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Guidance

Non-association independent schools inspection handbook

Updated 5 April 2024

Applies to England

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This guidance came into force on 5 April 2024.

Introduction

1. This handbook describes the main activities carried out during standard inspections of non-association independent schools in England under section 109(1) and (2) of the [Education and Skills Act 2008](#). It sets out the evaluation criteria that inspectors use to make their judgements and on which they report. These include the extent to which the school meets the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (referred to as the independent school standards).^{[footnote 1](#)} It applies to school inspections under the [education inspection framework \(EIF\)](#).

2. This handbook is primarily a guide for inspectors on how to carry out non-association independent school (referred to as schools) 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 use this handbook. When applying the guidance in this handbook, inspectors will take appropriate action to comply with Ofsted's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

3. 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 inspectors use to make the graded judgements about schools
- Part 4. Inspecting against the independent school standards and other requirements: this contains technical information about the standards

4. This handbook applies to standard inspections. It does not cover the range of additional inspections that we carry out of independent schools: emergency, progress monitoring, pre-registration and material change inspections. Guidance on these inspections is available in the [handbook for additional inspections of non-association independent schools](#).

5. This handbook also applies in the event that the Department for Education (DfE) commissions Ofsted to carry out a standard inspection of an independent school that is normally inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) (see the '[Memorandum of understanding between Ofsted and DfE: independent schools](#)'). In this event, the school will be added to [Ofsted Parent View](#), our online survey for parents, for the duration of the on-site inspection.

Conduct during inspections

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

7. 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.

8. Providers should approach their inspection with integrity and be open, transparent and honest. This includes providing evidence – or access to evidence – that will enable the 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

9. If a school has any concerns about an inspection, including about inspectors' conduct or any potential or perceived conflicts of interest, these 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](#)

10. 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. If it is not possible to resolve concerns with the lead inspector, the school or responsible body should follow the steps set out in [handling concerns and complaints](#).

Gathering personal information on inspection

11. 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.

12. Individuals and organisations are legally required to provide inspectors with access to information. Section 110 of The Education and Skills Act 2008 gives inspectors 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 are required for the purposes of the inspection. These powers enable inspectors to look at computers and other devices that may hold relevant information. Regulations enable the DfE to provide Ofsted with information on individual pupils where it relates to school inspections.

13. Paragraph 32(1)(g) of the independent school standards requires proprietors to provide any information reasonably requested in connection with an inspection under section 109 of The Education and Skills Act 2008 which is required for the purposes of the inspection to the body carrying out the inspection, and to give that body access to the school's admission and attendance registers.

14. 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.

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

Research on inspection

16. 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

17. In this handbook:

- the term 'school' refers to any type of provider registered with the Department for Education as an independent school
- 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 the proprietor 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
- the term 'proprietor' includes where the proprietor is an individual and where there is a proprietor body
- 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 'report' describes the formal written outcome of the inspection, which is usually published

Common misconceptions about inspection

18. 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

19. 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.

20. 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

Involving leaders and governance in inspections

21. We will invite the headteacher and the proprietor(s) 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 and can understand and discuss the educational content of the meeting with the headteacher. Additional members of staff 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 timetable for the rest of the inspection. On subsequent inspection days, 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 proprietor, where applicable) at the end of each day to set out the emerging and final findings.

22. We will expect the proprietor(s) and the person(s) responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school to be present during the inspection. Without meeting these individuals, inspectors may not be able to gather sufficient evidence in order to judge whether the school meets paragraph 34(1) of the independent school standards, which concerns the quality of leadership and management.

23. We will encourage the school to invite any governor who is available and any member of the proprietor body who is available to meet inspectors during an inspection. These meetings may include a virtual option using video or telephone calls if necessary.

Evaluating the quality of education

24. 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.

25. 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.

26. 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

27. 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.

28. 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.

29. 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 carries out necessary safeguarding checks.

30. 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 who meet or do not meet performance thresholds for pay progression
- provide processes for the performance management arrangements for school 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

31. 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. [\[footnote 2\]](#)

32. We do not expect, and there is no requirement for, schools to apply retrospectively for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and other pre-employment checks for staff who were appointed before 13 June 2013, when DBS requirements were introduced, and have been employed continuously since then.

33. 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 set of steps with regard to site security beyond what is set out in part 8 of the DfE's guidance [Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools](#); 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

Independent school standards

34. We will expect the school to provide all policies, schemes of work and plans and all other documents required by the independent school standards in English.

35. We will report on any failure to comply with the independent school standards.

Part 1. How schools will be inspected

Basics of Inspection

How schools are selected for inspection

36. All independent schools are inspected at the direction of the DfE, which is the registration authority for independent schools. Therefore, Ofsted may be asked to inspect an independent school at any time. This might occur, for example, where the DfE has particular concerns about a school.

37. The EIF and this handbook set out the arrangements for standard inspections of independent schools carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

38. For details on aligned inspections of boarding or residential special schools, see [Inspections of boarding and residential special schools](#). [\[footnote 3\]](#)

39. All schools have a unique reference number (URN). Any institution with its own URN that we inspect will receive an inspection report after each inspection.

Frequency of inspections [\[footnote 4\]](#)

40. A 3-year cycle of standard inspections began in January 2023. [\[footnote 5\]](#)

41. Schools that are judged as requires improvement or inadequate normally have a standard inspection within 2 years of the previous standard inspection.

42. We will normally re-inspect a school within 2 years if there were [no pupils on roll](#) at its most recent inspection (and therefore we were unable to make an overall effectiveness judgement). [\[footnote 6\]](#)

43. When a school transfers from being inspected by the ISI to being inspected by Ofsted, we will normally inspect it within 3 years of the [ISI's most recent educational quality with focused compliance inspection](#). However, the DfE may commission us to carry out an inspection sooner, for example if concerns are raised to the DfE about the school.

44. The DfE may commission Ofsted to carry out a progress monitoring inspection when a school has failed to meet all of the independent school standards. Therefore:

- all schools that are judged to be inadequate normally receive a progress monitoring inspection before their next standard inspection
- schools that are judged as requires improvement following a standard inspection may also receive a progress monitoring inspection before their next standard inspection

45. The purpose of the progress monitoring inspection is for inspectors to judge whether the school has addressed any unmet independent school standards and any other issues identified at the previous standard inspection.

46. On a progress monitoring inspection of a school that was judged as requires improvement but met all the independent school standards, inspectors will judge whether the school continues to comply with the standards relating to any qualitative issues that may have been identified at the previous standard inspection.

47. Guidance on progress monitoring inspections is available in the [handbook for additional inspections of independent schools](#)

Bringing forward standard inspections following additional inspections

48. The DfE may bring forward a school's next standard inspection following an additional inspection in order to update the school's graded judgements.

49. There are 2 scenarios when this may happen:

- a school that was graded requires improvement or inadequate has now been judged to have significantly improved at a progress monitoring inspection and now meets all of its previously failed independent school standards
- a good or outstanding school is judged to no longer meet the independent school standards at either:
 - an emergency inspection
 - a material change inspection, where the school has already implemented the change before getting approval from the DfE

50. In the first scenario, the lead inspector of that progress monitoring inspection must have judged that:

- all the previously unmet standards are now being met securely and consistently
- the school is likely to be able to provide evidence that it can meet part 8 of the standards (leadership and management) on a standard inspection
- any qualitative issues identified at the previous inspection have been rectified and solutions embedded so that the school stands a reasonable chance of being judged good
- the school's curriculum development is at a stage where it is likely to be judged favourably under the EIF

Carrying out additional inspections as part of a standard inspection

51. The DfE may commission Ofsted to carry out an additional inspection as part of a standard inspection. It may commission Ofsted to consider a school's application to make a material change to its registration, a school's progress in implementing its action plan and in meeting unmet independent school standards, or issues raised by a complaint or other issue about a school, as part of a standard inspection. The DfE will request this in an inspection commissioning form.

52. Similarly, if the DfE commissions Ofsted to carry out an additional inspection and a standard inspection is already scheduled to take place in the same or next term, Ofsted may recommend to the DfE that the additional inspection be carried out as part of the standard inspection.

53. In both cases, the 'additional matters' will normally be considered as part of the standard inspection in a single inspection. Ofsted will typically report on the 'additional matters' to the DfE in the report for the standard inspection and complete one independent school standards compliance record. The report will clearly set out the legislative basis for both inspection types and the reason for the additional inspection. The report will be published on [our reports website](#). However, there may be occasions – such as when a progress monitoring inspection is commissioned with a standard inspection – when 2 reports are written and published on our website. This is in order to ensure that the progress against previously unmet standards is reported clearly to the DfE.

New schools

54. Proprietors who want to open a new school must apply to the DfE for registration. They are asked to supply the information set out in [section 98 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#) and the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Provision of Information\) and Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#).

55. The Education and Skills Act 2008 requires Ofsted to carry out a pre-registration inspection of a prospective school before it opens, when commissioned to do so by the DfE. Inspectors consider the written evidence supplied in the school's application to the DfE before the pre-registration inspection is made to the school to advise the Secretary of State about the school's readiness for registration. Schools must not begin operating until they are registered (see ['Independent school registration'](#)). Following a pre-registration inspection, the inspector reports to the DfE about the extent to which the independent school standards are likely to be met. From the summer term 2018, these reports have been published on our website and made available to the school. The decision on whether or not to register the school lies with the DfE.

56. Once registered, new schools receive their first standard inspection in their first year of operation. These reports are also published on [our reports website](#). [\[footnote 7\]](#)

When can an inspection take place?

57. 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.

Schools requesting an inspection

58. Unlike other schools inspected under the EIF, independent schools are not able to request an inspection outside of the usual inspection cycle, as set out above.

Inspection fees

59. Schools are charged a fee for standard, pre-registration and progress monitoring inspections. The fees for pre-registration and progress monitoring inspections are set out in the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Inspection Fees and Savings Provisions\) Regulations 2019](#).

60. For standard inspections, schools are charged under [The Independent Educational Provision in England \(Inspection Fees and Savings Provisions\) Regulations 2019](#), which came into force on 1 July 2019.

61. 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. If the inspection is rescheduled to take place at another time, a fee will be payable once the inspection has taken place.

62. In the case of pre-registration inspections, where a proposed school withdraws its application at or following notification, the fee will still be payable.

Provision for 2- and 3-year-olds

63. 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 as part of a standard inspection and 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.

64. 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 early years provision in the standard inspection.

Inspections of boarding and residential special schools

65. When boarding provision in boarding schools has been judged inadequate or requires improvement, it is inspected again within 2 years. Where the boarding provision has been judged good or outstanding, it will be inspected within 3 years. Residential provision in residential special schools is inspected annually. We may inspect the boarding or residential provision sooner, for instance if we have a cause for concern, or at the request of the DfE.

66. When a boarding or residential special school's standard 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.

67. We will continue to carry out integrated additional inspections of independent schools when the DfE commissions us to do so and in line with the guidance in the [handbook for additional inspections of independent schools](#).

68. 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.

69. We 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](#). We carry out the inspection of the education provision under the EIF.

70. 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.

71. The education and social care regulatory inspectors 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), the proprietor and governors 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, looking at the strengths of the links between the day school and the boarding or residential provision, and if concerns are raised with inspectors about the children's welfare.

72. 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 inspectors 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.

Inspections of schools that are registered as children's homes

73. We may inspect education in a school that is also registered as a children's home in a standalone inspection or at the same time as the full inspection of the children's home. This is the case for children's homes that are registered as independent schools and for residential special schools that offer residential provision for more than 295 days a year and therefore must be registered as a children's home.

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

75. In a standalone inspection of the education in a school that is also registered as a children's home, inspectors must read the most recent education and children's home reports on the preparation day. They must contact the lead social care regulatory inspector or their manager to find out about any current issues concerning children's welfare that may affect aspects of the school inspection.

Concurrent inspections of schools with the same proprietor

76. When 2 or more schools with the same proprietor are inspected at the same time, the inspection teams may share evidence 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

77. 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

78. We will normally contact the school by telephone to announce the inspection around lunchtime on the day before the inspection is due to start.

79. By exception, we may carry out an inspection without notice, for example at the DfE's request. [\[footnote 8\]](#) When this happens, we will not telephone the school before the inspection.

80. If the headteacher is unavailable when the notification call is made, we will ask to speak to the most senior member of 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.

81. 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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) provision, alternative provision, 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.

82. We will also make clear that the inspectors will expect the proprietor(s) and the person(s) responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school to be present during the inspection. This is because inspectors will expect to interview them to judge their ability to promote and implement the relevant policies and procedures.

83. 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 request 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

Schools that appear to no longer be operating

84. On the rare occasion that it appears that a school is no longer operating, we will check whether the DfE requires an inspection to be carried out to check whether the school is still operating. If the DfE requires such an inspection, the standard inspection will normally be changed to an emergency inspection. The inspection will be carried out in line with the guidance on carrying out emergency inspections of schools that appear to have closed in the [handbook for additional inspections of independent schools](#)

Requests for deferral or cancellation

85. 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. We will not normally consider requests for deferrals if we receive them after 4.30pm on the day the school is notified. The lead inspector must immediately contact the regional duty desk. We will decide whether to grant a deferral in accordance with our [deferral policy](#).

86. 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.

87. The deferral policy makes clear that, where 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 these grounds alone. In addition, when the standard inspection of a school has already been deferred once because there were no pupils on roll, we will not defer the inspection for a second time solely on the same grounds.

88. If a 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.

89. If a school states that it has already closed or that it is no longer operating as a school, we will consult the DfE. The DfE may commission Ofsted to carry out an [emergency inspection](#) to check compliance with the independent school standards instead of a standard inspection.

90. 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 in accordance with our [deferral policy](#) whether the request can be granted.

91. We will always inform the DfE if we grant a deferral of any type of independent school inspection. Where we believe that an inspection of an independent school should be cancelled, we

will invite the DfE to withdraw the inspection commission.

Preparation carried out by the lead inspector

92. 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:[\[footnote 9\]](#)
- inspection reports on the school, which may include boarding and early years inspection reports
- any reports resulting from additional inspections carried out since the last standard inspection, in particular [emergency inspections](#)
- the findings of any recent Ofsted survey
- responses from Ofsted Parent View
- boarding pupils' and boarding staff's replies to [Ofsted's point-in-time surveys](#)
- any complaints made about the school to Ofsted [\[footnote 10\]](#)
- other information on Ofsted's provider information portal, which provides a high-level view of information about providers that Ofsted inspects and regulates
- relevant publicly available information, including information on the school's website, such as:
 - a statement of the school's values and ethos
 - the school's opening hours
 - information about the curriculum (so the lead inspector can start to assess the breadth and balance of the school's curriculum and whether it is likely to promote preparation for, and an appreciation of, life in modern Britain)
 - information about the use of tutoring in the school
 - for schools with pupils receiving secondary education, information about the school's careers programme
 - policies (for example, on behaviour, and relationships, sex and health education)
 - the presence of the safeguarding policy, as required by the independent school standards
 - the suitability of the safeguarding policy, taking into account current government requirements
 - information about SEND provision
 - the school's accessibility plan
 - information relating to the school's duties under the Equality Act 2010
 - information about governance
- any other information publicly available or available from relevant stakeholders such as local authorities and the police
- the most recent [inspection report on the relevant local authority's children's services](#)
- the main findings from the relevant [local area's SEND inspection](#), including (where relevant) arrangements for identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of young children with SEND
- information provided by the DfE, in particular any specific focus for the inspection, in the inspection commissioning form, where the DfE has commissioned:[\[footnote 11\]](#)
 - the inspection to be brought forward

- an additional inspection that will form part of the standard inspection
- any complaints from parents or members of the public that the DfE has asked Ofsted to consider as part of the inspection^[footnote 12]
- the school's census returns
- information on the school's registration status as recorded on the DfE's register '[Get information about schools](#)', such as the number and age range of pupils that the school is registered to take, the name of the proprietor and whether the school is 'section 41 approved'^[footnote 13]
- whether any additional sites are recorded on the location page of the school's record on '[Get information about schools](#)', or on the school's website
- the [register of licensed sponsors for Student and Child Student visas](#)
- information from any other associated providers (which will be triangulated with evidence gathered during the inspection): this may include registered early years provision or, if the school is part of a chain of independent schools, any relevant information from recent inspections of these schools, such as any reported evidence about the suitability and capability of the proprietor

93. The lead inspector will also check compliance with aspects of the independent school standards where that is possible before arriving on site (such as in relation to [part 6 of the standards, 'provision of information'](#)).

94. The lead inspector will find out who the school's individual proprietor or proprietor body is before the inspection starts. They will check whether the proprietor's identity is consistently recorded in the previous inspection report, the current 'Get information about schools' record for the school, the school's last census returns and the school's website, if one exists (this may have a section that describes governance arrangements). The lead inspector will record any discrepancies between 'Get information about schools' and other sources on an evidence card. They will follow this up on inspection.

95. If a registered school has moved its main or sole site to a different local authority area, the DfE's policy is that the school will not be treated as a new entity. However, the DfE will change the school's registration number, and consequently the school's URN. Therefore, the lead inspector will refer to the inspection history relating to the school's previous registration.

96. Other relevant information may be in the public domain and reported in the press or online, including information about safeguarding. Inspectors will therefore carry out a brief internet search as part of their pre-inspection planning to see whether there are any safeguarding or other issues, such as a change of governance, that may need to be followed up during inspection.^[footnote 14]

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

97. In announced inspections, 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 communicate what life in the school is like and provide further context about the school. 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. This will normally be later on in the afternoon following the initial notification call.

98. Inspectors' preparatory telephone conversations with headteachers will have 2 elements:

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

99. 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 staff who typically deputise for them and can understand and discuss the educational content of the calls.

100. 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

101. 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, so that they can pass on well-being concerns when appropriate and necessary
- make the school aware of the help and support for the headteacher's well-being that is available through the charity [Education Support](#)
- inform the headteacher of the time during the afternoon of the next day that the inspection will start
- make the school aware of the need to inform parents of the inspection, and that Ofsted's Parent View is the main method for gathering parents' views 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 the staff and pupil surveys, in the notification letter [\[footnote 15\]](#)
- confirm whether the school has a religious character or ethos
- discuss whether the school is part of a group of independent schools
- discuss the nature of any [SEND provision](#)
- 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
- 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 operates from more than one site, for example if it offers early years or sixth-form provision on separate premises. Inspectors must establish the full address of each site, record this on an evidence card and report it to the relevant Senior HMI, who will

decide if the tariff for the inspection needs to change. Inspectors will also ask the school to provide the addresses to the DfE, so that the DfE can record the information in the school's record on [‘Get information about schools’](#)

- 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
 - the 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 unique reference numbers 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 timetable 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 the use of off-site alternative provision used by any type of independent school’](#))
- establish whether the school offers statutory induction of [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 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)
- establish how the school will give the lead inspector access to its policy documents and records so that inspectors can check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. We expect all documents to be provided in English
- let the school know if and when [interpreters](#) will be present during the inspection
- 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 or governance responsibility who are unable to attend
- ask the school 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

- provide an opportunity for the school to discuss and/or give us information on potential equalities duties, including reasonable adjustments for individuals
- 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

102. To help leaders understand how the inspection is progressing and maintain a 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 clear that attendance at the meeting is optional and that the headteacher may leave at any point if they wish. They 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 timetable for the rest of the inspection. On subsequent inspection days, the meeting will help leaders to understand the evidence on which judgements are based.

103. The lead inspector will also request that the school provides certain information as early as possible to aid preparation. This will include:

- a copy of the school 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)

104. It is important that inspectors speak to the proprietor, governors, leaders and anyone else the lead inspector thinks would be relevant during inspections. There is a wide variety of leadership and governance models in the school sector, so it is essential that inspectors establish who is responsible for what. The lead inspector will:

- confirm the identity of the individual proprietor or proprietor body of the school
- make arrangements for, as a minimum, a meeting with the chair and as many members of the proprietor body as are available
- ask the school to invite as many members of the proprietor body as possible to attend the final feedback meeting
- establish the governance structure of the school and confirm arrangements for meetings with the school, those responsible for governance and anyone else the lead inspector thinks would be relevant
- make arrangements for, as a minimum, a meeting with 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
- invite the school to consider if there are any reasons, of either personal or professional nature, that may mean they wish to ask for a deferral

105. 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.

The educationally focused conversation

106. The educationally focused conversation will normally last up to 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.

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

108. 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 and can understand and discuss the educational content of the calls. They may also wish to have someone present to take notes.

109. 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 pupils achieve, pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and the personal development of pupils
- the specific areas of the school curriculum that should be focused on during inspection – during this call, inspectors will also agree with the headteacher which subjects will receive a deep dive during the inspection

Provision for children with SEND

110. If the school has provision for children with SEND, during the educationally focused conversation with the school, the lead inspector will ask the headteacher to clarify:

- the number of pupils with SEND and the range of their needs, together with pupils' timetables
- the type(s) of language or communication systems used. If there is specialist provision for deaf pupils and British Sign Language is used, the lead inspector will establish whether a British Sign Language interpreter will be provided by the school when inspectors are meeting with the pupils. The lead inspector will contact the inspection support administrator as soon as possible if an [interpreter](#) is needed. Details will be available in the team room
- staffing arrangements

Information that schools must provide by the start of the inspection

111. We will send the school a letter setting out that the following information must be made

available to inspectors at the formal start of the inspection:

- the policies and other documents required by the independent school standards
- schemes of work for the subjects that the school teaches
- 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's strategy
 - a summary of any school self-evaluation or equivalent
 - any reports from any external evaluation of the school
 - documented evidence of the work of the proprietor and/or those responsible for governance and their priorities
 - minutes of governors' meetings and other relevant strategic documentation about governance that the school may have
- records and data 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 Wi-Fi, if it exists, so that inspectors can connect to the internet
 - maps and other practical information
 - the school timetable, current staff list (indicating [ECTs](#)), times for the school day, including planned interruptions to normal school routines during the inspection and whether teachers cannot be observed for any reason

Safeguarding information

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

- the single central record for the school
- a list of 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 is able to meet requirements). Inspectors may select a sample of children to make sure the school is meeting the requirements in '[Keeping children safe in education: statutory guidance for schools and colleges](#)'

113. Schools and inspectors must make sure that all actions are compliant with legal requirements for information-handling.

Seeking the views of parents, staff and pupils

Seeking the views of parents

114. We will provide schools with a letter to pass on to parents that formally notifies them of a standard inspection. This letter explains how to use [Ofsted Parent View](#) and how parents can contact inspectors. Parents should complete their questionnaire by 2pm on the first on-site day of the inspection. 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), where these are available.

115. 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.

116. 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 should follow these up with the school and record its response.

117. 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

118. 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.

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

120. Inspectors should take careful account of the well-being of leaders and staff. They should 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 there are serious concerns, inspectors will normally contact the duty desk and inform those responsible for the person's well-being.

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

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

Pupil and staff questionnaires

123. 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. Pupils and staff should complete their questionnaire by 3pm on the first on-site day of the inspection.

124. 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 where there are concerns about serious misconduct, bullying of staff or criminal activity.

The inspection

Timetable of inspection and inspection team members

125. Standard inspections do not normally last longer than 3 days. Usually, the lead inspector will begin the inspection on the afternoon after the initial notification call. The size of the inspection team will vary according to the size and nature of the school. Any team inspectors will normally join the inspection for the second and third full days.

126. On the first day of the inspection, inspectors will not normally arrive before 12pm. On the second and third days, inspectors will not arrive before 8am. Inspectors will usually leave by 6pm on all on-site days.

127. 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

128. There is no requirement to deploy inspectors of a particular faith to inspect a school of the same faith. It would be unusual for an inspection team of a faith school to consist entirely of inspectors of that faith.

Pausing inspections

129. There may be exceptional occasions when we need to consider pausing an inspection. We will consider these on a case-by-case basis according to our [published guidance on pausing inspections](#).

The role of an interpreter during inspection

130. Interpreters support inspections of schools that teach some or all of their curriculum in a language other than English. This ensures that inspectors are able to consider the school's evidence about how its curriculum and overall education meets the criteria set out. Please note that this does not apply to those schools that teach languages, for example French or Latin, to pupils; interpreters will only be used to support inspections where subjects other than languages themselves are taught in another language.

131. Interpreters may support inspectors by interpreting what is said or written, but they will not contribute to the inspection judgements made about the school or decisions about whether the school complies with the independent school standards. [\[footnote 16\]](#)

132. Interpreters may be present for the entire duration of the inspection, or for only part of it, depending on how the school's provision is arranged. This will normally be confirmed during the lead inspector's initial telephone call to the school if appropriate.

133. Interpreters may accompany an inspector during any inspection activity. This could include, but is not limited to, visits to lessons; speaking to pupils, teachers, parents, governors and headteachers; looking at pupils' work; and reviewing curriculum materials, including schemes of work. The interpreter will take notes, which will be retained by the lead inspector and added to the evidence base.

Inspection methodology

134. 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 standard 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, inspectors 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 then bring all the evidence together to draw the conclusions that will inform further inspection activity and/or inform their final judgements

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

Keeping leaders informed

136. 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 subsequent inspection days, 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 the last on-site day

Early career teachers

137. 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.

138. 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 – whether or not the school has chosen to offer [statutory induction](#) – to ensure that ECTs have the knowledge and skills necessary to teach in their chosen subject or phase.^{[\[footnote 17\]](#)}

139. Inspectors should also gather ECTs' views on how the school is supporting their development, including the quality of their 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.

140. 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 to assess their support, mentoring and induction. Inspectors will not visit lessons given by trainees.

141. 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 only visit lessons taught by trainees in schools with a high proportion of trainees compared to the total number of teaching staff, and if it is not otherwise possible to visit a representative sample of lessons. In these cases, inspectors will be proportionate in taking trainees' performance into account when assessing the quality of education.

Meeting the proprietor and those responsible for governance

142. Inspectors will want to meet with the proprietor(s) and the person(s) responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school during the inspection. The purpose of this is to evaluate the effectiveness of the proprietor's work in monitoring how leaders at the school ensure that all the independent school standards are met. Without meeting these individuals, inspectors may not be able to gather sufficient evidence to judge whether the school meets paragraph 34(1) of the standards, which concerns the quality of leadership and management.

143. The lead inspector will also follow up any discrepancies about the proprietor's identity, that arose during their inspection planning or in the notification call.

144. Inspectors will also want to meet with governors (if the school has them) during the inspection.

145. The role that proprietors and governors play in the school's performance is evaluated as part of the judgement on the effectiveness of leadership and management. Reports will often contain a separate paragraph that addresses the governance of the school.

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

Other evidence

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

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

Considering complaints as part of the inspection

149. The DfE is responsible for investigating complaints about independent schools. We do not investigate complaints about independent schools, but the DfE may commission us to carry out an emergency inspection or bring forward the school's next standard inspection (or their first standard inspection following registration) as a result of a complaint. The DfE may also ask us to consider a complaint at the time of a school's next scheduled inspection. Complaints may also form part of the information that inspectors review when they [plan for any type of inspection](#).

150. If the DfE commissions us to carry out or bring forward an inspection as a result of a complaint, or to consider a complaint at the time of a school's next scheduled inspection, inspectors will consider the wider issues raised by a complaint that are relevant to the commission

or to the inspection framework. When inspectors consider the wider issues raised by a complaint, they will normally report whether the school meets the independent school standards (or national minimum standards) that are relevant to these issues.

151. The inspection report may reflect that the inspection was commissioned as a result of a complaint. However, reports will not refer to the substance of the complaint in case this identifies the complainant and/or any individuals in the school. If necessary, and when the DfE has specifically commissioned Ofsted to do so, Ofsted may use the independent school standards compliance record to confidentially share details relating to the complaint with the DfE.

Inspection of the school's approach to harmful sexual behaviour

152. During the inspection, 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, clear 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 [the paragraphs relating to behaviour policies](#), [the paragraphs relating to the RSHE curriculum](#) and [the paragraphs relating to sexual harassment](#)).

Inspecting schools with no pupils on roll

154. In the rare case that a school has no pupils on roll at the time of the inspection, the inspectors will [carry out the inspection](#) in line with this handbook, as much as is practicable. [\[footnote 18\]](#)

155. As there are no pupils present, it is unlikely that inspectors will be able to gather sufficient evidence in order to make all of the EIF judgements, or to judge the school's compliance with all of the independent school standards.

156. Inspectors will gather as much evidence as possible in relation to the EIF judgements in line with [part 2 of this handbook](#), and about the school's compliance with the standards. Inspectors will not base EIF judgements or judgements on whether standards are met on evidence relating to past pupils or on a prediction of what might happen if the school were to admit pupils. For example, they will not judge whether standards are likely to be met.

157. As there are no pupils on roll, inspectors will not be able to make a judgement on whether safeguarding is effective or on whether the school meets the safeguarding requirements in paragraph 7 of the standards. Inspectors will also not make a judgement on compliance with standards that require effective implementation of a policy on:

- the curriculum (paragraph 2(1)(a))
- behaviour (paragraph 9(b))
- bullying (paragraph 10)
- health and safety (paragraph 11)
- first aid (paragraph 13)
- risk assessment (paragraph 16(a))
- complaints (paragraph 33)

158. It may also not be possible to check compliance with the requirements of the standards relating to:

- curriculum policy, plans and schemes of work (paragraphs 2(1), 2(1)(b)(i) to 2(1)(b)(ii), 2(2)(a), 2(2)(b), 2(2)(d) to 2(2)(d)(ii), 2(2)(h), 2(2)(i))
- relationships and sex education (paragraph 2A(1) to 2A(2), for example the requirement to consult parents on the policy)
- teaching 3(a) to (j)
- spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (any of the paragraphs in part 2)
- the other welfare, health and safety requirements in part 3

The inspection report and compliance record

159. If inspectors cannot gather enough evidence to make EIF judgements or to judge whether standards are met because there are [no pupils on roll](#), they will explain this in the inspection report. Inspectors will record 'insufficient evidence' against the judgements on the front cover of the report and against the relevant standards in the independent school standards compliance record.

160. Inspectors will also report if there is no evidence of pupils attending in the last 3 years or if the school has no plans to admit pupils in the next 12 months. This is so that the DfE can consider whether they have reasonable cause to believe that the school has ceased to be an independent educational institution and whether the DfE has no reasonable cause to believe the institution will become an independent educational institution again within the following 12 months. Under these circumstances, the DfE may decide to remove the school from the register of independent schools under section 100 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

Providing feedback

161. 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 proprietor or, where there is a proprietor body, as many members as are available; the clerk to the proprietor body, or their delegate, may also attend to take notes (there can be more than one note-taker if desired)
- the headteacher and other senior leaders, agreed by the lead inspector and headteacher

- any person the headteacher or proprietor(s) wants present to assist and support them
- if the school has a governing body, the chair, and as many representatives as are available from the governing body; the clerk to the governing body, or their delegate, may also attend to take notes (there can be more than one note-taker if desired)
- in an aligned inspection, social care regulatory inspectors and education inspectors who will provide feedback to education and residential staff

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

163. 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.

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

165. During this meeting, the lead inspector will ensure that the headteacher, the proprietor, those responsible for governance and all attendees are clear:

- about the independent school standards that are met and those that are not met
- that the DfE will decide any action to take in respect of any [standards that are not met](#)
- 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 those responsible for the governance of the school to play a part in planning how to tackle any areas for improvement
- 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 those they deem appropriate. They should always be shared with governors, 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 meeting, 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 where the school has failed to comply with the independent school standards and has been judged requires improvement or inadequate, it may receive a progress monitoring inspection
- that, on receiving the draft report, they should ensure that the report is not to be published until the school receives a copy of the final inspection report
- that the headteacher or proprietor is invited and encouraged to complete the post-inspection survey

- 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, and can also contact Ofsted on the working day after the end of the inspection, if necessary
- about the procedure for making a complaint about the inspection

Inadequate schools

166. If inspectors reach the conclusion that the school's overall effectiveness is inadequate, the lead inspector will complete an 'Early notification form, non-compliance with independent school standards'.^{[[footnote 19](#)]} Ofsted will normally provide the form to the DfE soon after the inspection and before the report is finalised and published.

167. The DfE will use the information to determine whether to take [regulatory action](#) and to prioritise those schools that require most urgent attention.

After the inspection

Arrangements for publishing the report

168. The lead inspector is responsible for writing the inspection report, completing the independent school standards compliance record and submitting the evidence to Ofsted shortly after the inspection ends.^{[[footnote 20](#)]} 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. Where an additional inspection has formed part of the standard inspection, the outcomes will normally be included in the report and independent school standards compliance record for the standard inspection.

170. 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.

171. The school will have 5 working days to comment on the draft report. It can highlight minor points relating to the clarity and/or factual accuracy of the report, or it can submit a formal complaint seeking a review of the inspection process, including the judgements made or concerns about inspector conduct (see paragraph 172). If it only submits minor points of clarity or factual accuracy, we will consider and respond to these 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 the proprietor and members of governing body and whoever they deem appropriate. We may also send the draft report to the DfE

and other bodies as necessary. This will only take place following moderation or quality assurance.

172. If the school wishes to make a formal complaint, we will follow the process set out in our [published complaints procedure](#). We will respond to any complaint before we finalise and send the report to the school. If the school has previously chosen to highlight some minor points of clarity or factual accuracy on the draft inspection report (see paragraph 171), it will not normally be able to submit a formal complaint or challenge later. We will publish the final report on our [reports website](#) 5 working days after sending it to the school.

Figure 1: Ofsted's post-inspection and complaints procedure



173. Paragraph 32(1)(d) of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 requires the proprietor to:

- ensure that a copy of the inspection report is published and maintained on the school's website
- provide a copy of the report to the registered parents of every registered pupil at the school by the date specified by Ofsted, which is 5 working days from receipt

174. The proprietor may send or give a copy of the report to parents. Alternatively, if parents have provided an email address, the school may either email an electronic copy of the report to them, or email a link to where the report is available to download from the internet. [\[footnote 21\]](#)

175. We will send the final version of the report to the DfE before publication.

176. 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 DfE.

177. The evidence base for the inspection must be retained in line with our [published privacy notice](#).

Suitability of the proprietor and other managers – reporting concerns to the DfE

178. If inspectors identify any concerns about the suitability of the proprietor or any other member of staff employed at the school in a management capacity, these will be recorded in the independent school standards compliance record and reported to the DfE, as the appropriate authority. This information is particularly relevant when it may have any bearing on the suitability of a person to participate in the management of an independent school. This includes when the person's conduct undermines British values or child safety, or where the inspector has concluded that the person's conduct is so inappropriate that it may make them unsuitable to take part in the management of an independent school.

Quality assurance

179. 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.

180. 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. In very rare circumstances, if we find a weakness in the inspection process, we may carry out a further visit to [gather additional evidence](#).

181. 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

182. 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 chair of governors or the proprietor(s) can contact a senior Ofsted leader using the number provided at notification. In exceptional circumstances, this might lead to the [inspection being paused](#).

183. If an issue remains unresolved, the school 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 a senior inspector who is independent of the inspection to discuss and to resolve, where appropriate, at the earliest opportunity.

184. If it is not possible to resolve concerns during the inspection, through a telephone call the day after the inspection, the school may wish to lodge a formal complaint on receipt of the draft 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

185. 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](#)

Part 2. Explanation of Ofsted's judgements

186. This section of the handbook sets out how we evaluate schools on standard inspections.

187. Inspectors evaluate schools against the following key judgements:

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

Evaluating the quality of education

The curriculum

188. 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.

189. All pupils in independent schools (including special schools) are entitled to receive a broad, rich curriculum – this is a requirement of paragraph 2(2)(a) of the independent school standards. Schools should therefore provide inspectors with evidence that the minimum requirements for the intended coverage and ambition of an independent school's curriculum are met.

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

191. 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 curriculum at key stage 2. Some schools are exempt from the learning and development requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS). Where this is the case, the expectation would be that pupils are able to read and write fluently by Years 5 to 6 (see [early stages of learning to read in schools with pupils up to Year 3 \(or up to Years 5 to 6 for those schools where early reading is delayed due to an exemption\)](#)).

192. In key stage 2 and in secondary education, 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 in Years 7 to 9.

193. 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.

194. 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.

Ofsted's approach to evaluating the curriculum

195. 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 leaders responsible for the curriculum in the school have thought about what end points the curriculum is building towards (where relevant, with reference to the EYFS). They will also look at how leaders responsible for the curriculum in the school 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.

196. Inspectors will consider the 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 can 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.

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

198. 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

And the extent which 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

And the extent to which 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)

199. In evaluating the quality of education, inspectors will form a top-level view of the curriculum through conversations with the leaders responsible for curriculum in the school and any available data. However, they will want to see first hand the quality of education as experienced by pupils 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.

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

in primary 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 75 pupils), the methodology will be adapted to reflect the shorter inspection
- for special schools, see the [‘Independent special schools and provision for pupils with SEND in other independent schools’ section](#)
- for alternative providers, see the [‘Alternative provision’](#) section below

201. 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

202. 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.

203. 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.

204. Inspectors recognise that there may still be some limited circumstances in which a pupil may need to learn remotely. Where this is the case, it 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 quality of education and leadership and management and will not be inspected separately.

205. Inspectors will not analyse schools’ internal progress and attainment data during an inspection. [\[footnote 22\]](#) That does not mean that schools cannot use data where 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 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.

206. 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.

207. Inspectors will also bear in mind that developing and embedding an effective curriculum takes time, and that leaders 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.

208. 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.”

209. 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 published outcomes data, where this is available in published national data (this does not include teacher- or centre-assessed grades from 2020 and 2021). However, it does not constitute a substitute for inspectors’ first-hand inspection activities.

Talking about the curriculum with leaders

210. A professional dialogue with leaders is vital to our understanding of 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.

211. Inspectors will want subject 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

212. 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

213. 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.

214. 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 in which the same curriculum area or subject, including from different year groups. They will invite the proprietor, headteacher, subject leaders and/or other leaders to take part in joint visits to lessons.

215. When a school offers a specialist curriculum, inspectors will normally visit lessons in both the specialist and the non-specialist aspects of the school's provision (see the section '[Schools with a specialist curriculum](#)' in part 2 of this document).

216. 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.

217. 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.

218. Alongside other evidence, inspectors will also use evidence gathered from visits to lessons to inform their judgements about whether the school meets the independent school standards. These include the standard about teaching (paragraph 3), the requirement to effectively implement a policy that promotes good behaviour among pupils (paragraph 9(b)) and the standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (paragraph 5).^{[[footnote 23](#)]}

Work scrutiny

219. 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

220. Inspectors will also use evidence gathered from scrutiny of pupils' work to inform their judgements about whether the school meets the independent school standards. These include the standard about teaching (paragraph 3) and the standard about the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils (paragraph 5).^{[[footnote 24](#)]}

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

221. 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. Inspectors will consider the evidence from pupils alongside other evidence that they collect.

222. Inspectors will also talk to and observe pupils in a range of situations outside of normal lessons to evaluate other aspects of personal development, behaviour and attitudes and safeguarding. They will do this, 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)

223. During informal conversations with pupils, inspectors must 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.

224. 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. If it is not possible to speak to pupils, it is unlikely that the school will be able to provide inspectors with the evidence they need to be able to conclude that these aspects of the school's provision meet the requirements of the independent school standards. See [‘Inspectors talking to pupils on inspection’](#).

Discussions with staff

225. At the heart of our inspections is a professional dialogue between inspectors and the leaders, governors, proprietors 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

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

Schools with a specialist curriculum

227. Some non-association independent schools offer a specialist curriculum and Ofsted recognises their autonomy to do so. For example, some schools offer a specialist faith-based curriculum, while others offer a specialist education in the performing arts.^{[[footnote 25](#)]} Other independent schools, such as Steiner schools, take a distinct approach to the curriculum, even though the majority of the subjects on offer do not differ significantly from other schools.

228. Alongside any specialist education provided, it is important that pupils study a broad, rich curriculum. This is supported by Ofsted's research, and is a requirement of paragraph 2(2)(a) of the independent school standards.

229. Inspectors will assess a school's entire provision, including any specialist provision offered, when assessing compliance with the independent school standards^[footnote 26] and when reaching judgements in the following areas: overall effectiveness; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management.

230. When reaching a judgement under the quality of education judgement area, inspectors will work with school leaders to understand how the curriculum as a whole is structured, and where they can find evidence that the quality of education criteria are met. We expect that, in most schools, much of the evidence in support of the criteria will be drawn from the non-specialist curriculum, as most schools structure their curriculum such that the specialist curriculum supplements rather than directly delivers the academic core of subjects.

231. However, we will judge fairly those schools that take radically different approaches to the curriculum, including, for example, schools that teach a range of academic subjects through a faith-based curriculum. Inspectors will assess any school's curriculum favourably when leaders have built a curriculum with appropriate coverage, content, structure and sequencing and implemented it effectively. They are, however, likely to assess it negatively where the specialist curriculum is being delivered in a way that limits pupils' opportunities to study a broad range of subjects, or which fails to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

Early stages of learning to read in schools with pupils up to Year 3 (or up to Years 5 to 6 for those schools where early reading is delayed due to an exemption)

232. 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.

233. On inspections of schools with pupils up to Year 3 (or up to Years 5 to 6 for those schools where early reading is delayed due to an exemption), inspectors will carry out a deep dive to evaluate how well pupils are taught to read. They will pay particular attention to 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.

234. Except where [the paragraph relating to exemptions](#) applies, 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.

235. 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.

236. The formal teaching of reading may be delayed by an [exemption from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS](#). In these cases, inspectors will hear children from Years 5 to 6 read instead of Years 1 to 3. They will listen to pupils read from unseen books appropriate to their stage of progress to see whether they have the reading knowledge and skills, including the phonic knowledge, appropriate for a child in Years 5 to 6. This will inform the quality of education judgement.

237. In reaching an evaluation against the 'quality of education' judgement, and taking account of

any relevant exemption from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS, 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 (except where [the paragraph relating to exemptions](#) applies)
- 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 (except where [the paragraph relating to exemptions](#) applies)
- 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

238. 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.

239. 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 multiplication tables and 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 and procedures 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

Independent special schools and provision for pupils with SEND in other independent schools

240. All parts of the EIF apply to independent special schools, and to SEND provision in other independent schools. However, as with all provision, SEND provision has some specific factors that should be taken into account.

241. 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.

242. 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 identify, assess and meet the needs of pupils with SEND, including when pupils with SEND are receiving remote education
- 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 when 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’](#).

243. 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.

244. 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.

245. In special schools, 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 leaders and 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 if pupils’ outcomes are improving as a result of the curriculum.

246. For special schools with pupils aged 19 and over, please refer to [Provision for students aged 19 and over](#).

Independent special schools with section 41 approval

247. Independent schools that are organised to cater specifically for pupils with SEND are normally registered with the DfE as an ‘independent special school’; however, there is no legal definition of this term.

248. Under [section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014](#), the DfE can approve independent schools that are organised to cater specifically for pupils with SEND for the purpose of enabling the school [‘to be the subject of a request for it to be named in an EHC plan’](#).

249. Independent schools that are not approved under section 41 can still admit pupils with SEND.

250. If an approved independent special school is named in an EHC plan, the local authority must comply with the request to place the pupil at the school, and the school must admit the pupil. If a school is not approved under section 41, and is named in an EHC plan, there is no duty for the local authority to place the pupil in the school.

Evaluating the use of off-site alternative provision used by any type of independent school

251. Where pupils in registered independent schools 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 by the school. If required, they 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.

Alternative provision registered as an independent school

252. Alternative providers that are registered as an independent school may differ from other independent schools in that they are often intended to provide short-term interventions to secure the successful re-engagement into education.

253. All parts of the EIF apply to alternative providers registered as an independent school, and these providers must meet all the independent school standards.

254. In these settings, inspectors will gather and evaluate evidence about:

- how well leaders identify, assess and meet the needs of pupils when they first begin to attend the school, including pupils with SEND
- how well leaders ensure that the curriculum meets the requirements of the independent school standards, 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 those responsible for governance 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 schools assess pupils' learning and development, and whether pupils' outcomes are improving as a result of the different or additional provision being made for them, including outcomes for pupils with SEND

255. Pupils in alternative provision registered as an independent school 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.

256. 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 alternative provision 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 independent schools. Alternative providers may also offer services to registered independent 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.

257. Transitions into alternative providers registered as independent schools 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 leaders have 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.

258. For pupils who have left the school, 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 any external 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

259. 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.

260. 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 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 abuse, including sexual harassment and sexual violence – online or offline – are not accepted and are dealt with quickly, consistently and effectively whenever they occur

261. Inspectors' evidence for the importance of each of these factors comes from our 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](#).

262. 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.

263. Inspectors will assess a school's entire provision, including any specialist provision offered, when reaching a judgement about behaviour and attitudes.

Specific considerations for evaluating behaviour and attitudes

Attendance

264. 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.)

265. 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 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 into the school's approach.

266. 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.

267. 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.

Pupils who have specific needs, including pupils with SEND

268. 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 their individual circumstances.

Pupils who are not in school during the inspection

269. 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

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

271. 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.

Suspensions and exclusions

272. If a school uses suspensions, inspectors will evaluate their effectiveness, including the rates, patterns and reasons for exclusion and whether any pupils are repeatedly excluded. 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.

273. 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.

274. 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.

275. See also the [inclusion](#) section below.

Evaluating behaviour and attitudes in alternative provision registered as an independent school

276. 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 may join and leave the school roll at different 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.

277. Often, pupils attending alternative providers registered as independent schools, 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 the DfE guidance. Part-time timetables should not be open-ended and should result in swift full-time education for the pupils.

Ofsted's approach to evaluating behaviour and attitudes

278. 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 should 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 an appropriate person when talking to inspectors.

279. 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.

280. 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.

281. 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.

282. 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, where 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, those with responsibility for governance and other stakeholders
- gathering evidence about the typical behaviour of pupils who are not in school during the inspection, for example whether they have had suspensions in the 2 years before inspection
- balancing evidence seen during the inspection and also 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 ['Inspecting alternative provision used by any type of independent school' section](#).

Evaluating personal development

283. 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 leader's 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.

284. 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.

285. This judgement focuses on the dimensions of the personal development of pupils that our education system has agreed, either by consensus or statute, are the most significant. 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 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
- provides an effective careers programme in line with the government's [statutory guidance on careers advice](#) that offers pupils:
 - unbiased careers advice
 - experience of work, and
 - contact with employers
 - to encourage pupils to aspire, make good choices and understand what they need to do to reach and succeed in the careers to which they aspire
- supports readiness for the next phase of education, training or employment so that pupils are equipped to make the transition successfully
- 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

286. We will expect the school's relationships, sex and health education 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)

287. Inspectors will assess a school's entire provision, including any specialist provision offered, when reaching a judgement about personal development.

Specific considerations for evaluating personal development

288. 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

289. Relationships education is compulsory for all schools providing primary education; relationships and sex education is compulsory for all schools providing secondary education (including for pupils in any sixth-form provision). Health education is also compulsory for pupils in state-funded schools only. Independent schools are already required to teach health education as part of the requirement to teach personal, social, health and economic education in paragraph 2(2) (d) of the independent school standards

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

291. See the guidance '[Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics](#)' for more information.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

292. 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.

293. 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

294. 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

295. 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

296. 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 and respect diversity. This is shown by their respect and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities

297. The DfE has published [‘The independent school standards: guidance for independent schools’](#). This includes previously published non-statutory advice to help schools understand their obligations relating to a school’s provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Ofsted’s approach to evaluating personal development

298. Inspectors will focus on:

- whether the school has had due regard to the statutory guidance on RHSE (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 RHSE curriculum
- appropriately supports children with SEND to learn RHSE
- 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 the school’s careers programme and whether this meets the requirements of the independent school standards^[footnote 27]

299. 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.

Evaluating leadership and management

300. The leadership and management judgement is about how proprietors, leaders, managers and those responsible for governance 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 and managers 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 leaders’ and 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' and managers' 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
- whether leaders and those responsible for governance all understand their respective roles and perform these in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the school

301. 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. A full note of how the criteria relate to the available research can be found in our [EIF research commentary](#).

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

303. In reaching a judgement about the school's leadership and management, inspectors will take account of any of the independent school standards that are not met and consider what this means for the quality and effectiveness of each aspect of the school's work. The grade descriptors make clear that for leadership and management to be judged good or outstanding, all of the standards must be met. However, the grade descriptors do not replace the professional judgement of inspectors, and it is down to the inspection team to determine if the impact of any unmet standards is such that the leadership and management should be judged requires improvement or inadequate as a result.

304. Inspectors will also consider whether leaders are fulfilling all of their legal responsibilities associated with the running of the school, for example in relation to any international students.

305. Inspectors will assess a school's entire provision, including any specialist provision offered, when reaching a judgement about leadership and management.

Different levels of leadership

Leadership and management in school

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

Leadership and management in independent schools that are part of a group of schools

307. Where a school is part of a group of schools, it is important for inspectors to remember that the proprietor will be the head of this group and they are responsible for the quality of education provided in all the schools in the group

308. It is highly likely that parts of some of the leadership functions described in the grade criteria are performed by school leaders, although the proprietor may have responsibility for local governance. Inspectors will consult the school in order to determine the different levels of responsibility and oversight within the group, and so who they need to meet in the structure of the group in order to inspect the school. When leadership functions for the school are performed by group leaders, inspectors will consider which they need to meet in order to gather evidence. Inspectors will always expect to speak directly with the proprietor during the inspection.

309. It will be normal for inspectors to meet the leaders of groups of schools (for example, the chief executive or an education director) These individuals may also attend key inspection team meetings at the end of each inspection day.

Governance

310. Inspectors will seek evidence of the impact of those responsible for governance. This includes the impact of the proprietor. Where there is a proprietor body and/or governing body, inspectors will speak to as many members as possible.

311. Inspectors will consider whether those responsible for governance:

- ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- hold senior leaders to account for the educational performance of the organisation and its pupils, and the performance management of staff
- oversee the financial performance of the organisation and make sure that its money is well spent

312. Inspectors will explore how the proprietor and, where relevant, governors 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 proprietor and, where relevant, governors in this respect is supporting the school to provide a high-quality education for its pupils.

313. The proprietor is responsible for ensuring that the school meets all paragraphs in all parts of the independent school standards. In addition, the proprietor and those responsible for governance are responsible for ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties, for example under the Equality Act 2010, and other duties, such as in relation to the 'Prevent' duty. When inspectors consider whether the proprietor and, where relevant, governors are fulfilling this responsibility, they are not expected to construct or review a list of duties.

Capacity to improve

314. 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 end outcome has not yet been achieved, so that there is confidence that improvements will be swift and sustainable
- have done all that can be reasonably expected to do in the time available and the circumstances in which they work

Specific considerations for evaluating leadership and management

External support

315. If the school has received external support, 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.

Separation by sex

316. 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 characteristics such as sex, religion, belief or gender reassignment while at school, unless permitted by 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 characteristics or encourage participation in an activity where take-up by those with a certain characteristics 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 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)

317. 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 an inspector believes the school may be separating pupils unlawfully, 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.

318. It would be for a court to decide whether a school is in fact unlawfully discriminating against pupils. However, if inspectors consider that there is enough evidence to support a conclusion like this, they will write about this clearly in the inspection report.

319. The separation may have an impact on the school's grade:

- a school is unlikely to be judged as good or outstanding in leadership and management if inspectors consider that there is enough 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

320. 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

321. 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.

322. 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.

323. 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.

324. See [Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics in schools](#) for further guidance.

Workload

325. 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.

326. 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.

327. Collecting data can also create an additional workload for 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 school leaders should not have more than 2 or 3 data collection points a year, and that these should be used to inform clear actions.

328. 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

329. 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

330. 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 safeguarding policies, systems and processes are kept under continuous review

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

332. Inspectors are familiar with the 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’](#)

333. 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

334. 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.

335. 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 consider pupils' and parents' views using surveys, complaints or local intelligence.

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

337. 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 TRA, for example, around teacher misconduct.

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

339. 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

340. 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](#).

341. 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 it is likely that they will judge:

- safeguarding as ineffective
- the relevant independent school standards as not met

Arrangements for handling evidence or allegations of abuse

342. 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, records them in enough detail and deals with them swiftly and appropriately, and pupils are confident that this is the case

343. 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

344. 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 referred 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.

345. 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

346. 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 the 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 and paragraph 7 of the independent school standards can be judged as met. 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

347. Safeguarding is ineffective when there are serious or widespread systemic failures in the school's or setting'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.

348. 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 will address concerns about their safety, including risk of abuse, because leaders have not taken their views seriously and/or addressed relevant concerns
- pupils, particular 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

349. Evidence used to evaluate the impact of leaders' work, both currently and over time, includes, but is not limited to:

- meetings with leaders, including the proprietor, to discuss how well they know the school and the quality of education that it provides for pupils
- meetings with the proprietor and those responsible for governance as appropriate 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 judging the culture that has been established in the school by leaders and managers
- any evidence the school has from regularly surveying its staff and the way in which leaders and managers 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 school leaders and the local authority about those movements

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

Inspecting alternative provision used by any type of independent school

351. 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 the proprietor has ensured that the alternative provision is a suitable and safe placement that will meet pupils' academic/vocational/technical and, if appropriate, SEND needs. Inspectors will speak to a selection of pupils who attend off-site provision, where possible, including through video/telephone calls.

352. 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 the likelihood that pupils are safeguarded effectively.

353. 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 Ofsted has not yet inspected to assess the adequacy of the school's quality assurance process.

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

355. 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
- 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 the school's pupils benefit from a well-planned and sequenced, well-taught, broad curriculum

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

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

357. 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

Gaming

358. 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. If inspectors uncover evidence that deliberate gaming is taking place, the leadership and management judgement is likely to be inadequate.

359. 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.

Inclusion and off-rolling

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

- identify early those pupils who may be disadvantaged or have 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 reasons why pupils may be absent from school and provide swift support to improve their attendance

361. 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 guidance also sets out that a part-time timetable must only be in place 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.

362. 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.

363. '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

364. When inspectors find evidence of off-rolling taking place by our 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. If a decision is lawful, but still meets our definition of off-rolling, inspectors must be careful to consider the context of the decision and the integrity of the 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 our definition, then the leadership and management of the school are likely to be judged inadequate.

365. 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 two 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.

366. 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.

367. 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

368. When safeguarding is ineffective, this is likely to lead to an inadequate leadership and management judgement. However, there may be exceptional circumstances when it is appropriate to judge a setting as requires improvement, rather than inadequate.

Evaluating early years and sixth-form provision

Early years provision in schools

369. 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. [\[footnote 28\]](#) Inspectors' judgement on the effectiveness of early years provision includes evaluation of the provision for 2- and 3-year-olds. Inspectors should also note if any children receive additional funding.

370. 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 must 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.

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

372. Inspectors should 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 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

373. 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).

374. Inspectors will look at the 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.

375. 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

376. 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.

377. 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

Independent schools with exemptions from, or modifications to, the learning and development requirements of the EYFS

378. Section 46 of the Childcare Act 2006 gives the Secretary of State the power to confer exemptions from some or all of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS in one of two prescribed circumstances, which are referred to as the ‘independent schools route’ and the ‘established principles route’.^{[[footnote 29](#)]} The exemptions may modify or partially or fully exempt schools from delivering the educational programmes, meeting individual learning goals and making the assessment arrangements.

379. All independent schools that have early years provision must deliver the EYFS in full, unless they have an exemption or have applied for an exemption through the independent schools route and meet the 4 conditions determined by the Secretary of State, which are set out in the section on the independent schools route below.

Independent schools route

380. Registered independent schools that meet the 4 conditions below can ‘take up’ an exemption from all of the learning and development requirements for children aged 3 and over.

- Quality threshold – in the most recent standard inspection report the school must have both:
 - a separate judgement of good or outstanding for the early years provision (or if the most recent standard inspection report does not include a separate judgement for the early years provision, the school must have met all the requirements in the standard in part 2 of the independent school standards)
 - met the requirement in paragraph 2(2)(f) in part 1 of the independent school standards^{[[footnote 30](#)]}
- The other 3 conditions (seeking the views of parents, informing the local authority and notifying the DfE) are explained in the DfE’s guidance [‘The early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) learning and development requirements: guidance on exemptions for early years providers’](#)

Established principles route

381. If an independent school can demonstrate to the DfE that its early years provision is governed by ‘established principles’ that cannot be reconciled with one or more of the EYFS learning and development requirements, the DfE may grant the school an exemption from and/or modification to some or all of the EYFS learning and development requirements through the established principles route. To be granted exemptions or modifications, the school must meet the 4 conditions set out in the DfE’s guidance [‘The early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) learning and development requirements: guidance on exemptions for early years providers’](#).

Before an inspection

382. In their notification call, the lead inspector will ask the headteacher whether the school has,

or has applied for, an exemption from, or modification to, some or all of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS. They will ask the school to confirm whether the exemption is through the independent schools route or the established principles route. If the school has been granted an exemption and/or modifications through the established principles route, they will ask the school to confirm whether this covers all or part of the EYFS learning and development requirements.

383. If the school has applied for an exemption under the independent schools route and meets the quality threshold, the inspection will proceed as if the exemption has been granted.

384. However, if the school has applied through the established principles route, and has not yet received a letter from the DfE granting the exemption, the school is not exempt from the EYFS learning and development requirements, and will therefore be inspected against the EYFS in full.

On -site inspection activity

385. In inspections of schools that have been granted an exemption from/modification to all or some of the learning and development requirements of the EYFS, inspectors will inspect the early years provision against the independent school standards and the education inspection framework criteria. They will take into account the exemption and/or modifications when doing this. More information on how we will inspect the EYFS in schools is in: [Ofsted inspections: The EYFS in schools](#).

386. In schools with an exemption (under the established principles route), we will also inspect the early years provision against the learning and development requirements that are not exempt.

387. In schools with modifications (under the established principles route), inspectors will take the modifications into account when inspecting the early years provision against the learning and development requirements.

388. If a school has an exemption from all of the learning and development requirements under the established principles route or independent schools route and the school meets all 4 of the conditions set out in the [section on the independent schools route](#) we will only inspect its early years provision against the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS. We will not inspect it against the learning and development requirements.

389. Exempted independent schools must continue to comply with the independent school standards for children aged 2 and over and the EYFS safeguarding and welfare requirements. The Childcare Act 2006 does not allow for any exemptions from the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS.

390. Inspectors are likely to ask to see copies of letters from the DfE granting exemptions through the established principles route.

Sixth-form provision in schools

391. 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. [\[footnote 31\]](#) Inspectors must use

all their evidence to evaluate what it is like to be a student in the sixth form.

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

393. Inspectors should 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 (including those with SEND)
- how leaders and teachers develop a curriculum that provides progression, stretch and challenge for those pupils who do not have GCSE mathematics and English at grades 9 to 4 (or legacy grades A* to C); this may also include opportunities for 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

394. 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

395. Inspection of apprenticeships training are not in the scope of standard inspections of independent schools.

Provision for students aged 19 and over

396. An independent school may have students aged 19 and over on roll. Inspectors will only inspect and take account of provision for these students if they began their studies before the age of 18. However, as these students are essentially adults studying alongside children, inspectors will always report on whether safeguarding is effective in this context. [\[footnote 32\]](#)

Part 3. Grade descriptors

397. This part sets out the grade descriptors that inspectors will use in coming to judgments on standard inspections.

Reaching a judgement

398. Inspectors will make 4 key judgements:

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

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

- early years provision
- sixth-form provision

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

401. 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

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

- grade 1: outstanding
- grade 2: good
- grade 3: requires improvement
- grade 4: inadequate

403. 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.

404. 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.

405. 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.

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

Reaching judgements about schools with a specialist curriculum

407. In inspections of schools with a specialist curriculum, inspectors may not gather evidence for the quality of education judgement from the school's specialist provision (see the section 'Schools with a specialist curriculum'). However, they will assess a school's entire provision, including any specialist provision offered, when reaching judgements in the following areas:

- overall effectiveness
- behaviour and attitudes
- personal development
- leadership and management

Grade descriptors for quality of education

408. 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.

409. 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 is broad and ambitious for all pupils.

- Leaders adopt or construct a broad, rich 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. Ofsted's definition of this is a curriculum that is of comparable breadth and ambition to the national curriculum.
- Pupils study the full curriculum (as it is described in paragraph 2(2)(a) of the independent school standards); it is not narrowed. Where the school teaches a specialist curriculum, it also teaches the full range of subjects for as long as possible.
- 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' interest, and, where appropriate, there is a clear plan for returning all pupils to studying the full curriculum.
- 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.

The planning and implementation of the curriculum supports a strong impact on pupils' learning.

- The school's curriculum is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning and employment across a broad range of career options.
- 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.
- 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.
- Teachers ensure that their own speaking, listening, writing and reading of English support pupils in developing their language and vocabulary well.

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 work 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.

- The work given enables pupils to achieve the aims and ambition of the curriculum, which is coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge.
- 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.
- 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 that have developed 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.
- 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.

The impact of the education which pupils receive is strong, including for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.

- Pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum and, as a result, achieve well. This is reflected in the work that pupils produce.
- Pupils read widely and often, with fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age. They are able apply mathematical knowledge, concepts and procedures appropriately for their age.
- The impact of the education pupils receive is reflected in results from examinations (where available), or in the qualifications obtained. Inspectors will not use teacher-assessed grades from 2020 and 2021 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.

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 behaviour and attitudes

410. In order for the behaviour and attitudes judgement to be 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 a 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.

411. 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 excluded 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

412. 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.

413. 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, including 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 by providing unbiased information to all about potential next steps and high-quality careers advice and guidance.

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 those responsible for governance, through their words, actions or influence, directly and/or indirectly, undermine or fail to promote equality of opportunity in the school.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance are not protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremist views. Policy and practice are poor, which means that pupils are at risk.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance 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

414. In order for the leadership and management judgment 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)

- All of the independent school standards (and, where relevant, statutory requirements of the EYFS) are met.
- 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.

415. 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)

- All of the independent school standards (and, where relevant, statutory requirements of the EYFS) are met.
- 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.
- Those responsible for governance understand their role and carry this out effectively. The proprietor and those responsible for governance 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.
- The proprietor and those with responsibility for governance 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)

- All of the independent school standards may be met, but the school is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of a good judgement.
- 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.

- There are one or more unmet independent school standards (or, where relevant, statutory requirements of the EYFS) that may have a serious impact on pupils' welfare, health and safety, academic or personal development.
- 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.
- Leaders are not doing enough to tackle weaknesses in the school.
- The improvements that leaders and those responsible for governance 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 by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll or that pupils are regularly, repeatedly or systematically taken out of the 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 other legal responsibilities of the proprietor/those responsible for governance, and that breach is serious because of the extent of its actual or potential negative impact on pupils. The proprietor/governing body 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

416. 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.

417. 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 pupils (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 detail 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 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.

418. 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 programmes of study 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 programmes of study. Students make substantial and sustained progress from their identified and recorded starting points in their programmes of study. 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, 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

419. 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.

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

421. 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.

422. 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 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.

423. 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 grades in the report.

424. Inspectors will always make a written judgement about the effectiveness of the arrangements

for safeguarding pupils.

425. 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.

426. Inspectors will assess a school's entire provision, including any specialist provision offered, when reaching a judgement about overall effectiveness.

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 overall effectiveness will be inadequate when any one of the key

judgements is inadequate and/or safeguarding is ineffective.

Part 4. Inspecting against the independent school standards and other requirements

Technical information about the standards

427. The standards are set out in the schedule to the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#). Since 2014, the DfE has introduced minor amendments to the standards, most of which can be seen on the [legislation website](#).

428. The standards are structured in 8 parts. Each part contains one or more standards relating to that particular part. For example, part 1 contains 3 standards, and part 2 contains one standard. Each standard is set out in one or more paragraphs. For example, paragraph 12 contains a standard in its own right, and paragraph 5(a) is an element of the standard in paragraph 5. Schools must comply with each requirement in each paragraph to meet the standard.



429. Inspectors check a schools' compliance with the requirements of the paragraphs of the standards. They report to the DfE on a school's compliance with the standards, setting out which requirements of which paragraph the school does not meet.

Recording compliance and non-compliance

430. In standard inspections, inspectors check compliance with all paragraphs of the standards, and record 'met', 'not met' or 'not applicable' in the 'independent school standards compliance record'. For pre-registration inspections, inspectors report whether the school is likely to meet all of the standards should the DfE decide to register it. In the rare case that it is not possible to gather sufficient evidence to make a secure judgement on whether a standard is met or likely to be met, inspectors will record 'insufficient evidence'. On a standard inspection, this might happen where there are [no pupils on roll](#), and in pre-registration inspections, in respect of the standard about teaching. [\[footnote 33\]](#)

431. In material change, emergency and progress monitoring inspections, inspectors only check compliance with the paragraphs of the [standards specified by the DfE](#).

432. For all inspection types, where the requirement of a paragraph is not met and the paragraph is introduced by a stem, inspectors will record non-compliance with the stem itself, in addition to

non-compliance with the specific paragraph, as illustrated in the examples below.

- Where a school does not comply with paragraph 3(c), this means that it does not meet the standard contained in paragraph 3. Both paragraphs must be reported as not being met:

3 The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that the teaching at the school – 3(c) involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time.

- If paragraph 18(2)(c)(ii) is not met, inspectors will record non-compliance with 18(2)(c)(ii), 18(2)(c) (which contains the stem) and 18(2) (which contains the standard). All 3 paragraphs must be reported as not being met.

433. Where there are several elements to a paragraph of the standards, connected by ‘and’, all elements of the paragraph must be fulfilled for the requirement to be met. For example, paragraph 3(c) requires the proprietor to ensure that the teaching at the school ‘involves well planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time’. If the school fails to meet one element of a ‘multi-element’ paragraph, inspectors will record that the school does not comply with the whole paragraph, and record supporting evidence about the extent of non-compliance, for example explaining that effective teaching methods are not always used and the impact that this has on the pupils.

Gathering and recording evidence

434. Inspectors consider each paragraph of the standards on its own. Particular strengths in one area of a school cannot be used to compensate for evidence that a standard is not met elsewhere.

435. When inspectors judge that a school does not meet a requirement, they will record in the independent school standards compliance record and the inspection report that both the requirement of the particular paragraph of the standards, and the standard to which it relates, have not been met. For example, if paragraph 3(c) is not met, they will record that the standard in paragraph 3 is not met because the requirement in paragraph 3(c) is not met.

436. Inspectors record their evidence to support the judgement that requirements and standards are not met in the evidence base. Evidence to support the judgement that standards are met is only recorded in the evidence base, not the inspection report.

437. Inspectors will be clear in their feedback to schools, written evidence and the report about the evidence gathered that led to the judgement that a standard is not met. The evidence will be linked directly to the wording of the standard.

Paragraphs of the standards where compliance is not recorded

438. Compliance is sometimes not recorded against paragraphs that provide information about other paragraphs in the standards. For example, in part 4, paragraphs 18(4)(a) to 18(4)(c) set out

the instances when the checks specified in paragraphs 18(2)(d) to 18(2)(f) do not need to be carried out.

439. Some paragraphs in part 4 – for example 20(1) to 20(5)(b)(iii) – set out the checks that the Secretary of State carries out in relation to a proprietor of an independent school.

440. Some paragraphs provide an introduction to other paragraphs. For example, paragraph 1 states that the standards about the quality of education are contained in part 1.

441. There is normally no action for inspectors to take in relation to these paragraphs.

Definitions of terms used in the standards

442. Regulation 2 of the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) provides the definition of some of the terms used in the standards.

References made in the standards, other published resources for schools and technical notes

443. In checking compliance with the standards, inspectors will refer to the non-statutory DfE guidance '[The independent school standards: guidance for independent schools](#)', which sets out the DfE's understanding of the standards.

444. Inspectors may also refer to the published resources referred to below. The published resources include pieces of legislation, statutory frameworks of guidance, non-statutory guidance or departmental advice, as indicated in brackets below.

445. Some of the resources referred to are statutory guidance, with which the standards require schools to comply. Other resources are good practice guides that are available to advise schools. Schools do not have to follow them. Inspectors will not deem a standard to be unmet only because the school has not followed exactly what is set out in a published non-statutory guidance document; these documents provide best practice in complying with requirements. They will be clear about how the evidence gathered – for example the school's action, or inaction – means that the standard is not met. It is the standards that schools have to comply with, not non-statutory departmental guidance and advice.

446. If appropriate, inspectors may also refer to the following Ofsted guidance:

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

Groups of schools

447. The standards require schools to have and implement several policies. Some schools that are part of a group may have policies that are common to the group. This is acceptable to the DfE, provided that the policies are tailored so far as needed to each individual school – for example, by giving contacts in relevant local authorities – and are fully implemented. If there are separate websites for the schools, the policies should be available on the schools' websites. However, if there is only one website for the group, which is clearly identifiable as the only website for the schools, it is acceptable to the DfE that the policies are published there.

Key resources applicable to all parts of the standards

- [‘The independent school standards: guidance for independent schools’](#) (non-statutory guidance)
- [‘Registration of independent schools: guidance for proprietors’](#) (non-statutory guidance)

Part 1. Quality of education provided

Paragraph 2(2)(a)

- [Section 8 of the Education Act 1996 \(compulsory school age\)](#) (legislation)

Paragraph 2(2)(d)(ii) (and paragraph 5(b)(vi) in part 2)

- The protected characteristics are set out in [Chapter 1 of Part 2 of the Equality Act 2010](#) (legislation)

Paragraph 2(2)(f)

- [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage](#) (statutory framework)
- [‘The early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) learning and development requirements: guidance on exemptions for early years providers’](#) (non-statutory guidance)

Paragraph 2A(1) to 2A(2)

- [‘Relationships education, relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education’](#) (statutory guidance)
- [‘Inspecting teaching of the protected characteristics in schools’](#)

448. The school must meet all the requirements in paragraphs 2A(1)(a) to (g) in order to meet the

standard in paragraph 2A(1), except paragraph 2A(1)(c), which only applies to academies.

449. If an independent secondary school does not teach about lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships, it will not be meeting the expectations of the DfE’s statutory guidance, and will therefore not meet paragraph 2A(1)(d). It will also not meet the requirements to encourage respect for the protected characteristics in paragraph 2(2)(d)(ii) and paragraph 5(b)(vi).

Paragraph 3(a)

450. The requirement in paragraph 3(a) of the standards is not the same as the criteria set out in Ofsted’s quality of education judgement. Please refer to [‘The independent school standards: guidance for independent schools’](#) (non-statutory guidance).

Paragraph 3(j)

- [Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010](#) – see extract below (legislation)
- Schools with religious ethos and schools designated by order as having a religious character:
 - [‘Get information about schools’](#)
 - [Part G of ‘Registration of independent schools: guidance for proprietors’](#) (non-statutory guidance)
 - [Schedule 11 of the Equality Act 2010](#) (legislation)
- [‘Equality Act 2010: advice for schools’](#) (departmental advice)
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance](#) (guidance)

451. Paragraph 3(j). Schedule 11 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out that sections 85(1) and (2)(a) to (d) do not apply to an independent school registered as having a religious ethos. This is explained in part G of the DfE’s ‘Registration of independent schools’.

“85 Pupils: admission and treatment, etc.

(2) The responsible body of such a school must not discriminate against a pupil”–

(a) in the way it provides education for the pupil;

(b) in the way it affords the pupil access to a benefit, facility or service;

(c) by not providing education for the pupil;

(d) by not affording the pupil access to a benefit, facility or service;

(e) by excluding the pupil from the school;

(f) by subjecting the pupil to any other detriment.

452. Refer to [the section on schedule 10](#) of this document regarding schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Part 3. Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Paragraph 11

- [‘Health and safety: responsibilities and duties for schools’](#) (guidance)
- [‘Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions’](#) (statutory guidance)
- [‘School trips and outdoor learning activities: tackling the health and safety myths’](#) (guidance)

453. The Health and Safety Executive website contains the following information about [pupil to staff ratios on school trips](#): ‘Pupil to staff ratios for school trips are not prescribed in law. Those planning trips, on the basis of risk assessment, should decide the ratios, taking into account the activity to be undertaken and the age and maturity of the pupils.’

Paragraph 12

- [Fire safety risk assessment – educational premises](#) (guidance)
- [Fire safety risk assessment: sleeping accommodation](#) (guidance)
- [Fire safety law and guidance documents for business](#) (guidance)

Paragraph 14

454. Ratios of qualified staff to children in early years provision for children aged 2 to 5 must meet the welfare requirements of the [‘Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage’](#) (statutory framework)

Part 4. Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

- [‘Regulated activity in relation to children: scope’](#) (factual note)
- [Disclosure and Barring Service](#) (executive non-departmental public body website)

Paragraph 18(2)(b), 20(6)(a)(ii)

455. Under [section 142\(1\)\(a\) of the Education Act 2002](#), the Secretary of State may direct that a person may not provide education at an independent school (legislation).

456. The authority for making a prohibition order is section 141B(2) Education Act 2002 (as inserted by [section 8 of the Education Act 2011](#)). Any person that is subject to a prohibition order is prohibited from carrying out teaching work in an independent school (legislation).

457. The Secretary of State may make a direction under [section 128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#) prohibiting an individual from taking part in the management of independent educational institutions in England (legislation).

Checks on non-proprietor governors

458. The DfE's view is that any governor is part of the management arrangements for a school, even if they are not part of the proprietor body. Therefore, all governors must be subject to a section 128 prohibition from participation in management check (paragraph 18(2)(b)). This includes unpaid governors working on a voluntary basis.

459. Any governors who are paid by a school must also be subject to a DBS check (paragraph 18(2)(d)). The definition of 'staff' in regulation 2 of the independent school standards makes it clear that this includes people without a contract of employment. [\[footnote 34\]](#)

460. Paid governors should also be subject to a barred list check (paragraph 18(2)(a)) if they have regular unsupervised contact with the children. This will normally be the case.

461. A DBS certificate with a barred list check is also required for any unpaid governors who are engaged in regulated activity. (This falls under paragraph 7 of the standards, but not paragraph 18(2)(a) or 18(2)(d) – the DfE's view is that unpaid governors do not fall into the definition of staff because they work on a voluntary basis.)

Teaching prohibition orders and prohibition from management of independent schools orders

462. The DfE wrote to all independent schools in May 2018 to set out the arrangements for making the checks in 18(2)(b) and 20(6)(a)(ii).

“ 2. The standard relating to checks for staff is only met provided that no-one works at the school in contravention of a teacher prohibition order issued by the Teaching Regulation Agency on behalf of the Secretary of State. This effectively means that schools need to make checks for such orders when appointing into teaching positions. If a school has not previously done so they should also check that no existing members of teaching staff are subject to such orders, which began to be made from April 2012.

3. The standard relating to checks is also only met provided that no-one works at the school in contravention of a direction made by the Secretary of State under s.128 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 barring an individual from taking part in the management of an independent school. This effectively means that schools need to make checks for such directions when appointing into management positions, either from outside the school or by internal promotion. See [gathering personal information on inspection](#) for information about the position of existing staff in management positions.

4. When a Disclosure and Barring Service check, which includes children's barred list information, is made for any member of staff, details of any s.128 direction made by the Secretary of State will also be disclosed as part of that check. As DBS barred list checks can only be made if an individual is engaging in regulated activity, s.128 direction checks for all “management in

independent schools” roles can also be made using the TRA’s Secure Access Portal via the Teacher Services’ web page.

What constitutes taking part in the management of an independent school?

5. Individuals taking part in ‘management’ are likely to include individuals who are members of proprietor bodies (including governors...), and such staff positions as: head teacher, any teaching positions on the senior leadership team, and any teaching positions which carry a department headship. Whether other individuals such as teachers with additional responsibilities could be prohibited from ‘taking part in management’ depends on the facts of each case – so schools may wish to check them anyway. For non-teaching staff, posts which are part of the senior leadership team are likely to be regarded as ‘management’ for the purposes of checking for the existence of a barring direction. However, whether non-teaching staff are ‘taking part in management’ depends on the facts of each case. All employed school staff who work regularly in the school during school hours may be regarded as being in ‘regulated activity’ for the purposes of these checks.

7. Except where a person is being promoted internally to a management post, it is not necessary to carry out checks for s.128 directions for existing staff or members of the proprietor bodies. If an individual already at a school is the subject of a s.128 direction, that would be taken up by the department with the school concerned. If an individual barred under s.128 occupies a management position at an independent school, then that may be grounds for removal of the school from the register of independent schools (s.119 of the Act), leading to closure.

15. Any enquiries about barring directions and section 128 should be sent to registration.enquiries@education.gov.uk.”

Suitability of all members of staff (other than the proprietor, members of the proprietor body and supply staff)

Paragraphs to be checked by inspectors: 18(2) to (3).

Paragraphs 18(2)(d), 18(2)(e) and 18(2)(f) do not need to be carried out where 18(4) applies.

In order to meet paragraph 18(3), the checks in paragraphs:

- 18(2)(c) and
- 18(2)(e), except where paragraph 18(4) applies

must have been carried out before each staff member’s appointment.

463. Paragraph 18(2)(a) relates to the inclusion of a person's name in:

- the DBS barred list, for appointments made from December 2012
- the Independent Safeguarding Authority barred list, for appointments made from 2009 to November 2012
- List 99 for appointments made before 2009

or included in a corresponding list maintained under the law of Scotland or Northern Ireland:

- a list maintained under either Article 6(1)(a) or (b) of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
- a list maintained under either section 1(1)(a) or (b) of the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007

464. The check in paragraph 18(2)(c)(i) has been required by the independent school standards since 1 September 2003.

465. The check in paragraph 18(2)(c)(iii) has been required by the independent school standards since 1 May 2007.

466. The check in paragraph 18(2)(d) has been required by the independent school standards since 1 September 2003. Until 1 May 2007, an enhanced check was only required for staff regularly caring for, training, supervising or in sole charge of children. From 1 September 2003 to 30 November 2012, enhanced criminal records checks were performed by the Criminal Records Bureau. Since 1 December 2012, they have been carried out by the DBS.

467. The check required in paragraph 18(2)(f) has been required by the independent school standards since 1 September 2003.

468. Paragraph 18(3) sets out that the checks in paragraphs 18(2)(c) and, except where paragraph 18(4) applies, paragraph 18(2)(e) must be completed before a person's appointment. However, 18(2)(c)(ii) – checks on medical fitness – should not be made before the person is appointed. The DfE has issued the following advice to proprietors of independent schools.

“ From 1 October 2010, in accordance with Section 60 of the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful for employers to ask health-related questions of applicants before job offer, unless the questions are specifically related to an intrinsic function of the work. This means that schools should no longer, as a matter of course, require job applicants to complete a generic health questionnaire as part of the application procedure. Independent schools are advised to review their existing practices to ensure they are complying with both the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and Section 60 of the Equality Act. Schools may decide to ask necessary health questions after job offer. In any case, they should ensure that any health-related questions are targeted, necessary and relevant to the job applied for.”

469. Refer to paragraph 327 of [‘Keeping children safe in education’](#) for information on checks for existing staff (as opposed to new staff).

Suitability of all members of supply staff

Paragraphs to be checked by inspectors: 19(2) to (3).

In order to meet paragraph 19(2)(a)(i)(aa), the checks in paragraphs 21(3)(a)(i) to (iv),(vii) and 21(3)(b) must have been made in respect of each member of supply staff appointed.

In order to meet paragraph 19(2)(a)(i)(dd), additional checks for the relevant countries must have been made by the employment business as appropriate, and written confirmation to that effect must be obtained from the employment business for any member of staff supplied by the business who has lived abroad.

There are some countries for which checks are not possible. The school should ensure that the employment business has considered this and notified the school accordingly. As with the UK checks already needed for supply staff, it will be for the school to decide whether to accept supply of the staff member, given the outcome of checks (or the lack of them).

In order to meet paragraph 19(2)(d)(i), the 'contract or other arrangements which the proprietor makes with any employment business' must require the employment business to provide the notification from the employment business referred to in paragraph 19(2)(a)(i).

In order to meet paragraph 19(3), the certificate in paragraph 19(2)(a)(i)(bb) 'must have been obtained not more than 3 months before the date on which the person is due to begin work at the school', except where paragraph 19(4) applies.

Suitability of proprietors

470. Paragraphs 20(3)(b)(i) to (iii) and 20(5)(b)(i) to (iii) set out the checks on proprietors that are carried out by the DfE. Normally inspectors do not check compliance with these paragraphs. If there has been a recent change in the proprietor and it appears that the DfE has not been notified, the inspector will record this to inform the DfE.

Suitability of all members of the proprietor body

471. Inspectors will ensure that all checks in 20(6) to 20(6)(c) have been carried out for all members of the proprietor body, with the exception of the chairperson.

472. Refer to [paragraphs 18\(2\)\(b\) to 20\(6\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#) regarding the checks in paragraph 20(6)(a)(ii) of the standards.

473. Refer to paragraph 327 of 'Keeping children safe in education' for information on checks for existing staff (as opposed to new staff).

Paragraphs to be checked by inspectors: 20(6) to (c).

Paragraph 20(6)(b) is treated as being complied with, where paragraphs 20(7) (pre-registration inspection) or 20(8) (standard inspection) apply.

Single central record

Paragraphs to be checked by inspectors: 21(1) to (7)(b).

Each member of staff (other than the proprietor, members of the proprietor body and supply staff)

Paragraphs 21(3) to (b) set out the checks required in relation to each member of staff appointed on or after 1 May 2007 that are required to be recorded on the single central record.

In order to meet paragraph 21(4), for each member of staff in post on 1 August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1 May 2007, the following information should be recorded on the single central record:

- the checks in paragraphs 21(3) to 21(3)(b)

and

- whether an enhanced criminal record certificate was obtained, together with the date on which any check was completed or certificate obtained

Each member of supply staff

Paragraphs 21(5) to (c) set out the checks required in relation to each member of supply staff that are required to be recorded on the single central record.

In order to meet paragraph 21(5)(a)(i), the information in the following paragraphs should be recorded on the single central record, in respect of each member of supply staff:

- 21(3)(a)(i) to (iv)
- 21(3)(a)(vi) which refers to paragraph 18(2)(d)
- 21(3)(a)(vii)

Each member of the proprietor body

Paragraph 21(6) sets out the checks required in relation to each member of the proprietor body appointed on or after 1 May 2007 that are required to be recorded on the single central record:

- 20(6)(b)
- 'the date they were made and the date on which the resulting certificate was obtained'

Paragraphs 21(7) to (b) set out the checks required in relation to each member of the proprietor body in post on 1 August 2007 who was appointed at any time before 1 May 2007 that are required to be recorded on the single central record:

- 20(6)(b)
- ‘the date they were made and the date on which the resulting certificate was obtained’

and

- 21(7)(b)

Part 5. Premises of and accommodation at schools

474. In considering compliance with the standards about the premises and accommodation of schools, please also refer to [the section on schedule 10](#) of this document regarding schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

475. If a right of way passes through a school’s playground, the school must have suitable safeguards in place – for example proper supervision – in order for the standard in paragraph 25 to be met. The presence of the right of way itself does not constitute evidence of non-compliance.

Part 6. Provision of information

Paragraph 32(1)(j)

- [Section 119 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#) (legislation)
- [Education \(Independent Educational Provision in England\) \(Unsuitable Persons\) Regulations 2009](#) (legislation)

Paragraph 32(1)(a) refers to the information specified in paragraph 32(2)(a) to 32(2)(d).

Paragraph 32(1)(b) refers to paragraph 32(3)(a) to 32(3)(g), and:

- paragraph 32(3)(g) refers to reports carried out by Ofsted or one of the independent inspectorates and reports following inspections of boarding or residential provision, carried out by Ofsted or, in the case of boarding schools that are members of Independent Schools Council, the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

Paragraph 32(1)(d) refers to reports following standard, progress monitoring and emergency inspections, carried out by Ofsted or one of the independent inspectorates.

Paragraph 32(1)(e) refers to reports following inspections of boarding or residential provision, carried out by Ofsted or, in the case of boarding schools that are members of Independent Schools Council, the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

Paragraph 32(1)(g) applies to standard, progress monitoring and emergency inspections (not pre-registration inspections, which are carried out under section 99 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, or material change inspections, which are carried out under section 162(4) of the Education Act 2002). However, under the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#), independent schools are required to keep admission and attendance registers and make them available to inspectors during any type of inspection.

Paragraph 32(1)(j) refers to paragraph 32(4)(a) to 32(4)(c) and:

- paragraph 32(4)(a) refers to the sections of the Education and Skills Act 2008 under which the Secretary of State may decide to remove a school from the register
- paragraph 32(4)(b) refers to [section 116 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#), under which the Secretary of State may impose a 'relevant restriction' where a proprietor has failed to meet one or more of the independent school standards (legislation)
- paragraph 32(5) provides information about paragraph 32(4)(b), and refers to [section 117\(1\) of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#), which defines the 'relevant restriction' in section 116 (legislation)
- paragraph 32(4)(c) refers to [section 120 of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#), under which the Secretary of State may apply to a justice of the peace for an order to remove a school from the register.

476. In order to meet the standards in part 6, the school must provide the information specified in the paragraphs. The content and the quality of the information itself, or its implementation, do not influence compliance with the standards in part 6. These are covered by other parts of the standards. The only exceptions are where the school has provided information that is irrelevant to the requirement of the paragraph, or where the information is relevant but is significantly out of date.

477. The DfE has confirmed that the requirement of paragraph 32(1)(a) and 32(1)(b) is met if a school has placed the information on the school's website (where one exists) and has told parents that this is where it can be found. If a school does not have a website or has decided not to place a copy on its website, then it must make a copy available in the school, inform parents of its availability and provide the required information on request. Schools with boarding pupils frequently have additional information, such as a booklet for boarders, aimed specifically at boarders or their parents.

Part 7. Manner in which complaints are handled

Paragraph 33(k). The reference to ‘an inspection under section 109 of the 2008 Act’ means that the school’s complaints procedure must reflect that ‘correspondence, statements and records relating to individual complaints’ (which must normally be ‘kept confidential’) must be shared with inspectors if requested on standard, progress monitoring or emergency inspections.\$E

Part 8. Quality of leadership in and management of schools

34(1)(c)

The definition of ‘well-being’ in [section 10\(2\) of the Children Act 2004](#):

(2) The arrangements are to be made with a view to improving the well-being of children in the authority’s area so far as relating to—

(a) physical and mental health and emotional well-being;

(b) protection from harm and neglect;

(c) education, training and recreation;

(d) the contribution made by them to society;

(e) social and economic well-being.

478. If there are any unmet standards in parts 1 to 7 of the independent school standards, paragraphs 34(1)(a) and 34(1)(b) are also unmet, and so too is 34(1).

479. The quality of leadership and management standard is not met automatically if all the other standards are met. The school must demonstrate that it can consistently meet standards.

Other requirements checked by inspectors

Safeguarding procedure

- [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#) (legislation)

[DBS referral guides and factsheets](#) (guidance)

Duties under schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010

- [Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010](#) (legislation)
- [Equality Act 2010: advice for schools](#) (departmental advice)

480. Schools are required to comply with the requirements of schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. Schedule 10 relates to accessibility. Paragraph 3 of schedule 10 requires that schools have an accessibility plan and defines an accessibility plan as follows.

“(2) An accessibility plan is a plan for, over a prescribed period –

(a) increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the school’s curriculum,

(b) improving the physical environment of the school for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the school, and

(c) improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.”

481. [Paragraph 3 of schedule 10](#) sets out specific requirements about accessibility plans all of which schools must meet, and inspectors must check.

482. Disability is defined in section 6 of the Equality Act 2010 as follows.

“(1) A person (P) has a disability if—

(a) P has a physical or mental impairment, and

(b) the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on P’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

(2) A reference to a disabled person is a reference to a person who has a disability.”

Statutory requirements of the EYFS

- [‘Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage’](#)
- [‘The early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) learning and development requirements: guidance on exemptions for early years providers’](#)

483. Early years provision for children aged 2 and above, who are on the school’s roll, is inspected as part of the school inspection. This provision must comply with:

- the independent school standards
- the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS
- unless the school has been granted an exemption, the learning and development requirements of the EYFS

1. [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) as amended by the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Inspection Fees\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#) and the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Provision of Information\) and Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#). ↩
2. We use the term 'single central record' to refer to the register described in paragraph 21(1) of the independent school standards, which is also known as the 'single central register'. ↩
3. We inspect boarding/residential provision under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools or residential special schools, as appropriate. These inspections follow the '[Social care common inspection framework \(SCCIF\): boarding schools and residential special schools](#)'. ↩
4. The timing of the school's next inspection is calculated from the date that the final report from the previous standard inspection was sent to the school, which is the definition of a complete inspection (see [the paragraphs on the inspection process](#)). ↩
5. The inspection cycle for all non-association independent schools was extended by 4 terms in 2021 to take account of the temporary suspension of routine inspections due to the pandemic. ↩
6. If there are [no pupils on roll](#) at the time of the inspection, inspectors may not be able to gather sufficient evidence to make an overall effectiveness judgement. ↩
7. The inspection cycle for all non-association independent schools will be extended to take account of the temporary suspension of routine inspections owing to COVID-19. Therefore, inspections of new schools within the current cycle will not reflect the timescales published above. ↩
8. Inspection without notice will be considered when there are serious concerns about one or more of the following: the breadth and balance of the curriculum; rapidly declining standards; safeguarding, including a decline in standards of pupils' behaviour and the ability of staff to maintain discipline; and standards of leadership or governance. ↩
9. Inspectors should refer to the case records that are uploaded to the pre-inspection documents for use during preparation. ↩
10. We refer all complaints about independent schools to the DfE in a timely manner. See '[Memorandum of understanding between Ofsted and DfE: independent schools](#)'. ↩
11. The lead inspector should review the ICF for completeness; if they think it needs to be amended or added to, they should discuss this with the regional SHMI, who can raise with the DfE. ↩
12. From now on in this handbook, 'parents' will refer to mothers, fathers and/or carers. ↩
13. A registered independent school can be approved by the Secretary of State under [section 41\(1\) of the Children and Families Act 2014](#) to enable the school 'to be the subject of a request for it to be named in an EHC plan'. ↩
14. A change in proprietor constitutes a material change to the school's registration, which must be agreed with the DfE before being implemented. ↩
15. The lead inspector will check when they arrive on site that the school has disseminated the links for the point-of-inspection surveys to staff and to pupils. ↩

16. We expect the school to provide all policies, schemes of work and plans and all other documents required by the independent school standards in English. [↩](#)
17. Independent schools are not required to offer statutory induction to their ECTs. However, if they choose to offer statutory induction, they must adhere to the regulations and have regard to the [statutory guidance](#), and therefore the induction must be based on the [early career framework](#). [↩](#)
18. The DfE contacts all schools with no pupils on roll on a termly basis to check whether they have admitted pupils, or intend to admit pupils within the next 12 months. [↩](#)
19. 'Early notification form, non-compliance with independent school standards' used to be called 'Form A – initial advice to the registration authority that an independent school is not complying with the independent school standards'. [↩](#)
20. The inspector records whether or not the school meets every paragraph of the independent school standards and other relevant statutory requirements in the independent school standards compliance record. [↩](#)
21. [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) as amended by the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Inspection Fees\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#) and the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Provision of Information\) and Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#). [↩](#)
22. This does not include relevant assessment information (such as photographs, video and records of observations) made by teachers and teaching assistants for pupils who have profound or multiple learning difficulties. [↩](#)
23. [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) as amended by the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Inspection Fees\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#) and the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Provision of Information\) and Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#). [↩](#)
24. [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) as amended by the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Inspection Fees\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#) and the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Provision of Information\) and Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#). [↩](#)
25. This section of the handbook is not primarily for independent special schools, which often provide a highly specialised education designed to meet SEND pupils' needs. Independent special schools should refer to [paragraphs 217 to 222](#) of the handbook for further information on how the EIF will apply in independent special schools and to SEND provision. [↩](#)
26. Ofsted expects the school to provide all policies, schemes of work and plans and all other documents required by the independent school standards in English. [↩](#)
27. Paragraphs 2(2)(e) to 2(2)(e)(ii) of the independent school standards set out requirements about careers guidance for pupils receiving secondary education. [↩](#)
28. A separate judgement may not be made if there are fewer than 5 pupils in the early years provision. [↩](#)
29. The prescribed circumstances are set out in the [Early Years Foundation Stage \(Exemptions from Learning and Development Requirements\) Regulations 2008](#) and [The Early Years Foundation Stage \(Exemptions from Learning and Development Requirements\) \(Amendment\)](#)

[Regulations 2012.](#) ↩

- 30. Paragraph 2(2)(f) is the requirements for the curriculum to provide: ‘where the school has pupils below compulsory school age, a programme of activities which is appropriate to their educational needs in relation to personal, social, emotional and physical development and communication and language skills’. ↩
- 31. A separate judgement may not be made if there are fewer than 5 pupils in the sixth-form provision, where the school is only registered to admit pupils aged 16 and over or, especially in the case of special schools, the school does not differentiate between provision for older and younger pupils. ↩
- 32. See paragraph 7 of part 3 of the independent school standards. ↩
- 33. Where this document refers to meeting or not meeting a standard, this also applies to a proposed new school or a changing school being ‘likely to meet’ and ‘not likely to meet’ a standard in the case of pre-registration and material change inspections. ↩
- 34. Regulation 2 in the [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#) as amended by the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Inspection Fees\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#) and the [Independent Educational Provision in England \(Provision of Information\) and Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#). ↩

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