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Guidance

Initial teacher education (ITE) inspection framework: for use from September 2026

Updated 12 June 2026

Applies to England

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For use on inspections from 1 September 2026.

Introduction

The initial teacher education (ITE) inspection framework sets out how Ofsted inspects ITE providers in England. It includes the principles of inspection, which are set out in this document, and the standards we use to inspect providers, which are in our ITE inspection toolkit.

We have also published the following core inspection materials:

- an [operating guide](#) that sets out the methodology inspectors use to gather evidence
- an [inspection information page](#) that provides useful information about the process for a wide audience

Legal basis for ITE inspections

ITE inspections are carried out under the [Education Act 1994](#) and the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#).

[Section 18B of the Education Act 1994](#) gives His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) the power to inspect initial training of teachers for schools and, when requested by the Secretary of State, a duty to do so.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the [Education and Inspections Act 2006 \(Prescribed Education and Training etc\) Regulations 2007](#) set out HMCI's duty to inspect publicly funded training of further education and skills teachers, lecturers and trainers when requested by the Secretary of State.

Early years initial teacher training (ITT) inspections are covered under paragraph 9(1) of [Schedule 13 \(Interaction with other authorities\) to the Education and Inspections Act 2006](#). This states that 'The Chief Inspector may make arrangements with a public authority for the carrying out by him (a) in England or Wales, or (b) in Northern Ireland, of inspections of any institution or matter which he is not required or authorised to carry out by virtue of any other enactment.'

Inspections of level 6 early years teacher (EYTS) are carried out under part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The purpose of ITE inspections

Inspections provide an independent external evaluation of an ITE provider's effectiveness and, where appropriate, recommend what it should do to improve.

Inspectors gather a range of evidence, which they evaluate against the framework. They take full account of our policies and relevant legislation in areas such as safeguarding, equality and diversity.

Our inspections of ITE:

- provide trainees and prospective trainees with an expert, independent assessment of how well an ITE provider is performing and the quality of its ITE and training
- inform the public, the Secretary of State for Education, and Parliament about the work of ITE providers and whether they are providing an acceptable standard of teacher training; this provides assurance that minimum standards are being met, provides confidence that public money is being used well, and indicates where improvements are needed
- encourage individual ITE providers to improve, and raise standards across the education system as a whole

Principles of inspection

Inspections of ITE providers offer important information to potential trainees, current trainees, employers and other stakeholders about the quality of ITE. These groups should be able to make informed choices about different providers based on the information published in our inspection report cards.

The framework sets out the grades that apply to all phases of ITE and to the training programmes of individual providers. Inspectors use consistent standards for reaching those grades, which are based on [statutory and non-statutory guidance and research](#). They gather evidence in similar ways across different phases, although there may be some variation, for example depending on the type of provision. Inspectors comply with relevant guidance and codes of conduct, such as the [Powers of entry: code of practice](#).

We use evidence-led insights and inspector training to ensure that our process for determining grades is as valid and reliable as possible. Our inspections and grading process focus on 2 things: key strengths, from which other providers can learn intelligently, and priorities for improvement. They act as a trigger for others to take action.

Raising standards and improving lives for all

Ofsted exists to raise standards and improve lives for all. We put trainees and the pupils and learners they teach at the heart of what we do, especially those who face barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing. This is our mission.

The Equality Act 2010

The ITE inspection framework is intended to encourage improvement in the education and training provided to all trainee teachers in England.

The ITE inspection framework and standards make it clear that the expectation is that all trainee teachers will receive high-quality, ambitious education and training.

Inspectors assess the extent to which the provider complies with the relevant legal duties as set out in the [Human Rights Act 1998](#) and the [Equality Act 2010](#), including, where relevant, the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Conduct during Ofsted inspections

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

Inspectors uphold the highest professional standards in their work. They act with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect.

Providers should approach their inspection with integrity and be open, transparent and honest. This includes providing evidence – or access to evidence – that enables inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably. It means not withholding or

concealing evidence or providing false, misleading, inaccurate or incomplete information.

The evaluation scale used for inspection

We use a 5-point scale to grade different areas of a provider's work. From November 2025 we no longer provide an overall effectiveness grade for any provider.

The evaluation scale for each evaluation area is:

Exceptional (highest quality provision) – an evaluation area can be graded 'exceptional' when all the strong standards have been met and it meets all the additional standards in the 'exceptional' section of the toolkit.

Strong standard – an evaluation area can be graded 'strong standard' when all the expected standards and all the strong standards have been met.

Expected standard – an evaluation area can be graded 'expected standard' when all of the standards are met – this includes meeting the legal requirements and the expectations set out in statutory and non-statutory guidance and mandatory requirements, as well as the professional standards required of the particular type of provision, where these apply.

Needs attention – an evaluation area can be graded 'needs attention' when the 'expected standard' has not been met because some aspects of provision are inconsistent, limited in scope or impact and/or not fully meeting the legal requirements

Urgent improvement (lowest quality provision) – an evaluation area can be graded ‘urgent improvement’ when it needs urgent action to provide a suitable standard of education for trainees.

The evaluation areas graded on inspection

The evaluation areas represent the components of great education provision. Evaluating these areas enables:

- nuanced reporting for stakeholders on the different aspects of provision
- clarity for providers on particular strengths and recommended areas for improvement

For information about how inspectors grade evaluation areas, please refer to the [operating guide for ITE inspections](#).

The evaluation areas for ITE providers we inspect are:

- inclusion
- curriculum, teaching and training
- achievement
- professional behaviours, personal development and wellbeing
- leadership (and compliance, including safeguarding)

The [toolkit for ITE inspections](#) provides the grading standards and/or indicators for each evaluation area.

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