

A good education for all



Foreword



I am very grateful to all those who responded to our consultation on proposed changes to school inspections. We received several thousand responses from headteachers, teachers, governors, parents, pupils and other interested parties. We have listened carefully and have made a number of changes as a result. While it has been a challenge to find the right balance between the views of parents and the views of schools, especially about issues like the amount of notice we should give of an inspection, I believe we have found a sensible way forward.

Ofsted introduced a new school inspection framework in January 2012. This raised expectations and focused strongly on the importance of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. However, I believe we can, and must, do more.

Parents want a good standard of education for their children. I agree. Too many children go through their entire school careers in 'satisfactory' schools. From September, only 'good' will be good enough. The changes we are introducing will help schools that don't meet this standard to improve.

The 'satisfactory' grade will cease to exist and will be replaced by 'requires improvement'. We will inspect those schools that 'require improvement' more frequently and we will support and monitor them to help them to improve.

A school that 'requires improvement' is not failing or 'inadequate'. This new designation is a signal that these schools must improve to a 'good' standard within a reasonable period of time. That's why we are also saying that a school can only be judged as 'requires improvement' twice. We think four years is long enough to become 'good'. If a school is found to 'require improvement' at two consecutive inspections and it still isn't 'good' at a third, it is highly likely to be put into special measures.

To be judged 'outstanding' a school will need to have outstanding teaching. Not every lesson during inspection will need to be outstanding but, over time, teaching must be enabling almost all pupils to make rapid and sustained progress.

On no-notice inspection, we have decided that we will contact the school in the afternoon of the working day before the inspection. This will allow headteachers to be present and gives schools sufficient time to make the necessary practical arrangements, while ensuring that inspectors see schools as they really are.

We know that inspection works. The Institute of Education recently published evidence which showed that when Ofsted placed a school into the ‘notice to improve’ category – which will now be known as ‘serious weaknesses’ – GCSE results improved by 10%. That’s why we are determined to apply the same tried and tested techniques that have brought about improvement in failing schools to those which are not yet ‘good’.

I want Ofsted to be a partner with schools, supporting school leadership teams in their mission to raise standards. I am also a champion for children, which means holding schools to account where they are failing or not improving as quickly as they can.

I hope that the changes explained in this leaflet will take us one step further to ensuring that every child in England benefits from being in a ‘good’ school. I know that this will take time and the journey will sometimes be a rocky one, but the ambition that all schools should be ‘good’ schools is at the heart of these reforms. I know this ambition is shared by everyone in the profession.

Sir Michael Wilshaw HMCI

How school inspections are changing

Ofsted has published a revised school inspection framework and grade descriptors for implementation in September 2012. You can find these inspection instruments on our website, www.ofsted.gov.uk. We hope that you find them valuable. This leaflet sets out the main features of Ofsted inspections from September, including the key changes, for ease of reference.

From September 2012 Ofsted will:

- **continue to focus on what really matters**

Ofsted inspectors will make the same four key judgements that they make now. They will evaluate pupils' achievement; the quality of teaching; pupils' behaviour and safety; and leadership and management. Inspectors will spend time in classrooms and observe children in school. They will talk to teachers and school leaders, they will hear children in primary schools and some Years 7 and 8 pupils read, and they will look at data. When they are judging pupils' achievement, inspectors will pay particular attention to how schools are using the pupil premium. They will also consider how well the school is promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- **continue to grade on a revised four-point scale**

Inspectors will use the following grades: outstanding (grade 1), good (grade 2),

requires improvement (grade 3) and inadequate (grade 4).

- **continue to inspect 'good' schools less frequently than weaker schools**

Schools judged at their last inspection to be 'good' will still be inspected after four or five years, unless Ofsted's risk assessment indicates concerns which would lead to earlier inspection. 'Outstanding' schools are exempt from routine inspection. However, they will also be subject to risk assessment and may still be inspected if that risk assessment identifies concerns that indicate a possible drop in performance.

- **require 'outstanding' schools to have outstanding teaching**

To be judged as 'outstanding' overall, schools must have outstanding teaching. Inspectors will not expect to see a particular teaching style. However, they will look for evidence of teaching through which pupils make excellent progress, acquire knowledge, deepen their understanding and develop and consolidate their skills. Good and outstanding teaching also means that pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

- **expect pupils to make excellent progress in 'outstanding' schools**

In an 'outstanding' school, it is likely that the proportion of pupils making, and exceeding, expected progress will be high compared with national figures. We

would also expect pupils' attainment to be at least in line with national averages, with many pupils attaining above this. There will, of course, be exceptions, but in an 'outstanding' school, if pupils' attainment is below that of all pupils nationally, the gap will be closing rapidly.

- **replace the 'satisfactory' judgement with 'requires improvement'**

We think that the only acceptable standard of education is a good or better education. Only a good school is good enough. Where a school is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate, it will be deemed to 'require improvement'. Inspection reports will be clear about why these schools are not yet 'good', what they need to do to improve, and their strengths.

- **inspect schools that 'require improvement' earlier than 'good' schools**

Ofsted will re-inspect schools judged to 'require improvement' within a maximum period of two years. We will work with schools to help them to improve as quickly as possible. The timing of the next inspection will reflect the individual school's circumstances and will be informed by what inspectors find at monitoring visits.

- **expect schools that 'require improvement' to become 'good' schools within a defined timescale**

A school judged to 'require improvement' will have a full section 5 re-inspection within a maximum period of two years. If at that inspection it is

still judged to 'require improvement', there will be further monitoring and support, and another full section 5 inspection will take place within a further two years. If at this inspection it is still not 'good', it is highly likely that it will be judged 'inadequate' and deemed to require special measures. This will be because the school is still not providing an acceptable standard of education, and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement. However, there may be exceptions to this. For example, if at the third inspection there is a clear, sustained, upward trend but the school is still not yet good in all areas, inspectors will use their professional judgement and may give the school a further period of time to become 'good'.

- **replace the current 'notice to improve' with 'serious weaknesses'**

If a school is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but has leadership and management that are adequate or better, it is likely to be deemed to have serious weaknesses. Inspection reports will explain what schools with serious weakness need to do to improve quickly. Inspectors will monitor, support and challenge these schools. Schools which are inadequate overall and which have inadequate leadership and management will be deemed to require special measures as at present.

■ shorten the notice we give of an inspection

Inspectors will normally contact the school during the afternoon of the working day before the inspection, although we reserve the right to inspect without notice where we have concerns. A short period of notice will allow the school to make the necessary practical arrangements and inform parents about the inspection. Parents will be asked to feed their views on the school through to the inspection team mainly by using the 'Parent View' facility at www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, although alternative routes will also be available.



■ evaluate the robustness of performance management within the school

Inspectors will ask schools to provide anonymised information of the outcomes of the most recent performance management of all teachers. They will evaluate the robustness of performance management arrangements and consider whether there is an appropriate correlation between the quality of teaching in a school and the salary progression of the school's teachers. We will take the necessary steps to ensure that no individual teacher is identified.

Ofsted will put greater emphasis on whether governors are supporting and challenging leaders in equal measure, and inspection reports will show whether governors are holding schools sufficiently to account.



Preparing for inspection

What inspectors will need from your school

Inspectors prepare for inspections by reading the previous inspection report, analysing the latest data from RAISEonline (where available), and collating responses from Parent View. They also look at the school's website. It will help the smooth running of the inspection if your website includes:

- a calendar of major events, including closures
- the times of the school day
- basic information about how your school is organised, including any alternative or specialist provision
- information provided for parents.

What schools will need to have ready for inspectors

When the inspectors arrive, they will ask for some information. They will need:

- the names and responsibilities of staff
- timetables
- details of any changes to 'normal' routines.

Inspectors will also need access to:

- the school's monitoring data for pupils' progress and attainment – this includes data relating to pupils who receive alternative provision away from the main school site
- information about the use of the pupil premium and the impact this is having on pupils' achievement

- details of the school's internal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and how the findings are used
- a summary of the school's self-evaluation and any evidence of the school's improvement planning and subsequent progress
- information about performance management arrangements and anonymised information about performance management outcomes
- evidence relating to the work of governors and their impact
- the single central record which summarises the checks and vetting of all staff working with pupils
- records of exclusions, incidents of poor behaviour and bullying and racist incidents.

Where can further details be found about school inspections?

We have published a 'School inspection handbook' which explains how inspections are conducted and the judgements that are made by inspectors. It contains the grade descriptors used by inspectors when making their judgements.

We have also published the 'Framework for school inspection' which sets out the statutory basis for section 5 inspections.

Both documents are available at www.ofsted.gov.uk

The training materials used by inspectors will be available online from September 2012.

Myth-busting

We know that there are often rumours and myths about inspection. This section of the leaflet tries to address some of those we often hear. We hope that you find it helpful. We will provide an up-to-date question and answer section on our website from September so that you can always check the facts.

Q I think our school is due an inspection shortly. Do I need to have a lesson plan for the inspector?

No. You should do what your school normally expects you to do when planning lessons.

Q Someone told me that inspectors look for a particular style of teaching and that there is an ideal 'Ofsted lesson'. Is that right?

A. There are very many different teaching styles and inspectors will not make judgements about one 'right' way. Inspectors expect to see children who are fully engaged and making good progress.

Q I have heard from colleagues at another school that inspectors want pupils to have name badges. Is this correct?

A: Inspectors want to see schools and classrooms as they really are. It is not necessary for pupils to wear badges.

Q I have heard that schools with low attainment can never be judged by Ofsted to be good. That doesn't seem fair if the pupils are making good progress. Is that true?

A. No. The evaluation of pupils' progress is central to our judgements about achievement and a school's overall effectiveness. If pupils are learning well and making good progress over time, a school is likely to be judged good for achievement.

Q I have heard that schools need to have a certain proportion of lessons observed during the inspection as 'outstanding' before the school can be judged 'outstanding'. Is this correct?

A. No. Inspectors consider the full range of evidence and the impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time, before determining the quality of teaching. Lesson observations play an important part in reaching judgements about teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. However, they are part of a wide range of evidence gathered from across the school.

Q We were judged 'outstanding' at our last inspection so we will never be inspected again. Is this true?

A. A school previously found to be outstanding may be subject to further inspection. Most schools that were judged to be outstanding at their last inspection will be exempt from routine inspection unless concerns are raised about their performance. However, we conduct an annual risk assessment on these schools starting in the third year after the end of the year in which they were last inspected. We will also inspect some outstanding schools as part of our inspections of subjects and aspects of education.





“There is no finer job than serving young people and helping them to achieve to their full potential. You have the best job in the world, even if it doesn’t always feel like it. I want to emphasise once again that I understand how hard your task is, and that Ofsted, and the changes we are making, will support your endeavours.”

Sir Michael Wilshaw, March 2012



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No. 120112

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