



Official Statistics

Methodology: area SEND inspections and outcomes in England as at 31 December 2025

Published 16 July 2026

Applies to England

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Introduction

This document contains methodology relevant to our [official statistics release of area SEND inspections and outcomes in England](#) data, which we publish once a year.

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#) that all producers of official statistics should adhere to. You are welcome to contact us directly on data.AreaSEND@ofsted.gov.uk with any comments about how we meet these standards, or if you have any questions or feedback about our release. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk or via the OSR website.

Users can find out more about how Ofsted applies the Code of Practice for Statistics to our statistical releases on our [Ofsted standards for official statistics](#) page.

Area SEND inspection framework

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) carry out joint inspections of local areas at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under section [20\(1\)\(a\) of the Children Act 2004](#).

Inspectors assess how well local area partnerships comply with legal duties relating to children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including the Children and Families Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

Following on from the initial area SEND framework introduced in 2016, Ofsted and CQC launched a new inspection framework in late 2022, implemented from January 2023. This framework places greater focus on hearing directly from children, young people and their families to better understand their lived experiences.

The purpose of the inspections is to evaluate how effectively local area partnerships work together to improve outcomes, not to assess individual professionals. The focus is on how local authorities and integrated care boards (ICBs) jointly plan, evaluate and develop SEND services. However, inspectors also consider the responsibilities of other area partners as defined in the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice. Where inspectors identify widespread or systemic failings, local areas are required to produce priority action plans. Follow-up monitoring inspections assess if local area partnerships are taking effective action against each of the areas for priority action.

All local areas will receive a full inspection at least once during a 5-year period. The frequency and type of further inspections will be based on previous outcomes and additional intelligence. A 'local area partnership' includes education, health and care organisations responsible for planning, commissioning, delivering and evaluating SEND services within the geographical area of a local authority.

Changes to inspection frameworks and comparability

Framework changes have an impact on the comparability of data and reporting over time. The change in judgements and considering the effects of these mean that, between frameworks, there may be breaks or changes in the way we report certain judgements.

We introduced the new [area SEND inspection framework](#) in January 2023, following a consultation. Tables and charts in our official statistics after this date reflect inspection outcomes after 1 January 2023.

The framework is accompanied by an [inspection handbook](#). This sets out how inspectors gather evidence and judge a local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND.

The changes to the area SEND inspection framework in January 2023 mean that the following inspection outcomes are not comparable with the outcomes of inspections carried out under earlier frameworks:

- full inspection outcome
- monitoring inspection
- number of areas for priority action
- priority action plan

As a result of these changes, we can only analyse inspections completed after 1 January 2023. This will not provide a comprehensive view of the quality of SEND provision nationally.

This statistical release includes only inspections carried out under the current framework and for current local area structures. It excludes outcomes from previous frameworks or predecessor local areas.

Comparing inspection outcomes across years

The tables and charts in the release compare inspection outcomes over the past few years. These findings provide a partial picture of inspection outcomes across England, as not all local area partnerships have been inspected under the current framework.

When changes to local government boundaries, inspection frameworks or methodologies have been implemented, we will add guidance footnotes for clarity.

The selection process

Local areas are not inspected with equal regularity. Ofsted must inspect all local areas at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004. At our discretion, we may also carry out monitoring inspections of local areas using their power in section 20(2) of the Children Act 2004.

Refer to the [inspection framework and handbook](#) for details of the selection process.

Methodology

Data in this official statistics series is from area SEND inspections carried out in local areas at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under [section 20\(1\)\(a\) and 20\(2\) of the Children Act 2004](#).

We will present and analyse:

- in-year inspection outcomes for full inspections carried out between 1 January and 31 December of the latest reporting year
- in-year monitoring inspection outcomes for inspections carried out between 1 January and 31 December of the latest reporting year
- from 1 January 2023, inspections that have occurred under the current framework up to the reporting date

The most recent statistics, displayed in the tables and charts, count the number of local areas inspected. Local areas that have not yet been inspected are excluded from the measure.

The number of area SEND inspections completed each term is relatively low. Because of this, rather than using a cut-off date, we aim to schedule official statistics and management information so that there is enough time to include all inspection reports for the reporting period in each release. This helps to ensure that almost all inspections carried out within the reporting period have reports that are published and reflected in the statistics.

Under exceptional circumstances, we may withhold or withdraw publication of an inspection report. We do not include outcomes of withheld or withdrawn inspection reports in any of the datasets.

Changes since the previous release

Since the previous release, monitoring inspection data has been included, with inspection outcomes for monitoring inspections carried out between 1 January and 31 December of the latest reporting year.

Data

Ofsted data

We extract information on inspection outcomes from our administrative systems. While we aim to produce the highest-quality statistics, there are occasional differences between the data on the administrative system and the final inspection report. This could be due, for example, to changes during the quality assurance process. We perform rigorous quality assurance checks, including checking a sample of entries to ensure that the inspection report matches the data on the administrative system. In the event that the data recorded on the system affects reporting, we will provide a note in the release.

Where inspection reports are delayed, we would potentially publish revisions to the data (adding in the inspection outcomes of any inspection reports published

after the original cut-off date) in line with our [revisions policy for official statistics](#).

Other data sources

Data from external sources is not used in this publication.

Methods and quality

The average production time for this official statistics release is approximately 6 months after the last inspection in the calendar year. This time includes waiting for publication of inspection reports, obtaining and cleaning the data, drafting findings, quality assuring all outputs, internal sign-off and uploading the information to GOV.UK.

Other sources of similar data

No comparable data is published by other organisations that produce official or national statistics for area SEND inspections in England.

We also produce [management information](#) twice a year on the outcomes of area SEND inspections, without a detailed commentary.

Several third parties provide interactive tools displaying publicly available Ofsted inspection judgements. Third parties appear to collate these by using advanced computer techniques to harvest information from published inspection reports. We cannot comment on the quality of these datasets.

Who is this release for

Information in this release has 3 distinct purposes:

- it allows local areas, sector leaders, families and providers to be informed about key findings from our area SEND inspections
- it allows media outlets to use our key findings to inform the public about the quality of SEND provision across the country and in local areas
- it allows Ofsted staff to use inspection profiles to inform inspection framework development and underpin policies to improve standards; the important messages in the official statistics also contribute towards the findings in His Majesty's Chief Inspector's Annual Report to Parliament

Glossary

Definitions of terms are in the [statistical glossary](#).

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