



Correspondence

Schools and early education inspection update: October 2020 special edition

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Message from the Deputy Director of Schools and Early Education

Welcome to this special edition of the schools and early education inspection update. You will note that we have changed the title from 'School inspection update' to include early education. This is because we will now be including relevant guidance and information for inspectors on early education inspection matters as well as for schools.

I hope that you all enjoyed your summer, despite the unique circumstances in which we find ourselves. I know that these are strange and difficult times. The schools and early education policy team and I are very grateful for all the help and support that inspectors have provided in getting us back on track.

I know that your plans for restarting your work going out to providers will have taken shape by now, but I thought it was worth just summarising everything we have said to date about the restart and our approach to the autumn term visits.

Best wishes

Gill Jones, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI)
Deputy Director, Schools and Early Education

Maintained schools and academies

Interim visits

On 2 September, we published our [operational note](#) for inspectors carrying out interim visits to maintained schools and academies in the autumn term. As you will know, these visits are not inspections. They are not linked to routine school inspections and no school's overall effectiveness judgement will change due to them. They will be collaborative conversations that will help us to understand how well pupils are getting on as they return to school and resume learning the school's curriculum.

Many of you were involved in the piloting of the visits before the main visits started from 28 September, so thank you. All schools graded inadequate will be visited, along with a sample of schools across all other Ofsted grades, and a representative sample of schools across Ofsted's regions. The visits will normally last for a day and result in a letter, which will be published.

If inspectors find significant safeguarding concerns or a significant breakdown in leadership and management at a school, HMI can arrange to treat the visit as a 'no formal designation' inspection. We do not expect visits to result in section 5 inspections, except in very exceptional circumstances.

Interim visit training

Over the past few weeks we've been busy training our HMI workforce to carry out the interim visits this autumn. This training has been delivered through a combination of general information about COVID-19 (coronavirus), specific training on the details of the new policies and procedures that underpin these visits, and pilot visits to voluntary schools.

While many of the skills our inspectors will need for these visits are similar to those required on our standard inspections, the visits will require inspectors to take a very different approach, seeking to support rather than judge the school. Because of this, we've provided our HMI with a comprehensive package of training that covers all aspects of the visit, which we are confident will stand them in good stead to carry out this new work.

Return to inspection

Planning is underway for our intended return to regular inspection under the education inspection framework (EIF) in January 2021, though we are keeping the exact date of this under review, working with the Department for Education (DfE). We are currently exploring the challenges of inspecting under the EIF while COVID-19 measures are still in place.

Early education

EYFS reforms and early adopter schools

On 1 July 2020, the DfE published the reforms of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework. This guidance is for the early adopter schools that have chosen to use this framework before it becomes statutory in September 2021. The new version of the framework sets the standards that all early adopter schools must meet to ensure that children learn and develop well and that they are kept healthy and safe. The Secretary of State (SoS) for Education also published a [ministerial statement about the new publication](#).

In summary, the reforms to the EYFS cover the following:

- revisions to the educational programmes and early learning goals
- changes to the teacher assessment and moderation process at the end of the EYFS, including removal of the statutory requirement for local authorities to externally moderate
- removing the 'exceeding' criteria from the EYFS to increase the focus on more children reaching expected levels
- changes to the safeguarding and welfare requirements to explicitly include 'oral health' in the current requirement to 'promote the good health of children' in the EYFS framework

'Development matters'

The DfE recently published the updated [Development matters](#). This curriculum guidance is non-statutory and will be particularly useful for those schools that have signed up to be early adopters of the revised EYFS a year ahead of statutory roll-out.

Implications for inspectors

Early adopters

The DfE says that around 2,800 schools have signed up as early adopters. While inspectors will need to be aware of the changed curriculum and assessment expectations set out in the new EYFS documentation, there is no need to change our approach when inspecting these schools. This is because the EIF looks at progress through the curriculum and inspectors will not look at the school's internal assessment data.

'Development matters'

This guidance is non-statutory and will remain so when the revised EYFS is introduced in September 2021. It offers a top-level view of how children develop and learn, and guides, but does not replace, professional judgement. Early adopter schools can use the guidance to support them in changing their curriculum and practice. Those who are not early adopters, which include registered early years providers (nurseries and childminders), may find some elements of this guidance useful, but they will still need to follow the existing EYFS framework until statutory roll-out of the reforms in September 2021.

For information: changes to the EYFS disapplications and modifications

To support early years providers during the COVID-19 outbreak, in April 2020 the government temporarily disapplied and modified certain elements of the EYFS statutory framework. The original disapplications were lifted on 25 September 2020 and we are now in a 2-month transitional period for disapplications around staffing levels and paediatric first aid. This is because some providers may need time to get back to full staffing levels after the disapplications have been lifted.

The DfE is aware that any further restrictions or requirements related to COVID-19 due to a local or national lockdown may affect a provider's ability to comply with the EYFS. Therefore, the DfE has introduced new regulations that came into force on 26 September 2020. It will also allow the disapplications to reapply (with the exception of the EYFS profile disapplication) when a provider is prevented from complying with the EYFS due to COVID-19-related restrictions or requirements that have been imposed by the government. See the updated [EYFS disapplications guidance](#) for full details.

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Yes

No

Is there anything wrong with this page?

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