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Guidance

Further education and skills monitoring operating guide for inspectors: for use from November 2025

Updated 5 November 2025

Applies to England

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For use on inspections from 10 November 2025.

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About this guide

This guide sets out how lead inspectors ('you') should carry out monitoring of further education (FE) and skills providers, including how to conduct the initial introductory call to plan the monitoring inspection programme.

This guide complements Ofsted's [operating guide for full inspections](#), as well as [the framework](#), our separate [inspection information for FE and skills providers](#) and our [inspection toolkit for FE and skills](#).

The document discusses general principles in this first section, and the following material should be used as a step-by-step guide. Each different type of monitoring inspection has its own guide below and you should use the relevant section to inform how you carry out the monitoring programme for each provider.

Conduct

You must act in line with our [code of conduct](#), and demonstrate professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect at all times. At the earliest opportunity, and as necessary throughout the inspection, remind both the provider and the inspection team of the importance of following the code of conduct.

Monitoring inspections of FE and skills providers

There are 5 types of monitoring inspections of FE and skills providers:

- monitoring inspections of providers with any evaluation areas graded 'urgent improvement' or where safeguarding has been graded 'not met'
- monitoring inspections of providers with any evaluation areas graded 'needs attention'
- focused monitoring inspections
- monitoring inspections of new providers, referred to in our [inspection information for FE and skills](#)
- monitoring inspections of newly merged colleges

The monitoring programme

Providers with any evaluation area(s) graded as 'urgent improvement' or 'needs attention' and/or where safeguarding is 'not met' are allocated a His Majesty's Inspector (HMI). This HMI is responsible for liaising with provider leaders and/or the nominee. [\[footnote 1\]](#) They are the first point of contact during the monitoring process, and normally lead the on-site monitoring inspection(s).

Providers normally receive up to 5 working days' notice of a monitoring inspection, although monitoring inspections may be unannounced where that is considered appropriate.

Ofsted may carry out a full inspection of any provider without first completing a monitoring inspection where risk factors or other concerns are identified and this is considered the most appropriate course of action.

Ofsted will not normally monitor providers if their public funding for their education and/or training programmes has ceased.

Key principles of monitoring

Principle 1

Throughout the monitoring inspection, the toolkit will help you gather evidence to:

- **celebrate** the improvements leaders have secured since the full inspection
- **validate** leaders' actions and progress
- **highlight** where further improvement may still be needed

Principle 2

Leadership and governance are always key areas of focus when gathering evidence. Monitoring inspections focus on the effectiveness of leadership and governance in bringing about swift and sustainable improvement, even when this evaluation area has been graded as meeting at least the 'expected standard'.

Principle 3

Monitoring inspections can improve the grade for evaluation areas identified as 'urgent improvement' or 'needs attention'. In these cases, an updated report card will be published. Only the evaluation areas graded as 'urgent improvement' or 'needs attention' will be monitored. Use the toolkit to determine whether

leaders have made enough progress for the relevant evaluation area to be graded at least at the 'expected standard'. Where a grade may have declined, we may decide to carry out a full inspection.

Grade changes following a monitoring inspection

FE and skills providers may demonstrate improvements in particular evaluation areas – for instance, they may move from 'urgent improvement' to 'needs attention'.

If you gather enough evidence to support a change in grade during a monitoring inspection, update the report card accordingly. You must record explicitly where leaders have made improvements and the evidence to support this change in grade. See the FE and skills report-writing guidance on how to update the report card.

Changing grades from 'urgent improvement' to 'needs attention' or higher, or changing the safeguarding grade from 'not met' to 'met'

FE and skills providers with evaluation areas graded 'urgent improvement' will normally have a monitoring inspection within 6 months, and where required, another within 12 months.

Leaders may demonstrate improvements in particular evaluation areas during a monitoring inspection. For instance, individual evaluation areas graded 'urgent improvement' may be regraded to 'needs attention'. Make sure that you have robust evidence to support a change in grade – otherwise, the grade should remain

as it is.

Changing grades from ‘needs attention’ to ‘expected standard’

FE and skills providers with evaluation areas graded ‘needs attention’ normally have a monitoring inspection scheduled within 13 months of the publication of the report card.

Make sure that you have robust evidence to support a change in grade. Otherwise, the grade will remain as it is. If you have concerns that the provider has declined, contact the national duty desk, as a full inspection may have to be scheduled at the earliest opportunity.

Providers where grades do not change

Where you do not find enough evidence to validate that leaders have made the necessary improvements, discuss this with the national duty desk. You may need to consider carefully whether the grade awarded for leadership and governance at the last full inspection remains accurate. In particular, you will have to determine whether leaders and those responsible for governance still have the capacity to bring about the changes needed.

In this situation, be clear with leaders why the grades have not changed. Explain that the full inspection report card will be updated to say that the monitoring inspection took place, but that the evaluation area is still graded ‘urgent improvement’ or ‘needs attention’.

Providers where you have concerns about the progress leaders are making or concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or well-being

In this situation, it is important to call the national duty desk as soon as possible. Discuss the implications of your concerns. Make sure this is recorded carefully in the evidence base.

If, during a monitoring inspection of a provider with evaluation areas graded 'needs attention', the evidence shows clearly that if the provider were to receive a full inspection it is likely that one or more evaluation areas would be graded 'urgent improvement' or that safeguarding standards would not be met, you should contact the national duty desk as it may be necessary to carry out a full inspection.

Changing grades on focused monitoring inspections

Inspectors cannot change a grade on a focused monitoring inspection. If you have serious concerns, for instance about safeguarding, contact the national duty desk. It may be necessary to carry out a full inspection, reporting on all evaluation areas.

Monitoring inspections of providers with one or more 'urgent improvement' grades

and/or where safeguarding is 'not met'

There will normally be up to 2 monitoring inspections of these providers. The first monitoring inspection is likely to be within 6 months of the publication of the full inspection report card. If safeguarding was graded 'not met' at the last full inspection, this will be a priority focus at the first monitoring inspection.

If a provider has improved the quality of provision in these evaluation areas, the relevant grades will change, and we will publish an updated report card.

When all evaluation areas are no longer graded as 'urgent improvement', and safeguarding is graded as 'met', the urgent improvement monitoring programme will end. If there are remaining 'needs attention' grades, the provider may be subject to a 'needs attention monitoring inspection'.

If a second monitoring inspection is necessary, it will normally take place within 12 months of publication of the full inspection report card. If these areas have not improved, the 'urgent improvement' grades will remain. The provider will then have a full inspection within 18 months of publication of the full inspection report card.

Regardless of monitoring, all providers will normally have a full inspection within 4 years of the publication of the full inspection report card.

Process outline

For providers with one or more 'urgent improvement' grades following a full inspection, you will carry out:

- **an introductory monitoring programme call** – this marks

the start of contact between you (as the assigned HMI) and the provider's leaders and/or the nominee, which will continue throughout the monitoring programme^{[\[footnote 2\]](#)}

- **ongoing monitoring calls** – these are to maintain contact between the HMI, the nominee and other leaders, and to check on progress; their frequency will be determined by the HMI, provider leaders and the nominee
- **notification and planning calls** – to set up individual monitoring inspections
- **on-site monitoring inspections** – the specific monitoring inspection activity will be based on checking if the provider has improved the quality of provision, so that some/all of the 'urgent improvement' evaluation areas can be regraded; depending on the number of 'urgent improvement' grades, the team size may vary between inspections

Introductory monitoring programme call

The introductory monitoring programme call is the opportunity to start building an enduring relationship with leaders and the nominee, and to support them through the monitoring programme.

Determining the time of the call

You should:

- Call the provider by 10am, typically within 3 months of the publication of the full inspection report card. This call can take place on any day of the working week.
- Ask to speak with the most senior leader available.
- Explain that you are the HMI assigned to their monitoring programme and their first point of contact and that this is a short call to organise the introductory monitoring programme call. Share relevant information, such as your name and appropriate contact details.

- Agree and confirm a suitable time for the introductory monitoring programme call, usually later that day. Explain that this is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this. Agree the arrangements for this.
- Agree who will attend the call. Encourage the leader to have at least one other senior leader present to assist and support them in the call and, where available, the nominee.
- Agree the purpose of the call – that it is to introduce the process of the monitoring programme and to briefly discuss the ‘next steps’ identified at the previous full inspection.
- As with full inspections, ask whether the staff who will be joining the introductory monitoring call require any adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments.

Carrying out the introductory monitoring programme call

You should read the full inspection report card before carrying out the introductory monitoring programme call.

Call the provider at the agreed time. This is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this.

Ensure that leaders are clear about why the provider is subject to monitoring, highlighting the next steps identified at the previous full inspection. Confirm the specific evaluation areas that will be the focus of monitoring activity and the relevant expected standards that need to be secured.

Explain to leaders:

- that there will normally be up to 2 monitoring inspections
- that the first inspection will usually take place within 6 months of the publication of the full inspection report card
- that leaders can ask for a monitoring inspection earlier if they feel that they have compelling evidence to support an improvement in grade(s) – this should be submitted in writing to the HMI; the decision whether to carry out an earlier monitoring inspection is taken by the relevant regional director

- the focus for the monitoring inspection(s), associated evaluation areas and evidence-gathering themes – if there are numerous ‘urgent improvement’ areas, you may not be able to cover all of these in the monitoring programme
- that if identified evaluation areas have improved enough and there is compelling evidence to support this, they may be graded as ‘expected standard’ or higher during the monitoring inspection and an updated report card produced
- that they can ask any questions they might have about the process
- that they can contact you by email should they have any further questions
- that you will follow up by email to organise additional ongoing calls

During the call:

- discuss with leaders the actions they have already taken to address the next steps and any evidence they have of the impact of these
- discuss any support that they have planned or received and its impact
- invite them to ask any questions they have about the process

Confirm with leaders that ahead of each monitoring inspection you will notify them up to 5 working days before arriving on site, and that you will arrange a follow-up planning call before you arrive.

Ongoing calls

Call the provider at the previously agreed time and date. This is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this.

These calls are to maintain ongoing contact between the HMI and the nominee. They are used to check in on progress.

During the call, discuss with leaders:

- the actions they have already taken to address the next steps and their impact
- the progress they are already making towards the 'expected standard' in the evaluation area(s) graded as 'urgent improvement' at the last full inspection
- any support that they have received and its impact

When you agree that the provider is ready, confirm with the nominee that you will contact them to notify them of the inspection up to 5 working days before arriving on site, and that you will arrange a follow-up planning call before you arrive.

On-site monitoring inspections

Monitoring inspections normally last for up to 2 days, depending on the size and scope of the provider and the evaluation areas that will be covered by you and your inspection team. Where the monitoring inspection lasts 1 day, the inspection methodology set out below should be adapted accordingly.

The size of the inspection team will depend on the size and context of the provider.

Preparing for the inspection

Review the following, recording only brief and relevant evaluative information that will support a constructive and purposeful planning call:

- the provider's most recent report card or inspection report, or the report from any previous monitoring inspection
- relevant performance information published since the previous inspection
- any concerns about the provider raised with Ofsted since the last full inspection
- any information that you consider relevant from the provider's website, for example curriculum information or governance arrangements
- information on Ofsted's 'find information about a provider' system
- any documentation the provider has sent in advance of the inspection, as agreed between you and the nominee/senior leaders during monitoring calls

Consider which evaluation area(s) would be best to prioritise for the monitoring inspection. You are likely to prioritise core issues that impact on learners' and apprentices' safety, learning and/or well-being. The latest available data may help to inform your decisions.

Use your preparation and knowledge of the relevant expected standards in the toolkit evaluations area(s) to identify what you will need to explore in the planning call.

Determine the monitoring inspection activities that are likely to be suitable and give you the opportunity to gather the relevant evidence, considering the provider's context.

Notification and planning of the monitoring inspection

The monitoring inspection notification call

The guidance below applies to both the first and any subsequent monitoring inspections undertaken at the provider. You will

normally call the provider up to 5 working days before the start of the on-site monitoring inspection.

Ensure that you follow the relevant notification call script.

Cover the following, referring to the relevant section in the [operating guide for a full inspection](#):

- notification of inspection, and dates
- confirming key provider information
- scheduling the planning call
- confirming who will take part in the call
- discussing the role of the nominee/shadow nominee
- arrangements for adaptations and reasonable adjustments

The monitoring inspection planning call

Call the provider at the time agreed during the notification call. The planning call for a monitoring inspection is likely to be shorter than the call for a full inspection. However, this will depend on the range of evaluation area(s) and issues that need to be discussed. It should normally not be longer than 60 minutes in total. You should emphasise to leaders that they can take breaks when needed.

This call follows the same protocols as for full inspections. For example, it will normally be a video conference call and should not be recorded. The nominee can invite other senior leaders to join the planning call. Refer to the [operating guide for full inspections](#) for further information.

The planning call will be in 3 parts:

Part 1: Introduction and discussing practicalities

This will cover the same range of information as for a full inspection. This includes discussions about:

- Ofsted's code of conduct
- leaders' well-being, and who is responsible for their well-being

on a day-to-day basis; record how to contact the person or people responsible

- reasonable adjustments and adaptations
- whether leaders are clear about the purpose of the monitoring inspection and have what they need, such as details on how to upload documents to the portal

Part 2: The provider's context, leaders' actions and their impact

Discuss:

- your pre-inspection preparation
- any changes to the provider's context since the previous inspection(s) that leaders want to share with you
- numbers of learners and/or apprentices in provision that is in scope for the inspection
- any changes to leadership and governance arrangements since the last inspection
- reference to the outcome of the previous inspection and, where applicable, the previous monitoring inspection
- leaders' evaluation of the actions they have taken to address the areas for improvement, and how they assess the impact of their actions
- any support that they have received and its impact
- the evaluation areas that will form the core focus of this inspection – remember, you may not have time to look at all 'urgent improvement' evaluation areas during the monitoring programme
- how progress will be reported, and changes to the report card that this may result in

Part 3: Planning the timetable for the monitoring inspection

The purpose of this part of the call is to work with leaders to shape the plan for the inspection. Discuss the focus for the

inspection, remembering that core issues should be prioritised.

Consider and plan with leaders which activities you and the team need to carry out to gather the necessary evidence to:

- **celebrate** the improvements leaders have secured since the full inspection
- **validate** leaders' actions and progress
- **highlight** where further improvement may still be needed

When you shape the timetable, consider:

- your arrival time, remembering that this should not be before 8:30am
- a brief orientation meeting to check on staff well-being at the start of the day and to review the proposed inspection activity arrangements
- whether leaders would welcome the opportunity for the inspection team to meet briefly with staff at the start of the day
- which meetings you should arrange, including:
 - meetings with senior leaders and/or those responsible for governance to discuss the themes being explored
 - an end-of-day reflection meeting on day 1
 - an ongoing reflection meeting at the start of day 2 (for 2-day inspections)
 - final reflection and feedback meetings, and who can attend these (see the [inspection information document](#))
- the classroom/workshop activities taking place during the inspection
- opportunities to speak to staff/learners/apprentices/employers
- time to reflect on and record your evidence

You should leave the provider by 5:45pm other than in exceptional circumstances and in agreement with the nominee, for example when evening provision is offered that is relevant to

the monitoring inspection.

When deciding which activities to carry out, remember that these are not full inspections, so you need to consider how best to gather specific information about the evaluation areas you are focusing on. Activities should be focused and purposeful.

Use the toolkit to plan activities relevant to the evaluation area(s) you are focusing on. For example, if attendance was identified as an issue at the previous inspection, you should meet with the leader(s) with oversight of attendance; if inclusion is a focus area, you should carry out an inclusion-focused learning walk and case sampling.

Identify the first-hand evidence needed to assess progress, drawing on the earlier discussion with leaders about actions and impact.

Discuss with leaders how and where they can best demonstrate the positive impact and successes of their work, including (where relevant) how they have sustained improvements from the previous monitoring inspection.

Refer to [Additional guidance to support evidence-gathering](#) in the operating guide for full inspections to inform your planning of activities.

Focus your discussion with leaders on how to gather evidence that helps you and the inspection team to analyse the specific issue(s) that is/are holding back the provider's improvement. Consider how you can use the evidence gathered from activities such as learning walks to support any other evaluation area(s) that are the focus of the inspection.

Make sure that you share and explain the rationale for inspection activities, discussing any practical arrangements as required, and record this in your evidence base. The final decision on inspection activities rests with you as lead inspector. Be clear that you will ensure leaders have the opportunity to highlight the impact of their actions since the last full inspection/monitoring

inspection.

Remember to schedule regular brief reflection meetings to keep the nominee and other leaders updated on progress and emerging findings. Emphasise to leaders that the reflection meetings will provide the opportunity to review emerging findings and to agree adjustments to the planned inspection activities.

Agree a time when you will be able to upload the draft schedule to the portal. End the call and upload the schedule to the portal by the agreed time.

After the call(s)

Use electronic evidence-gathering (EEG) to inform team inspectors of pertinent information, including the planned activities, their responsibilities, and the outcome of any requested adaptations or reasonable adjustments. Relevant information should be included in the team briefing letter.

What to do on site during the monitoring inspection

Day 1

When you arrive on site:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff and find out whether any issues have arisen since the planning call
- hold a brief orientation meeting with the inspection team, including the nominee, to ensure that the team inspectors understand the provider's context, the inspection schedule, the times of reflection meetings and the evaluation areas being focused on
- check whether anyone involved in the inspection requires or has requested any reasonable adjustments because of a disability

- consider whether you need to make any adaptations to the inspection process where those with other protected characteristics may otherwise be put at a disadvantage (refer to the [Responding to requests for reasonable adjustments and/or adaptations](#) section of the main operating guide for further information)
- if there have been any requests for reasonable adjustments and/or adaptations, record them in the evidence base along with their outcome, and any other adaptations that have been requested

Follow the timetable for the day as discussed in the planning call. Activities for day 1 will typically include some or all of the following:

- a leadership discussion and learning walk where leaders can evidence the impact of their work
- curriculum learning walks and/or lesson inspections, including discussions with staff and learners/apprentices – offer leaders the opportunity to accompany inspectors on these
- further informal, or planned, discussions with learners and apprentices
- meetings with staff
- work scrutiny, either individually or jointly with a relevant staff member
- a focus on learners and/or apprentices who are disadvantaged, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or high needs, those who are known (or previously known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, including those without level 2 English and/or mathematics, where the previous inspection/monitoring inspection identified any recommendations or areas for improvement relating to these groups

Reflection meeting with the nominee

These meetings bring together the inspection team and the

nominee towards the end of the day to reflect on the emerging evidence. You should do the following:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues
- ensure you have applied the [3 key principles](#) when evaluating the first-hand evidence you have gathered
- share headline evidence, linked to the relevant expected standards in the toolkit
- consider which areas are emerging as having improved since the last full inspection/monitoring inspection, and areas where the provider may have more to do – this will support you in having a transparent dialogue with leaders about the emerging evidence
- record leaders' comments in the evidence base
- identify, agree on and arrange the necessary activities for the next stage(s) of the inspection, ensuring leaders understand the rationale for these

Day 2 (only for 2-day inspections)

Begin the day with a brief reflection meeting with a senior leader and nominee: confirm everyone's well-being, note any updates from leaders or unexpected events, and agree whether the schedule needs fine-tuning to fit the provider's working day. Adjust plans where necessary.

Continue to carry out the agreed inspection activities, remembering to have regular reflection meetings.

Once evidence collection has been completed on day 2, the team will hold a reflection meeting. The nominee will be present.

End-of-inspection reflection meeting with the nominee

Hold a reflection meeting with the nominee towards the end of the inspection, once evidence-gathering has been completed. During the reflection meeting:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues
- feed back on the evidence gathered on day 2
- evaluate all evidence gathered over the 2 days in the relevant evaluation area(s)
- confirm the progress the provider has made towards meeting the relevant expected standard(s), including the new grades for any areas that will be regraded (subject to our quality assurance processes)
- record the nominee's comments in the evidence base

Then hold the final feedback meeting, which senior leaders and the funding body/bodies can attend.

Final feedback meeting

Record the main points for feedback to the provider in the evidence base during the inspection.

Your feedback must be clear, respectful and grounded in the evidence gathered. It must cover all the points that will appear in the updated report card or written outcome/update.

Thank everyone for their contributions, engagement and involvement in the inspection and then explain clearly:

- that attendance at the final feedback meeting is voluntary and any attendee may leave at any time
- the key findings from the inspection, including the range of evidence gathered and the new grades for any areas that have been regraded (subject to our quality assurance processes)
- that leaders should share the inspection findings with those responsible for governance and whoever else they consider appropriate, which may include colleagues, family members, and/or their wider support group; however, the information should not be made public

- that the draft report card they receive must not be published; they must wait for the copy of the final report card
- that when they receive their draft report card and complete their factual accuracy check they do not need to check data from other published sources, but may want to review any data that was gathered during the inspection or commented on in the report card
- that the nominee should, ideally, complete the post-inspection survey
- that the provider has an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns or to seek clarification about the inspection, and can contact us after the end of the inspection if necessary (see the [Concerns or complaints about an inspection](#) section in the inspection information for FE and skills providers)
- that leaders can make a formal complaint and can find information on how to do this in our [complaints procedure](#)
- where applicable, any provisional changes to the provider's monitoring programme – but make clear that this is subject to quality assurance
- that the precise text of the written update may differ from the verbal feedback

Reflect the provider's context and frame your feedback through professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement. When managing attendees and the conduct of everyone who attends, make sure that the meeting is practical and constructive.

What to do after the monitoring inspection

Reporting on improvements

Use the FE and skills report-writing guidance to produce an updated report card.

You will need to update the following sections:

- ‘About this inspection’
- ‘About this provider’ (where appropriate)
- ‘What it’s like to be a learner at this provider’ – update only the paragraphs pertinent to the evaluation areas being focused on
- each evaluation area that has been focused on

If the provider submits comments after receiving the draft written update, you are responsible for reviewing and responding to these comments and making any necessary amendments, as set out in the report-writing guidance.

Monitoring inspections of providers with any evaluation area(s) graded ‘needs attention’

This monitoring inspection will normally take place up to 13 months after publication of the full inspection report card.

If a provider has improved the quality of provision in these evaluation areas, the relevant grades will change, and we will publish an updated report card.

If areas have not improved, the relevant ‘needs attention’ grades will remain, and the next full inspection will take place within 30 months of publication of the most recent full inspection report card.

If inspectors have concerns that any areas may have declined below ‘needs attention’, or that safeguarding remains ‘not met’, we may schedule a full inspection of the provider.

Process outline

For providers with evaluation areas graded 'needs attention' (but no evaluation areas graded 'urgent improvement') following a full inspection, inspectors will carry out the following:

- **introductory monitoring call** – this marks the start of contact between the HMI, leaders and the nominee, which will continue throughout the monitoring programme
- **ongoing monitoring calls** – these are to maintain ongoing contact between the HMI, the nominee and other leaders. They are used to check in on progress and evaluate readiness for the on-site inspection(s). The frequency of these calls will be determined by the HMI and the nominee
- **notification and planning call** – these are to set up individual monitoring inspections in the programme
- **on-site monitoring inspection** – the specific monitoring inspection programme will vary, but most providers will receive only 1 monitoring inspection. Depending on the number of areas graded 'needs attention', we may use a larger team of inspectors and/or conduct 2 monitoring inspections

Introductory monitoring programme call

The introductory monitoring programme call is the opportunity to start building an enduring relationship with the nominee and leaders, to support them towards their monitoring inspection.

Determining the time of the call

You should:

- Call the provider by 10am, typically within 3 months of the publication of the full inspection report card. These calls can

take place on any day of the working week.

- Ask to speak with the most senior leader available.
- Explain that you are the HMI assigned to the monitoring programme and their first point of contact and that this is a short call to organise the introductory monitoring programme call. Share relevant information such as your name and appropriate contact details.
- Agree and confirm a suitable time for the introductory monitoring call, usually later that day. Explain that this is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this. Agree the arrangements for this.
- Agree who will attend the call. Encourage the leader to have at least one other senior leader present to assist and support them in the call and, where available, the nominee.
- Agree the purpose of the call – that it is to introduce the process of the monitoring programme and to briefly discuss the ‘next steps’ identified at the previous full inspection.
- As with full inspections, ask whether the staff who will be joining the introductory monitoring call require any adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments.

Carrying out the introductory monitoring call

You should read the full inspection report card before carrying out the introductory monitoring call.

Call the provider at the agreed time. This is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this.

Ensure that leaders are clear about why the provider is subject to monitoring, highlighting the next steps identified at the previous full inspection.

Explain to leaders that:

- they will normally only receive 1 monitoring inspection
- the monitoring inspection will usually take place within 12 months of the publication of the report card for the previous

full inspection

- leaders can ask for a monitoring inspection earlier if they feel that they have compelling evidence to support an improvement in grade(s); they should submit their request to you in writing; the decision on whether to carry out an earlier monitoring inspection rests with the relevant regional director
- the monitoring inspection will focus on the evaluation areas graded 'needs attention' during the last full inspection; if there is compelling evidence that the provider has improved, they may be graded as 'expected standard' during the monitoring inspection and an updated report card produced
- they can ask any questions they have about the process
- they can contact you by email if they have any further questions
- you will follow up by email to organise ongoing calls

During the call, discuss with leaders:

- the actions they have already taken to address the next steps, and the impact of these
- any support that they have received and its impact

Confirm with leaders that you will contact them to notify them of the inspection up to 5 working days before arriving on site, and that you will arrange a follow-up planning call before you arrive.

Ongoing calls

Call the provider at the previously agreed time and date. This is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this.

These calls are to maintain ongoing contact between the HMI and the nominee. They are used to check in on progress and assess readiness for the on-site inspection(s).

During the call, discuss with leaders:

- the actions they have already taken to address the next steps, and their impact
- the progress leaders are already making to secure the expected standard in any evaluation area(s) graded 'needs attention' at the last full inspection
- any support that they have received and its impact
- if the provider is not ready for an on-site inspection, the scope and timing of further ongoing calls, how these will be arranged, and who will attend

When you agree the provider is ready, confirm with the nominee that you will contact them to notify them of the inspection up to 5 working days before arriving on site, and that you will arrange a follow-up planning call before you arrive.

On-site monitoring inspections

Monitoring inspections normally last for up to 2 days, depending on the size and scope of the provider and the evaluation areas that need to be covered by you and your inspection team.

Where the monitoring inspection lasts 1 day, the inspection methodology set out below should be adapted accordingly.

The size of the inspection team will depend on the size and context of the provider, and the number of evaluation areas that need to be graded.

Notification and planning of the on-site monitoring inspection

The guidance below applies to both the first and any subsequent

monitoring inspections carried out at the provider. You will normally call the provider up to 5 working days before the start of the on-site monitoring inspection.

The monitoring inspection notification call

Ensure that you follow the relevant notification call script.

Cover the following, referring to the relevant section in the [operating guide for a full inspection](#):

- notification of inspection, and dates
- confirming key provider information
- scheduling the planning call
- confirming who will take part in the call
- discussing the role of the nominee/shadow nominee
- arrangements for adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments

The monitoring inspection planning call

The planning call is likely to be shorter than it would be for a full inspection. However, this will depend on the range of evaluation area(s) and issues that need to be discussed. It should normally not be longer than 60 minutes in total. You should emphasise to leaders that they can take breaks when needed.

This call follows the same protocols as for full inspections. For example, it will normally be a video conference call and should not be recorded. The nominee can invite other senior leaders to join the planning call. Refer to the [operating guide for full inspections](#) for further information.

The planning call will be in 3 parts:

Part 1: Introduction and discussing practicalities

This will cover the same range of information as for a full inspection. This includes discussions about:

- Ofsted's code of conduct
- leaders' well-being, and who is responsible for this on a day-

to-day basis; record how to contact the person or people responsible

- reasonable adjustments and/or adaptations
- whether leaders are clear about the purpose of the monitoring inspection and have what they need, such as details of how to upload documents to the portal

Part 2: The provider's context, leaders' actions and their impact

Discuss:

- your pre-inspection preparation
- changes to the provider's context since the previous inspection(s) that leaders want to share with you
- the numbers of learners and/or apprentices in provision that is in scope for the inspection
- any changes to leadership and governance arrangements since the last inspection
- the outcome of the previous inspection and, where applicable, any previous monitoring inspection
- leaders' evaluation of the actions they have taken to address the areas for improvement, and how they assess the impact of their actions
- any support that they have received and its impact
- the evaluation areas that will form the core focus of this inspection
- how progress will be reported, and the changes to the report card that this may result in

Part 3: Planning the timetable for the monitoring inspection

The purpose of this part of the call is to work with leaders to shape the plan for the inspection.

Consider and plan with leaders which activities you and the team

need to carry out to gather the necessary evidence to:

- **celebrate** the improvements leaders have secured since the full inspection
- **validate** leaders' actions and progress
- **highlight** where further improvement may still be needed

When you shape the inspection schedule, consider:

- arrival time, remembering that this should not be before 8:30am
- a brief orientation meeting to check on staff well-being at the start of the day and to review the proposed inspection activity arrangements
- whether leaders would welcome the opportunity for the inspection team to meet briefly with staff at the start of the day
- which meetings to hold – these could include:
 - relevant meetings focused on the themes being explored, such as discussions with senior leaders and/or those responsible for governance
 - an end-of-day reflection meeting on day 1
 - an ongoing reflection meeting at the start of day 2 (for 2-day inspections).
 - final reflection and feedback meetings, and who can attend these (see the [inspection information for further education and skills providers](#))
- the classroom/workshop activities taking place during the inspection
- opportunities to speak to staff/learners/apprentices/employers
- time to reflect on and record your evidence

You should leave the provider by 5:45pm other than in exceptional circumstances and in agreement with the nominee, for example when evening provision is offered that is relevant to

the monitoring inspection.

When deciding which activities to carry out, remember that these are not full inspections, so you need to consider how best to gather specific information about the evaluation areas you are focusing on. Activities should be focused and purposeful.

Use the toolkit to plan activities relevant to the focus evaluation area(s) – for example, if attendance was an issue identified at the previous inspection, you could meet with the leader(s) with oversight of attendance; if inclusion is a focus area, you could carry out an inclusion-focused learning walk and case sampling.

Identify the first-hand evidence you need to assess progress, drawing on the earlier discussion with leaders about actions and impact. Engage leaders in a conversation about how and where they can best demonstrate the positive impact and successes of their work, including, where relevant, how they have sustained improvements from the previous monitoring inspection.

Refer to the [Additional guidance to support evidence-gathering](#) section in the operating guide for full inspections to inform your planning of activities.

Focus with leaders on how you will gather evidence that enables you to determine whether the provider meets at least the 'expected standard' in the relevant grading area(s). Consider how evidence gathered from activities such as learning walks can be used to support any other evaluation area(s) that are the focus of the inspection.

Make sure that you share and explain the rationale for inspection activities, discussing any practical arrangements as required, and record this in your evidence base. The final decision on inspection activities rests with you as lead inspector. Be clear that you will ensure leaders have the opportunity to highlight the impact of their actions since the last full inspection/monitoring inspection.

Remember to schedule regular brief reflection meetings to keep

the nominee and other leaders updated on progress and emerging findings. Emphasise to leaders that the reflection meetings will provide the opportunity to review emerging findings and to agree adjustments to the planned inspection activities.

Agree a time when you will be able to upload the draft schedule to the portal. End the call and upload the schedule to the portal by the agreed time.

After the call(s)

Use the EEG preparation card to inform team inspectors of pertinent information, including the planned activities, their responsibilities, and the outcome of any requested adaptations or reasonable adjustments. Relevant information should be included in the team briefing letter.

What to do on site during the monitoring inspection

Arrival

You should use your professional judgement to determine what time to arrive on site. This will likely be at the start of the day, but no earlier than 8:30am.

Day 1

When you arrive on site, you should:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff and find out whether any issues have arisen since the planning call
- hold a brief orientation meeting with the inspection team, including the nominee, to ensure that the team inspectors understand the provider's context, the inspection schedule, the times of reflection meetings and the evaluation areas being focused on
- check whether anyone involved in the inspection requires or

has requested any reasonable adjustments because of a disability

- consider whether you need to make any adaptations to the inspection process where those with other protected characteristics may otherwise be put at a disadvantage (refer to the [Responding to requests for reasonable adjustments and/or adaptations](#) section of the main operating guide for further information)
- if there have been any requests for adaptations, record them in the evidence base along with their outcome

Follow the schedule for the day as discussed in the planning call. Activities for day 1 will typically include some or all of the following:

- a leadership discussion and learning walk where leaders can evidence the impact of their work
- curriculum learning walks/lesson inspections, including discussions with staff and learners/apprentices – offer leaders the opportunity to accompany inspectors on these
- further informal, or planned, discussions with learners and apprentices
- meetings with staff
- work scrutiny, either individually or jointly with a relevant staff member

You should ensure that inspection activities include a focus on learners and/or apprentices who are disadvantaged, those with SEND or high needs, those who are known (or previously known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, including those without level 2 English and/or mathematics.

Reflection meeting with the nominee

These meetings bring together the inspection team and the nominee towards the end of the day to reflect on the emerging evidence. You should:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues
- ensure you have applied the [3 key principles](#) when evaluating the first-hand evidence you have gathered
- share headline evidence, linked to the relevant expected standards in the toolkit
- consider which areas are emerging as having improved since the last full inspection/monitoring inspection, and areas where the provider may have more to do – this will support you in having a transparent dialogue with leaders about the emerging evidence
- record leaders' comments in the evidence base
- identify, agree on and arrange the necessary activities for the next stage(s) of the inspection, ensuring leaders understand the rationale for these activities

Day 2 (2-day inspections)

Begin the day with a brief reflection meeting with a senior leader and nominee: confirm everyone's well-being, note any updates from leaders or unexpected events, and agree whether the schedule needs fine-tuning to fit the provider's working day. Adjust plans where necessary. Continue to carry out the agreed inspection activities, remembering to have regular reflection meetings.

Once evidence collection has been completed on day 2, the team will hold a reflection meeting. The nominee will be present.

End-of-inspection reflection meeting with the nominee

Hold a reflection meeting with the nominee towards the end of the inspection, once evidence-gathering has been completed. During the reflection meeting:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues

- feed back on the evidence gathered on day 2
- evaluate all evidence gathered over the 2 days pertinent to the relevant toolkit evaluation area(s)
- confirm the progress the provider has made towards meeting the relevant expected standard(s), including any related grade changes
- record the nominee's comments in the evidence base

Then hold the final feedback meeting, which senior leaders and the funding body/bodies can attend.

Final feedback meeting

Record the main points to feed back to the provider in the evidence base during the inspection.

Your feedback must be clear, respectful and grounded in the evidence gathered. It must cover all the points that will appear in the updated report card or written outcome/update.

Thank everyone for their contributions, engagement and involvement in the inspection and then explain clearly:

- that attendance at the final feedback meeting is voluntary and any attendee may leave at any time
- the key findings from the inspection, including the range of evidence gathered and any provisional grade changes (which are subject to our quality assurance arrangements)
- that leaders should share the inspection findings with those responsible for governance and whoever else they consider appropriate, which may include colleagues, family members, and/or their wider support group; however, the information should not be made public
- that the draft report card they receive must not be published; they must wait for the copy of the final report card
- that when they receive their draft report card and complete their factual accuracy check, they do not need to check data from other published sources, but may want to review any

data that was gathered during the inspection or commented on in the report card

- that the nominee should, ideally, complete the post-inspection survey
- that the provider has an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns or to seek clarification about the inspection, and can also contact us after the end of the inspection if necessary (see the [Concerns or complaints about an inspection](#) section in the inspection information for FE and skills providers)
- that leaders can make a formal complaint and can find information on how to do this in our [complaints procedure](#)
- that the precise text of the written update may differ from the verbal feedback

Reflect the provider's context and frame your feedback through professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement. When managing attendees and the conduct of everyone who attends, make sure that the meeting is practical and constructive.

What to do after the monitoring inspection

Use the FE and skills report-writing guidance to produce a written update to the report card, setting out your findings and making any necessary changes to grades.

You will need to update the following sections:

- 'About this inspection'
- 'About this provider' (where appropriate)
- 'What it's like to be a learner at this provider' – update only the paragraphs pertinent to the evaluation areas being focused on
- the evaluation areas being focused on

If leaders submit comments after receiving the draft written update, you are responsible for reviewing and responding to these comments, and making any necessary amendments, as set out in the FE and skills report-writing guidance.

Focused monitoring inspections

We may be asked to inspect a provider at any time, including where there are concerns that the safety of learners or apprentices is at risk, when information suggests that there has been a serious breakdown in leadership and governance, or where there has been a significant decline in standards of education. Equally, we may inspect any provider, at any time, at the discretion of His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), or if requested by the Secretary of State for Education.

Focused monitoring inspections focus sharply on the issues that have prompted the inspection. If information gathered on a focused monitoring inspection gives us substantial concerns, this may trigger a full inspection. You will not determine grades for any evaluation areas in a focused monitoring inspection.

Focused monitoring inspections are normally 1 day, but sometimes the inspection may take place over 2 days. The size of the inspection team depends on the complexity and scope of the issues raised.

Preparation

You must take account of any relevant information that has been shared with Ofsted, such as concerns raised through whistleblowing or other routes. Contact your regional senior HMI

to ensure you have access to all the relevant information and discuss what will be communicated to the provider when they are notified of the inspection. Do not investigate any complaint further. You will be considering wider aspects of the provider relevant to the complaint.

Where relevant, you should review the commission provided by HMCI or the Secretary of State for Education.

You should read the latest full inspection report card.

Notification

Whether notification is given or not will be decided by the regional senior HMI in advance of the inspection.

Monitoring inspections with notice

If you are undertaking a focused monitoring inspection with notice, notify the provider the day before the inspection, typically before midday. Make the purpose of the inspection clear during this call.

Monitoring inspections without notice

If you are carrying out a focused monitoring inspection without notice, you should normally telephone the provider about 15 minutes before arriving on site. Advise the senior leader you speak to that you will ensure that the focus of the inspection and the reasons that led to it will be made clear after you/the inspection team have arrived at the provider.

Notification and planning for an announced monitoring inspection

When the inspection is carried out with notice, follow the guidance for [Monitoring inspections to providers with one or](#)

[more 'urgent improvement' grades](#) about the notification and planning call.

When considering context, leaders' actions and their impact (part 2), adapt your discussion to focus on:

- the purpose of the inspection and the wider issues raised by any complaint(s), where relevant, without identifying specific complainants
- leaders' actions and the impact of the work in relation to the evaluation area(s) that link to the wider issues that are the focus of the inspection

When planning the timetable (part 3):

- use the possible whole-provider issues that you have identified from your preparation and the toolkit to identify the activities that will help you gather the evidence needed
- discuss your proposed activities with leaders, ensuring you remain flexible throughout

Carrying out an unannounced monitoring inspection

For unannounced monitoring inspections, you will need to plan a skeleton timetable in advance without input from leaders. Follow part 3 of [Planning the timetable for inspections to providers with one or more 'urgent improvement' grades](#).

When planning the timetable, be aware that staff and those responsible for governance may only be available at certain times.

What to do on site during the focused

monitoring inspection

Carry out the activities that you identified when planning the schedule for the inspection. Where the wider issues relate to safeguarding, refer to [Evaluating safeguarding in practice](#), as set out in the operating guide for full inspections.

Be aware that some inspections may begin with a safeguarding focus but expand to cover leadership and governance and other relevant evaluation areas. Use professional judgement to determine the scope of the inspection and ensure leaders are kept informed from the outset about any emerging themes.

Once you have decided on the key areas of focus and relevant inspection activities, consider their prioritisation, format and timing. Whether the focused monitoring inspection is scheduled over 1 or 2 days will inform your decisions. It is important that you find first-hand evidence to validate what leaders are telling you.

Remember to schedule regular reflection meetings with leaders and the inspection team.

Schedule time to assimilate your evaluative evidence.

Final feedback meeting

Follow the guidance for [Monitoring inspections of providers with one or more 'urgent improvement' grades](#). Adapt your feedback to discuss:

- the issues brought to Ofsted's attention that caused the provider to be inspected
- the key findings from the focused monitoring inspection, which are still subject to change as a result of quality assurance procedures or moderation

What to do after the focused monitoring

inspection

Amend the report card as applicable – see the FE and skills report-writing guidance.

Review and amend as necessary following any comments from the provider.

If inspectors find no evidence to corroborate the concerns that gave rise to the decision to inspect the provider, this will be explained in the updated report card.

If inspectors find evidence of significant concerns for any evaluation area, this should be explained in the updated report card. We may decide to carry out a full inspection as a result of this.

Monitoring inspections of new providers

This section applies to monitoring inspections of new providers, referred to in our [inspection information for FE and skills](#).

The monitoring inspection normally takes place within 18 months of the provider starting delivery.

Process outline

For this type of provider, you and your team will review 4 standard themes based on:

- progress in leadership and governance
- progress in inclusion

- progress in curriculum, teaching and training
- progress in ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements

The focus is on the progress the provider is making towards meeting the 'expected standard'. You will make a progress grade against each theme. Use the precise wording as it appears in these themes for the provider type you are inspecting:

Type of provision: Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training

Leadership and governance theme	Inclusion theme	Curriculum, teaching and training theme	Safeguarding theme
How much progress have leaders and those responsible for governance made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision, and is identifying and supporting the needs of	How much progress have leaders made in identifying the needs of individual apprentices and putting suitable support in place, in particular for those who are disadvantaged, those with SEND or high needs, those who are known (or previously	How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?	How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?

apprentices? known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their experiences and opportunities, including those without level 2 English and/or mathematics.

Type of provision: Providers newly directly funded to deliver adult learning provision from or after August 2017

Leadership and governance theme	Inclusion theme	Curriculum, teaching and training theme	Safeguarding theme
How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant adult learning provision that has a clearly defined	How much progress have leaders made in identifying the needs of individual learners putting suitable support in place, in particular for those who are disadvantaged, those with SEND or high	How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality adult education that prepares	How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?

purpose, and in identifying and supporting the needs of adult learners?	needs, those who are known (or previously known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their experiences and opportunities, including those without level 2 English and/or mathematics.	them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals?
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Type of provision: New independent specialist colleges that are newly funded by the Department for Education

Leadership and governance theme	Inclusion theme	Curriculum, teaching and training theme	Safeguarding theme
How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and delivering relevant learning programmes that are	How much progress have leaders made in identifying the needs of individual learners putting suitable support in place, in particular for those who are disadvantaged,	How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality learning programmes that develop their	How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place?

clearly defined and tailored to suit the individual needs of learners, and in identifying and supporting the needs of learners?	those with SEND or high needs, those who are known (or previously known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their experiences and opportunities, including those without level 2 English and/or mathematics.	independence, communication and skills, and help them to achieve their personal and/or work-related goals?
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Provision type: New 16 to 19 academies directly funded from August 2019 onwards and new providers that deliver only 16 to 18 provision

Leadership and governance theme	Inclusion theme	Curriculum, teaching and training theme	Safeguarding theme
How much progress have leaders and managers made in designing and	How much progress have leaders made in identifying the needs of individual learners and putting suitable	How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners	How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding

delivering relevant education programmes that have a clearly defined purpose, and in identifying and supporting the needs of learners?	support in place, in particular for those who are disadvantaged, those with SEND or high needs, those who are known (or previously known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their experiences and opportunities, including those without level 2 English and/or mathematics.	benefit from high-quality education programmes for young people that prepare them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals?	arrangements are in place?
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If a provider has more than one provision type, cover the curriculum, teaching and training theme separately for each provision type. For example, if an apprenticeship provider is funded for adult learning programmes, make progress grades against the curriculum, teaching and training themes for both apprenticeships and adult learning. [\[footnote 3\]](#)

You will normally make the following progress grades on monitoring inspections, against each of the themes:

- Significant progress: progress has been rapid and is already having considerable beneficial impact on learners and/or apprentices.
- Reasonable progress: the provider's actions are already having a beneficial impact on learners and/or apprentices.

Improvements are sustainable and are based on the provider's thorough quality assurance procedures.

- Insufficient progress: progress has been either slow or insubstantial or both, and the demonstrable impact on learners and/or apprentices has been negligible.

On-site inspections

Monitoring inspections normally last for up to 2 days, depending on the size and scope of the provider and the evaluation areas that need to be covered by you and your inspection team.

Where the monitoring inspection lasts 1 day, the inspection methodology set out below should be adapted accordingly.

On monitoring inspections you will normally be joined by 1 other inspector, but there may be more inspectors if the provider is very large or complex, or there are multiple evaluation areas that you need to focus on. You may also carry out monitoring inspections alone if there is only a very limited amount of activity to be completed.

Ofsted normally carries out one on-site monitoring inspection of new providers. However, in exceptional circumstances we may carry out a second new provider monitoring inspection before the first full inspection if learner/apprentice numbers are very low or circumstances make that appropriate.

Preparing for the inspection

Review the following, recording only brief and relevant evaluative information that will support a constructive and purposeful planning call:

- relevant published performance information

- any complaints made about the provider to Ofsted
- any information that you consider relevant from the provider's website, for example curriculum information or governance arrangements
- information on Ofsted's 'find information about a provider' system

Use your preparation and knowledge of the themes above to identify what you will need to explore in the planning call. Start to think about the potential inspection activities that will give you the opportunity to gather the relevant evidence, considering the provider's context, and including safeguarding.

Notification of the monitoring inspection

Constructive, professional dialogue

The focus on constructive, professional dialogue and building a rapport are as important on monitoring inspections as they are on full inspections.

Timing of the notification call

You will normally call the provider up to 5 working days before the start of the on-site monitoring inspection, unless the monitoring inspection is unannounced.

Ensure that you follow the relevant notification call script.

Cover the following, referring to the relevant section in the [operating guide for full inspections](#). This includes:

- notification of inspection, and dates
- confirming key provider information
- scheduling the planning call
- confirming who will take part in the call
- discussing the role of the nominee/shadow nominee

- arrangements for adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments

The planning call

The planning call should normally be shorter than it would be for a full inspection. It should not be longer than 90 minutes in total. You should emphasise to leaders that they can take breaks when needed.

Call the provider at the time agreed. This call follows the same protocols as for full inspections. For example, it will normally be a video conference call and should not be recorded. The nominee can invite other senior leaders to join the planning call. Refer to the [operating guide for full inspections](#) for further information.

The planning call will be in 3 parts:

Part 1: Introduction and discussing practicalities

This will cover the same range of information as for a full inspection. This includes discussions about:

- Ofsted's code of conduct
- leaders' well-being, and who is responsible for this on a day-to-day basis – record how to contact the person or people responsible
- reasonable adjustments and adaptations
- whether leaders are clear about the purpose of the monitoring inspection and have what they need, such as details of how to upload documents to the portal

Part 2: The provider's context, leaders' actions and their impact

Discuss:

- your pre-inspection preparation

- the context in which the provider works, and the curriculum it offers
- numbers of learners and/or apprentices in provision that is in scope for the inspection
- leadership and governance arrangements
- the themes that will form the core focus of this inspection
- how progress will be reported

Part 3: Planning the timetable for the monitoring inspection

The purpose of this part of the call is to work with leaders to shape the plan for the inspection. Discuss the focus for the inspection, remembering that the monitoring inspection themes should be prioritised.

Consider and plan with leaders what inspection activities you and the team need to carry out to gather the necessary evidence to:

- **celebrate** areas in which provision has strengthened
- **validate** their evaluation of the provider's progress
- **highlight** the priorities for improvement to ensure that all learners and apprentices achieve, belong and thrive

When you start to shape the inspection schedule, consider:

- arrival time, remembering that this should not be before 8:30am
- a brief orientation meeting to check on staff well-being at the start of the day and to review the proposed inspection activity arrangements
- whether leaders would welcome the opportunity for the inspection team to meet briefly with staff at the start of the day
- which meetings to hold – these could include:
 - an end-of-day reflection meeting on day 1
 - an ongoing reflection meeting at the start of day 2 (for 2-day

inspections)

- final reflection and feedback meetings, and who can attend these (see [inspection information for FE and skills](#))
- other relevant meetings focused on the themes being explored, such as with senior leaders, those responsible for safeguarding and/or those responsible for governance
- the classroom/workshop activities taking place during the inspection
- opportunities to speak to staff/learners/apprentices/employers
- time to reflect on and record your evidence
- arrangements for the final feedback meeting at the end of the inspection (see [inspection information for FE and skills providers](#) for who may attend); ask the provider to invite the appropriate people to the final feedback meeting

You should leave the provider by 5:45pm other than in exceptional circumstances and agreed with the nominee, for example when evening provision is offered that is relevant to the monitoring inspection.

In order to decide which activities to carry out, you should remember that these are not full inspections, so you need to consider how best to gather specific information about the themes you are focusing on.

Activities should be focused, purposeful and link directly to these themes. Identify the first-hand evidence needed to assess progress against the themes, drawing on your planning discussions with leaders. Engage leaders in a conversation about how and where they can best demonstrate the positive impact and successes of their work.

Refer to the [Additional guidance to support evidence-gathering](#) in the operating guide for full inspections to inform your planning of inspection activities. Consider how evidence gathered from activities such as learning walks can be used to support any

other themes that are the focus of the inspection.

Make sure that you share and explain the rationale for inspection activities, discussing any practical arrangements as required and recording this in your evidence base. The final decision on inspection activities rests with you as lead inspector. Be clear that you will ensure leaders have the opportunity to highlight the impact of their actions.

Remember to schedule regular brief reflection meetings to keep the nominee and other leaders updated on progress and emerging findings. Emphasise to leaders that the reflection meetings will provide the opportunity to review emerging findings and to agree adjustments to the planned inspection activities.

Agree a time when you will be able to upload the draft schedule to the portal. End the call and upload the schedule to the portal by the agreed time.

After the call(s)

Inform team inspectors (where relevant) of pertinent information, including the planned activities, their responsibilities, and the outcome of any requested adaptations or reasonable adjustments.

What to do on site during the monitoring inspection

Day 1

When you arrive on site, you should:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff and find out whether any issues have arisen since the planning call
- hold a brief orientation meeting with the inspection team, including the nominee, to ensure that the team inspectors understand the provider's context, the inspection schedule,

the times of reflection meetings and any assigned responsibilities in terms of evidence collection

- check whether anyone involved in the inspection requires or has requested any reasonable adjustments because of a disability
- consider whether you need to make any adaptations to the inspection process where those with other protected characteristics may otherwise be put at a disadvantage (refer to the [Responding to requests for reasonable adjustments and/or adaptations](#) section of the main operating guide for further information)
- if there have been any requests for adaptations, record them in the evidence base along with their outcome

Follow the schedule for the day as discussed in the planning call. Activities for day 1 will typically include some or all of the following:

- a leadership discussion and learning walk where leaders can evidence the impact of their work
- curriculum learning walks/lesson inspections, including discussions with staff and learners/apprentices – offer leaders the opportunity to accompany inspectors on these
- further informal, or planned, discussions with learners and apprentices
- meetings with staff
- work scrutiny, either individually or jointly with a relevant staff member
- case sampling of specific learners/apprentices – this should include those who are disadvantaged, those with SEND or high needs, those who are known (or previously known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, including those without level 2 English and/or mathematics
- a safeguarding meeting with the designated safeguarding

lead

Reflection meeting with the nominee

These meetings bring together the inspection team and the nominee towards the end of the day to reflect on the emerging evidence. You should:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues
- ensure you have applied the [3 key principles](#) when evaluating the first-hand evidence you have gathered
- share headline evidence, linked to the monitoring inspection themes – this will support you in having a transparent dialogue with leaders about the emerging evidence
- record leaders' comments in the evidence base
- identify and agree on the necessary inspection activities for the next stage(s) of the inspection, ensuring leaders understand the rationale for these activities
- discuss and arrange the practical arrangements for the agreed inspection activities

Day 2

Begin the day with a brief reflection meeting with a senior leader and/or nominee: confirm everyone's well-being, note any updates from leaders or unexpected events and agree whether the schedule needs fine-tuning to fit the provider's working day. Adjust plans where necessary.

Continue to carry out the agreed inspection activities, remembering to have regular reflection meetings.

Once evidence collection has been completed on day 2, the inspection team will hold a reflection meeting. The nominee will be present.

End-of-inspection reflection meeting with the nominee

Hold a reflection meeting with the nominee towards the end of

the inspection, once evidence-gathering has been completed. During the reflection meeting:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues
- give progress grades for each of the themes covered, explaining these in the light of evidence gathered over the 2 days of the inspection
- record in the evidence base the nominee's comments

Then hold the final feedback meeting, which senior leaders and the funding body/bodies can attend.

Final feedback meeting

Record the outcome and the main points for feedback to the provider in the evidence base during the inspection.

Your feedback must be clear, respectful and grounded in the evidence gathered. It must cover all the points that will appear in the updated report card or written outcome/update.

Thank everyone for their contributions, engagement and involvement in the inspection and then explain clearly:

- that attendance at the final feedback meeting is voluntary and any attendee may leave at any time
- the key findings from the inspection and the progress grades for each theme, including the range of evidence gathered
- that leaders should share the findings with those responsible for governance and whoever else they consider appropriate, which may include colleagues, family members, and/or their wider support group; however, the information should not be made public
- that the draft interim report card they receive must not be published; they must wait for the copy of the final report card
- that when they receive their draft interim report card and

complete their factual accuracy check, they do not need to check data from other published sources, but may want to review any data that was gathered during the inspection or commented on in the report card

- that the nominee should, ideally, complete the post-inspection survey
- that the provider has an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns or to seek clarification about the inspection and can also contact us after the end of the inspection, if necessary (see the [Concerns or complaints about an inspection](#) section in the inspection information for FE and skills providers)
- that leaders can make a formal complaint and can find information on how to do this in our [complaints procedure](#)
- the timeframe for the provider's next inspection activity (typically within 18 months of the publication of the monitoring inspection findings).
- that the precise text of the written update may differ from the verbal feedback, but that the inspection outcome will not change unless quality assurance deems that appropriate

Reflect the provider's context and frame your feedback through professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement. When managing attendees and the conduct of everyone who attends, make sure that the meeting is practical and constructive.

What to do after the monitoring inspection

Use the FE and skills report-writing guidance to produce a written update setting out your findings. This should reflect the progress the provider has made towards meeting the 'expected standard' in each of the new provider monitoring inspection themes. The findings and progress grades will be published in an interim report card in the 'latest updates' section.

If the provider submits comments following their written update, you are responsible for reviewing and responding to these and making any necessary amendments, as set out in the FE and skills writing guidance.

Insufficient progress in the safeguarding theme

If a provider is judged to have made insufficient progress in the safeguarding theme, it will normally receive a further monitoring inspection specifically to review its safeguarding arrangements within 4 months of the previous monitoring inspection.

Monitoring inspections of newly merged colleges before their first full inspection takes place

These monitoring inspections will take place if at least one of the predecessor colleges had any areas that were graded 'needs attention' or 'urgent improvement' following a full inspection under the renewed framework, or was graded 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' at its most recent inspection under the previous education inspection framework (EIF). We may also carry out a monitoring inspection of any newly merged college at any reasonable time following the merger. The full inspection will take place within 3 years of the merger.

Process outline

This type of monitoring inspection applies to newly merged

colleges and typically focuses on recommendations and areas for improvement identified at the previous inspections of one or more of the colleges. We may also carry out a monitoring inspection of any newly merged college at any reasonable time after the merger.

Although these monitoring inspections focus on previous recommendations and areas for improvement, they do not result in any changes of grade. We carry out one monitoring inspection of these providers. The subsequent full inspection will typically take place within 3 years of the merger.

Use the most recently published report recommendations/report card(s) to identify key themes for you and your team to focus on, so that you can make statements on the provider's progress towards recommendations and areas for improvement since the previous inspection.

Monitoring inspections normally last for up to 2 days, depending on the size and scope of the provider and the key themes that need to be covered by you and your inspection team. The size of the inspection team will also depend on the size and scope of the provider.

Preparing for the on-site inspection

Review the following, recording only brief and relevant evaluative information that will support a constructive and purposeful planning call:

- the provider's most recent report cards or inspection reports, or reports from any previous monitoring inspection
- relevant performance information published since the previous inspection
- any complaints made about the provider to Ofsted since the previous inspection

- any information that you consider relevant from the provider's website, for example curriculum information or governance arrangements
- information on Ofsted's 'find information about a provider' system

Consider which key themes can be best focused on during the inspection. You should normally prioritise core issues that impact on learners' and apprentices' safety, learning and/or well-being. The latest available data should inform your decisions.

Use your preparation to identify what you need to explore in the planning call.

Start to think about the potential inspection activities that will give you the opportunity to gather the relevant evidence, considering the provider's context, and including safeguarding, where relevant.

Notification of the monitoring inspection

Timing of the notification call

You will normally call the provider up to 5 working days before the start of the on-site monitoring inspection.

Ensure that you follow the relevant notification call script.

Cover the following, referring to the relevant section in the [operating guide for full inspections](#). This includes:

- notification of inspection, and dates
- confirming key provider information
- scheduling the planning call
- confirming who will take part in the call
- discussing the role of the nominee/shadow nominee

- arrangements for adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments

The planning call

The planning call should normally be shorter than it would be for a full inspection. However, this will depend on the size of provider and range of key themes that need to be discussed. It should not be longer than 90 minutes in total. You should emphasise to leaders that they can take breaks when needed.

Call the provider at the time agreed. This call follows the same protocols as for full inspections. For example, it will normally be a video conference call and should not be recorded. The nominee can invite other senior leaders to join the planning call. Refer to the [operating guide for full inspections](#) for further information.

The planning call will be in 3 parts:

Part 1: Introduction and discussing practicalities

This will cover the same range of information as for a full inspection. This includes discussions about:

- Ofsted's code of conduct
- leaders' well-being, and who is responsible for this on a day-to-day basis; record how to contact the person or people responsible
- reasonable adjustments and adaptations
- whether leaders are clear about the purpose of the monitoring inspections and have what they need, such as details of how to upload documents to the portal

Part 2: The provider's context, leaders' actions and their impact

Discuss:

- your pre-inspection preparation
- changes to the provider's context since the previous inspection(s) that leaders want to share with you, in particular following the merger
- changes to leadership and governance arrangements since the previous inspection, in particular following the merger
- numbers of learners and/or apprentices in provision that is in scope for the inspection
- the outcome of the previous inspection(s), in particular recommendations and areas for improvement, and, where applicable, previous monitoring inspections
- leaders' evaluation of the actions they have taken to address the recommendations and areas for improvement, and how they assess the impact of their actions
- any support that they have received and its impact
- the themes that will form the core focus of this inspection – remember, you may not have time to look at every recommendation and area for improvement from the previous inspection(s)
- how progress will be reported

Part 3: Planning the timetable for the monitoring inspection

The purpose of this part of the call is to work with leaders to shape the plan for the inspection. You should focus on the key themes you have identified.

Consider and plan with leaders the inspection activities you and the team need to carry out to gather the necessary evidence to:

- **celebrate** areas in which provision has strengthened
- **validate** their evaluation of the provider's progress
- **highlight** the priorities for improvement to ensure that all learners and apprentices achieve, belong and thrive

When you start to shape the schedule, consider:

- arrival time, remembering that this should not be before 8:30am
- a brief orientation meeting to check on staff well-being at the start of the day and to review the proposed inspection activity arrangements
- whether leaders would welcome the opportunity for the inspection team to meet briefly with staff at the start of the day
- which meetings to hold – these could include:
 - an end-of-day reflection meeting on day 1
 - an ongoing reflection meeting at the start of day 2 (for 2-day inspections)
 - final reflection and feedback meetings, and who can attend these (see the [inspection information for FE and skills providers](#))
 - other relevant meetings focused on the themes being explored, such as with senior leaders and/or those responsible for governance
- the classroom/workshop activities taking place during the inspection
- opportunities to speak to staff/learners/apprentices/employers
- time to reflect on and record your evidence
- arrangements for the final feedback meeting at the end of the inspection (see the [inspection information for FE and skills providers](#) for who may attend) – ask the provider to invite the appropriate people to the final feedback meeting

You should leave the provider by 5:45pm other than in exceptional circumstances, for example when evening provision is offered that is relevant to the monitoring inspection.

In order to decide which activities to carry out, remember that these are not full inspections, so you need to consider how best to gather specific information about the key themes you are

focusing on.

Activities should be focused, purposeful and link directly to these themes. For example, you will normally meet with the leader(s) with oversight of attendance if attendance was an issue identified at the previous inspection. Identify the first-hand evidence needed to assess progress, drawing on the earlier discussion with leaders about actions and impact.

Engage leaders in a conversation about how and where they can best demonstrate the positive impact and successes of their work, including how they have sustained improvements from any previous monitoring inspections.

Refer to the [Additional guidance to support evidence-gathering](#) to inform your planning of inspection activities. Focus your discussion with leaders on how to gather evidence that helps you and the inspection team to analyse the specific issue(s) that is/are holding back the provider's improvement.

Consider how evidence gathered from activities such as learning walks can be used across the themes that are the focus of the inspection.

Make sure that you share and explain the rationale for inspection activities, discussing any practical arrangements as required and recording this in your evidence base. The final decision on the inspection activities rests with you as lead inspector. Be clear that you will ensure leaders have the opportunity to highlight the impact of their actions since the last full inspection(s)/monitoring inspection(s).

Remember to schedule regular brief reflection meetings to keep the nominee and other leaders updated on progress and emerging findings. Emphasise to leaders that the reflection meetings will provide the opportunity to review emerging findings and to agree adjustments to the planned inspection activities.

Agree a time when you will be able to upload the draft schedule

to the portal. End the call and upload the schedule to the portal by the agreed time.

After the call(s)

Inform team inspectors (where relevant) of pertinent information, including the planned activities, their responsibilities, and the outcome of any requested adaptations or reasonable adjustments.

What to do on site during the monitoring inspection

Day 1

When you arrive on site, you should:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff and find out whether any issues have arisen since the planning call
- hold a brief orientation meeting with the team, including the nominee, to ensure that the team inspectors understand the provider's context, the inspection schedule, the times of reflection meetings and the key themes being focused on
- check whether anyone involved in the inspection requires or has requested any reasonable adjustments because of a disability
- consider whether you need to make any adaptations to the inspection process where those with other protected characteristics may otherwise be put at a disadvantage (refer to the [Responding to requests for reasonable adjustments and/or adaptations](#) section of the main operating guide for further information)
- if there have been any requests for adaptations, record them in the evidence base along with their outcome

Follow the schedule for the day as discussed in the planning call. Activities for day 1 will typically include some or all of the

following:

- a leadership discussion and learning walk where leaders can evidence the impact of their work
- curriculum learning walks/lesson inspections, including discussions with staff and learners/apprentices – offer leaders the opportunity to accompany inspectors on these
- further informal, or planned, discussions with learners and apprentices
- meetings with staff
- work scrutiny, either individually or jointly with a relevant staff member
- a focus on learners and/or apprentices who are disadvantaged, those with SEND or high needs, those who are known (or previously known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, including those without level 2 English and/or mathematics
- a safeguarding meeting with the designated safeguarding lead (for inspections which include a safeguarding focus)

Reflection meeting with the nominee

These meetings bring together the inspection team and the nominee towards the end of the day to reflect on the emerging evidence. You should:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues
- ensure you have applied the [3 key principles](#) when evaluating the first-hand evidence you have gathered
- share headline evidence linked to the key themes being explored
- consider which themes are emerging as having improved since the last full inspection/monitoring inspection, and themes where the provider may have more to do – this will

support you in having a transparent dialogue with leaders about the emerging evidence

- record leaders' comments in the evidence base
- identify and agree on the necessary activities for the next stage(s) of the inspection, ensuring leaders understand the rationale for these activities

Day 2

Begin the day with a brief reflection meeting with a senior leader and/or nominee: confirm everyone's well-being, note any updates from leaders or unexpected events, and agree whether the schedule needs fine-tuning to fit the provider's working day. Adjust plans where necessary.

Continue to carry out the agreed inspection activities, remembering to have regular reflection meetings.

End-of-inspection reflection meeting with the nominee

Hold a reflection meeting with the nominee towards the end of the inspection, once evidence-gathering has been completed. During the reflection meeting:

- check on the well-being of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues
- evaluate all evidence against the themes over the 2 days, providing feedback on the progress the provider has made – this will form the basis of the text that will appear in the 'latest updates' section of the report card; you should not provide specific grades
- record the nominee's comments in the evidence base

Then hold the final feedback meeting, which senior leaders and the funding body/bodies can attend.

Final feedback meeting

Record the outcome and the main points for feedback to the provider in the evidence base during the inspection.

Your feedback must be clear, respectful and grounded in the evidence gathered. It must cover all the points that will appear in the updated report card or written outcome/update.

Thank everyone for their contributions, engagement and involvement in the inspection and then explain clearly:

- that attendance at the final feedback meeting is voluntary and any attendee may leave at any time
- the key findings from the inspection, including the range of evidence gathered
- that leaders should share the findings with those responsible for governance and whoever else they consider appropriate, which may include colleagues, family members, and/or their wider support group; however, the information should not be made public
- that the draft report card they receive must not be published; they must wait for the copy of the final report card
- that when they receive their draft report card and complete their factual accuracy check, they do not need to check data from other published sources, but may want to review any data that was gathered during the inspection or commented on in the report card
- that the nominee should, ideally, complete the post-inspection survey
- that the provider has an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns and to seek clarification about the inspection, and can also contact us after the end of the inspection if necessary (see the [Concerns or complaints about an inspection](#) section in the inspection information for FE and skills providers)
- that leaders can make a formal complaint and can find information on how to do this in our [complaints procedure](#)
- that the precise text of the written update may differ from the verbal feedback

- the next inspection activity (within 3 years of the merger)

Reflect the provider's context and frame your feedback through professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement. When managing attendees and the conduct of everyone who attends, make sure that the meeting is practical and constructive.

What to do after the monitoring inspection

Use the FE and skills report-writing guidance to produce a written update for the 'latest updates' section of the report card, setting out your findings.

If the provider submits comments following this, you are responsible for reviewing and responding to these and making any necessary amendments, as set out in the writing guidance.

Deferring or pausing an inspection, or gathering additional evidence

Familiarise yourself with our guide on [deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#). You must contact the duty desk if you receive a request for a deferral before any on-site monitoring inspection.

Recording evidence

You must record evidence as set out in the [operating guide for](#)

[full inspections](#).

Quality assurance and consistency checking

You are responsible for the quality of your own work and that of your team, where applicable.

As the lead inspector, you are responsible for giving team inspectors timely feedback on the quality of their work and their conduct.

Additional guidance on evidence-gathering and other matters

Please refer to the sections [Additional guidance to support evidence-gathering](#) and [Other matters](#) in the operating guide for full inspections. This guidance also includes information that you may need to refer to, for example specific provider contexts to consider.

Annex: monitoring inspections of FE and skills providers that were subject to monitoring before the launch of the

renewed education inspection framework

This section applies to FE and skills providers which, by the end of October 2025, were judged to be:

- requires improvement; or
- inadequate

Introductory monitoring call

You should call the provider within 6 months of publication of the provider's last inspection report, **but not before January 2026**.

In the introductory call:

- begin to establish or continue the relationship between the HMI leading the monitoring programme and the provider
- explain that they will be monitored using the renewed EIF and toolkit
- clarify the evolving focus of monitoring, where applicable, to reflect the evaluation areas under the renewed EIF
- agree and communicate the likely timing of the next inspection event

Notification and planning of the on-site monitoring inspection

The monitoring inspection notification call

You should call the provider at the timescales indicated below, **but not before January 2026**:

- For 'requires improvement', within 7 to 13 months of the publication of the provider's last inspection report.
- For 'inadequate', within 6 months of the publication of the

provider's last inspection report.

On-site inspection

Follow the instructions set out in the section [Monitoring inspections of providers with any evaluation area\(s\) graded 'needs attention' or Monitoring inspections of providers with one or more 'urgent improvement' grades and/or where safeguarding is 'not met'](#), but note the following differences in the process:

- Based on the previously identified weaknesses and areas for improvement, use the most relevant evaluation areas in the toolkit to gather focused evidence to celebrate the improvements leaders have secured since the full inspection, validate leaders' actions and highlight where further improvement may still be needed.
- Do not grade any evaluation areas. These providers have not yet had a full inspection under the renewed EIF. They therefore have no report card. Set out your findings in the monitoring inspection report, with particular focus on the effectiveness of the actions leaders and those responsible for governance have taken to improve the provider. The letter will be subject to standard quality assurance arrangements under the renewed EIF.

-
1. Details of the role of the nominee are set out in the [inspection information for FE and skills providers](#). ↩
 2. The HMI is assigned by the relevant Ofsted region to be the first point of contact for the provider, to be in regular contact with them, and to lead the monitoring inspection(s). ↩
 3. If an apprenticeship training provider is funded for education programmes for young people, the additional quality of education theme to cover this is: 'How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality education programmes for young people that prepare them well for their intended job role, career aim and/or personal goals?' ↩

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