

Maintained schools and academies: inspections and outcomes

Methodology report

Age group: 2–19

Published: 30 November 2017

Reference no: 160022



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Introduction

1. This paper contains methodology and quality information relevant to Ofsted's official statistics release of maintained schools and academies inspections and outcomes data, which is published three times per year. These releases can be found at the following webpage:
www.gov.uk/government/collections/maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes-official-statistics.
2. This official statistics release reports on the outcomes of maintained schools¹ inspections that were conducted within the most recent reporting period. This release also includes the most recent inspection outcomes for all schools that are open and have been inspected, as at the end of the period. This report covers outcomes for all maintained schools and academies within England.
3. These official statistics are released to inform government and the public about the quality of schools in England, provide an evidence base for policymaking and to promote improvement across the school sector. The users of these official statistics include the Department for Education (DfE), local authorities, multi-academy trusts, academics and the voluntary sector (non-for profit organisations).
4. This methodology and quality report should be read in conjunction with the notes contained within the statistical first release, as those notes will include helpful information that is not in this report.

Methodology

5. Data in this official statistics series is from inspections conducted under sections 5 and 8 of the Education Act 2005². Further detail on the dates of inspections included can be found within the release. If an inspection report is not published by the cut-off date given in the release then the previous inspection will be reported as a school's most recent inspection where applicable. Data will be presented and analysed in two ways:
 - inspections that have occurred within the academic year being reported where published by the given date
 - the most recent inspection outcome of all open schools as at the end of the reporting period including those schools that have yet to be inspected for the first time
6. For Official statistics, data on inspection outcomes are collected one month after the end of the reporting period.. This helps to ensure that the vast

¹ Please see the glossary for a definition of maintained schools

² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents>

majority of inspections undertaken within the reporting period are published and reflected within the official statistics. This is done to minimise bias. For instance, inspection reports of those schools judged inadequate undergo additional moderation checks, and may otherwise miss a tighter reporting policy.

7. Under exceptional circumstances, Ofsted may withhold/withdraw publication of an inspection report. Outcomes of withheld/withdrawn inspection reports are not included in any of the datasets. If this is the case, these are highlighted with footnotes throughout the report.
8. Warning notice data is included in the school level data for any local authority maintained school receiving a warning notice from a local authority³ and for any academy receiving a warning notice from the Secretary of State for Education⁴ during the academic year being reported on. Pre-warning notices given to academies are not included. Any warning notices given by local authorities that are currently under appeal or have been withdrawn have not been included.
9. Where statements are made about whether inspection outcomes have declined or improved, they are referring to the most recent overall effectiveness outcomes compared to those of the most recent previous inspection only.
10. Data in this release is also used to update an interactive Ofsted's webtool ([DataView](#)⁵)
11. Schools are included within most recent inspection outcomes if they were open on the final day of the reporting period, or if they closed on that day and they have been inspected.
12. In September 2015, Ofsted introduced short inspections (please see glossary for further explanation). Where a short inspection converts to a full section 5 inspection, the outcome is reported within the outcomes for full inspections. Additional tables have also been added to the release to show the volumes of short inspections, the proportion that converted to full inspections, and the resulting inspection outcomes.

Phases of education

13. Ofsted reports on various phases of education, which include different types of establishment.

³ For further details, see Chapter 4 'Schools causing concern Intervening in failing, underperforming and coasting schools' Aug 2016 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/640916/SCC_guidance.pdf.

⁴ For further details, see www.gov.uk/government/publications/list-of-letters-to-academy-trusts-about-poor-performance.

⁵ Dataview; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exploring-ofsted-inspection-data-with-dataview>

- Nursery schools include local authority maintained nursery schools.
 - Primary schools include converter academies, sponsor-led academies, free schools and local authority maintained primary schools. These include some middle schools that have been deemed to be primary schools because the majority of pupils are primary-age children.
 - Secondary schools include converter academies, sponsor-led academies, free schools, studio schools, city technology colleges, university technical colleges and local authority maintained secondary schools. These include some middle schools, which have been deemed to be secondary schools because the majority of pupils are secondary-age children. This category also includes all-through schools.
 - Special schools include converter academies, sponsor-led academies free school specials and local authority maintained special schools. It also includes non-maintained special schools inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
 - Pupil referral units include alternative provision academies (both converter and sponsor-led), free school - alternative provision and local authority maintained pupil referral units.
14. Early years provision in schools may require separate registration on Ofsted's Early Years Register. This will be the case for provision in association independent schools and in state-funded schools where it is not governed by the school or it provides care for children under three. Where this provision is not on the Early Years Register, it will be inspected as part of the section 5 inspection and outcomes are included in the release. Early years registered provisions will be subject to an Ofsted early years inspection and included in the Early Years release. For information on registered early year provision inspections please refer to the official statistics for early years and childcare at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/early-years-and-childcare-statistics.
15. The welfare provision for boarding and residential special schools is inspected at the same time as the section 5 inspection, where possible. Inspections of this type are referred to as integrated inspections. Documents relating to the inspection of boarding and residential provision in schools can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/education/inspection-and-performance-of-schools#/education/inspection-of-boarding-and-residential-schools>.

Issues affecting comparability

16. Ofsted takes a proportionate approach to inspection. For example, the proportion of good schools that are inspected each year is smaller than the proportion of all good schools nationally. In addition, primary and secondary schools judged outstanding for overall effectiveness at their most recent previous inspection are exempted from further routine inspection. More information about this can be found in the coherence and comparability section of the quality report below.

17. Changes in inspection framework and policy over time may impact upon these statistics. These include policies related to schools becoming academies. Further information on this can be found within the comparability section of the quality report below.

Recent changes

18. Ofsted has launched far-reaching changes to the way it inspects maintained schools and academies. These changes came into effect in September 2015 and include the introduction of a common inspection framework for all early years settings on the Early Years Register, maintained schools and academies, non-association independent schools and further education and skills providers. The common inspection framework can be found at:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015.

Revisions

19. Revisions are published in line with Ofsted's revisions policy for official statistics. For more information about the policy please visit the Ofsted website:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics.

Quality

Relevance

20. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. These official statistics are released to inform government and the public about the quality of schools in England, provide an evidence base for policymaking and to promote improvement across the school sector.
21. Maintained schools and academies are inspected in accordance with sections 5 or 8 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), which can be found here:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.
22. The common inspection framework was launched on 1 September 2015. Under this framework, schools are judged as outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate (either having serious weaknesses or requiring special measures). The common inspection framework can be found here:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015.
23. These official statistics are the aggregates of judgements made on individual school inspections. By aggregating the judgements made and showing these as proportions of the total number of inspections, we can identify messages from the data. We analyse the data in different ways, for example by region or by phase of school, to identify important differences, patterns and trends. The

official statistics release draws out the key messages and communicates these in an understandable way, which is appropriate for a wide range of different users. Users are able to interpret and manipulate the data published for their own purposes. The users of these official statistics include the Department for Education (DfE), local authorities, multi-academy trusts, academics and the voluntary sector (non-for profit organisations).

24. More specifically, information found within this release is used in a variety of ways.
 - Media outlets use the key findings from our statistical release to inform the public about the quality of schools across the country and in particular local areas.
 - This data allows users to track movement in the education sector and monitor the quality of provision available at a national and local level and across provider types.
 - This accurate picture of the provision influences policy decisions about the location and quality of school provision.
 - This data helps identify areas of weak performance. This informs policy development within DfE, local authorities and multi-academy trusts to address issues and implement strategies to mitigate them.
 - Within Ofsted, inspection profiles inform inspection framework development and underpin policies to improve standards. The key messages within the official statistics contribute towards the findings in Ofsted's Annual Report to Parliament.
25. The data included in the release is generated by Ofsted's regulation and inspection process and is therefore administrative data.

Meeting user needs

26. In August 2015, we published the results of a consultation on this official statistics release. Documents relating to this consultation, which includes a list of resulting changes, can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/publication-of-statistics-on-maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes.
27. Since then a small number of additional tables and fields have been added to the release to reflect the changes made to inspections in September 2015. These provide information on short inspections as well as the new judgements introduced as part of the common inspection framework.
28. In 2016, the National Statistician published new guidance covering management information and official statistics. This guidance can be accessed here: www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/National-Statisticians-Guidance-Management-Information-and-Official-Statistics.pdf

29. Ofsted welcomes feedback about its statistical releases. If you have any comments, questions or suggestions, please contact the Schools Data and Analysis team at inspectioninsight@ofsted.gov.uk.

Coherence and comparability

30. The tables and charts within the release compare inspection outcomes over the past several years. There have been a number of framework changes since the first release of statistics and these have been reflected in the publications. The overall effectiveness grade has remained comparable across the different frameworks. Other sub judgements are, if possible, mapped across frameworks when changes occur. This is explained in more detail in the 'frameworks' section below.
31. When these changes have occurred, users have been alerted via updates in the official statistics introduction and methodology sections of the key findings document. When changes to inspection frameworks or methodological changes have been implemented to improve the output, guidance has been added to footnotes and the key findings document for easy access.
32. Inspection outcomes data presented in provisional official statistics releases will match the data shown in Dataview. Where inspection reports are published after the final publication date included within a release, the inspection outcomes will be reflected within the next provisional official statistics release.
33. There is no comparable data published by other producers of official or national statistics for school inspections in England.
34. In Scotland, inspections are carried out by Education Scotland and can be found at: <https://education.gov.scot/what-we-do/inspection-and-review/reports>.
35. In Wales, inspections are carried out by Estyn and can be found at: www.estyn.gov.uk/.
36. In Northern Ireland, inspections are carried out by Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) and can be found at: www.etini.gov.uk/.
37. Ofsted also produces regular management information on the outcomes of school inspections. At present, the methodology used to produce both releases is the same, although there have been differences in the past.
38. Several third parties provide interactive tools displaying publicly available Ofsted inspection judgements. These appear to be collated by using advanced computer techniques to harvest information from published inspection reports. Ofsted cannot comment on the quality of these datasets.

Changes that affect how comparable data are across time:

Integrated inspections

39. Where a maintained school, academy or special school offers residential boarding, Ofsted aims to inspect both the education and boarding provision during the same inspection. These are known as integrated inspections. If integrated inspections have taken place during the period these are included in table 2.

Frameworks

40. As noted above, framework changes have an impact on what we can report on in a consistent way. Consideration of how judgements change means that between frameworks there may be breaks or changes in the way we report certain judgements.
41. The common inspection framework was introduced in September 2015 following the 'better inspection for all' consultation.⁶ This consultation initiated various changes to the way Ofsted inspects providers. The common inspection framework can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015. The common inspection framework is designed to bring together the inspection of different education, skills and early years settings to provide greater coherence across different providers that cater for similar age ranges. Inspection judgements have therefore been standardised to apply across all remit areas.
42. Inspection frameworks before July 2014 and a list of changes to these can be found on the national archives at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141124154759/http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/maintained-schools-inspection-documents-archive>.
43. Guidance on the framework and handbook for inspectors used for inspections up until August 2015 can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-framework-for-school-inspection and www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook.
44. These framework changes have the following impact on current reporting:
 - Overall effectiveness: this judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2005 to the current framework

⁶More information can be found at: www.gov.uk/guidance/changes-to-education-inspection-from-september-2015.

- Effectiveness of leadership and management: this judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2005 to the current framework
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment: this judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2005 to the current framework
- Outcomes for pupils: this judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2005 to the current framework
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare: A new 'personal development, behaviour and welfare' judgement was introduced in September 2015 and supercedes the previous 'behaviour and safety of pupils' judgement, which is no longer presented in the most recent outcomes data. As such, analysis of this judgement (behaviour and welfare) will only represent inspections since September 2015 and will not provide a comprehensive view of the quality of provision nationally. Users can consult inspection reports or the following management information release should they wish to obtain these outcomes:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/monthly-management-information-ofsteds-school-inspections-outcomes>.
- Early years provision: This judgement is reported consistently across all frameworks from September 2005 to the current framework, with the exception of 2012/13 and 2013/14 academic years when, due to legislation changes, the judgement was not reported. Since September 2015, nursery schools have not received a separate early years judgement.
- 16 to 19 study programmes: This judgement has been reported consistently since September 2005. However, this judgement was not reported in 2012/13 and 2013/14 due to changes in legislation.

The selection process

45. Not all schools are inspected with equal regularity. Ofsted must inspect all schools to which section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) applies, within prescribed intervals. However, Ofsted takes a proportionate approach to inspection, as indicated in our inspection frameworks.
46. The result of this is that the schools inspected in a particular academic year are very unlikely to be representative of schools as a whole. This may also affect the comparability of school inspection outcomes between years. This is as a result of the following:
 - Schools that were previously judged to be less than good in their most recent inspections are inspected more frequently than good schools.

- As of September 2015, good schools receive a short inspection⁷ approximately every three years. A short inspection determines whether the school continues to provide the same standard of education for the pupils⁸. A short inspection will not result in individual graded judgements nor will it change the overall effectiveness grade of the school.
- If the inspection is converted to a full section 5 inspection then inspectors will make the full set of graded judgements required under section 5. Although the overall effectiveness grade of the school may remain unchanged if converted to a section 5 inspection, it is more likely that the judgements will either show improvement or decline than remain good.
- Where a short inspection does convert, it will not be included in any charts or tables showing the outcomes of section 5 inspections during the year. This may cause the proportion of schools considered to be good or better to appear lower than in previous years, and this is explained within the release.
- Users need to be particularly cautious if comparing outcomes from 2015/16 or later with previous years. Before September 2015, all good schools received a section 5 inspection no later than the fifth academic year, including in cases where they continued to provide the same standard of education.
- Primary and secondary schools previously judged to be outstanding in their most recent inspection are exempted from routine inspection and will not be inspected unless Ofsted has concerns about them. This can include concerns identified through risk assessment, a complaint, a serious safeguarding incident or concerns about the standards of leadership and management.
- Outstanding special schools, nursery schools and pupil referral units are not exempted from routine inspection. These schools receive a short inspection in the same way that all good primary and secondary schools do. If the inspector concludes that the school is continuing to provide an outstanding standard of education, the inspection will not convert to a full section 5 inspection.

Policy implications

47. Some policies within Ofsted and the DfE impact on the comparability of different school types to each other and to schools as a whole. Comparisons between school types should be treated with caution due to the different inspection frameworks used over the past five years and the variation in the number of schools included in the different categories.

⁷ A definition of 'short inspection' is provided in the glossary.

⁸ Good primary and secondary schools and outstanding nursery, pupil referral units and special schools are all eligible for short inspections. Outstanding primary and secondary schools are except from any routine inspections (including) short inspections.

- Converter academies (including special converters and alternative provision converters)

When a local authority maintained school converts to become an academy it keeps the inspection history from its predecessor school. For example, a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness that converted to an academy would retain its outstanding grade until it was inspected as an academy. Reporting of converter academies therefore includes some judgements where the school was inspected as an academy, and some where the most recent inspection was of the predecessor school. It is important to recognise that the academy and the predecessor school are different legal entities.

- Sponsor-led academies (including special sponsor-led academies and alternative provision sponsor-led academies)

Maintained schools may close to re-open as sponsor-led academies. Such schools are more likely to be schools that were judged to require improvement or to be inadequate at their most recent inspection. The new academy does not retain the inspection history of the maintained school and is not included in Ofsted's statistics until it is inspected as an academy. In addition, a large number of sponsor-led academies have not yet been inspected and inspection outcomes therefore reflect only those sponsor-led academies that have been inspected. Therefore, users should be cautious when drawing conclusions about the performance of all open sponsor-led academies based on the sub-set with inspection outcomes.

Occasionally, schools not inspected under section 5 may become academies. Independent schools sometimes do this. In this case, the previous school closes and re-opens as a new sponsor-led academy and the inspection history of the previous school is not included in Ofsted statistics.

- Free schools

Most free schools that are opened are new schools. As a consequence, we have not inspected all free schools that have opened. Therefore, caution needs to be exercised when using data as it only represents those free schools that have been inspected. As with sponsor-led academies, the number of free schools that have opened is comparatively small when compared to other school types. Users should take this into account when comparing free schools with other types of schools. This is because small groups such as free schools are more sensitive to changes than larger groups, such as maintained schools. For example, a change of one inspection grade in a group of 100 schools will bring one percent change in the overall group inspection outcomes, whereas a change of one grade in a group of 1000 schools will result in a change of 0.1%, which is less likely to change the overall profile of that group.

- Inspections in-year

As stated earlier, the outcomes of schools inspected in the academic year is very unlikely to be representative of schools as a whole, as Ofsted adopts an approach to inspection, which is proportionate to risk. Also, new schools are usually inspected according to a fixed cycle, so in the majority of cases the timing of this inspection is not determined by performance data of the school.

The result is that there may be differences in the inspection outcomes within the year, between schools that have previously been inspected and new schools. Because of this, users will need to take this into account when comparing the outcomes of different types of schools or inspections year on year.. At present, inspections of new free schools and sponsor-led academies account for a larger proportion of all inspections of these types of schools than is the case for academy converters and local authority maintained schools.

Accuracy and reliability

48. This release reports on (1) the most recent inspection grade of all open schools and (2) inspections that have taken place during the academic year. The statistic states the publication date by which a published inspection report would be included. Schools that have yet to be inspected are not included. If an inspection report has been published but subsequently withheld then this will not be included in inspection outcomes. Footnotes will advise where this is the case. Where the inspection report is published after the cut-off date given for the release, the inspection judgement will not be included. These will appear in later releases, after they have been published.
49. Ofsted moderates all inspection reports where a school is judged to be inadequate. This may result in some inspection reports being published after the publication cut-off date required for inclusion within the provisional release. Therefore, provisional statistics are likely to under-represent schools being placed in a category of concern. In addition, where there are concerns that further evidence may be required to secure the inspection evidence base, this will delay publication of an inspection report. Further details of these procedures can be found here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/gathering-additional-evidence-to-secure-an-incomplete-inspection-ofsted-related-protocol.
50. This release does not include the inspection outcomes of independent schools, further education and skills providers and providers of early years provision. These are included in separate releases. Further details of these can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics>.

Use of Ofsted administrative data

51. Inspections outcome data are extracted from Ofsted's administrative systems. Errors in recording inspection outcomes may affect the quality of source data. A

number of appropriate systems have been put in place by Ofsted to minimise the risk of reporting error:

Until April 2015

52. Until April 2015, Ofsted used a document scanner as a means of validating the outcomes entered into our systems of inspections undertaken under section 5 of the Education Act.

Migration to new administrative system

53. Ofsted introduced a new administrative system in September 2015. A thorough check of the migration from the old administrative system to the new system was undertaken to ensure that inspection data was correct.

Since September 2015

54. Inspections outcome data is extracted from Ofsted's administrative systems. Inspection outcomes are entered onto our systems by the lead inspector. As inspection reports undergo a quality assurance process, any errors are likely to be identified at this stage. In addition, a sample of the entries made onto our administrative system is checked to ensure that these match the inspection report. There is a focus on checking those entries where the risk of there being an error is highest. An example of this is where the inspection outcome awarded changes during the quality assurance process. There remains a small chance that some outcomes are entered incorrectly onto our systems.

Technical production

55. Technical production of the publications may also result in manual errors. A rigorous data quality assurance procedure is adopted with the aim of minimising the risk of reporting error. If an error is discovered within the document, a note is placed on the website and a corrected version of the document is uploaded as soon as possible.
56. More information on the issues relating to the use of administrative data is available here: www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics.

Data obtained from other sources

57. Data indicating whether schools are opened or closed and their type and phase of education is obtained from Edubase. The quality of data relating to school opening and closures is considered to be good. Changes that occur as a result of schools converting to academy status, or closing to become sponsor-led academies are managed centrally by the DfE's Academies Operations and Strategies team. The process for changes undergoes monthly reconciliation checks against other data systems within the DfE. Some issues have been identified around the closure, merger and amalgamation of local authority

maintained schools. Local authorities do not always inform the DfE of these changes, and therefore these are sometimes identified after the event. These discrepancies are usually picked up as part of checks built into other processes.

58. Official statistics produced before April 2016 used two different sets of Edubase data. Data on inspections in the period were based on Edubase approximately five weeks after the end of the period. However, data on the most recent inspections was based on Edubase as close as possible to the end of the period. This difference was primarily driven by the requirements of the reporting systems but resulted in a small number of inconsistencies in the phase, type or status of a school. Official statistics published in April 2016 onwards will use the same Edubase data for all charts and tables. This will make the data more consistent and be clearer for users. While this represents a change in the methodology of the official statistics, the difference between releases published before and after April 2016 is likely to be so small, and affect such a small number of cases, that comparisons can still be made with older releases.
59. Data obtained from Edubase on the type of education is also considered to be of good quality. Any change to the type of education requires verification from the DfE. The phase of education is not subject to the same verification, local authority maintained schools have some remit to change their age range through a local process. Errors are picked up as part of the DfE's performance table validation process but this may be after the event. The DfE has recently introduced a requirement for schools to update their Edubase record every 90 days.

Timeliness and punctuality

60. Data is currently published three times a year and includes details of inspections that have taken place and been published in the relevant period. To ensure data is as timely as possible, each release includes the most recent possible full month of inspections.
61. Data is published at 09:30 on the date pre-announced in the publication schedule: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/statistics. Information on any delay in publication can also be found on the publication schedule.
62. We allow one calendar month after the end of the reporting period as the cut-off date for the inclusion of published inspection reports. This is to allow time for the publication of the majority of inspections that have taken place within the reporting period. The average production time for this release is approximately six weeks. This time includes obtaining and cleaning the data, drafting findings, quality assuring all outputs and uploading the information onto the gov.uk website.
63. Publications are announced via social media. Pre-release access is given in accordance with the pre-release to official statistics order (2008). Details of this

order can be found at: www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/uk-statistical-system/legislation/pre-release-access/index.html.

64. The list of post holders granted pre-release access can be found as a separate document accompanying each release.

Accessibility and clarity

65. Ofsted releases are published in an accessible format on the Gov.UK website. The information is publicly available and there are no restrictions on access to the published data. Each release includes outcomes from Ofsted inspections that have subsequently been published. The data is aimed at keeping users informed of the progress of the inspection framework and of changes in the maintained schools and academies sector.
66. Supporting metadata in an accessible format accompanies each release to allow users to perform their own analysis. Users may use and re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/.
67. This metadata consists of provider level files in Excel and CSV. An Excel file is also provided with additional charts.

Performance, cost and respondent burden

68. There is no respondent burden in relation to this statistics release as data is a by-product of Ofsted's inspection process. The only cost involved is the internal resource involved in collating the release.

Confidentiality, transparency and security

69. Where sensitive or personal data is held by Ofsted, the disclosure control processes we have in place ensure that this data is not published. This includes suppressing the number of pupils for providers with fewer than three pupils on roll.
70. All data releases follow Ofsted's confidentiality and revisions policies, which can be found in these locations: www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics.

Glossary

School types

This data includes four school types: academy converters, academy sponsor-leds, free schools local authority maintained schools.

Academy converter

Academy converters are the most common type of academy. They do not have to follow the national curriculum and can set their own term times. They still have to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools.

Academy converters retain their latest inspection grade, even if the most recent inspection was of the predecessor school. However as part of re-brokering process some academy converters lose their inspection grade.

Academy sponsor-led

Sponsor-led academies are academies which have sponsors such as businesses, universities, other schools, faith groups or voluntary groups. Sponsors are responsible for improving the performance of their schools. University technical colleges and studio schools are included in academy sponsor-led.

Sponsor-led academies are viewed as new legal entities and do not retain their inspection history.

Free schools

Free schools are funded by the government but are not run by the local authority. They are set-up on a not-for-profit basis by charities, universities, and community and faith groups, among others.

Free schools are 'all-ability' schools, so cannot use academic selection processes like a grammar school. They can set their own pay and conditions for staff and change the length of school terms and the school day. Free schools do not have to follow the national curriculum.

Maintained schools

Maintained schools are funded by the government and run by the local authority. They must follow the national curriculum.

Short inspections

As of September 2015, Ofsted undertakes short inspections for primary and secondary maintained schools and academies that were judged good at their previous inspection. Short inspections take place approximately every three years. A short inspection will confirm that the previous grade for overall effectiveness is accurate and the setting remains good and that safeguarding is effective. These arrangements also apply to special schools, pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools that were judged outstanding at their previous inspection.⁹

A short inspection does **not** result in individual graded judgements. It does **not** change the overall effectiveness grade of the school or provider. If inspectors believe that a change of grade may be necessary, they will trigger a section 5 inspection, which will make the full set of graded judgements using the four-point grading scale.

⁹ These settings are currently not exempt from routine inspections if they are judged outstanding.