

Every child matters

Framework for the inspection of schools in England from September 2005

First published 1992

Revised 1993, 1994, 1996, 1999, 2003, 2005, 2007

This edition April 2008

Age group: All

Published: July 2005; this edition April 2008

Reference no: 070186

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Published July 2005; this edition April 2008

Reference no. 070186

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Introduction

This framework is for inspections carried out under section 5 (s5) of the Education Act 2005. It sets out the principles applicable to the inspection of schools carried out by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted). It comprises:

- the common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision
- procedures in the case that the provision is inadequate
- principles of inspection
- code of conduct for inspectors
- procedures for handling complaints about inspection.

The framework also reflects the requirement in the Children Act 2004 for Ofsted to develop (in partnership with others) a framework for the integrated inspection of children's services with which the school inspection framework must be consistent, so that judgements made in individual inspections can feed into joint area reviews.

The main features of the inspections are:

- short, focused inspections that take no more than two days in a school and concentrate on close interaction with senior managers in the school, taking self-evaluation evidence as the starting point
- short notice of inspections to avoid schools carrying out unnecessary pre-inspection preparation often associated with an inspection. Short notice should help inspectors to see schools as they really are
- teams with few inspectors, with many inspections led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs). Furthermore, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) will publish and be responsible for all reports
- three years as the usual period between inspections, though occurring more frequently for schools causing concern
- strong emphasis on school improvement through the use of the school's self-evaluation, including opportunities for input from pupils, registered parents and other stakeholders, as the starting point for inspection and for the school's internal planning and development. **To facilitate this, schools are strongly encouraged to update their self-evaluation form at appropriate intervals**
- a common set of characteristics to inspection in schools and other post-16 provision of education from early childhood to the age of 19
- there will be two categories of schools causing concern, those deemed to require special measures and those requiring a notice to improve.

In the move to adopt a set of characteristics common to inspection across all phases of education, there will be a **common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision** for the inspection of education from early childhood to

the age of 19. Where judgements are only required in some settings, because of the nature of their work or the statutory requirements of inspection, this is made clear. There are four key parts to this **common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision**.

Inspectors are required to arrive at an overall judgement on the effectiveness of the school. This overall judgement should be informed by the judgements inspectors have already made about the school's provision, learners' outcomes, leadership and management, and the school's capacity to make further improvement. Inspectors also make separate judgements, as appropriate, on the effectiveness of the foundation stage and of post-16 provision in schools. These additional judgements are set out in the section under 'overall effectiveness' and contribute to the overall judgement.

The inspection of children's services requires judgements to be made in inspections of individual schools to feed into conclusions about the quality of provision in an area and the outcomes achieved by children and young people.

The introduction of a **common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision** has led us to publish non-statutory guidance. The guidance for the inspection of schools is available on the Ofsted website and is in two principal parts:

- guidance on using the evaluation schedule
- guidance on conducting inspections.

These will be amended periodically to keep them relevant to changing circumstances in each setting in which learning takes place and to respond to the evaluation of the impact of inspections which Ofsted intends to undertake on a regular basis.

Supplementary guidance, dealing with specific issues, is also published from time to time. Amendments to guidance will be published in *Inspection Matters*.

The Framework sets out the requirements for inspection. Inspectors must meet these requirements fully and inspection providers must ensure that they do so.

Part A. The inspection system

The purpose of school inspections

The law requires all maintained and certain independent schools to be inspected regularly. The approach to Ofsted school inspections has developed and improved continuously since they were established by the Education (Schools) Act 1992. The main purposes and features of the inspection system from September 2005 are explained here.

Why do we have inspections?

1. Inspection provides an independent, external evaluation of the quality and standards of the school.
2. The published inspection report tells parents, the school and the wider community about the quality of education at the school and whether pupils achieve as much as they can. The inspection team's findings provide a measure of accountability and must help the school to manage improvement.
3. Periodic external inspection must be complemented by more continuous internal evaluation. This inspection framework, and the approach adopted for inspection, are aimed at promoting a culture of rigorous self-evaluation and improvement.
4. HMCI's Annual Report to Parliament on the quality and standards of education in England is based on all the inspections conducted in the previous academic year, including thematic inspection exercises conducted by HMI and additional inspectors.

How frequent are inspections?

5. Regulations under the Education Act 2005 require schools to be inspected about every three years following their first inspection in the period 2005–09. Inspections are proportional to need, the least effective schools having the shortest interval between inspections. When HMCI considers it necessary, she will arrange for a school to be inspected more frequently.

What is inspected?

6. Under s5 of the Education Act 2005, inspectors must report on:
 - the quality of the education provided in the school
 - how far the education meets the needs of the range of pupils at the school
 - the educational standards achieved in the school
 - the quality of the leadership and management of the school including whether the financial resources made available to the school are managed efficiently
 - the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils at the school

- the contribution made by the school to the well-being of those pupils.

Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 Ofsted also has a duty to report on the contribution made by schools to community cohesion; this duty will commence in September 2008.

7. Some schools are designated under section 69(3) of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 by the Secretary of State as having a religious character. The content of collective worship is not included in the section 5 inspections of such schools, but under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 it is inspected separately along with the teaching of denominational education where this is delivered. Often, these inspections coincide at the request of the governing body.

8. Where the school makes community or care provision that is subject to inspection under Part XA of the Children Act 1989, the checking of compliance with the care standards is not part of the school inspection. However, wherever possible the Children Act inspection and the school inspection will take place at the same time.

Which schools are inspected?

9. All maintained schools and some non-maintained schools are covered by the legislation on inspection.

The inspection

How do inspections reflect the extended services, specialist status or other distinctive features of schools?

10. The lead inspector must ensure that the inspection is focused so as to reflect any distinctive features, specialist status or extended services of the school. Inspectors must understand the specific objectives of these schools and assess how well they achieve them.

How many days will inspectors spend in the school?

11. In all cases the inspection will last no longer than two days, although the number of inspectors involved in the inspection will vary.

Internal school evaluation

Ofsted recognises the importance of school self-evaluation as a continuous process that is complemented from time to time by external inspection. Self-evaluation makes an important contribution to inspections. It provides the school and the inspectors with a means of ensuring that inspection covers matters of potential significance to the school.

What part does school self-evaluation play in inspection?

12. Schools have a range of internal processes for monitoring their own performance and evaluating the effectiveness of their work in raising achievement. Such monitoring and evaluation should contribute, directly or indirectly, to periodic updating of the school improvement plan, which maps the priorities for action and sets out programmes for implementing them.
13. Inspection takes account of, or contributes to, these processes in several ways.
 - A summary of the findings of self-evaluation undertaken by the school is recorded in the self-evaluation form (SEF) which is used by the lead inspector to focus inspection effort where it matters most. The school's summary of its self-evaluation is used as the basis for discussion between the lead inspector and the senior team and, where possible, governors of the school.
 - The quality and use made of school self-evaluation are a good indication of the calibre of management. Evidence of how effectively schools undertake self-evaluation and the use they make of it helps inspectors to evaluate the quality of management in the school and the capacity of the school to improve.
14. In order to promote the use of self-evaluation, the SEF, which is completed by the school and updated at appropriate intervals, is designed to match the **common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision** used by inspectors.

Inspectors and inspection teams

Who inspects schools?

HMI lead a high proportion of secondary school inspections and a substantial minority of primary school inspections. They are involved in the quality assurance of all inspection reports. Inspection teams are made up of Additional Inspectors recruited, trained and assessed by regional inspection providers to a standard set by Ofsted. Inspectors must be fit, proper, competent and effective.

Who are the inspection providers and how do they select inspectors?

15. Inspection providers are external organisations working alongside Ofsted on a commercial basis, who may arrange inspections to the schedule agreed by Ofsted. The inspection providers assemble inspection teams using HMI and/or Additional Inspectors who are either the employees of the providers, or who work under contract to them.

16. Additional Inspectors are authorised to inspect under Schedule 1 of the Education Act 2005; they are required to have the qualifications and experience and to meet the standards specified by Ofsted. The Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk gives further information.

How much training do inspectors have?

17. Ofsted requires that all inspectors are properly trained and assessed to specified standards. Initial training for candidates who meet the selection criteria (see www.ofsted.gov.uk) takes place over several months and includes placement on inspections. Once inspectors embark on their inspection programme they are expected to engage in continuous professional development to hone their inspection skills and to keep abreast of educational developments. Inspections may include trainee inspectors. Inspectors are assessed on their first inspection by HMI.

Part B. The inspection process

Before the inspection

For inspectors to make the best use of their time in the school, and for inspection to be of most value to the school, they must gain an understanding of the school and the emphases and issues for the inspection before they begin their work on-site. Pre-inspection activities, and contacts with the school, must ensure that:

- good communications and effective working relationships are established with the school
- arrangements for the inspection are agreed
- demands on the school are kept to a minimum and the school is dissuaded from producing extra documents for the inspection
- pre-inspection evidence has been thoroughly analysed
- the issues for the inspection have been established and shared with the school
- members of the inspection team have a clear understanding of what the school offers and a shared view of inspection issues and arrangements.

Inspectors must take full account of the school's analysis of its own performance; this should feature strongly when the issues for inspection and plans for the deployment of the team are discussed with the school.

When are schools notified about inspections?

18. Well before the inspection, Ofsted informs inspection providers about the schools to be inspected and any issues specified by HMCI that will be included in inspections. This is to enable inspection providers to assemble their teams.

19. Schools are normally notified at least two clear working days before a planned inspection. If, however, HMCI is concerned about the safety or well-being of pupils in a school she will exercise her right to inspect a school without notice.

What information will inspectors need from the school?

20. Inspectors will be given a password to allow them to take a copy of the school's SEF and they will use the school's RAISEonline report and the report from the previous inspection to prepare a pre-inspection briefing about the school. Ofsted may also share with inspectors information from any complaints received from parents. Information about the school, its pupils, and its self-evaluation is gathered using the SEF, much of which will be pre-populated.

21. At the start of the inspection the school is asked to provide one copy each of:

- the school's current improvement or management plan
- the school's timetable
- a plan of the school.

22. If any or all of these documents are available on the school's website, inspectors should retrieve them from this source and not ask the school to provide them. Schools must not be asked to provide multiple copies of documentation.

What contacts should providers and lead inspectors make with the school?

23. The inspection provider must contact the appropriate authority (normally the governing body) and the headteacher to inform them that the inspection will take place, normally two clear working days before the inspection. As soon as possible after the school knows that it is to be inspected, the lead inspector should contact the headteacher to discuss the inspection arrangements. A good working relationship with the school must be established. The first contacts are important in helping the school to understand the inspection process and how the inspection will proceed.

24. During the first meeting with the headteacher and senior staff, discussion should 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.

25. Informing the school about the arrangements for the inspection will not normally extend to telling schools which lessons will be visited in any part of the inspection, although meetings with key staff should be agreed as quickly as possible.

How do inspectors seek the views of registered parents, pupils and other partners about the school's work?

26. Schools are required by the Education Act 2005 to notify parents of the inspection, and to include details of how they may inform the inspectors of their views. For this purpose, governors will be provided with a standard letter which is available in a range of community languages. The letter includes a brief questionnaire for parents to record their views about the school.

27. Responses to the questionnaire should be returned, in confidence, to the lead inspector for analysis. Completed questionnaires will be analysed by inspectors early in the inspection.

28. Any survey of **pupils' views** carried out by the school should not take the place of discussion with pupils during the inspection. Inspectors should take opportunities to talk with groups of pupils, for example year group representatives, the school council or other pupils' forum.

29. Where parents ask to see inspectors during the inspection, inspectors should do what they can to accommodate the request as far as it is practicable.

30. Inspectors are required to have regard to any views expressed to them by parents, governors, the headteacher, staff and pupils. The school should be encouraged to seek the views of any **significant partners** in the school's work and to reflect these in the SEF.

31. Lead inspectors should take account of any external views of the school proffered by the school, such as the local authority's (LA's) or the school improvement partner's latest monitoring report (or any equivalent) on the performance of the school against its targets.

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 main strengths and weaknesses and what it must do to improve. On-site inspection activity must ensure that:

- sufficient evidence is gathered so that judgements about the school are secure and reliable
- all inspectors record evidence on evidence forms
- the main judgements about the school are corporately agreed
- the conduct of the inspection is to a high standard so that professional relationships are strong and inspectors' work is respected
- teachers receive well-informed and helpful feedback.
- teachers receive feedback on lessons observed and the headteacher, together with other appropriate individuals, receives well-informed and helpful feedback about the overall effectiveness of the school.

What are the principles for gathering evidence?

32. Inspectors must collect sufficient evidence to secure the judgements required and to make a fair assessment of the school. Where a school disagrees with a provisional judgement, senior managers should be given the opportunity of presenting further evidence to support their case. Inspectors should be flexible enough to respond to such suggestions and to follow up other important issues as they emerge. All inspectors must contribute to corporate judgements on all sections of the **common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision**.

33. Information held by the school must be freely available for inspectors to see, and the school must cooperate in the inspectors' task of gathering evidence.

What sort of evidence is collected?

34. Most of the time on site is spent gathering first-hand evidence by:

- direct observation
- talking to staff, pupils and others in the school
- tracking school processes, such as evaluation and performance management
- checking that appropriate policies are in place, including those for the safeguarding of learners and for promoting equality of opportunity and greater equity in outcomes

- analysing samples of pupils' current and recent work
- joining meetings such as school council or management meetings, and directly observing management processes, such as the monitoring of teaching
- analysing records relating to pupils with special educational needs, including individual education plans, statements, annual reviews and transitional reviews
- tracking case studies of vulnerable pupils such as those with learning difficulties and disabilities, and children in care.

35. Inspectors will not normally observe complete lessons or sessions. Indeed there will be times when scanning across the work of several groups of pupils is desirable. However, inspectors will ensure that teachers are aware of the main reasons for observing a lesson or part lesson.

How is evidence recorded?

36. During inspection, inspectors must gather and analyse first-hand and other evidence and record judgements on standard forms:

- Evidence forms are used to record first-hand evidence from observations and discussions, and the analysis of data and other documentary evidence
- the overall judgements made about the school are reached corporately and recorded by the lead inspector in the Inspection Judgements Form..

37. The forms, together with any briefings, plans or instructions prepared by the lead inspector, contribute to the evidence base for the inspection. The lead inspector is responsible for compiling and assuring the quality of the evidence base.

How are judgements secured?

38. The lead inspector must manage regular team meetings to ensure that judgements about the school, particularly the main evaluation and reporting requirements in the **common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision**, are corporately agreed, and that the strengths and weaknesses of the school and what it must do to improve are identified. Judgements must be supported convincingly by evidence. Emerging findings must be discussed with the headteacher, and, where appropriate, senior managers, at regular intervals. The headteacher must be given every opportunity to provide further evidence should he or she wish to do so.

39. The **overall judgements** must reflect all the evidence considered by the inspection team. Final judgements should be made only when all first-hand evidence has been collected and considered, and must represent the corporate view of the whole inspection team.

40. At the end of the inspection, the team must consider whether the school falls into either of the two categories of schools that are a cause for concern. The requirements are set out on page 18.

Common grading scale for all inspection judgements

41. A common grading scale will be used in making judgements for institutional inspection and for judgements relating to the five outcomes assessed for joint area reviews:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

What feedback do inspectors give during the inspection?

42. Inspectors must offer oral feedback to teachers and other staff about the work they see. Judgements must be clear.

43. Constructive dialogue between inspectors and staff, particularly between the lead inspector and the headteacher, is essential.

The outcomes of inspection

After the inspection team has reached its conclusions, these must be explained to senior managers and, where possible, the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector should explain that all reports are subject to quality control. With this qualification, the oral feedback should ensure that the written report will contain no judgements that come as a surprise to the school. Any aspects that have been judged inadequate, or where the judgement is different from what the school might have expected, should be clearly reported in the feedback. The findings of inspection, set alongside the school's self-evaluation, provide a basis for planning for improvement. Post-inspection activity must ensure that:

- feedback is effective in explaining the inspection findings and what the school needs to do to improve
- opportunity is provided for the school to understand why judgements have been made
- the inspection report gives a clear and convincing account of the findings of the inspection.

What are the written outcomes of the inspection?

44. An inspection report must include:

- a commentary on the school's effectiveness, its strengths and weaknesses, what it must do to improve, and the parents' and pupils' views of the school

- all of the evaluation requirements specified in the **common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision**.

45. Although the format of the inspection report is prescribed, the content and wording are not. The text, balance and tone of the report must reflect the school. Reports should be well argued, written in clear English and based convincingly on the evidence. Parents are the main audience for the report; a brief letter to pupils giving the main findings of the inspection should be provided as an annex to the report. This should be addressed to the learners and should be written in language that is accessible to the majority of them. HMCI expects schools to ensure that all pupils are made aware of the findings of the inspection.

46. The report must be factually correct. The final pre-publication draft should be sent to the school for checking after the feedback meetings. One working day is allocated to the school to comment on the draft, unless the school is placed in a category of concern. Judgements in the report cannot be changed unless factual errors or omissions have a significant bearing on them. Any such changes are the responsibility of the lead inspector who must consult the team.

When will the report be issued?

47. The report will be published on the Ofsted website (www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports) within three calendar weeks of the inspection being concluded. The regional inspection provider will send a copy of the inspection report on behalf of Ofsted to:

- the appropriate authority for the school
- the headteacher.

48. For maintained schools, a copy must also be sent to:

- the LA, or the governing body where the LA is not the appropriate authority
- the person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors, if the school has them (including diocesan or other appropriate authorities in the case of schools with a religious character).

49. For secondary schools with sixth forms, a copy of the report must be sent to the Learning and Skills Council for England (LSC) at the following address:

The National Director of Quality and Standards
The Learning and Skills Council
Cheylesmore House
Quinton Road
Coventry
CV1 2WT

50. In exceptional circumstances Ofsted may decide that the normal period for completion of the inspection report should be extended.

What must the governing body do when the inspection report is received?

51. The governing body must send a copy of the report to all registered parents and carers of pupils at the school within five working days of receiving it. The governing body must also make a copy of the report available upon request to members of the public. A charge, not exceeding the cost of reproduction, can be made for copies of the report.

52. In the period following an inspection, the school will want to begin to act on the findings set out in the inspection report. With the exception of schools requiring special measures, how schools act on the points for improvement in their report is a matter for them.

Schools causing concern

Most schools emerge with credit from their inspections. Some, though, are not achieving enough and cause concern. Inspectors are required to judge whether or not the school requires special measures, or a notice to improve.

Provision causing concern

53. If inspectors judge that a school's overall effectiveness is inadequate, it will require special measures or receive a notice to improve because it requires significant improvement.

54. These two categories of schools causing concern are defined below:

Special measures

- Schools which 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 capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Notice to improve

- Schools which require significant 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 which is currently failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, but has the capacity to improve, will also be in this category.

55. These judgements are subject to moderation by senior HMI. Feedback to the school should make it clear that this is the case. In particular, the law requires that HMCI personally authorises a report which states that special measures are required.

56. When a draft report includes either of these judgements, the governing body must be given five days notice to comment on the draft before the report is finalised.

57. Guidance on making the judgements and the moderation procedure is set out in the *Guidance on conducting the inspection*.

Part C. The common inspection schedule for schools and other post-16 provision

58. This schedule lists the questions inspectors must ask in every institution or setting providing education and/or training. Most of these questions are applicable to all schools and other post-16 provision, although a few are more relevant to particular age groups or particular types of provider. There are separate frameworks for schools and colleges and other post-16 providers which have a common inspection schedule at their heart, meeting the requirements of:

- the Education Act 2005
- the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the annual grant letter issued by the Secretary of State for the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
- the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

59. All inspections of settings, except those making provision solely for adults, institutions or providers will contribute to the joint area reviews which will be carried out in every local authority area in England over a three-year period. These reviews will evaluate the extent to which each area is meeting the following five outcomes for children and young people:

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

60. Each of the evaluation requirements listed below is numbered according to the outcome to which it refers. Most refer to enjoying and achieving, but all five outcomes are covered. In judging leadership and management and the overall effectiveness of the provider, inspectors will consider the contribution made to all five outcomes.

Overall effectiveness

How effective and efficient are the provision and related services in meeting the full range of learners' needs and why?¹

What steps need to be taken to improve the provision further?

Inspectors should evaluate:

- the overall effectiveness of the provision, including any specialist provision and extended services, and its main strengths and weaknesses
- the capacity to make further improvements
- the effectiveness of any steps taken to promote improvement since the last inspection

and, where appropriate:

- the effectiveness of links with other organisations to promote the well-being of learners
- the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage
- the effectiveness of the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?

Inspectors should evaluate (the numbers in parentheses refer to the Every Child Matters outcomes in each part of the schedule):

- learners' success in achieving challenging targets, including qualifications and learning goals, with trends over time and any significant variations between groups of learners (3)
- the standards of learners' work (3)
- learners' progress relative to their prior attainment and potential, with any significant variations between groups of learners (3)
- the extent to which learners enjoy their work (3)

and, where appropriate:²

- the acquisition of workplace skills (4,5)
- the development of skills which contribute to the social and economic well-being of the learner (2,4,5)
- the emotional development of learners (1)
- the behaviour of learners (1,2)

¹ More detailed listings of what to evaluate are given in *Using the evaluation schedule*

² These outcomes for learners are generally reported in the personal development and well-being section of section 5 school reports.

- the attendance of learners (2,3)
- the extent to which learners adopt safe practices and a healthy lifestyle (1,2,5)
- learners' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development (3,4)
- whether learners make a positive contribution to the community (4).

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching, training and learning?

Inspectors should evaluate:

- how well teaching and/or training and resources promote learning, address the full range of learners' needs and meet course or programme requirements (3,4)
- the suitability and rigour of assessment in planning and monitoring learners' progress (3)
- the identification of, and provision for, additional learning needs (3)

and, where appropriate

- the involvement of parents and carers in their children's learning and development (3).

How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of learners?

Inspectors should evaluate:

- the extent to which programmes or activities match learners' needs, aspirations and potential, building on prior attainment and experience (3,5)
- how far programmes or the curriculum meet external requirements and are responsive to local circumstances (4,5)
- the extent to which enrichment activities and/or extended services contribute to learners' enjoyment and achievement (3,4,5)
- the extent to which the provision contributes to the learners' personal development and well-being, for example their capacity to stay safe and healthy, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (1, 2).

How well are learners guided and supported?

Inspectors should evaluate:

- the care, advice, guidance and other support provided to safeguard welfare, promote personal development and achieve high standards (1,2,3)
- the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance to learners in relation to courses and programmes, and where applicable, career progression (3,5).

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

Inspectors should evaluate:

- how effectively self-evaluation is used to secure improvement
- how well challenging targets are being used to raise standards for all learners
- how effectively leaders and managers at all levels clearly direct improvement and promote the well-being of learners through high quality care, education and training
- how well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve their potential
- the adequacy and suitability of staff, including the effectiveness of processes for recruitment and selection of staff to ensure that learners are well taught and protected
- the adequacy and suitability of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation
- how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money

and, where appropriate:

- how effective are the links made with other providers, services, employers and other organisations to promote the integration of care, education and any extended services to enhance learning and to promote well-being
- the effectiveness with which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities.

Part D. Quality assurance

The code of conduct for inspectors

Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work, and ensure that school staff are treated fairly and benefit from their inspection. These standards are assured through a code of conduct for inspectors and a quality guarantee to teachers and other staff. Equally, it is reasonable to expect school staff and others involved with the inspection to be courteous and helpful to inspectors.

Principles of inspection

61. The principles below apply to all inspections carried out by, or on behalf of Ofsted. They are intended to ensure that the:

- findings of the inspection are valid
- findings of inspection contribute to improvement
- process of inspection promotes inclusion
- inspection is carried out openly with those being inspected.

62. The principles of inspection are that inspection of providers will:

- have the experiences of learners and outcomes for them at its heart
- provide judgements of the contribution of providers to outcomes, the quality and value for money of provision, the quality of its management and the prospects for improvement
- assess evidence and make judgements objectively against national standards where applicable, and other published criteria
- be proportionate to risk and tailored to circumstances and needs
- ascertain and take into account the views of learners and, where appropriate, of registered parents and carers, and look to involve them in inspections in other ways
- make use as far as possible of the existing documentation and systems of the organisations inspected and avoid placing unnecessary burdens on them
- encourage rigorous self-assessment by the organisations inspected
- evaluate the work of the inspected bodies in eliminating unlawful racial discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and encouraging good race relations
- report openly, clearly and fairly on the basis of secure evidence
- enable themes of national significance to be pursued and reported
- be designed to promote and support improvement, linking with action to follow up recommendations
- build quality assurance into inspection, respond fairly to complaints, carry out evaluation of the conduct and effectiveness of inspection and seek continually to improve it.

Code of conduct for inspectors

63. Inspectors must uphold the highest professional standards in their work, ensure that staff of the provider are treated fairly and have the opportunity to benefit from their inspection. These standards are ensured through a code of conduct for inspectors. The code requires inspectors to:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and have no connection with the school which could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity
- do all they can to minimise the stress on those involved in the inspection, taking account of their best interests and well-being
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those being inspected, and communicate judgements clearly and frankly
- respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work.

Providers should be courteous and helpful to inspectors.

How is the quality of inspections assured?

64. HMI assess:

- the quality of inspections and reports
- the effectiveness of Additional Inspectors
- the regional contractors' own quality assurance arrangements.

65. Regional inspection providers may monitor the work of inspectors as part of their quality assurance procedures. Assessments are confidential to the inspectors and contractors concerned. Where an inspection report is judged to be seriously misleading, or an inspection is seriously flawed, the school will be notified and may be offered a reinspection.

66. All schools are invited to take part in a post-inspection survey so that the views of headteachers, governors, staff and others about the inspection of their school are obtained and contribute to inspection development.

Handling complaints and concerns about inspections

The vast majority of inspections are free of problems. Occasionally, schools or other interested parties feel dissatisfied with some aspect of their inspection or inspection report. A complaints procedure sets out how schools can raise concerns informally, or complain about their inspection and what will happen with their complaint.

Informal resolution of concerns

67. Schools are encouraged to raise any concerns about an inspection as early as possible with the lead inspector in order that these can be resolved informally wherever possible. In addition, Ofsted has a helpline which schools can contact for advice where it has not been possible to resolve the concern with the lead inspector. More details are provided in the complaints procedure (see below).

Complaints procedure

68. Guidance on how schools can complain about their inspection and what will happen with their complaint can be found in the complaints procedure.
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2473.