

# School inspections

A guide for parents

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This document applies to all maintained schools, including special schools and pupil referral units. It also covers academies, city technology colleges, city colleges for the technology of the arts and some non-maintained special schools in England.

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**Age group:** 0–19

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**Published:** January 2018

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**Reference no:** 160054

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## **Why does Ofsted inspect schools?**

We inspect schools to provide information to parents, to promote improvement and to hold schools to account for the public money they receive. School inspections are required by law. We provide an independent assessment of the quality and standards of education in schools, and check whether pupils are achieving as much as they can.

## **Who inspects schools?**

Her Majesty's Inspectors and Ofsted Inspectors (who in most cases are serving school leaders who inspect for Ofsted for an agreed number of days each year) carry out the inspections. All inspectors have been trained to, and assessed against, Ofsted's standards.

## **When do inspections happen and how long do they last?**

A school that was judged to be outstanding at its last inspection is exempt from routine inspection. We will not normally inspect exempt schools unless we have a concern about their performance. Ofsted will also carry out an annual assessment of an exempt school's performance (from the third year after the school's last inspection) to determine whether an inspection might be necessary. Exempt schools continue to be inspected as part of Ofsted's programme of surveys of curriculum subjects and aspects of the curriculum. Exemption from inspection does not apply to maintained nursery schools, special schools or pupil referral units.

A school judged to be good at its last inspection normally receives a short inspection (see section on 'short inspections' below).

A school judged as requires improvement at its last inspection is a school that is not yet good but overall provides an acceptable standard of education. The school is inspected again within a period of 30 months. Where a school has been judged as requires improvement at two successive inspections, it will be subject to monitoring from inspectors to check its progress and is inspected again within a period of 30 months.

A standard inspection usually lasts two days and the number of inspectors on the inspection team will vary according to the size and nature of the school.

## **What judgements do inspectors make?**

Inspectors will make graded judgements on the following areas using the four-point scale:

- Effectiveness of leadership and management
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- Outcomes for pupils.

Where applicable, inspectors will also make a graded judgement on the effectiveness of the early years or sixth form provision in the school.

We give schools an overall grade from 1 to 4:

- grade 1 (outstanding)
- grade 2 (good)
- grade 3 (requires improvement)
- grade 4 (inadequate).

The school must take all reasonable steps to make sure that parents of pupils at the school receive a copy of the report.

## What happens if Ofsted judges a school to be inadequate?

If inspectors judge a school to be inadequate, it will be placed in one of the following two categories of concern.

- **Special measures** – This means the school is failing to provide its pupils with an acceptable standard of education, and is not showing the capacity to make the improvements needed.
- **Serious weaknesses** – This means that one or more of the key areas of the school's performance require significant improvement, but leaders and managers have demonstrated the capacity to improve.

A maintained school judged as inadequate and placed in a category of concern will be issued with an academy order by the Secretary of State for Education, to require it to become a new sponsored academy.<sup>1</sup> Inspectors will not normally monitor the school unless there are concerns or there is a delay in the school becoming a sponsored academy.

For an academy that has been judged as inadequate and placed in a category of concern, inspectors will visit the academy to check on its progress until it can be removed from the category (unless it is re-brokered with a new sponsor to become a new sponsored academy). Ofsted will re-inspect an academy that has been judged

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<sup>1</sup> Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) judged inadequate will also be issued with an academy order and will be required to become an alternative provision sponsored academy. Maintained nursery schools and non-maintained special schools judged inadequate are not subject to academy orders and will be monitored in the same way as academies that have been judged inadequate (as per the next paragraph).