

# Support and challenge for further education and skills providers

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This guidance sets out Ofsted's approach to supporting and challenging further education and skills providers that are judged to require improvement.

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## Introduction

1. This guidance explains how Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) will support and challenge further education and skills providers that are judged to require improvement whose inspection was notified before 10 November 2017. This does not apply to those providers judged as requires improvement whose inspection was notified on or after 10 November 2017. Those providers will have a monitoring visit, as set out in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook'.<sup>1</sup> The arrangements whereby Ofsted supports and challenges inadequate providers to improve are detailed in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook'.
2. A provider judged to require improvement at their most recent inspection will normally have a full re-inspection within 12 to 24 months of its previous inspection.
3. Ofsted's position is that:

'All providers must be at least good and this must be viewed as the minimum expected standard... Providers want the very best for their learners and we want Ofsted to play its part to the full in helping to achieve this.'
4. This guidance sets out the contribution that Ofsted will make to helping providers that require improvement get to good or better.

## Strategies for support and challenge

### Ofsted's general duty to promote improvement

5. Ofsted has a range of duties under Section 117(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. One of these is to perform its functions for the general purpose of encouraging improvement in the services it inspects and regulates. Inspection and regulation are Ofsted's principal ways of identifying strengths and weaknesses in the quality of provision and bringing about improvement. In addition to these functions Ofsted will provide bespoke support and challenge for those providers that are not yet judged to be good.
6. All providers have a responsibility for ensuring that they provide a good quality of education and/or training for their learners. Senior managers together with the governing body, as appropriate, must determine the exact actions to take to improve the provider and how to access any necessary support. However, HMI will support and challenge the provider in this process.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', Ofsted; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015), paragraph 23.

## **Improvement activity – the range of options**

7. The following is an indicative range of support and challenge strategies that HMI may choose to employ and/or recommend when visiting a provider. The strategies are not mutually exclusive and the list is not exhaustive. HMI may identify other activities that suit the specific circumstances of the provider. The range of options may include:
  - HMI meeting with governors to explain, using Ofsted evidence, how the governing body can assist in ensuring that a provider improves to good
  - HMI arranging opportunities for representatives from the provider to shadow an Ofsted inspection
  - HMI offering to arrange a visit for senior leaders and governors to another provider
  - a meeting between the HMI and other staff, or groups of staff, at the provider to review progress against agreed action plans and/or to share good practice
  - HMI meeting with middle leaders and managers in the provider to discuss how teaching or training can be strengthened
  - joint observation of a particular subject or aspect by the HMI and senior/middle leaders.

## **Carrying out improvement visits**

8. Where a provider has been judged to require improvement at the most recent inspection (if this was notified before 10 November 2017), an HMI will normally contact the provider's principal or chief executive beforehand to offer a visit to the provider by the improvement HMI.
9. The improvement HMI will normally agree with the provider a suitable time for an initial telephone conversation and an on-site improvement visit. The improvement HMI will:
  - discuss, by telephone or meeting, with the principal, CEO or their representative the provider's areas of improvement as set out in the inspection report
  - discuss and agree the priority actions that the provider will take and the timescales for doing so in order to address the areas for improvement and so improve to good or outstanding
  - agree other means of support and challenge that are deemed appropriate.
10. To maintain a clear separation of roles, the improvement HMI will not normally be one of those who carried out the last inspection. They will also not normally be one of those HMI who will carry out the subsequent inspection.

## **After the visit**

11. The inspector will send the principal/chief executive the reporting letter that confirms the actions, timescales and any further arrangements discussed at the visit.
12. The reporting letter will not be published on the Ofsted website. However, it will be shared with the Education and Skills Funding Agency. In the case of colleges and local authority providers, the letter will also be shared with the further education commissioner. The letter may also be shared with United Kingdom Visas and Immigration (UKVI), the part of the Home Office which deals with Tier 4 licences.

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