

Ofsted Inspections *(revised 2007)*

The law requires all maintained schools and post-16 provision up to the age of 19 to be inspected regularly to provide independent, external evaluation of the quality and standards in schools. In 2005 the Education Act introduced a system of regular, light touch, inspections which include pre-school and child care providers. This fact card aims to give governors an overview of the inspection process and to help them fulfil their roles effectively.

Key Features

- Inspections conducted on behalf of the Offices for Standards in Education (Ofsted) along with school self-evaluation and school improvement planning are crucial tools to help raise standards in schools.
 - Inspections are conducted by a small team led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) or a Lead Inspector (LI) based on a common set of characteristics for all schools.
 - The usual period between inspections is three years, this is reduced where schools are causing concern.
 - Only 2-5 days notice is given before the inspection date so schools need to be in a state of readiness.
 - There is an emphasis on school improvement through the use of the school's own self-evaluation, including regular input from pupils, parents and other stakeholders.
 - A common grading scale is used in making judgements
 - Grade 1 - Outstanding**
 - Grade 2 - Good**
 - Grade 3 - Satisfactory**
 - Grade 4 - Inadequate**
- Inspectors are required to arrive at a judgement on the **overall effectiveness and efficiency** of the school. This judgement should be informed by the judgements inspectors have already made about **standards and achievement**, the quality of **leadership and management**, in particular the capacity of the school to make improvements and to assess accurately the **quality of its own provision**. In addition, inspectors are required to make separate judgements, as appropriate, on the standards of quality of the foundation stage and the effectiveness and efficiency of post-16 provision in schools.
 - Schools designated as having religious character will undergo a supplementary inspection which has a specific focus on the denominational element of the school's provision.

Before the inspection

As soon as the school is informed of the inspection the lead inspector will contact the Headteacher to discuss arrangements for the inspection. In order for inspectors to make the best use of their time in school they must gain an understanding of the school in advance. This is facilitated by establishing good communications and

making information readily available. Inspectors access the school's Self-Evaluation form (SEF), RAISEonline data and previous Ofsted report to prepare a **pre-inspection briefing** about the school.

Schools are also asked to supply supplementary documents including the School's Improvement Plan, teaching time table and plan of the school.

The pre-inspection briefing is sent electronically to the school on the first day of the inspection and tells the school staff and governors what the inspection will focus on. The first meeting with the Headteacher and senior staff will focus particularly on the school's self-evaluation. It should lead to identification or confirmation of issues that will be followed through in the inspection.

Schools are required to inform parents of the inspection and to inform inspectors of their views. Standard letters, including a questionnaire are available. Inspectors will also want to take into account views of pupils, governors, staff and any other stakeholders or significant partners in the school's work.

On-site Inspection

The time allocated to inspection must be used mainly for gathering first-hand evidence that leads to conclusions about the effectiveness of the school, its strengths and weaknesses and what it must do to improve.

Most evidence is collected through:

- direct observation
- talking to staff, pupils and parents
- tracking school processes, such as evaluation and performance management
- analysing pupil's work

- observing management processes and monitoring teaching
- analysing records relating to pupils with special educational needs
- tracking case studies of vulnerable pupils such as those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and children in care.

Common Inspection Schedule

The schedule forms the basis for all inspections and lists the questions inspectors must ask leading to judgements in key areas as follows:

1. Overall Effectiveness

Inspectors must make an overall judgement of the school's effectiveness of provision including extended services and take into consideration the impact of steps to make improvement since the last inspection as well as capacity to make further improvements. Where appropriate, specific judgements will be made in this section on the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage or sixth form.

2. Achievement and Standards

In considering how well learners achieve inspectors will consider:

- Performance data, by groups of pupils, key stages, showing trends and value added in relation to school targets.
- How well learners make progress, taking account of any variations between groups of pupils as well as pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities.

3. Personal Development and Well-being

This section focuses on the extent to which schools meet the following five

outcomes for children and young people:

- being healthy
- staying safe
- enjoying and achieving
- making a positive contribution
- achieving economic well-being.

Inspectors will consider the personal development and well-being of learners including behaviour, attendance, exclusions, desire to learn, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, healthy lifestyles, positive contribution to the community, developing workplace skills, adopting safe practises.

4. The Quality of Provision

In this section inspectors will be looking at three areas and asking:

- How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the needs of the children?
- How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?
- How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?

5. Leadership and Management

Inspectors must judge how effective the leadership and management of the school is in raising achievement and supporting learners. They will consider whether :

- Leaders set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality care and education
- The governing body discharge their responsibilities
- Resources are used effectively
- There is rigorous school self-evaluation
- Performance is actively monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets

- There is adequacy and suitability of staff, resources, accommodation and learning resources
- There are effective processes for recruitment and selection of staff to ensure that learners are well taught and protected
- Equal opportunities are promoted and discrimination tackled so learners reach their potential
- Links are developed with other providers to promote the integration of care, education and any extended services to enhance learning and to promote well-being.

Judgements

Emerging findings are discussed with the Headteacher, and where appropriate, the senior management team. Final judgements are only made when all first-hand evidence has been collected and considered, and must represent the corporate view of the whole inspection team. At the end of the on-site inspection oral feedback will be given to the Headteacher, senior managers and where possible, the chair of governors. The written report that follows should contain no surprises.

The Written Report

A draft report is sent to the school for checking. One working day is allocated to the school to comment on the draft, unless the school is placed in a category when the school is given five working days to comment on the draft. Judgements in the report cannot be changed unless factual errors or omissions have a significant bearing on them. The report is published on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports) within three calendar weeks of the inspection being conducted. The governing body must send a copy of the report to all parents and carers of pupils

at the school within five working days of receiving it. Copies must also be made available to members of the public upon request. Pupils should also be informed in writing of the outcomes of the inspection. A template for a letter to pupils is attached to the school's Ofsted report.

School causing concern

Most schools emerge with credit from their inspections. However, if inspectors judge that a school's overall effectiveness is **inadequate** it will require **special measures**, or a **notice to improve** because it requires significant improvement.

Special Measures

Schools require special measures because they are failing to give learners an acceptable standard of education, and where the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capability to secure the necessary improvement.

Notice to improve

This will be given to schools that require improvement because they are performing significantly less well than they might in all the circumstances in which they might reasonably be expected to perform. A school that is currently failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, but has the capacity to improve will also be in this category.

Post Ofsted Action Planning

Schools are expected to incorporate recommendation for improvement in the school's improvement plan. When a school is given notice to improve or required special measures the Local Authority must produce a Statement of Action within 10 working days of issue of the final report to address the issues. This will form the basis of the new School Improvement Plan.

Checklist for Governors

1. Ensure the school self-evaluation form (SEF) is kept up to date and that judgements made are supported with robust evidence.
2. Ensure the SEF accurately reflects the schools strengths and weaknesses.
3. Notify parents of an inspection and details of how parents may inform inspectors of their views.
4. Provide inspectors with a copy of the School Improvement Plan and supporting documents.
5. Be available to meet with the inspectors during the inspection.
6. Comment on the draft report as appropriate.
7. Circulate copies of the final report to parents within 5 working days of receipt of the final report and notify pupils of the key outcomes of the inspection.
8. Incorporate guidance for school improvement provided by the inspection into the new School Improvement Plan.
9. If the school is judged to be inadequate governors must draft an action plan in collaboration with the Local Authority to address the key issues.

Sources of further information:

Please refer to the Framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005 www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications which is updated three times a year.