborate evidence and keep the lead inspector fully aware of any developments. Clearly this does not apply to inspections with only one inspector and those teams with only two inspectors may not need to meet formally, provided there is regular communication between them.
93. The team should meet for a more extended period at the end of day one to discuss emerging findings, and at the end of day two to finalise judgements and identify areas for improvement. The headteacher is invited to attend these meetings unless there are compelling reasons why the headteacher should not attend. However, it is important that the team also has at least some time discussing evidence by themselves.
94. It is helpful to use the meeting at the end of the first day as an opportunity for making provisional judgements about as many areas as possible. In using the grade descriptors for 'outstanding', 'good' and 'satisfactory' in *The evaluation schedule* inspectors should consider the evidence available and judge which descriptors best fit that evidence. The descriptors for 'inadequate' identify unacceptable outcomes for pupils and/or the school's performance. The 'inadequate' descriptors

cannot be applied as a 'best fit'. If any of the criteria for 'inadequate' are met the judgement for that particular area is likely to be 'inadequate'.

95. By the end of the first day inspectors are likely to have obtained a provisional view about most of the judgements captured under the heading: 'Outcomes: how well are pupils doing taking account of any variation?' Inspectors should also have a provisional view about 'The quality of teaching' and 'The use of assessment to support learning'. There is likely to be sufficient evidence at this point to judge whether the SEF is in the main a robust and accurate record of the school's performance. It is sound practice to discuss the likely recommendations for improvement by the start of the final inspection day so that these issues can be tested and confirmed. The other main function of the meeting at the end of the first day is to plan the final day's inspection activities. The meeting should be kept short and focused.
96. If, by the end of day one, the school is giving cause for significant concern, the lead inspector should forewarn the headteacher of the possibility that the school's overall effectiveness may be judged inadequate. It must be emphasised that final judgements are not made until the final team meeting towards the end of the inspection.
97. The outcomes of 'formal' team meetings should be recorded on evidence forms.

At the end of the on-site inspection

98. Inspection activity, including lesson observations, should continue throughout the second day. The team must meet to consider the evidence available and make its final judgements. Final judgement grades should be recorded and key points for feedback should be identified as the meeting progresses. The team should also ensure that time is set aside to complete any feedback to staff on lesson observations and to prepare for the final team meeting and the final feedback.
99. Final judgement grades should be recorded and key points for feedback should be identified as the meeting progresses. In order to ensure judgements are clear and also to inform feedback, inspectors should produce bullet-pointed summary evidence forms which highlight strengths and areas for improvement on the following (as a minimum):
 - the overall outcome judgement for individuals and groups of pupils
 - the school's capacity for sustained improvement
 - procedures for safeguarding pupils
 - recommendations for improvement
 - any other main points for feedback.

After the inspection

Formal feedback at the end of the inspection

100. Before leaving the school, the lead inspector must ensure that the school is clear:
- about the grades awarded for each judgement set out in *The evaluation schedule* and recorded in the report template: these are all of the grades on the inspection judgement form, not just the 'major' or 'headline' grades
 - that, although unlikely, the grades may be subject to change because of quality assurance checks and should, therefore, be treated as confidential until the school receives a copy of the final inspection report
 - that the main points provided orally in the feedback will be referred to in the text of the report
 - about the recommendations for improvement
 - about the procedures leading to the publication of the report
 - about the complaints procedure
 - where relevant, about the implications of the school being judged satisfactory overall
 - where relevant, about the implications of the school being deemed to require special measures or a notice to improve.
101. Separate guidance is available for the procedures for schools judged to require special measures or a notice to improve. In addition, separate guidance on the monitoring procedures for schools judged to be satisfactory in their overall effectiveness is also available. Inspectors should be familiar with these guidance documents.
102. As there will be a regular dialogue or close engagement with the headteacher and senior staff during the inspection, this should preclude the need for a lengthy, detailed, formal, final feedback session. Where the headteacher and senior staff have been involved in joint observations, discussion with inspectors and some team meetings (or parts of meetings) they should already have a clear and detailed understanding of the inspection outcomes before the formal, final feedback.
103. Attendees at this feedback meeting should include at least one representative from the governing body. Attendees may also include other senior staff who were not present at the final team meeting. If it is appropriate, representatives from the local authority and/or the school improvement partner may also be invited by the headteacher. If the

overall effectiveness of the school is judged inadequate it is particularly helpful if a representative from the local authority attends the feedback.

104. The lead inspector should explain the purpose of the feedback session to those present. Where there has been close engagement with the headteacher and/or senior staff and they are likely to be able to answer questions from the stakeholders present, the lead inspector should also explain that the feedback will not be extensive because the headteacher and senior team have been involved closely with the process of the inspection. Governors and local authority representatives may seek clarification about the judgements, but discussion should not be lengthy. Any feedback should be in the form of professional and objective language and should not include informal remarks which may be personally damaging to the reputation of a member of staff.
105. In the event that the headteacher has declined the opportunities to engage with the inspection team, the lead inspector should prepare a more extended formal feedback meeting. In such circumstances, the lead inspector should inform the headteacher of the main findings in advance of the extended formal feedback meeting.

The inspection report

106. Before writing the report, the lead inspector should note the guidance in paragraphs 106 to 126 and also take account of the specific guidance provided in the report template. When writing the report, it is essential that the lead inspector follows the technical instructions in the prescribed order.
107. The report should be finalised by the lead inspector immediately after the inspection. A letter should also be drafted for pupils, thanking them for their involvement and providing information about the main outcomes of the inspection. Usually, the report is written the day after the on-site inspection is finished.
108. The school is required to distribute the inspection report to parents and the report is published on the Ofsted website. The arrangements for publishing the report are as follows.
 - The report is completed by the lead inspector the day after the inspection and forwarded to the designated quality assurance reader for the inspection service provider. The quality assurance reader edits the report, discussing any significant issues with the lead inspector, and returns it to the lead inspector copying in the inspection service provider's contact for the inspection. The lead inspector then responds to the editor's comments and returns the next draft to the inspection service provider.
 - The inspection service provider forwards the report to the school for a factual accuracy check and the lead inspector responds to the

school's comments about factual accuracy; the inspection service provider then forwards the final version of the report to Ofsted so that it can be signed off by HMI. Finally, the inspection service provider forwards it to the school and to Ofsted for publication.

- The school receives an electronic version of the report, including the letter to pupils, within 15 working days of the end of the on-site inspection. Schools have five working days to distribute the report to parents and carers, including the letter to pupils. After that time the report is published on Ofsted's website.
- If a school is placed in a category of concern, the time to publication is extended so that the judgements can be moderated by a senior HMI and, in the case of those schools judged to require special measures, signed off by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI).

109. In general, reports for schools which are satisfactory or better should be **no less than 1,500 and no more than approximately 2,000 words long**. Detailed guidance on the content and structure of the report can be found in guidance which is available separately. Inspectors should make appropriate professional judgements about the extent of the detail needed to 'tell the story of the school', depending on the complexity of circumstances. Reports are divided into the following sections, all of which require commentary:

- main findings, including a commentary on capacity to improve
- what does the school need to do to improve further?
- how good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?
- the quality of the school's work
- how effective are leadership and management?
- where relevant, the Early Years Foundation Stage, and/or the sixth form, and/or boarding provision
- views of parents and carers
- a letter to pupils.

110. There is no need to report in writing about each individual grade. However, there **must** be commentary about:

- the school's main strengths, including any areas of outstanding practice, and the main areas for improvement
- the school's capacity to improve
- how well groups of pupils achieve and enjoy their learning and in particular their learning and performance in the classroom (as seen through first-hand observation); this helps to explain the 'big picture' about pupils' achievement, without unnecessary or excessive detail about data, for example about examination, test and task results

- outcomes for different groups of pupils
 - the effectiveness with which leaders and managers, including governors:
 - embed ambition and drive improvement
 - promote equal opportunity and tackle discrimination
 - ensure that safeguarding procedures are effective
 - promote community cohesion.
111. The letter to pupils provides a brief summary of the report. It should be tailored to the age of the audience so that it is easy to read for younger pupils. It should avoid patronising older pupils. The text should be aimed at the older pupils in the school or, where the school has a sixth form, at Key Stage 4 pupils as sixth formers may be expected to read the full report. The letter should:
- convey the main inspection judgements
 - tell the pupils what is going well and where improvements could be made; inspectors should ensure that this is done in a way that does not undermine staff and must avoid identifying individual members of staff
 - state how the pupils themselves can contribute to the school's improvement.
112. It is intended that teachers explain the letter to very young children.
113. The 'Introduction' to the report sets out the composition of the inspection team and summarises the general sources of evidence. It also identifies areas looked at in detail during the inspection. These may be the key issues for inspection identified in the pre-inspection briefing, or may be issues which arose during the inspection. These issues should be specific to the school rather than generic, such as 'the quality of teaching'.
114. The 'Information about the school' section includes commentary about the school's distinctive features, for example the nature of its pupil population, the provision of extended services or its status as a specialist school. The description should be factual and avoid any references that may be construed as negative. Significant aspects of the school's recent history should also be highlighted, for example if the school has been rebuilt or if it was placed in special measures/given a notice to improve at its previous inspection.
115. Where different groups of pupils are mentioned in this section, reference to these groups should be made in the 'Outcomes' section of the report.

116. Any statutory wording for a school placed in or removed from a category of concern should be written at the start of the 'Main findings' section of the report (see paragraphs 119–124 for the form of words).

Reporting on schools judged to be satisfactory for their overall effectiveness

117. Inspectors should include the following wording in all reports for schools graded 3 for their overall effectiveness, immediately after the 'What the school should do to improve further' section:

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

118. Schools graded satisfactory for their overall effectiveness should be informed that if a monitoring visit takes place it will be carried out without notice. Details of the procedures for monitoring visits are found in separate Ofsted guidance.

Reporting that a school is causing concern/no longer causing concern

119. The judgement that a school falls into one of the categories of concern must be clearly stated at the start of the 'Main findings' section of the report.

120. Where inspectors find that the school requires special measures, the following statement must be included in the oral feedback and written report:

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

121. Where the school requires significant improvement and is given a notice to improve, the following statement must be included in the oral feedback and written report:

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to... [state clearly the areas in which significant improvement is required].

122. If the effectiveness of the sixth form has been judged to be inadequate, this must be stated as one of the areas requiring significant improvement and the wording 'the school (also) requires significant improvement in relation to its sixth form' should be used.
123. When an inspection team judges that a school subject to special measures no longer requires special measures, the following statement must be included in the oral feedback and the written report:

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

124. When an inspection team judges that a school previously requiring significant improvement and subject to a notice to improve no longer requires significant improvement, the following statement must be included in the oral feedback and written report:

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

General points about report writing

125. Detailed guidance is issued to inspectors in the report template. Inspectors should explain clearly in the report any apparently stark differences in the main grades from one inspection to the next. This is to ensure that readers are clear about aspects of the school's work that change significantly between inspections. It is also to ensure that readers do not confuse such changes with a lack of consistency in judgements. This is particularly important when inspections are more frequent than the statutory maximum, for example when a school has been issued with a notice to improve.
126. Inspectors should also ensure that they:
- report unequivocally and avoid expressing judgements as recommendations, for example inspectors should report 'self-evaluation is weak' rather than 'self-evaluation needs to be improved'
 - make specific recommendations based on their diagnosis of the school's strengths and weaknesses, for example it is not acceptable to simply state that a school should 'improve teaching'; the recommendations should make clear which elements of teaching should be improved and how
 - make sure the text in all sections explains the grades; wherever possible, they should point the school towards improvement by conveying why a higher grade was not awarded

- make sure that the numerical grades are consistent, and that any apparent discrepancy is explained in the text
- capture the 'big picture' about standards of attainment, learning and progress and achievement, reporting on these clearly and without excessive detail
- write about the impact of any special provision, for example when the school has specialist status or provides extended services
- avoid speculation or prediction, for example attempting to predict what the school's examination results will be the next summer or what would result if a particular course of action were to be followed
- avoid over-generalisation from a specific instance; where relevant, inspectors should refer to the evidence on which judgements are based
- make clear judgements, avoiding qualifiers such as 'overall' or 'however'
- avoid overuse of phrases such as 'average level'
- make judicious, but not excessive, use of examples and quotations
- write clearly, unambiguously and interestingly for the parent audience, without exaggerating, being over-colloquial or using jargon
- follow the guidance in the *Guide to Ofsted's house style*.⁵

Schools causing concern

127. All schools whose overall effectiveness is inadequate will be placed in one of the formal categories of concern and will require either **significant improvement** or **special measures**.

128. A school requires **significant improvement** if it is either

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

or

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

Schools requiring significant improvement are said to be issued with a **notice to improve**.

⁵ www.ofsted.gov.uk/Publications/080230.

129. A school requires **special measures** if it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Deciding on a category

130. When the overall effectiveness of a school is judged to be inadequate inspectors will need to decide in which category of concern it should be placed. They must first consider whether the school is providing an acceptable standard of education.
131. If the school **is** providing an acceptable standard of education it does not require special measures even if its leaders, managers and governors are failing to demonstrate the capacity to make the necessary improvements. However, the school requires significant improvement because its overall effectiveness is inadequate and it will require a **notice to improve**.
132. The decision that a school is **not** providing an acceptable standard of education is a matter for professional judgement, but it is likely to be the case if more than one important area is graded 4. It may not be the case when the inadequate grade for overall effectiveness is the result of a grade 4 for an isolated strand which is not having a major impact on core functions such as teaching. Inspectors will need to consider carefully the significance of the impact of individual strands of *The evaluation schedule for schools*.
133. If the school is **failing** to provide an acceptable standard of education, inspectors will need to consider whether its leaders, managers and governors demonstrate the capacity to make the necessary improvements. The descriptors in *The evaluation schedule for schools* spell out clearly the features of satisfactory or better 'capacity'.
134. A school which has inadequate overall effectiveness and is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education will require:
- a **notice to improve** if its leaders, managers and governors demonstrate the capacity to make the necessary improvements
 - **special measures** if its leaders, managers and governors do not demonstrate the capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Procedures for the lead inspector when considering placing a school in a category

135. If by the end of the first day of the inspection the lead inspector thinks it is possible that the school's overall effectiveness will be judged inadequate, s/he is strongly advised to ring the schools causing concern

quality assurance national team helpline at Ofsted's National Business Unit (NBU).

136. To ring the helpline at the NBU, inspectors should use the hotline number 0300 123 4234. When the call is answered, the lead inspector should use the following form of words: 'I am an inspector leading an inspection in a school and I would like to talk to the schools causing concern duty HMI'. The lead inspector will be asked for her/his name and the name and unique reference number (URN) of the school, and will then be put through to the duty HMI, with whom s/he will be able to talk through the situation.
137. During the second day of the inspection the lead inspector may wish to contact the helpline again to discuss emerging findings, for example, just before the final team meeting. When the inspection team has made the final judgement, and if it is that the school requires special measures or a notice to improve, the lead inspector should telephone the helpline prior to the oral feedback and use the form of words indicated in the previous paragraph. The lead inspector should be prepared to briefly explain the reasons for the judgement.
138. Details of the procedures for monitoring visits and reinspections of schools judged to be inadequate are found in separate Ofsted guidance on the Ofsted website⁶.

Quality assurance of inspections

139. Responsibility for assuring the quality of the inspection lies with the lead inspector in the field and with Ofsted internally. The lead inspector is expected to set clear expectations for the team and ensure that those expectations are met. It is vital that the lead inspector ensures that all judgements are supported by evidence and that the way in which the inspection is conducted is beyond reproach.
140. Some inspections are subject to external quality assurance by HMI. There is no set pattern to the external quality assurance. It might consist of a telephone call to discuss progress, or perhaps a site visit by quality assurance personnel. When an external quality assurance visit is scheduled, the lead inspector should explain clearly the purpose and likely format of the visit during the initial telephone conversation with the headteacher. Such visits will be carried out in a supportive manner. Their overriding purpose is to secure the quality of the inspection. They will normally involve discussions with the headteacher and perhaps other staff, and with the team, as well as scrutiny of documentation and participation in team meetings. While the conduct of the inspection is

⁶ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Forms-and-guidance/Browse-all-by/Education-and-skills/Schools/Monitoring-inspections>

primarily a matter for the inspection team, the quality assurance visitor will intervene decisively if judgements appear to be insecure.

141. The lead inspector should have a well-understood line of communication to a quality assurance colleague should there be, in the absence of a visit, a need to discuss significant issues. This will normally involve using the procedure set out in paragraph 135.
142. The draft report, including the pupils' letter, is checked by an editor to ensure it is clear and coherent.
143. In addition, the report and letter are signed off by an HMI within Ofsted.
144. Where there is a grade change or the text of a report has been subject to significant amendments made after the school has completed its factual accuracy check, it is incumbent on the lead inspector to make a courtesy call to talk this through with the headteacher.

Handling concerns and complaints during the inspection

145. If a school raises a concern during the course of an inspection, the lead inspector should consider the concern and assess its validity. If the concern is found to be justified, the lead inspector should do all that is possible to remedy the problem. The complaints procedure encourages schools to speak to the lead inspector where they have a concern. It is often easier to resolve issues on the spot and this helps to avoid formal complaints later.
146. If the school is dissatisfied with the lead inspector's response, or in any case wishes to take the complaint further, the lead inspector and inspection service provider should ensure that the school is fully informed of the procedures for making complaints.

Inspectors' code of conduct

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

Inspectors' code of conduct
<p>Inspectors should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour ■ evaluate provision in line with frameworks, national standards or requirements ■ base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence ■ have no connection with the provider which could undermine their objectivity ■ report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable ■ carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy,

respect and sensitivity

- endeavour to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection
- act in the best interests and well-being of service users
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests
- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues.

The engagement of schools' staff with inspectors

147. To ensure that inspection is productive and beneficial, it is important that inspectors and schools establish and maintain an appropriate working relationship based on courtesy and professional behaviour. Inspectors are expected to uphold the code of conduct but Ofsted also expects schools to play their part in ensuring that inspectors can conduct their visit in an open and honest way and evaluate the school objectively. Schools should:

- provide evidence that will enable inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision
- work with inspectors to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
- ensure that the health and safety of inspectors is not prejudiced while they are on 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
- understand the need of inspectors to observe practice and talk to staff and users without the presence of a manager.