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Guidance

School monitoring operating guide for inspectors: for use from September 2026

Updated 12 June 2026

Applies to England

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For use on inspections from 7 September 2026.

About this guide

This guide sets out how lead inspectors ('you') should carry out monitoring inspections of state-funded schools.

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

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 school and the inspection team (where applicable) of the importance of following the code of conduct.

Equality duties on education inspections

Both inspectors and schools have responsibilities under the [Equality Act 2010](#). Guidance on the equality duties for schools and inspectors is set out in our [Equality duties on education inspection](#) policy. This includes what to do if you witness or find evidence of behaviour by leaders and staff that does not comply with the act.

Principles of monitoring

We carry out monitoring inspections under [section 8 of the Education Act 2005](#).

When planning and carrying out monitoring inspections, you should draw on Ofsted's published guidance for full inspections in a way that is appropriate to the specific context of the inspection. You should use the toolkit to identify the appropriate area(s) of focus for the inspection, and the toolkit and operating guide for full inspections to identify the appropriate inspection activities for each monitoring inspection.

Types of monitoring inspection

There are 3 types of monitoring inspection:

- improvement monitoring inspections, which include:
 - [improvement monitoring inspections of schools with any evaluation area graded 'urgent improvement' \(and/or where safeguarding has been graded 'not met'\) and placed in a category of concern](#)
 - [improvement monitoring inspections of schools with any evaluation area graded 'needs attention'](#)
- [focused monitoring inspections](#)
- [legacy monitoring inspections of schools that were placed in a category of concern before the launch of the renewed education inspection framework](#)

An overview of improvement monitoring inspections

Principles of improvement monitoring

Improvement monitoring is a supportive process. Throughout the monitoring inspection, you should **celebrate** the improvements leaders have secured since the last full inspection, **validate** leaders' actions and progress and **highlight** where further improvement may still be needed.

Through professional dialogue, you should seek to understand the progress that leaders are making in improving the school. Drawing on this, and your professional judgement, you will need to consider:

- the most appropriate timing for the on-site monitoring inspection(s) within the improvement monitoring programme (see below)
- the most appropriate focus, or focuses, of any on-site monitoring inspection

During the improvement monitoring inspection, consider whether the school's grades have provisionally improved, where this is possible and appropriate, and you have gathered sufficient evidence to do so.

The improvement monitoring programme

Schools that are subject to an improvement monitoring inspection (see [types of monitoring inspection](#)) will be part of an improvement monitoring programme. The type of programme the school is part of will depend on whether it has been placed in a category of concern, or whether any evaluation areas have been graded as 'needs attention'.

The improvement monitoring programme for schools with any evaluation area graded as 'urgent improvement' (and/or where safeguarding has been graded as 'not met') and placed in a category of concern

An improvement monitoring programme starts with an introductory call with school leaders and any nominee(s). This typically takes place within 3 months of the publication of the school's last full inspection report card. Inspectors do not visit the school's site as part of these calls.

You will then carry out one or more on-site monitoring inspection(s) at the school. The number of on-site monitoring inspections will depend on the category of concern that the school was placed in at its last full inspection.

- Schools that are found to require significant improvement under the renewed framework may have up to 5 on-site monitoring inspections within 18 months of the last full inspection report card being published.

- Schools that are found to require special measures under the renewed framework may have up to 6 on-site monitoring inspections within 24 months of the last full inspection report card being published.

These on-site monitoring inspections are usually scheduled termly. They normally begin in the term following publication of the report card from the school's last full inspection.

[The annex](#) provides more information about the legacy monitoring programme for schools that were placed in a category of concern before the launch of the renewed education inspection framework. We refer to these as legacy monitoring inspections.

The improvement monitoring programme for schools with any evaluation area graded 'needs attention'

An improvement monitoring programme starts with an introductory monitoring call with school leaders and any nominee. This typically takes place within 3 months of publication of the school's last full inspection report card. Inspectors do not visit the school's site as part of these calls.

You will then carry out an on-site monitoring inspection at the school. A school with any evaluation areas graded 'needs attention' will normally have a single on-site monitoring inspection within 24 months of publication of the last full inspection report card. We may inspect sooner when necessary, for example if the school requests this or if we consider that the school may be ready for, or requires, an earlier on-site monitoring inspection.

Between the introductory monitoring call and the single on-site inspection, we may contact any school with an evaluation area graded 'needs attention', on an [ongoing basis](#), for monitoring purposes. We do not do this for schools that are in a category of concern, as their monitoring programme includes more numerous and frequent on-site monitoring inspections.

Safeguarding on improvement monitoring inspections

In all improvement monitoring inspections, including where safeguarding was graded as 'met' at the previous full inspection, you must always remain vigilant and professionally curious about any possible safeguarding concerns. This does not mean that we reinspect safeguarding on every on-site monitoring inspection.

However, you must:

- by exception, check the single central record where there have been any changes to staffing since the previous full or monitoring inspection
- by exception, review, with the headteacher, any new allegations or concerns about adults and the steps the school has taken in response to them
- always maintain professional curiosity about safeguarding throughout the monitoring inspection

If concerns about safeguarding emerge, you must prioritise gathering further safeguarding evidence as necessary and contact the national duty desk.

You must deem the inspection to be a full inspection if the evidence indicates that safeguarding standards are no longer met and/or children may be at risk of significant harm or have been harmed. You must then follow the procedures set out in the [operating guide for full inspections](#).

The exception to this is when the school is already placed in a category of concern and the change in safeguarding grade does not require a change in this category of concern. In these instances, provided you have gathered sufficient evidence to support your decision, you must provisionally change the safeguarding grade to 'not met'. You can do this without the monitoring inspection being deemed a full inspection.

If, having gathered sufficient evidence during the monitoring inspection, you determine that safeguarding is likely to remain graded as 'met', and that pupils are not at significant risk of harm, but some improvements to safeguarding are necessary, you must reflect this in the updated 'next steps' of the report card. Inspectors will check the school's progress towards addressing this 'next step' at the school's next monitoring inspection.

Grade changes following an improvement monitoring inspection

Improvement monitoring inspections can provisionally improve the grade for evaluation areas identified as 'urgent improvement' or 'needs attention', or where safeguarding is graded 'not met'. You should consider whether grades can be provisionally improved whenever it is possible and appropriate to do so, provided that you have sufficient evidence to support this.

On an improvement monitoring inspection of a school that was placed in a category of concern under the renewed framework, you should gather sufficient evidence to evaluate whether to provisionally change a grade, typically from 'urgent improvement' to 'needs attention' or 'expected standard'. If you have sufficient time after evaluating the 'urgent improvement' areas, consider whether changes from 'needs attention' to 'expected standard' are appropriate. Where applicable, you should also consider whether safeguarding should be provisionally graded 'met'. Focus particularly on any relevant toolkit standards that were not met in the previous full inspection. When provisionally improving grades, also ensure that you have gathered sufficient wider evidence to assure yourself that the school continues to meet the remaining standards for the new provisional grade.

You must, however, remain vigilant to situations where a school is showing significant signs of improvement across a range of evaluation areas, as any further grade changes may mean its category of concern needs to be removed. Where this is the case, either the monitoring inspection must be deemed a full inspection, or a full inspection must be scheduled as soon as possible so that the school's [category of concern may be removed](#).

On an improvement monitoring inspection of a school with any evaluation area graded 'needs attention', you should gather sufficient evidence to evaluate whether to provisionally change a grade, typically from 'needs attention' to 'expected standard'. Focus particularly on any relevant toolkit standards that were not met in the previous full inspection. When provisionally improving grades, also ensure that you have gathered sufficient wider evidence to assure yourself that the school continues to meet the remaining standards for the new provisional grade.

You cannot usually award a grade higher than 'expected standard' on an improvement monitoring inspection, unless there are exceptional circumstances where there is specific evidence to support this. In these circumstances, you must consult the national duty desk and the regional director before making such a change. Otherwise, the monitoring inspection would need to be deemed a full inspection to award a grade higher than 'expected standard'.

You cannot consider improving the grades for any evaluation area that is not within the scope of the improvement monitoring programme (that is, areas graded 'expected standard' or above or 'met' at the most recent full inspection).

Improvement monitoring inspections cannot lower the grade for an evaluation area. For this to happen, the inspection would need to be deemed a full inspection. If you have concerns that one or more evaluation areas may have declined (including any that are not the focus of, or within the scope of, the improvement monitoring

inspection), you should contact the national duty desk. If you gather sufficient evidence which suggests that an evaluation area may need to be graded lower than it was in the previous inspection, you should consider deeming the inspection to be a full inspection.

There is only one exception to this: if, during a monitoring inspection of a school that is already placed in a category of concern, you find that safeguarding may no longer be graded 'met' and the change in safeguarding grade does not require a change in the category of concern that the school is placed in, follow the procedure set out in [Safeguarding on improvement monitoring inspections](#) above.

If a monitoring inspection is deemed to be a full inspection, you should carry out all the evidence-gathering activities required in a [full inspection](#), and produce a new full inspection report card.

Removing a school from a category of concern within an improvement monitoring programme

While grades for individual evaluation areas may improve during the improvement monitoring programme, the statutory designations of 'requires significant improvement' or 'special measures' can only be removed following a full inspection. If evidence gathered during the monitoring inspection indicates that a school has improved significantly, so that if a full inspection were carried out no evaluation area would be graded 'urgent improvement' and safeguarding would be graded as 'met', the monitoring inspection should be deemed to be a full inspection, or a full inspection should be scheduled at the earliest opportunity.

Improvement monitoring of new schools whose predecessor school was subject to a monitoring programme

A school may receive a new unique reference number (URN) from the Department for Education (DfE) due to a change in status or after undergoing a significant change. We define a new school for inspection purposes as a school that receives a new URN.

Any school whose predecessor school was eligible for (or had already started) an

improvement monitoring programme, and which subsequently receives a new URN, will be treated as a new school. From the point when the URN officially changes, this school will no longer be monitored. Like any other new school, it will usually receive a full inspection in its third academic year of operation. We may, however, continue to monitor a school before the change of URN is officially completed.

Improvement monitoring inspections of schools with any evaluation area graded as ‘urgent improvement’ (and/or where safeguarding has been graded as ‘not met’) and that have been placed into a category of concern

Process outline

For schools placed in a category of concern (either ‘requires significant improvement’ or ‘requires special measures’) following a full inspection, you will carry out:

- **an introductory monitoring programme call** – this marks the start of the monitoring programme
- **notification and planning calls** – to set up individual on-site monitoring inspections in the programme
- **on-site monitoring inspections** – information about the number of monitoring inspections is set out in the [monitoring programmes](#) section

Introductory monitoring programme call

The introductory monitoring programme call is the opportunity to start building an enduring relationship with school leaders, and, where applicable, the nominee and to

support them through the monitoring programme.

Remember to record appropriate notes from the call using the monitoring programme form.

You should:

- Call the school, typically within 3 months of the publication of its last full inspection report card. This call can take place on any day of the working week.
- Ask to speak with the headteacher or the most senior member of school staff available.
- Explain that this is a short call to organise the introductory monitoring programme call.
- Share appropriate contact details.
- Explain the purpose of the introductory monitoring programme 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.
- Agree a suitable time for the call, usually later that day. Explain that this is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this.
- Agree who will attend the call. Encourage the headteacher to have at least one other senior leader present to assist and support them in the call and, where applicable, the school’s nominee.
- Ask whether the leaders who will be joining the call require any adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments.

Carrying out the introductory monitoring programme call

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

Call the school at the agreed time.

Ensure that leaders are clear about why the school 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 the monitoring programme.

Explain to leaders:

- that this monitoring programme will continue only for as long as it is required – this will be when the school has improved sufficiently for the category of concern to be removed

- that the maximum number of monitoring inspections they can expect depends on whether the school requires significant improvement or requires special measures
- that there will typically be one monitoring inspection per school term
- that the monitoring programme will be reviewed and adjusted during each monitoring inspection
- that the monitoring inspection will focus on the evaluation area(s) graded 'urgent improvement' and/or safeguarding where it was graded 'not met', and the 'next steps' from the previous full inspection
- that if the evaluation area(s) graded 'urgent improvement', and/or safeguarding where it was graded 'not met', have improved enough to meet the relevant standards and there is sufficient evidence to support this, then those evaluation area(s) may be graded 'needs attention' or 'expected standard' (or, in the case of safeguarding, 'met') following the monitoring inspection and an updated report card will be produced
- the circumstances where an inspection may need to be deemed a full inspection, including where the school may be ready for its category of concern to be removed

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, whether external or, where applicable, through the trust, the local authority or a federation, and its impact
- invite them to ask any questions they have about the process

Explain that ahead of each monitoring inspection you will notify them up to 5 working days before arriving on site.

On-site monitoring inspections

Typically, the on-site monitoring inspection will be 1 day for schools that require significant improvement and 2 days for schools that require special measures.

Preparing for the on-site monitoring inspection

Review any relevant information, recording only brief and evaluative notes. This must include:

- any relevant complaints made to Ofsted about the school since the last full or monitoring inspection
- the information on Ofsted's 'Find information about a provider' system, such as [warning notices](#)
- any updates to Ofsted Parent View since the last full or monitoring inspection, for example where there have been any significant changes to the proportion of responses

This may also include:

- reminding yourself of the content of the school's full inspection report card, particularly the 'next steps', and any subsequent report card updates following previous monitoring inspections
- any performance information published since the last full or monitoring inspection
- the local authority or trust's statement of action for the school
- any information that you consider relevant from the school's website, for example curriculum information or governance arrangements

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

Notification and planning calls

The monitoring inspection notification call

You should usually telephone the school up to 5 working days before the start of the on-site inspection. This call may take place on any day of the working week.

Ensure that you follow the relevant notification call script.

Ask to speak with the headteacher. If the headteacher is unavailable, ask to speak with the most senior member of school staff who is available.

Cover the following:

- Inform the school that a monitoring inspection is taking place. Confirm the date and length of the inspection.
- Where relevant, confirm details of the inspection team. Check whether there are any conflicts of interest or concerns. Note any conflicts or concerns and your response in the evidence base.
- Agree a time for a second, longer [planning call](#), usually later that day. Explain what you will discuss during the call. Explain that this is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this.
- Agree who will attend that call. Encourage the headteacher to have at least one other senior leader present to assist and support them in the call and, where available, the school's nominee.
- Discuss the [role of the nominee](#).
- Discuss arrangements for [adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments](#).
- Confirm any changes to [key information about the school](#) since the last full or monitoring inspection.

Complete and upload the notification form and inform the inspection support team that you have made the notification call.

The monitoring inspection planning call

Call the school at the time agreed during the notification call. The length of the planning call will typically depend on the range of evaluation area(s) that need to be discussed. Typically, it should normally not be longer than 60 minutes overall. You should emphasise to leaders that they can take breaks when needed.

The call will normally be a video conference call. It should not be recorded, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as a reasonable adjustment.

The planning call will be in 3 parts:

Part 1: Introduction and discussing practicalities

This part of the call includes discussions about:

- Ofsted's code of conduct and where to access it
- leaders' wellbeing
- reasonable adjustments and adaptations
- ensuring that leaders are clear about the purpose and focus of the monitoring inspection and have what they need

Discuss with leaders what documents may need to be uploaded to the portal. Invite them to provide evidence of any impact of the steps they have taken, which should be directly linked to the evaluation area(s) and 'next steps' that will be explored at the monitoring inspection.

Invite school leaders to let parents and carers know about the monitoring inspection and to access Ofsted Parent View. You should consider views expressed on Ofsted Parent View during the inspection.

Consider whether it would be useful to use pupil and staff surveys. You may also request that the free-text facility for Ofsted Parent View is opened. Let leaders know that the school will receive a link to the surveys in their notification letter. Ask that they encourage parents, pupils and staff to complete them.

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

Discuss:

- any relevant changes since the last full or monitoring inspection, for example to leadership and governance arrangements
- the outcome of previous monitoring inspection(s) where applicable
- leaders' evaluation of the actions they have taken to address the evaluation area(s) that are graded 'urgent improvement', or where safeguarding is graded 'not met', and how they have assessed the impact of their actions
- any support they have received and its impact
- the evaluation areas that will form the core focus of this monitoring inspection

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 discuss with leaders which evaluation area(s) would be best to prioritise for the monitoring inspection. You should prioritise any potential issues that may impact on pupils' safety, learning and/or wellbeing. Beyond this, you should prioritise those areas where leaders are likely to be able to demonstrate the impact of the work they have done to improve.

Consider and discuss with leaders the potential monitoring inspection activities that are likely to gather the most relevant evidence, considering the school's context.

When you start to shape the timetable, consider:

- your arrival time, remembering that this should not be before 8am
- a brief meeting to check on staff wellbeing at the start of the day and to review the proposed timetable and inspection activity arrangements
- whether leaders would welcome the opportunity for the inspection team, where applicable, to meet briefly with staff at the start of the day
- which inspection activities you will carry out in the morning – these depend on the evaluation area(s) that are the focus of the inspection
- afternoon activities, which will include relevant follow-up activities
- time to reflect on and record your evidence
- the start time of any reflection meeting(s) – further information about who can attend [reflection meeting\(s\)](#) can be found below
- arranging a suitable time to meet with relevant senior leaders, those responsible for governance and trust leaders/local authority/diocese representatives (as applicable)
- time to analyse the responses to Ofsted Parent View and any staff or pupil surveys, where applicable
- arrangements for the final reflection and final feedback meetings at the end of the monitoring inspection (see [inspection information for state-funded schools](#) for who may attend); ask the school to invite the appropriate people to the final feedback meeting

You should leave the school by 5pm other than in exceptional circumstances – for example, if leaders request a meeting with a trust member after 5pm due to their availability. When any request to stay beyond 5pm is made, whether by school leaders or (where applicable) the inspection team, discuss this with leaders and record brief notes in the evidence base.

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, purposeful and link directly to the relevant evidence-gathering themes and standards in the toolkit. Typically, these should include a focused leadership meeting followed by a learning walk where leaders can evidence the impact of their school improvement work ‘on the ground’. On all monitoring inspections, you should remain alert to, and professionally curious about, any safeguarding concerns, including where safeguarding was graded as ‘met’ during the previous full inspection. You should also complete the inspection activities in the [Safeguarding on improvement monitoring inspections](#) section.

Identify the first-hand evidence needed to evaluate 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 how they have sustained improvements from previous monitoring inspections, where relevant.

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

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 are given the opportunity to highlight the impact of their actions since the last full/monitoring inspection.

Remember to schedule brief ongoing reflection meetings so that the nominee and other leaders remain updated on progress and emerging findings. Emphasise to leaders that the reflection meetings are an 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 timetable to the portal.

After the call(s)

Inform team inspectors (where relevant) of any 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

Monitoring inspections are scheduled for either 1 or 2 days, depending on whether the school requires significant improvement or has been placed into special measures.

Day 1

When you arrive on site, you should:

- check on the wellbeing of leaders and staff and find out whether any issues have arisen since the planning call
- hold a brief meeting with the inspection team (where relevant) to ensure that the

team inspectors understand the school's context and the purpose of the inspection

- hold a short orientation meeting with the headteacher, and where applicable the nominee, to confirm the inspection schedule, the frequency of reflection meetings and the evaluation areas you are focusing 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 protected characteristics may otherwise be put at a disadvantage (refer to the [Responding to requests for reasonable adjustments and/or adaptations](#) 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 and organisation for the day as discussed in the planning call. You may, however, deviate from this as necessary, based on emerging evidence. Where this is the case, you must keep leaders informed about your rationale for any changes.

Reflection and final feedback meetings

You should make sure that all meetings are practical and constructive. This includes managing attendees and the conduct of everyone who attends. You should always invite the local authority to attend the final feedback meeting in a maintained school, and in all schools where [safeguarding has provisionally been found to be 'not met'](#).

Reflection meetings with leaders and the nominee

These meetings bring together the inspection team with leaders and the nominee (if there is one) to reflect on the emerging evidence. It is flexible which leaders can attend, as long as providers agree with you who is attending before the meeting takes place. You should:

- check on the wellbeing of leaders and staff, and allow leaders and/or the nominee to raise any issues or concerns or seek clarification, including about the conduct of the inspection or of individual inspectors
- discuss whether any evaluation areas are emerging as having improved since the

last full/monitoring inspection, and identify where the school may have more to do

- identify the most appropriate inspection activities to gather any further evidence required
- review the plans for the rest of the day, agreeing any changes to the planned inspection activities to make sure that they enable you to form a clear picture of progress across the toolkit evaluations areas being considered on this monitoring inspection

End of day 1 reflection meeting with leaders and the nominee (only for 1-day inspections)

During the end of day reflection meeting:

- check on the wellbeing of leaders and staff, and allow leaders and/or the nominee to raise any issues or concerns or seek clarification, including about the conduct of the inspection or of individual inspectors
- evaluate evidence for the specific evaluation area(s) that the monitoring inspection is focused on, linked to the relevant expected standards in the toolkit
- confirm whether the evidence supports a provisional change in grades for any evaluation area(s)
- confirm whether the school is making the progress that it should towards the category of concern being removed
- where relevant, consider whether any provisional changes are needed to the subsequent monitoring programme
- record leaders' comments in the evidence base

You will then hold a final feedback meeting.

End of day 1 reflection meeting with leaders and the nominee (only for 2-day monitoring inspections)

On 2-day inspections, hold a reflection meeting with leaders at the end of day 1 to:

- check on the wellbeing of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues
- share headline evidence, linked to the relevant expected standards in the toolkit
- confirm whether the emerging evidence from day 1 potentially supports a provisional change of grade for any evaluation area(s)
- record leaders' comments in the evidence base
- identify and agree on the necessary day 2 inspection activities for the relevant

evaluation area(s) in the toolkit, ensuring that leaders understand the rationale for these

- discuss and arrange the agreed inspection activities on day 2

Day 2 (only for 2-day inspections)

As with day 1, begin the day with a brief reflection meeting with the headteacher or nominee: confirm everyone's wellbeing, note any updates from leaders or unexpected events, and agree whether the timetable needs fine-tuning to fit the school'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, hold a reflection meeting. Leaders will be present.

End of day 2 reflection meeting with leaders and the nominee (only for 2-day inspections)

In the reflection meeting:

- check on the wellbeing 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 the evidence gathered over the 2 days of the inspection for the specific evaluation area(s) that the monitoring inspection focused on, and link this to the relevant expected standards in the toolkit
- confirm whether the evidence supports a provisional change of grade for any evaluation area(s)
- confirm whether the school is making the progress that it should towards the category of concern being removed
- where relevant, consider whether any provisional changes are needed to the subsequent monitoring programme
- record the leaders' comments in the evidence base

You will then hold the final feedback meeting.

Final feedback meeting for 1- and 2-day inspections

Your feedback must be clear, respectful and grounded in the evidence gathered. It should cover all the points that will appear in the updated report card. Remind those present that the updated report card will be published on our report website.

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

- that attendance at the final feedback meeting is voluntary and any attendee may leave at any time
- the key findings from this monitoring inspection and, where relevant, the updated provisional grades for each evaluation area(s) within the scope of the inspection (these may change as a result of quality assurance procedures or moderation)
- the rationale and key evidence supporting each updated provisional grade or the reasons why the evidence does not support provisionally updating the grade, using the language of the toolkit
- the impact of any external support the school has received
- whether or not the school is making the progress that it needs to for the category of concern to be removed, and, if it is not yet ready for the category to be removed, your reasons for that decision
- for schools in special measures, whether the school is able to [appoint early career teachers](#), and that this decision or recommendation (as applicable) will be included in the report card and will be reviewed at any subsequent inspections
- that school leaders should share the inspection findings with all governors/trustees, 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 or shared with parents. It should be made clear to other attendees (for example from the local authority or diocese) that they should not share the information at all until the updated report card is published
- that the draft updated report card they receive must not be published; they must wait for the copy of the final updated report card
- that the text of the updated report card may differ from the verbal feedback, but the inspection outcome will not change unless this is considered appropriate at the quality assurance stage
- that when they receive their draft updated 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 on inspection or commented on in the report card
- that during their factual accuracy check, they only need to check the report card text that has been updated at this monitoring inspection
- that the headteacher should, ideally, complete the post-inspection survey

- that the school 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 state-funded schools)
- that leaders can make a formal complaint and can find information on how to do this is in our [complaints procedure](#)
- where applicable, any provisional changes to the school's monitoring programme – but make clear that this is subject to regional director approval

Reflect the school's context and frame your feedback through professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement.

If the school is not ready for its final monitoring inspection to be deemed a full inspection, then its next inspection will be a full inspection. This is likely to be carried out by a new lead HMI. It will typically take place during the term following the end of the monitoring programme, although we may inspect sooner than this if we have concerns. This needs to be made clear to attendees at the final feedback meeting.

Removing a school from of a category of concern

You can deem any monitoring inspection to be a full inspection as soon as you are confident the school has improved sufficiently and is ready for its category of concern designation to be removed, which may be earlier than the fifth or sixth monitoring inspection. This will be the case when you have gathered sufficient evidence to demonstrate that, if the school were to receive a full inspection, no evaluation area would be graded 'urgent improvement' and safeguarding would be graded as 'met'. This evidence may be gathered over one or more monitoring inspections. When a monitoring inspection is deemed to be a full inspection, a full inspection report card with a new set of grades for all evaluation areas will be produced and published.

If you consider that the school is ready to be removed from a category of concern, you must call the national duty desk before making your decision.

If you deem the inspection to be a full inspection, it will then be completed using the [operating guide for full inspections](#).

What to do after the monitoring inspection

Produce an updated report card, unless the inspection has been deemed a full inspection. If the inspection has been deemed a full inspection, produce a new report card.

Update the following sections:

- each evaluation area that the inspection focused on
- 'What it's like to be a pupil at this school' – update only the paragraphs relevant to the evaluation areas that the inspection focused on
- 'Next steps' (remembering that additional 'next steps' should only be included if they are critical and necessary to the school's improvement)
- 'About this inspection'
- 'Information about this school' (where appropriate)

Improvement monitoring inspections of schools with any evaluation area(s) graded 'needs attention'

Process outline

For schools with evaluation areas graded 'needs attention' following a full inspection, inspectors will carry out the following:

- **introductory monitoring call** – this marks the start of the monitoring programme
- **ongoing monitoring contact** – to maintain ongoing contact with school leaders and the nominee. Ongoing monitoring contact is used to check in on progress and evaluate readiness for the on-site monitoring inspection(s). The frequency of any contact will be determined by you, in discussion with school leaders
- **notification and planning calls** – to set up individual on-site monitoring inspections in the improvement monitoring programme

- **on-site monitoring inspection** – schools with evaluation areas graded as ‘needs attention’ will normally have a single on-site monitoring inspection within 24 months of the publication of the last full inspection report card. However, we may inspect earlier than this where necessary

Introductory monitoring programme call

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

Remember to record appropriate notes from the call using the monitoring programme form.

You should:

- Call the school, typically within 3 months of the publication of the school’s full inspection report. This call can take place on any day of the working week.
- Ask to speak with the headteacher or the most senior member of school staff available.
- Explain that this is a short call to organise the introductory monitoring programme call.
- Share appropriate contact details.
- Explain 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.
- Agree a suitable time for the call, usually later that day. Explain that this is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this.
- Agree who will attend the call. Encourage the headteacher to have at least one other senior leader present to assist and support them in the call and, where available, the school’s nominee.
- Ask whether the leaders who will be joining the call require any adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments.

Carrying out the introductory monitoring programme call

You should read the school’s last full inspection report card before carrying out the introductory monitoring call and [establish whether the school is part of the DfE’s](#)

[regional improvement for standards and excellence \(RISE\) programme.](#)

Call the school at the agreed time.

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

Explain to leaders that:

- they will normally only receive one monitoring inspection
- the monitoring inspection will usually take place no later than 24 months after the publication of the school's report card for the previous full inspection – the precise timing will depend on the progress leaders are making to address the 'next steps' identified at the last full inspection
- they can [ask for a monitoring inspection earlier](#) if they feel that they have compelling evidence to support an improvement in grade
- the monitoring inspection will focus on the evaluation areas graded 'needs attention', and the 'next steps' from the previous full inspection
- the circumstances in which a monitoring inspection may be deemed to be a full inspection
- if the evaluation area(s) graded 'needs attention' at the last full inspection have improved enough, and there is sufficient evidence to support this, then they may be provisionally graded 'expected standard' following the on-site monitoring inspection and an updated report card will be produced
- they can contact you by email should they have any further questions
- you will follow up by email to organise additional ongoing monitoring contact – this will typically take place at least once every term

During the call:

- discuss the actions that leaders have already taken to address the 'next steps', and the impact of these
- discuss any support that they have received, whether external or, where applicable, through the trust, and its impact
- invite them to ask any questions they may have about the process

Confirm with leaders that they will be contacted to notify them of the inspection up to 5 working days before arriving on site.

Ongoing monitoring contact

Maintain ongoing monitoring contact with school leaders and any nominee (as previously agreed) to check in on progress and assess the school's readiness for the on-site monitoring inspection. Ongoing monitoring contact may take place on any day of the working week and may be by email, or by phone/video call, as you consider appropriate.

If the school was not listed as being part of the DfE's RISE programme during the introductory monitoring call, before contacting the school you should remember to check whether it has been added to the [list published by the DfE](#) in the meantime.

During ongoing monitoring contact, you should seek to understand:

- the actions leaders 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 leaders have received, and its impact
- if the school is not ready for an on-site monitoring inspection, agree any further ongoing monitoring contact as necessary

When you agree the school is ready, confirm with leaders that they will be notified about the on-site monitoring inspection up to 5 working days before arriving on site. Do not confirm exactly when the school will be inspected before you notify it officially.

Remember to record appropriate notes from any contact using the monitoring programme form.

Requesting an earlier monitoring inspection of schools with any evaluation area(s) graded 'needs attention'

On-site monitoring inspections of schools with any evaluation area(s) graded 'needs attention' are usually scheduled within 24 months of the last full inspection report

card being published. However, leaders can ask for this on-site monitoring inspection to be scheduled earlier than usual if they feel they have compelling evidence to support a likely improvement in grade(s) for the evaluation areas graded 'needs attention'. They should submit this in writing to Ofsted. The decision on whether to carry out an earlier on-site monitoring inspection rests with the relevant Ofsted regional director.

Separately to a school requesting an earlier inspection, we might decide it is appropriate to carry out an earlier inspection if there is sufficient evidence to support a likely improvement in grade(s), or where we have any concerns.

Remember that, in all cases, you must not confirm exactly when a school will be inspected before you notify it officially.

On-site monitoring inspections

On-site monitoring inspections will usually last for 1 day with 1 inspector. However, monitoring inspections may last for 2 days, depending on the size of the school and the number of evaluation areas graded 'needs attention'.

If the school was not listed as being part of the DfE's RISE programme during the introductory monitoring call or any subsequent ongoing monitoring contact, remember to check whether it has been added to the [list published by the DfE](#) in the meantime.

Notification and planning of the on-site monitoring inspection

You should usually telephone the school up to 5 working days before the start of the on-site monitoring inspection. This call can take place on any day of the working week.

The monitoring inspection notification call

Ensure that you follow the relevant notification call script.

Ask to speak with the headteacher. If the headteacher is unavailable, ask to speak with the most senior member of school staff who is available.

During the call, you must:

- Inform the school that a monitoring inspection is taking place. Confirm the date and length of the inspection.
- Check whether there are any conflicts of interest or concerns. Note any conflicts or concerns and your response in the evidence base.
- Agree a time for a second, longer [planning call](#), usually later that day. Explain what you will discuss during the call. Explain that this is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this.
- Agree who will attend that call. Encourage the headteacher to have at least one other senior leader present to assist and support them in the call and, where available, the school's nominee.
- Discuss the [role of the nominee](#).
- Discuss the arrangements for [adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments](#).
- Confirm any changes to [key information about the school](#) since the last full inspection.

Complete and upload the notification form and inform the inspection support team that you have made the notification call.

The monitoring inspection planning call

Call the school at the time agreed during the notification call. The length of the planning call will typically be no longer than 60 minutes. However, this will depend on the range of evaluation area(s) that need to be discussed. You should emphasise to leaders that they can take breaks when needed.

The call will normally be a video conference call and should not be recorded unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as a reasonable adjustment.

The planning call will be in 3 parts.

Part 1: Introduction and discussing practicalities

In your discussions with leaders, you must:

- check on the headteacher's and any other leaders' wellbeing
- remind them of Ofsted's code of conduct and where to access it
- ensure that leaders are clear about the purpose and focus of the monitoring inspection and that they have what they need
- make arrangements for any adaptations and reasonable adjustments

Invite school leaders to let parents know about the inspection and how to access Ofsted Parent View. You should consider views expressed on Ofsted Parent View during the inspection.

Surveys of pupils and staff are not normally used. You should, of course, engage with staff and pupils during the monitoring inspection. However, if you consider there are other specific circumstances on the monitoring inspection that mean it would be helpful to open the staff and pupil surveys, and/or the free-text facility on Ofsted Parent View, then you may consider doing so at your discretion.

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

Discuss:

- any relevant changes since the last full inspection, for example to leadership and governance arrangements
- leaders' progress in addressing the evaluation area(s) graded as 'needs attention', how they have assessed the impact of their actions, and any relevant evidence to support this
- any support that they have received and its impact

You should work with leaders to identify evidence that will enable you to see the impact of their actions to improve the evaluation area(s) graded 'needs attention'.

Part 3: Planning the inspection schedule

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

Discuss with leaders the potential monitoring inspection activities that you and any team need to carry out to gather the most relevant evidence, considering the school's context.

When you start to shape your timetable, consider:

- arrival time, remembering that this should not be before 8am
- a brief meeting to check on staff wellbeing at the start of the day and to review the proposed timetable and inspection activities
- whether or not leaders would welcome the opportunity for the inspection team, where applicable, to meet briefly with staff at the start of the day
- the activities to be organised, focusing on the areas that are relevant to the school's improvement journey – these are likely to include:
 - a focused leadership meeting relating to relevant areas of focus and a

subsequent learning walk to see the impact of leaders' actions on the ground

- meeting with pupils; for example, where attendance was an issue, meeting pupils whose attendance has improved as a result of leaders' actions since the previous full inspection
- any other relevant inspection activities, for example meeting with staff to discuss the impact of the professional learning programme, if this had contributed to a 'needs attention' grading in the leadership and governance evaluation area
- discussing with leaders any necessary practical arrangements to support these activities
- your rationale for the inspection activities you have selected, noting this in your evidence base; the final decision on inspection activities rests with you as lead inspector
- scheduling regular brief reflection meetings to keep the headteacher, nominee and other leaders updated on progress and emerging findings throughout the monitoring inspection
- time to reflect on and record your evidence
- arranging a suitable time to meet with those relevant senior leaders, those responsible for governance and trust leaders/local authority/diocese representatives (as applicable), if this is required
- time to analyse the responses to Ofsted Parent View and any staff or pupil surveys, where applicable
- time for you to write the updated report card while on site – it is important to factor in enough time to update the report card
- time to feed back your findings to leaders and governors
- arrangements for the final reflection and final feedback meetings at the end of the monitoring inspection (see [inspection information for state-funded schools](#) for who may attend); ask the school to invite the appropriate people to the final feedback meeting

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, purposeful and link directly to the relevant evidence-gathering themes and standards in the toolkit. Typically, they should include a focused leadership meeting followed by a learning walk where leaders can evidence the impact of their school improvement

work 'on the ground'. On all on-site monitoring inspections, you should remain alert to any [safeguarding concerns](#), and complete the safeguarding inspection activities set out in that section.

Identify the first-hand evidence needed to evaluate 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 of their work and show specific examples of initiatives that have been successful.

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

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 are given the opportunity to highlight the impact of their actions since the last full inspection.

Remember to schedule brief ongoing reflection meetings so that the nominee and other leaders remain updated on progress and emerging findings. Emphasise to leaders that the reflection meetings are an opportunity to review emerging findings and to agree adjustments to the planned inspection activities.

You should leave the school by 5pm other than in exceptional circumstances – for example, if leaders request a meeting with a trust member after 5pm due to their availability. When any request to stay beyond 5pm is made either by leaders or (where relevant) the inspection team, discuss with leaders and record brief notes in the evidence base.

Agree a time when you will be able to upload the draft timetable to the portal.

After the call(s)

Use the EEG preparation card to inform team inspectors (where relevant) of any pertinent information, including the planned activities, their responsibilities, and the details of any requested adaptations or reasonable adjustments.

What to do during an on-site 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 school day, but no earlier than 8am.

You should make sure that all meetings are practical and constructive. This includes managing attendees and the conduct of everyone who attends.

Initial meeting with school leaders/the nominee

In this meeting, you should confirm with leaders that the planned inspection activities will provide opportunities to gather evidence of the impact of their actions since the last full inspection by seeing the school in operation at first hand.

In this meeting you should:

- explain the focus and purpose of the monitoring inspection and the process
- remind all present of Ofsted's code of conduct and where to access it
- check on the wellbeing of the headteacher, other leaders and staff
- check on whether any adaptations and reasonable adjustments are needed
- check that leaders have invited the appropriate people to the final feedback meeting at the end of the inspection
- discuss the proposed timetable and arrangements for inspection activities

Allow some flexibility in the timing of this meeting. For example, it may need to be in 2 parts to allow for you to speak with pupils at the start of the day, or other relevant activities.

Reflection meetings

You should make sure that all reflection and final feedback meetings are practical and constructive. This includes managing attendees and the conduct of everyone who attends.

During the day, plan opportunities to keep leaders up to date with what you are finding. Agree changes to the schedule if needed to ensure leaders have the opportunity to provide evidence of the impact of their work.

These meetings bring together the inspection team (where relevant), leaders and the nominee (if there is one) to reflect on the emerging evidence. It is flexible which leaders can attend, as long as providers agree with you who is attending before the meeting takes place. You should:

- check on the wellbeing of leaders and staff, and allow leaders and/or the nominee to raise any issues or concerns or seek clarification, including about the conduct

of the inspection or of individual inspectors

- discuss whether any evaluation areas are emerging as having improved since the last full/monitoring inspection, and identify where the school may have more to do
- identify the most appropriate inspection activities to gather any further evidence required
- review the plans for the rest of the day, agreeing any changes to the planned inspection activities to make sure that they enable you to form a clear picture of progress across the toolkit evaluations areas being considered on this monitoring inspection

End of day 1 reflection meeting with leaders and the nominee (only for 1-day inspections)

During the end of day reflection meeting:

- check on the wellbeing of leaders and staff, and allow leaders and/or the nominee to raise any issues or concerns or seek clarification, including about the conduct of the inspection or of individual inspectors
- evaluate evidence for the specific evaluation area(s) that the monitoring inspection is focused on, linked to the relevant expected standards in the toolkit
- confirm whether the evidence supports a provisional change in grades for any evaluation area(s)
- where relevant, consider whether any provisional changes to the subsequent monitoring programme are needed
- record leaders' comments in the evidence base

You will then [reflect privately and update the report card](#).

End of day 1 reflection meeting with leaders and the nominee (only for 2-day monitoring inspections)

On 2-day inspections, hold a reflection meeting with leaders at the end of day 1 to:

- check on the wellbeing of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues
- share headline evidence, linked to the relevant expected standards in the toolkit
- discuss whether emerging evidence from day 1 potentially supports a provisional change in grades for any evaluation area(s)
- record leaders' comments in the evidence base
- identify and agree on the necessary day 2 inspection activities for the relevant

evaluation area(s) in the toolkit, ensuring that leaders understand the rationale for these

- discuss and arrange the agreed inspection activities on day 2

Day 2 (only for 2-day inspections)

As with day 1, begin the day with a brief reflection meeting with the headteacher or nominee. Check everyone's wellbeing, note any updates from leaders or unexpected events, and agree whether the timetable needs fine-tuning to fit the school'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, hold an end of day reflection meeting. Leaders will be present.

End of day 2 reflection meeting with leaders and the nominee (only for 2-day inspections)

In the reflection meeting:

- check on the wellbeing 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 the evidence gathered over the 2 days of the inspection for the specific evaluation area(s) that the monitoring inspection focused on, linked to the relevant expected standards in the toolkit
- confirm whether the evidence supports a provisional change in grade for any evaluation area(s)
- record leaders' comments in the evidence base

You will then reflect privately and update the report card.

Reflection and writing time for the inspector(s) for 1- and 2-day inspections

Set aside private time in the afternoon on either the first or second day (as applicable, depending on whether it is a 1- or a 2-day inspection) to reflect, ensure that your evidence base is complete, and check that you have sufficient evidence to support your emerging findings and any provisional grade changes for any evaluation area.

You will need to update the relevant sections of the school's report card. Update the following sections:

- the evaluation areas being focused on
- ‘What it’s like to be a pupil at this school’ – update only paragraphs pertinent to the evaluation areas being focused on
- ‘Next steps’
- ‘About this inspection’
- ‘Information about this school’ (where appropriate)

You will then hold the final feedback meeting.

Final feedback meeting for 1- and 2-day inspections

You should always invite the local authority to attend the final feedback meeting in a maintained school, and in all schools where [safeguarding has provisionally been found to be ‘not met’](#).

Your feedback must be clear, respectful and grounded in the evidence gathered. It should cover the points that will appear in the updated report card. Remind those present that the updated report card will be published on our reports website.

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 that any attendee may leave at any time
- the key findings from this monitoring inspection and, where relevant, the updated provisional grades for each evaluation area(s) (which may change as a result of quality assurance procedures or moderation)
- the rationale and key evidence supporting each updated provisional grade or the reasons why the evidence does not support provisionally updating the grade, using the language of the toolkit
- the impact of any external support that the school has received
- that school leaders should share the inspection findings with all governors/trustees, 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 or shared with parents. It should be made clear to other attendees (for example from the local authority or diocese) that they should not share the information at all until the updated report card is published
- that the draft updated report card they receive must not be published; they must

wait for the copy of the final updated report card

- that the text of the updated report card may differ from the verbal feedback, but the inspection outcome will not change unless this is considered appropriate at the quality assurance stage
- that when they receive their draft updated 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 on inspection or commented on in the report card
- that during the factual accuracy check, they only need to check the report card text that has been updated at this monitoring inspection
- the approximate timing of the next full inspection – this will typically be approximately 4 years following the publication of the report card from the school's last full inspection, although we may inspect sooner than this if we have any concerns
- that the headteacher should, ideally, complete the post-inspection survey
- that the school 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 state-funded schools)
- that leaders can make a formal complaint and can find information on how to do this in our [complaints procedure](#)

Reflect the school's context and frame your feedback through professional dialogue, with the aim of supporting improvement.

It is important that you leave the school site by 5pm, other than in exceptional circumstances.

What to do after the monitoring inspection

If the school submits comments following the factual accuracy check, you are responsible for reviewing and responding to these comments, and making any necessary amendments.

Focused monitoring inspections of schools

Under [section 8 of the Education Act 2005](#), Ofsted can carry out inspections to follow up concerns about any school.

We may decide to carry out a focused monitoring inspection at any school at any time, including if:

- there are concerns that the safety of pupils and/or staff is at risk
- information suggests that there has been a serious breakdown in leadership and governance
- there has been a significant decline in standards of education and/or care
- we receive information that causes us concern, for example through a qualifying complaint made to Ofsted or by other means

Also, we may inspect any school, at any time, at the discretion of His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), or if requested to do so by the Secretary of State for Education.

Focused monitoring inspections focus sharply on the issues that have prompted the inspection. You will not determine or change grades for any evaluation areas.

If you have serious concerns, for instance about safeguarding, or where the school may need to be placed into a category of concern, contact the national duty desk. It may be necessary to deem the focused monitoring inspection to be a full inspection and report on all evaluation areas.

Focused monitoring inspections typically last for 2 days and will usually have 1 inspector.

Preparation

Where relevant, you must review the outcomes of any investigations carried out in line with HMCI's power to investigate qualifying complaints about schools under section 11A of the Education Act 2005, or any other information shared with Ofsted.

Contact your regional senior HMI to ensure you have access to all the relevant information and discuss what will be communicated to the school when they are notified of the inspection.

Do not investigate any complaint. You will only be considering wider aspects of the school relevant to the complaint.

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

You should read the full inspection report card (if there is one), or the report from the school's most recent graded, ungraded and/or monitoring inspection if there is no report card.

You should also review the school's inspection data summary report.

Notification

The exact timing of the inspection and whether notification is given will be decided by the regional director in advance of the inspection.

Focused monitoring inspections with notice

If you are undertaking a focused monitoring inspection with notice, notify the school the working day before the inspection, typically before midday. Make the purpose of the inspection and the reasons that led to it clear during this call.

You should:

- Ask to speak with the headteacher or the most senior member of school staff available.
- Inform the school that a focused monitoring inspection is taking place and confirm the date and length of the inspection.
- Ensure that leaders are clear about the purpose of the inspection and the reasons for it.
- If the school is being inspected because of a qualifying complaint made to Ofsted about the school under section 11A of the Education Act 2005, inform leaders that as a result of the wider issues raised by the complaint, a decision has been

taken to inspect the school.

- Where applicable, explain that the inspection will focus on the wider issues raised by the complaint and will not investigate the complaint itself. If the complainant has requested confidentiality, take all practical steps to ensure that their identity is not disclosed to the school. At times, the nature of the complaint may mean that the headteacher is able to discern the identity of the complainant. Where this is the case, ensure that you do not confirm the complainant's identity.
- Discuss the [role of the nominee](#).
- Discuss any arrangements for [adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments](#).

You should note that leaders are not required to provide any information in advance of the focused monitoring inspection, but if this is offered, you should accept it.

If required, you may arrange a time for a second, longer planning call later in the day. Agree who will attend that call and encourage the headteacher to have at least one other senior leader present to assist and support them. This will typically be a video conference call and should not be recorded, unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as a reasonable adjustment.

Focused monitoring inspections without notice

If you are carrying out a focused monitoring inspection without notice, you should normally telephone the school about 15 minutes before arriving on site. Advise the headteacher (or senior leader) 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 school.

Planning call for an announced focused monitoring inspection

When the focused inspection is carried out with notice, hold a planning call where required.

The planning call will be in 3 parts:

Part 1: Introduction and discussing practicalities

In this part of the call, you should discuss:

- Ofsted's code of conduct and where to access it
- leaders' wellbeing
- reasonable adjustments and adaptations
- the purpose of the focused monitoring inspection and the reasons for it

There is no mandatory requirement for leaders to inform parents about the focused monitoring inspection. However, you should invite leaders to inform parents so that there is an opportunity for them to contribute their views about the school through Ofsted Parent View. These views should be considered during the inspection.

Consider whether it would be useful to use pupil and staff surveys. You may also ask for the free-text facility for Ofsted Parent View to be opened. Let leaders know that the school will receive a link to the surveys in their notification letter. Ask them to encourage parents, pupils and staff to complete these.

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

When considering context, leaders' actions and their impact, focus on:

- any relevant changes since the last inspection, for example to leadership and governance arrangements
- 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

You should also confirm the evaluation areas that will form the core focus of this monitoring inspection.

Part 3: Planning the timetable

When planning the timetable, you should:

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

You should also consider:

- your arrival time, remembering that this should not be before 8am
- a meeting at the start of the inspection to check on staff wellbeing and to review the proposed timetable and inspection activity arrangements – this meeting is also an opportunity to discuss the potential issues that led to the focused monitoring inspection
- the morning and afternoon inspection activities for day 1 – activities should be focused, purposeful and link directly to the relevant evidence-gathering themes

and standards in the toolkit

- time to reflect on and record your evidence
- the start time of any reflection meeting(s)
- arranging a suitable time to meet with relevant senior leaders, those responsible for governance and trust leaders/local authority/diocese representatives (as applicable)
- time to analyse the response to Ofsted Parent View and any staff or pupil surveys, where applicable
- arrangements for the final reflection and final feedback meetings at the end of the focused monitoring inspection

You should leave the school by 5pm other than in exceptional circumstances, for example if leaders request a meeting with a trust member after 5pm due to their availability. If any request to stay beyond 5pm is made, whether by school leaders or (where applicable) the inspection team, discuss this with leaders and record brief notes in the evidence base.

Once you have decided on the key areas of focus and relevant inspection activities, consider how to prioritise them, and their format and timing. Your decisions will be informed by whether the focused monitoring inspection is scheduled over 1 or 2 days. It is important that you find first-hand evidence to validate what leaders are telling you.

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

Make sure that you share and explain the rationale for inspection activities, discussing any practical arrangements as required. 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 are given the opportunity to highlight the impact of their actions to address the potential issues that led to the inspection.

Remember to schedule brief ongoing reflection meetings so that the nominee and other leaders remain updated on progress and emerging findings. Emphasise to leaders that the reflection meetings are an opportunity to review emerging findings and to agree adjustments to the planned inspection activities.

Carrying out an unannounced focused monitoring

inspection

For unannounced focused monitoring inspections, you will need to plan a skeleton timetable in advance without input from leaders. Follow part 3 of the section above.

When planning the skeleton timetable, be aware that:

- staff and those responsible for governance may only be available at certain times
- you will need to observe the start of the school day – explain this to leaders when you arrive on site and let them know that you will meet with them to explain the reasons for the inspection once this activity is complete

What to do on site during the focused monitoring inspection

Day 1

If the inspection is being carried out without notice, you must make the focus of the inspection and the reasons that led to it clear to the headteacher at the earliest opportunity on your arrival at the school.

When you arrive on site, you should:

- observe the start of the school day
- check on the wellbeing of leaders and staff and find out whether any issues have arisen since the notification call, or, where applicable, the planning call
- hold a brief meeting with the inspection team (where relevant) to ensure that the team inspectors understand the school's context and the purpose of the inspection
- meet with leaders, as set out in [Reflection meetings with leaders and the nominee](#)
- 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 protected characteristics may otherwise be put at a disadvantage (refer to the [Responding to requests for reasonable adjustments and/or adaptations](#) 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

The meeting with leaders at the start of the inspection should cover pertinent issues about the school and the focus of the inspection. It must give the headteacher and other leaders (including, where the school is part of a trust, the CEO or their delegate and other trust leaders (where relevant)) the opportunity to present an oral summary evaluation of the school's position on the issues, and identify where evidence may be found.

Carry out the activities that you identified when planning the timetable 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. You must always remain vigilant to any new safeguarding concerns, even when safeguarding is not the focus of the inspection.

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

Remember to schedule regular reflection meetings with leaders and, where applicable, with the inspection team. You should make sure that all meetings are practical and constructive. This includes managing attendees and the conduct of everyone who attends.

Schedule in time to assimilate your evaluative evidence.

Remember to be vigilant throughout the focused monitoring inspection for [circumstances that may require the inspection to be deemed a full inspection](#).

Reflection meetings with leaders and the nominee

These meetings bring together the inspection team (where relevant), leaders and the nominee (if there is one) to reflect on the emerging evidence. It is flexible which leaders can attend, as long as providers agree with you who is attending before the meeting. You should:

- check on the wellbeing of leaders and staff, and allow leaders and/or the nominee to raise any issues or concerns or seek clarification, including about the conduct of the inspection or of individual inspectors
- identify the most appropriate inspection activities to gather any further evidence required
- review the plans for the rest of the day, agreeing any changes to the planned

inspection activities to make sure that they enable you to form a clear picture of the potential issues being considered on this focused monitoring inspection

End of day 1 reflection meeting with leaders and the nominee

Hold a reflection meeting with leaders at the end of day 1 to:

- check on the wellbeing of leaders and staff, and on the inspection process and the conduct of those involved in the inspection; resolve any issues
- share headline evidence and record leaders' comments in the evidence base
- identify, agree and arrange the necessary day 2 inspection activities, ensuring that leaders understand the rationale for these

Day 2

As with day 1, begin the day with a brief reflection meeting with the headteacher or nominee: confirm everyone's wellbeing, note any updates from leaders or unexpected events, and agree whether the timetable needs fine-tuning to fit the school'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, hold a reflection meeting. Leaders will be present.

End of day 2 reflection meeting with leaders and the nominee

In the reflection meeting:

- check on the wellbeing 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 the evidence gathered over the 2 days of the inspection
- record leaders' comments in the evidence base

You will then hold the final feedback meeting.

Final feedback meeting

Your feedback must be clear, respectful and grounded in the evidence gathered. It must cover all the points that will appear in the focused monitoring report. Remind those present that a focused monitoring report will be published on our reports website.

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

- that attendance at the final feedback meeting is voluntary and that any attendee may leave at any time
- the issues, where relevant, brought to Ofsted's attention that caused the school to be inspected, without identifying or discussing where the concerns came from
- the key findings from the specific focus areas for the focused monitoring inspection, which may be subject to change as a result of quality assurance procedures or moderation
- that school leaders should share the inspection findings with all governors/trustees 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 or shared with parents. It should be made clear to other attendees (for example from the local authority or diocese) that they should not share the information at all until the final focused monitoring inspection report is published
- that the draft focused monitoring inspection report they receive must not be published; they must wait for the copy of the final focused monitoring report -that the text of the focused monitoring report may differ from the verbal feedback, but the inspection outcome will not change unless this is considered appropriate at the quality assurance stage
- that the headteacher should, ideally, complete the post-inspection survey
- that the school 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 state-funded schools)
- that leaders can make a formal complaint and can find information on how to do this in our [complaints procedure](#)

Remember that unless you deem this inspection to be a full inspection, you cannot change or award any grades.

Remind leaders that, unless the inspection has been deemed a full inspection, the school's next full inspection will be 4 years after the publication of its last full inspection report card (if the school has one). If the school does not yet have a report card, then its next full inspection will be determined by the timing and outcome of its last inspection before the launch of the renewed EIF. See [Inspection information for state-funded schools](#) for further details.

What to do after the focused monitoring inspection

You must draft a focused monitoring inspection report setting out your findings, unless the focused monitoring inspection has been deemed a full inspection.

If the school submits comments during the factual accuracy check, you are responsible for reviewing and responding to these comments and making any necessary amendments.

Remember that unless you deem this focused monitoring inspection to be a full inspection, you cannot change or award any grades.

Deeming a focused monitoring inspection to be a full inspection

If, during a focused monitoring inspection, you find evidence that the school may be graded 'urgent improvement' for any evaluation area, or that the safeguarding standards may not be met, you may deem the inspection to be a full inspection or recommend that a full inspection be brought forward. You must call the national duty desk before making any decision.

If you deem the inspection to be a full inspection, the inspection will be completed using the [operating guide for full inspections](#).

In this instance, inspectors will evaluate all evaluation areas and a full inspection report card will be published. This could result in the school being placed in a category of concern.

Deferring or pausing an inspection, or gathering additional evidence

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

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 any team inspectors timely feedback on the quality of their work and their conduct.

Additional guidance on evidence-gathering and other matters

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 if the school uses any alternative provision, has a religious character, or has an inclusion base (including specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)).

Annex 1: legacy monitoring inspections

This section applies to schools which, by the end of October 2025, were placed into a category of concern – those that:

- require special measures; or

- have serious weaknesses

We refer to the monitoring inspections that these schools will receive as legacy monitoring inspections.

Legacy monitoring programme

Each legacy monitoring programme will start with an introductory monitoring programme call, which will be followed by on-site legacy monitoring inspections. The number of on-site legacy monitoring inspections in the legacy monitoring programme will vary depending on the extent of the issues identified at the last graded inspection and the category of concern that the school is in:

- Schools with serious weaknesses will usually receive up to 5 legacy monitoring inspections. If the school is not showing signs of improvement within 18 months, a full inspection will be scheduled.
- Schools in special measures will usually receive up to 6 legacy monitoring inspections. If the school is not showing signs of improvement within 24 months, a full inspection will be scheduled.

On-site legacy monitoring inspections are usually scheduled termly. The legacy monitoring programme can be ended sooner by being deemed a full inspection if there is sufficient evidence that the school has improved sufficiently for its category of concern to be removed.

If at the end of the legacy monitoring programme a full inspection is required, this will typically take place during the term following the end of the monitoring programme.

Introductory monitoring call

Remember to record appropriate notes from the call using the monitoring programme form.

You should read the school's most recent inspection report from before the launch of the renewed EIF (whether graded or monitoring) before carrying out the call.

You should call the school, typically 6 to 9 months after its last graded or monitoring

inspection that took place before the launch of the renewed EIF. This call may take place on any day of the working week.

You should:

- Ask to speak with the headteacher or the most senior member of school staff available.
- Explain that this is a short call to organise the introductory monitoring programme call.
- Share appropriate contact details.
- Explain the purpose of the introductory monitoring programme call.
- Agree a suitable time for the call, usually later that day. Explain that this is normally a video conference call, unless technology does not allow this.
- Agree who will attend the call. Encourage the headteacher to have at least one other senior leader present to assist and support them in the call and, where applicable, the school's nominee.
- Ask whether the leaders who will be joining the call require any adaptations and/or reasonable adjustments.

You should then call the school at the agreed time.

In the introductory call:

- Explain that the school 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.
- Explain that this monitoring programme will continue only for as long as it is required – this will be when the school has improved sufficiently for the category of concern to be removed.
- Let them know that the maximum number of monitoring inspections they can expect will depend on whether the school has serious weaknesses or is in special measures.
- Explain that there will typically be one monitoring inspection per school term.
- Explain that the monitoring programme will be reviewed and adjusted during each monitoring inspection.
- Clarify that these monitoring inspections cannot award or change grades.
- Set out the circumstances where an inspection may need to be deemed a full

inspection, including where the school may be ready for its category of concern to be removed.

- Agree and communicate the likely timing of the first monitoring inspection (remembering not to confirm exactly when the school will be inspected before you notify it officially).

On-site inspection

Follow the instructions set out in the [On-site inspections for schools causing concern](#) section, but note the following differences in the process:

- Remember that the school has not yet been inspected under the renewed framework. Therefore, 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 last graded or monitoring inspection. Validate leaders' actions and highlight where further improvement may still be needed to remove the special measures or serious weakness designations.
- Do not grade any evaluation areas, as these schools do not have a report card. Set out your provisional findings in the legacy monitoring inspection report, with particular focus on the effectiveness of the actions leaders and governors/trustees have taken to improve the school. The legacy monitoring inspection report will be subject to standard quality assurance arrangements under the renewed EIF.

Remember that the category of concern can only be removed by the on-site legacy monitoring inspection being deemed to be a full inspection.

You may also deem the on-site legacy monitoring inspection to be a full inspection if you have serious concerns about a decline in standards. This includes when safeguarding may need to be graded as not met and/or when the category of concern may need to be changed from serious weaknesses to special measures.

If you deem the legacy monitoring inspection to be a full inspection, the inspection will be completed using the [operating guide for full inspections](#).

Safeguarding

During legacy monitoring inspections, including those where safeguarding was judged effective at the last graded inspection, you must always remain vigilant and

professionally curious about any possible safeguarding concerns.

In addition, you must also:

- by exception, check the single central record where there have been changes to staffing since the previous graded or monitoring inspection
- by exception, review, with the headteacher, any new allegations or concerns about adults and the steps the school has taken in response to them
- always maintain a professional curiosity about safeguarding throughout the inspection

Where possible concerns emerge relating to safeguarding, you must prioritise gathering further evidence on safeguarding as necessary and contact the national duty desk.

If evidence indicates that safeguarding standards may need to be graded 'not met' and/or pupils may be at a significant risk of harm, you must deem the inspection to be a full inspection. Follow the procedures set out in the [operating guide for full inspections](#).

If, having gathered sufficient evidence during the monitoring inspection, you determine that safeguarding is likely to be graded as 'met', and that pupils are not at a significant risk of harm, but some improvements to safeguarding are necessary, you must reflect this in the monitoring inspection report. You will check progress towards addressing these improvements at the school's next on-site monitoring inspection.

Monitoring inspection report

Each monitoring inspection report will include an evaluation of the progress that leaders and those responsible for governance are making towards the removal of the special measures or 'requires significant improvement' designations.

In a school that requires special measures, you will evaluate whether:

Leaders and governors/trustees (as applicable) are taking effective action to improve the school, but continued work is needed to remove the special measures designation.

Or

Leaders and governors/trustees (as applicable) are taking ineffective action to improve the school, and significant further work is needed to remove the special

measures designation.

In a school that has serious weaknesses, you will evaluate whether:

Leaders and governors/trustees (as applicable) are taking effective action to improve the school, but continued work is needed to remove the 'requires significant improvement' designation.

Or

Leaders and governors/trustees (as applicable) are taking ineffective action to improve the school, and significant further work is needed to remove the 'requires significant improvement' designation.

Monitoring of new schools whose predecessor school was subject to a monitoring programme

A school may receive a new URN from the DfE due to a change in status or after undergoing a significant change. We define a new school for inspection purposes as a school that receives a new URN.

Any school whose predecessor school was eligible for (or had already started) a monitoring programme, and which subsequently receives a new URN, will be treated as a new school. From the point when the URN officially changes, these schools will no longer be monitored and, like any other new school, will usually receive a full inspection in their third academic year of operation. We may, however, continue to monitor a school before the change of URN is officially complete.

Annex 2: Schools that were graded 'requires improvement' before the launch of the renewed EIF

Schools will not receive a monitoring inspection under the renewed EIF if their overall effectiveness was previously graded 'requires improvement', or there was no overall effectiveness judgement, or any key or provision judgements were graded 'requires improvement'. These schools will usually receive a full inspection within 2.5

years from the publication of the last graded inspection report.

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