



Office for Standards
in Education

Area inspection framework



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

HMI 1779



Office for Standards
in Education

A supplement to the
Common Inspection Framework

Area inspection framework



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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Introduction

1. This *Area inspection framework* (the framework) is effective from 1 September 2003 and meets the requirements of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 as amended by the Education Act 2002 (the Act). It sets out principles that apply to the inspections of the provision of non-higher education and training made by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), local education authorities (LEAs) and their partners within an area. Inspections are carried out under section 65 of the Learning and Skills Act by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).
2. Under section 178(3) of the Education Act 2002, the extension of the range of area inspections to 14–19 commenced with effect from January 2003. Thereafter, the duty in section 65(1) of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 as amended by section 178(3) of the Education Act 2002 (and the power under section 65(2)) is in respect of a **'specified description of education and training'** that could extend to any age group or type of education within that age range.
3. A draft framework was published in January 2003. In revising the framework, consideration has been given to the responses to consultation. A summary of these responses may be found on the Ofsted web site: www.ofsted.gov.uk. Account has also been taken of the strategies outlined in *Success for all*, November, 2002, and of more recent publications, including *Opportunity and excellence*, January, 2003, which provide information on government policy for 14–19 education and training.
4. This framework is a supplement to the *Common Inspection Framework* (CIF). It is also intended to be compatible and consistent with the existing frameworks. These include the frameworks for inspecting schools, LEA(s) and Connexions partnerships. This framework includes the evaluation requirements that apply to inspection across an area, as a whole, of the quality of provision for education and training for 14–19 year olds. The framework reflects the principles and the general requirements of the Act for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI) to be informed about:
 - the quality of education and training
 - the standards achieved by those receiving that education and training
 - whether financial resources made available to those providing that education and training are managed efficiently and used in a way which provides value for money.

Purposes and principles of inspection

Main purposes of inspection

5. The main purposes of area inspections are:
 - to give an independent public account of the standards achieved, the quality of provision and the efficiency and effectiveness with which education and training are planned and managed across an area to meet the needs of learners and employers
 - to keep the Secretary of State for Education and Skills informed of the standards and quality of education and training, of the effectiveness of strategic planning across an area and of whether the provision made provides value for money
 - to identify key issues for action and evaluate the effectiveness of measures to bring about improvement.

Principles of inspection

6. The following principles apply to all inspection activities carried out by or on behalf of Ofsted. They are intended to ensure that:
 - the findings of inspection contribute to improvement
 - the process of inspection promotes inclusion
 - inspection is carried out openly with those being inspected
 - the findings of inspection are valid, reliable and consistent.

- Inspection acts in the interests of children, young people and adult learners and, where relevant, their parents, to encourage high-quality provision that meets diverse needs and promotes equality.
- Inspection is evaluative and diagnostic, assessing quality and compliance and providing a clear basis for improvement.
- The purpose of inspection and the procedures to be used are communicated clearly to those involved.
- Inspection invites and takes account of any self-evaluation by those inspected.
- Inspection informs those responsible for taking decisions about provision.
- Inspection is carried out by those who have sufficient and relevant professional expertise and training.
- Evidence is recorded, and is of sufficient range and quality to secure and justify judgements.
- Judgements are based on systematic evaluation requirements and criteria, are reached corporately, where more than one inspector is involved, and reflect a common understanding in Ofsted about quality.
- Effectiveness is central to judging the quality of provision and processes.
- Inspection includes clear and helpful oral feedback and leads to written reporting that evaluates performance and quality and identifies strengths and areas for improvement.
- The work of all inspectors reflects Ofsted's Values and Code of Conduct.
- Quality assurance is built into all inspection activities to ensure that these principles are met and inspection is improved.

7. Area inspections carried out under section 65 of the Act will take account of these principles. The application of these principles as described in this framework is concerned with:
 - what is evaluated and reported
 - how inspections are carried out.

What is evaluated and reported

8. Inspections will focus on the quality of education and training and the effectiveness and quality of strategic planning of education and training for young people aged 14–19 years and will evaluate and report on:¹

Strategy for education and training (14–19) in the area

The effectiveness of the strategies for education (14–19) in raising achievement and increasing participation in education and training.

Achievement

How well learners achieve.

Access to and participation in education and training

The effectiveness of the curricula and the configuration of provision in meeting the needs of all learners, employers and the community.

Quality of education and training 14–19

The quality of teaching, learning and training and how resources affect achievement and the quality of education, training, guidance and support.

Guidance and support

How well learners are guided and supported.

Leadership and management

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the partners in implementing the strategies for 14–19 education and training for the area.

9. To summarise judgements, Ofsted and the ALI will use the agreed common grading scale and grade descriptions that are applied in the *Common Inspection Framework*.
10. The inspection report will include an assessment of the overall effectiveness of the strategies for 14–19 education and training drawn up by the local LSC, LEA(s) and partners. This assessment will be expressed in the summary of the report and will describe the provision as one of the following: outstanding, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory, very weak. Further guidance, which supplements this framework, on the criteria to be used by inspectors in arriving at this judgement is published on the Ofsted web site: www.ofsted.gov.uk.
11. In arriving at the overall judgement, inspectors will use formative grades for each of the key areas and evaluation criteria set out in the schedule below. These grades will be as follows: 1 (outstanding), 2 (good), 3 (satisfactory), 4 (unsatisfactory), 5 (very weak).

¹ 14–19 includes all learners who begin a course of study, up to and including level 3, before their 19th birthday.

How inspections are carried out

Inspectors

12. Inspectors accredited by Ofsted will be trained in the use of the framework and will be competent to inspect. In most cases, inspectors work as part of a team led by Ofsted. A reporting inspector, appointed by HMCI, will be responsible for planning and managing the inspection and its reporting. Members of an inspection team will collectively have the expertise and experience to inspect effectively all aspects of the provision covered by the inspection.

Process of inspection

13. Inspections are to be carried out in a way that secures the co-operation and confidence of those being inspected. A climate should be created in which the inspection makes a valuable contribution to improvement. This requires that:
 - inspectors are well prepared for the inspections they undertake
 - before inspection, those concerned are briefed so that the inspection process and their involvement in it are fully understood
 - the inspection should be conducted in a way that keeps the local LSC, LEA(s) and partners informed of emerging issues and findings.

Ofsted and the ALI will keep to a realistic minimum the demands that they make for information and other materials.
14. Ofsted will give at least 12 weeks' notice of inspection to the local LSC and LEA(s), which will be responsible for informing their partner organisations, and providers of the timing and arrangements for inspection.
15. The scope of an 'area' will be determined through discussion with local partners, in particular the local LSC and relevant LEAs. The criteria for determining the size of an area will include 'travel to learn' patterns of individuals, LEA(s) and local LSC boundaries. Some area inspections may cover more than one LEA area, or only part of one LEA area. In some inspections, local LSC boundaries may be crossed to take account of geographical and economic factors affecting the provision of education and training. Inspection will be completed in at least a part of each local LSC area by the end of 2006.
16. In conducting inspections the evidence and findings from earlier inspections evaluating the quality of provision for learners within the 14–19 age range will be drawn upon. These will include inspections conducted by Ofsted and/or the ALI of schools, colleges and other providers, the Connexions service and LEAs within the area. Inspectors will ensure that the views of learners about their education and training, and about the support and guidance they receive, are sought and considered as part of the evidence of inspection.

17. Ofsted and the ALI will seek to co-ordinate inspections within an area to minimise, as far as possible, the demands on providers and strategic partners. In particular, when planning the programme of area inspections, Ofsted will take account of local LSC plans for strategic area reviews (StARs). In discussion with the LSC and DFES, Ofsted may agree to modify the scope of an area inspection to take account of the arrangements for StARs.
18. Ofsted and the ALI would wish to consider and take account of any evaluation of 14–19 provision, for the area as whole or part of the area to be inspected, completed by the local LSC, LEA(s) or their partners. The local LSC and LEA(s) are invited to submit a self-evaluation based upon this framework at least four weeks prior to the inspection. Ofsted/ALI will take account of the evidence and findings of StARs and these may also form the basis of a self-evaluation.

Conduct of inspectors

19. Inspectors will uphold high professional standards in their work. They must:
 - be impartial and objective; this requires that they have no connection with the statutory bodies or the providers within the area that could undermine their objectivity
 - report honestly and fairly
 - be open and transparent in the way they work, providing as much feedback as possible on the inspection
 - carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity, and reflecting the principles of equality of opportunity in all they do
 - act with the best interests of learners as a priority.

In return, inspectors should be afforded professional courtesy.

Quality of inspection

20. Inspections should be conducted in such a way that:
 - the evidence gathered from young people and their parents or carers, from providers, local LSC, LEA(s) staff, employers and others, from observations, and from documentation is sufficient to sustain secure judgements
 - judgements are consistent with the inspection evidence, and findings reflect the balance of evidence and the collective view of the inspection team
 - the communication of findings, both orally and in written form, is clear, well-argued and based convincingly on evidence gathered before and during the inspection.

Follow-up to inspections

21. Following inspections, there will be an opportunity for full and open feedback of the inspection findings from the lead inspector, and discussion of them. The composition of the feedback meeting will vary from inspection to inspection, but in most circumstances it will include the senior staff of the local LSC and LEA(s) and representatives of their key partners.
22. The report following any inspection must be factually accurate. The local LSC and LEA(s) will be offered the opportunity to check the factual accuracy of an inspection report before it is published.

Post-inspection action plans

23. Inspections will identify issues for improvement that will form the basis of action plans, prepared by the local LSC and LEA(s) and partner organisations responsible for the provision, to address weaknesses and build on strengths. Action plans to address weaknesses identified by inspection will be submitted for approval to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Where the inspection identifies that the provision is less than satisfactory overall, these plans will be assessed by Ofsted, which will advise the Secretary of State on the adequacy of the plans to bring about improvement within an appropriate timescale. Where necessary, further inspection may be conducted to ensure appropriate progress is made in improving the quality of provision.

Reinspection

24. Where inspection identifies that the provision made in the area does not reach a satisfactory standard, the report will indicate the timescale in which weaknesses are to be addressed. A further inspection of the area will be conducted, at a date specified by Ofsted, normally within three years of the publication of the report, and will also assess the progress made in bringing about improvements.

Complaints

25. The statutory bodies and providers will have recourse to a published complaints procedure that will be made known to them in advance of their inspections.

Evaluation schedule

26. This part of the framework sets out the evaluation requirements that apply to the inspection of education and training in an area. They are based on the principles set out earlier in the framework. The evaluation requirements apply to the area as a whole and, wherever applicable, to the provision of education and training by the different providers within the area.

Inspection should answer the question:

How effective and efficient is the provision of education and training across the area in meeting the needs of learners, employers and the community?

The following questions set out under the six aspects of the schedule will guide inspection.

Strategy for education and training (14–19) in the area

1. How effective are the strategies for education (14–19) in raising achievement and increasing participation in education and training?

Achievement

2. How well do learners achieve?

Access to and participation in education and training

3. How effective are the curricula and the configuration of provision in meeting the needs of all learners, employers and the community?

Quality of education and training 14–19

4. How effective are teaching, learning and training?
5. How do resources affect achievement and the quality of education, training, guidance and support?

Guidance and support

6. How well are learners guided and supported?

Leadership and management

7. How effective are the leadership and management of the partners in implementing the strategies for 14–19 education and training for the area?

Strategy for education and training (14–19) in the area

1. How effective are the strategies for education (14–19) in raising achievement and increasing participation in education and training?

To answer this question, inspectors will evaluate:

- How effectively the strategies set a clear direction leading to high-quality education and training.
- How well strategic plans encourage high levels of access, participation and success in education and training.
- How effectively strategies lead to improvements in the quality of provision and raising standards.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- there are effective structures and partnerships which support strategies for widening opportunities for 14–19-year-old learners and for raising standards of achievement across the area
- local and national targets for the standards achieved by different groups of learners are met
- the strategies for raising standards and improving opportunities for 14–19 year olds across the area are understood and supported by education and training providers, parents, employers and others
- the strategic and operational plans of key partners and providers are consistent with the overall strategy for the area and contribute to the achievement of demanding targets for participation, retention, attainment and progression of learners at all levels
- the strategies include explicit aims relating to equality of opportunity which are reflected in the nature of the education and training opportunities available across the area
- the strategies take account of the cost-effectiveness of provision including the educational value added to individual learners and different groups.

Achievement

2. How well do learners achieve?

To answer this question, inspectors will evaluate:

- The standards of attainment of learners by age 16 and 19.
- The progress made by learners and their success in achieving their learning goals.
- The progression rates of young people to higher education, further education and training, and employment.
- How well the standards achieved meet the needs of employers, and government targets.
- The extent to which local and national targets for the standards achieved by different groups of learners are met.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- appropriate local and national targets for course completion and progression to higher education, further education and training, and employment are met
- achievements meet appropriate targets in relation to learners' abilities and previous attainment
- the attainment of particular groups meets their needs and the needs of employers
- learners achieve the skills of literacy and numeracy and ICT that enable them to progress and participate effectively in education, training and employment
- learners make appropriate progress in relation to their prior attainments
- learners, parents, employers and community leaders are satisfied that the achievements of learners reflect their ability and prepare them well for further study, training or employment.

Access to and participation in education and training

3. How effective are the curricula and the configuration of provision in meeting the needs of all learners, employers and the community?

To answer this question, inspectors will evaluate:

- How successfully and efficiently the configuration of providers meets the needs of learners and employers.
- How well providers collaborate to ensure a comprehensive range of learning opportunities at a suitable range of levels.
- The suitability of, and access to, pathways that enable all young people, including those with low attainment or learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to move on to appropriate further and higher education, training and employment.
- How well the curriculum supports educational and social inclusion and encourages high levels of participation.
- The extent to which the curricula provided meet the needs of individual learners, employers and the local community.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- the local LSC, LEA(s), schools, colleges and other providers and partnerships effectively assess the needs of learners, employers and the community in the area
- the local LSC, LEA(s), schools, colleges and other providers and partnerships respond to the needs of learners and employers by ensuring an appropriate range of general, vocational and work-based learning opportunities at suitable levels and locations
- schools, colleges and other providers effectively collaborate to increase access and participation in further and higher education and training, including by vulnerable and disaffected young people
- schools, colleges and other providers offer coherent programmes which support continued participation and progression of all young people, including those who are vulnerable or disaffected
- the curriculum meets the needs of learners and includes development of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, and offers appropriate opportunities for work-related learning
- appropriate targets for participation in post-16 education and training, and for progression to employment and higher education are met for all groups of learners
- the provision allows learners to explore personal, social, spiritual and moral issues and satisfies legal requirements, where applicable, in relation to religious education

- unnecessary duplication of provision is avoided and there is efficient use of resources.

Quality of education and training 14–19

4. How effective are teaching, learning and training?

To answer this question, inspectors will evaluate

- The quality of teaching and training across the range of providers.
- How well teaching and training promote progress and achievement.
- How well learners develop their skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- The extent to which the teaching and training supports educational inclusion.
- The progress and destinations of young people in relation to their prior achievement and learning programmes.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- teaching and training promote the achievement of local and national targets for course completion and progression
- teaching encourages good attendance, behaviour, motivation and course completion
- teaching and training enhance the personal development of individual learners
- learners' needs for additional support are assessed, planned for and effectively met by the range of institutions and training organisations
- teaching and training meet the needs of individual learners and course and programme requirements.

5. How do resources affect achievement and the quality of education, training, guidance and support?

To answer this question, inspectors will evaluate:

- The extent to which the funding available meets the needs of all young people.
- The adequacy of resources and accommodation to support teaching, training and learning.
- The adequacy and suitability of staff across the range of providers.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- the resources provided across the area meet the education, training, guidance and support needs of all learners and their teachers
- equality of opportunity is promoted through the distribution of resources to support education, training, guidance and support
- there are sufficient trained and knowledgeable staff to meet the needs of all learners.

Guidance and support

6. How well are learners guided and supported?

To answer this question, inspectors will evaluate:

- The effectiveness of guidance and support for young people across all types of education and training provision.
- The quality of information, advice and guidance to young people in relation to their needs and the opportunities for education and training.
- The effectiveness with which young people's learning and support needs are assessed and met.
- The monitoring of young people's progress, particularly through key points of transition.
- The access young people have to relevant and effective support on personal issues.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- there is a coherent framework for the assessment and reporting of young people's learning and support needs
- learners follow appropriate courses and programmes to enable them to achieve their goals for progression to further study or employment
- young people have access to impartial information, advice and guidance appropriate to their needs
- data on the destinations of young people are comprehensive and used effectively to enable them to make appropriate decisions regarding further education, training or employment
- arrangements for referral and on-course support help young people to participate fully in education, training and employment
- the arrangements for transition to further education, training and employment ensure continuity of support and guidance for young people and assist and encourage learners at all levels to progress
- young people are assisted in overcoming barriers to progression to further and higher education, training and employment.

Leadership and management

7. How effective are the leadership and management of the partners in developing and implementing the strategies for 14–19 education and training for the area?

To answer this question, inspectors will evaluate:

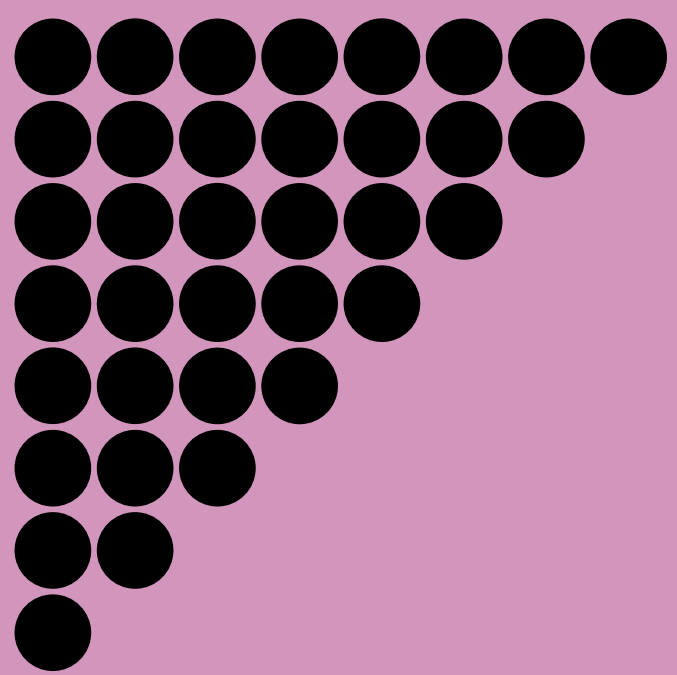
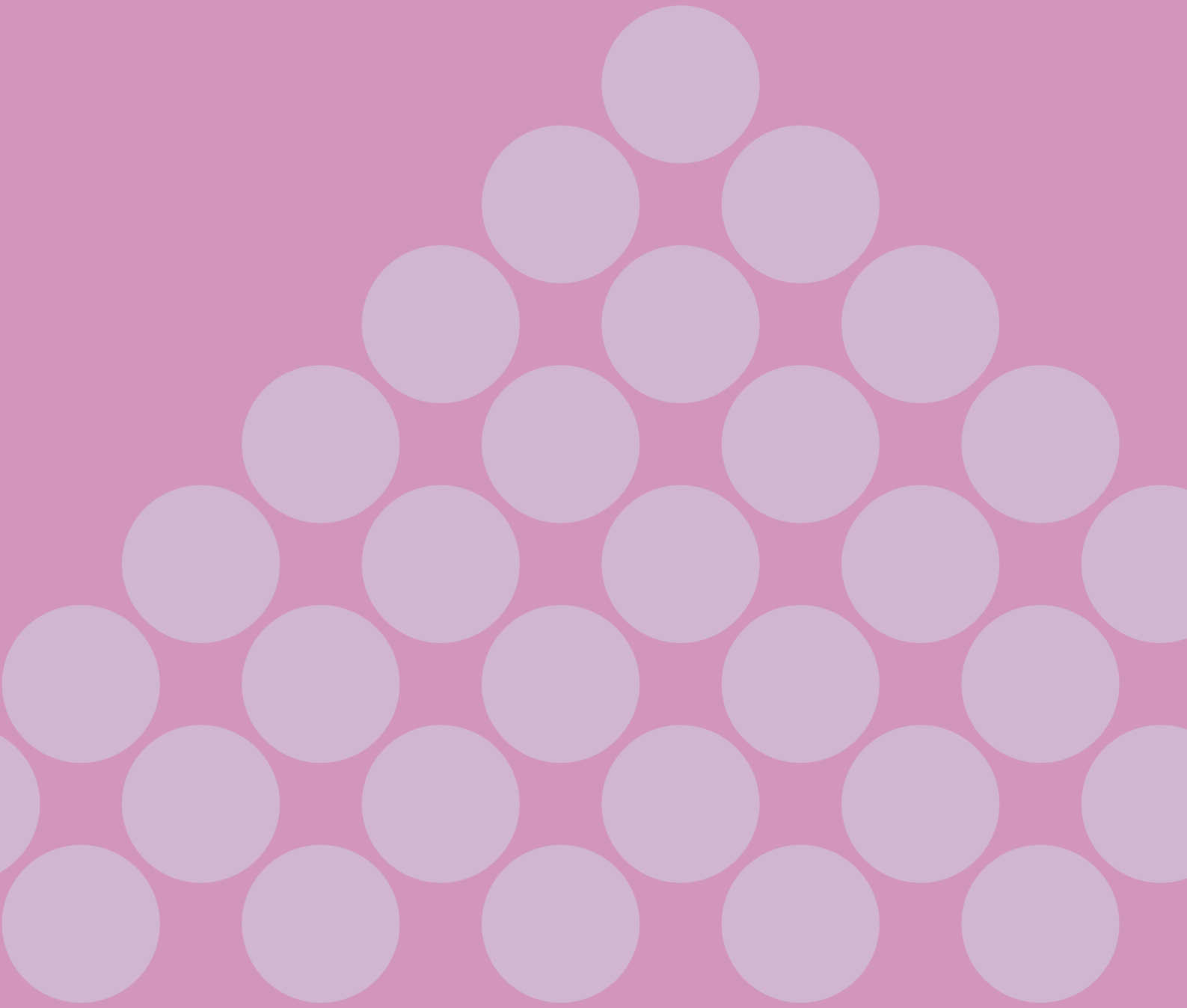
- The extent to which the local LSC and LEA(s) demonstrate appropriate leadership and encourage effective partnership and collaboration.
- How well strategies for 14–19 education and training are implemented by managers at all levels.
- How effectively arrangements for assuring the quality of provision are implemented and lead to improvements in the quality of education and training.
- How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money.
- How well equality of opportunity is promoted and relevant policies are implemented.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- the local LSC and LEA(s) communicate a clear vision for 14–19 education and training and effectively lead the development of well-defined strategies for 14–19 education and training in the area
- arrangements are in place to support effective and continuing partnership between statutory bodies, providers and employers and community organisations
- partners collaborate effectively to implement strategic priorities and support the achievement of appropriate targets
- partners ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively, to support the achievement of value for money and the strategic priorities for the area
- management and the assessment of performance are based on accurate data and the systematic monitoring and analysis of learners' achievements, learning and support needs
- the strategies for improvement are implemented effectively to the benefit of learners
- quality assurance at all levels contributes to the assessment of the overall effectiveness of the strategy and leads to clearly identified priorities and challenging targets for improvement
- aims and measures relating to equality especially regarding discrimination against gender, race and disability are successfully implemented at all levels.

Further guidance

Further guidance may be found on the Ofsted web site giving information about the criteria for grading.



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