



Research and analysis

# Ofsted areas of research interest

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## Applies to England

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## Introduction

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) is a non-ministerial government department that reports directly to Parliament. Our core mission is to improve lives by raising standards in education and children’s social care. We inspect and regulate organisations and individuals that provide education, training and care, from early years settings and schools to further education providers and children’s social care services. (In this document, we will refer to these collectively as ‘providers’.)

Ofsted produces independent, evidence-based evaluations of the quality and

effectiveness of its providers through inspection, regulation, analysis and research. [\[footnote 1\]](#) These evaluations inform policymakers, practitioners and the public, and help to drive improvement across all providers. Ofsted is committed to being a force for improvement. In everything we do, we are guided by our values of putting children, young people and learners first, and of being independent, accountable and transparent, and evidence-led. Central to this is the focus of Sir Martyn Oliver, His Majesty's Chief Inspector, on understanding what it is like to be a child growing up in a particular area. This means we must make sure that our inspection and regulation activity reflects the experiences of children, young people and learners. We do this by taking account of context and community, and understanding how children and learners achieve, belong and thrive. By keeping their experiences at the heart of what we do, we aim to make a real difference to their lives.

## **Our evidence-led approach**

Evidence underpins all of our work as a regulator and inspectorate. Insights play a key role in ensuring that Ofsted uses the knowledge and understanding gained through our work to support better outcomes for children, young people and learners. One of our core values is to be evidence-led, meaning that the inspection frameworks and processes across all Ofsted remits are grounded in robust evidence.

We use research in various ways to support and improve our inspection processes and regulatory practice. For example:

- we make sure that our evaluation areas focus on the factors that matter most to the life chances of children, young people and learners
- our research informs inspection and regulatory activities by helping us understand what works for children, young people and learners, and what supports sound inspection and regulatory decision-making
- we evaluate our frameworks, handbooks and methodologies to confirm they are being implemented as intended and are achieving the desired outcomes, and we identify and address unintended consequences

Our unique position gives us an overview of what is happening across the sectors we inspect and regulate. The evidence we collect from routine inspections, regulatory decision-making and targeted research visits keeps practitioners, policymakers and decision-makers up to date with what works (and what does not) for children, young people and learners. It also keeps them up to date with effective

practice across Ofsted and the sector, which contributes to national debates and system-wide improvements.

## **Purpose of this area of research interest document**

This document sets out the research questions and themes that are most important to Ofsted's work. Its purpose is to:

- highlight our evidence needs to the research community, encouraging others to run independent studies and contribute evidence (in the form of existing, published and ongoing research) that can inform our understanding and address gaps in knowledge
- support collaboration between Ofsted, government departments, academics and other stakeholders on research projects with the potential to strengthen the evidence base and improve practice across the sectors we inspect and regulate
- inform policy and practice by ensuring that research aligns with the challenges and opportunities facing the education, childcare and children's social care sectors

By publishing our areas of research interest, we aim to foster dialogue and create partnerships that will help to identify published, ongoing or planned research that can strengthen Ofsted's evidence base, reduce duplication, and shape wider research activity. This will help us refine our frameworks, improve our methodologies, and ultimately ensure better outcomes for children, young people and learners.

While this document outlines priority areas for external evidence, it is not the only way we engage with researchers and sector experts. Ofsted will continue to work closely with external partners through our wider research projects, evaluations and collaborative activity.

## **Areas of research interest**

The following areas of research interest reflect the themes and questions that matter most to improving outcomes for children, young people and learners. These priorities are rooted in our commitment to raising standards, safeguarding children and vulnerable learners, and ensuring that every child, young person and learner can thrive, regardless of background or circumstance. They highlight where further

evidence would inform our inspection frameworks, regulatory practice and policy development.

The themes and questions were developed through focus groups with education, childcare and children's social care colleagues at Ofsted, including engagement with His Majesty's Inspectors and Regulatory Inspectors, and policy, strategy, communications, and data and research teams. The themes and questions are designed to reflect the full range of remits we inspect and regulate.<sup>[footnote 2]</sup> They explore what works in practice, identifying emerging risks and opportunities, and strengthening the evidence base for decisions that shape the lives of children, young people and learners. The questions that follow are grouped into 7 categories of focus:

- Inclusion
- Family, support and stability
- Professional learning and development
- Artificial intelligence (AI), online harms and digital literacy
- Participation and pathways
- Post-16 education, training and employment
- Transitions

While many of the areas outlined are directly tied to Ofsted's statutory role in inspecting and regulating education, childcare and children's social care, several themes naturally extend into broader system-level questions. We have engaged with Ofsted's Insights and Research external reference groups to make sure that wider issues align closely with the [areas of research interest for the Department for Education \(DfE\)](#) and other related government departments. We encourage researchers to consider both areas of research interest documents together to position their work where it can have the greatest impact.

Our areas of research interest are not intended to be exhaustive. They represent the issues where robust, high-quality research can make the greatest difference to Ofsted's work and can improve outcomes for children, young people and learners. These priorities should therefore not be read as the full breadth of what Ofsted examines through inspection, regulation, or existing internal or externally commissioned research activity. Many other areas of interest are already covered by existing research or evaluation activity – for example, implementation and impact evaluation of the renewed education inspection framework, and work linked to the reforms of the social care frameworks. Instead, these priorities reflect the subset of

topics where we are inviting external researchers to contribute evidence. This means that some themes may be deliberately broad to make sure we capture a wide range of relevant insight. This is important, as Ofsted continues to explore and evaluate many other areas internally, while using the areas of research interest to highlight where external expertise can add the most value.

## **Inclusion**

Ofsted believes every child, young person and learner, whatever their background, should be able to achieve, thrive and succeed. Inclusion is central to this vision. It is about reducing barriers to learning and wellbeing so that all children, young people and learners, particularly the most vulnerable, can access high-quality care and education and the wider experiences that help them flourish.<sup>[footnote 3]</sup> To create inclusive environments, we must make sure that children, young people and learners feel safe, supported, and inspired to reach their potential. At the same time, we must recognise and learn from providers who help learners succeed despite significant challenges.

Our research interest in inclusion focuses on understanding the challenges and protective factors that influence inclusion, belonging, and fair access to high-quality education and care. We explore what works in practice to support children, young people and learners who face the highest barriers. This includes looking at the approaches that have the greatest impact on their achievement, wellbeing and long-term outcomes. It involves examining effective strategies for multi-agency collaboration, early identification and action in response to identified needs, and adapting provision to meet diverse challenges. We are interested in finding out how high-quality inclusive practice is shaped by local context. We also want to see where providers show exceptional practice and strong outcomes across all the areas we regulate and inspect.

### **Inclusive practice**

- How do the educational needs and experiences of children and young people known to social care influence their learning outcomes? What strategies in schools and further education settings are most effective in supporting these learners to achieve well?
- How are education providers, including mainstream further education providers, specialist colleges and prison education, adapting to support learners who face the highest barriers? What constitutes effective practice?

- What factors impact engagement and achievement for children and learners with additional needs in secure children's homes and youth offending institutions? Which interventions or policies most effectively improve participation and outcomes?
- What approaches are most effective in supporting children, young people and learners to be physically present in education settings? How can providers reduce patterns of poor attendance, high exclusions and increasing movement into home education, part-time timetables or non-school-based provision?[\[footnote 4\]](#)
- To what extent are children and young people with intersecting needs over- or under-represented in children's social care pathways? What factors contribute to these patterns of representation? What practices or approaches are most effective in reducing disparities and ensuring equitable outcomes across these groups?
- What exclusionary practices and interventions are being used in schools and early years settings? How widely are they used? What drivers contribute to their use for children and learners who face the highest barriers?
- Where is effective practice being shown? How are providers achieving strong outcomes for children, young people and learners who face the highest barriers?

### **Early identification of needs**

- How can early years settings reliably identify additional needs before formal diagnosis? What factors lead to delays or misidentification of needs?
- How effective are the current approaches to identifying additional needs at the earliest stages of a child's education?
- What gaps exist in workforce knowledge and skills for early identification of additional needs? How can professional learning and development improve early identification practices across education, care and children's social care?
- How do schools and early years settings work with families and partner agencies to identify wider needs, such as parenting support and family health, at the earliest stage? What are the challenges that they face?
- How effective are early help and family support services at working to keep families together in children's social care? What practices best strengthen families' capacity to help, protect and care for their children?

### **Belonging**

- What factors contribute most to a sense of belonging for children, young people and learners? These may include their relationships with parents, families and carers, and peer networks, their inclusion in education settings, and their

community engagement.

- What strategies are most effective in promoting a sense of belonging for all children, young people and learners, including those who face the highest barriers? Which interventions work across different contexts? Why?
- How do children and young people who are placed outside their home area develop and maintain a sense of identity, belonging and lifelong relational links, particularly as they approach adulthood? What factors influence where they see 'home'? How do these experiences and relationships shape their wellbeing and long-term outcomes?
- How does achieving and maintaining permanence support inclusion and children's, young people's and learners' achievement and wellbeing? To what extent and in what ways do frequent moves, for example moving home or changing care provider or school, disrupt the development of secure relationships?
- Where in England can we find exceptional inclusion practice that enables children, young people and learners to thrive despite significant contextual challenges?

### **Multi-agency working**

- What does effective multi-agency collaboration look like in practice across education, care and children's social care? For example, specifically in high-risk areas, how do youth justice, education and children's social care collaborate to address risks outside the home?
- What challenges and enablers affect multi-agency working at local and national levels and how can these be overcome? These may include issues around communication, data sharing, governance, cultural differences and differences in regulatory and inspection regimes.
- How does multi-agency working influence outcomes for children, young people and learners who are vulnerable? Examine measurable impacts on health, wellbeing, inclusion and educational attainment.
- How do continuity and stability across relationships, placements and professionals, and timely access to services, influence outcomes for children, young people and learners? Services may include support for different special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and cultural and recreational support.

### **Inclusive admissions**

- How common is it for schools to actively prevent the admission of certain groups, such as pupils with SEND or those from particular religions, despite statutory requirements? What are the reasons for this?

- How do admissions practices affect access for vulnerable groups and overall school diversity?
- How do admissions practices contribute to part-time timetabling and the risk of off-rolling? What is the relationship between restrictive or selective admissions policies and higher rates of pupil movement, exclusions or alternative provision (AP) placements?
- What factors influence schools' decisions to commission AP? How do these drivers differ across local contexts?

## **Family, support and stability**

Children's outcomes are strongly shaped by the love, stability and support provided by their family and wider family networks or in their care placement. Our research interest in this area focuses on understanding the following:

- what enables effective and timely family help, in order to keep children and young people with their families wherever possible
- how safe, loving and stable relationships are sustained for children and young people known to children's social care
- what contributes to children and young people entering into or moving within the care system.

We want to strengthen the evidence we have about the effectiveness of care approaches, such as kinship care, fostering and supported accommodation, in local contexts. This includes gaining a clearer understanding of what promotes stability, where and why breakdowns occur, and how emerging care approaches operate in practice.

- What enablers and challenges affect local authorities' ability to deliver consistent, timely and high-quality family help?
- How do local authorities balance family help and the protection of children? What evidence informs risk-aware and proportionate decision-making in practice?
- What factors support sustained and effective engagement with families receiving family help, especially in cases where safeguarding risks have been identified?
- What factors enable effective kinship care in practice? How well is kinship care understood by professionals and families?

- What factors contribute to stability and sustained loving relationships in kinship placements over time? Where are there pressure points that can lead to breakdown or re-entry into care?
- How effective are current approaches to family help and kinship care in improving the experiences and outcomes of children, young people and families?
- When considering a move into supported accommodation, what approaches to decision-making lead to positive outcomes for young people? What are the early indicators of stability versus placement breakdown?
- How will upcoming children's social care reforms impact the use, regulation, and quality of supported accommodation for children?
- How are local authorities reshaping their fostering models considering government reforms? What impact is this having on children and young people, specifically focusing on quality and placement stability?
- What factors and practices are local authorities adopting to ensure effective sufficiency planning that leads to children and young people's needs being met?
- What does emerging good practice show about how families, parents, wider family networks and carers can meaningfully shape the development and delivery of children's services?
- What are the experiences of children and young people whose needs have been identified but are not yet being met by services? How can data be improved to understand unmet need, service pathways and outcomes?

## **Professional learning and development**

Improving the quality of education and care for children, young people and learners depends on a stable, skilled and supported workforce. Recruitment and retention continue to present significant challenges across all sectors. This is driven by factors such as low pay, high workloads, stress, pupil behaviour and negative perceptions of certain roles. High staff turnover rates and providers' reliance on agency staff can undermine stability and impact care, learning and safeguarding. Addressing these issues requires strategies that attract qualified professionals, promote inclusion and provide robust training, development opportunities, and wellbeing support. It is essential to understand workforce mobility and diversity gaps in order to create evidence-based solutions that strengthen capability and ensure the workforce reflects the communities it serves. This ultimately improves outcomes for children, young people and learners.

## **Quality of training**

- How does the quality and accessibility of professional learning, development and training vary across sectors (early years, schools, post-16, children's social care)? What are the implications for workforce capability?
- What does effective leadership practice look like in planning and supporting professional learning and development at institution level?
- To what extent are professionals adequately trained to identify vulnerable learners and those with complex needs, and to make sure they receive appropriate support?

## **Diversity and inclusion**

- What challenges prevent individuals from diverse backgrounds from entering and staying in the education or children's social care profession and progressing their career to higher positions?
- What successful practices are providers using to widen participation and create a more representative workforce?

## **Workforce stability**

- What strategies or practices are providers using to successfully strengthen workforce stability?
- To what extent does professional learning and development improve workforce capability, retention and preparedness to support vulnerable learners?
- How does workforce instability, including high turnover and reliance on agency staff, affect the quality of care, education and/or safeguarding outcomes for children, young people and learners?
- To what extent and in what ways are diversity, inclusion, and flexible working considered in recruitment and retention practices? What gaps remain in achieving equality of opportunity? What is the impact of inclusive workforce strategies on children, young people, learners and families?
- What is the relationship between flexible working arrangements and workforce stability?
- What are the patterns and implications of workforce mobility and reduced numbers in certain roles (for example childminders or vocational specialists) across sectors?

## **AI, online harms and digital literacy**

Issues surrounding AI, online harms and digital literacy are increasingly shaping the experiences of children and young people. The rapid integration of AI and digital tools into learning and care environments offers opportunities for personalised support and innovation, but it also raises questions about safety and ethics, and the reliability of information. At the same time, online harms, from misinformation to reinforcing stereotypes, are prevalent. This underscores the need for robust digital literacy skills that allows learners to navigate digital spaces safely. It is essential to understand how these factors interact, and their implications for teaching, learning and safeguarding, to make sure that education and care systems prepare children and young people for a digital future while protecting their wellbeing.

AI is beginning to influence practice across schools, further education and skills, early years, and social care settings. It offers potential benefits such as personalised learning, administrative efficiency, and enhanced safeguarding. However, we need to understand more about how education providers and social care settings are using AI, and what factors enable or hinder its effective implementation.

### **AI use**

- How are AI and technology being used to support teaching and learning across all education settings?
- What does high-quality AI or technology-supported teaching and assessment look like, and how are practices evolving in response to AI?
- How is AI being used to enable personalised and adaptive learning for children, young people and learners with SEND? How effective are AI tools in supporting independent learning?
- How are local authorities and children's social care providers using AI to reduce workload, enhance practice, and improve the quality of support for children and families across different regions?

### **AI impact and outcomes**

- Does the use of AI and other technology in education widen or narrow gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged learners (for example digital poverty or language barriers)? [\[footnote 5\]](#) What impact is this having on educational outcomes?
- How does using AI and other technology influence cognitive and socioemotional development? This may include problem-solving, critical thinking, knowledge retention, resilience, and forming and maintaining relationships.
- How does AI use shape learners' career aspirations and choices?
- How are AI and technology affecting workforce sustainability, including workload

and retention?

### **Online harms, safety and ethics**

- Are there particular groups of children and young people who are more vulnerable to online harms, including those linked to AI? How are education and care settings supporting them to stay safe?
- What risks and ethical considerations arise from AI and technology use in education, childcare and children's social care? These may include bias, stereotyping, data privacy, intellectual property rights and safeguarding.
- How are providers and settings ensuring the safe and ethical use of AI, particularly for individuals who may be at greater risk of harm or bias?

### **Training and guidance**

- In managing the risks of AI, what does effective governance and continuing professional development for teachers and practitioners look like?
- To what extent, and how, do initial teacher education (ITE) programmes and professional development courses prepare teachers to use AI and other technology effectively? Are teacher trainers confident and knowledgeable enough about AI and technology?
- How can training programmes equip teachers to integrate AI and technology without diminishing problem-solving and critical thinking skills? How do providers ensure guidance keeps pace with rapid technological change?
- What regulatory frameworks and codes of practice currently guide the use of AI and technology in education, childcare and children's social care? Where are the gaps in ensuring safe, ethical and effective implementation?
- What clarity and guidance are needed to define acceptable and unacceptable AI/technology practices? How can providers avoid unethical uses?

### **Digital literacy**

- What are the challenges to introducing digital technologies in education settings, including young offender institutions and prisons?
- How are children in early years settings using technology? How are its benefits and risks monitored and managed?
- How are families and social workers supporting children to use technology safely? To what extent are families and social workers aware of the associated benefits and risks?

# Participation and pathways

Persistent challenges, including poor attendance, non-school-based education experiences and parental engagement, continue to widen gaps in learning and long-term opportunities for children and learners. These gaps particularly affect vulnerable groups. Ofsted's research interest in this area is to understand the drivers behind these patterns, assess the effectiveness of interventions, and identify strategies that strengthen inclusion and continuity of education for all learners.

## Attendance

- What interventions are most effective in improving attendance across all education settings?
- How can schools and post-16 settings address attendance challenges for vulnerable groups? What approaches work best across different phases?
- How is poor attendance related to exclusion, suspension or eventual disengagement from education? This may include transitions into post-16 pathways and the risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- How can early years providers and family hubs work with parents to establish strong attendance-related routines from the earliest stages? How can they identify and address barriers that may affect later engagement in education?
- How have attendance patterns changed for vulnerable groups since COVID-19? How do these patterns differ between school-age and post-16 learners?
- What factors are influencing delayed entry to reception? How does this affect short and long-term attendance patterns for different groups of children?
- What contextual patterns are evident in behaviour and attendance challenges? What local factors are related to both risk and improvement?

## Non-school-based education

- How do non-school-based education experiences, including off-rolling, affect academic progress, wellbeing and long-term outcomes (for example employment or further education), particularly for children, young people and learners experiencing vulnerability?
- What systemic, education and family-level factors contribute to non-school-based education pathways?
- What pressures or incentives (for example accountability measures, performance data or resource constraints) influence schools' decisions to use off-rolling, part-time timetables, or isolation units? How do these drivers vary by context?

- To what extent and in what ways are certain vulnerable children, young people and learners disproportionately affected by non-school-based education and off-rolling? What patterns emerge across different contexts?
- Which interventions or strategies successfully support pupils at risk of exclusion or disengagement without disrupting their education? How can these be scaled and shared across the sector?

## **Engagement**

- How does the information that Ofsted publishes influence the decisions that parents, carers, young people and learners take about future care, education, training and employment pathways? What factors shape how different groups interpret and use this information?
- What are the challenges and enablers to effective parental engagement in education? How do these differ for socioeconomically disadvantaged families, families of children who have SEND, and those accessing early years provision?
- What interventions or communication strategies are most effective in helping parents understand the importance of early education and safeguarding practices? How can these be scaled across different communities?
- How does parental involvement with the setting influence attendance, behaviour and attainment, particularly for disadvantaged pupils or pupils with SEND? What strategies work best to strengthen this relationship?
- How can providers effectively engage families of vulnerable groups, such as refugees, asylum seekers, or those with limited understanding of the education system, to identify risks of off-rolling and ensure continuity of education?
- How effectively do government policies (for example early education offers for working parents) support equitable access and engagement for disadvantaged families?

## **Post-16 education, training and employment**

Post-16 provision is pivotal in supporting young people to progress into meaningful education, employment or training. It also provides critical upskilling and re-skilling opportunities to adults to support them into better employment. Recent qualification reforms, including changes to funding and the introduction of new pathways such as V Levels and foundation apprenticeships, are reshaping the options available.

These developments raise important questions about accessibility and equity,

particularly for learners at risk of becoming NEET and those with additional needs. Ofsted is interested in understanding how these changes influence participation, progression and outcomes. We also want to understand what effective practice to prevent learners from becoming NEET looks like across diverse learner groups.

### **Qualification reforms**

- How do recent and upcoming qualification reforms, such as the removal of funding for certain levels and the introduction of V Levels and foundation apprenticeships, shape young people's choices, particularly those at risk of becoming NEET? What effective practices support these learners in this changing landscape?
- How do qualification reforms impact disadvantaged learners specifically? What does good practice for supporting those learners look like?
- How do the reforms interact with broader policy drivers, such as reducing NEET rates and addressing skills gaps?

### **Apprenticeships**

- What does good practice look like in delivering apprenticeship pathways that engage younger learners (16 to 18) and ensure access to high-quality opportunities across different levels, especially where provision or funding models vary?
- What does high-quality provision look like for short-term apprenticeships that are less than 12 months long?
- In preparation for foundation apprenticeships, what learnings can providers take from other short work-based learning programmes delivered for young people, to best support learners with additional needs or who are at risk of becoming NEET?

### **Adult provision**

- What features of effective provision in short courses, skills bootcamps, and other adult learning programmes are most successful in securing long-term employment/higher paid work for adults?
- How are adults with additional needs (for example mental health challenges or SEND) supported to access and succeed in training and employment?

### **Children and young people in the secure estate**

- What impact does access to prison-based vocational education have on young people's post-release outcomes, such as gaining skilled employment and successfully reintegrating into society?
- Is there a relationship between young people's levels of access to vocational

education while in custody and their reoffending rates?

- What does good practice look like in supporting young people in secure settings (for example youth custody or secure children's homes) during their transition to independence?

## **Care leavers**

- How do current support systems align with care leavers' own priorities for their futures? What evidence is there about how well services understand and respond to these priorities across different local contexts?
- How do the educational pathways and outcomes of care leavers compare to those of their non-care-experienced peers?
- How do education, training and housing pathways affect outcomes for care-experienced young people, particularly post-16 and care leavers? How well are these needs reflected in local system planning and practice?
- What does good inter-agency working to support care leavers look like?
- How effectively do local services help children in care and care leavers to build, sustain and benefit from enduring relationships? What does effective practice look like in enabling them to maintain this network of support over time?
- How do local services identify and meet the support, welfare and wellbeing needs of care leavers who are living in supported accommodation or are at risk of homelessness? What evidence is there about how consistently their needs, including unmet mental health needs, are recognised, assessed and responded to across different local contexts?

## **Transitions**

Children and young people need support through significant educational transitions. This is vital for their long-term success. These periods, including transitions from early years through to post-16 education, training or care, can present heightened risks, particularly for vulnerable children, young people and learners. Effective transition planning requires collaboration between early years, schools, post-16 providers, social care and other agencies to ensure continuity of support and prevent disengagement. It is essential to understand the factors that influence successful transitions and the role of data sharing in order to shape policy and practice that promote stability and positive outcomes.

- How effective are current processes for supporting children and young people

through key educational transitions, including from home into early years settings, within early years and primary education, from primary to secondary school, from school to post-16 education or training and from post 16 to employment?

- What factors most strongly influence successful transitions? What contributes to learners becoming NEET during these transitions?
- How well do early years settings, schools and post-16 providers share information and collaborate to ensure continuity of support for vulnerable children and learners?
- How can schools, children's social care providers and other agencies work together to prevent children from becoming missing from education during transitions, including during moves out of school or care?
- How effective are transition arrangements, when children and learners move between education or care settings, in making sure that needs are well understood?
- What impact will upcoming reforms (for example Family Help, fostering changes, supported accommodation and SEND reforms) have on transition planning and stability for children, young people and learners?
- How do inconsistencies in data collection and sharing affect transitions? What does effective transitional safeguarding look like for young people moving into further education or leaving care?
- How does relational stability (for example across family, social workers, practitioners, carers, education and health professionals) affect children, young people and learners' safety, wellbeing and engagement during transitions?
- How well do local authorities ensure continuity and stability of support for children during periods of structural change, such as local government reorganisation? What evidence is there that children's experiences and outcomes are protected throughout transitions?

## **Working with us**

### **Accessing data**

Ofsted collects a wide range of data to support our regulatory and inspection

activities and is committed to transparency and making data available to support research and evidence-based practice. We publish regular data for all our remits on GOV.UK, including official statistics and reports that are accessible to all interested users.

## Core publications

- [Statistics at Ofsted](#): comprehensive datasets and statistical releases covering inspections and outcomes across education and care sectors
- Annual report: analysis of trends and issues in the sectors we inspect and regulate: [Ofsted annual report 2024/25: education, children's services and skills](#)
- Corporate annual report and accounts: data on operational aspects of Ofsted: [Ofsted corporate annual report and accounts 2024 to 2025](#)

## Official statistics and management information

Ofsted publishes a range of official statistics and management information products across different remits. These include:

- Area SEND statistics: data on inspections and outcomes for local area SEND services
- Children's social care statistics: inspections and outcomes for children's homes, fostering agencies, adoption agencies and other social care providers
- Early years and childcare statistics: information on inspections and quality ratings for nurseries, childminders, and other early years settings
- Further education and skills statistics: data on inspections and performance of colleges, training providers and adult learning services
- Teacher development statistics: statistics on inspections and outcomes for ITE and teacher development programmes
- Non-association independent schools statistics: inspection outcomes for independent schools not affiliated with an association
- Online education accreditation scheme (OEAS) quality assurance commissions: management information: data on quality assurance work commissioned by Ofsted for OEAS

- Ofsted Parent View: management information: aggregated feedback from parents collected through the Parent View survey platform
- State-funded schools statistics: inspection grades for maintained schools and academies
- Unregistered schools management information: data on investigations and enforcement related to unregistered schools
- Responses to post-inspection surveys: feedback from providers and stakeholders following inspections

Note: Some remits have both official statistics and management information publications. All sources are listed on page 82 of the [Ofsted annual report 2024/25: education, children's services and skills](#).

## Interactive tools

- [Explore an area](#): an interactive resource on GOV.UK that allows users to view inspection grades and other key indicators for all local authorities in England, supporting deeper analysis of regional trends and contexts

## Secure access for approved researchers

In addition to publicly available data, Ofsted occasionally publishes more sensitive or detailed datasets. Where appropriate, and in line with legal and ethical standards, we may make some of this data available for research purposes. Access is subject to strict rules and safeguards to ensure confidentiality and prevent misuse. They are accessible through secure platforms such as:

- ONS Secure research service
- UK Data Service

Researchers wishing to access these datasets must apply for approved researcher status through the relevant organisation's website. The service gives guidance on eligibility and application processes.

## Methods and approach

At Ofsted, we take a pragmatic approach to research methods and do not hold a fixed position on research design. Our choice of methods is guided by the research questions we seek to answer. We recognise the value of qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods and evaluative approaches, each offering distinct insights that contribute to a robust evidence base.

Our research activity typically includes:

- on-site research visits to observe practice and gather rich contextual evidence
- inspection information gathered through inspection activity to inform our understanding of practice
- secondary data analysis to make effective use of existing datasets
- synthesis of existing research to build on the current evidence base
- surveys, interviews, and case studies to capture diverse perspectives
- evaluations of frameworks and/or policies to understand effectiveness and identify areas for improvement
- advanced statistical analysis, where appropriate, to identify patterns and trends

We prioritise methodological rigour and transparency, ensuring that all research and evaluation activity produces credible, relevant and actionable findings.

Where appropriate, we also commission research and evaluations from external organisations, using the Crown Commercial Service's research and insights framework to ensure quality and compliance.

## Secondments

Ofsted offers a variety of research-related opportunities for collaboration through secondment. Recent examples include [UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\) policy fellowships](#) and the [UKRI Bridging responsible AI divides \(BRAID\) fellowship](#).

Future secondment opportunities will be advertised through our official channels.

# Get in touch

Ofsted is committed to using high-quality research and evidence to inform our work and improve outcomes for children, young people and learners.

This document is not a direct invitation to tender; however, we welcome information about existing, published, relevant ongoing or planned research. If you are working in an area related to our areas of research interest, you can let us know at [research.surveys@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:research.surveys@ofsted.gov.uk). We will review submissions and may get in touch to follow up, if necessary.

Where evidence gaps are identified around a tightly defined question, we may undertake targeted engagement such as reaching out to specific organisations or publishing a focused request for evidence. We will only undertake these activities where the purpose is clear and we have a defined plan for how the insights we receive will be used. We may also share updates or emerging insights through blogs or other communications channels, where appropriate.

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1. In this document, any reference to research undertaken at Ofsted should be understood to include evaluations. [↩](#)
  2. Ofsted expects to start inspecting multi-academy trusts in the future. Where the 'schools' remit is mentioned, this also includes at trust level. [↩](#)
  3. Vulnerability refers to children, young people and learners who are commonly recognised as being at greater risk, such as those who are facing socioeconomic disadvantage, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are known/previously known to social care. It also includes children, young people and learners who face other barriers to their learning and wellbeing that may not be captured by existing categories, such as children facing unstable housing or who are victims of bullying or discrimination. [↩](#)
  4. Non-school-based provision is any arrangement that involves a school-age child being educated for part of the week outside school or college or regularly spending part of the week not attending education at all – for example, flexi-schooling, part- or full-time attendance at unregistered alternative provision (AP), education otherwise than at school (EOTAS) provision, home education, online education or part-time timetables. [↩](#)
  5. The [Digital Poverty Alliance](#) defines digital poverty as 'the inability to interact with

the online world fully, when, where and how an individual needs to'. [↩](#)

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