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Guidance

School inspection handbook

Updated 24 January 2024

Applies to England

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This guidance came into force on 19 January 2024.

Introduction

1. This handbook describes the main activities carried out during graded, ungraded and urgent inspections of maintained schools and academies in England under sections 5 and 8 of the Education Act 2005, respectively. It sets out the grade descriptors that inspectors use to make their judgements and on which they report. It applies to school inspections under the [education inspection framework \(EIF\)](#).

2. Graded inspections are carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. They were previously known as section 5 inspections. In graded inspections, we use Ofsted's full framework and grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management), for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision) and for its overall effectiveness, against our grade descriptors.

3. Ungraded inspections are carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. They were previously known as section 8 inspections of good and outstanding schools. An ungraded inspection differs from a graded inspection because it does not result in individual graded judgements. Instead, it focuses on determining whether the school remains the same grade as it was at its previous graded inspection.

4. Urgent inspections are also carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. They were previously known as inspections with no formal designation and unannounced behaviour inspections.

5. Ofsted may also carry out inspections under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 in order to comply with a request from the Secretary of State under section 118(2) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 for information or advice about maintained schools and academies. We may also carry out [research during inspections](#).

6. This handbook is primarily a guide for inspectors on how to carry out school inspections. However, we make it available to schools and other organisations to ensure that they are informed about the processes and procedures of inspection. It seeks to balance the need for consistency in inspections with the flexibility required to respond to the individual circumstances of each school. This handbook should be regarded not as a set of inflexible rules, but as an account of the procedures of inspection. Inspectors will use their professional judgement when they apply the guidance in this handbook.

7. The handbook has 4 parts:

- Part 1. How schools will be inspected: this contains information about the processes before, during and after the inspection

- Part 2. Explanation of Ofsted’s judgements: this sets out the kinds of evidence that inspectors gather and the activities they carry out to make their judgements
- Part 3. Grade descriptors: this contains the evaluation criteria that inspectors use to make the graded judgements about schools
- Part 4. Urgent inspections: this contains the procedures and evaluation criteria for these inspections. It stands alone and therefore may repeat some of the content of part 1

Conduct during inspections

8. [Ofsted’s code of conduct](#) outlines our expectations of the conduct of our inspectors and our expectations of providers during inspection.

9. Inspectors will uphold the highest professional standards in their work. They will treat everyone they meet during inspections fairly and with the respect and sensitivity they deserve. Inspectors will work constructively with leaders and staff, demonstrating professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect at all times.

10. Providers should approach their inspection with integrity and be open, transparent and honest. This includes providing evidence – or access to evidence – that will enable inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably. It means not withholding or concealing evidence, or providing false, misleading, inaccurate or incomplete information.

Schools raising concerns

11. If a school has any concerns about an inspection, including about inspectors’ conduct or any potential or perceived conflicts of interest, they should be raised at the earliest opportunity with the lead inspector. Concerns can be raised at any point during the inspection, including (but not limited to):

- [the inspection planning conversation](#)
- [meetings between leaders and inspectors](#)
- [the final feedback meeting](#)

12. Any concerns will be taken seriously, and the act of raising the concern will not impact inspection findings or how a school is considered by Ofsted.

Gathering personal information on inspection

13. Inspectors will gather any personal information necessary to assist them in inspecting a school. Our [privacy policy](#) sets out what personal information we collect, what we do with it, how long we keep it and individuals' rights under data protection legislation.

14. Individuals and organisations are legally required to provide inspectors with access to information. Section 10 of The Education Act 2005 gives inspectors powers of entry to any premises on which a school provides education to pupils and a right to inspect, and take copies of, any records kept by the school, and any other documents containing information relating to the school, that His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) considers relevant to the discharge of their functions. These powers enable inspectors to look at computers and other devices that may hold relevant information. Regulations enable the Department for Education (DfE) to provide Ofsted with information on individual pupils where it relates to school inspections.

15. Inspectors gather evidence on inspection and record this on Ofsted's systems. They may also see evidence on site that contains personal information about staff and young people, such as registers and lesson plans. Inspectors may take notes from, or copies of, this type of evidence before handing it back to an appropriate staff member at the end of the inspection. Any notes or copies will be stored as evidence securely and not retained by inspectors personally. Inspectors may take photographs of pupils' work. These photographs will be stored securely as evidence, but will not be retained by the inspector personally.

16. In most schools, inspectors will gather evidence electronically using a range of devices, including laptops, mobile phones and tablets. Inspectors should transfer evidence securely in line with our security policies.

Research on inspection

17. We may carry out [research during our inspections](#). Where this happens, the research activity will have no impact on inspection judgements. In addition to this research approach, as our research work is based on our national priorities, we may invite providers to participate in research visits (separate to inspections) at other times.

Clarification for schools

Terminology

18. In this handbook:

- the term 'school' refers to a maintained school or an academy, and the terms 'maintained school' or 'academy' will be used where applicable to that type of school only
- the term 'leaders' refers to the staff in a school who are responsible for making key decisions about how the school operates, for example on matters such as the curriculum or behaviour. It will always include the headteacher and will likely include their senior staff, but will otherwise vary from school to school, especially depending on its size. In most schools, it will include middle or subject leaders who have responsibility for individual subjects and/or aspects of the curriculum. Additionally, in a trust, 'leaders' also includes leaders from within the trust (but not from governance roles) who have a role in running the school, including the trust chief executive officer (CEO) and other roles such as executive headteacher or director of education
- the term 'trust' refers to any academy trust, including single-academy trusts, multi-academy trusts and multi-academy companies (many dioceses use the term 'multi-academy companies'; these are legally identical to multi-academy trusts but use a different name)
- the term 'board of governors' is used to refer to the accountable authority for a maintained school, and 'governors' is used to refer to members of that board. The board is the appropriate body of the school for the purposes of section 6 of the Education Act 2005
- the term 'board of trustees' is used to refer to the accountable authority of a trust, and 'trustees' is used to refer to the trustees on that board (who may be referred to as directors if they are in multi-academy companies). The board is the appropriate body and the proprietor for standalone academies or for all the academies in a trust, for the purposes of section 6 of the Education Act 2005
- the term 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean: pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at

any point in the last 6 years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route)

- any reference to parents includes registered parents or carers
- any reference to a school with serious weaknesses refers to a school that requires significant improvement under section 44 of the Education Act 2005
- any reference to 'report' describes the formal written outcome from an inspection, which is usually published

Common misconceptions about inspection

19. The information below confirms our requirements. This is to correct common misconceptions about inspection that can result in unnecessary workload for schools. It is intended to highlight specific practices that we do not require.

Evidence for inspection

20. We do not require schools to do additional work or to ask pupils to do work specifically for the inspection, or create unnecessary workload for teachers through our recommendations.

21. We will not require schools to provide:

- evidence for inspection beyond that set out in this handbook
- evidence in any specific format, as long as it is easily accessible for inspectors
- written evidence of oral feedback to pupils
- predictions of attainment and progress scores
- assessment or self-evaluation, other than that which is already part of the school's business processes
- performance and pupil-tracking information
- any specific document or plan in relation to the pupil premium other than its pupil premium strategy, and will not require any further school-generated data on the pupil premium

Involving leaders and governance in inspections

22. We will invite the headteacher and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust (or their delegate) (where applicable) to observe the inspectors' team meeting at the end of each day. At least one other member of staff may attend the meeting to

support the headteacher. This should typically be someone who deputises for them (or a member of trust staff) and who can understand and discuss the educational content of the meeting with the headteacher. Additional members of staff (this could include trust staff or a local authority representative) may attend at the discretion of the lead inspector, but attendees should be few in number to allow for a productive conversation in the time available. Leaders will attend the meeting to observe inspectors bringing the evidence together. On day 1, this will help leaders to decide what they want to draw inspectors' attention to, clarify any matters of fact and contribute to the construction of the day 2 timetable. On day 2, it will help leaders to understand the evidence on which the judgements are based. On inspections with a single inspector, the lead inspector will have a short discussion with the headteacher (and the CEO or their delegate, where applicable) at the end of each day to set out the emerging and final findings.

23. We will encourage maintained schools to invite any governor who is available and academies to invite any trustee who is available to meet inspectors during an inspection. These meetings may include a virtual option using video or telephone calls if necessary.

24. In academies, we expect to meet those directly responsible for management and governance, including the CEO or their delegate (or equivalent), the chair of the board of trustees (or their delegate) and other trustees. Inspectors will refer to the scheme of delegation and discuss this with the headteacher during their notification call, when deciding who may be the most appropriate individuals to speak to.

Evaluating the quality of education

25. We will judge schools that take radically different approaches to the curriculum fairly; inspectors will assess any school's curriculum favourably when leaders have built or adopted a curriculum with appropriate coverage, content, structure and sequencing and implemented it effectively.

26. We will not look unfavourably on schools that have adopted curriculum sequences created by others, for example commercial or local schemes. We will look at whatever curriculum the school is using. It is up to schools to determine their practices and it is up to leadership teams to justify these on their own merits rather than referring to this handbook.

27. We will not:

- grade individual lessons
- advocate a particular method of planning (including lesson planning), teaching or

assessment, or expect curriculum planning to be in any specific format

- require schools to provide individual lesson plans or previous lesson plans
- require schools to provide recordings of live lessons that are delivered remotely, unless they are normally stored for staff or pupils' future use
- require schools to carry out a specified amount of lesson observation
- take a random sample of exercise books/folders/sketchbooks/electronic files or evaluate individual workbooks or expect workbooks to be compiled solely to provide evidence for inspection
- use work scrutiny to evaluate teachers' marking
- specify the frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback
- require schools to ensure a particular frequency or quantity of work in pupils' books or folders
- require photographic evidence of pupils' work (although inspectors may ask to take photographs themselves of pupils' work, and will take all reasonable steps to anonymise these)

Staff information and professional development

28. The focus of these inspections is on schools and how all the individuals within them work together to make sure children receive the highest possible quality of education. The focus is not on inspecting the specific individuals that work in schools.

29. We will not provide schools with any information from any lesson visit with the intention that it be used in capability or disciplinary proceedings or for the purposes of performance management.

30. We will not routinely check personnel files, although inspectors may look at a small sample. They will also review the single central record for the school and at how the school undertakes necessary safeguarding checks.

31. We will not require schools to:

- provide evidence of the monitoring of teaching, teachers' professional development or application of the [teachers' standards](#), other than that which is already part of the school's normal activity
- provide evidence about each teacher from each of the bulleted sub-headings in the teachers' standards
- provide specific details of the pay grade of individual teachers who are observed during inspection

- provide anonymised lists of teachers meeting or not meeting performance thresholds for pay progression
- provide processes for the performance management arrangements for staff
- use the EIF to grade teaching or individual lessons
- include targets relating to the proportion of good or better teaching in the headteacher's objectives
- set teachers' performance targets based on commercially produced predictions of pupils' achievement, or any other data set, from which it would then hold teachers to account

Safeguarding and security

32. We expect schools to maintain, as they are required to by ['Keeping children safe in education: statutory guidance for schools and colleges'](#), a single central record of the safeguarding checks they carry out. The statutory guidance also requires trusts to record this information in a way that allows for details of each individual academy to be provided separately and without delay, even if it is held centrally.

33. We do not expect, and there is no requirement for, schools to apply retrospectively for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for existing staff who already have a criminal record check. However, there are limited circumstances where schools and colleges will need to carry out new checks on existing staff for example, when an individual working at the school or college moves from a post that was not regulated activity with children into work which is considered to be regulated activity with children; there has been a break in service of 12 weeks or more, or there are concerns about an individual's suitability to work with children.

34. We expect schools to meet the other requirements of Keeping children safe in education, but have no additional or separate expectations of schools with respect to:

- taking any specific steps with regard to site security; in particular, inspectors do not have a view about the need for perimeter fences or lockdown alarms
- using a digital platform to monitor pupils' internet use, and we do not specify how these platforms should operate

Part 1. How schools will be inspected

Basics of inspection

Timing of inspection

35. An inspection can take place at any point from 5 school days after the first day pupils attend in the autumn term. For example, if pupils return to school on a Wednesday, an inspection can take place as early as the following Wednesday.

36. Ofsted is required to inspect at prescribed intervals all schools to which [section 5](#) applies. The law usually requires the maximum interval for inspections to be no more than 5 school years from the end of the school year in which the last relevant inspection took place. However, if a school's most recent graded or ungraded inspection was before 4 May 2021, the legal maximum for that school will, instead, be up to 7 years.

37. In general, our policy is that a school judged outstanding or good will usually be inspected within the 4 academic years following its last inspection, and a school judged requires improvement or inadequate will usually be inspected within 2.5 years.

38. However, the picture is currently more complicated for several reasons (see our [blog on inspection timings](#) for more information). The sections below will give you an indication of when your next inspection is likely to be. You can click on these links to take you directly to that section:

- [schools with an outstanding grade that were previously exempt from routine inspection](#)
- [new schools and schools not yet inspected under their current URN \(not including previously exempt schools\)](#)
- [schools with a good or outstanding judgement AND an ungraded inspection which recommended a follow-up graded inspection](#)
- [other schools with a good or outstanding judgement](#)
- [schools with an requires improvement judgement](#)
- [schools with an inadequate judgement](#)

39. As has always been the case, the indications we give are only rough guides. We may inspect sooner if we need to (for example if we have concerns about a school). Further, if a school undergoes significant change, for example through merging with

another school, its next inspection may be later to give time for these changes to bed in. We do not confirm exactly when a school will be inspected before we notify it officially.

Schools with an outstanding grade that were previously exempt from routine inspection

40. Timing of the next inspection for schools that were previously exempt from routine inspection due to an outstanding grade will depend on when the inspection was that graded that school outstanding. In some cases, this may be the date its predecessor school was inspected.

Date of last inspection (or of predecessor's last inspection)	Likely date of next inspection	Type of next inspection
Before September 2011	Before January 2024	Graded
September 2011 to July 2013	Before January 2025	Graded
September 2013 to July 2015	Before September 2025	Graded
September 2015 to July 2016	Before January 2024	Ungraded
September 2016 to July 2018	Before January 2025	Ungraded
September 2018 to March 2020	By July 2025	Ungraded
Since April 2021	Please refer to tables below based on your most recent grade	n/a

Schools with a good or outstanding judgement who have had an ungraded inspection that recommended a follow-up graded inspection

41. If a school's most recent grade was good or outstanding but it has since had an ungraded inspection that recommended a follow-up graded inspection, the next inspection will be:

Date of ungraded inspection	Likely date of next inspection
Before September 2021	Before September 2023

After September 2021

Within 1 to 2 years of the ungraded inspection

Schools with a good or outstanding judgement

42. If a school's most recent grade was good or outstanding, and either:

- it hasn't since had an ungraded inspection
- or the last ungraded inspection did not recommend that the next inspection be graded

then the next inspection will be:

Date of last inspection	Likely date of next inspection
--------------------------------	---------------------------------------

Before September 2018	Before July 2024
-----------------------	------------------

Before April 2020	Before September 2025
-------------------	-----------------------

After April 2021	Around 4 years after your last inspection
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Schools with a requires improvement judgement

Date of last inspection	Likely date of next inspection
--------------------------------	---------------------------------------

Before January 2020	Before January 2024
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Before April 2020	Before January 2025
-------------------	---------------------

After April 2021	Within 2.5 years after your last inspection
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Schools with an inadequate judgement

Date of last inspection	Likely date of next inspection
--------------------------------	---------------------------------------

Before April 2020	Before July 2024
-------------------	------------------

After April 2020	Within 2.5 years after your last inspection
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43. This does not include schools that receive a new URN because they convert to an academy or move to a trust. We treat these as [new schools](#).

Graded and ungraded inspections

44. The EIF and this handbook set out the statutory basis for school inspections carried out under the Education Act 2005.

45. This section of the handbook applies to graded and ungraded inspections of schools in England under sections 5 and 8 of the Education Act 2005, respectively. The schools subject to inspection under this section of the Act are:

- maintained schools, including community, foundation and voluntary schools
- maintained special schools, including community and foundation special schools
- maintained nursery schools
- academies, including:
 - sponsor-led academies
 - academy converter schools
 - academy special schools
 - alternative provision academies
 - free schools
 - special free schools
 - university technical colleges (UTCs)
 - studio schools
 - city technology colleges
 - city technology colleges for the technology of the arts
- certain non-maintained special schools approved by the Secretary of State under section 342 of the Education Act 1996
- pupil referral units (PRUs)

46. This handbook does not apply to monitoring programmes or inspections. The policy for these inspection events can be found in our [monitoring handbook](#).

47. The [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) applies to 16 to 19 academies.

48. We identify a school by its unique reference number (URN). Any institution with

its own URN will be inspected in its own right. Schools that work in partnership with other schools, through federations, managed groups, chains or other collaborative activities, but that have a separate URN will be inspected as individual schools and separate inspection reports will be published. Schools that work on different sites, or that have different provisions, but share a single URN will be inspected as one body. We may, however, try to coordinate the inspection of certain groups of schools, where this is possible.

Graded inspections

49. All schools with a judgement of requires improvement or inadequate will receive a graded inspection, as will a selection of schools with an outstanding or good judgement (see [‘risk assessment’ section](#)). A graded inspection uses our full framework and grades the school against our key judgement (and any relevant provision judgement) grade descriptors, and for its overall effectiveness (see [part 3](#)).

Ungraded inspections

50. Some good and outstanding schools will receive a graded inspection, but many will receive an ungraded inspection instead. An ungraded inspection differs from a graded inspection because it does not result in individual graded judgements but focuses on determining whether the school remains the same grade as at the school’s previous graded inspection. It cannot change the overall effectiveness grade of the school. Very occasionally, an ungraded inspection can be ‘deemed’ to be a graded inspection under section 9 of the Education Act (see further details in the [‘ungraded inspection deemed to be a graded inspection’ section](#)). Where this is the case, inspectors will make the full set of graded judgements using the 4-point grading scale required for graded inspections.

51. Usually, an ungraded inspection will be followed by a further ungraded inspection after approximately a 4-year interval. However, if inspectors find evidence that a school may no longer be at the same grade for overall effectiveness, they will specify that the next inspection should be a graded inspection, with the full range of graded judgements available. This should take place within 1 to 2 years. The [‘outstanding schools that were formerly exempt from routine inspections’ section](#) sets out specific temporary rules about some outstanding schools.

52. As is the case for all schools, a good or outstanding school may still receive an urgent inspection (carried out under section 8) at any time in certain circumstances ([see part 4](#)). For example, we may decide that we should inspect a school earlier than its next scheduled inspection if:

- there are potential safeguarding issues and/or welfare concerns
- there is a potential decline in the standards of pupils' behaviour and/or the ability of staff to maintain discipline
- a subject or thematic survey inspection raises general concerns
- we have received a [qualifying complaint about the school](#) that, taken alongside other available evidence, suggests that it would be appropriate to do so
- concerns are raised about standards of leadership or governance
- concerns are identified about the breadth and balance of the curriculum (including whether the statutory requirement to publish information to parents is not met)
- HMCI or the Secretary of State have concerns about the school's performance
- the Secretary of State requests an inspection for any other reason

Schools requesting an inspection

53. The board of governors of a maintained school or the board of trustees of an academy are able to request an inspection of an individual school for which they are responsible. This will be a graded inspection. It will be the same as an inspection carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005, although it will technically be carried out under sections 8 and 9. If Ofsted carries out a requested inspection, HMCI may charge the appropriate authority for its cost.

New schools

54. We define a new school as a school with a new URN. The DfE provides all schools with a URN. If a school changes its status or undergoes significant change and receives a new URN, it becomes a new school for inspection purposes, except where that school was [previously exempt from inspection](#). If the school retains its URN following a change, it will be treated as the same school.

55. Academies account for most new schools. These include free schools, former maintained schools that have voluntarily converted to become academies (academy converters), and former maintained schools that were judged as inadequate by Ofsted and were directed by the Secretary of State to become academies and join a trust.

56. Judgements made about a predecessor school with a different URN are not judgements about the new school, even if the new school is, or seems to be, substantially the same provision. Inspectors may look at the performance of any predecessor school as part of pre-inspection planning. They can look at this data to consider whether the new academy has improved on, or declined from, its predecessor's performance and whether it has tackled any areas of weakness or

built on strengths from the predecessor school. However, inspectors will take care not to give undue weight to any progress or attainment compared with those of the predecessor. Inspectors will not take account of the predecessor's key judgements or areas for improvement when reaching their judgements about the new school. Inspectors will make clear to the new school the extent to which they have taken account of the performance data from its predecessor school(s) but judgements will be made about the current school only, not the predecessor.

57. The first inspection of a new school will normally take place as follows:

Date of school opening	Likely date of next inspection
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Before September 2020	By the end of your 5th academic year
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After September 2020	By the end of your 3rd academic year
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58. New academy converters whose predecessor schools were judged good or outstanding at their last graded inspection will normally receive an ungraded inspection as their first inspection instead of a graded inspection. However, these schools may receive a graded inspection if we deem it necessary.

59. We will normally carry out ungraded inspections of academy converters approximately every 4 years (although see [timing of inspection](#) above). This is in line with ungraded inspections of other good and outstanding schools. However, when carrying out the first ungraded inspection of a new academy, we will consider the inspection history of the predecessor school to decide the timing of the inspection.

60. For inspections of academy converters that were formerly exempt from routine inspection because their predecessor schools were judged outstanding, the decision on when the first inspection will take place is determined by the most recent inspection of the school's predecessor school(s). We will also use this to determine whether the first inspection will be a graded or ungraded inspection. Further details are set out in the ['outstanding schools that were formerly exempt from routine inspections' section](#).

61. There are some new academy converters whose predecessor school was judged good, with evidence that it may have improved to outstanding at its most recent ungraded inspection, or the lead inspector was not satisfied that the school would receive at least its current grade if a graded inspection was carried out at that time. In both these circumstances, we informed the predecessor schools that their next inspection would be a graded inspection. If that graded inspection did not

happen before the schools converted to academy status, the new academy converter will receive a graded inspection as its first inspection.

62. In both these circumstances, the graded inspection will normally take place:

- no later than the predecessor school would have received the graded inspection if it had not converted to an academy; but
- no earlier than 1 year after the new academy opens

63. The first graded inspection report of a new academy will state 'not previously inspected as an academy' (this will not apply if an existing academy is re-brokered and receives a new URN). The first graded inspection report of a converter academy will include, in the context section, a statement that follows the example below:

“ Piccadilly Gate Academy converted to become an academy on 1 September 2019. When its predecessor school, Piccadilly Gate Secondary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.”

Risk assessment

64. We use risk assessment to ensure that our approach to inspection is proportionate so that we can focus our efforts on where we can have the greatest impact. We use risk assessment, for example, to determine which good and outstanding schools will receive an ungraded inspection, and which will receive a graded inspection. Risk assessment is a desk-based review of relevant information pertaining to the school. The indicators that we analyse in our risk assessment are usually the most recent data available at that time.

65. We use a broad range of indicators to select schools for inspection. Therefore, receiving a graded inspection, rather than an ungraded inspection, does not mean that there are significant concerns about a school.

66. Our [risk assessment methodology](#) is updated and published yearly.

67. In a risk assessment, we analyse:

- data from the DfE (for example, progress, attainment, attendance and exclusion data)
- school workforce census data
- the views of parents and carers, including those shown by [Ofsted Parent View](#),

Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents

- qualifying [complaints](#) about the school referred to Ofsted
- pupil mobility (this measures the amount of pupils leaving the school before the normal leaving age, or joining after the normal joining age, for that school)
- the outcomes of any inspections that we have carried out since the last graded or ungraded inspection
- statutory warning notices
- any other significant concerns that are brought to our attention

Outstanding schools that were formerly exempt from routine inspections

68. Between 15 May 2012 and 13 November 2020, mainstream primary and secondary schools judged to be outstanding in their overall effectiveness at their most recent graded inspection were exempt from routine inspections. These schools are now once again [subject to routine inspections](#). This also applies to academy converter schools that were formerly exempt because the overall effectiveness of their predecessor school was outstanding at its most recent graded inspection.

69. All formerly exempt schools will receive an initial inspection by July 2025. However, for that inspection they will not be subject to the risk assessment process set out above. Those schools that last received a graded inspection before September 2015 will receive an initial graded inspection. Schools that last received a graded inspection after this date will normally receive an initial ungraded inspection. If that ungraded inspection indicates that outstanding performance may not have been maintained, we will normally carry out a graded inspection within the next 12 months or as soon as possible thereafter and, in any event, before 1 August 2026. Beyond these initial inspections, future inspections of these schools will take place as set out in the ['inspection timings'](#) section above.

Provision for 2- and 3-year-olds

70. Schools that take 2- and 3-year-olds as part of their early years provision may not need to register that provision with Ofsted. In these cases, we will inspect provision for 2- and 3-year-olds on both ungraded and graded inspections. On graded inspections, inspectors will ensure that the judgement on the effectiveness of early years provision includes an evaluation of the provision for 2- and 3-year-olds.

Inspectors will also note if any children receive additional funding.

71. Any care that a school provides for children in the early years age range, before and/or after the school day or during the school holidays, is considered as part of the evaluation of the school's early years provision.

Inspections of boarding and residential special schools

72. When a boarding or residential special school's graded or ungraded inspection is due in the same financial year as the full inspection of its boarding or residential provision, we will normally carry out an aligned inspection.

73. Aligned inspections are carried out by 2 separate inspection teams (education and social care). They result in 2 sets of graded judgements and 2 separate published reports. We will also publish on [our reports website](#) a summary letter using extracts from both reports.

74. Inspectors make the judgements for boarding or residential provision in accordance with the guidance and grade descriptors in the [social care common inspection framework \(SCCIF\): boarding schools and residential special schools](#). Inspectors carry out the inspection of the education provision under the EIF.

75. Education inspectors will consider the impact of the boarding/residential judgements on the overall effectiveness judgement for the whole school. They will take account of the proportion of boarders/residential pupils who also attend the school and the seriousness of any issues found.

76. In practice, inspectors from both teams will work closely together to plan the inspection activities. They will discuss their findings throughout the inspections. They will normally carry out meetings with key personnel, such as the designated safeguarding lead(s) and the governors/trustees, together. The 2 teams will share inspection evidence where it is appropriate to do so. Examples of when it is appropriate to share evidence include assessing pupils' attendance, the strengths of the links between the day school and the boarding or residential provision, and if concerns are raised with inspectors about the welfare of the children in the school and/or boarding or residential provision.

77. We will notify the provider of the aligned inspections at around 2pm on the day before both inspections are due to start. The lead education and social care

inspectors will then follow this notification call with separate calls to the headteacher and head of boarding, respectively. All education and social care teams will arrive and leave the school at the same time at the beginning and at the end of the inspection. Arrival and departure times throughout the inspection will differ according to the requirements of each remit's framework.

78. In instances when the boarding/residential inspection is aligned with an ungraded inspection and that inspection is deemed to be a graded inspection, the inspections will cease to be aligned at that point. They will continue as stand-alone events.

Inspections of schools that are registered as children's homes

79. A graded or ungraded inspection of the education in a school that is also registered as a children's home may take place as a stand-alone inspection of the education provision or at the same time as the full inspection of the children's home. This applies to residential special schools that offer residential provision for more than 295 days a year and must therefore be registered as a children's home.

80. When possible, we will attempt to carry out both inspections at the same time so that inspectors may work together and share evidence. In practice, inspectors from both teams will work closely together to plan inspection activities. They may carry out meetings with key personnel, such as the designated safeguarding lead(s) and the proprietor, together. The 2 teams will discuss their findings throughout the inspections and will share inspection evidence, where it is appropriate to do so. Examples of when it is appropriate to share evidence include assessing pupils' attendance, the strengths of the links between the day school and the children's home provision, and if concerns are raised with inspectors about the welfare of children in the day school and/or children's home.

81. When the education inspection of a school that is also registered as a children's home takes place as a standalone event, inspectors must read the most recent education and children's home reports on the preparation day. They must make themselves aware of any current issues concerning children's welfare that may affect aspects of the school inspection by contacting the lead social care regulatory inspector or that inspector's manager. Inspectors will ensure that they take these into consideration during the inspection.

Concurrent inspections

82. We may schedule inspections at the same time for 'linked provision', which is when one or more schools have arrangements to share important aspects of their provision, such as sixth-form programmes or an inclusion unit. Inspectors will make

sure that they communicate with each other before and during the inspections. They will also share evidence electronically where it is appropriate to do so. Inspectors can share:

- key lines of enquiry that emerge during planning, when the issues are likely to affect both/all of the schools
- findings with the inspectors in the other inspection team during the inspection

83. Inspectors will not rely solely on this shared evidence to make their judgements. Shared information must be followed up by inspectors' own evidence gathering.

Before the inspection

Notification and lead inspector's preparation

Notification

84. We will normally contact the school by telephone to announce a graded, ungraded or urgent inspection between 9.30am and 2pm on the school day before the inspection.

85. By exception, we reserve the right to carry out a graded, ungraded or urgent inspection without notice. Where this is the case, the lead inspector will normally telephone the school about 15 minutes before arriving on site.

86. If the headteacher is unavailable when the notification call is made, we will ask to speak to the most senior member of school staff available. Once we have informed the school by telephone that the inspection will take place, we will send confirmation to the school by email.

87. During the initial notification phone call, we will ask the school to confirm the information we hold about the provision. This will include the number of pupils on roll at the school, the governance arrangements for the school and whether the school has any pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), nursery provision for 2- and 3-year-olds or additional resource provision. We will also ask if any adult lives on the school premises. If adults do live on the premises, inspectors will consider the school's risk assessment in assessing the school's safeguarding.

Schools will be expected to demonstrate they have fully assessed any risks to children, including in their safeguarding check of residents, in their assessing of access between the residential accommodation and the rest of the premises, and in their consideration of other individuals (such as family members and visitors) that will access the residential accommodation. In academies, there should also be a discussion about who (in the trust and in the school) has responsibility for key decisions like behaviour policy and curriculum content.

88. We will then send the school a letter setting out key information for leaders to be aware of before the inspection. This will include:

- Ofsted's privacy notice
- informing the school that inspectors will use a range of technology to gather evidence electronically
- informing the school that inspectors may ask to take photographic evidence, for example of pupils' work and displays, but that inspectors will not take photographs of pupils
- [information that the school will need to make available to inspectors at the start of the inspection](#)
- the links to pupil and staff questionnaires, so they can be shared

Requests for deferral or cancellation

89. While it is important that we carry out our planned inspections wherever possible, sometimes there may be reasons that a planned inspection may not go ahead and so a school may request a deferral of an inspection. A school may make a request during the initial notification phone call, or at the earliest opportunity afterwards, before the start of the inspection. Inspections may also, exceptionally, need to be paused once inspectors have arrived on site (see the '[pausing school inspection](#)' section). We will not normally consider requests for deferral if we receive them after 4.30pm on the day the school is notified. The inspection support administrator or lead inspector must immediately contact the regional duty desk. We will decide whether to grant a deferral in accordance with our [deferral policy](#).

90. Normally, if the school is providing education to pupils, an inspection will go ahead. In exceptional circumstances, however, an inspection might be cancelled or deferred after the school has been notified, following a request made by the school. We will aim to let the school know whether a request is granted on the same day it is made, but in some cases, particularly when the request for deferral comes later, this may happen by 8am the next morning.

91. If a school is within 6 months of confirmed closure, and this is evidenced in a funding agreement, for example, but the school does not request a cancellation when notified of an inspection, the lead inspector will call the regional duty desk to highlight this and get advice about whether the inspection should still be carried out. Decisions will be made case by case.

92. In the case of an inspection without notice, any requests for a deferral will be passed to Ofsted's relevant regional director, who will decide whether the request can be granted.

Preparatory telephone call(s) from the lead inspector to the headteacher

93. Once we have informed the school of the inspection, the lead inspector will contact the school by telephone or video and ask to speak to the headteacher. This is an opportunity for the headteacher to provide a fuller context of the school that may not be expressed sufficiently through data alone. It is also an opportunity for the headteacher to discuss the particular circumstances of the school that have had a role in the decisions made by leaders. Inspectors' preparatory telephone conversations with headteachers have 2 elements:

- a short inspection-planning conversation that focuses on practical and logistical arrangements
- a longer, reflective, educationally focused conversation about the school's progress since the last inspection, including how COVID-19 has affected this

94. The lead inspector will encourage the headteacher to have at least one other senior leader present during both calls, to assist and support them. This will usually be colleagues who typically deputise for them (or a member of trust staff) and who can understand and discuss the educational content of the calls.

95. We understand that there is a great deal of information to be discussed at this stage of the inspection. For this reason it may be helpful to discuss these elements in 2 or more separate conversations with a break in between. The lead inspector will discuss what will work best for the headteacher.

Inspection planning conversation

96. This conversation will be short and focused on practical issues. The lead inspector will:

- check on the headteacher's well-being, and find out whether any steps need to be taken to ensure any issues or concerns are addressed, including that appropriate support is available. The lead inspector should ascertain how to contact whoever is responsible for the headteacher's well-being on a day-to-day basis (normally the local authority or trust), so that they can pass on well-being concerns when appropriate and necessary
- make the school aware of its statutory duty to inform parents of the inspection and that the Ofsted Parent View tool is the main method for gathering the views of parents at the point of inspection; inspectors will remind the school that Ofsted's letter to parents containing the link to Ofsted Parent View may be sent electronically, or a paper copy may be given to pupils to take home
- check that the school has received the links to staff and pupil surveys in the notification letter
- confirm whether the school has a religious character
- establish whether the school is part of any wider federation or partnership arrangement
- discuss the nature of any [specially resourced provision](#) or designated unit for pupils with SEND or other pupils, if applicable, including:
 - the number of pupils who have been placed in provision funded from a resource base, and the range of these pupils' needs
 - pupils' timetables, including when they are taught in mainstream classes (with and without support) and when they receive specialist support in a separate resource base
 - the type(s) of language and/or communication systems used; if the specialist provision is for deaf pupils, it is important to establish whether it uses British Sign Language and whether the school will provide a British Sign Language interpreter when inspectors meet with the pupils. If the school is not providing an interpreter but one is needed, the lead inspector will contact the regional duty desk as soon as possible
 - staffing arrangements and details of any outreach services provided by the resource base
- establish whether the school provides any other alternative or specially resourced provision/designated units for particular pupils
- discuss any nursery provision (see the ['provision for 2- and 3-year-olds' section](#)), before- and/or after-school care and holiday clubs led and managed directly by the school, particularly if these take [2- to 8-year-olds](#) (if the school offers before and/or after-school care for its own pupils, inspectors will consider this provision as part of the school inspection)
- establish whether the school is linked to a children's home, and if so whether the

children's home is managed by the school

- clarify whether the school has boarding or residential provision, and if so the:
 - number of boarding houses or residential units and their addresses
 - number of boarders or residential pupils on roll
- establish whether the school has any pupils who attend off-site alternative provision, either full time or part time, run either by the school or by a different organisation; if the school uses off-site alternative provision, the lead inspector will ask for further details about this, including:
 - the number of pupils who attend
 - the number of off-site alternative providers used currently
 - the URNs and addresses of the alternative providers
 - the names and addresses of the alternative providers (if there is no URN for one or more alternative providers)
 - the range of needs that these providers cater for
 - the timetables for the pupils who attend
- arrange to visit a sample of off-site alternative providers during the inspection. Inspectors will normally visit a sample of any part-time unregistered alternative providers during the inspection, as directed by the relevant Ofsted region. Any registered alternative provision that we have not yet inspected will normally be visited during the inspection (see [‘Evaluating schools’ use of alternative provision on graded inspections’](#))
- establish which approach to the early career framework the school is using for early career teachers (ECTs)
- ask the headteacher if the school is experiencing, or has recently experienced, any tensions in or pressures from the community. If it has, the inspector will ask for details, including what the headteacher/school has done in response
- invite the headteacher and other leaders, as agreed by the lead inspector and headteacher, to take part in joint visits to lessons
- make arrangements for meetings with relevant staff (and any person that the staff member wishes to be present for those meetings)
- agree whether it may be pragmatic to do some elements of the inspection through video or telephone calls. This will usually only be to involve parents and those with leadership, trust or governance responsibility who are unable to attend
- ask the headteacher to read Ofsted's [code of conduct](#), which sets out expectations for both inspectors and providers, and explain that if the headteacher has any concerns about inspectors not acting in accordance with the code of conduct, they should raise this as soon as possible with the lead inspector. This is so that any issues can be resolved before the inspection is completed

- provide an opportunity for the school to give us information about any other factors they consider relevant to their current context, and ask any questions or to raise any concerns, such as perceived conflicts of interest
- give the school an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns, or to seek clarification before the inspection, and explain how the school will be able to raise any matters during the inspection itself

97. To help leaders understand how the inspection is progressing and to maintain constructive professional dialogue, the lead inspector will use this call to invite the headteacher, and at least one other member of staff, to observe the inspection team meetings at the end of each day. The lead inspector will make it clear that attendance at the meeting is optional and that the headteacher may leave at any point if they wish. The lead inspector will also explain to leaders that, on day 1, the aim is to help them identify what other evidence they want to draw inspectors' attention to, provide clarification on any matters of fact and contribute to the construction of the day 2 timetable. On day 2, the meeting will help leaders to understand the evidence on which judgements are based.

98. The lead inspector will also ask the school to provide certain information as early as possible to aid preparation. This will include:

- a copy of the school's timetable(s), where relevant
- details of any relevant staff absence
- any requests to not visit any specific lesson or lessons (for example, if a teacher is subject to capability procedures)

99. It is important that inspectors speak to leaders and governors/trustees during inspections. There are a wide variety of leadership and governance models in the school sector, so it is essential that inspectors establish who is responsible for what.

100. In a maintained school, the lead inspector will:

- establish the governance structure of the school and confirm arrangements for meetings with the school, the board of governors and anyone else the lead inspector thinks would be relevant
- make arrangements for, as a minimum, a meeting with the chair of the board of governors and as many governors as are available
- ask the school to invite as many governors as are available to attend the final feedback meeting
- request either a face-to-face meeting or a telephone call with a representative from the local authority, diocese or other relevant responsible body

- request that a representative from the local authority, diocese or other relevant responsible body is present at the final inspection feedback meeting
- invite the school to consider if there are any reasons, of either a personal or professional nature, that may mean they wish to ask for a deferral.

101. In an academy, the lead inspector will:

- establish the governance structure of the academy and of the trust
- consult the academy and trust in order to determine the different levels of responsibility and oversight within the trust and so who they need to meet from the trust
- if the trust has delegated responsibilities to local committees (known as local governing bodies in trusts' articles of association), clarify where responsibility lies and who they should talk to during the inspection. This should be set out in a scheme of delegation. Academies should also set out their governance structure in their annual financial statements, which can generally be found on the DfE performance tables site
- confirm arrangements for a meeting with leaders (in both the academy and the trust) that will include the CEO and anyone else agreed between the headteacher, CEO and lead inspector (see [‘approach to the trust in school inspections’](#) section below)
- make arrangements for one meeting, as a minimum, with the chair of the board of trustees (or their delegate) and as many trustees as are available. Inspectors will also ask the school to invite as many trustees as are available to attend the final feedback meeting
- request either a face-to-face meeting or a telephone call with a representative from the diocese, sponsor or other relevant responsible body
- request that a representative from the diocese, sponsor or other relevant responsible body attends the final inspection feedback meeting
- invite the school to consider if there are any reasons, of either a personal or professional nature, that may mean they wish to ask for a deferral.

102. If any issues arise, the lead inspector may also need further clarification from the school, for example when information is not available on the school's website.

Preparation carried out by the lead inspector

103. To prepare for the educationally focused conversation, and the inspection as a whole, inspectors will review and consider:

- all relevant information held by Ofsted, including:

- inspection reports on the school, including the section 48 report for schools with a designated religious character
- any surveys or monitoring letters
- where relevant, the multi-academy trust summary evaluation (MATSE) report
- Ofsted's [inspection data summary report \(IDSR\)](#)
- responses from [Ofsted's Parent View](#)
- any complaints made about the school to Ofsted
- other information on Ofsted's provider information portal, which provides a high-level view of information about providers that we inspect and regulate, including any [warning notices](#)
- relevant publicly available information, such as the [school's website](#) and the [trust's website](#), including:
 - a statement of the school's values and ethos
 - the school's opening hours
- information about the curriculum
- information about the use of tutoring in the school
- information on the careers programme for pupils in Years 7 to 13
 - policies (for example on safeguarding, behaviour, and relationships, sex and health education)
 - use of funding (for example, pupil premium and catch-up funding)
 - information about SEND provision (for example, SEND information report and accessibility plan)
 - information schools are required to publish related to Equality Act 2010 duties
 - information about governance
 - for an academy, the trust's scheme of delegation
- any other information about the school (including safeguarding) that is publicly available, including information reported in the press or online
- the most recent [inspection report on the relevant local authority's children's services](#)
- the main findings from the relevant [local area SEND inspection](#), including (where relevant) arrangements for identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of young children with SEND
- information published by local authorities, the DfE (including the Education and Skills Funding Agency and regional school commissioners) and the police

The educationally focused conversation

104. The educationally focused conversation will normally last around 90 minutes, but may be longer. It will help the lead inspector and headteacher to establish a constructive professional relationship for the inspection and give them a shared understanding of the starting point of the inspection. It will also help inspectors to form an initial understanding of leaders' views of the school and its progress since the previous inspection.

105. This conversation will be used to agree the day 1 inspection plan with the headteacher.

106. We encourage headteachers to have at least one other senior leader present during this call, to assist and support them. This will usually be staff who typically deputise for them (or a member of trust staff) and who can understand and discuss the educational content of the calls. They may also wish to have someone present to take notes.

107. Inspectors will use this conversation to understand:

- the school's context, and the progress it has made since the previous inspection, including any specific progress made on areas for improvement identified at previous inspections that remain relevant under the current inspection framework
- the specific impact of COVID-19 on the school and how leaders are responding to the ongoing impact. We recognise that responding to COVID-19 has placed great demands on leaders and detailed discussions of this may be required to understand the school's context
- the headteacher's assessment of the school's current strengths and weaknesses, particularly in relation to: the curriculum, the way teaching supports pupils to learn the curriculum, the standards that pupils achieve, pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and the personal development of pupils
- Where the school is an academy, the role of trust leaders, including which decisions are made centrally by them, and which are delegated to the headteacher and/or other school leaders (see ['approach to the trust in school inspections'](#) section below).
- the specific areas or subjects of the school curriculum that should be focused on during inspection – during this call, inspectors will also agree with the head which subjects will receive a deep dive during the inspection

SEND resource bases

108. If the school has a SEND resource base delegated to it by the local authority, that resource base must be inspected as part of the school inspection. Inspectors

will consider evidence about the resource base when making judgements about the school overall.

Information that schools must provide by 8am on the day of inspection

109. We will send the school a letter setting out that the following information must be made available to inspectors by 8am the next day, at the formal start of the inspection:

- strategic documents about the school, including:
 - anything that sets out school improvement planning or the longer-term vision for the school, such as the school or the trust's strategy
 - for maintained schools, minutes of governors' meetings and other relevant strategic documentation about governance that the school may have
 - for academies, minutes of board of trustees' meetings and other relevant strategic documentation about the trust that the school may have
 - a summary of any school self-evaluation or equivalent
 - any reports from any external evaluation of the school
- records and information about behaviour and attendance, including:
 - up-to-date attendance analysis for all groups of pupils
 - records and analysis of pupils taken off roll
 - records and analysis of exclusions and suspensions, incidents of poor behaviour and any use of internal isolation
 - records and analysis of bullying, discriminatory and prejudiced behaviour, either directly or indirectly, including racist, sexist, disability and homophobic/biphobic/transphobic bullying, use of derogatory language and racist incidents
 - records and analysis of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence
 - records and analysis of any restrictive physical intervention
- operational documents, including:
 - access to wifi, if it exists, so that inspectors can connect to the internet
 - maps and other practical information
 - the school timetable, current staff list (indicating [ECTs](#), mentors and induction tutors) and times for the school day, including any planned interruptions to normal school routines during the inspection and whether any teachers should

not be visited for any reason

Safeguarding information

110. On arrival at the school, inspectors must have secure access to safeguarding information, including:

- the single central record for the school
- a list of any referrals made to the designated safeguarding lead in the school and those that were subsequently referred to the local authority, along with brief details of the resolution (a very short summary of how the school dealt with the matter and assurance that pupils have received the appropriate help)
- any referrals made to the local authority designated officer regarding staff or other adults
- a list of all pupils who have open cases with children's services or social care and all pupils who have a multi-agency plan. This is to ensure that the school knows who these pupils are, and meets the pupils' requirements in respect of their open cases or multi-agency plans. Inspectors may select some children to sample to ensure the school is doing what is required by ['Keeping children safe in education: statutory guidance for schools and colleges'](#).

111. Schools and inspectors must ensure that all actions are compliant with legal requirements on information-handling.

Seeking the views of parents, staff and pupils

Seeking the views of parents

112. We will provide schools with a letter to pass on to parents that formally notifies them of a graded or ungraded inspection. This letter explains how to use Ofsted Parent View and how parents can contact inspectors. Schools should encourage parents to complete the [Ofsted Parent View questionnaire](#) by placing a link to it on their website. In addition, inspectors will encourage the school to notify parents using its own electronic systems (such as text messages), if these are available.

113. Schools will be expected to provide these details to parents on both graded and ungraded inspections. However, schools should note that, for graded inspections, they are [required by law to take any reasonably practicable steps to notify the parents of registered pupils at the school](#), including the parents of those

who have been suspended, attend alternative provision or are away from school. Schools are also [required by law to notify relevant bodies](#), including providers of alternative provision. Similarly, inspectors have a statutory duty to have regard to the views of parents and other relevant persons on graded inspections.

114. Inspectors will review the evidence from Ofsted Parent View throughout the inspection to ensure that all online responses received during the inspection are taken into account. If the response rate for Ofsted Parent View is low, inspectors may take steps during the inspection to gather further evidence of parents' views. Inspectors will do this on both graded and ungraded inspections, but it should be noted that inspectors have a specific [statutory duty](#) to have regard of the views of parents and other relevant persons on a graded inspection.

115. Inspectors will also take into account any other evidence from parents, including the results of any past surveys the school has carried out or commissioned. If individual parents raise serious issues, inspectors will follow these up with the school and record its response.

116. During aligned inspections of boarding or residential special schools, inspectors will take account of the views that parents have given on Ofsted Parent View about the school's boarding or residential provision. They will also take account of the views of children and young people who are boarders or residential pupils, and those of boarding staff, which will have been gathered through [Ofsted's annual point-in-time surveys](#).

Meetings with staff, pupils and parents

117. During the inspection, inspectors will need to speak to staff in a range of different roles. They will do so in line with our code of conduct, and at all times act with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect.

118. Staff (including leaders at all levels) may always be accompanied by another appropriate person when speaking to inspectors. However, it is important that staff are able to express their views freely to inspectors.

119. Inspectors should take careful account of the well-being of leaders and staff and adjust their approach or activity, as appropriate, as they go about their inspection work in the best interests of pupils. If inspectors see or suspect that a staff member (including all leaders and the headteacher) is upset or distressed at any point during the inspection, inspectors should respond sensitively. Where appropriate, inspectors will consider suitable adjustments to enable the staff member to continue. Where appropriate, inspectors will inform those responsible for the person's well-

being. The lead inspector should contact the duty desk to discuss what action to take.

120. In exceptional circumstances, inspectors may need to consider [pausing the inspection](#).

121. Meetings with pupils or parents must take place without the presence of any leaders or staff, unless there are relevant exceptional circumstances.

Pupil and staff questionnaires

122. The views of pupils and staff in schools are gathered through online questionnaires. The inspection support administrator sends online links to the school with the formal notification of inspection. The school is asked to encourage staff and pupils to complete the online questionnaires, except for those pupils in any boarding provision whose views will have already been sought through the point-in-time survey. Pupils and staff should complete their questionnaires by 3pm on the first day of the inspection. For ungraded inspections of schools with fewer than 150 pupils (which take place over 1 day), questionnaires should be completed by 11am on the day of inspection.

123. Inspectors may also gather evidence from pupils, parents or other stakeholders in person. This may include informal meetings at the start and/or end of the day. In drawing on evidence from these meetings, every attempt must be made to protect the identity of individuals. There may be circumstances, however, in which it is not possible to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewee. Inspectors have a duty to pass on disclosures that raise child protection or safeguarding issues and/or when there are concerns about serious misconduct, bullying of staff or criminal activity.

The inspection

Timetable of inspection

124. Graded and ungraded inspections normally last 2 days. However, an ungraded inspection of a primary school or maintained nursery school with fewer than 150 pupils or children on its roll will normally last for 1 day. The size of the inspection

team will vary according to the size and nature of the school. Inspection activity will take place over both days of the inspection.

125. On each day of the inspection, inspectors will not arrive before 8am and will leave by 6pm except in exceptional circumstances (although they may need to stay later for inspections in boarding and residential schools).

126. On aligned inspections of boarding and residential special schools, the social care regulatory inspectors may stay into the evening to ensure that they are able to meet boarding or residential pupils and see the boarding or residential provision operating. How long they stay will depend on their lines of enquiry.

Pausing inspections

127. There may be exceptional occasions when a pause to inspection needs to be considered. We will consider these on a case-by-case basis according to our published guidance on [pausing school inspections](#). This policy sets out in detail how to request a pause in inspection, the importance of leader and staff welfare, the role of the responsible body, and how leaders, responsible bodies and others can contact a senior leader in Ofsted directly if they have issues they do not feel they can raise directly with the lead inspector.

Inspection methodology

128. Our framework puts a series of joined-up professional conversations about education at the heart of inspection. It uses a 3-part methodology to inspect schools on graded and ungraded inspections. Through this methodology, inspectors build a view of the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management:

- from their pre-inspection preparation and the educationally focused conversation with the headteacher, the lead inspector will form a top-level view – an initial understanding of the curriculum, the way teaching supports pupils to learn the curriculum, the standards pupils achieve, pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and the personal development of pupils
- inspectors will then collect and connect evidence for each of the judgement areas throughout the on-site part of the inspection

- towards the end of each day, inspectors will bring all the evidence together to draw the conclusions that will inform further inspection activity and/or inform their final judgements

129. Inspectors' priority during inspections is to collect first-hand evidence.

Approach to the trust in school inspections

130. Inspectors will recognise that trusts are a single legal entity and that decisions made by individual academies and those by trust leaders cannot easily be separated, although inspectors must focus on decisions that impact only the specific academy they are inspecting. Inspectors will ensure that, through conversation with leaders (in the school and the trust), they identify the correct leaders, in the individual academy and the wider trust, to meet with during the course of the inspection. They will also recognise that trusts retain overall legal responsibility for all matters in the school, even where matters are delegated.

131. Inspectors will recognise that the trust leaders they need to speak to may be those who have delegated responsibility and that, where trusts are large, for example, this may be more than 1 person. Inspectors will not limit attendance at meetings or on inspection activities but will use their professional judgement to ensure that the right individuals are present and makes the most effective and efficient use of time.

132. Inspectors will, as a minimum, want to meet the CEO if possible but will recognise that (especially in large trusts) CEOs may need other senior trust leaders present to support these meetings. However, inspectors will want to understand how all leaders ensure that delegated responsibilities are carried out effectively, including how leaders assure themselves that systems are working as intended.

Keeping leaders informed

133. At the heart of our inspections is a professional dialogue between inspectors and leaders and so the lead inspector will agree a process for keeping leaders informed of progress throughout the inspection. This will normally mean regular meetings with the headteacher and/or any other previously agreed school leader(s) (at a minimum, at the start, middle and end of each day) to:

- provide updates on emerging issues, including initial general findings about the quality of education, and to enable further evidence to be provided
- allow the headteacher to raise any issues or concerns, or to seek clarification, including related to the conduct of the inspection or of individual inspectors

- alert the headteacher to any serious concerns
- inform the headteacher if, by the end of day 1 or during day 2, there is emerging evidence that the school might be judged as requires improvement or inadequate. The lead inspector must emphasise that final judgements are not made until the final team meeting at the end of day 2

Early career teachers

134. Inspectors will meet ECTs where possible and may wish to visit ECTs' lessons. When the lead inspector requests a copy of the current staff list, they must ask whether it includes any ECTs and/or any trainees on placement, including those on School Direct or School Direct (salaried) training routes or post-graduate teaching apprenticeships (PGTA).

135. Inspectors will take into account the fact that ECTs have less experience than other teachers. However, they must assess the effectiveness of the [support and professional development put in place for ECTs](#) to ensure that ECTs have the knowledge and skills necessary to teach in their chosen subject or phase.

136. Inspectors should also gather ECTs' views on how the school is supporting their development, including the quality of mentoring and how the school ensures that they access their entitlement to training under the ECF. Inspectors will also discuss how the school supports ECTs in managing pupils' behaviour.

137. Inspectors will meet with mentors and, where possible, the induction tutor. Inspectors will meet any trainees employed by the school on the School Direct (salaried) route or PGTA route to assess their support, mentoring and induction.

138. Inspectors will not visit lessons taught by trainees. The [teachers' standards](#) state that providers will assess trainees against the standards in a way that is consistent with what could reasonably be expected of a trainee teacher before the awarding of qualified teacher status (QTS). Inspectors will not take trainees' performance into account when assessing the quality of education.

Meeting governors/trustees

139. Inspectors will want to meet those responsible for governance during the inspection. In a maintained school, this will usually be the school governors. In an academy, this will be the board of trustees.

140. In a school that is part of a trust, the board of trustees is the accountable entity and governance body. Often, local governing bodies can appear responsible for governance, when in reality it is trustees who are accountable for the academy trust.

Local governing bodies are committees to which trustees may choose to delegate some specific responsibilities, but in some cases, they may act purely as advisory bodies and engage with the community. Their responsibilities are set out in the trust's scheme of delegation. Sometimes, their powers are delegated from trust leaders; if this is the case, they are part of the school's management, not its governance. Inspectors will therefore need to be careful to establish who has overall responsibility for governance. Inspectors will also ensure that meetings are with those who are directly responsible for exercising governance of the school and for overseeing its performance.

141. Inspectors will take account of the specific context of the school in deciding who to speak to. For example, this may include inviting diocesan representatives for a multi-academy company.

142. The role that governors and trustees play in the school's performance is evaluated as part of the judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management.

143. As with meetings with pupils and parents, meetings or telephone discussions with those responsible for governance should take place without leaders being present (except where leaders are also trustees), unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been discussed with the lead inspector.

Other evidence

144. Inspectors will also scrutinise a range of school records, documentation and information relating to, for example, pupils' behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

145. We may use the evidence that inspectors gather during inspections to inform other work, such as national reporting, for example our [education recovery series](#).

Inspection of religious education and collective worship

146. The Secretary of State [designates certain schools as having a religious character](#). In a faith school, pupils are educated in the context of the principle of a religion. It is normal for there to be a formal link with a religious organisation. In schools without a religious character, we inspect religious education (RE) and collective worship as part of our graded inspections. This is different in schools with a religious character. In most of these schools, denominational education and collective worship are inspected by a body [appointed by the maintained school's](#)

[board of governors under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 or as provided in the academy's funding agreement](#). In a voluntary controlled school designated as having a religious character, we inspect RE, but not collective worship.

147. Inspectors may gather evidence from anywhere relevant (including RE lessons and assemblies) to evaluate pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, personal development and/or behaviour and attitudes.

148. The fact that the school has been designated as having a religious character must be referenced in the 'information about this school' section of the inspection report.

149. [Section 48 inspections](#) (or the equivalent inspection of an academy) are usually carried out every 3 to 5 years (and usually within 2 to 3 years of a new voluntary-aided school or academy or free school opening). Section 48 inspections were suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic and restarted in September 2021. The first inspection will be within 8 years of the last, rather than the usual 3 to 5 years. The lead inspector on a graded inspection will check the section 48 arrangements. This includes when the next inspection is due and when the last inspection was. They will write about this in the inspection report. They will ensure that the required consultation has taken place with the prescribed faith body, when a school has a prescribed faith body and decides not to use that body's inspection service but to appoint its own inspector.

150. Inspectors will familiarise themselves with any issues raised in any section 48 inspection (or equivalent) held since the last Ofsted inspection. Inspectors will not, however, use that evidence in an Ofsted inspection. The lead inspector will note in the inspection report if the section 48 inspection (or equivalent inspection of an academy) is overdue and that, therefore, the school is failing in its statutory duty.

151. If a section 48 inspection (or equivalent inspection of an academy) happens at the same time as an Ofsted graded inspection, inspectors will mention this in the 'information about this school' section.

Specific matters for graded inspections

Inspection of the school's approach to harmful sexual behaviour

152. On graded inspections, we will look at how leaders ensure that their school's culture addresses harmful sexual behaviour. Inspectors will expect schools to

assume that sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence are happening in the community, and potentially in the school, even when there are no specific reports, and put in place a whole-school approach to address them.

153. Schools should have appropriate and well-communicated school-wide policies in place that make it clear that sexual harassment (including sexual harassment through sexualised language), online sexual abuse and sexual violence are unacceptable. Those policies should be consistently reflected throughout the school (see paragraphs [302](#), [327](#), and [390 to 391](#)).

Specific matters for ungraded inspections

154. On ungraded inspections, inspectors will normally adopt the same methodology for inspecting the quality of education and safeguarding as that used on a graded inspection outlined in the [‘quality of education’ section](#) and [‘safeguarding’ section](#).

155. They will also focus on a number of other areas within the graded inspection framework, as set out below.

- Attendance – inspectors will consider whether the school is doing all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance
- Behaviour – inspectors will not make a judgement on all the criteria contained in the ‘behaviour and attitudes’ judgement. Nevertheless, they will consider 2 key factors:
 - whether the school has high expectations for pupils’ behaviour and conduct and applies these expectations consistently and fairly. Inspectors will also consider whether this is reflected in pupils’ positive behaviour and conduct. They will consider whether staff make sure that pupils follow appropriate routines, whether low-level disruption is not tolerated and whether pupils’ behaviour does not disrupt lessons or the day-to-day life of the school
 - whether leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. If bullying, aggression, discrimination and derogatory language occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively and are not allowed to spread
- Gaming and off-rolling – when carrying out inspection activities, inspectors will be particularly alert to any evidence that suggests that the school may be gaming or off-rolling. Definitions of these can be found in the [‘evaluating gaming on a graded inspection’](#) and [‘evaluating a school’s approach to inclusion and off-rolling on a graded inspection’](#) sections.

- Pupils' wider development – inspectors will consider:
 - the extent to which the curriculum goes beyond the academic, vocational or technical
 - whether the school provides effectively for pupils' broader development
 - whether the school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high quality
 - secondary schools' approach to careers information, education, advice and guidance (CIEAG). Definitions of this can be found in the ['careers provision' section](#). If a school is not meeting its requirements in respect of CIEAG, inspectors will state this in the inspection report
- Workload – inspectors will consider the extent to which:
 - leaders engage with staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them, engaging with them realistically and constructively
 - staff are free from bullying and harassment
 - leaders and staff understand the limitations of assessment and use it in a way that will avoid creating an unnecessary burden. Inspectors understand that assessment arrangements may have been altered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Inspectors will seek to understand how staff are supported and the steps that are being taken to remove the risk of additional workload

156. Where the lead inspector has concerns about any of the above, this could be evidence that the school would no longer receive at least its current grade if a graded inspection were to be carried out, and, where those concerns are serious, could suggest that the inspection needs to be deemed a graded inspection.

Providing feedback

157. At the end of the final day of the inspection, inspectors will make an overall evaluation of the evidence and make their final judgements. They will record the main points for feedback to the school in the evidence base. The on-site inspection ends with a final feedback meeting with the school. Those connected with the school who may attend include:

- the headteacher and, for an academy, the CEO (or equivalent or delegate)
- any person the headteacher or CEO wants present to assist and support them
- for maintained schools, the chair of the school's board of governors and as many governors as are available; the clerk to governors (or equivalent), or their

delegate, may also attend to take notes (there can be more than one note-taker if desired)

- for academies, the chair of the board of trustees, or their delegate, and as many trustees as are available; the clerk to the board, or their delegate, may also attend to take notes (there can be more than one note-taker if desired)
- a representative from the local authority (always for maintained schools and additionally for academies where safeguarding is found to be ineffective)
- a representative from the sponsor and/or the designated responsible body, diocese or other responsible body
- in an aligned inspection, social care regulatory inspectors and education inspectors, who will provide feedback to education and residential staff

158. Due to the diverse nature of school governance, in some schools a single individual may have more than one of the above roles.

159. The lead inspector may agree that other leaders can attend. If the feedback is likely to be challenging or is likely to raise difficult issues, the lead inspector will be sensitive to any implications arising from this feedback and will, therefore, discuss with the headteacher which other people may attend to ensure the necessary support for school leaders.

160. Attendance at the feedback meeting is voluntary and any attendee may leave at any time, including leaving for a short time and then returning.

161. During this meeting, the lead inspector will ensure that the headteacher, the CEO, governors, trustees and all other attendees are clear:

- about the key findings from the inspection. The lead inspector must give sufficient detail to enable all attendees to understand how judgements have been reached and for governors/trustees to play a part in beginning to plan how to improve
- for graded inspections, about the provisional grades awarded for each key judgement and for overall effectiveness. They will also ensure that schools understand that the grades are provisional and so may be subject to change as a result of quality assurance procedures or moderation. We expect leaders to share the inspection outcome and findings with whoever they deem appropriate. They should be shared with governors/trustees, irrespective of whether they attended the meeting (and irrespective of what other role they may hold (for example, a teacher governor). Leaders may also share inspection outcomes, in confidence, with others who are not involved with the school. This may include leaders' colleagues, family members, medical advisers and/or their wider support group. However, the information should not be made public or shared with parents

- that the main findings of the inspection and the main points provided orally in the feedback, subject to any change, will be referred to in the text of the report, although the text of the report may differ slightly from the oral feedback
- about what the school needs to improve: this will appear in the inspection report as ‘What does the school need to do to improve?’
- that, on receiving the draft report, they should ensure that the report is not published until the school receives a copy of the final inspection report
- that the headteacher is invited and encouraged to complete the post-inspection survey
- about the implications of the school being placed in a category of concern if the school is judged to be inadequate, using the wording set out in the [‘schools causing concern’ section](#).
- where a school is judged to have serious weaknesses solely due to safeguarding, that we will return within 3 months of the publication of the graded inspection report for an early monitoring inspection (see our [monitoring handbook](#) for more details).
- where a school requires special measures, whether it may appoint ECTs (or in the case of an academy, a recommendation on whether the academy should appoint ECTs)
- that, in addition to being able to raise concerns at any stage during the inspection, the school has an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns, or to seek clarification about the inspection at this stage, and can contact Ofsted on the working day after the end of inspection, if necessary
- about the procedure for making a complaint about the inspection

Procedures when judging a school as inadequate on a graded inspection

162. If, by the end of the first day of the inspection or during day 2, before the final feedback meeting the lead inspector thinks it is possible that the school’s overall effectiveness is inadequate and that it might be judged to have serious weaknesses or to require special measures, they must make the school’s leadership aware of this. (see the [‘keeping leaders informed’](#)) section. The lead inspector must also ring Ofsted’s duty desk.

163. The lead inspector will be asked for their name and the name and URN of the school. They will then be put through to one of the HMI on duty. In this call, the lead

inspector must talk through the evidence used by inspector(s) in reaching an emerging provisional judgement of inadequate. The overall effectiveness judgement is not confirmed at this point. The lead inspector must record the main points of the conversation in the evidence base.

164. During the second day of the inspection, the lead inspector may contact the duty desk again to discuss emerging findings. If the inspection team has made the provisional judgement that the school is inadequate and has serious weaknesses or requires special measures, the lead inspector must telephone the duty desk before the final oral feedback meeting with the school. The lead inspector will be prepared to explain briefly the reasons and underpinning evidence for the inadequate judgement.

Informing a school that it is deemed to be causing concern

165. If a school is provisionally judged to require special measures or to have serious weaknesses, inspectors must use the following words during the final feedback to the school, indicating that the overall effectiveness judgement is subject to moderation by HMIs and, in the case of special measures, agreement by HMCI.

- When the school has serious weaknesses:

“ In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty’s Chief Inspector is likely to be of the opinion that this school has serious weaknesses because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances be reasonably expected to perform.”

- When the school requires special measures:

“ In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty’s Chief Inspector is likely to be 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 in the school.”

166. The implications for schools causing concern are set out in the [‘schools causing concern’ section](#).

167. [The Education \(Induction Arrangements for School Teachers\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) state that a maintained school that has been judged to require special measures must not appoint ECTs unless HMCI has given permission in writing. When the lead inspector has informed a maintained school that it may not

appoint ECTs, the school must seek approval in writing to the relevant Ofsted regional director and giving supporting reasons if it later wishes to appoint ECTs. The restriction on appointing ECTs does not extend to trainee teachers who joined employment-based training programmes at the school before the notice ([paragraph 10 of Schedule 2 to the Qualifications Regulations 2003](#)).

After the inspection

Arrangements for publishing the report

168. The lead inspector is responsible for writing the inspection report and submitting the evidence to Ofsted shortly after the inspection ends. The text of the report should explain the judgements and reflect the evidence. The findings in the report should be consistent with the feedback given to the school at the end of the inspection.

169. Inspection reports are sent to the school following moderation and quality assurance. We aim to send reports to schools as quickly as reasonably possible. In most circumstances, we will send the draft report to the school within 18 working days of the end of the inspection.

170. The school will have 5 working days to comment on the draft report, inspection process and findings. We will consider all comments. We will respond to them when we share the final report with the school. This will normally be within 30 working days of the end of the inspection. As set out above, we expect leaders to share the inspection outcome and findings with governors/trustees and whoever they deem appropriate (see paragraph 161). We may also send the draft report to the DfE and other bodies. This will only take place following moderation or quality assurance.

171. If the school wishes to make a formal complaint, it has 5 working days after we have shared the final report with the school in which to do so. If a complaint is not submitted, we will normally publish the report on [our reports website](#) 3 working days later. If a complaint has been submitted, the publication of the report may be delayed.

172. For graded inspections, once a school has received its final report, it is required to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that every parent

of a registered pupil at the school receives a copy of the report within 5 working days ([section 14\(4\)\(c\) of the Education Act 2005](#)). Schools may wish to consider whether emails to parents and/or publication on the school's website can fulfil this requirement. If the school has not submitted a complaint, we will normally publish the report on [our reports website](#) 3 working days later. If it has submitted a complaint, the publication of the report may be delayed.

173. In all cases, the inspection process should not be treated as complete until all inspection activity has been carried out and we have sent the final version of the inspection report to the school.

174. The evidence base for the inspection must be retained in line with our retention and disposal policy. This is normally for 6 years from when the report is published. We may decide that retaining it for longer is warranted for research purposes.

Quality assurance

175. All inspectors are responsible for the quality of their work. The lead inspector must ensure that inspections are carried out in accordance with the principles of inspection and the code of conduct.

176. We monitor the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes, and HMI/Senior HMI visit some schools or monitor remotely to quality assure inspections. We may also evaluate the quality of an inspection evidence base. The lead inspector will be responsible for giving team inspectors feedback about the quality of their work and their conduct.

177. All schools are invited to take part in a voluntary post-inspection survey in order to contribute to inspection development. The link to this survey is provided when the school receives the final copy of its inspection report.

Handling concerns and complaints

178. The great majority of our work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during the inspection, they should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible, in order to resolve issues before the inspection is completed. Any concerns raised, and actions taken, will be recorded in the

inspection evidence. If there are any concerns that it is not possible to resolve with the lead inspector during the inspection, the headteacher, another senior leader, the local authority or a trust representative can contact a senior Ofsted leader using the number provided as part of the notification process (usually during the preparatory telephone call(s) with the headteacher).

179. If an issue remains unresolved, the school or responsible body can contact Ofsted on the working day after the end of the inspection. This will be an opportunity for the school to raise informal concerns about the inspection process or outcomes, ask about next steps or highlight information that they feel was not fully considered during the inspection. This will be directed to an inspector who is independent of the inspection, to discuss and to resolve, where appropriate, at the earliest opportunity.

180. If it is not possible to resolve concerns during the inspection, through a telephone call the day after the inspection, or through submitting comments in response to the draft report, the school may wish to lodge a formal complaint when it receives the final report. The lead inspector will ensure that the school is informed that it is able to make a formal complaint and that [information about how to complain is available on gov.uk](#).

Use of Ofsted logos

181. A school judged to be outstanding or good can [use specific Ofsted logos](#) to promote its judgement, for example on its website. Schools may only use a logo when it reflects the judgement of the most recent graded inspection of that school. They must remove the logo when the school's URN changes, or if their grade changes. More information can be found on [our logo terms of use page](#).

Inspection outcomes

Outcomes of a graded inspection: judgements

Schools that are judged outstanding or good

182. A school judged to be outstanding or good on a graded inspection will normally receive an ungraded inspection around 4 years later.

Schools that are judged as requires improvement

183. A school that is judged as requires improvement following a graded inspection is a school that is not good but overall provides an acceptable standard of education. The [‘schools causing concern’ section](#) explains ‘acceptable standard of education’. The judgement of requires improvement is not a formal category of concern, but the school may be subject to monitoring by Ofsted so inspectors will direct the school to [Ofsted’s monitoring handbook](#).

184. The school will usually receive a graded inspection within 2.5 years of the publication of the previous report. For the first inspection after the pandemic, this period will be extended by 2 years.

185. If, at the next graded inspection, the school has not demonstrated that it has improved to good, the lead inspector will need to consider whether it continues to require improvement or may be inadequate. If the school has demonstrated improvement in some areas and there is a general upward trend, but key aspects of performance remain less than good, the school may be judged as requires improvement again. In that case another graded inspection will take place within 2.5 years of the publication of the previous report (for the first inspection after the pandemic, this period will be extended by up to 2 years). These considerations will be made at each graded reinspection of a school that was previously judged as requires improvement.

Schools that are judged as inadequate (schools causing concern: special measures and serious weaknesses)

186. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be inadequate following a graded inspection will be deemed to be in a formal category of concern.

187. If inspectors conclude that the school’s overall effectiveness is inadequate, but both quality of education and personal development are judged requires improvement or better, inspectors will conclude that the school is giving an acceptable standard of education and will judge the school to have serious weaknesses.

188. If the school’s grade either for quality of education or for personal development is ‘inadequate’, inspectors will conclude that the school is failing to give an acceptable standard of education. Inspectors must then consider whether school leaders, trust leaders (in academies), and governors/trustees are demonstrating the

capacity to improve the school.

189. If inspectors conclude that the school is inadequate, and is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education but school leaders, trust leaders (in academies), and governors/trustees are demonstrating the capacity to improve, they will judge the school to have serious weaknesses.

190. If inspectors conclude that the school is inadequate, and is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and school leaders, trust leaders (in academies) and governors/trustees are not demonstrating the capacity to improve the school, then the school will be judged to require special measures.

Capacity to improve

191. In deciding whether schools have the capacity to improve, inspectors should not simply consider a school's potential but the extent to which leaders:

- are able to identify and prioritise the right issues (shown by the accurate identification of the issues and effective evaluation processes to identify any future issues)
- take appropriate and timely action to address the identified issues, including the effective use of internal and external support, where necessary
- have a track record of improvement, even if the desired outcome has not yet been achieved, so that there is confidence that improvements will be swift and sustainable
- have done all that they can be reasonably expected to do in the time available and the circumstances in which they work

Implications for a school causing concern

192. Inadequate schools will be monitored in accordance with the policies set out in the [monitoring handbook](#).

193. Maintained schools and PRUs that are judged to be causing concern will be subject to an academy order as set out in the [DfE's statutory guidance](#). The Secretary of State has a duty to make an academy order for all maintained schools judged to have serious weaknesses ('requiring significant improvement') and those that require special measures. This includes maintained special schools, but excludes maintained nursery schools and non-maintained special schools. For academies that are causing concern, the Secretary of State has a power to terminate the funding agreement, and the academy may join another trust.

194. Whether becoming a new academy or being brokered or rebrokered, these

schools will become new sponsored academies. We will then inspect them as new schools within 3 years of operation and normally in the third academic year (or 5th year if they opened before September 2020). However, in exceptional circumstances, schools that are becoming new academies or being rebrokered may receive an ungraded inspection before their next graded inspection.

195. Academies judged to have serious weaknesses will normally be reinspected within 2.5 years of the publication of the inspection report in which they were judged to have serious weaknesses. (For the first inspection after the pandemic, this period will be extended by up to 2 years.)

196. The timing of the next graded inspection for academies subject to special measures will be determined by the academy's rate of improvement. However, it will normally take place within 2.5 years of the publication of the inspection report that judged it to require special measures (for the first inspection after the pandemic, this period will be extended by up to 2 years).

197. Maintained nursery schools and non-maintained special schools judged inadequate are not subject to academy orders.

198. The law states that ECTs (not including trainee teachers on employment-based training programmes) may not be appointed to maintained schools or PRUs judged to require special measures, unless we have given permission in writing. Schools judged to require special measures must apply to us in writing if they wish to appoint ECTs, stating the reasons for the request.

Taking a school out of a category of concern

199. When an inspection team judges that a school no longer requires special measures, inspectors must use the following words during the final feedback to the school:

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

200. When an inspection team judges that a school previously judged to have serious weaknesses no longer has serious weaknesses, inspectors must use the following words during the final feedback to the school:

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

Outcomes of an ungraded inspection

201. There are 4 possible outcomes for an ungraded inspection of a good school, 3 of which can apply to an ungraded inspection of an outstanding school.

- Outcome 1 – the school continues to be a good/outstanding school. This is the most common outcome.
- Outcome 2 – the school was previously judged to be good and it remains so, and there is sufficient evidence of improved performance to suggest that it might have been judged outstanding if it had received a graded inspection instead of an ungraded inspection. The school will be informed that its next inspection will be a graded inspection, which will typically take place within 1 to 2 years of the publication of the ungraded inspection report.
- Outcome 3 – the lead inspector is not satisfied that the school would have received at least its current grade if it had received a graded inspection instead of an ungraded inspection. The school will be informed that its next inspection will be a graded inspection, which will take place within the statutory timeframe, typically within 1 to 2 years of the publication of the ungraded inspection report, depending on how near to the end of the statutory timeframe the ungraded inspection has taken place.
- Outcome 4 – the lead inspector has gathered evidence that suggests that the good or outstanding school may now be inadequate in one or more of the graded judgements under a graded inspection, and there are serious concerns about the quality of education, pupils' behaviour or safeguarding. The ungraded inspection will usually be deemed to be a graded inspection, usually within 48 hours. Alternatively, for outstanding schools only, there are concerns that the school's performance could be declining to 'requires improvement'. Again, the ungraded inspection will usually be deemed to be a graded inspection, usually within 48 hours.

202. Inspectors will always report on whether safeguarding is effective. If there is evidence that safeguarding may be ineffective, the lead inspector will always deem the ungraded inspection to be a graded inspection.

Schools that remain good/outstanding (outcome 1)

203. Where the lead inspector judges that a school remains good/outstanding, they will confirm this judgement in the final feedback to the school at the end of the ungraded inspection.

204. A school judged to have remained good or outstanding following an ungraded

inspection will normally receive an ungraded inspection around 4 years later. (For the first inspection after the pandemic, this period will be extended by up to 2 years.)

Schools that remain good, with marked improvement (outcome 2)

205. Where the lead inspector considers that, based on the evidence they have seen, a school remains good and inspectors have reason to believe that the quality of education might have been outstanding if the school had received a graded inspection instead of an ungraded inspection, the lead inspector will indicate that this is likely to be their conclusion (subject to quality assurance of the inspection).

206. The school will then receive a report that makes clear that its next inspection will be a graded inspection. The report will confirm that the school remains good and will highlight the reasons why inspectors believe that the quality of education is outstanding.

207. The graded inspection will usually take place within 1 to 2 years after the publication of the ungraded inspection report, giving the school time for the strong practice and marked improvements to be consolidated. The decision on the timing of the full graded inspection will be for the relevant Ofsted regional director to determine. Schools may request an early inspection and these requests will be considered by the relevant Ofsted region.

208. The relevant regional director may choose to carry out an ungraded inspection instead, which can be up to 4 years after publication of the original ungraded inspection report, if they believe that a graded inspection is likely to serve no useful purpose (as in, it is likely to yield a further judgement of good). This decision would normally follow a request from a school where the school does not believe it would be likely to receive an outstanding judgement at a graded inspection. We will not draw any conclusions solely from a school making a request. The decision is always at the discretion of the regional director, and they must first assure themselves there is no evidence that the school has declined below good.

Schools that may no longer be good/outstanding (outcome 3)

209. Where the lead inspector is not satisfied that the school would receive its current grade if a graded inspection was carried out at the time of the ungraded inspection, the lead inspector will indicate that this is likely to be their conclusion (subject to quality assurance of the inspection).

210. The school will then receive a letter setting out what the school is doing well and what it needs to improve. The school's current overall effectiveness judgement will not change as a result of the ungraded inspection.

211. The school will subsequently receive a graded inspection, which will typically take place within 1 to 2 years of the publication of the ungraded inspection report.

212. It may be sooner, however, in order to comply with [The Education \(School Inspection\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2015](#), which require a graded inspection in these schools within 5 school years from the end of the school year in which the previous inspection took place (this will be 6 years for the school's first inspection following the COVID-19 pandemic). This means that, for a small number of schools, the follow-on graded inspection may be carried out sooner than the usual 1 to 2 years after the inspection has taken place.

213. For outcomes 2 and 3, if a maintained school converts to become an academy before the graded inspection has been carried out, the school's first inspection as a new academy will be a graded inspection at least 1 year after the school becomes an academy.

Ungraded inspection is deemed to be a graded inspection (outcome 4)

214. The ungraded inspection will be deemed to be a graded inspection, usually within 48 hours, if there are serious concerns about the quality of education, behaviour, potential gaming (including off-rolling) or safeguarding. This will occur if inspectors:

- find evidence that suggests that the 'quality of education' might be judged to be inadequate were a full graded inspection to take place at the time of the ungraded inspection. This may include a situation where the range of subjects being taught is very narrow (taking any COVID-19 catch-up factors into consideration)
- find evidence relating to behaviour that suggests that 'behaviour and attitudes' might be judged to be inadequate if a graded inspection was to take place at the time of the ungraded inspection
- find evidence that suggests that the school has removed pupils from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion, or encouraged parents to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil
- find evidence that deliberate gaming is taking place
- find evidence indicating that safeguarding may be ineffective

215. The ungraded inspection will also be deemed to be a graded inspection (under the [Education Act 2005](#)) when the lead inspector has gathered evidence that suggests that the school would be inadequate in one or more of the graded judgements if it had received a graded inspection instead of an ungraded inspection.

216. A decision to deem the inspection to be a graded inspection does not predetermine the outcome of the graded inspection. At the end of the graded inspection, the school may receive any grade along the 4-point grading scale.

217. If inspectors gather evidence that suggests an outstanding school's performance may have declined so that if a graded inspection was to be carried out at the time of the ungraded inspection, the school would likely be judged as requires improvement or inadequate, inspectors will deem the ungraded inspection to be a graded inspection, usually within 48 hours.

218. Where the ungraded inspection is HMI-led and is deemed to be a graded inspection, the HMI will normally remain the lead inspector for the graded inspection. However, where the ungraded inspection has been led by a contracted Ofsted Inspector (OI), the OI may either remain as the lead inspector for the graded inspection or an HMI may lead the graded inspection. More inspectors may join the lead inspector. The ungraded inspection will become a graded inspection, and the team will gather and evaluate evidence in order to make a full set of graded judgements.

219. An ungraded inspection report will not be produced when the ungraded inspection is deemed to be a graded inspection. Instead, the school will receive a graded inspection report.

Part 2. Explanation of Ofsted's judgements

220. This section of the handbook sets out how we evaluate schools on the 2 most common types of inspection: graded inspections and ungraded inspections.

221. Inspectors evaluate schools against the following key judgements:

- quality of education
- behaviour and attitudes
- personal development
- leadership and management

222. The 'evaluating the quality of education' section applies to both graded and ungraded inspections. The other judgement sections are split into specific graded

inspections and ungraded inspections sections.

223. The majority of inspections that we carry out are ungraded inspections. The purpose of these inspections is to confirm whether a school remains good or outstanding under the definition of overall effectiveness set out in the [grade descriptors](#). These differ from graded inspections, where inspectors make an overall effectiveness judgement, as well as the other 4 key judgements set out in part 3.

Evaluating the quality of education

The curriculum

224. A school's curriculum sets out the aims of a programme of education. It also sets out the structure for those aims to be implemented, including the knowledge and skills to be gained at each stage. It enables the school to evaluate pupils' knowledge and skills against those expectations.

225. All pupils in maintained mainstream and special schools are expected to study the basic curriculum, which includes the national curriculum, religious education and age-appropriate relationships and sex education. PRUs and alternative provision settings are not necessarily expected to deliver the national curriculum (see [statutory guidance](#)). The national curriculum sets out requirements for:

- English, mathematics, science, physical education and computing in key stages 1 to 4
- art and design, design and technology, geography, history and music in key stages 1 to 3
- languages in key stages 2 and 3
- citizenship in key stages 3 and 4

226. Since September 2020, schools have also been required to teach:

- relationships education (key stages 1 and 2)
- relationships and sex education (key stage 3 and 4)
- health education (key stages 1 to 4)

227. Academies are expected to offer all pupils a broad curriculum that should be similar in breadth and ambition to the national curriculum, and must include English, mathematics, science and religious education.

228. All schools that include early years provision must comply with the DfE's [statutory framework for the early years foundation stage \(EYFS\)](#).

229. In key stage 1, pupils should be able to read, write and use mathematical knowledge, ideas and operations so that they are able to access a broad and balanced curriculum at key stage 2. Some schools are exempt from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. Where this is the case, the expectation is that pupils are able to read and write fluently by Years 5 and 6.

230. In key stages 2 and 3, schools need to provide a broad, rich curriculum. [Our research into the curriculum](#) shows that these stages are particularly susceptible to a narrow curriculum, and that this has a disproportionately negative effect on disadvantaged pupils (including those with SEND). If a school has shortened key stage 3, inspectors will look for evidence that the school has made provision to ensure that pupils still have the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects, commensurate with the national curriculum, in Years 7 to 9.

231. In the key stage 4 curriculum, the government's national ambition is that 90% of Year 10 pupils in state-funded mainstream schools should be starting to study EBacc GCSE courses nationally by 2025 (taking their examinations in 2027). This is an ambition, and not a target for any individual school. Inspectors will not make a judgement about the quality of education based solely or primarily on the school's progress towards the EBacc ambition. Nevertheless, it is an important factor in understanding a school's level of ambition for its pupils. It is, therefore, important that inspectors understand what schools are doing to prepare for this, and they should take those preparations into consideration when evaluating the intent of the school's curriculum.

232. All schools are also required to promote the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

233. If remote education is in place, schools should ensure that it is well integrated within their course(s) of study, and is well designed to support the wider implementation of the school's curriculum.

234. The DfE has set out a [minimum expectation of at least 32.5 hours for the length](#)

[of the school week in \(non-statutory\) guidance](#) in mainstream state-funded schools by 1 September 2024 at the latest. Where it is clear that increasing the overall time pupils spend in school (to at least 32.5 hours per week) would improve the quality of education, inspectors will reflect this in their evaluation of the school, and in the inspection report. If a school is not meeting the minimum expectation, and this impacts on the quality of education, inspectors will expect schools to set out a clear rationale for this and understand what impact it has on the quality of education. They will also want to understand what plans are in place to meet the minimum expectation.

Ofsted's approach to evaluating the curriculum

235. Inspectors will consider the knowledge and skills that pupils will gain at each stage through the school's curriculum (we call this 'intent'). They will look at the scope of the curriculum, including how carefully the leaders (including trust leaders) responsible for the curriculum in the school have thought about what end points the curriculum is building towards (with reference to the national curriculum and, where relevant, the EYFS). They will also look at how the leaders (including trust leaders) responsible for the curriculum have broken down the content into components and sequenced that content in a logical progression, systematically and explicitly, for all pupils to acquire the intended knowledge and skills. Inspectors will also consider the rigour of subject-specific planning.

236. Inspectors will consider how the curriculum developed or adopted by the school is taught and assessed in order to support pupils to build their knowledge and to apply that knowledge as skills (we call this 'implementation'). This includes how well the subject curriculum is presented to ensure that pupils understand key concepts, and that they can transfer key knowledge to long-term memory and apply it fluently. This includes the use of assessment to check pupils' understanding of what the curriculum intent says they should know, and to identify and correct misunderstandings and inform teaching. It also includes whether teachers either have expert knowledge of the subjects that they teach, or are supported to address gaps in their knowledge so that pupils are not disadvantaged by ineffective teaching.

237. Finally, inspectors will consider the outcomes that pupils achieve as a result of the education they have received (we call this the 'impact'). This will include their view of how pupils are progressing through the curriculum, and their view on schemes of work or other long-term planning (in whatever form they are normally used).

238. Inspectors will focus on what our inspection experience and research show are the most important factors to consider. These are the extent to which:

- the school's curriculum:
 - is ambitious and designed to give pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils (including pupils with SEND) the knowledge they need to take advantage of opportunities, responsibilities and experiences in later life
 - is planned and sequenced so that the end points that it is building towards are clear and that pupils develop the knowledge and skills, building on what has been taught before, to be able to reach those end points
 - has rigour, where relevant, so that pupils learn the knowledge that they need to answer subject-specific questions and to gain disciplinary knowledge of how the subject works (this should not prevent a topic-based or thematic approach, however)
 - accounts for delays and gaps in learning that have arisen and continue to arise as a result of the pandemic
 - remains as broad as possible for as long as possible, including when delivered remotely. The school does not offer disadvantaged pupils (including pupils with SEND) a reduced curriculum
- teachers:
 - have expert knowledge of the subjects that they teach and are supported, where necessary, to address gaps in their knowledge so that pupils are not disadvantaged by ineffective teaching
 - present information clearly, promote appropriate discussion, check pupils' understanding systematically, and identify misunderstandings and adapt teaching as necessary to correct these
 - deliver the subject curriculum in a way that allows pupils to transfer key knowledge to long-term memory. Teaching is sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before and pupils can work towards clearly defined end points
 - use assessment to check pupils' understanding to inform teaching, and to help pupils embed key concepts, use knowledge fluently and develop their understanding, and not simply memorise disconnected facts
 - consider the most important knowledge or concepts that pupils need to know and focus on these, and prioritise feedback, retrieval practice and assessment
 - ensure that remote education, if needed, enables all pupils to access lessons and learn, and monitor pupils' engagement and communicate with parents and colleagues effectively if there are concerns
- all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils (including those with SEND):

- acquire the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life
- make progress, in that they know more, remember more and are able to do more. They are learning what is intended in the curriculum
- produce work of high quality
- achieve well in national tests and examinations, where relevant
- are being prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment at each stage of their learning, including whether pupils in sixth form are ready for the next stage and are going on to appropriate, high-quality destinations
- are able to read to an age-appropriate level and fluency (if not, they will be incapable of accessing the rest of the curriculum, and they will fall rapidly behind their peers)

239. In evaluating the quality of education, inspectors will form a top-level view of the curriculum through conversations with the leaders (including trust leaders) responsible for curriculum in the school. They will use the official IDSR as a starting point, but will want to see the quality of education as experienced by pupils first hand and understand how well leaders know what it is like to be a pupil at the school. Inspectors' understanding of the school's curriculum is primarily formed through deep dives. We will look at the curriculum in all the key stages that the school has, through our deep dives. Inspectors will use 2022 outcomes cautiously and 2021/22 data will only be used to inform discussion with the schools about pupil outcomes. No schools will be marked down on the basis of the 2021/22 data alone.

240. The number of deep dives will vary depending on the size of the school and the inspection team:

- in primary schools (and infant, junior and lower-middle schools), inspectors will always carry out a deep dive in reading and deep dives in one or more foundation subjects. In addition, inspectors will often carry out a deep dive in mathematics
- in secondary schools, the deep dives will typically focus on a sample of 4 to 6 subjects, looking at a wide variety of pupils in different year groups across that sample
- in small schools (with fewer than 150 pupils), for ungraded inspections, the methodology will be adapted to reflect the shorter inspection (only 1 day)
- for maintained nursery schools and specialist settings, see the ['provision-specific considerations' section](#)

241. Deep dives gather evidence of the curriculum within a certain subject, to build an understanding of the curriculum in the school as a whole. They encompass a range of activities, including:

- talking about the curriculum with leaders
- joint visits to lessons
- work scrutiny
- talking to and observing pupils in addition to joint visits to lessons
- discussions with teachers

242. Inspectors may not always carry out all of these activities on a deep dive. More detail on these activities can be found in the sections below.

243. Inspectors will not grade intent, implementation and impact separately and will not grade individual lessons or teachers. Instead, inspectors will reach a single graded judgement for the quality of education, drawing on all the evidence they have gathered and using their professional judgement.

244. Inspectors recognise that there may still be some limited circumstances in which a pupil may need to learn remotely. Where this is the case, this learning will not be evaluated separately but as part of the wider curriculum. Similarly, where the school is directly deploying tutors to support education recovery from the pandemic, inspectors will consider how this supports the aims of the school curriculum, rather than evaluate the quality of the tutoring. Use of tutors will be integrated into the evaluation of both the quality of education and leadership and management and will not be inspected separately.

245. Inspectors will not look at non-statutory internal progress and attainment data on inspections of schools. That does not mean that schools cannot use data if they consider it appropriate. Inspectors will, however, put more focus on the curriculum and less on schools' generation, analysis and interpretation of data. Teachers have told us that they believe this will help us play our part in reducing unnecessary workload. Inspectors will be interested in the conclusions drawn and actions taken from any internal assessment information, but they will not examine or verify that information first hand. Inspectors will use published national performance data as a starting point on inspection, where it is available.

246. Inspectors will be alert to unnecessary or excessive attempts to simply prompt pupils to learn glossaries or long lists of disconnected facts. Learning can be defined as an alteration in long-term memory. If nothing has altered in long-term memory, nothing has been learned. However, pupils learn by connecting new knowledge with existing knowledge. Pupils also need to develop fluency and unconsciously apply their knowledge as skills. This must not be reduced to, or confused with, simply memorising disconnected facts. When inspectors evaluate the impact of the education provided by the school, their focus will primarily be on

what pupils have learned.

247. We will judge schools taking radically different approaches to the curriculum fairly. We recognise the importance of schools' and trusts' autonomy to choose their own curriculum approaches. If leaders are able to show that they have thought carefully, that they have built a curriculum with appropriate coverage, content, structure and sequencing, and that it has been implemented effectively, and that the curriculum does not leave some pupils behind, then inspectors will assess the school's curriculum favourably.

248. Inspectors will recognise that some schools are going through a period of change, including when they have been brokered into a trust or rebrokered from one trust to another. In some schools, the quality of education may have been poor and may now be showing significant and sustained improvement. In these situations, nationally generated performance data may lag behind the current quality of education in the school and so inspectors will view the national data in this context.

249. Inspectors will also bear in mind that developing and embedding an effective curriculum takes time, and that the school may only be part-way through the process of adopting or redeveloping a curriculum. If leaders have an accurate, evaluative understanding of current curriculum practice in their school and have identified appropriate next steps (taking into account any impact of COVID-19) to improve curriculum quality and develop curriculum expertise across the school, inspectors will evaluate 'intent' favourably when reaching the holistic quality of education judgement. They will recognise that the criteria for a judgement of good are the best fit. Where inspectors consider available national data, they will be mindful of the age of this data, especially around statutory assessment and qualifications, when making judgements. Teacher-assessed grades from 2020 and 2021 will not be used to assess curriculum impact.

250. As part of making the judgement about the quality of education, inspectors will consider the extent to which schools are equipping pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. Our understanding of 'knowledge and cultural capital' is derived from the following wording in the national curriculum:

“ It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.”

251. National assessments and examinations are useful indicators of pupils' outcomes, but they only represent a sample of what pupils have learned. Inspectors will consider any outcomes data, where this is available in published national data

(this does not include teacher- or centre-assessed grades from 2020 and 2021), but it does not constitute a substitute for inspectors' first-hand inspection activities.

Talking about the curriculum with leaders

252. A professional dialogue with leaders is vital to our understanding the curriculum within that subject. Inspectors understand that subject leadership works differently in different schools – especially smaller schools – and will work within that context in each school.

253. In an academy, this will also include talking to relevant trust leaders about any role they have in the curriculum. This does not mean that Ofsted expects the trust to make curriculum decisions, necessarily. However, where trusts have made decisions that affect the implementation and impact of the curriculum within an individual academy (including a decision to allow schools to make all curricular decisions), inspectors will want to understand how and why that decision was made, and the impact on pupils.

254. Inspectors will want leaders to set out the scope of what they intend pupils to learn. This will include:

- the extent to which there are clear end points
- whether subject content is broken down into appropriately sized steps and sequenced to build towards those end points
- the rigour of subject-specific planning, where appropriate

255. We define rigour as ensuring that the curriculum keeps to subject-specific questions, methods, conventions, rules and practices and how the subject discipline builds new knowledge. This should not prevent a topic-based or thematic approach, however. Inspectors will also want to understand the approach to teaching and assessing whether pupils have understood the content they have been taught.

Joint visits to lessons

256. Inspectors will not take a random sample of lessons to visit. Instead, they will connect lesson visits to other evidence, such as discussions with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils, and work scrutiny.

257. Inspectors will discuss with school leaders what lessons will be visited as part of the deep dive to see the curriculum in action. Where possible, inspectors will visit several lessons from the same curriculum area or subject, including from different year groups. They will invite the headteacher, subject leaders and/or other leaders to

take part in joint visits to lessons.

258. Lesson visits are not about evaluating individual teachers or their teaching. Teaching will not be graded. Inspectors will connect evidence from lesson visits with what they learn from other deep dive activities, to form a rounded view of the quality of education.

259. Lesson visits are also useful for gathering evidence that contributes to the 'behaviour and attitudes' judgement by providing direct evidence about how behaviour is managed within individual classrooms and how pupils respond. This evidence will complement the other evidence that inspectors gather about behaviour during inspection.

Work scrutiny

260. Inspectors will look at pupils' work. Work scrutiny will help inspectors to form a view of whether pupils know more and can do more, and whether the knowledge and skills they have learned are well sequenced and have developed incrementally.

Talking to and observing pupils in addition to joint visits to lessons

261. Inspectors will ask to speak to groups of pupils, including about the subjects they have been looking at. They will want to understand what pupils have learned and how their teachers help them to learn new curriculum content. Inspectors will take advantage of opportunities to gather evidence from a wide range of pupils, both formally and informally. Evidence from pupils will always be considered alongside the other evidence that inspectors collect.

262. Inspectors will also talk to and observe pupils in a range of situations outside of normal lessons to evaluate personal development, behaviour and attitudes, and safeguarding for example:

- at the start and finish of the school day
- during lunchtime, including in the dining hall, and breaktimes or playtimes
- during assemblies and tutor periods
- when moving between lessons
- during enrichment activities (including clubs and activities outside of the normal timetabled curriculum)

263. During informal conversations with pupils, inspectors will ask them about their experiences of teaching, learning and behaviour in the school, including the prevention of bullying and how the school deals with any form of harassment and

violence, discrimination and prejudiced behaviour, if they happen. Inspectors will ensure that all questions are appropriate.

264. During the inspection, it is important that pupils are able to express their views freely to inspectors. Therefore, inspectors must have the opportunity to speak to pupils with no other adults present, unless there are exceptional circumstances. This is particularly important when inspectors ask pupils questions about safeguarding. Inspectors will, where relevant and practical, also try to ensure that they speak to at least some single-sex pupil groups to provide the opportunity for pupils to speak more freely about issues such as sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence. See [‘Inspectors talking to pupils on inspection’](#).

Discussions with staff

265. At the heart of our inspections is a professional dialogue between inspectors and the leaders, governors/trustees and staff of the school. Inspectors will discuss with staff:

- how the school’s curriculum informs their choices about content and sequencing to support pupils’ learning
- how the training and support that they receive helps them to deliver the content effectively
- their workload, including whether assessment practices create any unnecessary burdens
- other matters, including those related to safeguarding and pupils’ behaviour

266. Staff may always be accompanied by another appropriate person when speaking to inspectors. However, it is important that staff are able to express their views freely to inspectors.

Early stages of learning to read

267. During all inspections, inspectors will be interested in how the school supports pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read, including older pupils. This is especially the case because of the disruption to learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

268. On inspections of infant, junior, primary and lower-middle schools, inspectors will carry out a deep dive to evaluate how well pupils are taught to read. They will pay particular attention to the pupils who most need to improve their reading (the lowest 20%) to assess how well the school is teaching phonics and supporting all children to become confident, fluent readers. This will include understanding how reading is

taught remotely, where applicable.

269. Inspectors will listen to several low-attaining pupils in Years 1 to 3 read from unseen books that are appropriate to their stage of progress. They should also draw on information from the school's policy for teaching reading, phonics assessments, phonics screening check results and lesson visits.

270. Wherever possible, inspectors will listen to children read to a familiar adult in a classroom or in an open area that the pupils are familiar with. They will take into consideration the length of time a pupil has attended the school.

271. In reaching an evaluation against the 'quality of education' judgement, inspectors will consider whether:

- the school is determined that every pupil will learn to read, regardless of their background, needs or abilities. All pupils, including the weakest readers, make sufficient progress to meet or exceed age-related expectations
- stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction are chosen for reading to develop pupils' vocabulary, language comprehension and love of reading. Pupils are familiar with and enjoy listening to a wide range of stories, poems, rhymes and non-fiction
- the school's phonics programme matches or exceeds the expectations of the national curriculum and the EYFS early learning goals. The school has clear expectations of pupils' phonics progress term by term, particularly from Reception to Year 2
- the sequence of reading books shows a cumulative progression in phonics knowledge that is matched closely to the school's phonics programme. Teachers give pupils sufficient practice in reading and re-reading books that match the grapheme–phoneme correspondences they know, both at school and at home
- reading, including the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics, is taught from the beginning of Reception
- the ongoing assessment of pupils' phonics progress is sufficiently frequent and detailed to identify any pupil who is falling behind the programme's pace. If they do fall behind, targeted support is given immediately
- the school has developed sufficient expertise in the teaching of phonics and reading

Mathematics

272. When inspectors look at mathematics, they will evaluate the quality of a school's mathematics education through lesson visits, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their work, discussions with subject leaders, and examining any published

data. This will include understanding how mathematics is taught remotely, where applicable.

273. Inspectors will draw on information from the Year 4 multiplication tables check. The check provides information about the extent to which pupils recall their times tables fluently, which is essential for future success in mathematics. Inspectors will use the information as a starting point only and understand that it represents a small element of the mathematics curriculum overall.

274. Inspectors will consider what steps the school has taken to ensure that:

- pupils understand and remember the mathematical knowledge, concepts and procedures appropriate for their starting points, including knowledge of efficient algorithms. This should also ensure that pupils are ready for the next stage, whether that is the next lesson, unit of work, year or key stage, including post-16 mathematics
- the school's curriculum planning for mathematics carefully sequences knowledge, concepts and procedures to build mathematical knowledge and skills systematically and, over time, the curriculum draws connections across different ways of looking at mathematical ideas
- the curriculum divides new material into manageable steps lesson by lesson
- the school's curriculum identifies opportunities when mathematical reasoning and solving problems will allow pupils to make useful connections between identified mathematical ideas or to anticipate practical problems they are likely to encounter in adult life. Pupils have sufficient understanding of, and unconscious competence in, prerequisite mathematical knowledge, concepts and procedures that are necessary to succeed in the specific tasks set
- within the curriculum, there are sufficient opportunities planned to revisit previously learned knowledge, concepts and procedures; this is to ensure that, once learned, mathematical knowledge becomes deeply embedded in pupils' memories. This then allows rapid and accurate recall and frees pupils' attention so they can work with increasing independence, apply their mathematical knowledge to more complex concepts, procedures and opportunities for problem-solving, and gain enjoyment through a growing self-confidence in their ability
- there is flexibility in curriculum planning so that the school can address identified gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge that hinder their capacity to learn and apply new content. Those pupils behind age-related expectations are provided with the opportunities to learn the mathematical knowledge and skills necessary to catch up with their peers
- there are objective assessments that can identify when all pupils have gained the

intended understanding and unconscious competence in knowledge, concepts and procedures necessary before they move on to new or more complex content

- teaching models new procedures and uses resources and approaches that enable pupils to understand the mathematics they are learning
- all teachers of mathematics, including non-specialist teachers of mathematics, have sufficient mathematical and teaching content knowledge to deliver topics effectively
- pupils' mathematical knowledge is developed and used, where appropriate, across the curriculum

Pupils with SEND in both mainstream and specialist settings

275. All parts of the EIF apply to state-funded and non-maintained special schools provision, PRUs, alternative provision and mainstream schools' provision for pupils with SEND. However, as with all provision, SEND provision has some specific factors that should be taken into account.

276. Pupils with SEND have a range of different needs and starting points. Pupils will have unique, individual needs, even where their needs may fall under the same umbrella term, such as autism. Some pupils have severe, complex or profound needs that have a significant impact on their cognitive development, especially the way that they are able to make alterations to their long-term memory. Other pupils have starting points at least as high as other pupils of their age, for instance some pupils with sensory impairments.

277. Inspectors will gather and evaluate evidence about:

- how well the school identifies, assesses and meets the needs of pupils with SEND, including when pupils with SEND are receiving remote education
- whether leaders are suitably ambitious for all pupils with SEND
- how well leaders ensure that the curriculum is coherently sequenced to meet all pupils' needs, starting points and aspirations for the future
- how successfully leaders involve parents, carers and, as necessary, other professionals/specialist services in deciding how best to support pupils with SEND, including agreeing the approach to remote education
- how well leaders include pupils with SEND in all aspects of school life
- how well leaders ensure that pupils' outcomes are improving as a result of any

different or additional provision being made for them, including any reasonable adjustments in remote education provision. This covers outcomes in:

- communication and interaction
 - cognition and learning
 - physical health and development
 - social, emotional and mental health
- how well pupils with SEND are prepared for their next steps in education, employment and training, and their adult lives, including: further/higher education and employment, independent living, participating in society and being as healthy as possible in adult life. See [‘Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years’](#).

278. Because of the wide range of pupils’ needs, inspectors will not compare the outcomes achieved by pupils with SEND with those achieved by other pupils with SEND in the school, locally or nationally.

279. Pupils with SEND often have significant and complex vulnerabilities and can face additional safeguarding challenges. This includes understanding and pre-empting increased risks that pupils may be drawn into harmful situations as a result of grooming, be more likely to experience abuse from other pupils or adults, and may experience additional barriers in reporting abuse and having abuse recognised by professionals. Inspectors will evaluate the ways in which leaders have made appropriate and effective safeguarding arrangements that reflect these additional vulnerabilities.

Specialist settings

280. All parts of the EIF apply to special schools, PRUs and other alternative provision in free schools and academies, while accepting that the curriculum may be very specialised. For this reason, in special schools, deep dive areas may not be traditional subject areas. The lead inspector will seek to understand the school’s curriculum during the initial phone call with the headteacher. Once the lead inspector has understood the school’s curriculum design, the areas for a deep dive will be agreed. These may include national curriculum subjects, may derive from the 4 broad areas of need (for example, communication and interaction or physical development), may be a curriculum area very specific to that school or may be a combination of these examples. Inspectors will work closely with staff to understand how the curriculum area they are looking at is designed and implemented to meet the needs of pupils in the school. Inspectors will evaluate whether pupils’ outcomes are improving as a result of the curriculum.

281. The government's ambition for EBacc does not apply to special schools with secondary-age pupils. In addition, the Progress 8 accountability measure may not always be the most appropriate performance indicator for these schools.

Provision-specific considerations

Maintained nursery schools

282. All parts of the EIF apply to maintained nursery schools and to early years provision in mainstream schools. However, as with all provision, maintained nursery schools have some specific factors that should be taken into account.

283. In [maintained nursery schools](#), inspectors will always carry out at least 3 deep dives; one will be in communication and language and one other prime area of learning. At least one other deep dive will be in a specific area of learning.

284. Inspectors will spend most of the inspection time gathering first-hand evidence by observing the quality of the daily routines and activities of children and staff. Inspectors will also discuss children's development with staff. Much of this will be through incidental conversations prompted by observing the children at play and the interactions between them and adults.

285. The choice of teaching methods is a decision for providers. The inspector will judge the quality of the provision in relation to the impact it has on children's learning, development and well-being.

286. We recognise that the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic may have impacted on what children have learned. This could result in some children having a wider than usual range of starting points and gaps in their knowledge. Inspectors will pay close attention to how maintained nursery schools identify and address any of these delays and gaps and what it is doing to address disruption to learning to ensure that children are well prepared for their next stage of education. Inspectors will use all their evidence to evaluate what it is like to be a child in the maintained nursery school, taking account of the ages of the children and whether they attend part time or full time.

287. Inspectors will gather and evaluate evidence about:

- how well the school identifies children's early starting points, particularly those children with SEND

- the extent to which staff use the 7 areas of learning to introduce children to new ideas, vocabulary and syntax, and to develop children's love of stories, poems, songs and rhymes
- how well the school includes disadvantaged children (including those with SEND) in all aspects of school life
- how well leaders ensure that the EYFS curriculum is coherently sequenced to meet all children's needs and starting points
- whether leaders are suitably ambitious for all children and consider their cultural capital when preparing them for the next stage in their education
- how successfully leaders involve parents, carers and, as necessary, other professionals/specialist services in deciding how best to support children
- how well children's learning and development are shared with parents as required by the EYFS, and the extent to which parents are supported to help their child to learn

Junior, middle, studio schools and university technical colleges

288. There are some schools that start and stop at non-standard ages for pupils, so inspectors take into account national expectations differently.

289. Pupils at junior schools, on average, have higher attainment scores at the end of key stage 2 than pupils at all other primary schools. However, on average, they also have lower progress scores. This may be for a variety of reasons, and inspectors will take this into account when comparing their results with those of pupils in schools that start education from the beginning of key stage 1.

290. Pupils at middle schools, on average, have lower progress scores at the end of key stage 2 than pupils at primary schools. Due to the age range of pupils at middle schools, pupils will have only attended a middle school for a short time before they take their key stage 2 tests and will still have a number of years left at the school. Inspectors will take this into account when comparing pupils' results to those of schools that start educating their pupils from the beginning of key stage 1.

291. The government's ambition for EBacc does not apply to UTCs and studio schools because they provide a specialist technical and professional education.

292. The Progress 8 accountability measure is not the most appropriate performance indicator for UTCs and studio schools. These establishments typically start educating pupils at age 14 and have a focus on preparing pupils for their future careers. Inspectors will pay attention to other measures, particularly pupils' destinations when they leave the UTC or studio school.

Evaluating the use of off-site alternative provision

293. Where pupils, including those in PRUs and other alternative providers, attend off-site alternative provision, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which these placements are safe and effective in promoting pupils' progress. Inspectors will normally visit a sample of the alternative providers used and, if required, may speak to local authorities, other agencies and parents/carers to gather evidence. Inspectors will want to understand how providers ensure that pupils who attend multiple settings or part time are kept safe when they are not on site for the whole school day.

Evaluating quality of education in pupil referral units and academy alternative provision

294. PRUs and academy alternative providers differ from other schools in that they are intended to be short-term interventions to secure the successful re-engagement into education. In these settings, inspectors will gather and evaluate evidence about:

- how well the school identifies, assesses and meets the needs of pupils when they first begin to attend the PRU or other alternative provider, including pupils with SEND
- how well leaders ensure that the curriculum is coherently sequenced and meets all pupils' needs, starting points and aspirations for the future, including through remote education
- how successfully leaders involve parents, carers and, as necessary, other professionals or specialist services in deciding how best to support pupils
- whether leaders are ambitious for all pupils, and the extent to which governors/trustees understand the particular context of the provision
- how well leaders include pupils in all aspects of school life, giving particular emphasis to how well they are prepared for their next steps in education, employment and training, and adult lives
- how well leaders ensure that pupils' outcomes are improving as a result of any different or additional provision being made for them, including outcomes for pupils with SEND

295. Pupils in PRUs and other alternative providers often have significant, complex vulnerabilities. In the same way as with other schools, inspectors will evaluate the ways in which leaders have made appropriate and effective safeguarding arrangements for pupils in the light of their higher vulnerability to safeguarding risks. Inspectors will expect providers to understand their unique contextual safeguarding factors and outline how they proactively work, including with other agencies, to mitigate the specific factors that affect their pupils and the community that they

serve.

296. PRUs and other alternative providers may have different objectives in their work related to the reasons why a pupil is placed in alternative provision, the needs of the pupil, the duration of placements and the proportion of time that pupils stay with the provider each week. For instance, in a PRU that provides short-term placements for excluded pupils or those at risk of exclusion, the core work may emphasise specific improvements in pupils' attitudes, behaviour and/or attendance alongside their academic/vocational/technical achievement or be aiming to reintegrate pupils into mainstream schools. Alternative providers may also offer services to schools and other educational settings to help them support children with additional needs in their settings. An alternative provision setting may be the permanent destination for some pupils. Inspectors will evaluate schools' success in these areas, while bearing in mind that we expect high academic/vocational/technical aspirations for all pupils.

297. Transitions into PRU and alternative providers are often complex, involving dual registration, periods of non-attendance and meetings with a range of services and families. When evaluating pupils' attainment and progress, inspectors will consider the ways in which the school has identified, assessed and met the needs of pupils. They will evaluate the progress that pupils have made since they began to attend the alternative provision.

298. For pupils who have left the PRU or other alternative provider, inspectors will consider how well the progress they made there enabled them to move on to suitable destinations and, post-16, to take courses at an appropriately demanding level. They will also look closely at how effective liaison is with other schools to ensure that there are appropriately high expectations and, as far as reasonably possible, continuity in pupils' education programmes. Inspectors will also look at whether the provider works closely with families, schools and other agencies to ensure a smooth transition to and from alternative provision. They will look at whether it sets expectations that reintegration back into mainstream education is a key component of a placement.

Evaluating behaviour and attitudes

299. The behaviour and attitudes judgement considers how leaders and other staff create a safe, calm, orderly and positive environment in the school and the impact this has on the behaviour and attitudes of pupils.

300. The judgement focuses on the factors that research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to pupils' positive behaviour and attitudes, thereby giving them the greatest possible opportunity to achieve positive outcomes. These factors are:

- having a calm and orderly environment in the school and the classroom, as this is essential for pupils to be able to learn
- setting clear routines and expectations for the behaviour of pupils across all aspects of school life, not just in the classroom
- having a strong focus on attendance and punctuality so that all pupils benefit from the education and experiences the school offers
- having clear and effective behaviour and attendance policies with clearly defined consequences that are applied consistently and fairly by all staff. Children, and particularly adolescents, often have particularly strong concepts of fairness that may be challenged by different treatment by different teachers or of different pupils
- developing pupils' motivation and positive attitudes to learning, as these are important predictors of attainment. Developing positive attitudes can also have a longer-term impact on how pupils approach learning tasks in later stages of education
- fostering a positive and respectful school culture in which staff know and care about pupils
- creating an environment in which pupils feel safe, and in which bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual abuse and sexual violence – online or offline – are not accepted and are dealt with quickly, consistently and effectively whenever they occur

301. Inspectors' evidence for the importance of each of these factors comes from their inspection experience, areas of agreement in academic research and our own research. A full note of how the criteria relate to the available research can be found in our [EIF research commentary](#).

302. Additionally, inspectors will expect schools to have effective behaviour policies in place regarding harmful sexual behaviour. The policies should include details of appropriate sanctions that should be applied consistently and that reflect and are consistent with the messages that are taught across the curriculum.

Specific considerations for evaluating behaviour and

attitudes

Attendance

303. Inspectors will expect schools to do all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance, while recognising that the context in which schools operate has changed. (Attendance between March 2020 and March 2021 will not impact on the judgement of the school.)

304. Inspectors will expect schools to have done an analysis of absence and persistent absence rates for all pupils, and for different groups, compared with the published local and national averages for all pupils. This includes the extent to which pupils with persistent and severe absence are improving their attendance over time or whether attendance is consistently low. Inspectors will want to see this analysis and how this has fed in to the school's approach.

305. Where attendance is not consistently at or above what could reasonably be expected, inspectors will expect attendance to be a high priority for leaders and for it to be improving towards and beyond national, pre-pandemic levels. There should be a strong understanding of the causes of absence (particularly for persistent and severe absence) and a clear strategy in place that takes account of those causes to improve attendance for all pupils. In some cases of persistent and all cases of severe absence, schools should make efforts to engage in multi-agency work with the local authority and other partners.

306. Where leaders are aware of the issues affecting attendance and have a clear, strategic plan of action in place but attendance for all pupils is not yet consistently very high, inspectors should judge this favourably, as long as there is a track record of improvement that demonstrates leaders' capacity to continue to improve attendance (using the same factors used in [considering what category of concern schools should be placed into](#)).

Pupils who have specific needs, including pupils with SEND

307. The school may be working with pupils with particular needs in order to improve their behaviour or their attendance. When this is the case, behaviour and conduct that reflects the school's high expectations and their consistent, fair implementation are likely to include demonstrable improvement in the attendance and behaviour of these pupils, taking account of individual circumstances.

Pupils who are not in the school during the inspection

308. Inspectors will gather evidence about the typical behaviour of all the pupils who

attend the school, including those who are not present on the day of inspection. If there is evidence that a school has deliberately removed pupils from the school site on the day of inspection or has arranged for them to be absent, and inspectors reasonably believe that this was done in order to have an impact on the inspection, then inspectors are likely to judge both behaviour and attitudes and leadership and management to be inadequate.

Behaviour

309. Inspectors will also recognise that the context in which schools operate with respect to behaviour has changed as a result of the pandemic.

310. Where inspectors see evidence of poor behaviour but leaders are aware of the issues and have a clear, strategic plan of action, inspectors will judge this favourably, as long as there is a track record of improvement that demonstrates leaders' capacity to continue to improve behaviour (using the same factors used in [considering what category of concern schools should be placed into](#)).

Suspensions and exclusions

311. If a school uses suspensions, inspectors will evaluate their effectiveness, including the rates, patterns and reasons for suspensions and whether any pupils are repeatedly suspended. Schools should have a strategy for reintegrating a pupil who returns to school following a suspension and for managing their future behaviour. Inspectors will consider how well the school is recognising and acting to address any patterns that exist. This is because disruptive behaviour or sudden changes in behaviour can be an indication of unmet needs or a change in another aspect of a young person's life.

312. Headteachers have the right to exclude pupils when there are legitimate reasons for them to do so. Used correctly, exclusion is a vital measure for headteachers to use. Exclusions must be legal and justified. Permanent exclusions should only be used as a last resort, in response to a serious breach or persistent breaches of the school's behaviour policy, and when allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school.

313. Inspectors will consider whether the school is developing the use of alternative strategies to exclusion and taking account of any safeguarding risks to pupils who may be excluded. Inspectors will recognise when schools are doing all that they can to support pupils at risk of exclusion, including through tenacious attempts to engage local support services.

314. See also the [‘inclusion’ section](#) below.

Evaluating behaviour and attitudes in pupil referral units and academy alternative provision

315. Inspectors will take the school’s official records as a starting point for discussions about attendance. They must evaluate pupils’ attendance as a percentage of a full-time timetable, even when temporary part-time arrangements are in place. Leaders may have a range of ways of evaluating pupils’ attendance, given that pupils often join and leave the school roll at various times of the year. Inspectors will take into account the turnover of pupils in the provision when considering evidence for attitudes and behaviour. Inspectors will evaluate the impact of strategies that leaders use to improve pupils’ attendance.

316. Often, pupils attending PRUs, UTCs and alternative providers have had poor attendance in the past. Inspectors will evaluate the improvement in pupils’ attendance from their starting points when this is relevant. Inspectors will also evaluate the ways in which leaders take account of pupils’ weak attendance in their safeguarding systems and the clarity of their attendance recording. If schools use part-time timetables, and pupils are not attending other provision or placements in addition to their school, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which schools monitor these situations and are aspirational and effective in getting pupils into education full time , quickly and in line with DfE guidance. Part-time timetables should not be open-ended and should result in swift full-time education for the pupils. (See the [‘inclusion’ section](#) for more details).

Ofsted’s approach to evaluating behaviour and attitudes on graded inspections

317. Inspectors will hold discussions with pupils and staff to gather evidence about school culture and practice in relation to pupils’ behaviour, support for staff and other systems. In setting up discussions, inspectors will select a sample of staff. These discussions will include trainees, supply staff, ECTs, administrative support staff and catering staff, as well as other members of staff. The discussions will provide inspectors with valuable information that includes the views of those who most urgently require the school’s support in managing pupils’ behaviour. Where practically possible, inspectors will carry out discussions with individuals, not groups, to allow members of staff to give clear evidence without being influenced by the views or expectations of others in the group when talking about a sensitive issue.

However, staff may always be accompanied by another appropriate person when talking to inspectors.

318. Inspectors will speak to pupils from a range of different backgrounds and who have different experiences of the school's approach to behaviour. This should include pupils who have experienced sanctions under the school's behaviour policy. Inspectors will take into account the views of these pupils, their experiences of others' behaviour and attitudes towards them, and their understanding of the importance of positive behaviour in school and beyond school.

319. Inspectors will evaluate the experience of particular individuals and groups, such as pupils for whom referrals have been made to the local authority (and check, for a small sample of these pupils, how the referral was made and the thoroughness of the follow-up), pupils with SEND, looked-after children, those with medical needs and those with mental health needs. In order to do this, inspectors will look at the experience of a small sample of these pupils and consider the way the school is working with the multi-agency group to ensure that the child receives the support they need. For pupils with SEND, this will include ensuring that appropriate reasonable adjustments are made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the SEND code of practice.

320. The pupil and staff surveys used in inspection contain questions about safeguarding, behaviour and discipline, bullying, how respondents feel about the school and how well supported and respected they feel they are in the school. Inspectors will meet school leaders to discuss the results of the interviews and surveys of pupils and staff.

321. Over the course of inspection, inspectors will carry out evidence-gathering activities. In some cases, inspectors will be able to gather this evidence as part of other activities they are carrying out. The activities are:

- observing pupils' behaviour in a range of different classes at different times of the day
- observing pupils at breaktimes, lunchtimes, between lessons and, if they are led and managed by the school, before- and after-school clubs
- observing pupils' punctuality in arriving at school and at lessons
- observing pupils' respect for, and courtesy and good manners towards, each other and adults, and their pride in themselves and their school
- evaluating the school's analysis of, and response to, pupils' behaviour over time, in whatever format the school already has
- analysing the school's own analysis and understanding of the absence, persistent

absence and severe absence rates for all pupils and the causes, and for different groups compared with national averages for all pupils; this includes how this analysis has fed into the school's prioritisation strategy for improvement to consistently high attendance, the extent to which low attenders are improving their attendance over time, and whether attendance is consistently low

- evaluating the prevalence of permanent exclusion, the procedures surrounding this and the reasons for it, and the support given to make sure that it is a last resort
- evaluating the effectiveness of suspensions, including the rates and reasons for exclusion
- assessing the school's work to follow up and support suspended pupils
- gathering the views of parents, staff, governors, trustees and other stakeholders
- speaking to trust leaders about the role the trust plays in the school's behaviour policies and in any other aspects of behaviour and attitudes in the school, and how and why those decisions were made
- gathering evidence about the typical behaviour of pupils who are not in school during the inspection, for example whether they have suspensions in the 2 years before inspection
- balancing evidence seen during the inspection and evidence of trends over time
- visiting any off-site unit that the school runs (on its own or in partnership with other schools) for pupils whose behaviour is poor or who have low attendance.

Inspectors will assess safeguarding procedures, the quality of education and how effectively the unit helps to improve pupils' behaviour, learning and attendance.

For more information, see the ['evaluating the use of off-site alternative provision on graded inspections' section](#)

Ofsted's approach to evaluating behaviour and attitudes on ungraded inspections

322. In evaluating behaviour and attitudes for ungraded inspections, inspectors may consider any of the factors set out in the grade descriptors for graded inspections. However, they will usually focus on:

- whether the school is doing all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance. This will start with considering the school's analysis of absence and persistent absence for all pupils, the extent to which there is a strong understanding of the causes of absence and a clear strategy in place to improve attendance. In some cases this will include looking at factors such as off-rolling

and part-time timetables

- whether the school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct and applies these expectations consistently and fairly. Inspectors will also consider whether this is reflected in pupils' positive behaviour and conduct. They will consider whether staff make sure that pupils follow appropriate routines, whether low-level disruption is not tolerated and whether pupils' behaviour does not disrupt lessons or the day-to-day life of the school
- whether leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. If bullying, aggression, discrimination and derogatory language occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively and are not allowed to spread
- behaviour not being managed well as potential evidence that the school would no longer receive at least its current grade if a graded inspection was carried out. If the lead inspector has serious concerns about behaviour, the inspection can be deemed a graded inspection

323. Inspectors will gather this evidence principally through the deep dives carried out. They may carry out additional inspection activity (such as that set in the paragraph above) where they consider it necessary.

Evaluating personal development

324. The curriculum provided by schools should extend beyond the academic, technical or vocational. Schools support pupils to develop in many diverse aspects of life. The personal development judgement is used by inspectors to evaluate leaders' (including trust leaders') intent to provide for the personal development of all pupils, and the quality with which the school implements this work. Inspectors will recognise that the impact of the school's provision for personal development will often not be assessable during pupils' time at school.

325. At the same time as the school is working with pupils, those pupils are also being influenced by other factors in their home environment, their community and elsewhere. Schools can teach pupils how to build their confidence and resilience, for example, but they cannot always determine how well young people draw on this. Schools are crucial in preparing pupils for their adult lives, teaching them to understand how to engage with society and providing them with plentiful opportunities to do so. In this judgement, therefore, inspectors will seek to evaluate the quality and intent of what a school provides (either directly or by drawing on high-quality agencies and providers, for example the Duke of Edinburgh's Award

scheme, Cadet Forces and the National Citizenship Service), but will not attempt to measure the impact of the school's work on the lives of individual pupils.

326. This judgement focuses on the factors that research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to pupils' personal development. These include how the school:

- ensures that curriculum subjects such as citizenship, RE and other areas such as personal, social, health and economic education, and relationships and sex education, contribute to pupils' personal development – including by considering the provision, quality and take-up of extra-curricular activities offered by the school
- develops pupils to become responsible, respectful and active citizens who are able to play their part and become actively involved in public life as adults
- through the curriculum, assemblies, wider opportunities, visits, discussions and literature, develops and deepens pupils' understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law, and mutual respect and tolerance
- promotes equality of opportunity so that all pupils can thrive together, understanding that difference is a positive, not a negative, and that individual characteristics make people unique. This includes, but is not limited to, pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics and how equality and diversity are promoted
- ensures an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all pupils, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, and where no discrimination exists, for example in respect of wider opportunities for pupils
- develops pupils' characters, which we define as a set of positive personal traits, dispositions and virtues that informs pupils' motivation and guides their conduct so that they reflect wisely, learn eagerly, behave with integrity and cooperate consistently well with others. This gives pupils the qualities they need to flourish in our society
- develops pupils' confidence, resilience and knowledge so that they can keep themselves mentally healthy
- enables pupils to recognise online and offline risks to their well-being – for example, risks from criminal and sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, substance misuse, gang activity, radicalisation and extremism – and making them aware of the support available to them
- enables pupils to recognise the dangers of inappropriate use of mobile technology and social media
- develops pupils' understanding of how to keep physically healthy, eat healthily and

maintain an active lifestyle, including giving ample opportunities for pupils to be active during the school day and through extra-curricular activities

- develops pupils' age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships through appropriate relationships and sex education
- supports readiness for the next phase of education, training or employment so that pupils are equipped to make the transition successfully, including, for secondary schools, through careers information education, advice and guidance
- in special schools, enriches the curriculum, taking into account specific factors such as the local area's arrangements for providing home-to-school transport for children with SEND

327. We will expect the school's relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) curriculum (and wider curriculum) to specifically address sexual harassment, online abuse and sexual violence. The curriculum should also address safeguarding risks (including online risks), issues of consent, and what constitutes a healthy relationship both online and offline. We will also expect schools to provide effective pastoral support. This includes being alert to factors that increase a child's vulnerability, or potential vulnerability, such as mental ill health, domestic abuse, having additional needs, and being at greater risk of exploitation and/or of feeling unable to report abuse (for example, girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children).

Specific considerations for evaluating personal development

328. Where usual opportunities have been disrupted by the pandemic, inspectors will look at whether the school has found alternative approaches to providing a rich range of personal development opportunities since the school reopened to all pupils in March 2021.

Relationships, sex and health education on graded inspections

329. Relationships education is compulsory for all schools providing primary education. Relationships and sex education is compulsory for all schools providing secondary education (including, where a school has one, in sixth form provision). Health education is also compulsory for pupils in state-funded schools.

330. If a school is failing to meet its obligations, inspectors will consider this when reaching the personal development and leadership and management judgements.

331. See the guidance [‘Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics’](#) for more information.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

332. Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of the school’s provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This is a broad concept that can be seen across the school’s activities, but draws together many of the areas covered by the personal development judgement.

333. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils includes developing their:

- ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life
- knowledge of, and respect for, different people’s faiths, feelings and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experiences

334. Provision for the moral development of pupils includes developing their:

- ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong and to readily apply this understanding in their own lives, and to recognise legal boundaries and, in doing so, respect the civil and criminal law of England
- understanding of the consequences of their behaviour and actions
- interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues and ability to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues

335. Provision for the social development of pupils includes developing their:

- use of a range of social skills in different contexts, for example working and socialising with other pupils, including those from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds
- willingness to participate in a variety of communities and social settings, including

by volunteering, cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively

- acceptance of and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. They will develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain

336. Provision for the cultural development of pupils includes developing their:

- understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage and that of others
- understanding and appreciation of the range of different cultures in the school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain
- ability to recognise, and value, the things we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities
- knowledge of Britain's democratic Parliamentary system and its central role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain
- willingness to participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical, sporting and cultural opportunities
- interest in exploring, improving understanding of and showing respect for different faiths and cultural diversity and the extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity. This is shown by their respect and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities

Ofsted's approach to evaluating personal development on graded inspections

337. On graded inspections, inspectors will focus on:

- whether the school has had due regard to the statutory guidance on RSHE (see [‘relationships, sex and health education on graded inspections’ section](#)) and so:
 - has formed a policy following consultation with parents
 - has staff trained to assess and deliver the RSHE curriculum
 - appropriately supports children with SEND to learn RSHE
- whether pupils have sufficient age-appropriate awareness and understanding of

the protected characteristics

- whether pupils have sufficient knowledge about how to stay safe, including online
- pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, citizenship education, modern British values, the development of character and wider development
- in secondary schools, the effectiveness of CIEAG

338. Much of the evidence that inspectors will consider in making the personal development judgement will be drawn from across the deep dives carried out, and conversations with leaders, other staff, pupils and governors. Inspectors will also draw on any other evidence they consider as part of the inspection.

Careers provision on graded inspections

339. All schools providing secondary education are expected to provide effective CIEAG, in line with the statutory '[Careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#)', to encourage pupils to make good choices and understand what they need to do to succeed in the careers to which they aspire.

340. As part of this, it is important that schools understand and meet the requirements of section 42B of the Education Act 1997 (referred to in DfE guidance as 'provider access legislation'), which came into force in January 2018. Both maintained schools and academies are required by law to:

- provide opportunities for a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils in Years 8 to 13 to inform them about technical education qualifications and apprenticeships
- publish a policy statement setting out the arrangements the school has in place for pupils to access education and training providers
- make sure the policy statement is followed so that all pupils in Years 8 to 13 receive information about the full range of education and training options

341. In assessing a secondary school's personal development offer, inspectors will assess the quality of careers provision and how well it benefits pupils in choosing and deciding on their next steps. This will include looking at:

- the quality of the unbiased careers advice and guidance provided to pupils
- the school's implementation of the provider access arrangements to enable a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils in Years 8 to 13
- how the school provides good-quality, meaningful opportunities for pupils to encounter the world of work
- the school's use of the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#)

- the school's published information about its careers provision (as required by the School Information Regulations) and the school's statement on its provider access arrangements (as required by section 42B of the Education Act 1997)

342. If a school is not meeting the requirements of section 42B of the Education Act 1997, inspectors will state this in the inspection report. They will consider what impact this has on the quality of careers provision and the subsequent judgement for personal development.

Ofsted's approach to evaluating personal development on ungraded inspections

343. In evaluating personal development for ungraded inspections, inspectors may consider any of the factors set out in the grade descriptors for graded inspections. However, they will focus on:

- the extent to which the curriculum goes beyond the academic, vocational or technical
- whether the school provides effectively for pupils' broader development
- whether the school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high quality
- secondary schools' approaches to CIEAG

Evaluating a school's approach to harmful sexual behaviour on ungraded inspections

344. Inspectors will expect schools to assume that sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence are happening in and around the school, even when there are no specific reports. They will expect schools to work to prevent sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence through a whole-school approach that includes an effective behaviour policy with appropriate sanctions, pastoral support and a carefully planned RSHE curriculum that includes addressing issues of consent.

Evaluating a school's approach to careers provision on ungraded inspections

345. Inspectors will review and assess secondary schools' approaches to CIEAG. If a school is not meeting its requirements in respect of career's advice, inspectors will

state this in the inspection report.

Evaluating leadership and management

346. The leadership and management judgement is about how leaders and governors/trustees collectively ensure that the education that the school provides has a positive impact on all its pupils. It focuses on the areas where inspection and research indicate that leaders can have the strongest effect on the quality of the education provided by the school. Important factors include:

- leaders' high expectations of all pupils in the school, and the extent to which these are embodied in all staff's day-to-day interactions with pupils
- the extent to which leaders focus their attention on the education provided by the school. There are many demands on leaders, but a greater focus on this area is associated with better outcomes for pupils
- whether continuing professional development for teachers and staff is aligned with the curriculum, and the extent to which this develops teachers' content knowledge and teaching content knowledge over time, so that they are able to deliver better teaching for pupils
- the extent to which leaders create coherence and consistency across the school so that pupils benefit from effective teaching and consistent expectations, wherever they are in the school
- whether leaders seek to engage parents and their community thoughtfully and positively in a way that supports pupils' education. Also, whether leaders are thoughtful in drawing boundaries and resisting inappropriate attempts to influence what is taught and the day-to-day life of the school
- the extent to which leaders take into account the workload and well-being of their staff, while also developing and strengthening the quality of the workforce
- the extent to which leaders' (including trust leaders') high ambitions are for all pupils, including those who are harder to reach. This includes ensuring that practices such as 'off-rolling' do not take place and that the way the school uses the pupil premium is founded on good evidence
- whether leaders and governors/trustees all understand their respective roles and perform these in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the school

347. Our evidence for the importance of each of these factors comes from our inspection experience, areas of consensus in academic research and our own

research. There is a full note of how the criteria relate to the evidence available in our [EIF research commentary](#).

348. [The 'safeguarding' section](#) sets out the importance of safeguarding and its place on inspection.

Different levels of leadership

Leadership and management in a school

349. Inspectors will look at the work of headteachers, trust leaders, subject leaders and others with leadership and management roles when reaching this judgement.

Leadership and management in academies

350. When a school is an academy, it is important for inspectors to remember that the trust is one entity, and that the board of trustees and trust leaders are responsible for the quality of education provided in all the schools that make up the trust.

351. It is highly likely that parts of some of the leadership functions described in the grade criteria are performed by trust leaders (for example, the CEO or an education director) and not solely by individual leaders of the school. As such, the roles those leaders perform will be relevant to the school inspection.

352. Even where most decisions are made at the school level, the role of trusts will still be relevant, including how they assure and ensure that decision making about the implementation of trust policy, where applicable, is leading to a high-quality education for pupils.

353. Inspectors will consult the school and trust in order to determine the different levels of responsibility and oversight within the trust and so who they need to meet in the structure of the trust in order to inspect the school. Because leadership functions will be performed by trust leaders, inspectors will consider which they will need to meet in order to gather evidence.

354. It will be normal for inspectors to meet the CEO or their delegate. The CEO or their delegate may also attend key inspection team meetings at the end of each inspection day.

Governance

355. Inspectors will seek evidence of the impact of the board of governors or the board of trustees.

356. The [DfE's governance handbook](#) sets out the purpose of governance, which is to provide confident, strategic leadership and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance.

357. Inspectors will explore how governors/trustees carry out their functions. For example, the clarity of the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction will have a significant impact on the decisions that leaders make about the curriculum. Inspectors will consider whether the work of the board of governors or the board of trustees in this respect is supporting the school to provide a high-quality education for its pupils.

358. In addition, the board of governors or the board of trustees are responsible for ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties, for example under the Equality Act 2010, and other duties, for example in relation to the 'Prevent' duty. The board of governors or the board of trustees are also expected to exercise strategic oversight of all aspects of safeguarding. When inspectors consider whether the board of governors or the board of trustees are fulfilling this responsibility, they are not expected to construct or review a list of duties.

Governance in academies

359. In an academy, the board of trustees is responsible for governance. Inspectors will speak to the chair of the board of trustees (or their delegate) and as many other trustees as are available.

360. Executive trust leaders may or may not sit on the board of trustees (and as such be part of the governance of a trust) and so the distinction between leadership and governance may vary in different trusts. All trusts should have, and publish, a scheme of delegation clearly setting out everything that has been delegated by the board of trustees. Advice on how this should work can be found in the DfE guidance ['Multi-academy trusts: establishing and developing your trust'](#).

361. When inspecting academies, inspectors will need to bear in mind that governance functions can be quite different from those in a maintained school. Some functions that a governing body in a maintained school would carry out may be done by the trust's leaders or staff. If this is the case, it will be important for inspectors to ascertain the board of trustees' role in that process and how it ensures and assures that these functions are carried out properly.

362. It may be that the board of trustees have chosen to delegate some of their powers to members of an 'academy committee' or 'local governing board' at school level. If inspectors are informed that a local governing body has delegated responsibilities, they should establish clearly which powers are with the trustees, which are with the trust leaders and which are with the local governing board. They should then ensure that both their inspection activities and the inspection report accurately reflect who is responsible for what. Whatever the situation, they will still need to talk to the chair of the trust board (or their delegate).

Specific considerations for evaluating leadership and management

The use of the pupil premium and catch-up funding

363. Inspectors will gather evidence about the use of the pupil premium and catch-up funding (and, where applicable, early years pupil premium), particularly regarding:

- the level of funding received by the school in the current academic year and levels of pupil premium funding received in previous academic years
- how leaders and governors have spent the funding, their rationale for this spending and its intended impact on the learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils (including those with SEND).

External support

364. If the school has received support from an external body, inspectors will not evaluate or report on the quality or the impact of the support and challenge on improvement in the school. Instead, they will comment on the action that the school has taken and the impact that this has had on the quality of the school's work.

365. If a school is part of a trust and is receiving support from within the trust, inspectors will be clear that this is internal, not external, support.

Separation by sex

366. Schools have an obligation not to discriminate against pupils on the basis of protected characteristics. It may be unlawful for schools to separate pupils on the basis of any protected characteristic such as sex, religion, belief or gender reassignment while at school, unless permitted by an exception under the Equality Act 2010, such as:

- positive action to alleviate a disadvantage associated with a certain characteristic, address the different needs of those with a certain characteristic or encourage participation in an activity where take up by those with a certain characteristic is low (section 158). This could, for example, include pupils of one race or sex getting additional work experience in a sector in which they are under-represented, or separating the pupils by sex for teaching in subjects if the school has evidence that that this improves their academic outcomes. Any positive action must be proportionate
- in relation to separation by sex in competitive sport, games or other competitive activities in which physical strength, stamina or physique are significant factors in determining success or failure. A school is allowed to organise separate events for boys and girls (section 195).

367. If an inspector finds any evidence of potentially less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic, they will contact the duty desk and must take legal advice. If complex issues mean that advice takes longer than anticipated, we may [pause the inspection](#) until the advice has been received.

368. It would be for a court to decide whether a school is in fact unlawfully discriminating against its pupils. However, if inspectors consider that there is sufficient evidence to support such a conclusion, they will write about this clearly in the inspection report. The separation may have an impact on the schools grade:

- a school is unlikely to be judged as good or outstanding in leadership and management if it inspectors consider there is sufficient evidence to support a conclusion that it is separating pupils in a potentially unlawful way
- if the school has genuine and imminent plans to reintegrate pupils, a judgement of requires improvement will normally be appropriate
- in other cases, the grade will likely be inadequate for leadership and management

369. Where appropriate, inspectors will also refer to the following guidance:

- [‘Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics in schools’](#)
- [‘Separation by sex: implications for the inspections of mixed sex/co-educational schools’](#)

Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics

370. How a school meets the expectations of the [DfE’s statutory guidance on relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education](#) contributes to the leadership and management judgement. If a primary school does not teach about lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships, this will not have an impact

on the leadership and management judgement as long as the school can satisfy inspectors that it has still fulfilled the requirements of the DfE's statutory guidance. If it cannot do this, for example if it has failed to consult with parents, inspectors will consider this when making the leadership and management judgement. Similarly, if a secondary school has not fulfilled the requirements of the DfE's statutory guidance, for example, if it has failed to consult with parents, inspectors will also consider this when making the leadership and management judgement. In those circumstances, the school will not ordinarily receive a judgement for this better than requires improvement.

371. If a secondary school does not teach about lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships, it will not be meeting the expectations of the DfE's statutory guidance. Inspectors will consider this when making the leadership and management judgement. In those circumstances, the school will not ordinarily receive a judgement for this better than requires improvement.

372. See ['Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics'](#) for further guidance.

Workload

373. When used effectively, assessment helps pupils to embed knowledge and use it fluently, and assists teachers in producing clear next steps for pupils. However, assessment is too often carried out in a way that creates unnecessary burdens for staff and pupils. It is therefore important that leaders and teachers understand its limitations and avoid misuse and overuse.

374. Assessment should support the teaching of the curriculum, but not substantially increase teachers' workloads by necessitating too much one-to-one teaching or overly demanding programmes that are almost impossible to deliver without lowering expectations of some pupils.

375. Collecting data can also create an additional workload for school leaders and other staff. Inspectors will look at whether schools' collections of attainment or progress data are proportionate, represent an efficient use of school resources, and are sustainable for staff. The Teacher Workload Advisory Group's report, ['Making data work'](#), recommends that leaders should not have more than 2 or 3 data collection points a year, and that these should be used to inform clear actions.

376. Schools choosing to use more than 2 or 3 data collection points a year should have clear reasoning for:

- what interpretations and actions are informed by the frequency of collection

- the time taken to set assessments, collate, analyse and interpret the data
- the time taken to then act on the findings

377. Inspectors will seek to understand how staff are supported and the steps that are being taken to remove the risk of additional workload. If a school's system for data collection is disproportionate, inefficient or unsustainable for staff, inspectors will reflect this in the inspection report.

Safeguarding

378. All schools should have an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. This means they:

- protect pupils from serious harm, both online and offline
- are vigilant, maintaining an attitude of 'it could happen here'
- are open and transparent, sharing information with others and actively seeking expert advice when required and making sure all safeguarding decisions are accessible for appropriate scrutiny, being accepting of challenge to ensure the right decisions are made, and accepting that there may be safeguarding issues in any provision at any time (see also paragraph 424 of ['Keeping children safe in education: statutory guidance for schools and colleges'](#))
- ensure that all those who work with pupils are trained well so that they understand their responsibilities and the systems and processes that the school operates and are empowered to 'speak out' where there may be concerns
- actively seek and listen to the views and experiences of pupils, staff and parents, taking prompt but proportionate action to address any concerns, where needed
- have appropriate child protection arrangements, which:
 - identify pupils who may need early help, and who are at risk of harm or have been harmed. This can include, but is not limited to, neglect, abuse (including by their peers), grooming, exploitation, sexual abuse and online harm
 - secure the help that pupils need and, if required, refer in a timely way to those who have the expertise to help
 - manage safe recruitment and allegations about adults who may be a risk to pupils
- are receptive to challenge and reflective of their own practices to ensure that safeguarding policies, systems and processes are kept under continuous review

379. Inspectors will not use the four-point grading scale for this aspect of the school. However, inspectors will always make a written judgement under 'leadership and management' in the report about whether the arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective.

380. Inspectors will be familiar with relevant guidance and statutory responsibilities for schools on safeguarding, including:

- [‘Ofsted safeguarding policy’](#)
- [‘Keeping children safe in education: statutory guidance for schools and colleges’](#)
- [‘Working together to safeguard children’](#)
- [‘Positive environments where children can flourish’](#)

381. However, inspectors will go beyond ensuring that schools meet their statutory requirements and beyond simply reviewing documents. They will triangulate evidence gathered during the inspection to evaluate the effectiveness of the safeguarding culture that has been established in the school.

Evaluating safeguarding culture

382. Inspectors will evaluate the extent to which there is an effective whole-school approach to safeguarding. They will want to find out how well staff keep pupils safe.

383. Inspectors will not make judgements about safeguarding based solely on the evidence that the school presents during the inspection. To examine safeguarding culture, inspectors must probe further and take into account a range of evidence so that they are able to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements over time. Inspectors will focus on reviewing decisions made and incidents that have occurred since the last inspection. They will also give proportionate consideration to pupils' and parents' views using surveys, complaints or local intelligence.

384. Inspectors will look for evidence of effective safeguarding practice and at the impact of this practice on all pupils. Inspectors will examine how a school is implementing its safeguarding policies and processes effectively and how it keeps them under review.

385. Inspectors will ensure that the school has proper arrangements in place for sharing information appropriately with relevant parties, including forwarding information to schools and post-16 or post-18 providers (such as at the point of transition) and other agencies, such as the Teaching Regulation Agency, for example, around teacher misconduct.

386. On all inspections, inspectors will determine whether there have been any safeguarding incidents or allegations since the last inspection, and whether the school has taken appropriate action to safeguard the pupils affected and/or to deal with allegations.

387. Inspectors will take a proportionate account of the comments made about safeguarding from staff, pupils and parents of pupils who attend the school, balancing these alongside the other evidence collected during the inspection.

Speaking to pupils

388. The school must provide opportunities for inspectors to speak to pupils with no other adults present, unless there are exceptional circumstances, as it is important that pupils are able to express their views freely to inspectors. See [our guidance 'Inspectors talking to pupils on inspection'](#).

389. As outlined above, inspectors will triangulate evidence gathered during the inspection to evaluate the effectiveness of the safeguarding culture that has been established in the school. If inspectors cannot corroborate this evidence because they are prevented from talking to pupils on inspection, then safeguarding will likely be judged ineffective.

Arrangements for handling evidence or allegations of abuse

390. Inspectors will also look at how schools handle allegations of sexual abuse, including sexual harassment and sexual violence, including the extent to which:

- the school supports pupils to report concerns about harmful sexual behaviour, and makes sure it identifies and addresses any barriers that could prevent pupils from making a disclosure
- staff are confident and well trained in handling reports of sexual abuse in line with part 5 of the government's 'Keeping children safe in education' guidance, including incidents between children and those off school premises
- the school takes allegations seriously, comprehensively records and deals with them swiftly and appropriately, and pupils are confident that this is the case

391. If schools do not have adequate processes in place to manage evidence or allegations of abuse, it is likely that safeguarding will be considered ineffective.

Evidence or allegations of abuse identified on inspection

392. On a very small number of occasions, inspectors may come across evidence or allegations of child abuse, including sexual abuse, during an inspection.

Inspectors must not attempt to investigate any incident or allegations but will make sure that concerns about a child's safety are reported to the appropriate authority. Any referrals will normally be made by the designated safeguarding lead for the school (see [‘Safeguarding concerns: guidance for inspectors’](#)). Inspectors must be satisfied that the correct referral has taken place and record this in their evidence base.

393. If a child discloses to an inspector that they are suffering or at risk of abuse, the inspector will stop all other activity and focus on ensuring that the child receives the help they need. Specific guidance on what to do in this situation can be found in [‘Safeguarding concerns: guidance for inspectors’](#).

Minor safeguarding improvements

394. Inspectors may identify minor improvements that need to be made to the school's safeguarding practices during inspection, such as administrative errors in paperwork or out-of-date policies. Some of these improvements may be rectified easily before the end of the inspection. Where this is the case, inspectors will have a constructive and professional conversation with leaders so that the school has every chance to make these minor improvements. Where minor improvements are required but these are not able to be resolved before the end of the inspection, if the school has taken steps to resolve the issue, the school can still be judged effective for safeguarding. Importantly, any minor improvements that need to be made, while strengthening safeguarding practice, will not have an immediate impact on the safety of pupils.

Ineffective safeguarding

395. Safeguarding is ineffective when there are serious or widespread failures in the school's safeguarding arrangements. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not meet statutory requirements, or they give serious cause for concern, or the school has taken insufficient action to remedy weaknesses following a serious incident.

396. While it is not possible to produce an exhaustive list, the following are examples of what may constitute ineffective safeguarding:

- insufficient action is being taken to remedy weaknesses following a failure of safeguarding arrangements that meant children may have not been safe
- safeguarding allegations about staff members are not being handled appropriately
- clear evidence of serious failures in safeguarding practice that lead pupils or particular groups of pupils not to be safe in school

- statutory requirements, such as breaches of the requirements for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, are not being met
- pupils have little confidence that the school or setting will address concerns about their safety, including risk of abuse, because leaders have not taken their views seriously and/or addressed relevant concerns
- pupils, particularly vulnerable pupils, who are not on the school site (whether long term, temporary or for part of the school day) and the school are either not clear where those pupils are or are not able to give reassurances as to the appropriate steps taken to safeguard them when off-site. This can include children absent from education and children attending inappropriate, unregistered or unmonitored alternative provision.

Ofsted's approach to evaluating leadership and management on graded inspections

397. Evidence used to evaluate the impact of leaders' (including trust leaders') work, both currently and over time, includes, but is not limited to:

- meetings with leaders, including trust senior staff if appropriate, to discuss how well they know the school and the quality of education that it provides for pupils
- meetings with governors/trustees to evaluate how well they fulfil their statutory duties, including their duties under the Equality Act 2010 and in relation to safeguarding
- documentary evidence provided by the school that demonstrates the effectiveness of the school's provision
- interviews with staff and pupils to evidence how well leaders have created a positive culture
- first-hand evidence gathered during the course of inspection
- responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires and Ofsted Parent View; these will be particularly useful for evaluating the culture that has been established in the school by leaders
- any evidence the school has from regularly surveying its staff and the way in which leaders have responded to concerns raised by staff or parents, for example about how senior leaders support teachers to tackle low-level disruptive behaviour
- if there are unusual patterns of pupil movement, discussions with leaders, the local authority and (where appropriate) the trust about those movements

398. Inspectors will always report on the school's activity to gather the views of staff, whether through its internal procedures or through using the Ofsted questionnaire. They will do this in the 'information about this inspection' section.

Evaluating schools' use of alternative provision on graded inspections

399. Inspectors will evaluate how well a school continues to take responsibility for its pupils who attend alternative or off-site provision. Inspectors need to be assured that leaders have ensured that the alternative provision is a suitable and safe placement that will meet pupils' academic/vocational/technical needs, pastoral needs and, if appropriate, SEND needs. Inspectors will speak to a selection of pupils who attend off-site provision, where possible, including potentially through video or telephone calls.

400. Inspectors will ask the school about the registration status of any alternative providers that they use. Any provider of alternative provision must be registered as an independent school if it caters full time for 5 or more pupils of compulsory school age, or one pupil who is looked after or has an education, health and care (EHC) plan. If a school uses alternative provision that should be registered but is not, inspectors will carefully consider whether this affects the likelihood that pupils are safeguarded effectively.

401. Inspectors will normally visit a sample of any part-time unregistered alternative providers during the inspection, as directed by the relevant Ofsted region. This may be completed remotely. This is to assess the adequacy of the school's quality assurance process. Inspectors will normally visit any registered alternative provision site that we have not yet inspected to assess the adequacy of the school's quality assurance process.

402. Inspectors will consider the quality of registered alternative provision using our latest inspection report and assess its impact on the overall quality of education for pupils in a proportionate way.

403. Inspectors will consider:

- the reasons why leaders considered off-site provision to be the best option for the pupils concerned, and whether leaders have kept that under review
- whether leaders have made the appropriate checks on the registration status of the provision and how that has influenced their decision to use that provider
- what safeguarding checks leaders have made and continue to make to ensure that the provision is a safe place for their pupils to attend
- the extent to which leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a well-planned and

sequenced, well-taught, broad and balanced curriculum

- the attendance and behaviour of the pupils who attend the provision
- how well the provision promotes pupils' personal development

404. If a school uses a provider that is not registered, the inspector must contact the duty desk so that staff can notify Ofsted's unregistered schools team. Following the inspection, the team will determine whether Ofsted needs to take further action because there is reasonable cause to believe that the setting is operating as an unregistered school.

405. A school is likely to be judged inadequate for leadership and management if:

- it is making ineffective or inappropriate use of alternative provision
- it is using inappropriate alternative provision
- leaders have not taken the necessary steps to assure themselves of the suitability of a provision
- leaders are not aware of how many of their pupils attend alternative provision
- leaders are not taking responsibility for their pupils who attend alternative provision

Evaluating gaming on a graded inspection

406. Inspectors will challenge leaders about unusual patterns of examination entry that appear to 'game the system', for example if they are entering pupils for courses that are not in their educational best interest. The IDSR will provide inspectors with areas to investigate when nationally available data suggests that gaming may be taking place. If inspectors uncover evidence that deliberate gaming is taking place, the leadership and management judgement is likely to be inadequate.

407. Inspectors will also challenge leaders about unusual patterns in the way that the school records attendance, including the use of inaccurate register codes or changes to when the register is taken. For example, if inspectors reasonably believe that a school is inaccurately recording attendance, has changed the timing of session registration to game attendance rates or is using part-time timetables inappropriately, then inspectors are likely to judge leadership and management to be inadequate.

Evaluating a school's approach to inclusion and off-rolling on a graded inspection

408. Schools should have an inclusive culture that supports arrangements to:

- identify early those pupils who may be disadvantaged or have additional needs or

barriers to learning

- meet the needs of those pupils, drawing on more specialist support when necessary, and help those pupils to engage positively with the curriculum
- ensure that pupils have a positive experience of learning and achieve positive outcomes
- understand why pupils may be absent from school and provide swift support to improve their attendance

409. As set out in the [DfE's attendance guidance](#), in very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. The DfE guidance '[Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#)' provides further specific guidance for pupils who are anxious about attending school.

410. Both pieces of guidance are clear that a part-time timetable must be in place only for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution, and may not be used to manage behaviour. The school will need to show inspectors why a part-time timetable is in place for any pupil and that there were plans, from the very beginning, to return to a full-time timetable. Where part-time timetables are being used inappropriately, this may be an unlawful suspension of a pupil (see next paragraph). If a part-time timetable is justified but the school has no clear plans to return the pupil to full-time education, this will likely impact its leadership and management grade.

411. An unlawful suspension is where a pupil is sent home, or told not to come into school, often as a result of a pupil's behaviour, without a formal suspension being used. This may be off-rolling (see next paragraph), although it may not be off-rolling: the school may consider it to be in the pupil's interest. Like any other legal breach that has a negative impact on pupils, this would normally mean an inadequate judgement for leadership and management.

412. 'Off-rolling' is a form of gaming where a school:

- removes a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or
- encourages a parent to remove their child from the school roll or
- encourages a sixth form student not to continue with their course of study or
- retains a pupil on the school roll but does not allow them to attend school normally, without a formal permanent exclusion or suspension
- and that decision is made primarily in the interests of the school and not the pupil.

413. When inspectors find evidence of off-rolling taking place by Ofsted's definition,

they will always address this in the inspection report. They may, depending on the scale and impact, need to consider it when reaching the judgement. Where a decision is lawful, but still meets Ofsted's definition of off-rolling, inspectors will be careful to consider the context of the decision and the integrity of leaders' actions. They should be clear about what impact the off-rolling has had on pupils involved, and on the school. There are many different activities that can constitute off-rolling, so there can be no hard and fast rules as to how it should be addressed. However, if inspectors determine the school to be off-rolling according to Ofsted's definition, then the leadership and management of the school are likely to be judged inadequate.

414. There are many situations where a school removes a pupil from the school roll that would not amount to off-rolling. These include those set out in the DfE's [School suspensions and permanent exclusions guidance](#). Managed moves and off-site direction, for example, can both be effective tools in breaking a cycle of poor behaviour. Neither are off-rolling when they are genuinely used in a pupil's best interests, and within the requirements of the statutory guidance. Similarly, if a pupil transfers to the roll of their alternative provision, is dual-registered or dual-coded across 2 schools or providers, or uses alternative provision while they remain registered at the school, provided this is genuinely in the best interest of the pupil, it is not off-rolling. If a school appropriately removes a pupil from the roll due to a formal permanent exclusion and follows the proper processes, this is not off-rolling. Headteachers have the right to exclude pupils when there are legitimate reasons for them to do so. Used correctly, exclusion is a vital measure for headteachers to use.

415. However, any of these measures can amount to off-rolling or gaming in some cases, and if a school uses them, inspectors may ask to see evidence of the ways in which these have been carried out.

416. Inspectors will also be interested if there are high numbers of pupils moving on and off roll, but this may not in itself mean that off-rolling is taking place.

The impact of safeguarding on the leadership and management judgement on graded inspections

417. When safeguarding is ineffective, this is likely to lead to a judgement of inadequate for leadership and management.

Ofsted's approach to evaluating leadership and management on ungraded inspections

418. In evaluating leadership and management for ungraded inspections, inspectors may consider any of the factors set out in the grade descriptors for graded inspections; however, they will focus on the matters set out below. In addition, inspectors will consider the extent to which governors/trustees understand their role and carry this out effectively.

Evaluating a school's approach to safeguarding on an ungraded inspection

419. Inspectors will always consider the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding. All schools should have an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. This means that they:

- protect pupils from serious harm, both online and offline
- are vigilant, maintaining an attitude of 'it could happen here'
- are open and transparent, sharing information with others and actively seeking expert advice when required
- ensure that all those who work with pupils are trained well so that they understand their responsibilities and the systems and processes that the school operates and are empowered to 'speak out' where there may be concerns
- actively seek and listen to the views and experiences of pupils, staff and parents, taking prompt but proportionate action to address any concerns, where needed
- have appropriate child protection arrangements, which:
 - identify pupils who may need early help, and who are at risk of harm or have been harmed. This can include, but is not limited to, neglect, abuse (including by their peers), grooming, exploitation, sexual abuse and online harm
 - secure the help that pupils need and, if required, refer in a timely way to those who have the expertise to help
 - manage safe recruitment and allegations about adults who may be a risk to pupils
- are receptive to challenge and reflective of their own practices to ensure that safeguarding policies, systems and processes are kept under continuous review

420. Inspectors will usually carry out the following activities during the inspection to inform their safeguarding judgement:

- check the school's single central record, focusing on staff that have joined since the school's last inspection

- review the school's safeguarding training schedule or record, focusing on new staff that have joined since the last inspection
- review safeguarding records or case files and Parent View responses for the school
- ask (in an age-appropriate way) a selection of pupils if they know how to raise safeguarding concerns
- ask a selection of staff, including non-teaching staff and new staff, if they know how to raise safeguarding concerns

421. Inspectors will not grade this key aspect of a school's work. However, inspectors will always make a written judgement in the report about whether the arrangements for safeguarding children and pupils are effective. Inspectors will go beyond simply reviewing documents in order to evaluate the safeguarding culture of the school.

422. Inspectors may identify minor improvements that need to be made to the school's safeguarding practices during inspection, such as administrative errors in paperwork or out-of-date policies. Some of these improvements may be rectified easily before the end of the inspection. Where this is the case, inspectors will give the school the chance to make these minor improvements. Where minor improvements are required but these are not able to be resolved before the end of the inspection, the school can still be judged effective for safeguarding. Importantly, any minor improvements that need to be made, while strengthening safeguarding practice, will not have an immediate impact on the safety of pupils.

Evaluating a school's approach to gaming and off-rolling on an ungraded inspection

423. Inspectors will look for any evidence that suggests that the school may be gaming or off-rolling, which could be evidence that the school would no longer receive at least its current grade if a graded inspection were carried out. Where the lead inspector has serious concerns about gaming or off-rolling, the inspection will be deemed to be a graded inspection.

Evaluating a school's approach to staff workload on an ungraded inspection

424. Inspectors will look at the extent to which leaders engage with staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them, engaging with them realistically and constructively.

425. Inspectors will consider the extent to which staff are free from bullying and harassment. Inspectors will also consider whether leaders and other staff

understand the limitations of assessment and use it in a way that will avoid creating unnecessary burdens.

426. Inspectors will seek to understand how staff are supported and the steps that are being taken to remove the risk of additional workload.

427. If these issues are not being managed well, this could be considered as evidence that the school would no longer receive at least its current grade if a graded inspection were carried out. Where the lead inspector has serious concerns about workload or the bullying or harassment of staff, the inspection will be deemed to be a graded inspection.

Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision on graded inspections

Early years provision in schools

428. Inspectors are required to grade the standards of education and care in any early years provision in schools and to write about its effectiveness in the inspection report. Inspectors' judgement on the effectiveness of early years provision will include evaluation of the provision for 2- and 3-year-olds. Inspectors will also note if any children receive additional funding.

429. We recognise that the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic may have impacted on children's learning or, development. This could result in some children having a wider than usual range of starting points and gaps in their knowledge. Inspectors will pay close attention to how schools identify and address any of these delays and gaps and what the school is doing to address disruption to learning to ensure that children are well prepared for their next stage of education. Inspectors will use all their evidence to evaluate what it is like to be a child in the early years provision, taking account of the ages of the children and whether they attend part time or full time.

430. The effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding children is reflected in the main judgement for the school.

431. Inspectors will take account of all the judgements made across the evaluation schedule. In particular, they should consider:

- the extent to which leaders and other staff plan, design and implement the early years curriculum
- the extent to which the curriculum and care practices meet the needs of the range of children who attend, particularly any children with SEND
- the progress all children make in their learning and development relative to their starting points and their readiness for the next stage of their education
- children's personal, social and emotional development, including whether they feel safe and are secure, stimulated and happy

432. Inspectors will particularly consider the intent, implementation and impact of the school's early years curriculum. They will evaluate the impact that the quality of education has on children, particularly disadvantaged pupils (including those with SEND).

433. Inspectors will look at children's learning and development over time. They will ascertain how well the curriculum is meeting children's needs. This will be evident in the extent to which children know and remember more of the intended curriculum. Inspectors need to make careful inferences about children's current progress by drawing together evidence from a range of sources.

434. Inspectors will consider, taking into account any exemptions from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS, how well:

- leaders assure themselves that the aims of the EYFS are met and that it is appropriately ambitious for the children it serves. Staff ensure that the content, sequencing and progression in the 7 areas of learning are secured
- the content of the EYFS curriculum is taught in a logical progression, systematically and in a way that is explained effectively, so that it gives children the necessary foundations for the rest of their schooling
- children develop, consolidate and deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills across all the areas of learning in the EYFS
- staff develop children's communication and language through singing songs, nursery rhymes and playing games
- staff develop children's love of reading through reading aloud and telling stories and rhymes
- children demonstrate their attitudes and behaviours through the key characteristics of effective learning:

- playing and exploring
- active learning
- creative thinking and thinking critically

435. More information about inspections and the EYFS, including how inspectors will take account of any exemptions and modifications to the learning and development requirements, can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

436. Teaching is a broad term that covers the many different ways in which adults help young children learn. It includes their interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play and activities, communicating and modelling language, showing, explaining, demonstrating, exploring ideas, encouraging, questioning, recalling, providing a narrative for what they are doing, facilitating and setting challenges. It takes account of the equipment that adults provide and the attention given to the physical environment, as well as the structure and routines of the day that establish expectations. Integral to teaching is how practitioners assess what children know, understand and can do, as well as taking account of their interests and dispositions to learn (characteristics of effective learning), and how practitioners use this information to plan children's next steps in learning and to monitor their progress.

437. In addition, when observing provision for 2- and 3-year-olds, inspectors will consider the extent to which all staff are:

- knowledgeable about the typical development and characteristics of learning for 2- and 3-year-olds, including their emotional and physical dependence on adults
- aware of the large difference in development between children who are just 2 and those approaching their fourth birthday
- responsive when children need comforting, and provide support appropriate to the individual needs of the child
- attentive to children's care needs and use times caring for them as an opportunity to help children's learning
- giving children time to be in familiar, small groups and opportunities to be in smaller, quieter areas for play
- patient and attentive when allowing 2- and 3-year-olds to express their ideas
- listening to children and responding to their verbal and non-verbal communication, rather than interrupting them

Sixth-form provision in schools

438. Inspectors are required to grade the standard of education in any sixth-form provision in schools and to write about the sixth form in the inspection report. Inspectors will use all their evidence to evaluate what it is like to be a student in the sixth form.

439. The effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding students is reflected in the main judgement for the school.

440. Inspectors will take account of the key judgement areas in the evaluation schedule. They should consider:

- the extent to which leaders and teachers have high expectations for attainment and progress and the effectiveness of the systems they use to monitor and develop the quality of sixth-form programmes for all students, including disadvantaged pupils, which in turn includes those with SEND
- how leaders and teachers develop a curriculum that provides progression, stretch, mathematics and English for those young people without GCSE grades 9 to 4 (or legacy grades A* to C), as well as work experience or industry placements and non-qualification activities (which may include tutorials, work to develop study, leadership, teamwork, self-management skills and volunteering)
- the effectiveness of high-quality, impartial careers guidance in enabling all students to make progress and move on to a higher level of qualification, employment or further training when they are ready to do so

441. Through observing teaching and training activities and by holding discussions with students, teachers and support staff, inspectors will consider how well:

- students develop personal, social and independent learning skills
- students achieve high levels of punctuality and attendance
- students' conduct and attitudes, including in non-qualification or enrichment activities and/or work experience, prepare them for employment or progress to higher levels of study

442. Inspection of apprenticeships training is not in the scope of graded or ungraded inspections of schools. Inspection of T-level technical education programmes is in scope from September 2023. Where T levels are offered by a school sixth form, inspectors will consider this provision as part of their evaluation of the quality of education.

Part 3. Grade descriptors for graded inspections

443. This part sets out the grade descriptors that inspectors will use in coming to judgements on graded inspections.

Reaching a judgement

444. Inspectors will make 4 key judgements:

- the quality of education
- behaviour and attitudes
- personal development
- leadership and management

445. Where relevant, inspectors will also make 2 provision judgements:

- early years provision
- sixth-form provision

446. Inspectors will also make a judgement on the school's overall effectiveness.

447. The grade descriptors are not exhaustive. They do not replace inspectors' professional judgements. Inspectors will interpret the way that grades are described according to pupils' age, stage and phase of education.

Ofsted judgements

448. Inspectors use the following 4-point scale to make all judgements:

- outstanding
- good
- requires improvement
- inadequate

449. Outstanding is a challenging and exacting judgement. In order to reach this standard, inspectors will determine whether the school meets all the criteria for good under that judgement, and does so securely and consistently.

450. In other words, it is not enough that the school is strong against some aspects of the judgement and not against others, but it must meet each and every good criterion. In addition, there are further criteria set out under the outstanding judgement, which the school will also need to meet.

451. When considering a judgement of good or requires improvement, inspectors will look at whether the overall quality of the school is most closely aligned to the descriptors set out.

452. A school is likely to be inadequate under a particular judgement if one or more of the inadequate criteria applies.

Grade descriptors for quality of education

453. In order for the quality of education judgement to be outstanding, the school must meet all of the good criteria securely and consistently and it must also meet the additional outstanding criteria.

Outstanding (1)

- The school meets all the criteria for a good quality of education securely and consistently.
- The quality of education provided is exceptional.

In addition, the following apply.

- The school's curriculum intent and implementation are embedded securely and consistently across the school. It is evident from what teachers do that they have a firm and common understanding of the school's curriculum intent and what it means for their practice. Across all parts of the school, series of lessons contribute well to delivering the curriculum intent.

- The work given enables pupils, over time and across the school, to consistently achieve the aims of the curriculum, which is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.
- Pupils' work across the curriculum is consistently of a high quality.
- Pupils consistently achieve highly, particularly the most disadvantaged. Pupils with SEND achieve exceptionally well.

454. In order to judge whether a school is good or requires improvement, inspectors will use a 'best fit' approach, relying on the inspection team's professional judgement.

Good (2)

- Leaders adopt or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils (including pupils with SEND), the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. This is either the national curriculum or a curriculum of comparable breadth and ambition.
- The curriculum may undergo necessary changes (for example, following a review by leaders or to take account of COVID-19) and certain aspects may be more developed than others. Where this is the case, these changes do not prevent all pupils having access to an appropriately broad and ambitious curriculum. Where adaptations to curriculum breadth are made for particular pupils, there is a clear rationale for why this is in those pupils' interests, and, where appropriate, there is a clear plan for returning all pupils to studying the full curriculum.
- The school's curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.
- Pupils study the full curriculum; it is not narrowed:
 - in primary schools, a broad range of subjects (exemplified by the national curriculum) is taught in key stage 2 throughout each and all of Years 3 to 6
 - in secondary schools, the school teaches a broad range of subjects (exemplified by the national curriculum) throughout Years 7 to 9. The

school's aim is to have the EBacc at the heart of its curriculum, in line with the DfE's ambition where this applies, and good progress has been made towards this ambition.

- The curriculum is successfully adapted, designed or developed to be ambitious and meet the needs of pupils with SEND, developing their knowledge, skills and abilities to apply what they know and can do with increasing fluency and independence.
- The work given enables pupils to achieve the aims and ambition of the curriculum, which is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the subject(s) and courses they teach. Leaders provide effective support, including for those teaching outside their main areas of expertise.
- Teachers present subject matter clearly, promoting appropriate discussion about the subject matter being taught. They check pupils' understanding systematically, identify misconceptions accurately and provide clear, direct feedback. In so doing, they respond and adapt their teaching as necessary without unnecessarily elaborate or individualised approaches.
- Over the course of study, teaching is designed to help pupils to remember long term the content they have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger ideas.
- Any remote education is well integrated within course(s) of study, and is well designed to support the wider implementation of the school's curriculum.
- Teachers and leaders use assessment well. For example, they use it to help pupils embed and use knowledge fluently, or to check understanding and inform teaching, or to understand different starting points and gaps as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders understand the limitations of assessment and do not use it in a way that creates unnecessary burdens on staff or pupils.
- Teachers create an environment that focuses on pupils. The textbooks and other teaching materials that teachers select – in a way that does not create unnecessary workload for staff – reflect the school's ambitious intentions for the course of study. These materials clearly support the intent of a coherently planned curriculum, sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.
- Reading is prioritised to allow pupils to access the full curriculum offer.
- A rigorous and sequential approach to the reading curriculum develops pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading. At all stages,

reading attainment is assessed and gaps are addressed quickly and effectively for all pupils. Reading books connect closely to the phonics knowledge that pupils are taught when they are learning to read.

- The sharp focus on ensuring that younger children and those at the early stages of reading gain the phonics knowledge and language comprehension necessary to read, and the skills to communicate, gives them the foundations for future learning.
- Teachers ensure that their own speaking, listening, writing and reading of English support pupils in developing their language and vocabulary well.
- Pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum and, as a result, achieve well. This is reflected in the work that pupils produce.
- Where available, impact is reflected in results from national tests and examinations that meet government expectations, or in the qualifications obtained. Teacher assessed grades from 2020 and 2021 will not be used to assess impact.
- Pupils are ready for the next stage of education, employment or training. They have the knowledge and skills they need and, where relevant, they gain qualifications that allow them to go on to destinations that meet their interests and aspirations and the intention of their course of study. Pupils with SEND achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Pupils read widely and often, with fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age. They are able to apply mathematical knowledge, concepts and procedures appropriately for their age.

Requires improvement (3)

- The quality of education provided by the school is not good.

Inadequate (4)

The quality of education is likely to be inadequate if any one of the following applies.

- The school's curriculum has limited ambition, little or no structure or

coherence, and leaders have not appropriately considered content and sequencing. Pupils experience a jumbled, disconnected series of lessons that do not build their knowledge, skills or understanding.

- The pupils' experiences in lessons contribute weakly to their learning of the intended curriculum.
- The range of subjects is narrow and does not prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain.
- Pupils cannot communicate, read, write or apply mathematics sufficiently well for their age and are therefore unable to succeed in the next year or stage of education, or in training or employment. (This does not apply for some pupils with SEND.)
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make is consistently well below that of other pupils nationally and shows little or no improvement.
- Pupils with SEND do not benefit from a high-quality education. Expectations of them are low, and their needs are not accurately identified, assessed or met.
- Pupils have not attained the qualifications appropriate for them to progress to their next stages of education, training or employment.

Grade descriptors for evaluating behaviour and attitudes

455. In order for the behaviour and attitudes judgement to be outstanding, the school must meet all of the good criteria securely and consistently and it must also meet the additional outstanding criteria.

Outstanding (1)

- The school meets all the criteria for good in behaviour and attitudes securely and consistently.
- Behaviour and attitudes are exceptional.

In addition, the following apply:

- Pupils behave with consistently high levels of respect for others. They play a highly positive role in creating a school environment in which commonalities are identified and celebrated, difference is valued and nurtured, and bullying, harassment and violence are never tolerated.
- Pupils consistently have highly positive attitudes and commitment to their education. They are highly motivated and persistent in the face of difficulties. Pupils make a highly positive, tangible contribution to the life of the school and/or the wider community. Pupils actively support the well-being of other pupils.
- Pupils behave consistently well, demonstrating high levels of self-control and consistently positive attitudes to their education. If pupils struggle with this, the school takes intelligent, fair and highly effective action to support them to succeed in their education.

456. In order to judge whether a school is good or requires improvement, inspectors will use a 'best fit' approach, relying on the inspection team's professional judgement.

Good (2)

- The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. These expectations are commonly understood and applied consistently and fairly. This is reflected in pupils' positive behaviour and conduct. Low-level disruption is not tolerated and pupils' behaviour does not disrupt lessons or the day-to-day life of the school. Leaders support all staff well in managing pupils' behaviour. Staff make sure that pupils follow appropriate routines.
- Leaders, staff and pupils create a positive environment in which bullying is not tolerated. If bullying, aggression, discrimination and derogatory language occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively and are not allowed to spread.
- There is demonstrable improvement in the behaviour and attendance of pupils who have particular needs.
- Pupils' attitudes to their education are positive. They are committed to their learning, know how to study effectively and do so, are resilient to setbacks and take pride in their achievements.
- Pupils have high attendance. They come to school on time and are

punctual to lessons. When this is not the case, the school takes appropriate, swift and effective action.

- Suspensions are used appropriately. The school reintegrates suspended pupils on their return and manages their behaviour effectively. Permanent exclusions are used appropriately as a last resort (see [statutory guidance on school exclusion](#)).
- Relationships among pupils and staff reflect a positive and respectful culture; pupils are safe and they feel safe.

Requires improvement (3)

- Behaviour and attitudes in the school are not good.

Inadequate (4)

Behaviour and attitudes are likely to be inadequate if any one of the following applies.

- Leaders are not taking effective steps to secure good behaviour from pupils and a consistent approach to discipline. They do not support staff adequately in managing behaviour.
- Pupils' lack of engagement and persistent low-level and/or high-level wilful disruption contribute to reduced learning and/or disorderly classrooms.
- A significant minority of pupils show a lack of respect for each other and/or staff and a lack of self-discipline. Pupils frequently ignore or rebut requests from teachers to moderate their conduct. This results in poor behaviour around the school.
- Pupils show negative attitudes towards the value of good manners and behaviour as important factors in school life, adult life and work.
- Attendance is consistently low for all pupils or groups of pupils and shows little sign of sustained improvement.
- Incidents of bullying or prejudiced and discriminatory behaviour, both direct and indirect, are frequent.
- Pupils have little confidence in the school's ability to tackle harassment,

bullying, violence and/or discriminatory behaviour successfully.

- Poor behaviour means that pupils, or particular groups of pupils, are not safe or do not feel safe at school and/or at alternative placements.

Grade descriptors for personal development

457. In order for the personal development judgement to be outstanding, the school must meet all of the good criteria securely and consistently, and it must also meet the additional outstanding criteria.

Outstanding (1)

- The school meets all the criteria for good in personal development securely and consistently.
- Personal development is exceptional.

In addition, the following apply:

- The school consistently promotes the extensive personal development of pupils. The school goes beyond the expected, so that pupils have access to a wide, rich set of experiences. Opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests are of exceptional quality.
- There is strong take-up by pupils of the opportunities provided by the school. Disadvantaged pupils(including those with SEND), consistently benefit from this excellent work.
- The school provides these rich experiences in a coherently planned way, in the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities, and they considerably strengthen the school's offer.
- The way the school goes about developing pupils' character is exemplary and is worthy of being shared with others.

458. In order to judge whether a school is good or requires improvement, inspectors will use a 'best fit' approach, relying on the inspection team's professional judgement.

Good (2)

- The curriculum extends beyond the academic, vocational or technical and provides for pupils' broader development. The school's work to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is of a high quality.
- The curriculum and the school's effective wider work support pupils to be confident, resilient and independent, and to develop strength of character.
- The school provides high-quality pastoral support. Pupils know how to eat healthily, maintain an active lifestyle and keep physically and mentally healthy. They have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and of the protected characteristics.
- The school provides a wide range of opportunities to nurture, develop and stretch pupils' talents and interests. Pupils appreciate these and make good use of them.
- The school prepares pupils for life in modern Britain effectively, developing their understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and diversity effectively. As a result, pupils understand, appreciate and respect difference in the world and its people, celebrating the things we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities.
- Pupils engage with views, beliefs and opinions that are different from their own in considered ways. They show respect for the different protected characteristics as defined in law and no forms of discrimination are tolerated.
- The school provides pupils with meaningful opportunities to understand how to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society. Pupils know how to discuss and debate issues and ideas in a considered way.
- Secondary schools prepare pupils for future success in education, employment or training. They use the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#), a framework that defines the best careers provision in schools and colleges, to develop and improve their careers provision and enable a range of education and

training providers to speak to pupils in Years 8 to 13. All pupils receive unbiased information about potential next steps and high-quality careers guidance; the school meets the requirements of section 42B of the Education Act 1997. The school provides good quality, meaningful opportunities for pupils to encounter the world of work.

Requires improvement (3)

- Personal development in the school is not good.

Inadequate (4)

Personal development is likely to be inadequate if any one of the following applies.

- A significant minority of pupils do not receive a wide, rich set of experiences.
- Leaders and governors/trustees, through their words, actions or influence, directly and/or indirectly, undermine or fail to promote equality of opportunity in the school.
- Leaders and governors/trustees are not protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremist views. Policy and practice are poor, which means that pupils are at risk.
- Leaders and governors/trustees are actively undermining fundamental British values and are not protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremist views.
- Pupils or groups of pupils are discriminated against, and the school is not taking effective action to address this.
- Pupils are unprepared for life in modern Britain.

Grade descriptors for leadership and management

459. In order for the leadership and management judgement to be outstanding, the school must meet all of the good criteria securely and consistently, and it must also meet the additional outstanding criteria.

Outstanding (1)

- The school meets all the criteria for good in leadership and management securely and consistently.
- Leadership and management are exceptional.

In addition, the following apply:

- Leaders ensure that teachers receive focused and highly effective professional development. Teachers' subject, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge consistently build and develop over time. This consistently translates into improvements in the teaching of the curriculum.
- Leaders ensure that highly effective and meaningful engagement takes place with staff at all levels and that issues are identified. When issues are identified, in particular about workload, they are consistently dealt with appropriately and quickly.
- Staff consistently report high levels of support for well-being issues.

460. In order to judge whether a school is good or requires improvement, inspectors will use a 'best fit' approach, relying on the inspection team's professional judgement.

Good (2)

- Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality education to all pupils. This is realised through strong, shared values, policies and practice.

- Leaders focus on improving teachers' subject, pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge in order to enhance the teaching of the curriculum and the appropriate use of assessment. The practice and subject knowledge of staff, including ECTs, build and improve over time. This includes building teachers' expertise in remote education.
- Leaders aim to ensure that all pupils successfully complete their programmes of study. They provide the support for staff to make this possible. They create an inclusive culture and do not allow gaming or off-rolling.
- Leaders engage effectively with pupils and others in their community, including, when relevant, parents, employers and local services. Engagement opportunities are focused and have purpose.
- Leaders engage with their staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them. They are realistic and constructive in the way they manage staff, including their workload.
- Leaders protect staff from bullying and harassment.
- Governors/trustees understand their role and carry this out effectively. Governors/trustees ensure that the school has a clear vision and strategy, that resources are managed well and that leaders are held to account for the quality of education.
- Governors or trustees ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties, for example under the Equality Act 2010, and other duties, for example in relation to the 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding.
- Safeguarding is effective

Requires improvement (3)

- Leadership and management are not good.
- Safeguarding is effective.

Inadequate (4)

Leadership and management are likely to be inadequate if one or more of

the following applies.

- The school's capacity to improve the quality of education, pupils' personal development or pupils' behaviour and attitudes is poor, or leaders are overly dependent on external support (support from within the school's trust is not considered external support).
- Leaders are not doing enough to tackle weaknesses in the school.
- The improvements that leaders and governors/trustees have made are unsustainable or have been implemented too slowly.
- The school is making ineffective or inappropriate use of alternative provision or is using inappropriate alternative provision (including, for example, failing to ensure the suitability of a provision or not taking responsibility for their pupils who attend alternative provision).
- The school is systematically gaming its results, entering pupils for courses that are not in their educational best interest.
- There is evidence that pupils have been removed from the school roll without a formal permanent exclusion, or removed from the school roll by the school encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, or are regularly, repeatedly or systematically taken out of school without a formal suspension (for example, being sent home to 'cool off' or put on a part-time timetable). Leaders have taken insufficient action to address this.
- Leaders are not aware of, or are not taking effective action to stem, the decline in the attainment or progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- There is a clear breach of one or more of the legal responsibilities of the governors or trustees, and that breach is serious because of the extent of its actual or potential negative impact on pupils. The board of governors or board of trustees either is unaware of the breach, or has taken insufficient action to correct it and/or to remedy the negative or potential negative impact on pupils and/or to ensure that a suitable system is in place to prevent a similar breach in the future.
- Safeguarding is ineffective.

Grade descriptors for early years provision in schools

461. In order for the early years provision of a school to be judged outstanding, it must meet all of the good criteria securely and consistently, and it must also meet the additional outstanding criteria.

Outstanding (1)

- The school meets all the criteria for good in the effectiveness of early years securely and consistently.
- The quality of early years education provided is exceptional.

In addition, the following apply:

- The EYFS curriculum provides no limits or barriers to the children's achievements, regardless of their backgrounds, circumstances or needs. The high ambition it embodies is shared by all staff.
- The impact of the curriculum on what children know, can remember and do is strong. Children demonstrate this through being deeply engaged and sustaining high levels of concentration. Children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, do well. Children with SEND achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Children are highly motivated and are eager to join in. They share and cooperate well, demonstrating high levels of self-control and respect for others. Children consistently keep on trying hard, particularly if they encounter difficulties.

462. In order to judge whether a school is good or requires improvement, inspectors will use a 'best fit' approach, relying on the inspection team's professional judgement.

Good (2)

- Leaders adopt or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give children, particularly disadvantaged (including those with SEND), the knowledge, self-belief and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.
- The curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced. It builds on what children know and can do, towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and

skills for their future learning.

- There is a sharp focus on ensuring that children acquire a wide vocabulary, communicate effectively and, in Reception, secure a knowledge of phonics, which gives them the foundations for future learning, especially in preparation for them to become confident and fluent readers.
- The school's approach to teaching early reading and synthetic phonics is systematic and ensures that all children learn to read words and simple sentences accurately by the end of Reception.
- The school has the same academic ambitions for almost all children. For children with particular needs, such as those with SEND, their curriculum is designed to be ambitious and to meet their needs.
- Children benefit from meaningful learning across the curriculum.
- Staff are knowledgeable about the areas of learning they teach. They manage the EYFS curriculum and pedagogy in relation to the learning needs of their children. Staff are expert in teaching systematic, synthetic phonics and ensure that children practise their reading from books that match their phonics knowledge.
- Staff present information clearly to children, promoting appropriate discussion about the subject matter being taught. They communicate well to check children's understanding, identify misconceptions and provide clear explanations to improve their learning. In so doing, they respond and adapt their teaching as necessary.
- Staff read to children in a way that excites and engages them, introducing new ideas, concepts and vocabulary.
- Staff are knowledgeable about the teaching of early mathematics. They ensure that children have sufficient practice to be confident in using and understanding numbers. The mathematics curriculum provides a strong basis for more complex learning later on. Over the EYFS, teaching is designed to help children remember long term what they have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger concepts. This is checked well by staff and leaders. Leaders understand the limitations of assessment and avoid unnecessary burdens on staff or children.
- Staff create an environment that supports the intent of an ambitious, coherently planned and sequenced curriculum. The resources are chosen to meet the children's needs and promote learning.
- The curriculum and care practices promote and support children's emotional security and development of their character. Staff teach children the language of feelings, helping them to appropriately develop their emotional literacy (see pages 8 to 9 of the 'Statutory framework for the

early years foundation stage', which set out the personal, social and emotional development (PSED) area of learning). Leaders and other staff are particularly attentive to the youngest children's needs.

- Staff give clear messages to children about why it is important to eat, drink, rest, exercise and be kind to each other. They teach children to take managed risks and challenges as they play and learn, supporting them to be active and develop physically.
- Staff provide information for parents about their children's progress, in line with the requirements of the EYFS. They provide information to parents about supporting their child's learning at home, including details about the school's method of teaching reading and how to help their children learn to read.
- Children develop detailed knowledge and skills across the 7 areas of learning in an age-appropriate way. Children develop their vocabulary and use it across the EYFS curriculum. By the end of Reception, children use their knowledge of phonics to read accurately and with increasing speed and fluency.
- Children are ready for the next stage of education, especially for Year 1 in school, if applicable. They have the knowledge and skills they need to benefit from what school has to offer when it is time to move on. By the end of Reception, children achieve well, particularly those children with lower starting points.
- By the end of Reception, children have the personal, physical and social skills they need to succeed in the next stage of their education.
- Children enjoy, listen attentively and respond with comprehension to familiar stories, rhymes and songs that are appropriate to their age and stage of development. Children develop their vocabulary and understanding of language across the 7 areas of learning.
- Children demonstrate their positive attitudes to learning through high levels of curiosity, concentration and enjoyment. They listen intently and respond positively to adults and each other. Children are developing their resilience to setbacks and take pride in their achievements.
- Children are beginning to manage their own feelings and behaviour, understanding how these have an impact on others. They are developing a sense of right from wrong.

Requires improvement (3)

- The effectiveness of the early years is not yet good.

Inadequate (4)

The effectiveness of the early years is likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.

- A poorly designed and implemented curriculum does not meet children's needs or provide the necessary foundations for the rest of their schooling.
- Leaders and/or staff have a poor understanding of the areas of learning they teach and the way in which young children learn.
- Assessment is overly burdensome. It is unhelpful in determining what children know, understand and can do.
- By the end of Reception, children cannot communicate, read or spell phonically decodable words as well as they should. They do not have basic fluency in number and shape, space and measure.
- Children are not well prepared for the next stage of their learning, particularly those who receive additional funding or have SEND. Strategies for engaging parents are weak and parents do not know what their child is learning or how to help them improve.
- The attainment and progress of children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are consistently low and show little or no improvement, indicating that children are underachieving considerably.

Grade descriptors for sixth-form provision in schools

Outstanding (1)

- The school meets all the criteria for good in the effectiveness of sixth-form provision securely and consistently.
- The quality of sixth-form provision provided is exceptional.

In addition, the following apply:

- The work that sixth-form students do over time embodies consistently demanding curriculum goals. It matches the aims of the curriculum in being coherently planned and sequenced towards building sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and destinations.
- The impact of the taught curriculum is strong. Students acquire and develop high-quality skills and produce work of a consistently high standard.
- Sixth-form students demonstrate consistently highly positive attitudes and commitment to their education. They have consistently high levels of respect for others.
- The sixth form consistently and extensively promotes learners' personal development. The sixth form goes beyond the expected, so that learners have access to a wide, rich set of experiences that teach learners why it is important to contribute actively to society. This is achieved through activities that strengthen considerably the sixth form's offer.

463. In order to judge whether a school is good or requires improvement, inspectors will use a 'best fit' approach, relying on the inspection team's professional judgement.

Good (2)

- Leaders adopt or construct study programmes that are ambitious, appropriately relevant to local and regional employment and training priorities and designed to give sixth-form students, particularly those with high needs and disadvantaged pupils (including those with SEND), the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in life.
- The curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively

sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment.

- The school is ambitious for all its sixth-form students, including those with SEND and those who have high needs. This is reflected in the curriculum. The curriculum remains ambitious and is tailored, where necessary, to meet individual needs.
- Sixth-form students study the intended curriculum. The school ensures this by teaching all components of the full programmes of study. Any remote education is integrated into course(s) of study, and is well designed to support the wider implementation of the school's curriculum. Changes may have been made to the intended curriculum to have a short-term specific focus for some or all students. Where this is the case, there is a clear rationale for why it is in those students' best interests, and there is a clear plan for returning all students to studying to their full programme.
- Teachers have expert knowledge of the subject(s) and courses they teach. Leaders provide effective support for those teaching outside their main areas of expertise. When relevant, teachers have extensive and up-to-date vocational expertise.
- Teachers present information and/or demonstrate skills clearly, promoting appropriate consideration of the subject matter being taught. They check students' understanding systematically, identify misconceptions and provide clear, direct feedback. In doing this, they respond and adapt their teaching as necessary without recourse to unnecessary, time-consuming, individualised approaches to subject matter.
- The work that teachers give to sixth-form students is demanding. It ensures that students build knowledge and acquire skills, improving and extending what they already know and can do.
- Teachers encourage students to use subject-specific, professional and technical vocabulary well.
- Over the course of study, teachers design and use activities to help students to remember long term the content they have been taught, to integrate new knowledge into larger concepts and to apply skills fluently and independently.
- Teachers and leaders use assessment well. For example, they use it to help students embed and use knowledge fluently and flexibly, to evaluate the application of skills, or to check understanding and inform teaching or to understand different starting points and gaps as a result of the pandemic. Leaders understand the limitations of assessment and do not use it in a way that creates unnecessary burdens on staff or students.
- Teachers create an environment that allows sixth-form students to focus

on learning. The resources and materials that teachers select and produce – in a way that does not create unnecessary workload for staff – reflect the school's ambitious intentions for the course of study. These materials clearly support the intent of a coherently planned curriculum, sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning, independent living and employment.

- Students develop detailed knowledge across the curriculum and, as a result, achieve well in their study programmes. Students make substantial and sustained progress from their identified and recorded starting points in their study programmes. Where appropriate, this is reflected in results in national examinations that meet government expectations, or in the qualifications obtained.
- Students are ready for the next stage of education, employment or training. They have gained qualifications or met the standards that allow them to go on to destinations that meet their interests, aspirations and intended course of study. Students with high needs have greater independence in making decisions about their lives.
- Students have high attendance and are punctual. Their attitudes to their education are positive. Where relevant, attitudes improve over time.
- The sixth form prepares its students for future success in education, employment or training. It does this through providing: unbiased information to all about potential next steps; high-quality, up-to-date and locally relevant careers guidance; and opportunities for good-quality, meaningful encounters with the world of work
- Leaders and other staff create an environment in which students feel safe because staff and learners do not accept bullying, harassment or discrimination or child-on-child abuse – online or offline. Staff deal with any issues quickly, consistently and effectively.
- Students develop an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships through appropriate relationship and sex education.

Requires improvement (3)

- The quality of education in the sixth form is not yet good.

Inadequate (4)

The effectiveness of the sixth form is likely to be inadequate if any one of the following applies.

- The design, coverage or teaching of the curriculum does not provide adequately for all students.
- The curriculum does not prepare students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain.
- Weak assessment practice means that teaching fails to meet students' needs.
- The attainment and progress of students are consistently low and show little or no improvement over time, indicating that students are underachieving considerably.
- Students do not develop or improve the English and mathematical skills they need to succeed in the next year or stage of education, or in training or employment.
- Students have not attained the qualifications, skills or behaviours appropriate for them to progress to their next stage of education, training or employment.
- Students' attendance is consistently low and shows little sign of sustained improvement. Their lack of engagement, motivation or enthusiasm inhibits their progress and development.
- The school does not ensure that sixth-form students get access to unbiased information about potential next steps, high-quality careers guidance, or opportunities for encounters with the world of work.

Grade descriptors for overall effectiveness

464. Inspectors will use all their evidence to evaluate what it is like to attend the school. In making their judgements about a school's overall effectiveness, inspectors will consider whether the standard of education is good or whether it exceeds good and is outstanding. If it is not good, then inspectors will consider

whether it requires improvement or is inadequate.

465. In judging the school's overall effectiveness, inspectors will take account of the 4 key judgements.

466. In coming to each of these key judgements, inspectors will also draw on evidence from the inspection of any early years provision or sixth-form provision and consider its impact in the wider context of the school.

467. Inspectors will judge the effectiveness of any early years provision or sixth-form provision. For either case or both, inspectors will give a grade, summarise the key findings and explain the effectiveness grading in the inspection report. However, inspectors may decide not to give a grade and not to report on the early years or sixth-form provision if there is the risk that it is possible to identify individual pupils because numbers are so small. Typically, this will be when there are fewer than 5 pupils.

468. The grade for early years and/or the grade for the sixth-form provision may be the same as, or higher or lower than, the overall effectiveness grade. Inspectors will take into account the size of the early years and sixth-form provision in relation to the size of the school when considering the impact of these judgements on the overall effectiveness grade. Inspectors will explain any difference between the early years and/or sixth-form provision grade(s) and the overall effectiveness grade in the report.

469. Inspectors will always make a written judgement about the effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding pupils.

470. Before making the final judgement on overall effectiveness, inspectors will always consider the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school, and evaluate the extent to which the school's education provision meets different pupils' needs, including pupils with SEND.

Outstanding (1)

- The quality of education is outstanding.
- All other key judgements are likely to be outstanding. In exceptional circumstances, one of the key judgements may be good, as long as there is convincing evidence that the school is improving this area sustainably

and securely towards outstanding. Typically this will mean meeting each and every one of the good criteria but falling short on the outstanding for that key judgement.

- Safeguarding is effective.

Good (2)

- The quality of education is at least good.
- All other key judgements are likely to be good or outstanding. In exceptional circumstances, one of the other key judgement areas may require improvement, as long as there is convincing evidence that the school is improving this area sustainably and securely towards good.
- Safeguarding is effective.

Requires improvement (3)

- Other than in exceptional circumstances, it is likely that, when the school is judged as requires improvement in any of the key judgements, the school's overall effectiveness will also be requires improvement.
- Safeguarding is effective.

Inadequate (4)

- The judgement on the overall effectiveness will be inadequate when any one of the key judgements is inadequate and/or safeguarding is ineffective.

Part 4. Urgent inspections

471. Under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 (the Act), Ofsted can carry out inspections to follow up concerns about schools that are not in a category of concern but that have been brought to its attention through, for example, a qualifying complaint made to Ofsted or by other means.

472. Inspectors will follow this guidance if we have concerns that the safety of pupils and/or staff is at risk or when information suggests that there has been a serious breakdown in leadership and management or a decline in standards. This might be raised internally through our risk assessment process, or externally through a complaint or other information we receive.

473. If we receive information about a school that causes us concern, we will weigh this carefully against all other data and information we hold before making a decision on whether to carry out an urgent inspection of the school. The decision on whether to inspect the school is made by the relevant Ofsted regional director. Where an inspection takes place as a result of a qualifying complaint, inspectors will also take account of guidance issued by the national complaints team.

474. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate individual complaints or incidents of a safeguarding and/or child protection nature. However, such matters may raise whole-school issues, for example about the school's arrangements to keep pupils safe. It is the whole-school issues that will be the focus of these inspections.

475. Urgent inspections are selective and focus sharply on the issues raised that caused the school to be inspected. As a result, inspectors will not make judgements on the overall effectiveness of the school or any of the key judgements within the EIF. Inspection findings must be made based on the areas of focus. Where the inspection focus is on the school's safeguarding arrangements, inspectors will take account of the ['safeguarding' section](#).

476. It is important to note that those leading, managing and governing a school are responsible for the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. Governors/trustees in particular must ensure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. Concerns about safeguarding may raise wider questions about the effectiveness of leadership and management and governors' ability to hold the school to account. Therefore, in some cases, urgent inspections will focus on both elements and may be expanded as appropriate. It is the responsibility of the lead inspector, using their professional judgement, to determine the precise focus of the inspection and make sure that leaders are fully aware of this when the inspection

begins. An inspection may begin with a specific focus on safeguarding, but its scope may be widened to cover leadership and management or other aspects of the provision where appropriate.

477. If, during the inspection, inspectors are sufficiently concerned about the overall standard of education provided by the school, the inspection may, under section 9 of the Act, be treated as ('deemed') a graded inspection. In these cases, all the judgements required by the EIF will be made and a graded inspection report produced and published.

Before an urgent inspection

Staffing and scheduling the inspection

478. The inspection will normally last for 2 days. However, it may in some instances be shorter or longer, depending on the circumstances of the school and the nature of the concerns that led to the inspection.

479. Inspections being carried out as a result of a qualifying complaint made to Ofsted will normally be led by an HMI.

480. Inspections that arise from information that we have received should take place as soon as is practicable after the decision to inspect has taken place. The exact timing is, however, at the discretion of the relevant regional director. Inspections arising from our risk assessment process will take place throughout the year.

Notification

481. The notice given to the school of the inspection will be half a day, the same as that for graded inspections. However, we may carry out the inspection without notice. Where this is the case, we will normally telephone the school about 15 minutes before arriving on site.

482. Where notice of inspection is given, we will make the initial telephone call to the school to inform them that an inspection will take place. If required, we may arrange a time for a second longer telephone conversation with the headteacher to discuss the inspection. We will make the purpose of the inspection clear during the initial telephone call with the headteacher, and will encourage the headteacher to have at least one other senior leader present during the call, to assist and support them. This will usually be staff who typically deputise for them (or a member of trust staff)

and who can understand and discuss the educational content of the calls.

483. If the inspection is carried out without notice, the lead inspector must make the focus of the inspection and the reasons that led to it clear to the headteacher at the earliest opportunity after they arrive at the school.

484. If the school is being inspected because of a qualifying complaint made to Ofsted about the school under section 11A of the Act, the school will be informed that as a result of the wider issues raised by the complaint, a decision has been taken to inspect the school.

485. The lead inspector will explain that the inspection will focus on the wider issues raised by the complaint and will not investigate the complaint itself. If the complainant has requested confidentiality, we must take all practicable steps to ensure that the complainant's identity is not disclosed to the school. At times, the nature of the complaint may mean that the headteacher is able to discern the identity of the complainant. Regardless, we will not confirm the complainant's identity.

486. The headteacher, at the end of the telephone conversation, should be in a position to understand the reasons for, and the purpose and focus of, the inspection. There is no mandatory requirement for a school to inform parents about the inspection. The lead inspector will invite the school to inform parents so that there is an opportunity for parents to contribute their views about the school through Ofsted Parent View.

487. Following the pre-inspection telephone conversation, we will confirm the arrangements for the inspection by sending a notification letter to the school. Where no prior notice of the inspection is given, we will provide formal notification of the inspection to the school after the inspector(s) have arrived.

488. Schools are not required to provide copies of any information in advance of the inspection, but if these are offered, the lead inspector will accept them.

489. Some urgent inspections may specifically focus on behaviour within the school, and these inspections will usually be carried out without prior notification.

Inspectors' preparation for the inspection

490. The lead inspector must check the provider information portal (PIP) for information relevant to the inspection. The lead inspector will brief any team inspectors about the inspection and ensure that the key lines of enquiry and key issues to pursue are understood. Where an inspection is carried out as a result of issues raised in a qualifying complaint made to Ofsted, inspectors must not

investigate the complaint itself during the inspection or seek parents' views on the complaint itself. It is the whole-school issues raised in the complaint that will be followed up during inspection.

491. To prepare for the inspection, inspectors will review:

- copies of any qualifying complaint(s) received, other information on the PIP and any response letters
- issues raised by the investigation of any [qualifying complaints](#) about the school under [the Education Act 2005](#)
- any previous Ofsted inspection report
- Ofsted's IDSR
- information from the pre-inspection telephone conversation with the headteacher
- any documentation emailed to the lead inspector in advance of the inspection, as agreed between the headteacher and the lead inspector

During an urgent inspection

Engagement with the school's senior leadership team

492. Inspectors will engage with the school's leadership team, and all other staff, with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect, in line with the code of conduct. The policies on [pausing an inspection](#) apply to urgent inspections as well as routine inspections.

493. The meeting at the start of the inspection may or may not involve the whole of the school's senior leadership team. The headteacher may be of the view that a meeting with her or him alone, or with 1 or 2 leaders, will be sufficient to limit any potential interruption to the school's normal routines.

494. The meeting with leaders at the start of the inspection will cover pertinent issues about the school and the focus of the inspection. It must give the headteacher and others (including where the school is part of a trust, the CEO or their delegate and other trust leaders (where relevant) the opportunity to present an oral summary evaluation of the school's position on the issues, and identify where evidence may be found.

Evidence gathering during the inspection

495. The kinds of activities carried out during these inspections are no different from graded inspections. However, where the focus of the inspection is on the school's safeguarding arrangements, activities should focus on safeguarding issues, including, but not exclusively:

- a review of the single central record and safeguarding policy
- a review of referrals made to the designated safeguarding lead in the school and those that were subsequently referred to the local authority designated officer, and their resolution
- a review of records of staff training on child protection and the prevention of radicalisation and extremism
- a review of the school's procedures for dealing with relevant staffing issues, for example suspensions or disciplinary investigations or actions over issues of child protection and/or safety. This is not a review of individual cases, but of school procedures in dealing with such issues
- discussions with pupils and staff
- a check of the school's internet safety procedures
- a review of the personal, social and health education curriculum and how it links to issues of safety and pupils' welfare
- a review of persistent absence cases and exclusions data
- consideration of the views of parents and carers through Ofsted Parent View and, where practicable, through discussions or meetings with parents or groups of parents during the inspection
- any relevant issues that appear to be of greatest concern from pre-inspection evidence
- any other issues that affect care, safety or child protection and that do not appear to have been tackled fully
- any issues that relate to poor pupil behaviour

496. The exact structure of the day will depend on the issues to be followed up and is likely to be drawn from the sources of evidence described in part 2 above.

497. During the inspection, the lead inspector will maintain an ongoing dialogue with the headteacher and leaders. It is especially important to make sure that the headteacher and leaders understand any emerging issues. The final feedback to the school, especially when it is challenging, should not be a surprise to the headteacher or trust leaders.

498. Inspectors will not make judgements on the overall effectiveness of the school or any of the key judgements within the EIF; this is only necessary for graded

inspections. If there are weaknesses in a specific area, inspectors may make specific recommendations about what the school needs to do to tackle the weaknesses in that area.

499. If, however, inspectors have sufficient evidence that some of the core reporting areas for judging a school have declined significantly since its last ungraded or graded inspection, then they will need to consider whether the effectiveness of the provision as a whole has declined. In these circumstances, it may be necessary for the inspection to be deemed to be a graded inspection, under section 9 of the Act. In these cases, all the judgements required by the EIF will be made and a graded inspection report published.

500. Alternatively, where evidence prompts concerns that overall standards may no longer be as reported under the last graded inspection, but where no serious concerns have been identified, the lead inspector may recommend to the relevant regional director that the next graded inspection be brought forward. The timing of any such inspection should not be indicated to the school. If the inspection raises concerns, these concerns should be reported at the feedback meeting.

501. Where safeguarding is a focus for the inspection or where it becomes a focus during the course of the inspection, the lead inspector, having reviewed all the evidence gathered during the inspection, will report in the letter whether [safeguarding](#) is effective.

502. Inspectors may identify minor improvements that need to be made to the school's safeguarding practices during inspection, such as administrative errors in paperwork or out-of-date policies. Some of these improvements may be rectified easily before the end of the inspection. Where this is the case, inspectors will give the school the chance to make these minor improvements. Where minor improvements are required but these are not able to be resolved before the end of the inspection, the school can still be judged effective for safeguarding. Importantly, any minor improvements that need to be made, while strengthening safeguarding practice, will not have an immediate impact on the safety of pupils.

503. If safeguarding is not effective and/or if pupils are considered to be at risk, the lead inspector will deem the inspection to be a graded inspection.

At the end of an urgent inspection

Final feedback

504. The lead inspector and headteacher should discuss which other members of staff, if any, will attend the feedback session, especially if the feedback is likely to be challenging or is likely to raise sensitive issues.

505. The oral feedback at the end of the inspection, typically towards the end of the second day of a 2-day inspection, must:

- report the extent of the evidence base
- cover the issues brought to our attention that caused the school to be inspected
- be clear about whether the school's safeguarding arrangements are effective
- be clear about the findings being made on the specific areas of focus for the inspection
- identify the school's areas of strength and any aspects that the school needs to improve in relation to safeguarding and child protection, and the specific areas of focus for the inspection
- make clear that the text of the report may differ from the oral feedback
- set out our policy on complaints

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