



Conducting the inspection

Guidance for inspectors of schools

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The purpose of this guidance

Inspection provides an independent, external evaluation of the effectiveness of a school in promoting the standards, personal development and well-being of its learners, the quality of its provision and how well it is led and managed. It is also designed to help schools to improve the quality of the education they provide and so raise standards.

This guidance is designed to assist inspectors of schools in their work. Schools can use it to see how inspections will be conducted and may find it helpful when carrying out their self-evaluation. Inspectors structure their examination of the provision to accord with the *Evaluation Schedule* based upon *Every child matters: framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005*. Separate guidance is provided on how to interpret and apply this schedule.

This guidance is in two parts. First, it sets out the process of inspection, indicating the main principles, stages and approaches in the inspection of schools. The second part explains procedures for schools causing concern. Briefing papers on school inspections, and training materials that contain further advice on inspection, are available on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection. Further information on inspection and the work of Ofsted is also available on this website.

The process of inspection

The following information summarises the main principles and strategies of inspection, and indicates the main activities that need to be undertaken from the time the inspection is called until the publication of the report.

Principles of inspection and the conduct of inspectors

The principles of inspection and the code of conduct for inspectors are laid out in the *Every child matters: framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005*. All inspectors should be conversant with these and apply them rigorously.

The approach to inspection

The main features of an inspection are set out below.

- The school's self-evaluation, as summarised in its self-evaluation form (SEF), is a central part of the inspection.
- There is a strong focus on the well-being of pupils in the light of the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* and the Children Act 2004.
- Notice of inspection is short, typically in the week before, and the time spent in a school is not usually more than two days.

- Individual subjects are not inspected.
- Inspection approaches will be very flexible in the light of emerging evidence.
- Judgements about standards, and the progress that pupils make, are based in most schools mainly on the performance data.
- The quality of teaching is judged taking all factors into account, and does not depend upon an aggregation of lesson grades.
- The quality of the school's leadership and management and, associated with this, the school's capacity to improve, are at the heart of this approach to inspection.
- There is a strong interaction between the inspectors and the school's leadership and management in investigating the school's effectiveness.
- Inspections are designed to have an important impact on school improvement.

The time available for inspection

- The size of the inspection team and the total inspection time will for the most part be determined by the size of the school and the nature and range of the provision. The regional inspection services provider (RISP), in consultation with the local managing inspector (an HMI), will agree any variations in the normal tariff for inspection in the light of particular circumstances.
- The duration of the inspection will in virtually all cases involve inspectors being in a school for not more than two days. The inspection of smaller schools will take less time than this.
- Where schools provide day-care managed by the governing body, it is likely that a child care inspector (CCI) will work with the inspection team for one day to carry out this aspect of the inspection (where childcare provision is not managed by the school's governing body, its inspection is still likely to take place at the same time, but will not form part of the school inspection or its report).

Pre-inspection contact with the school

- The school will be contacted usually two, and by not more than five, working days before the inspection and then sent confirmation by email.
- The lead inspector will make telephone contact with the school shortly before the inspection commences. This initial conversation is an important part of the inspection process, as it is a good opportunity to build a constructive relationship and a climate of trust. It is worth allowing **up to an hour** for this discourse. The lead inspector might find it helpful to make a short call initially to arrange a suitable time for a longer conversation.
- The lead inspector should ask to speak to the headteacher. If the head is not available on the day, then the deputy or next most senior member of staff should be requested.

- It helps to be familiar with the SEF and the PANDA report before ringing, but this is not the time for raising inspection issues with the school.
- Following the telephone conversation, the school should have a good understanding of what the inspection will involve including the likelihood that not all teachers will be observed.
- The lead inspector should not visit a school before an inspection begins.

Using the school's self-evaluation form

- The SEF, as the summary of a school's process of self-evaluation, is at the heart of the new inspection arrangements; it serves as the main document when planning the inspection, and provides crucial evidence in evaluating the quality of leadership and management and the school's capacity to improve.
- When compiling the pre-inspection briefing, the lead inspector will evaluate the school's view of itself as expressed in the SEF under the headings of the evaluation schedule, and explore the extent to which this is compatible with the available evidence. Issues for inspection will arise from important inconsistencies between the SEF's conclusions and the evidence, and also from significant matters that the SEF seems to have omitted.
- The conclusions in the SEF, in the light of the pre-inspection analysis, should be discussed at the first meeting with the senior management team (SMT). Inspectors should also ask about the self-evaluation process and how it led to the writing of the SEF, and ascertain the extent of involvement of governors (who have final responsibility for it).
- Following the discussion with the SMT, the inspection team in consultation with the school will formulate strategies for inspection, focusing on any discrepancies between statements in the SEF and the evidence.
- In the regular meetings between the head and the lead inspector, and at any interim meeting between the SMT and the inspection team, there should be discussion of the conclusions in the SEF in the light of the gathering inspection evidence.
- At team meetings, the SEF should be regularly referred to in order to see whether inspection evidence reflects its conclusions.
- Inspectors should always consider that the SEF is merely a summary of the outcomes of a school's self-evaluation process. The quality of the SEF is a good guide to the quality of the whole process, but it is not an infallible one. It is an important part of the inspection to determine whether the SEF really does represent the school's fully considered view of itself and whether the wider process of self-evaluation is one that leads to genuine and sustained improvement.
- In the effectiveness section of the report, inspectors should indicate clearly both the school's view of itself and the view of the inspection team, together with a brief justification of the team's findings. **The leadership and management section of the report should include**

an evaluation of the quality of the school's self-evaluation process that led it to make its judgements in the SEF.

- If a school has not completed an SEF, inspectors should follow the headings in the evaluation schedule, using whatever evaluation records the school possesses and giving the school adequate opportunity to provide evidence. **The fact that a school has not completed an SEF does not mean that its self-evaluation is unsatisfactory.**

Preparation of the pre-inspection briefing

- The preparation of the pre-inspection briefing (PIB) is the responsibility of the lead inspector. It should be a succinct analysis that will focus the inspection.
- The PIB template in the inspection documents provides a structure for the pre-inspection analysis. It should be completed electronically.
- The text should be highly evaluative and not too long, but sufficient to enable a reader to understand where the main inspection issues spring from. Polished prose is not required, but an intelligible note form will suffice.
- The first part of the PIB is an analysis under main headings from the evaluation schedule of the extent to which the school's view of itself is borne out by the available evidence. This analysis should provide a reasoned basis for the pre-inspection hypotheses and issues that need to be pursued.
- The second part of the PIB is the listing of the **most significant** issues to be explored, starting with the first meeting with the senior management team. The issues should be few in number.
- The PIB, together with the SEF, will form the central part of the pre-inspection briefing meeting with team members.
- The school should be provided with a written version of the PIB in time for the start of the first meeting with the school's senior managers. This contributes greatly to the openness of the inspection process.

Team deployment

- It is useful to assign aspects of the school to particular team members, who can then lead on collecting and synthesising evidence and drafting report sections.
- The allocation of lead roles for the Every Child Matters outcomes helps to give them a higher profile and facilitates the collection of evidence.
- The attachment to year groups might occur for discussions and dipping into registration and circle/tutor time.
- The inspection is emphatically not a subject inspection.
- The inspection issues might also be provisionally allocated to inspectors, with two provisos: there might be reallocation as some issues are settled while others emerge, and it is likely that all members of the team will contribute to the investigation of the main issues.

- Above all, it is important that all team members are **flexible** in their approach, as issues may surface that will require redeployment.

Planning inspection activities

- The shape and focus of an inspection will reflect the issues raised by the pre-inspection analysis and the initial discussion with the SMT. They are likely to change as new evidence becomes available.
- It is important early in the inspection to agree as far as possible with the school the interpretation of the data to be used to judge the standards reached and the progress achieved by the learners. This provides an important basis for other judgements.
- The onus is placed upon the school to demonstrate the case it makes in the SEF. In setting up inspection activities the inspection team should indicate to the school what needs to be tested and ask it to suggest the best ways to find the necessary evidence. This is not only likely to be more efficient, but involves the school in the inspection process.
- Inspection trails based on this consultation with the school will probably involve some lesson observations, but might equally focus on discussions with staff and pupils and examination of the school's monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Where there are no obvious discrepancies or omissions in the SEF, teams should set up inspection trails to find evidence in support of assertions. Inspectors must remember that they need to report against the headings in the evaluation schedule of *Every child matters: framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005.*, and should be aware of concentrating too much on particular issues and losing sight of this.
- It will be useful to come to a view of the quality of the school's self-evaluation as quickly as possible, as this will have a major bearing on how the rest of the inspection is conducted. To do this, inspectors will need to get evidence of the processes the school has in place for evaluating its effectiveness.
- It is important to be **flexible** and unwise to plan much of the inspection beyond the first day, as reshaping is likely to occur as the inspection proceeds.
- **When the evidence does not bear out what the SEF claims, discuss the problem as soon as possible with the school and make sure senior staff have the opportunity to provide further evidence to support their view, and then test this out.** If further investigation still does not support the school's view, then the inspection team will have grounds, on the basis of the evidence collected, to come to its own conclusion.

The range and balance of evidence

- The lead inspector will set out from the beginning the kind of evidence the team will be expected to gather. This will then be discussed with the

- school – which might lead to changes in what is done. (See Planning inspection activities).
- The performance data are central in judging standards and progress and in informing the judgements about the quality of provision and of leadership and management.
 - During the inspection, most of the time on site will be spent in gathering first-hand evidence by:
 - observation of lessons
 - talking to staff, learners and others in the school – including the chair of governors, or a nominated alternative
 - tracking school processes, such as self-evaluation and performance management
 - analysing samples of work – normally during lesson observations, though there may be occasions when materials need to be collected together for a specific evidence trail
 - joining meetings such as school council or management meetings, and directly observing management processes, such as the monitoring of teaching
 - analysing records relating to learners, such as those with special educational needs.
 - In secondary schools, where there are significant numbers of learners involved in higher education provision, or where a wide range of higher education provision is offered by a school, inspectors will need to take account of the guidelines on inspecting this. These guidelines will be developed by Ofsted in consultation with the Quality Assurance Agency.
 - A basic principle of gathering first-hand evidence is **fitness for purpose**. Inspectors should ask: what is needed to investigate particular issues or assertions made by the school? **Once a matter has been resolved, there is no need to pursue it further. There are no hurdles to be jumped in gathering a particular quantity of evidence.** The inspections are intended to be 'smart' – that is, tightly focused and efficient. That said, they must also ensure that the judgements are valid and securely based upon the evidence collected.
 - Where the early evidence suggests that the school might be placed in a category, such as special measures, the team should consider carefully whether it needs to reshape the inspection strategy to extend the range and quantity of evidence. The fitness for purpose principle continues to apply and inspectors should match the evidence collected to the perceived weaknesses to ensure that they are fully substantiated. This does not necessarily involve a significant extension in the number of lesson observations. Before the inspection is complete, check again with the school to make sure there is no further evidence to take into account.

Notes on lesson visiting

- There is no requirement to see full lessons, but it may be helpful to see some if, for instance, the team needs a fuller picture of provision for

different groups of learners, or if teaching is a particular focus of the inspection.

- Generally, half-hour visits to lessons will be appropriate. But there will also be occasions, in both primary and secondary schools, when shorter visits are beneficial, to compare, say, provision for three sets of learners all timetabled at the same time, or to look at the impact of extended services. Brief 10 minute visits across a range of lessons might be helpful to track particular issues.
- In many inspections not all teachers will be observed. It is important to manage the school's expectations of this.
- The lead inspector should agree the pattern of lesson visiting with the team, and keep the school informed of the rationale behind it. But the school will not normally be informed in advance of the lessons to be visited.
- When judging the impact of extended services, inspectors will observe teaching but may also spend additional time tracking the impact of the extended services on particular groups of pupils and/or individuals, for example, the impact of the provision for family literacy.

Obtaining the views of learners, parents and carers, and other stakeholders

- The SEF provides the first source of evidence about the way the school gathers and responds to the views of its stakeholders.
- Governors will be asked to send a letter to parents and carers informing them of the inspection and inviting them to complete a short questionnaire.
- Parents and carers may also indicate that they would like to speak with inspectors. It is important to make arrangements to meet or talk on the telephone with any parents or carers who seek to do so, though being sensible about the manageability of this. One inspector should be available to meet parents/carers or receive telephone calls at the time agreed by the RISP.
- When talking with learners during the inspection it should be possible to ascertain their observations about the degree to which the school seeks and acts upon their views.
- In setting up the inspection, schools should be asked if they have any main partners they wish to invite to be interviewed as part of the inspection.

Completing evidence forms

Separate guidance is provided on completing the evidence form (EF). A few reminders:

- EFs are generally handwritten
- they can be used for discrete events, such as a lesson observation

- they can also be 'open' or 'running' EFs where, for example, a particular theme is pursued across a number of lessons and discussions, and the EFs are then stapled together to give a 'trail'
- they should be used for recording the main points of discussion when feeding back to senior management and for synthesising the evidence that underpins all important judgements.

Building relationships with the school's senior management team

- It is important, as far as possible, that inspectors conduct inspections in ways that interact with schools and involve them in the process of evaluation. They thus should actively find ways to develop a co-operative approach.
- The lead inspector should offer to meet briefly with all staff at the start of the inspection, where this is possible.
- The use of the SEF to underpin the inspection is an important bedrock of the whole process.
- An initial meeting with the SMT to go through the issues in the pre-inspection briefing will help the senior staff in the school to have a fuller understanding of the direction of the inspection and will give all of them an early opportunity to indicate where they think decisive evidence about the school's performance is to be found.
- It is important to have an early discussion on standards and achievement.
- Along with frequent meetings between the lead inspector and the headteacher to discuss the progress of the inspection, it might also be useful to agree opportunities with the larger group comprising the SMT to discuss work in progress and get their responses to emerging findings.
- At every stage, and particularly where the judgements of the senior team and inspectors differ, the senior team should be given every opportunity to provide additional evidence to support their views.
- The offer of joint lesson observations, or joint scrutiny of work, is another way of building a sense of shared evaluation of the school.
- The openness of the team and the general quality of the dialogue with staff will normally help to give the school confidence in the inspection process.

Conducting joint lesson observations

- Joint lesson observations with senior or middle management members of the school's staff enable inspectors to evaluate the management's judgements about teaching. They allow the school to be involved, and provide evidence on the quality of teaching. Subsequent discussion with the teacher can also throw light on how effectively managers use the evidence of observation to bring about improvement.
- Joint observations might be offered to the school if they provide the most appropriate vehicle for tracking down evidence, but never insisted upon.

- All joint observations should be agreed between the lead inspector and the head: team inspectors should not arrange them independently.
- The head should be provided with a copy of Ofsted's lesson grade descriptions and an EF (but inspectors should not insist that it is completed).
- It is helpful to guide the head on which lessons to select – preferably where the quality of teaching is not likely to be extreme (very good or very bad), and always where it is thought the teacher is confident enough for a joint observation to occur. Inspectors should check with the teacher that s/he is happy for the joint observation to go ahead - and it is usually helpful if s/he has been observed before within the school.
- The lesson is usually observed in the normal way, though noting also what steps the joint observer takes (such as sitting still, or getting involved with pupils).
- After the observation, it is best for an inspector not to convey a view about the lesson but to ask the joint observer what s/he thought of the lesson – its strengths, what would have made it better, how good it was overall. If the joint observer offers a written record, then this can be looked at. Inspectors can then discuss the lesson, offering their own view of its quality. Any differences of judgement should be explored.
- Feedback should be given to the manager who jointly observed a lesson on the quality of his/her evidence and judgements. Feedback to the teacher following a joint observation should be left to the manager, but this can be observed.
- An EF should be written up in the usual way - making sure that an evaluation is included of the quality of the joint observer's evaluation. (A separate EF may be appropriate for the latter).
- **Inspectors should make absolutely sure that the head is not engaging in this joint observation as part of a disciplinary procedure for the teacher concerned.** That is why it is important to try to avoid what is likely to be a poor lesson, and to ensure that the teacher is happy for the joint observation to occur.

Meetings of the inspection team

- Wherever possible, a **briefing meeting** should be held with all team members shortly before the inspection begins, so that the lead inspector can brief the team. This should ensure that all team members are thoroughly versed in the main inspection issues and the context of the school.
- Following the initial meeting with the SMT it might be necessary to convene a team meeting to reshape the inspection activities, perhaps because certain issues have already been settled or because new inspection trails have become necessary.
- It is helpful to use the **meeting at the end of the first day** as an opportunity for coming to provisional judgements on as many things as possible. Certainly, the team should try to have reached agreement with the school on standards and progress. A fairly firm provisional view

should exist on personal development, the ECM outcomes and the quality of teaching. There should be enough evidence by this time to know whether the SEF is a robust and reliable record of the school's performance. It is also prudent to have sketched out the likely issues for improvement by the start of the final day so that these issues can be tested and confirmed. The other main function of this meeting is to decide what inspection activities will occur the next day. The meeting should be short and to the point. If by this time the school is causing concern, the lead inspector should consult the attached guidance and take appropriate steps.

- The **final team meeting** is when inspectors come to their corporate judgements on the performance of the school, complete the Inspection Judgements form and agree what the school should do to improve further. It is unwise to leave too much to this meeting, for it occurs after the inspection has ended and any unresolved issues that emerge can probably not be settled. When, at the final team meeting, a school is judged to be inadequate, the team must consider whether it provides an acceptable standard of education and, if not, whether it requires special measures or an improvement notice (see attached guidance).
- The final team meeting should be organised in such a way that it finishes in time to allow oral feedback to senior managers not long after the school day finishes.
- The team might wish to meet at other times to review evidence and possibly refocus the inspection.

Focus on *Every child matters*

- Prominence has to be given to the **five outcomes** with which *Every child matters* is concerned:
 - be healthy
 - for example, helping learners to adopt healthy lifestyles, build their self-esteem, eat and drink well and lead active lives
 - stay safe
 - for example, keeping learners safe from bullying, harassment and other dangers
 - enjoy and achieve
 - for example, enabling learners to make good progress in their work and personal development and to enjoy their education
 - make a positive contribution
 - for example, ensuring that learners understand their rights and responsibilities, are listened to, and participate in the life of the community
 - achieve economic well-being
 - for example, helping pupils to gain the skills and knowledge needed for future employment.

- Team members who are given the responsibility for leading on elements of the inspection schedule which incorporate the five outcomes should ensure that they have sufficient evidence to report on them.
- It is not possible to investigate the welfare of every child but the team should make sure that the school contributes effectively towards the five outcomes. As part of the testing of the school's procedures, the team should focus on the effectiveness of the school's arrangements through a sample of 'case studies' of vulnerable children. It is helpful if the school identifies a few vulnerable children, and makes their records available for discussion with the member of staff most concerned. It may be appropriate to interview the children as part of a wider group, but they should not usually be singled out to be interviewed by themselves.
- The inspection report should clearly evaluate the five outcomes for the learners in the sections on achievement and standards, and on personal development and well-being. References to the provision that gives rise to these outcomes will largely be reported in the section of the report on the quality of provision.

Vulnerable children

Wherever possible case studies should cover the two most vulnerable groups:

- looked after children
- learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD).

In addition, other groups of vulnerable children may have significance in a particular local context. They might include, for example, the children of Travellers or asylum seekers. These groups should be given specific attention within the context of the main inspection.

Inspecting standards and progress

- The performance data provide the most important evidence in most schools for evaluating standards and progress. This might be augmented by some first-hand observation, though in the time available it will be inappropriate, and also difficult if not impossible, to form a comprehensive view on the basis of this sort of evidence, especially in secondary schools.
- An interpretation of the data should be agreed as far as possible with the school. The school should be asked at an early stage whether it believes that the available performance data provide a fair view of the school's current performance. Where it thinks this is not the case, it should be asked to provide evidence to support its view.
- The judgement about overall **standards** should normally be based upon the most recent information in the PANDA report comparing the school's results against all schools nationally, unless there are strong reasons to take a different view – for example, because of evidence from the previous summer's results which are not yet in the PANDA report and which show noticeably better or worse outcomes. A stable trend over

recent years will support the judgement made, but where there is fluctuation or a clear trend the reasons for this should be discussed with the school and its view obtained of the performance of the current cohorts. Where the cohorts are small in number, due care should be exercised in using the results of a single year to make judgements.

- Within these broad overall judgements, the team will want to explore with the school differences in performance between key stages, subjects and groups of learners. The school should have data which throw light on the performance of different groups of learners, for example learners from minority ethnic backgrounds. Such variations in performance are likely to feature in the report on the school
- **Note:** some educational settings, such as those in the Foundation Stage, and in special schools and PRUs, have little standardised data. In these cases judgements on standards and progress will have to rely strongly on other records, such as the Foundation Stage profile and records demonstrating how well learners have met their targets. There may be more need, and scope, for first-hand evidence in these settings.
- The overall judgement on progress within the school will also depend on the learners' **attainment at the time of entry**. This is the baseline for evaluating progress. The PANDA report includes relevant data on attainment on entry, which should be used as the baseline for agreeing this with the school.
- The judgement on **progress** is, in effect, the value added by the school. A starting point for this judgement is the contextual value added information in the PANDA report. This gives the most robust comparison of the school with all others in the country as it takes into account the major factors that affect progress. The school might also use other measures for evaluating the value added, and the *Interpreting Data* CD-ROM that forms part of Ofsted's training materials provides information about the main analyses found in schools. Evidence of the school's success in meeting challenging targets will be important in evaluating the learners' progress.
- The inspection team, in discussion with the school, must come to a balanced view of the learners' progress using the full range of available data and other evidence, for example talking to learners about their work and examining the school's analysis of progress over the recent past.

Inspecting personal development and well-being

- Statistical data such as attendance and exclusion figures, and participation rates in activities, provide evidence that can be used for raising questions about the school's provision and in forming judgements.
- Evidence of learners' personal development and well-being can be gathered through every observation and discussion with learners, parents, governors and staff.
- It is normally essential to speak to a sample of learners and ask them specific questions about their life and work in the school, for example

about the extent to which they feel safe and what they do if they are troubled.

- The case studies of vulnerable children will contribute important evidence on the effectiveness of the school's care for its learners, and should wherever possible form part of the inspection.
- School surveys of learners' or parents' views might provide further insights.
- It is also important to investigate in every inspection whether the child protection arrangements to safeguard children are secure and comply with statutory requirements.

Inspecting teaching

- The basis of the school's view of the quality of teaching needs to be tested out.
- The outcomes for the learners in terms of their standards, progress and personal development and well-being form the primary evidence for the quality of teaching. Where, for example, the outcomes are good, the teaching is likely to be good. But inspectors should be aware of special contextual factors, such as schools facing really challenging circumstances, where sometimes only modest progress might be made even when the teaching is very good.
- The strategies to test the school's view of the teaching include: scrutiny of the school's records of lesson monitoring; discussions with teachers about the managers' observations of their lessons and what support they provide to bring about improvement; discussions with learners about their work; asking the school for pockets of strong, satisfactory and weaker practice and checking this out; and joint observations with senior managers to evaluate how well they identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching (although this should always be carefully negotiated and not imposed). These activities will help to confirm the quality of the school's self-evaluation as well as inform the judgement about teaching.
- Discussions with learners, perhaps with samples of their work, can be used to investigate particular features of the teaching noted by senior managers. These interviews, especially for older learners, should be used to evaluate the quality of learning facilitated by the school.
- One way of testing out particular issues related to teaching, for example behaviour management, assessment or the clarity of lesson objectives, might be to make a series of short, focused visits to lessons.
- Some additional light sampling might be undertaken, if time allows, to find out whether there are other issues in teaching besides those indicated in the SEF.
- **Note:** it is only in smaller schools that it is likely that all or most of the teachers will be observed.
- Where the inspectors' view of teaching differs from that in the SEF, this should be discussed with school, which should be asked to provide further evidence to confirm its view. It might be useful to take a senior

manager into one or two lessons to see if perceptions of teaching quality are shared.

- The quality of the lessons seen will be a factor in judging the overall quality of teaching, but this judgement should **never** be made by simply aggregating the lesson grades.

Inspecting how well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners

- Documents provided by the school, such as its curriculum arrangements, will be a good first clue to whether it meets the range of needs of its learners, complies with statutory requirements, reflects any specialist status it might have acquired, and builds learning progressively from year to year.
- It is normally valuable to discuss the curriculum with senior managers at the start of the inspection and, if necessary, the relevant senior member of staff to explore any issues. Inspection activities should cover the implementation of national strategies and the development of basic skills.
- Judgements on the curriculum should also draw on more extensive evidence. Discussions with learners should indicate how they experience and enjoy the curriculum. Selective scrutiny of work will provide evidence of the depth and range of coverage in particular areas. In secondary schools, supplementary documentation, such as a curriculum analysis or a selection of timetables, will also help to show how learners experience the curriculum.
- The progress made by learners, and their attendance, are further indicators of a curriculum that engages them. Where, for example, learners in Key Stage 4 are disenchanted and results are low inspectors should investigate whether the school has made adequate attempts to adapt the range of provision.
- Where particular elements of the curriculum, such as those relating to the promotion of safe and healthy lifestyles, are said to be delivered across the curriculum, this can be checked out by talking with staff and learners about these matters and, if necessary, looking through a small sample of schemes of work.
- The quality of individual education plans for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities is a good guide to whether particular needs are met, but this will require further investigation, for example by observing classroom activity. Where such learners are withdrawn from mainstream education, it should be investigated whether they still receive their statutory entitlement.
- The range and take-up of enrichment activities should be investigated through discussion with staff, who might have a documentary record of what is offered, supported by discussions with learners and, where possible, some direct evidence. The school might well wish to suggest to inspectors activities that might be observed.

- If the school's view of its curriculum in the SEF differs from that emerging from the inspection, it should be asked to provide further evidence to support its evaluation.
- In coming to a view on the curriculum, inspectors should take particular account of whether the school meets the range of needs of all groups of learners.

Inspecting how well learners are cared for, guided and supported

- Any non-compliance with statutory requirements regarding health and safety, child protection and the appointment of staff, as shown in the SEF or elsewhere, should be investigated as a matter of priority.
- In all inspections it is essential to evaluate the arrangements for child protection. This involves examining: the extent to which the school complies with the procedures of the Area Child Protection Committee; whether a child protection officer (CPO) is appointed and adequately trained; whether staff are sufficiently aware of the child protection arrangements; the adequacy of the school's record-keeping; the effectiveness of the links with outside agencies; and whether the school's arrangements are adequately reviewed. This will involve as a minimum a discussion with the CPO and a look at the records.
- Discussions with learners on their safety and the quality of care are essential. They should be asked whether they feel safe from bullying and other forms of harassment and confident in approaching staff if they feel troubled, and whether they are aware of risks, for example from the Internet.
- As inspectors go about their work they should evaluate whether the school does all it can to provide a safe physical environment, for example in the state of repair of equipment and accommodation and how well learners are taught to handle equipment safely.
- The ethos of the school will provide good evidence of the effectiveness of the care for individual learners, something that can be tested out through the case studies of vulnerable children (see **Focus on *Every child matters* – Vulnerable children**). Records of exclusions and reasons for persistent non-attendance can throw light on whether the school is a safe environment and felt to be so.
- Discussions with learners should reveal whether their progress is adequately monitored, and how effectively they are supported. It should also indicate whether they know their targets and whether they are challenging enough.
- The quality of the information provided to help learners make educational and curriculum choices, and statistics on retention rates on post-16 courses, give a good indication of the quality of guidance. This can be underpinned by discussions with relevant staff and groups of learners.
- Where learners have poor attendance, or are excluded, or drop out in significant numbers, inspectors should evaluate the school's attempts to re-engage them.

- Through discussion and other means, inspectors should evaluate the school's links with other agencies to support learners. There might be the possibility of speaking with representatives from them.

Inspecting leadership and management

- The quality of leadership and management is usually revealed by their **impact** in terms of the progress, personal development and well-being of the learners, and the quality of the teaching, curriculum and care. The extent to which the school reaches challenging targets is a good sign of the effectiveness of leadership and management, as is its recent improvement.
- The rigour of the school's **self-evaluation**, together with its development planning and evidence of its track record in building on its strengths and dealing with any weaknesses, is very important testimony to the overall effectiveness of leadership and management and their capacity to move the school forward.
- Leadership and management should be evaluated by selecting two or three major initiatives and devising inspection trails to see how effectively they are implemented. These involve assessing their impact and talking to staff and learners to see how they have been implemented.
- The quality of professional development arrangements gives a good indication of how well managers know their school and take steps to improve it. Inspectors can evaluate the quality and range of actions taken to support teachers and improve their performance. Inspectors may invite managers to participate in joint observations of lessons to explore further the effectiveness of the management's approach to staff development. (Performance management records are confidential and should not be asked for, nor should they be accepted if offered unless they are anonymous).
- In coming to an overall view of the quality of leadership and management it is essential to take account of the effectiveness of the headteacher, the SMT and other layers of management.
- The involvement of **governors** is not always easy to arrange but inspectors should do what they can to facilitate this. During the initial telephone call to the school, the chair or a nominated alternative should be invited for an interview. Inspectors should use the issues from the SEF to investigate how effectively governors hold the school to account and ensure compliance with legal requirements.
- The strength of leadership and management, especially the quality of the self-evaluation and the track record in securing improvement, will be the major factor in determining the school's **capacity to improve**.

Evaluating overall effectiveness

- The judgement on overall effectiveness should be the last one that is made, since it takes account of all other evaluations about the school's performance.

- Inspectors should not arrive at their judgement by an arithmetical calculation of the grades awarded for aspects of performance, but by weighing those judgements and assessing their relative significance.
- The report should make it clear to readers why inspectors have arrived at the overall judgement in terms that are particular to the school inspected. Where the judgement differs from the school's own assessment of its performance, the reasons should be made clear.

Providing oral feedback to the school

- It is most important that inspectors observe fully the principles of inspection and the code of conduct in the Framework for inspecting schools when providing feedback.

Feedback to teachers after lessons

- Dialogue with teachers is an integral part of the inspection principles and code of conduct and it is most important to offer feedback to teachers after all lessons.
- Often, this can be done immediately after the lesson or else at a mutually convenient time. It is useful to build time into the inspection timetable to complete feedback as necessary. The headteacher should be asked to let teachers know that they should expect feedback.
- Feedback will usually be quite brief. The teacher should recognise the strengths of the lesson and, except where it was outstanding with little scope for improvement, understand how it might have been better. Teachers should also learn the inspector's judgement on the overall quality of the lesson. **Note:** The EF contains a box for the quality of the **lesson**, and it is this judgement that should be communicated rather than the one on teaching.
- Where inspectors see snippets from a series of lessons, so that there is not enough evidence to form a judgement on any one of them, then they can offer to meet all the teachers concerned and feed back any general points they have observed.
- Where non-teaching staff are observed in teaching roles, they should also receive feedback based upon the same principles and criteria.

Feedback to headteacher and SMT

- Feedback on emerging inspection findings should be discussed with the headteacher, and possibly the senior team as a whole, at regular intervals throughout the inspection. This will give the senior team time to reflect on what the evidence is indicating and to provide more evidence if necessary.
- Final judgements should not be a surprise to the headteacher or senior team. This is particularly important where the school appears to have significant weaknesses that may lead to it being placed in a category of concern. Feedback in such cases must be sensitive, but firm.

- The senior team should be given feedback shortly after the inspection finishes. This feedback should be a continuation of the dialogue that has been built up during the inspection. Where possible, this feedback should include a governor and this is particularly important where the school is identified as causing concern (see attached guidance on this).

Feedback to heads of department

- Feedback is not given to heads of department, as subjects are not inspected.

Writing and publishing the report

- Reports are much shorter than previous section 10 inspections and are completed within three weeks of the end of the inspection.
- The report is finalised by the lead inspector immediately after the inspection. A letter should also be drafted for learners, thanking them for their involvement and feeding back the main outcomes. They can be compiled in draft form during the last afternoon in the school if time allows, prior to giving feedback to the senior team. The lead inspector must decide whether bullet points or continuous prose are required from team members, and this must be made clear to the team before the start of the inspection.
- The lead inspector will usually have the day after leaving the school to finalise the report and the letter to learners. They should then be sent, together with the completed *Inspection Judgements* form, to the first editor.
- When writing the report it is important to be succinct and evaluative. Suggested maximum length:
 - secondary schools: 2,000 words
 - other schools: 1,500 words
- It is important to acknowledge how well the school knows itself. It is important to ensure that judgements on the ECM outcomes are clear. The quality of the school's self-evaluation (not just its outcome in the form of the SEF) should be clearly evaluated in the leadership and management section of the report, with any weaknesses in the process or outcomes noted. It is important to make the report specific to the school inspected and not to be formulaic. Parents and carers are the main audience for the report and their views should be reflected where appropriate.
- The letter to learners should be addressed to the school council. It should be succinct, no more than one page of A4, and readable without being patronising. The language needs to be direct and key judgements should be clear.
- Where a school has been identified as causing concern, the judgement should be included in the draft report but this will be subject to moderation. (Please see annex for further guidance).
- For all other schools, once there has been a first edit of the report and the letter, they should be sent to the lead inspector who incorporates

necessary changes and sends them to the school to enable a check for factual accuracy to be made. The report, the letter and the *Inspection Judgements* form should be watermarked with *draft* and emailed. The lead inspector should request that they be returned within 24 hours.

- When the lead inspector has received and dealt with any amendments requested by the school, the report, the letter to learners and the *Inspection Judgements* form should be returned to the administrative team, who will arrange for them to be signed off. The report will then be proof read before being sent for publication.
- Schools will receive electronic versions of the report and the letter to learners within three weeks of the end of the inspection. Schools are allowed five days to distribute the report to parents and carers and to distribute the letter to learners; after that time the report will appear on the internet.

Record of the inspection: the evidence base

- The evidence base will consist of four types of documents written by inspectors:
 - the pre-inspection briefing
 - evidence forms (EFs)
 - the form recording inspection judgements
 - inspection report and the letter to learners.
- In addition, the evidence base will include the SEF and performance data.
- The evidence base needs to be retained for the period of time specified by Ofsted.

Quality assurance of inspections

- Quality assurance will always be carried out by the lead inspector and the team internally. The lead inspector will be expected to set clear expectations for the team and ensure that those expectations are met. It is vital that the lead inspector ensures that all judgements are supported by evidence and that the way in which the inspection is conducted is beyond reproach.
- There is no set pattern to the external quality assurance. It might consist of a telephone call to discuss progress, or perhaps a site visit by quality assurance personnel. Such visits will be carried out in a supportive manner. Their overriding purpose is to secure the quality of the inspection. They will normally involve discussions with the headteacher and perhaps other staff, and with the team, as well as scrutiny of documentation and participation in team meetings. While the conduct of the inspection is primarily a matter for the team, the quality assurance visitor will intervene decisively if judgements appear to be insecure.
- The lead inspector should have a well understood line of communication to a quality assurance colleague should there be, in the absence of a visit, a need to discuss significant issues.

- The draft report and the letter to learners will be read by an editor to ensure that they are coherent and readable. The editor should also receive the PIB and the judgement recording form.
- In addition, the report and the letter will be signed off by a relevant HMI within Ofsted.

Handling concerns and complaints during the inspection

- If a school raises a concern during the course of an inspection, the lead inspector should consider it and come to a fair assessment of it. If the concern is found to be justified, the lead inspector should do what is possible to redress the problem. The complaints procedure encourages schools to speak to the lead inspector where they have a concern, and promises that he or she will do all they can to resolve the matters raised, seeking advice where necessary. It is often easier to resolve issues on the spot and helps to avoid formal complaints later.
- If the school is dissatisfied with the lead inspector's response, or in any case wishes to take the complaint further, the lead inspector should ensure that the school is fully informed of the procedures for making complaints.

Behaviour towards inspectors

- There is an expectation that school staff will be courteous and helpful to inspectors with whom they have contact. Ofsted will not accept the abuse, harassment or intimidation of, or interference with, inspectors or support staff during the course of their legitimate work.
- If an instance of such behaviour occurs during an inspection, the lead inspector should seek to resolve the issue informally with the headteacher. If the issue cannot be resolved in this way, the lead inspector should follow Ofsted's complaints procedure.

Schools causing concern

All schools whose overall effectiveness is inadequate will be placed in one of the formal categories of schools causing concern. Subject to legislation a school will require:

special measures if it is failing to give its pupils 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

or

significant improvement if it does not require special measures but requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform (*Schools falling into this category will be issued with a notice to improve*).

Making the judgements

The inspection team needs to form a view about the school's overall effectiveness. Each school will have a different range of strengths and weaknesses; some more important than others. The process for arriving at a decision needs to be more sophisticated than cancelling out a weakness by citing a strength. The most important touchstone for inspectors should be the impact of the school's work on the pupils' progress and well-being and the implications for the pupils of any identified failure in the school's work.

If a school's performance in any part of the evaluation schedule is on the borderline between satisfactory and inadequate, particular emphasis should be given to the emboldened criteria in the 'best fit' grade descriptions. The team must ensure that its judgements are convincingly substantiated and consistent with the emerging evidence and judgements made in other sections of the evaluation schedule.

If the team is certain that **the school is effective overall** despite having one or more aspects that are inadequate, the school cannot be placed into a category of school causing concern. The inadequacies will be identified as priorities for improvement without the school requiring a notice to improve.

If, however, the team judges that the school's overall effectiveness is inadequate, it must decide whether the degree or extent of the underperformance means that the school is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education. **If it is, the school will require special measures** unless (as may be the case in a few instances) there is clear evidence that the leaders, managers and governors of the school are demonstrating the capacity

to secure the necessary improvement – in which case it will be judged to require significant improvement and receive a **notice to improve**.

In most instances **notices to improve will be issued to schools which are not failing to provide an acceptable standard of education**, but require significant improvement in important aspects of their work.

Judging whether leaders, managers and governors are demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement

To demonstrate the capacity to secure the necessary improvement, the leaders, managers and governors of a school need to show that their actions have had a significant impact in achieving clear and sustained progress. Good intentions and an aspirational outlook, or a recent change of headteacher following a period of poor leadership, do not in themselves provide sufficient proof of the capacity to achieve improvement. Inspectors should confirm that there is convincing evidence of: thorough self-evaluation, including rigorous analysis of performance data; effective strategic planning; rigorous and robust monitoring of standards and the quality of education; and action that has had a demonstrably beneficial impact.

Moderation of judgements

The judgement that a school is causing concern is subject to moderation, which will be undertaken by the Assistant Divisional Manager responsible for schools causing concern in the Region in which the inspection took place. If the team judges that the school requires special measures, the judgement must be referred after moderation to HMCI.

Reporting that a school is causing concern

The judgement that a school falls into one of the categories of schools causing concern must be clearly spelled out in the report in the section about the overall effectiveness of the school.

Where a team finds that the school requires special measures, the following statement must be included in the oral and written reports:

'In accordance with legislation, this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils 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.'

Where the school requires significant improvement and is given a notice to improve, the following statement must be included in the oral and written reports:

'In accordance with legislation, this school requires significant improvement in relation to . . .' (state clearly the areas in which the school is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform). If the effectiveness of the sixth form has been judged to be inadequate, this must be stated as one of the areas requiring significant improvement and the wording *'this school (also) requires significant improvement in relation to its sixth form'* should be used.