

ADCS briefing on the Ofsted consultation on changes to education inspections

Introduction

Following the Big Listen in spring 2024 and Ofsted's response to this last autumn, the inspectorate has published a [consultation](#) outlining proposed changes to its inspections of education settings.

Plans to change the current framework, introduce a new report card approach to presenting inspection findings plus views on a series of inspector toolkits are sought by Monday 28 April.

Changes set out here will be implemented from November 2025 across most settings and providers, with changes to assuring teacher education planned for January 2026.

Inspection methodology

Ofsted hopes to change the way inspection looks and feels: "This is especially important at the point of professional interaction and conversation between inspectors and leaders. To do this, we will instil our core values of professionalism, courtesy, empathy, and respect. These values, together with the inspection methodology, play a crucial role in shaping the overall experience of inspection." Key changes outlined here include:

- Better use of the initial KIT call to establish a relationship between the inspector and leaders
- End to the use of the subject deep dive methodology to allow for greater flexibility during fieldwork
- End to the use of ungraded inspections
- Reduce admin burden and expectations in terms of production of written evidence
- All schools with a need for improvement will receive monitoring visits (attention needed or current requires improvement judgements), which will focus on areas requiring attention
- Monitoring will only take place for as long is necessary to see a tangible difference for children.

Toolkits

Ofsted is seeking views on a [series of toolkits](#) for its inspectors which set out the standards underpinned by statutory and non-statutory guidance, professional frameworks and expectations and research relevant to the different stages and types of education.

There are separate toolkits for early years, state-funded schools, non-association independent schools, FE and skills and ITE, which are available to comment on.

Reports cards

New report cards look across multiple domains, each chosen as they represent the components parts of great education. There will be more tailoring to each phase of education and type of provider.

Early years settings

- leadership and governance
- curriculum
- developing teaching
- achievement
- behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines
- children's welfare and wellbeing
- inclusion

- safeguarding (met / not met judgement only).

For schools, including independent schools

- leadership and governance
- curriculum
- developing teaching
- achievement
- attendance
- personal development and wellbeing
- inclusion
- safeguarding (met / not met only)
- early years in schools (where applicable)
- sixth form in schools (where applicable).

FE and skills providers

- leadership
- inclusion
- safeguarding (met / not met)
- contribution to meeting skills needs (colleges and specialist institutions only)
- curriculum (for each type of provision e.g. learners with high needs, apprenticeships)
- developing teaching and training (as above)
- achievement (as above)
- participation and development (as above).

Initial teacher education (ITE)

- leadership
- inclusion
- curriculum
- teaching
- achievement
- professional behaviours, personal development and wellbeing.

Additionally, contextual information about the setting and community it serves will be presented here, such as the characteristics of children e.g. with SEND, their outcomes, absence and performance data plus locality information e.g. levels of deprivation.

Evaluation scale

Ofsted is consulting on the use of a five-point scale to give parents and carers more information whilst helping inspectors to better validate and share successes, provide reassurance where improvements are in train and to highlight where more attention is needed going forward:

- **exemplary** – all evaluation areas are graded as at least secure and that is consistently strong, there is a feature of practice that could be considered as exemplary
- **strong** – practice is consistently secure across different year groups, key stages and subjects. Leaders go beyond the legal and professional standards expected of them
- **secure** – the provider is offering a secure standard of education. This includes meeting the legal requirements and the expectations set out in non-statutory guidance, as well as the professional standards required (where applicable)

Our evaluation of this provider

Causing concern	Attention needed	Secure	Strong	Exemplary
	Achievement ⌵	Leadership and governance ⌵	Attendance ⌵	
		Curriculum ⌵	Behaviour and attitudes ⌵	
		Developing teaching ⌵	Inclusion ⌵	
		Personal development and well-being ⌵		
		Sixth form ⌵		

Safeguarding evaluation

Safeguarding	Met	⌵ Show
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- **attention needed** – some aspects of provision are inconsistent, limited in impact and/or not fully meeting the legal requirements, expectations or the professional standards required, where applicable. However, leaders have the capacity to make the necessary improvements
- **causing concern* (lowest quality provision)** – needs urgent action to provide a suitable standard of education and/or care for children and learners.

* The same scale will be used across all provision, however, the definition of the lowest point on the scale will vary depending on the specific education remit e.g. an early years provider may get an outcome of 'not met with enforcement action' while schools may be categorised as 'requiring special measures'.

Views are also sought on other approaches to scoring on a scale of two, three, four, four+, five and seven grades. At the lower end, a causing concern / not causing concern approach was discounted as being too simplistic and uninformative for parents and carers given the current inspection profile, while the use of seven judgements was seen as too complicated.

There is a query about whether the five-point scale presented as the preferred option (exemplary – causing concern) should be a four+ scale, with exemplary practice being presented via a narrative instead. The consultation states that Ofsted intends to systematically share 'exemplary' case studies through the new Ofsted Academy.

Inclusion

Ofsted has developed a working definition of inclusion, which underpins the proposed changes set out here and informs the toolkits. Responders are asked to comment on this definition:

Inclusive providers are at the heart of their communities. They have high expectations and aspirations for every child and learner. They are particularly alert to the needs of those who need the most support to achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Leaders set a clear and ambitious vision for inclusion at the provider. They communicate this to children, learners, staff, and parents and carers. They create a culture in which every child and learner belongs, and feels safe, welcomed and valued. They make sure that all children and learners access a high-quality education, taught by experts with high ambition who strive to develop every child and learner's potential.

Leaders work in a close and effective partnership with parents and carers and other agencies to secure the best possible outcomes for every child and learner, regardless of their starting points. Inclusive providers are relentless in identifying and removing barriers to participation and learning, so that all children and learners can achieve and thrive.

Other questions

- What are the workload and wellbeing implications of the changes set out in this consultation?
- Are there any unintended consequences?
- Any other comments or changes not already set out in the response?
- Equality impact assessment of Ofsted's plans.