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Consultation outcome

Improving the way Ofsted inspects education: equality impact assessment - response to the consultation

Updated 9 September 2025

Introduction

This equality impact assessment sets out how the renewed education inspection framework (EIF) methodology and toolkits will meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including the public sector equality duty (PSED) set out in [section 149 of the Equality Act 2010](#).

[We consulted](#) on how we inspect early years, state-funded schools, non-association independent schools, further education (FE) and skills providers and initial teacher education (ITE) providers.

The PSED requires Ofsted, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

We have updated this statement to reflect the feedback we received through the consultation. This statement sets out our assessment of the equality, diversity and inclusion implications of the renewed methodology and toolkits. It is published alongside our [response to the consultation](#).

In this assessment, we use the term ‘learners’ to mean anyone attending school, early years, FE and skills or ITE provision. It covers children, pupils, learners, apprentices and trainees. We also use the term ‘providers’ (of education) rather than writing out all of those we inspect, as listed above, for ease of reading.

The renewed EIF

The consultation covered the following areas, and these are the areas we will be making changes to following the publication of the consultation response:

- report cards
- toolkits
- changes to our inspection methodology
- changes to full inspections and monitoring inspections of state-funded schools
- how we identify state-funded schools causing concern

Following the consultation, we are publishing the toolkits and accompanying operating guides to be used during inspection, plus inspection information documents to guide providers. These relate to all inspections in scope for the consultation, which are:

- [early years inspections](#)
- [state-funded schools inspections](#)
- [non-association independent schools inspections](#)
- [FE and skills inspections](#)
- [ITE inspections](#)

We have also produced [videos of example report cards](#) as part of the consultation response to show what these will look like.

How the renewed EIF may affect people in terms of protected characteristics

We have considered how the reforms could affect individuals or groups of people in terms of protected characteristics. We have also considered whether the proposals meet the 3 PSED aims.

The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Under the renewed EIF, our inspections will feel more collaborative. We have embedded mental health awareness and cultural sensitivity into our training. Listening to consultation feedback, we have tried to ease concerns about workload and well-being pressures on providers.

Due to the composition of the sector, certain groups sharing protected characteristics will interact more with our inspection reforms than others.

Eliminating discrimination

Toolkits, methodology and data

The toolkits are designed to strengthen our focus on inclusion,

and to support the Equality Act 2010 in reducing unlawful discrimination. The toolkits will focus on how providers address learners' barriers to learning and/or well-being, including learners who share protected characteristics.

The renewed methodology allows inspectors to more thoroughly consider information such as a provider's context and cohorts of learners. When inspection evidence or leaders indicate that a group with particular protected characteristics faces barriers to learning or well-being, our revised approach will support inspectors to evaluate how effectively the provider supports them.

We will use data, where available, to scrutinise learners' achievement and attendance more effectively, including for disadvantaged learners, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those known (or previously known) to children's social care and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being. Some consultation respondents warned this could create unintended consequences for groups of learners who share protected characteristics, for example providers might discriminate against or exclude some groups in the misguided hope of securing a more favourable inspection grade. We believe our strong focus on inclusion will counterbalance any perverse incentives. The renewed methodology and toolkits are designed to mitigate discriminatory practice. Continuing the work of the original EIF, we will hold providers to account if they have policies (for example, in relation to behaviour, retention or admissions) or practices that unlawfully discriminate, directly or indirectly, against learners who share protected characteristics.

Some respondents felt the toolkits were not sufficiently adapted for settings with a high proportion of learners sharing particular protected characteristics, such as those with SEND. Following consultation feedback and test visits to a diverse range of providers, we have refined the toolkits. For example, in the 'attendance and behaviour' (schools) and 'participation and development' (FE and skills) evaluation areas, we have made it

clearer that staff should make appropriate and reasonable adjustments. In doing so, they will still maintain high expectations for what all learners can achieve. This will help to ensure that learners with shared protected characteristics are supported by the renewed framework.

Accessibility of documents

There were mixed views on the accessibility of the documents published with the consultation, such as the toolkits and report cards. Some questioned the accessibility of the report cards for parents or carers with learning needs and/or disabilities or those who speak English as an additional language, while a small group of respondents expressed similar concerns about the toolkits.

We are committed to ensuring that our documents are accessible to as many people as possible, as stated in our [accessible documents policy](#). Since the launch of the consultation, we have rigorously user tested the report cards and adjusted them to improve accessibility. We have also streamlined the toolkits, made the language and layout more straightforward and improved the use of colour. The report cards are visually represented, which may improve accessibility those who may struggle to read English.

Advancing equality of opportunity

Barriers to learning and context

Inspectors will evaluate and report on whether providers create an inclusive culture. We will focus on the extent to which those with SEND and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being are a focus of the provider's work. We will continue to identify exclusive practices, such as off-rolling, in our inspections.

We will include relevant data in report cards, guided by consultation feedback. In schools, for example, this will cover the proportion of pupils who have education, health and care (EHC) plans or who receive SEN (special educational needs) support, compared to national figures. This will help readers understand the diversity of the provision and may reduce perverse incentives around admissions and exclusions, supporting equality of opportunity. It will also help inspectors hold leaders to account for any gaps or anomalies between a provider's data and local data.

Attendance

Building on the Department for Education's [updated attendance guidance](#), we will also focus more on attendance in schools. Regular attendance supports equality of opportunity in education by ensuring that all learners have access to the educational opportunities they need to succeed.

Inspectors will seek to understand from the outset the different cohorts of learners present in a provider, and any barriers to learning and well-being they may face (which includes factors preventing attendance). Inspectors will look at leaders' action to help learners overcome these.

We recognise that absence rates may be higher for some learners with particular protected characteristics. For example, learners with SEND may have more absences for hospital appointments or learners from certain religious groups may be absent to perform religious observances. We will carry out our

inspections with a sensitivity to the context that providers and learners are working in. Inspectors will prioritise understanding whether providers' actions are made in the best interests of learners.

Workload and well-being

Some consultation respondents raised concerns about how inspections will impact provider staff with certain disabilities, such as those relating to mental health. We are committed to dealing sensitively and consistently with providers' well-being concerns.

Following the Big Listen, we have already made significant reforms to support provider staff as part of inspections. We have trained all inspectors on mental health awareness, introduced a policy to pause inspections when inspectors have concerns about the well-being of leaders and staff members, launched a provider contact helpline and a national team for inspectors to contact to assist with any well-being concerns, and set up an inspection welfare, support and guidance hub.

Inspectors will work within our [code of conduct](#), taking reasonable steps to prevent undue anxiety and to minimise stress during the inspection. The operating guides, published alongside the consultation response, detail the process for inspectors to make reasonable adjustments as required to accommodate the needs of disabled staff or to make other adaptations to avoid discrimination on the grounds of any other protected characteristics. To prepare inspectors for the renewed framework, we will be delivering further essential training and development opportunities, including on the Equality Act 2010.

Our proposed approach to inspection aims to minimise workload pressures for providers. We have based the toolkits on the requirements and standards that leaders and providers already

need to adhere to or meet. They should not lead to any additional preparatory work for an inspection. The renewed approach to inspection has also removed deep dives and introduced the non-compulsory role of a nominee, to reduce workload pressures on middle leaders and streamline the inspection process for providers.

In response to feedback from the consultation, we have adapted our approach to further reduce the workload pressures of the renewed EIF. We have reduced the number of evaluation areas for inspection, changed our approach to 'exceptional', and set out clear guidance for inspectors about the length of inspection days. We believe these measures will ensure that staff who share certain protected characteristics are not negatively affected by the renewed framework.

Some respondents suggested that the use of a 5-point scale may lead to increased workload demands. In the consultation response, we considered the relative merits of different grading systems. For the reasons set out there, we have concluded that a 5-point scale, supplemented by narrative summaries, will ensure fair and consistent accountability for providers. We have also taken a range of actions to alleviate potential well-being and workload concerns, including in setting the standards, communicating the new processes, providing support throughout inspections, and reforming inspectors' practice.

We commissioned an independent review of the proposed reforms on leaders', practitioners' and inspectors' workloads, mental health and well-being. We have detailed our response in the consultation response document.

Inspector workforce

Some consultation respondents questioned levels of diversity within the inspection workforce. One of our current [equality objectives](#) commits us to creating a welcoming and inclusive

workplace with equality of opportunity for our workforce, attracting talent from wherever it comes. We strive to improve representation of minority groups who have shared protected characteristics and are underrepresented across the organisation. We are currently in the process of reviewing our equality objectives and will publish updated objectives and a refreshed set of actions shortly.

Fostering good relations

Bullying and harassment

Inspectors are expected to comply with our [code of conduct](#) during inspection. Our [complaints process](#) allows concerns to be raised about an inspection. In following these, good relations will be fostered with all groups, including those who share certain protected characteristics.

Monitoring and evaluation

We believe we have given full and appropriate consideration to all elements of the PSED. Our consultation process gave all stakeholders the opportunity to raise any concerns they had in relation to the equality impact of our proposals.

We have revised this statement, as well as the toolkits and methodology, to respond to the feedback gathered during the consultation period.

We will continue to monitor the impact of the renewed EIF and its implications.

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