Ofsted raising standards improving lives

Official Statistics

Main findings: further education and skills inspections and outcomes, as at 31 August 2020

Published 26 November 2020

Contents

Introduction
Provider numbers, inspection volumes and outcomes
Outcomes by provider group
Notes
Glossary
Further information

Print this page

This is the main findings report for the further education and skills inspections and outcomes as at 31 August 2020 release. The following are also available:

- underlying data, tables and charts
- methodology
- pre-release access list

Introduction

This release contains:

- provisional data for the most recent inspections and outcomes on 31 August 2020
- provisional data for inspections and monitoring visits carried out between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020

We carried out inspections from 1 September 2019 under the education inspection framework (EIF). This replaced the common inspection framework, which was in effect from 1 September 2015 to 31 August 2019. This is the second official statistics release relating to inspections of further education and skills providers under the EIF.

Impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus)

All routine inspections and the publication of inspection reports were suspended in March 2020 due to COVID-19. We started to publish inspection reports again from May and all those published by 30 September 2020 are included in this release. The impact of COVID-19 on the further education and skills provider base is yet to be seen, with almost all of the providers remaining in Ofsted's systems between February and August 2020.

The overall number of further education and skills providers has stabilised this reporting year. This marks an end to the rapid expansion seen over the past 2 years, when there had been large increases in the number of providers we were required to inspect.

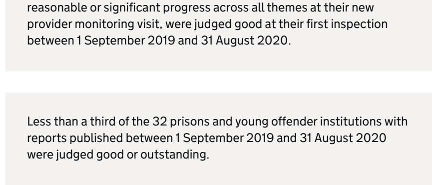
The proportion of providers not yet inspected or visited as at 31 August 2020 was 13%. This is similar to the proportion as at 31 August 2017, before the further education and skills provider base rapidly expanded (see Figure 1).

Between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, the proportion of providers inspected and judged to be good or outstanding was 68%. This is 14 percentage points higher than in 2018/19, due largely to short inspections not being carried out last year.

Over three quarters of providers that were judged to be making reasonable or significant progress across all themes at their new provider monitoring visit, were judged good at their first inspection between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020.

Less than a third of the 32 prisons and young offender institutions with reports published between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 were judged good or outstanding.

Figure 1: Number and proportion of further education and skills providers inspected or visited, over time



Download a zip file with the underlying data in csv format.

Provider numbers, inspection volumes and outcomes

Provider numbers

The overall number of further education and skills providers has stabilised this reporting year.

On 31 August 2020, there were 1,871 further education and skills providers publicly funded and delivering education, training and/or apprenticeships recorded on Ofsted's systems. This is 32 fewer than on 31 August 2019. The decrease includes 14 National Careers Service contractors that are no longer inspected by us since the introduction of EIF. This marks a break in the trend seen over the past 2 years, when the number of providers had increased on 31 August 2017 and 31 August 2018 by 735 and 221 respectively. These large increases were mainly as a result of the apprenticeship funding reforms introduced in April 2017.

As at 31 August 2020, 87% of the further education and skills providers had received a new provider monitoring visit or an inspection, leaving 13% not yet inspected or visited. This is similar to the levels seen before the apprenticeship funding reforms rapidly expanded the provider base we inspect. The percentage not yet inspected or visited has reduced from 37% on 31 August 2018, to 13% as at 31 August 2020 (see Figure 1).

The number of general further education colleges that we report on continues to decline, as established colleges merge together to form new entities. Since 1 September 2019, there have been 3 mergers. One general further education college merged with a specialist designated institution and there was a merger between 2 general further education colleges and a sixth-form college. As at 31 August 2020, there were 168 general further education colleges recorded on Ofsted's systems.

The number of 16 to 19 academies has increased by 6 since 1 September 2019, as 4 new 16 to 19 free schools opened, one 16 to 19 free school closed and 3 sixth-form colleges converted to become 16 to 19 academies. As at 31 August 2020, there were 58 16 to 19 academies.

The number of sixth-form colleges that we report on continues to decline, either through merging with general further education colleges or by converting to academies. Since 1 September 2019, 1 sixth-form college has merged and 3 have become academies. As at 31 August 2020, there were 50 sixth-form colleges recorded on Ofsted's systems.

Since 1 September 2019, 7 new independent specialist colleges have opened and 1 has closed. As at 31 August 2020, there were 103 independent specialist colleges recorded on Ofsted's systems.

The number of independent learning providers (including employer providers) has declined by 12 since 1 September 2019. An additional 24 independent learning providers (including employer providers) became publicly funded and started delivering education, training or apprenticeships and 36 providers were no longer funded and had stopped delivering. As at 31 August 2020, the total number of independent learning providers (including employer providers) was 1,246. This is a 122% increase since 31 August 2017.

In-year monitoring visit volumes

There was a more equal balance of monitoring visits and inspections this reporting year compared with 2018/19.

A monitoring visit is an interim type of inspection that explores one or more specific themes. For further education and skills providers, monitoring visits can be broken down into 2 main categories:

- new provider monitoring visits
- other monitoring visits

We introduced new provider monitoring visits in 2018 for newly, directly and publicly funded providers at the request of the Department for Education. Inspectors make progress judgements by considering the impact of actions taken to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviours of learners.

Other monitoring visits have been in place for more than 5 years. Inspectors assess the main areas for improvement identified in the inspection report for providers judged requires improvement or inadequate. We also use monitoring visits to assess providers with a safeguarding concern or, in the case of colleges that have merged, the relevant themes about the progress of the merged college, including from the most recent report(s) of the predecessor college(s).

Since 1 September 2019, we have carried out 237 monitoring visits, of which 179 were new provider monitoring visits.

In-year new provider monitoring visit outcomes

Almost a quarter of apprenticeship providers were making insufficient progress in one or more areas at their new provider monitoring visit.

All but 6 of the 155 new provider monitoring visits to apprenticeship providers were to independent learning providers (including employer providers). The other 6 were to higher education institutions. Overall, 76% of providers were making at least reasonable progress across all themes that they were assessed on. However, this leaves almost a quarter of providers making insufficient progress in one or more areas.

Table 1: Apprenticeship new provider monitoring visit outcomes, between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020

Progress judgement	Insufficient progress	Reasonable progress	Significant progress
How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?	36	107	12
What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?	34	107	14
How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?	13	128	14
What progress have leaders and managers made to ensure that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals?[1]	0	1	0

Table shows number of providers receiving each progress judgement.
1.This judgement was only made when a provider also offered adult education.

In addition, we carried out 5 new provider monitoring visits to newly directly funded providers delivering adult education, 6 to independent specialist colleges and 1 to a provider delivering 16 to 19 provision. Two providers delivering adult education provision received at least 1 insufficient progress judgement. One independent specialist college was judged to be making insufficient progress across all themes. All the other providers were judged to be making reasonable or significant progress across all themes.

There were also 12 safeguarding follow-up visits, after an insufficient judgement for safeguarding was made at a new provider monitoring visit. At these visits, 4 providers were still found to be making insufficient progress in safeguarding.

From new provider monitoring visit to first full inspection

Over three quarters of providers that were judged to be making reasonable or significant progress across all themes at their new provider monitoring visit were judged good at their first inspection between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020.

Between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, we inspected 50 providers for the first time that had previously had a new provider monitoring visit. Over three quarters of providers that were judged to be making reasonable or significant progress across all themes at their new provider monitoring visit were judged good at their first inspection. The 4 providers judged insufficient across all themes went on to be judged inadequate, whereas those providers with a mix of outcomes were more likely to be judged requires improvement at their full inspection.

Table 2: Overall effectiveness at first full inspection between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, by previous new provider monitoring visit judgements

New provider monitoring visit outcome	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Reasonable or significant progress across all themes judged (32)	0	25	6	1
Mixed (14)	0	3	10	1
Insufficient progress in all themes judged (4)	0	0	0	4

Number of inspections in brackets.

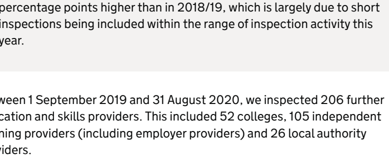
In-year inspection volumes and outcomes

The proportion of providers judged good or outstanding is 14 percentage points higher than in 2018/19, which is largely due to short inspections being included within the range of inspection activity this year.

Between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, we inspected 206 further education and skills providers. This included 52 colleges, 105 independent learning providers (including employer providers) and 26 local authority providers.

The 206 further education and skills inspections consisted of 146 full inspections and 60 short inspections (including those that converted to full inspections). The proportion of first inspections to providers is slightly lower than in 2018/19.

Figure 2: Proportion of full and short inspection activity, by inspection type and reporting year

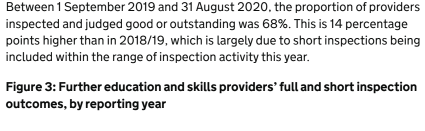


Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.
1. The following provider types remain subject to routine inspection when judged outstanding: higher education institutions offering further education and/or apprenticeships to Level 5, local authority providers, independent specialist colleges and dance and drama colleges.
Download a zip file with the underlying data in csv format.

The first 3-year cycle of short inspections concluded on 31 August 2018. Following a policy change introduced on 1 September 2018, we will normally inspect providers previously judged good within 5 years of their latest inspection. These changes led to only 2 short inspections being carried out in the last reporting year. From 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020, we carried out 60 short inspections (including those that converted to full inspections).

Between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, the proportion of providers inspected and judged good or outstanding was 68%. This is 14 percentage points higher than in 2018/19, which is largely due to short inspections being included within the range of inspection activity this year.

Figure 3: Further education and skills providers' full and short inspection outcomes, by reporting year



Number of inspections in brackets.
Download a zip file with the underlying data in csv format.

Historically, around 90% of the providers that received a short inspection in any given year (including those that convert to a full inspection) remained good or improved to outstanding. Of the 60 short inspections (including those that converted to a full inspection) carried out this reporting year, 93% remained good or improved to outstanding.

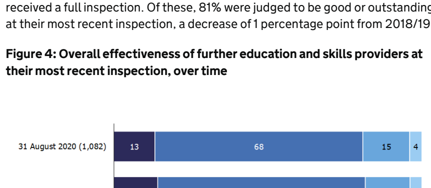
Of the 206 providers inspected between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, 202 had effective safeguarding arrangements in place for learners. Four providers were judged not to have effective safeguarding arrangements in place. Two of these providers had declined to inadequate; one was previously judged as good and the other as requires improvement. One was the first inspection of a merged sixth-form college. The other provider was inspected for the first time.

Most recent inspection outcomes

The proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection has decreased by 1 percentage point from 2018/19.

On 31 August 2020, 58% of the 1,871 further education and skills providers had received a full inspection. Of these, 81% were judged to be good or outstanding at their most recent inspection, a decrease of 1 percentage point from 2018/19.

Figure 4: Overall effectiveness of further education and skills providers at their most recent inspection, over time



Number of providers in brackets.
Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.
Download a zip file with the underlying data in csv format.

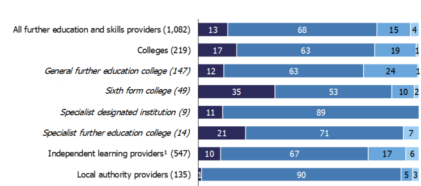
The proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection can be affected by:

- providers whose overall effectiveness grade improves or declines at inspection during the year
- new providers receiving their first overall effectiveness judgement
- Ofsted no longer reporting on providers because they have merged, ceased to be funded or have stopped delivering

Between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, the group that had the biggest impact on the proportion judged good or outstanding was new providers. There were almost twice as many providers receiving their first overall effectiveness judgement compared with those that we no longer reported on.

The proportion of newly inspected providers that were judged to be good or outstanding was 57%, which was lower than the overall proportion judged good or outstanding for all further education and skills providers as at 31 August 2019. This means that although the proportion of providers judged good or outstanding in this reporting year was 14 percentage points higher than in 2018/19, the overall proportion judged good or outstanding remained relatively stable.

Figure 5: Overall effectiveness of further education and skills providers at their most recent inspection, on 31 August 2020



Number of providers in brackets.
Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100. When the number of providers is small, percentages should be treated with caution.
1. Includes employer providers.
2. We judge higher education institutions on their further education and apprenticeship provision to Level 5. We do not judge the provider as a whole.
Download a zip file with the underlying data in csv format.

Outcomes by provider group

General further education colleges

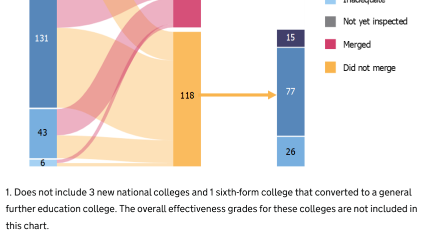
Almost half of the general further education colleges that were active on 31 August 2015 have since been through a merger.

In 2015, the government launched its review of post-16 education and training institutions across England. This led to a series of area reviews that, among other recommendations, resulted in a range of structural solutions such as mergers and colleges joining existing group structures.

On 31 August 2015, there were 214 general further education colleges recorded on Ofsted's systems. Since that time, almost half of the colleges (96) have been through a merger. This has reduced the number of colleges we report on to 168 as at 31 August 2020. Although the number of colleges we report on has reduced by 21%, the original college sites continue to deliver provision and are still considered during the inspection of the new entity. A newly merged college does not carry forward any inspection grades from its predecessor colleges and will not have an overall effectiveness judgement until its first full inspection.

We had previously inspected all of the general further education colleges that merged. Most of the outstanding colleges did not merge (25 out of 34). Around half of the colleges judged either good, requires improvement or inadequate went through the merger process.

Figure 6: General further education college grade profile as at 31 August 2015 and 31 August 2020



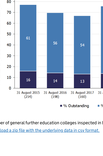
1. Does not include 3 new national colleges and 1 sixth-form college that converted to a general further education college. The overall effectiveness grades for these colleges are not included in this chart.
Download a zip file with the underlying data in csv format.

Since 2015, 92 of the general further education colleges that did not merge have been re-inspected, with 72% judged good or outstanding. This is similar to the grade profile as at 31 August 2015, when 77% of colleges were judged good

as at 31 August 2020, we had inspected 26 of the 46 general further education colleges that were newly formed from a merger. Almost two thirds were judged good or outstanding (17), including 2 that were judged outstanding, with the remaining colleges being judged requires improvement. Currently, this grade profile is lower than the original profile as at 31 August 2015, however, we have yet to inspect 20 of the colleges.

Overall, of the general further education colleges that we had inspected, 75% were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection, as at 31 August 2020. This was a 3 percentage point decrease compared with 31 August 2019, which was largely as a result of a much lower proportion of general further education colleges inspected for the first time this year being judged good or outstanding than the proportion as at 31 August 2019. Twelve (57%) of the 21 general further education colleges newly inspected this year were judged good or outstanding. This included inspections of 2 national colleges, one of which was judged requires improvement and one inadequate.

Figure 7: Proportion of general further education colleges judged good or outstanding for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection, over time



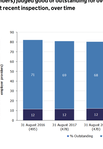
Number of general further education colleges inspected in brackets.
Download a zip file with the underlying data in csv format.

Independent learning providers

The proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection has declined by 2 percentage points.

Between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, we inspected 105 independent learning providers (including employer providers). Overall, 61% of providers were judged good, with none judged outstanding. This is an increase of 19 percentage points compared with the proportion of providers judged good or outstanding in 2018/19. The increase can be attributed to the return of short inspections and a higher proportion of providers being judged good at their first inspection. In 2018/19, 40% of providers were judged good or outstanding at their first inspection. This reporting year, 57% of providers were judged good at their first inspection.

Figure 8: First full inspection outcome for independent learning providers (including employer providers), by reporting year



Number of inspections in brackets.
Download a zip file with the underlying data in csv format.

Although the proportion of independent learning providers (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 was higher than the previous reporting year, overall the proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection declined by 2 percentage points, from 79% as at 31 August 2019 to 77% as at 31 August 2020. The decrease was due to a combination of factors including:

- a much lower proportion of newly inspected providers being judged good or outstanding than the proportion as at 31 August 2019
- more providers declining from good or outstanding to requires improvement or inadequate, than improved

This is the fourth year there has been a decline in the proportion of independent learning providers (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding.

Figure 9: Proportion of independent learning providers (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection, over time

Number of providers in brackets.
Download a zip file with the underlying data in csv format.

Other further education and skills providers

Table 3: Summary of main findings for other provider groups with at least 5 inspections

Provider type/group	No. of providers on 31 August 2020	No. of inspections between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020	Main findings
Local authority providers	136	26	Twenty three of the 26 local authority providers inspected since 1 September 2019 were judged good. One local authority provider declined from good to inadequate. The overall proportion of local authority providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection, as at 31 August 2020, increased by 1 percentage point to 92%.
Sixth-form colleges	50	11	Nine out of 11 sixth-form colleges inspected since 1 September 2019 were judged good or outstanding. The one sixth-form college inspected following a merger was judged inadequate. The overall proportion of sixth-form colleges judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection as at 31 August 2020, remained at 88%.
16-19 academies	58	9	Of the 9 16-19 academies inspected since 1 September 2019, 5 were judged good and 3 outstanding. The overall proportion of academies judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection as at 31 August 2020 increased by 2 percentage points to 92% and the proportion judged outstanding increased by 4 percentage points to 44%.
Independent specialist colleges	103	11	Nine out of 11 independent specialist colleges inspected since 1 September 2019 were judged good or outstanding, including 2 that improved from requires improvement. The overall proportion of independent specialist colleges judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection, as at 31 August 2020, increased by 3 percentage points to 76%.

Prisons and young offender institutions

Less than a third of the 32 prisons and young offender institutions with reports published between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 were judged good or outstanding.

On 31 August 2020, there were 115 prisons and young offender institutions. We had inspected all of these.

Ofsted contributed to 32 prison and young offender institution inspections where the reports were published between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020. All but one of the prisons and young offender institutions had previously been inspected. Of the 13 prisons and young offender institutions previously judged good, 8 declined at inspection and most of those that previously required improvement remained at that grade, with 2 declining to inadequate. The prison that was inspected for the first time was judged requires improvement.

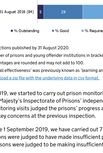
Table 4: Overall effectiveness of education, skills and work in prisons and young offender institutions published between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020, by previous overall effectiveness grade

Previous overall effectiveness	Total number of inspections	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Outstanding	1	0	0	0	0
Good	13	0	5	5	1
Requires improvement	13	0	2	9	2
Inadequate	4	0	1	2	1
Not previously inspected	1	0	0	1	0
Total	32	0	9	19	4

'Overall effectiveness' was previously known as 'learning and skills and work activities'.

Overall, more prisons and young offender institutions declined to be less than good than improved to good. Therefore, the in-year inspection outcomes led to a decline in the proportion of prisons and young offender institutions judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection by 5 percentage points, to 45%. This reverses the trend in the previous 3 years, when the proportion of prisons and young offender institutions judged good or outstanding had been gradually increasing.

Figure 10: Overall effectiveness of education, skills and work in prisons and young offender institutions at their most recent inspection, over time



Inspections published by 31 August 2020.
Number of prisons and young offender institutions in brackets.
Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.
'Overall effectiveness' was previously known as 'learning and skills and work activities'.
Download a zip file with the underlying data in csv format.

In 2019, we started to carry out prison monitoring visits to contribute towards Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons' independent reviews of progress. The monitoring visits judged the prisons' progress against themes identified from the key concerns at the previous inspection.

Since 1 September 2019, we have carried out 7 prison monitoring visits. All prisons were judged to have made insufficient progress in at least 1 theme and 2 prisons were judged to be making insufficient progress across all 3 themes.

Notes

The quality report for these official statistics contains an explanation of the methodology used and the relevant inspection frameworks, along with other useful information.

Glossary

Definitions of terms are within the statistical glossary.

Further information

Contact for comments or feedback

If you have any comments or feedback on this publication, you should contact Richard Jones on 03000 130 608 or Richard.Jones@ofsted.gov.uk.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following for their contribution to this statistical release: Angela Serjeant, Simon Gibson, John Hadler, Emily Green and Kyle Drury.

Is this page useful?

Yes | No | There's something wrong with this page

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

Brexit transition

Check the new rules for January 2021

Services and information

Benefits
Births, deaths, marriages and care
Business and self-employed
Childcare and parenting
Citizenship and living in the UK
Crime, justice and the law
Disabled people
Driving and transport
Education and learning
Employing people
Environment and countryside
Housing and local services
Money and tax
Passports, travel and living abroad
Visas and immigration
Working, jobs and pensions

Departments and policy

How government works
Departments
Worldwide
Services
Guidance and regulation
News and communications
Research and statistics
Policy papers and consultations
Transparency and freedom of information releases

Help Privacy Cookies Contact Accessibility statement Terms and conditions
Rhestr o Wasanaethau Cymraeg Built by the Government Digital Service

OGL All content is available under the Open Government Licence v.3.0, except where otherwise stated

© Crown copyright