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Guidance

Ofsted inspections and visits: deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence

Ofsted's policy for considering whether to defer or pause an inspection or visit, or whether additional evidence needs to be gathered.

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This policy sets out the processes that inspectors should follow when considering whether to defer or pause an inspection or visit, or whether additional evidence needs to be gathered.

In most instances, this involves a determination about whether an inspection or visit should go ahead on the planned dates and/or within the planned timescales.

Introduction

1. Ofsted inspects in the interests of children and learners. When an inspection or visit is scheduled, it should take place unless there are exceptional circumstances. We acknowledge, however, that there will be times where an inspection/visit cannot go ahead or needs to be paused; when it is incomplete and/or when we need to gather additional evidence. This policy sets out how and when those decisions are made and provides information on the decision-making and oversight of such decisions within Ofsted.
2. [Deferring an inspection](#) refers to an inspection or visit being rescheduled because it cannot go ahead on the planned dates. This usually happens during the notification process, and in most cases will be before inspectors arrive on site, or at the first opportunity after inspectors arrive where providers have no notice of the inspection.
3. [Pausing an inspection](#) refers to when an inspection or visit that has already started is paused (and so inspectors will leave if they are on site) and will resume at a date or time beyond the originally scheduled inspection days. A paused inspection can become an incomplete inspection if the pause goes on beyond the time specified in this section.
4. The [Gathering additional evidence protocol](#) applies to:

- an inspection that is found to be incomplete after the on-site activity has ended: this includes when our quality assurance or complaints processes identify that further inspection activity is required to ensure that the evidence and judgements reached are secure
- an inspection that has been paused for a period beyond the timeframes set out [in the annex to this guidance](#)

It ceases to apply when the final version of the report has been sent to the provider and/or the Secretary of State.

Application

5. This policy applies to inspections/visits for the following providers where Ofsted inspects provisions regulated by the Department for Education (DfE). Our pausing policy only applies to Ofsted's work in England and there may be different arrangements for any inspection work outside England:

- maintained schools and academies (and other types of school inspected under sections 5 and 8 of the [Education Act 2005](#))
- independent schools inspected by Ofsted (under sections 109(1) and (2) of [the Education and Skills Act 2008](#) and under section 162(4) of [the Education Act 2002](#))
- providers of initial teacher education (ITE) under section 18B of the [Education Act 1994](#) and part 8 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- early career framework (ECF) and national professional qualifications (NPQ) lead providers under part 8 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- providers of further education and skills under part 8 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

6. The policy also applies to the following providers where Ofsted inspects under the [Children Act 2004](#) and where Ofsted is the regulator:

- early years and childcare provision under sections 49, 60 and 77(2)(b) of the [Childcare Act 2006](#)
- childminder agencies under sections 51D and 61E of the [Childcare Act 2006](#)
- residential special schools, some boarding schools, and residential provision for 16 and 17 year olds in further education colleges and independent specialist colleges (under section 87 of the [Children Act 1989](#))
- local authority children's services (ILACS) and secure training centres (under the [Education and Inspections Act](#)

2006)

- local areas, inspected as part of our joint targeted area inspections (JTAs) carried out under section 20 of the [Children Act 2004](#)
- area special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) services for children and young people under section 20 of the [Children Act 2004](#)
- children's homes, including secure children's homes, adoption support agencies, voluntary adoption agencies, independent fostering agencies, residential family centres, supported accommodation and residential holiday schemes for disabled children (under the [Care Standards Act 2000](#))
- inspections of Cafcass (including focused and monitoring visits) (under the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#))

Part 1: Deferrals

7. Ofsted puts the interest of children and learners first. It is only in exceptional circumstances that we would consider granting a deferral. A provider requesting a deferral will need to evidence the reasons for their request.

Circumstances for deferring Ofsted inspections and visits

8. There are a limited number of circumstances when we may decide to defer an inspection or visit. The examples below show where we could potentially grant a deferral, but do not provide automatic grounds for a deferral, and are not exhaustive. We will consider each case separately and on its own merits, including (where applicable) consideration of whether the setting is under regulatory or enforcement action.

9. Normally, we will only defer an inspection or visit if:

- this is the first time the provider has requested a deferral on those grounds
- the headteacher, proprietor, centre manager, childcare provider, nominated individual, the initial teacher education (ITE) provider representative, the nominated lead provider representative, registered manager and/or registered provider or similar authority, or a member of the provider's senior management team is subject to a current police investigation or serious concern from another agency that would be compromised by an inspection of, or visit to, the provider
- the provider has experienced a recent major incident, such as: a fatality involving a pupil, child, service user, trainee, training participant or a member of staff; serious injury or

serious/infectious illness at a provider; death of a member of a household where childcare takes place; or a serious incident when the presence of an inspector would have an adverse impact on the well-being of children, young people or adults

- the provision is confirmed as being due to merge, close or move **and** it is decided that no useful purpose will be served by inspecting it. (If an independent school is within 6 months of confirmed closure, the inspection will normally still go ahead. We will inform the DfE of the timescale in which the school expects to close.)
- concerns in a local area mean that an inspection or visit would be inappropriate (such as a security incident or other major incident that means the police and senior leaders are focused on public safety)
- the relevant setting is closed to all users – for example, owing to a staff training day or adverse weather conditions that make access difficult or dangerous – for at least half of the time for which the inspection or visit has been scheduled (this does not apply to pre-registration inspections of independent schools)
- at least three quarters of the users will not be at the provider’s setting or with their employer – for example, owing to a school trip, holiday or a religious festival – for at least half of the period for which the inspection or visit has been scheduled (this does not apply to inspections of registered childcare settings or pre-registration inspections of independent schools)
- a school has very recently converted to become an academy; in these circumstances, His Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HMCI) reserves the right to go ahead with the inspection or visit if they deem it necessary, or to schedule the academy’s first inspection or visit for a later date
- a further education and skills provider, ITE provider or an ECF or NPQ lead provider is no longer in receipt of relevant public funding
- a childminder agency no longer has childminders registered with it ([see Inspection of childminder agencies: requirements for Ofsted](#))
- circumstances that compromise our ability to gather sufficient evidence to reach valid and reliable judgements
- any other major incident that has a significant effect on the routine day-to-day running of the provision or running of the inspection or visit
- there are other exceptional circumstances that the relevant Ofsted regional/national director decides warrant a deferral

10. Building and/or refurbishment work is not normally a reason

for deferral if the provider is open and users are on site.

However, if the provider is significantly disrupted by measures taken to deal with reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), we will consider these deferral requests carefully as an exceptional circumstance.

11. Inspections of, or visits to, schools or further education and skills providers may still go ahead when all, or substantial numbers of, pupils, learners or users are not on site, but continue to be educated through remote or blended learning.

12. The absence of the headteacher, clinical commissioning group's chief executive, or the director of children's services or their equivalent will not normally be a reason for deferring an inspection or visit.

13. The fact that [an inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 \(or equivalent inspection in an academy\)](#) is taking place at the same time as an Ofsted inspection would not normally alone be reason for a deferral.

Requesting a deferral

14. A deferral request should be made at the earliest possible opportunity (usually before 16:30 on the day of notification), to the inspection support administrator or inspector who notifies the provider of the inspection or visit. A request can be made on the telephone or in person, but should be confirmed in writing (preferably by email) so that we can consider it promptly.

15. If an inspection or visit has started, we will not normally consider a deferral (see guidance below on inspections without notice), but could consider [pausing the inspection](#) instead. However, we carry out some inspections and visits without giving notice to the provider. There may be exceptional circumstances where we may need to consider whether an unannounced inspection should go ahead.

16. When a deferral is requested, we will consider whether the timing of any rescheduled inspection or visit would cause this to fall outside of any intervals or windows prescribed in law or by the DfE. For regulated early years and social care settings, we will also carry out a risk assessment to determine whether any other regulatory responses would be appropriate. We will continue to make arrangements for the inspection or visit while considering the request for deferral.

17. In the case of a deferral request made due to the absence or illness of the headteacher, proprietor, centre manager, childcare provider, nominated individual, the ITE provider

representative, the nominated lead provider representative, registered manager and/or registered provider, or similar authority, the relevant Ofsted regional director will determine whether the inspection or visit will take place, in consultation with the relevant national director, as appropriate.

18. In exceptional circumstances, it may prove difficult to contact the provider. In these cases, the inspection or visit will normally still go ahead. We will continue to try and contact the provider. If there continues to be no answer, it will be carried out as an unannounced inspection or visit.

Considerations for deferring specific inspections

Monitoring inspections of maintained schools and academies

19. In the case of a monitoring inspection for a school judged to require improvement, to have serious weaknesses or to require special measures, we consider that the presence of the headteacher is important in helping inspectors understand the school's improvement journey. We are, therefore, more likely to defer the monitoring inspection if the headteacher is out of school, unless the headteacher is absent for a prolonged period, for example due to ill health.

Independent school inspections

20. We may defer an inspection of an independent school in the case of unavoidable absence of the headteacher or proprietor, when this person is the only person with leadership responsibility in the school, at the discretion of the relevant Ofsted regional director.

21. When an independent school is also the provider of a regulated social care service, we will carry out a risk assessment to consider whether any other regulatory responses would be appropriate.

22. When a school requests a deferral of its inspection because there are no pupils on roll, and the DfE is already taking regulatory or enforcement action against the school, we will not agree to defer the inspection on the grounds of no pupils being on roll alone.

23. When we are informed that an independent school has already closed or that it is no longer operating as a school, we will consult the DfE. The DfE may commission us to carry out an emergency inspection to check compliance with the independent school standards.

24. We will always inform the DfE if we grant a deferral of any type of independent school inspection.

25. Independent schools are charged a fee for standard, pre-registration and progress-monitoring inspections, as explained in the [non-association independent school inspection handbook](#). An inspection fee will always be charged unless a deferral is granted in line with our deferral policy before the start of on-site inspection activity.

26. If, in notifying an independent school of an inspection, it proves difficult to contact the provider, we will check that the DfE has no reason to believe that the school is no longer operating and confirm an inspection is still required.

Independent schools: pre-registration inspections

27. Pre-registration inspections of independent schools will not be deferred because a proposed school withdraws its application at, or following, notification. Pre-registration inspections will not go ahead if, before we notify the school of its inspection, we are notified by the DfE that the proposed school's application for registration has been withdrawn. The inspection fee may still be payable, as set out in the [handbook for additional inspections of independent schools](#).

28. Pre-registration inspections must not be deferred on the basis that the proposed school states that it is not ready for inspection. The DfE informs proposed new schools that they should not apply to register if they will not be ready to operate within the proposed timescale. The DfE will expect a proposed new school to be ready to undergo a pre-registration inspection, since the provision wishes to educate (and, for boarding schools and residential special schools, accommodate) pupils in the near future.

29. Proposed new schools should have already reported to the DfE any incomplete building works – or any other issues that may prevent inspectors gaining access to the site – before we notify them of their inspection. Therefore, we will not normally defer a pre-registration inspection if the proposed school states that it is not ready for inspection, unless there are issues preventing access to the site and those issues were communicated to us during the notification call. Consequently, if inspectors arrive on site and are unable to carry out or complete the pre-registration inspection due to an inability to access the site, for example incomplete building works, the inspection fee may still be payable, as set out in the [handbook for additional inspections of independent schools](#).

30. In cases when proposed new schools strongly resist a pre-

registration inspection, we will report this to the DfE.

Independent schools: material change inspections

31. If it transpires in the notification call that a school no longer wishes to continue with its application to make a [material change](#), we will inform the DfE. The inspection will normally not go ahead.

Area SEND, ILACS and JTAI inspections/visits

32. We do not anticipate having to defer an area SEND inspection or thematic visit; an ILACS short, standard, focused or monitoring inspection; or a JTAI inspection, other than in exceptional circumstances. If local areas have concerns about the timing of an inspection/visit, they may submit a deferral request, with any supporting reasons, to the lead inspector at the point of notification of the inspection/visit. We will consider each individual request on its merits. All requests will be considered by Ofsted in line with this policy and, as appropriate, jointly with our relevant inspection partners (that is, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and HM Inspectorate of Probation). If a local area requests a deferral of its inspection/thematic visit, the lead inspector must notify Ofsted through the appropriate region as soon as possible.

Part 2: Pausing an inspection or visit

33. When a deferral is no longer possible because the inspection has started, the inspection can still be paused where there are exceptional circumstances that mean it cannot reasonably proceed. This also applies to regulatory visits in early years and social care. In all instances, we will need to carefully weigh up the risk of pausing against the risk of continuing, acting in children's best interests at all times. In some instances, pausing an inspection or visit will not be appropriate, such as in situations where we are concerned that children and young people may be at risk of harm (see below).

34. The guidance below refers to 'lead inspector':

- in most cases, this will be the inspector in charge of the inspection
- in some cases, it will be the sole inspector on the inspection

35. The guidance refers to the senior inspector. This will be the most appropriate senior inspector, depending on the remit.

36. The guidance below refers to contacting and passing

information to leaders' employers (for example, for state-funded schools, the local authority, the board of governors or the trust) where there are serious concerns about leaders' welfare. There are, however, some providers for which there is no clear employer, often because the leader is also the proprietor or owner of the setting and, therefore, has ultimate responsibility.

37. Before considering a formal pause, lead inspectors should consider whether other options are appropriate – for example, by visiting a different location to complete the inspection or interviewing another member of staff. Inspectors should aim to complete the inspection wherever possible, with appropriate adjustments to the timetable as needed.

38. If inspectors see or suspect that a person is upset or distressed during the inspection, they should respond sensitively. Inspectors should treat all those they meet on inspection with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect, and work in a way that does not lead to significant additional stress on leaders. It is entirely appropriate and acceptable to take a break from inspection activities, provided the inspection can be completed within the planned tariff and timescale. This would not be considered a pause to inspection. Where appropriate, the lead inspector will inform the employer of any serious concerns. Inspectors should first contact a senior inspector (including through the regional duty desk) or Regulatory inspection manager (RIM)/senior officer (SO) or quality assurance manager, where practical to do so.

39. Prior to or on arrival at the setting, the lead inspector will normally ask leaders who is responsible for their welfare (usually their employer). Where applicable, inspectors will record the contact details of this individual or organisation, if given. If there is not an employer, leaders can provide the name of someone else who we may contact in an emergency. Prior to any such contact, inspectors should first contact a senior inspector (including through the regional duty desk) or RIM/SO or quality assurance manager, where practical to do so.

If leaders have not supplied the details of their employer or, in an emergency, a person who is appropriate to contact, or appropriate contact cannot be made, then inspectors are not expected to investigate who else to contact. Inspectors should however report this to the relevant Senior His Majesty's Inspector (SHMI) (through the duty desk where applicable).

40. In addition to any action others may take, Ofsted may contact appropriate authorities, in an emergency. Inspectors should first contact a senior inspector (including through the regional duty desk) or RIM/SO or quality assurance manager, where practical to do so.

41. If the lead inspector believes that all of the inspection activity needs to be stopped temporarily, they will need to consider formally pausing the inspection. Inspectors will make every effort to protect the integrity of the inspection, and so only exceptional circumstances will result in a pause. Exceptional circumstances are likely to include:

- circumstances that compromise our ability to gather sufficient evidence to reach valid and reliable judgements, and/or where leaders in the provider require support (for example from their employer), which may be due to concerns about the well-being of leaders
- any other major incident that has a significant effect on the routine day-to-day running of the provision
- any major incident that has a significant effect on the running of the inspection

Process for pausing an inspection

42. Pausing an inspection will usually not be appropriate where we are concerned that children and young people may be at risk of harm, or where there is regulatory or enforcement action against a provider. The safety and well-being of children and learners are our first priority. In these circumstances, we would not normally pause the inspection, but may take other steps, such as continuing the inspection but extending over additional time, or taking a short break.

43. The lead inspector will usually initiate any pause. Any provider may request a pause either from the lead inspector or the contact at Ofsted they will be given at notification. Open, honest and professional discussion sits at the heart of the decision-making process.

44. If an inspector considers that an inspection may need to be paused, the lead inspector should use the relevant quality assurance support for that type of inspection – contacting a senior inspector (including through the regional duty desk) or RIM/SO or quality assurance manager as appropriate ([see table in annex](#)).

45. The lead inspector will set out to the senior inspector the reason for the proposed pause, and state whether a pause is necessary or other alternatives may be appropriate. These may include having a senior inspector take a remote, desktop review of the electronic evidence, or deploying a senior inspector to quality-assure the inspection.

46. The senior inspector will check that appropriate steps have

been taken if inspectors are concerned about the health or well-being of senior staff.

47. In all circumstances, the lead inspector should seek the views of the provider when making a decision to pause. The provider may wish to make alternative arrangements to allow the inspection to continue and/or so they can take appropriate steps to ensure continued leadership is in place, depending on the circumstances.

48. Any final decision needs to be made in line with the [decision-making table](#) annexed to this guidance.

Length of the pause

49. The senior inspector and the lead should consider the length of the pause being considered. Length will vary on a case-by-case basis but, in most circumstances, the inspection should resume on the next working day or at the earliest opportunity.

50. In deciding the length of the pause we will, where applicable, consider how quickly the provider can confirm to inspectors that the issues leading to the pause have been addressed and there is no significant detrimental effect on the day-to-day operations of the provider.

51. In most cases, we would not expect a pause to extend beyond the period set out in the [table annexed to this document](#), depending on leaders' capacity to maintain the typical day-to-day operations of the provider, and/or on inspector availability.

52. The length of the pause should balance the views of the provider with the circumstances leading to the pause and the need to put children and learners first. Inspectors should be aware of the additional pressure that an extended pause can have on all those involved in an inspection.

Process for the provider requesting a pause to an inspection

53. If a provider wishes to request a pause to an inspection, they should normally ask the lead inspector.

54. If the provider has concerns that they do not feel that they can discuss with the lead inspector (for example if the issue is connected with the lead inspector or the inspection itself) they should contact a senior inspector on the number given to them during the inspection notification.

55. The senior inspector will listen carefully and record what has been said. Then, depending on the nature of the issue, they will usually contact the lead inspector to discuss the concern and decide how to proceed.

Next steps

56. If the decision is taken to pause the inspection, Ofsted will tell leaders (usually in person but always with a follow-up email from the lead inspector or senior inspector on behalf of the region):

- that the inspection is being paused
- the likely timeframe for returning
- that this will not affect the outcome of the inspection, and no judgement has yet been reached
- that we will inform them when the inspection resumes, which will be within the timeframe already stated
- that the inspection team may potentially be different when the inspection resumes.

57. If the decision is taken not to pause the inspection, the lead inspector/senior inspector should tell leaders that a pause was considered, and explain why the decision was made to continue the inspection without a pause. They should also set out what other steps (if any) are being taken. The inspection team should keep a record of these details.

58. The lead inspector should make sure that any relevant information about staff welfare and the welfare of children, young people and learners is passed on appropriately before leaving the site (or ending the off-site inspection).

Resuming the inspection

59. The inspection should resume in line with the agreed likely timeline. The circumstances leading to the pause will determine when and how the lead inspector makes contact with the provider to resume the inspection.

60. In some very exceptional cases, a pause may need to be longer than originally anticipated. In these circumstances the inspection may need to be treated as an [incomplete inspection](#).

61. The decision on whether to be treated as incomplete and use the gathering additional evidence policy will take account of:

- the extent of the activity that remains to be completed
- the size and complexity of the inspection and the ability to reschedule it in a timely way, including where it is a joint inspection
- the reasons the pause has been extended. For example, it may be that the circumstances leading to the pause remain

62. The senior inspector must keep the provider informed, seeking the necessary sign-off internally in line with decision-making responsibilities.

Considerations for pausing specific inspections

Aligned/integrated inspections of state-funded or independent boarding schools and residential special schools

63. Where a boarding or residential special school's inspection is aligned/integrated with an inspection of its boarding or residential provision, any decision as to pausing the inspection should be made separately for both elements of the inspection. It is possible, due to the different potential risks to children and young people in boarding or residential accommodation, that a different decision is made for one of the elements of the inspection. One inspection can be paused while the other continues (and the inspection would cease to be aligned/integrated).

Independent school inspections

64. We will always inform the DfE if we pause any type of independent school inspection.

Further education and skills inspections

65. Where Ofsted normally ask leaders who is responsible for their welfare (usually their employer), if there is not an employer, leaders can provide the name of someone else who we may contact in an emergency. The lead inspector will also inform the inspection nominee if there are any serious concerns.

Area SEND, ILACS and JTAI inspections/visits

66. Area SEND, ILACS and JTAI inspections/visits all have evidence-gathering activities carried out both remotely and on-site. Area SEND and JTAI inspections/visits are carried out jointly with other inspectorates. If issues arise, inspectors will first consider changing the timing of a planned activity, and/or substitute that with another activity, such as visiting a different

provider or office, rather than pausing the inspection. Each case will, however, be considered on its own merits, and will require coordination and agreement with the other inspectorates, where relevant.

ITE inspections

67. Where the event is a multi-phase inspection of ITE provision, it may be appropriate to only pause one phase of the inspection.

Secure training centres

68. Secure training centre inspections are joint with CQC and HMI Prisons. Any decision will require coordination and agreement with the other inspectorates.

Part 3: Gathering Additional Evidence Protocol

69. This protocol applies where we need to gather additional evidence to secure the inspection evidence base, or when a pause to inspection goes on beyond the time specified in [Part 2 \(Pausing an inspection\)](#) of this document.

70. Part 3 of this guidance may often not apply to area SEND thematic visits. We do not publish reports about individual areas or make judgments about individual areas during these visits. We visit a small number of areas and share our findings in a national report. In rare instances where a thematic visit extends beyond the time specified in Part 2 due to exceptional circumstances, policy leads will decide if we have sufficient evidence from other visits on which to base our report findings.

71. If the evidence base is insecure or the inspection has been paused, we may need to gather further information in order to revise and report the findings.

72. This policy does not apply when we have sent the final version of the report to the provider.

73. This policy also does not apply when an inspection may be unreliable for reasons other than an insecure evidence base, including when:

- it may have been carried out using an incorrect statutory power
- the inspection judgements reached relied on assessing matters or activities that fall outside our remits

In these circumstances, the regional director (RD), their relevant

designated officer (RD's delegate) or other relevant decision maker should seek urgent legal advice before taking further action.

Incomplete inspections following a pause in inspection

74. When an inspection is paused beyond the time specified in the [annex of this document](#), it automatically becomes an incomplete inspection.

75. However, it is still possible that an inspection paused for less than the time specified in [the annex of this document](#) may subsequently turn into an incomplete inspection if the inspection cannot resume within that timescale.

76. A paused inspection that is deemed incomplete will normally require a further on-site visit.

Deciding whether the evidence base is secure

77. The RD or the RD's delegate will refer to the evidence base and any other appropriate material to decide whether the evidence base is secure.

78. If the decision maker considers that there are insecure elements in the inspection evidence base, they will consider whether legal advice is required from our legal services team. The decision maker will normally arrange for an evidence base review to be carried out.

Examples of when additional evidence may be needed when evidence bases are not secure

79. Examples of circumstances in which we may decide an inspection is incomplete include when:

- the evidence that the inspection team gathered and recorded does not substantiate key judgements
- the conduct of the inspection was such that we cannot rely fully on the evidence gathered and recorded to provide a fair and accurate view of the provider, in whole or in part
- the inspector or inspection team has not gathered sufficient evidence, or evidence of sufficient quality, to get a fair and accurate view of the provider, in whole or in part
- information applicable to the provider at the time of inspection has been received after the inspection and before publication of the inspection report. The relevance of the information received makes it necessary for us to review and reapply the evidence gathered at the inspection against the

inspection outcome

- the inspector or inspection team was not able to complete their on-site evidence-gathering activities due to reasons beyond their or the provider's control

What happens when we decide to gather additional evidence

80. We will take steps to secure or complete the evidence base. These may include a further visit to the provider to gather more evidence. We will need to be satisfied that the evidence base is secure and that the inspection process is complete before the inspection report is finalised.

81. Once we have decided that we need to secure or complete the inspection evidence, the decision maker will normally write to the provider to:

- explain the reasons why additional evidence is required
- if appropriate, offer an apology
- if appropriate, request further evidence or arrange a follow-up conversation with the inspector
- if appropriate, confirm that an inspector/inspection team will carry out a further visit in order to gather and analyse the necessary evidence to secure or complete the evidence base, and that this visit will take place as soon as practicable

82. The decision maker will also inform the relevant policy team, HMCI and Ofsted's Chief Operating Officer of the decision.

83. There may be circumstances where we may need to carry out a further visit to a provider without notice. For example, this could be in relation to a safeguarding or child protection matter that has been brought to our attention after the inspection and before the publication of the inspection report.

Delaying publication on the Ofsted reports website to consider concerns

84. We have established processes for checking quality, finalising inspection reports and dealing with concerns and comments raised by providers. Providers have an opportunity to highlight points of clarity or factual accuracy, or submit a formal complaint, about the inspection process or findings when they receive their draft inspection report. We will respond to any complaint before we finalise and send the final report to the school, [as set out in our complaints procedure](#).

85. Very rarely, and usually after considering concerns raised

by a provider or following our own internal pre-publication quality assurance processes, we may identify elements in the evidence base that are not sufficiently secure. This may mean that we need to take steps to secure or complete the evidence base.

86. In these cases, we will need to take further action to complete the inspection and we will not publish the inspection report on the Ofsted reports website until we are satisfied that the inspection judgements are secure and/or the inspection report's narrative text is appropriately supported by evidence.

87. After we have completed any necessary further activity, we will send an amended draft inspection report to the provider for comments. We will then finalise and publish the amended inspection report in line with our normal processes. This includes, where appropriate, consideration of any complaint prior to publication of the final report.

88. These situations should happen very rarely. However, when they do, it is important that we maintain full and sensitive communication with the provider throughout.

Gathering additional evidence – next steps

89. Further activity may focus on the insecure or incomplete elements of the evidence base. However, in some instances, the decision maker may determine that the inspector or inspection team must re-visit all elements of the evidence base to ensure that reliable judgements can be reached.

90. The decision maker may determine that the inspection's evidence base can be secured or completed by requesting and/or receiving specified evidence from the provider, without the need for a further visit.

91. If we decide a further visit is necessary, the decision maker will normally:

- write to the provider as outlined above
- determine whether it is practicable to use the same inspector or inspection team (we maintain the right to use a different inspector or inspection team)
- determine whether to request further evidence and information for planning before the further visit
- confirm to the provider as soon as practicable:
 - the date of the further visit
 - the identity of the inspector (and inspection team members as applicable)

- any further evidence or information required before the further visit

92. We maintain the right to carry out a further visit without notice, for example in circumstances where concerns about the protection or safety of children have been brought to our attention.

93. At the end of the further visit:

- the lead inspector will provide verbal feedback to the provider/manager in the usual way for the type of inspection being carried out or, if necessary, make arrangements with the provider/manager for feedback to be given at a later date
- the lead inspector will follow the usual steps set out in the relevant handbook (if there have been any changes to the handbook since the original visit, inspectors will use the handbook as it was at the time of the original visit)
- we will complete the quality assurance process set out in the relevant handbook
- we will clarify what impact (if any) the further visit has on the timescale for reinspection of that provider

Annex: Decision makers and lengths of pauses

Remit	Decision Maker	Who in Ofsted needs to be consulted	Number of working days (see note 1) before a pause would engage part 3 of this guidance
State-funded schools	Regional director	Regional Help Desk	5
		National Help Desk	
Independent schools	Regional director	Regional Help Desk	5
		National Help Desk	
Early years and childcare	Regional director	Regional Help Desk	5 (see note 2)

provision		National Help Desk	
Initial teacher education	Regional director	Regional Help Desk National Help Desk	15
Early career framework (ECF) and national profession qualifications (NPQ)	Regional director	Regional Help Desk National Help Desk	15
Further education and skills	Regional director	Regional SHMI National Help Desk	15
Area SEND	Regional director in consultation with CQC	Quality assurance manager, national directors or their deputies CQC	15
Childminder agencies	SHMI	Regional director	5
ILACS	Regional director	Quality assurance manager, national directors or their deputies.	5 or 15 depending on the nature of the inspection activity
JTAIs	Regional director in consultation with the other inspectorates	Quality assurance manager, national directors or their deputies.	15

The other inspectorates as relevant

SCCIF inspections	RIM	SHMI/RD	5 (see note 2)
Cafcass	Deputy directors	Quality assurance manager, national directors or their other deputies	5 or 15 depending on whether it's a focused visit or a full inspection

Notes


1. A working day is usually any weekday other than a public holiday, which may not necessarily be the same as the days that an inspected provider might operate.

2. Noting that where the inspection or regulatory event is based on risk to children, it may not be possible to pause.

View [Annex: Decision makers and lengths of pauses](#).

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