

School monitoring handbook

 [gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-monitoring-handbook-for-september-2023](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-monitoring-handbook-for-september-2023)

Ofsted

This guidance came into force on 16 September 2024.

Introduction

1. This handbook sets out the principles that underpin our approach to monitoring schools.
2. It also sets out how inspectors will monitor schools to identify whether the school is making sufficient progress to improve.
3. We have published information about other inspections that we carry out (graded, ungraded and urgent inspections) in the [school inspection handbook](#). We recommend that schools familiarise themselves with the wider inspection policy in that handbook, including our grade descriptors for graded inspections, alongside this one.
4. We carry out all inspections that form part of our monitoring programmes under [section 8\(2\) of the Education Act 2005](#).
5. A school categorised as having ‘serious weaknesses’ is a school that meets the definition of ‘requiring significant improvement’, as set out in [section 44 of the Education Act 2005](#).
6. A school which requires special measures is a school that meets the definition of ‘requiring special measures’, as set out in [section 44 of the Education Act 2005](#).
7. This handbook has 3 parts:
 - Part 1. Ofsted’s monitoring policy: this sets out the principles that apply to monitoring
 - Part 2. Monitoring programmes: this sets out the monitoring programmes for different types of school and contexts
 - Part 3. Monitoring inspections: this describes the policy and process for monitoring inspections for schools
8. Our monitoring process informs leaders and governors or trustees of the school, by highlighting specific areas of the school’s performance that need to improve. Monitoring reports also provide assurance to parents about the improvement journey that a school is on, so that they are kept updated about the quality of education that their child is currently receiving.

9. The monitoring inspection process allows schools to receive an earlier graded inspection. This minimises the time a school waits to receive a graded inspection when it has improved.

10. In this handbook:

- the term 'school' refers to a maintained school or an academy, and the terms 'maintained school' or 'academy' will be used where they apply to that type of school only
- the term 'leaders' refers to the staff in a school who are responsible for making key decisions about how the school operates, for example on matters such as the curriculum or behaviour. It will always include the headteacher and will likely include their senior staff, but will otherwise vary from school to school, especially depending on its size. In most schools, it will include middle or subject leaders who have responsibility for individual subjects and/or aspects of the curriculum. Additionally, in a trust, 'leaders' also includes leaders from within the trust (but not from governance roles) who have a role in running the school, including the trust chief executive officer (CEO) and other roles such as executive headteacher or director of education
- the term 'trust' refers to any academy trust, including single-academy trusts, multi-academy trusts and multi-academy companies (many dioceses use the term 'multi-academy companies'; these are legally identical to multi-academy trusts but use a different name)
- the term 'board of governors' is used to refer to the accountable authority for a maintained school, and 'governors' is used to refer to members of that board. The board is the appropriate body of the school for the purposes of section 6 of the Education Act 2005
- the term 'board of trustees' is used to refer to the accountable authority of a trust, and 'trustees' is used to refer to the trustees on that board (who may be referred to as directors). The board is the appropriate body and the proprietor for standalone academies or for all the academies in a trust, for the purposes of section 6 of the Education Act 2005
- the term 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean: pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (~~SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities)~~); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last 6 years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route)
- any reference to parents includes registered parents or carers

- any reference to a school with serious weaknesses refers to a school that requires significant improvement under section 44 of the Education Act 2005
- any reference to 'report' describes the formal written outcome from an inspection, which is usually published
- 'key judgements' means our quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management, judgements
- 'provision judgements' means our judgements on any early years provision or sixth-form provision in a school

Conduct during inspections

11. Ofsted's code of conduct outlines our expectations about the conduct of our inspectors and our expectations of providers during inspection.

12. Inspectors will uphold the highest professional standards in their work. They will treat everyone they meet during inspections fairly and with the respect and sensitivity they deserve. Inspectors will work constructively with leaders and staff, demonstrating professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect at all times.

13. Providers should approach their inspection with integrity and be open, transparent and honest. This includes providing evidence – or access to evidence – that will enable inspectors to report honestly, fairly and reliably. It means not withholding or concealing evidence, or providing false, misleading, inaccurate or incomplete information.

Schools raising concerns

14. If a school has any concerns about an inspection, including about inspectors' conduct or any potential or perceived conflicts of interest, they should raise these at the earliest opportunity with the lead inspector. Concerns can be raised at any point during the inspection. We will take any concerns seriously. The act of raising the concern will not impact on our inspection findings or how we consider a school. If it is not possible to resolve concerns with the lead inspector, the school or responsible body should follow the steps set out in Handling concerns and complaints.

Gathering personal information on inspection

15. Inspectors will gather any personal information necessary to assist them in inspecting a school. Our privacy policy sets out what personal information we collect, what we do with it, how long we keep it and individuals' rights under data protection legislation.

16. Individuals and organisations are legally required to provide inspectors with access to information. Section 10 of The Education Act 2005 gives inspectors powers of entry to any premises on which a school provides education to pupils. It also gives them a right to inspect, and take copies of, any records kept by the school, and any other documents containing information relating to the school that His Majesty's Chief Inspector considers

relevant to the discharge of their functions. These powers enable inspectors to look at computers and other devices that may hold relevant information. Regulations enable the Department for Education (DfE (Department for Education)) to provide Ofsted with information on individual pupils where it relates to school inspections.

17. Inspectors gather evidence at inspection and record this on Ofsted's systems. They may also see evidence on site that contains personal information about staff and young people, such as registers and lesson plans. Inspectors may take notes from, or copies of, this type of evidence before handing it back to an appropriate staff member at the end of the inspection. Inspectors will store securely any notes or copies as evidence and will not retain these personally. Inspectors may take photographs of pupils' work. They will store securely any photographs as evidence and will not retain these personally.

18. In most schools, inspectors will gather evidence electronically using a range of devices, including laptops, mobile phones and tablets. Inspectors should transfer evidence securely in line with our security policies.

Research on inspection

19. We may carry out research during our inspections. Where this happens, the research activity will have no impact on inspection judgements. In addition to this research approach, we may invite providers to participate in research visits (separate to inspections) at other times.

Part 1. Ofsted's monitoring policy

20. Through our monitoring programmes, inspectors will evaluate how school leaders, trust leaders (in academies) and governors/trustees are improving the school. Inspectors will identify the factors that are leading to sustainable improvement and any barriers that may prevent improvement from happening as quickly as it should.

Our monitoring threshold

21. The following schools are eligible for monitoring:

- those in a category of concern
- those graded as requires improvement or inadequate for at least one key or provision judgement in their most recent graded inspection

22. All schools that meet our threshold for monitoring are eligible for routine monitoring. This will continue until they no longer meet that threshold (but see part 2 below, as there are many cases where eligible schools will not be monitored). The monitoring inspection could be deemed a graded inspection and therefore could change grades for key and/or provision judgements.

23. Monitoring is a flexible process. The focus and improvement steps for each school will depend on its context. This means that the exact content of a monitoring programme that a school receives will depend on how quickly the school makes sustainable improvements (see [part 2 of this handbook](#)).

24. Monitoring is forward-looking. It does not just focus on what issues caused the school to meet our monitoring threshold. That could encourage ‘quick fixes’ that focus on the symptoms rather than the causes of weaknesses. Inspectors will instead focus on the school’s progress towards coming out of a category of concern (serious weaknesses or special measures) or no longer requiring monitoring. Monitoring inspections evaluate whether all leaders’ actions are effective (that leaders are taking the right actions in the right order at the right time), while bearing in mind the end goal of improving the school.

25. The aims of this process are to:

- establish and maintain a constructive, professional relationship between leaders and inspectors
- support the school by providing recognition and assurance of aspects that are being addressed effectively, but also where aspects still need to improve
- identify quickly whether a school is improving or not
- make sure that, when schools improve, they receive a graded inspection at the earliest opportunity

26. During the monitoring process, inspectors will look for evidence of how well leaders have understood what the school needs to do to no longer meet the monitoring threshold and how well it is improving.

27. Monitoring inspections will normally be carried out by His Majesty’s Inspectors.

What we know about schools that improve

28. Our research (particularly [‘Fight or flight? How “stuck” schools are overcoming isolation’](#) and experience from inspection have led us to identify a number of core factors in school improvement.

Areas	Schools that improve	Schools that do not improve
Curriculum planning	The curriculum is ambitious, well sequenced, broad and balanced. Any variation between subjects is outweighed by leaders’ work to secure high-quality learning in most curriculum areas.	Curriculum planning is recent or incomplete. Some subjects are not taught in sufficient depth. Some staff lack the expertise to deliver the curriculum well.

Areas	Schools that improve	Schools that do not improve
Early reading	There is strong provision for phonics and reading. In all school types, this includes effective support for pupils who have fallen behind.	There are issues with reading and phonics, particularly for the weakest readers. Staff expertise is a barrier in some schools.
Special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities))	There is high-quality, ambitious provision that takes account of, and ensures good outcomes for, pupils with SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities).	There are weaknesses in the provision for pupils with SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities). There is too little focus on supporting these pupils to achieve academically.
Behaviour and attitudes	There are high expectations for behaviour and attendance. There is effective extra help for pupils who need it.	Disruptions to learning and poor attendance remain barriers to improvement.
Personal development	Leaders place importance on developing personal, social and spiritual well-being. There is a broadening of pupils' skills and perspectives. The opportunities provided benefit all pupils.	Many pupils do not take up extra-curricular activities. Aspects of the personal, social and health education and/or spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum are new or are not implemented effectively.
Governance	There is effective challenge and support from governors/trustees. There is a shared and ambitious vision.	Governor/trustee training is needed so that they can better hold executive leaders to account. At times, a more effective interface is needed between governors/trustees.
Vision	There is a clarity of direction. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas where there is still more to do.	There is an absence of accurate self-evaluation. There is not a compelling picture that plans are implemented as intended.
Staffing	Staff feel supported to develop their subject knowledge through high-quality and motivational professional development.	There is often instability in staffing and higher-than-average staff absence. There are inconsistencies in the quality of support and training that staff receive.

Specific considerations for schools causing concern

29. Following a graded inspection, if any key judgement is inadequate and/or safeguarding is ineffective, a school will be placed in a formal category of concern. The paragraphs below refer to leaders' capacity to improve the school. Inspectors should refer to the capacity to improve section of the school inspection handbook.

30. There are a number of specific matters that we consider when monitoring schools in a category of concern. These are explained later.

31. When placing a school in a category of concern, inspectors need to decide whether the school has serious weaknesses or requires special measures. Inspectors must first consider whether the school is failing to give an acceptable standard of education:

- if both quality of education and personal development are judged as requires improvement or better, inspectors will conclude that the school is giving an acceptable standard of education and will judge the school to have serious weaknesses
- if either quality of education or personal development is judged as inadequate, inspectors will conclude that the school is failing to give an acceptable standard of education

32. Inspectors must then consider whether school leaders, trust leaders (in academies) and governors/trustees are showing the capacity to improve the school.

Serious weakness

33. If inspectors conclude that the school is failing to give pupils an acceptable standard of education but school leaders, trust leaders (in academies) and governors/trustees are showing the capacity to improve, they will judge the school to have serious weaknesses.

Special measures

34. If inspectors conclude that the school is failing to give pupils an acceptable standard of education and those responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not showing the capacity to improve, they will judge it to need special measures.

Appointment of ~~ECTs (early career teachers)~~ in schools judged to require special measures

35. The Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (England) Regulations 2012 state that early career teachers (~~ECTs (early career teachers)~~) (not including trainee teachers on employment-based training programmes) may not be appointed to maintained schools or pupil referral units (~~PRUs (pupil referral units)~~) judged to require special measures, unless we have given permission in writing. We do not have similar powers with respect to academies judged to require special measures; but, in our report, we may strongly recommend that an academy should not appoint ~~ECTs (early career teachers)~~. However, this is only advisory.

36. When inspectors decide (on a graded inspection) that a school requires special measures, they will consider whether the school should, from that point on, be able to appoint ECTs (early career teachers). If the lead inspector considers that the school has the ability to give ECTs (early career teachers) the support they require, they will include one of the following statements in the inspection report:

- for maintained schools: The school may appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection
- for academies: HMCI is of the opinion that the school may appoint early career teachers

37. Otherwise, they will include the following:

- for maintained schools: The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection
- for academies: HMCI strongly recommends that the school does not seek to appoint early career teachers

38. The position will be considered again during any monitoring visit we carry out, and reports will contain similar wording.

Other legal requirements for schools in a category of concern

39. Section 15 of the Education Act 2005 requires local authorities or trusts (as appropriate) that are responsible for a school in a category of concern to prepare, and send to Ofsted and the DfE (Department for Education), a statement of action. This should set out the action that they propose to take, the period within which they propose to take it and the arrangements they propose to make for engaging with parents. The statement will form part of the evidence base that inspectors will consider when monitoring, alongside any improvement plan prepared by the school.

Academy orders and the monitoring process

40. Maintained schools and PRUs (pupil referral units) that are placed in a category of concern will be subject to a directive academy order.

41. The Secretary of State has a duty to make an academy order for all maintained schools judged to have serious weaknesses (and so 'requiring significant improvement') under the Education Act 2005 and those that are judged to require special measures. This includes maintained special schools but excludes maintained nursery schools and non-maintained special schools.

42. For academies in a category of concern, the Secretary of State has a power to terminate the funding agreement. The academy may become part of a trust or be transferred to another trust.

43. As such, maintained schools and ~~PRUs (pupil referral units)~~ that have been issued with an academy order and academies that are being transferred to a new trust following termination of their funding agreements may be monitored differently from maintained nursery schools, non-maintained special schools and other schools that are not subject to academisation or re-brokering (see monitoring programmes below).

44. Where a school receives a new ~~URN (unique reference number)~~ (for example, when a maintained school or ~~PRU (pupil referral unit)~~ becomes a sponsored academy, or an academy moves to a new sponsor with a new funding agreement), we will inspect it as a new school. Its first inspection will therefore be a graded inspection. This will usually take place during its third academic year of operation (for the first inspection after the pandemic, this period will be extended by up to 2 years). However, in exceptional circumstances, schools that become new academies may receive an ungraded inspection before their next graded inspection.

45. Academies in a category of concern that are not transferred to a new trust will be subject to monitoring. Academies in a category of concern that are transferred to a new trust but do not receive a new ~~URN (unique reference number)~~ will not normally be monitored, but will not be treated as a new school for the purposes of reinspection.

46. We will determine the timing of the next graded inspection by the academy's rate of improvement. However, it will normally take place within 2.5 years of the publication of the graded inspection report. For the first inspection after the pandemic, this period will be extended by up to 2 years.

47. Maintained nursery schools and non-maintained special schools in a category of concern are not subject to academy orders. They will be monitored as set out in this section of the handbook.

Part 2. Monitoring programmes

48. The structure of monitoring programmes will reflect the fact that some schools are further along the improvement journey than others.

49. Inspectors recognise that leading an organisation through a period of change is demanding for all leaders and presents a different challenge to maintaining standards in schools that meet our monitoring threshold. For this reason, inspectors will want to understand how all those responsible for the improvement of the school, not just school leaders, are contributing to the process. Inspectors will want to understand the role that governors/trustees and (where appropriate) local authority and diocesan staff play in securing improvement and will look closely at the support, challenge and capacity provided to leaders.

50. Each monitoring inspection will focus on how the school is progressing towards no longer meeting the monitoring threshold. They may explore the key areas laid out in part 1. Inspectors will seek to understand the extent to which all leaders have identified the

areas of the school where there is still more to do and whether they are taking the necessary steps to improve.

Monitoring programmes for schools not in a category of concern

51. Other than schools in category of concern, we may also monitor any school that was graded as requires improvement or inadequate for at least one key or provision judgement in its most recent graded inspection. However, we will not normally monitor these schools if any of the following apply:

- this was the school's first graded inspection
- the school is good or better for all judgements other than provision judgements
- the school's most recent 'leadership and management' judgement is good
- the school's second most recent graded inspection took place before 1 September 2024 and graded the school outstanding, good or inadequate for overall effectiveness
- the school's second most recent graded inspection took place after 1 September 2024 and all key and provision judgements were good or outstanding

52. When we monitor schools not in a category of concern, we will usually carry out a single monitoring inspection. This takes place within 14 months of the most recent graded inspection.

53. These schools will usually receive a graded inspection within 2.5 years after the publication of the graded report (for the first inspection after the pandemic, this period will be extended by up to 2 years). The timing of the reinspection will be at the discretion of Ofsted's relevant regional director.

54. Following a monitoring inspection, the lead inspector may consider that the school is ready for reinspection because it has made sufficient progress towards coming out of a category of concern or no longer requiring monitoring. In these cases, they may recommend that the next graded inspection is brought forward.

55. If the lead inspector feels that the school would benefit from further time to improve, they may recommend that the school is reinspected later in the 2.5-year inspection window.

Monitoring programmes for schools in a category of concern

56. Monitoring will normally begin within 3 to 9 months of the publication of the graded inspection report for all schools in a category of concern that are not subject to academisation nor in the process of being transferred to a new trust. This includes all maintained nursery schools and non-maintained special schools that are not eligible for these interventions.

57. If safeguarding is ineffective (whatever the grades for other judgement areas), we will usually monitor that school regardless of academisation or transfer processes. This will likely occur earlier than in schools with effective safeguarding.

58. Maintained schools or PRUs (pupil referral units) that have been issued with an academy order, and academies that are being transferred to a new trust following termination of their funding agreements, will not normally be monitored unless there is a delay in academisation/transfer (except where safeguarding is ineffective – see paragraph above). If the process is delayed (that is, if the school is still open after 9 months), monitoring will normally take place.

59. A school may receive up to 5 monitoring inspections over the 2.5 years following the publication of the graded inspection report that placed it in a category of concern. The expectation is that the school will improve and come out of a category of concern within 18 to 24 months.

60. At the end of a monitoring inspection, inspectors will consider whether the school has made sufficient progress and no longer requires a category of concern. Where this is the case, the monitoring inspection will be deemed to be a graded inspection. All the judgements required by the school inspection handbook will be made and a graded inspection report produced.

61. If, after a programme of monitoring inspections lasting up to 2.5 years, the school has not been removed from a category of concern, it will receive a graded inspection.

Part 3. Monitoring inspections

62. Monitoring inspections are selective and focused on where the school needs to improve in order to come out of its category of concern or no longer meet our monitoring threshold. In deciding the focus, inspectors will consider the findings from the most recent graded inspection.

63. It is important that all leaders demonstrate that they are having a significant impact on all of the areas where there is still more to do and are capable of securing further improvement. Inspectors should consider the extent to which leaders demonstrate capacity to improve the school in a sustainable way.

64. There should be clear evidence that leaders are having an impact on improving the quality of education and securing meaningful progress on improvement within the curriculum, particularly in schools where attainment is low.

65. Inspectors must consider the impact of the external support provided to the school and, as appropriate, any support and challenge provided by external partners on school improvement. If a school is receiving support from within its own trust, inspectors will be clear that this is not external support.

Before the monitoring inspection

Inspector's preparation for monitoring inspections

66. Schools should not produce an action plan specifically for Ofsted or for inspection work. We will expect schools to review their existing plans to address matters where the most recent graded inspection identified that improvement was needed.

67. The lead inspector will prepare for the monitoring inspection by reviewing the inspection history and other relevant information to build a picture of what has been happening to the school over time. This includes:

- previous Ofsted inspection reports (including local authority ~~SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities)~~ and inspecting local area children's services (ILACS (inspections of local authority children's services)) reports, where relevant)
- any performance information published since the last inspection
- information from Ofsted Parent View
- any self-evaluation, improvement plan, action plan or equivalent that may have been completed by the school, trust or local authority; this should include any specific information about curriculum and governance
- information about the curriculum on the school's website, plus any additional information on the school's website that the lead inspector deems relevant
- relevant complaints made about the school to Ofsted since the last inspection
- information on Ofsted's provider information portal, including any warning notices
- for schools in a category of concern, the local authority or trust statement of action for the school

68. During the monitoring inspection, the lead inspector will seek to identify the barriers that are preventing the school from improving. The lead inspector will decide where to focus inspection activities to gather evidence about how quickly and effectively leaders and governors/trustees are tackling the areas where the most recent graded inspection identified a need for the school to improve.

69. The lead inspector will also gather evidence to assess and report on progress the school has made since we found that it met our threshold for monitoring. The inspection will report on any barriers that are preventing the school from improving quickly and sustainably.

Notification

70. The lead inspector will usually telephone the school up to 2 school days before the start of the on-site monitoring inspection. If the headteacher is unavailable, the lead inspector should ask to speak to the next most senior member of staff and explain the arrangements for the monitoring inspection.

71. In academies, the lead inspector will also arrange to speak to the CEO and anyone else, as agreed between the CEO and the lead inspector, during the inspection.

72. The lead inspector should ensure that the headteacher will be present on the day of the inspection. Once the inspection has been confirmed, the lead inspector will inform the inspection support team at Ofsted, who will send formal notification to the school by email.

73. During the initial telephone call with the school, the lead inspector will:

- confirm the date of the inspection
- explain the purpose of the monitoring inspection
- make it clear that the headteacher is encouraged to have at least one other senior leader present during the call to assist and support them. This will usually be staff who typically deputise for them (or a member of trust staff) and who can understand and discuss the educational content of the call. The headteacher may also wish to have someone present to take notes
- check on the headteacher's well-being, and find out whether any steps need to be taken to ensure that any issues or concerns are addressed, including that appropriate support is available. The lead inspector should ascertain how to contact whoever is responsible for the headteacher's well-being on a day-to-day basis (normally the local authority or trust), so that they can pass on well-being concerns when appropriate and necessary
- make the school aware of the help and support available for the headteacher's and staff's well-being through the charity [Education Support](#)
- confirm that the school will inform the governors/trustees and (where relevant) the local authority and/or diocese and that the lead inspector will wish to speak to, at a minimum, the chair (or their delegate) during the inspection to discuss how aspects of the quality of education are improving

- discuss which leaders and staff will need to be involved in the inspection, the practical arrangements for inspection and the inspection activities needed, which may include:
 - meeting staff
 - reviewing documentation
 - talking to pupils
 - reviewing pupils' work
 - visiting lesson
 - discussing any specific issues that the lead inspector should be made aware of before arriving to start the monitoring inspection
 - asking the school to upload any action or improvement plan and/or self-evaluation they have completed to the portal
- agree a process for keeping leaders informed of progress throughout the inspection. This will normally mean regular meetings with the headteacher and/or any other previously agreed school leader(s) see Keeping leaders informed
- ask the headteacher to read Ofsted's code of conduct, which sets out expectations for both inspectors and providers, and explain that if the headteacher has any concerns about inspectors not acting in accordance with the code of conduct, they should raise this as soon as possible with the lead inspector. This is so that any issues can be resolved before the on-site inspection activity is completed
- provide an opportunity for the school to raise any issues or concerns, such as perceived conflicts of interest, or to seek clarification before the inspection
- provide an opportunity for the school to discuss and/or give us information on potential equalities duties, including reasonable adjustments for individuals
- explain how the school will be able to raise any matters during the inspection itself

74. While the lead inspector will consider the progress made in implementing the school's action plan and the impact of leaders and governors'/trustees' actions, lead inspectors are not visiting simply to evaluate action plans, but to challenge and support the school.

Keeping leaders informed

75. At the heart of our inspections is a professional dialogue between inspectors and leaders and so the lead inspector will agree a process for keeping leaders informed of progress throughout the inspection. This will normally mean regular meetings with the headteacher and/or any other previously agreed school leader(s) to:

- provide updates on emerging issues, including initial general findings and enable leaders to clarify any factual matters
- draw inspectors' attention to any other specific matters

- allow the headteacher to raise any issues or concerns, including related to the conduct of the inspection or of individual inspectors, or to seek clarification
- alert the headteacher to any serious concerns

Requests for inspections to be deferred or cancelled

76. While it is important that we carry out our planned inspections wherever possible, sometimes there may be reasons that a planned inspection may not go ahead and so a school may request a deferral of an inspection. A school may make a request during the initial notification phone call, or at the earliest opportunity afterwards, before the start of the inspection. There may be exceptional occasions when we need to consider pausing an inspection once inspectors have arrived on site. We will not normally consider deferrals if we receive them after 4.30pm on the day the school is notified. The lead inspector must immediately contact the regional duty desk. We will decide whether this should be granted in accordance with our deferral policy.

77. Normally, if the school is providing education to pupils, the inspection will go ahead. In exceptional circumstances, however, an inspection might be cancelled or deferred after the school has been notified, following a request made by the school. We will aim to let the school know whether a request is granted on the same day it is made, but in some cases (particularly when the request for deferral comes later), this may happen by 8am the next morning.

78. If a school is within 6 months of confirmed closure, and this is evidenced in a funding agreement, for example, but the school does not request a cancellation when notified of an inspection, the lead inspector will call the regional duty desk to highlight this and get advice about whether the inspection should still be carried out. We will make decisions on a case-by-case basis.

The monitoring inspection visit

79. Monitoring inspections focus on the extent to which leaders (in the school and the trust):

- have high expectations of all pupils in the school, and the extent to which these are embodied in leaders' and staff's day-to-day interactions with pupils
- focus their attention on the education provided by the school. There are many demands on leaders, but a greater focus on this area is associated with better outcomes for pupils
- ensure that continuing professional development for teachers and staff is aligned with the curriculum, and the extent to which this develops teachers' content knowledge over time, so that they are able to deliver better teaching for pupils
- create coherence and consistency across the school so that pupils benefit from effective teaching and consistent expectations, wherever they are in the school

- seek to engage parents and their community thoughtfully and positively in a way that supports pupils' education
- are thoughtful in drawing boundaries and resisting inappropriate attempts to influence what is taught and the day-to-day life of the school
- take into account the workload and well-being of their staff, while also developing and strengthening the quality of the workforce
- have high ambition for all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils (including pupils with SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities)). This includes ensuring that practices such as 'off-rolling' do not take place and that the way the school uses the pupil premium is founded on good evidence
- leaders and governors/trustees all understand their respective roles and perform these in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the school

80. Where applicable, they will also consider whether the school no longer requires a category of concern, and so should receive a graded inspection.

Activities carried out by inspectors

81. During all monitoring inspections, the lead inspector will:

- meet the headteacher and other leaders (including, in an academy, the CEO or other trust leaders) to establish a purposeful and productive working relationship and focus on discussing the actions taken so far to tackle issues from the graded inspection. At least one other member of staff may attend to support the headteacher or other leaders. This should typically be someone who deputises for them (or a member of trust staff) and who can understand and discuss the educational content of the meeting with the headteacher or other leaders
- hold meetings with the chair and as many members of the governing board or board of trustees as are available and (where relevant) the local authority to establish what action is being taken
- gather any other evidence needed. This may include discussions with staff and pupils, observing learning and pupils' behaviour, and talking to pupils about their work and their progress
- consider views expressed on Ofsted Parent View. Where possible, inspectors will talk to parents about their views about the school
- discuss with leaders the next steps that they need to take to improve the school

82. During the inspection, inspectors will need to speak to staff in a range of different roles. They will do so in line with our code of conduct, and at all times act with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect.

83. Staff (including leaders at all levels) may always be accompanied by another person when speaking to inspectors. However, it is important that staff are able to express their views freely to inspectors.

84. Inspectors should take careful account of the well-being of leaders and staff and adjust their approach or activity, as appropriate, as they go about their inspection work, in the best interests of pupils. If inspectors see or suspect that a staff member (including all leaders and the headteacher) is upset or distressed at any point during the inspection, inspectors should respond sensitively. Where appropriate, inspectors will consider suitable adjustments to enable the staff member to continue. Where there are serious concerns, inspectors will contact duty desk, and will normally inform those responsible for the person's well-being.

85. In exceptional circumstances, inspectors may need to consider pausing the inspection.

86. Meetings with pupils or parents must take place without the presence of any leaders or staff, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

87. The exact structure of the monitoring inspection and the activities that the inspector carries out will reflect where the school is on its improvement journey and the areas that are most pertinent to sustained improvement.

Pausing inspections

88. There may be exceptional occasions when we need to consider pausing an inspection. We will consider these on a case-by-case basis according to our published pausing inspections guidance.

Inspectors will not look at internal progress or attainment data

89. Inspectors will not look at non-statutory internal progress and attainment data on inspections of schools. Teachers have told us that they believe this will help us play our part in reducing unnecessary workload.

90. That does not mean that schools cannot use data if they consider it appropriate. Inspectors will, however, focus more on the curriculum and less on schools' generation, analysis and interpretation of data. Inspectors will be interested in the conclusions drawn and actions taken from any internal assessment information, but they will not examine or verify that information first hand. Inspectors will use published national performance data as a starting point on inspection, where it is available.

Workload

91. Inspectors will consider the extent to which all leaders engage with staff and are aware and take account of the main pressures on them, engaging with them realistically and constructively. They will consider the extent to which staff are supported by leaders to

implement the improvements that are required. Inspectors will also consider whether changes are made in a way that avoids creating an unmanageable workload.

Gaming and off-rolling

92. When carrying out monitoring inspections, inspectors will be particularly alert to any evidence that suggests that the school may be:

- gaming – entering pupils for courses or qualifications that are not in their educational best interest in order to achieve apparently better performance for the school
- off-rolling – removing a pupil or pupils from the school without a formal permanent exclusion when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil; further explanation of off-rolling is in the [school inspection handbook](#)

Seeking the views of parents, staff and pupils

93. On all monitoring inspections, the lead inspector will review evidence from Ofsted Parent View during the inspection to take any relevant information from responses into account. The lead inspector may also decide to open the free-text facility for the inspection, although this will normally only be where a school is judged to require special measures.

94. The views of staff may also be gathered through an online questionnaire, although this will normally only be where a school is judged to require special measures.

95. The inspection support administrator will send a link to the school when surveys are open, along with the formal notification of inspection. We will ask the school to encourage staff and/or parents (as appropriate) to complete the online questionnaire.

Safeguarding

96. Although inspectors will always satisfy themselves that there are no significant safeguarding concerns, they will only report specifically on the effectiveness of safeguarding where the previous graded or monitoring inspection found safeguarding to be ineffective.

97. If this is the case, inspectors should evaluate whether safeguarding is now effective, using the guidance in the [school inspection handbook](#).

98. This should include whether there have been any further safeguarding incidents since the previous inspection of the school. Inspectors must record the school's response as part of the evidence gathered.

99. If safeguarding was previously judged to be ineffective, but is now judged to be effective, the report will include a judgement that: 'safeguarding is effective'.

100. If safeguarding is not effective or if pupils are considered to be at risk, the lead inspector will deem the inspection to be a graded inspection (unless the school is already in a category of concern). Safeguarding is ineffective when there are serious or widespread failures in the school's safeguarding arrangements. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils do not meet statutory requirements, or they give serious cause for concern or the school has taken insufficient action to remedy weaknesses following a serious incident. The school inspection handbook provides some examples of what might constitute ineffective safeguarding.

101. In the event of concerns or queries about safeguarding, inspectors must contact their regional duty desk.

102. In the event of a current or ongoing incident coming to light during the inspection, inspectors should refer to the school inspection handbook for further guidance.

103. Regardless of whether safeguarding has been identified as a specific area that must improve, inspectors will always be interested in how the school keeps pupils safe and in the safeguarding culture of the school. In addition to making general observations about safeguarding, inspectors will always:

- check the school's single central record, focusing on staff that have joined since the last inspection
- review the school's safeguarding training schedule or record, focusing on new staff who have joined since the last inspection
- review Ofsted Parent View responses for the school
- ask a selection of pupils, in an age-appropriate way, if they know how to raise safeguarding concerns
- ask a selection of staff, including non-teaching staff and new staff, if they know how to raise safeguarding concerns

104. On a very small number of occasions, inspectors may come across evidence of child abuse, including sexual abuse, during an inspection. Inspectors must not attempt to investigate any incident or allegations but will make sure that concerns about a child's safety are reported to the appropriate body or bodies (for example, the local authority). Any referrals will normally be made by the designated safeguarding lead for the school (see '[Safeguarding concerns: guidance for inspectors](#)'). Inspectors must be satisfied that the correct referral has taken place and record this in their evidence base.

105. If a child discloses to an inspector that they have been abused, or are at risk of abuse, the inspector will stop all other activity and focus on ensuring that the child receives the help they need. Specific guidance on what to do in this situation can be found in '[Safeguarding concerns: guidance for inspectors](#)'.

Evaluating support for schools that are judged to require special measures

106. During the first monitoring inspection of a school that is judged to require special measures, inspectors will meet with the headteacher, the CEO or their delegate (or equivalent in a trust), the chair of the governing body or board of trustees (where possible) and as many governors/trustees as are available. At least one other member of staff may attend the meeting to support the headteacher. This should typically be someone who deputises for them (or a member of trust staff) who can understand and discuss the educational content of the meeting with the headteacher. Additional members of staff (this could include trust staff or local authority representatives) may attend at the discretion of the lead inspector, but attendees should be few in number to allow for a productive conversation in the time available. Inspectors will look for evidence of how well leaders and governors/trustees are implementing the school's plans for improvement.

107. On subsequent inspections, inspectors will also report on the impact of the trust's or local authority's support for the school, along with any external support.

Monitoring inspection judgements

108. This section sets out the judgements that inspectors will make at the end of a monitoring inspection. There are different judgements depending on whether schools have serious weaknesses, require special measures or otherwise meet our threshold for monitoring.

109. Monitoring inspections will focus on the actions taken by all leaders and governors/trustees to tackle the areas that led to the school meeting our monitoring threshold. Monitoring inspections must also focus on the progress that the school has made towards coming out of a category of concern or no longer meeting the threshold for monitoring.

Schools not in a category of concern

110. At the end of the monitoring inspection, the lead inspector will make a single judgement, stating:

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but some aspects of the school need further improvement.

Or

Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

Schools with serious weaknesses

111. The monitoring inspection report must include an assessment of the effectiveness of the action taken by the school towards removal of the serious weaknesses designation. A judgement will also be made, stating whether:

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to no longer be judged as having serious weaknesses.

Or

[The school] continues to have serious weaknesses. Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

112. Whichever judgement is reached, if inspectors decide not to deem it a graded inspection (see [paragraph 140](#)), the school will remain in a category of concern. Inspectors will explain this to the school.

113. The crucial factor in reaching a judgement is the anticipated timescale for the removal of the serious weaknesses designation given the current rate of improvement. A school in which leaders are making sufficient progress is one that will be on course to have the serious weaknesses designation removed within 2.5 years after the publication of the previous graded inspection report. A school that is not making sufficient progress will be likely to continue to have serious weaknesses, or may be judged to require special measures, when the graded inspection takes place.

114. Inspectors will base this judgement on the school's progress towards coming out of its category of concern. Although generally this will be informed by the matters where the most recent graded inspection identified that improvement was needed, other factors that arise during the monitoring period must not be ignored. Inspectors should make the key judgement about the school's progress towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation by considering the evidence that they have gathered and by using their professional judgement.

115. If a monitoring inspection is deemed to be a graded inspection, or a separate graded inspection takes place at a later date, the grades for all key and provision judgements will be updated. If the lead inspector on this inspection judges that the school no longer has serious weaknesses, the oral feedback and written report must include the formal statement that:

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

116. This judgement is not subject to moderation. However, as with all inspections, it should not be published or shared with parents until we send the final report to the school.

117. When the serious weaknesses designation is removed, the lead inspector must, on the final day of the inspection, notify Ofsted's relevant regional duty desk.

Schools that are subject to special measures

118. During the monitoring inspections, inspectors are required to evaluate the school's progress towards the removal of special measures. Inspectors will make a judgement on whether:

Leaders have made progress to improve the school, but more work is necessary for the school to no longer be judged as requiring special measures.

Or

[The school] continues to require special measures. Leaders have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

119. Whichever judgement is reached, if inspectors decide not to deem it a graded inspection (see paragraph 140), the school will remain in a category of concern. Inspectors will explain this to the school.

120. Inspectors will base the judgement on the school's progress towards coming out of its category of concern. Although generally this will be informed by matters where the most recent graded inspection identified that improvement was needed, other factors that arise during the monitoring period must not be ignored. The crucial factor is the anticipated timescale for the school to be judged to no longer require special measures, given the current rate of improvement. A school that is making sufficient progress will be on course to no longer require special measures within 2.5 years of the monitoring period after publication of the inspection report that judged the school to require special measures. A school that is not making sufficient progress is likely to continue to require special measures when the next graded inspection takes place.

121. If a monitoring inspection is deemed to be a graded inspection, or a separate graded inspection takes place at a later date, the grades for all key and provision judgements will be updated. If the lead inspector on this inspection judges that special measures are no longer required, the oral feedback and written report should include the formal statement that:

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

122. This judgement is not subject to moderation. We expect leaders to share the inspection outcomes and findings with whoever they deem appropriate. The outcomes and findings should be shared with governors/trustees, irrespective of whether they attended the meeting, and irrespective of what other role they may hold (for example, a teacher governor). Leaders may also share inspection outcomes, in confidence, with others who are not involved with the school. This may include leaders' colleagues, family members, medical advisers and/or their wider support group. However, the information should not be made public or shared with parents.

123. When it is judged that special measures are no longer required, inspectors must write a full graded report. They must also, on the final day of the inspection, notify Ofsted's relevant regional duty desk.

Feedback at the end of the monitoring inspection

124. The school will receive verbal feedback, in which the lead inspector will:

- report the range of evidence gathered
- comment on the impact of any support for school improvement
- cover any specific issues identified by the lead inspector in the pre-inspection preparation and during the inspection
- make clear that the text of the report may differ from the verbal feedback, but that the judgements will not change unless quality assurance deems that appropriate
- make clear that, in addition to being able to raise concerns at any stage during the inspection, the school has an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns, or to seek clarification about the inspection, and can also contact Ofsted on the working day after the end of the inspection, if necessary

125. The lead inspector will chair the final feedback meeting, and they will agree who should attend with the headteacher. Those connected with the school who may attend include:

- the headteacher (or equivalent) and, for academies, the CEO/their delegate (or equivalent) and other leaders, as agreed by the lead inspector and headteacher
- any person the headteacher or CEO wants present to assist and support them
- for maintained schools, the chair of the school's governing body and as many governors as are available; the clerk to governors (or equivalent), or their delegate, may also attend to take notes (there can be more than one note-taker if desired)
- for academies, the chair of the board of trustees or their delegate, and as many trustees as are available; the clerk to the trustees or the board (or equivalent), or their delegate, may also attend to take notes (there can be more than one note-taker if desired)
- a representative from the local authority (always for maintained schools and additionally for academies where safeguarding is found to be ineffective)
- a representative from the sponsor and/or designated responsible body, diocese or other responsible body

126. If the feedback is likely to be challenging or is likely to raise difficult issues, the lead inspector will be sensitive to any implications arising from this feedback and will therefore discuss with the headteacher which other people may attend the meeting to ensure the necessary support for school leaders.

127. Attendance at the feedback meeting is voluntary and any attendee may leave at any time, including leaving for a short time and then returning.

128. During the final feedback meeting of a monitoring inspection, the lead inspector will ensure that leaders, governors/trustees and all attendees are clear:

- about the judgements made
- that the main findings of the inspection and the main points provided orally in the feedback, subject to any change, will be reflected in the text of the report
- about areas where improvement is needed
- that the judgements are provisional and so may be subject to change as a result of quality assurance procedures or moderation. We expect leaders to share the inspection outcomes and findings with whoever they deem appropriate. The outcomes and findings should be shared with governors/trustees, irrespective of whether they attended the meeting, and irrespective of what other role they may hold (for example, a teacher governor). Leaders may also share inspection outcomes, in confidence, with others, not involved in the school, provided the information is not made public or shared with parents. This may include leaders' colleagues, family members, medical advisers, and/or their wider support group
- that, in addition to being able to raise concerns at any stage during the inspection, the school has an opportunity to raise any issues or concerns or to seek clarification about the inspection, and can contact Ofsted on the working day after the end of the inspection, if necessary
- about the procedure for making a complaint about the inspection

129. If there are serious concerns about the lack of urgency in tackling weakness at the school, the lead inspector will expect to speak to the board of governors or board of trustees, or as many governors/trustees are available, and will share the concerns with the school and make specific recommendations for more urgent action or intervention. If needed, they will arrange to do this after the inspection. For an academy, the lead inspector should also invite the CEO or their delegate and other leaders within the trust (as required) to the final feedback meeting. These meetings may include a virtual option using video or telephone calls if necessary.

130. If a monitoring inspection identifies serious concerns about aspects of the school's performance that were not identified in the previous graded inspection or in any earlier monitoring inspection, the inspector should report these and they may lead to the next graded inspection being brought forward.

Final feedback meeting for schools with serious weaknesses

131. In addition to the points covered above, the inspector will include the judgement made about the effectiveness of actions towards the removal of serious weaknesses, describing the progress made against the matters where the most recent graded inspection identified that improvement was needed.

Final feedback meeting for schools with serious weaknesses solely due to ineffective safeguarding

132. In addition to the points covered above, the inspector will include the judgement made about the effectiveness of arrangements for safeguarding. They will describe the progress made on matters that, at the most recent graded inspection, caused safeguarding to be judged ineffective.

Final feedback meeting for schools that require special measures

133. In addition to the points covered above, the inspection team must judge the progress that the school is making towards no longer requiring special measures.

134. Whatever the outcome, inspectors must clearly explain the reasons for the decision to remove or not to remove the special measures judgement. Inspectors should also make clear to the school whether they are able to appoint ECTs (early career teachers).

135. The judgement that special measures are no longer required may involve reference to:

- the best interests of the pupils; this is paramount
- evidence from previous monitoring inspections
- the school's ability to demonstrate that it meets the needs of all pupils and has the capacity for sustained improvement. This determines the timing of removal of the special measures judgement
- the extent to which capacity for sustained improvement has been demonstrated by leaders at all levels, rather than through an over-reliance on external support or on 1 or 2 individuals in the school

Monitoring inspections that are deemed to be graded inspections

136. This section outlines the circumstances in which a monitoring inspection may be deemed to be a graded inspection. The policy and methodology for graded inspections are set out in the school inspection handbook.

137. If a monitoring inspection has been deemed to be a graded inspection and the judgement is that the school has serious weaknesses or requires special measures, the Secretary of State must be informed.

Deeming of monitoring inspections of schools that are not in a category of concern

138. Where the lead inspector has significant concerns about a school, they may deem the monitoring inspection to be a graded inspection.

139. In exceptional circumstances, where the concerns are such that the school requires an immediate graded inspection, the monitoring inspection may be deemed to be a graded inspection, usually within 48 hours. Where the lead inspector finds that the school would be very likely to be judged good or better for all key and provision judgements if a graded inspection were held, they may also choose to deem that monitoring inspection a graded inspection. Where this is the case, inspectors will inform the school straight away. The graded inspection will usually take place within 4 weeks. Inspectors will make all the judgements required by the evaluation schedule and will produce a graded inspection report. Where necessary, more inspectors may be deployed to complete the inspection.

Deeming of monitoring inspections of schools with serious weaknesses

140. Where inspectors are satisfied that the school is making sufficient progress for the likely removal of the serious weaknesses designation, they will take the decision to deem the monitoring inspection to be a graded inspection. This may result in the school being judged as no longer having serious weaknesses. Where a monitoring inspection identifies significant concerns about aspects of the school's performance that were not identified in the previous graded inspection or any earlier monitoring inspections, inspectors must consider these and they will affect the judgement about the progress made by the school.

141. When the serious weaknesses designation is removed, whether through a monitoring inspection deemed to be a graded inspection or when the next graded inspection takes place, the lead inspector must, on the final day of the inspection, notify Ofsted's relevant regional duty desk.

142. The 'Information about this inspection' section of the report must include the statement:

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection to be a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

143. Where the graded inspection team has reached the judgement that the school no longer has serious weaknesses, the oral feedback and written report must include the formal statement that:

In accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

144. The introduction to the report should explain why the school was inspected. For example:

When xx school was inspected in xx 20xx, it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Subsequently, the school was inspected on xxx occasions. At the last monitoring inspection, leaders were judged to have made progress to improve the school, but more work was necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

Or

When xx school was inspected in xx 20xx, it was judged to have serious weaknesses. Subsequently, the school was inspected on xxx occasions. At the last monitoring inspection, leaders were judged to have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

Deeming of monitoring inspections of schools that require special measures

145. When it is judged that the school no longer requires special measures, the monitoring inspection is deemed to be a graded inspection. A full inspection report must be written and published in accordance with the [school inspection handbook](#).

146. The school details page of the report must include the statement:

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was deemed to be a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

147. The introduction to the report should explain why the school was inspected. For example:

When xx school was inspected in xx 20xx, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on xxx occasions. At the last monitoring inspection, leaders were judged to have made progress to improve the school, but more work was necessary for the category of concern to be removed.

Or

When xx school was inspected in xx 20xx, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on xxx occasions. At the last monitoring inspection, leaders were judged to have made insufficient progress to improve the school.

148. A report that removes the special measures judgement should include the following statement in accordance with the graded report template guidance:

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

After the monitoring inspection visit

The monitoring inspection report letters

149. The school will receive a short monitoring report, which we will publish on [our reports website](#).

150. All monitoring inspection reports will set out an evaluation of whether all leaders and governors/trustees have made progress to ensure that pupils receive a good quality of education, and particularly whether they are building or adopting an effective curriculum.

151. In addition, for schools in a category of concern, the report will include information on the quality of the school, trust or local authority's improvement plans and, where applicable, the impact of any support provided to the school.

152. For schools that require special measures, the report will also include a judgement about whether the school may employ ECTs (early career teachers).

Arrangements for publishing the report

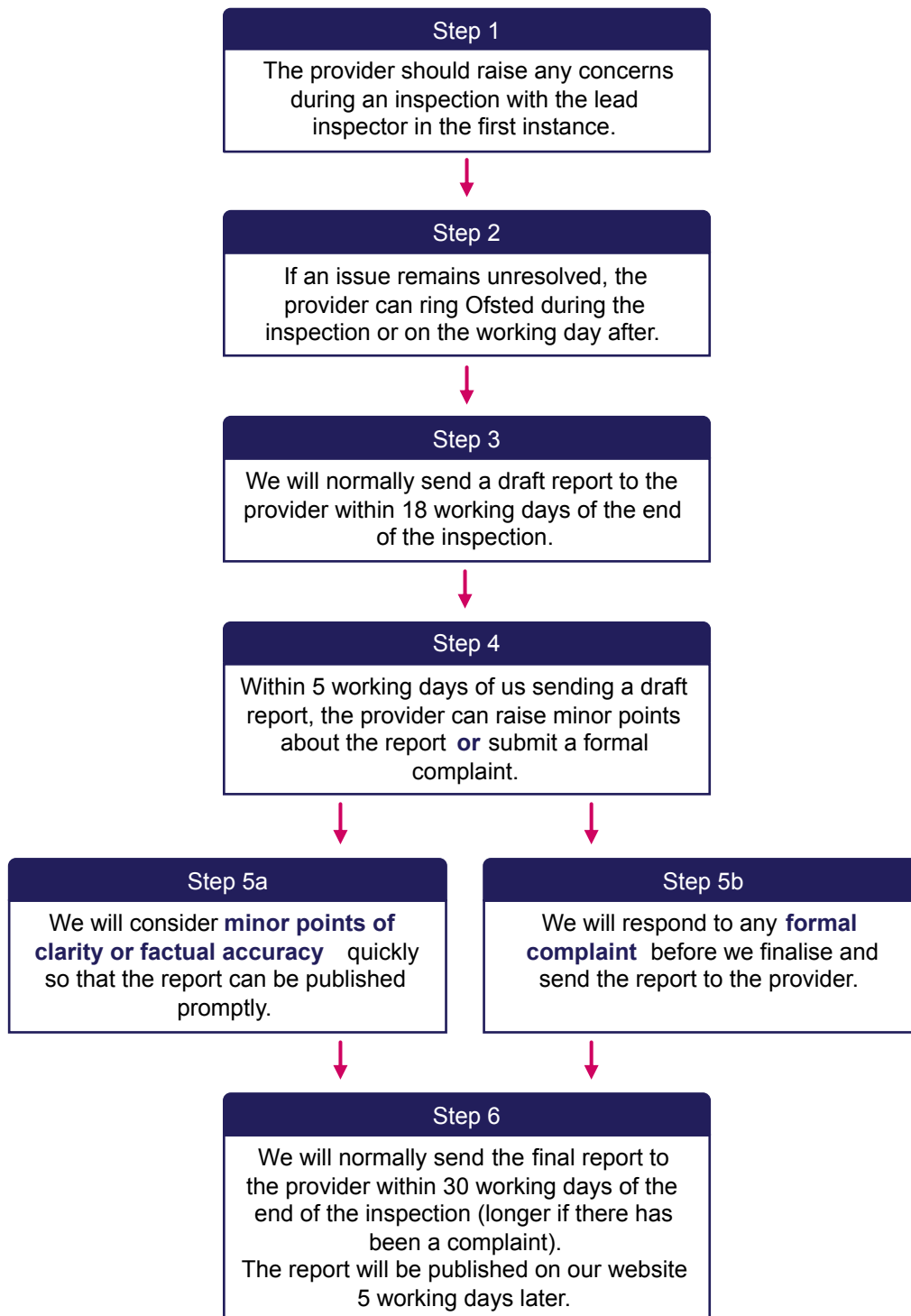
153. The lead inspector is responsible for writing the inspection report and submitting the evidence to Ofsted shortly after the inspection ends. The text of the report should explain the judgements and reflect the evidence. The findings in the report should be consistent with the feedback given to the school at the end of the inspection.

154. Inspection reports are sent to the school following moderation and quality assurance. We aim to send reports to schools as quickly as reasonably possible. In most circumstances, we will send the draft report to the school within 18 working days from the end of the inspection.

155. The school will have 5 working days to comment on the draft report. The school can highlight minor points relating to the clarity and/or factual accuracy of the report, or it can submit a formal complaint seeking a review of the inspection process, including the judgements made or concerns about inspector conduct. If it only submits minor points of clarity or factual accuracy, we will consider and respond to these when we share the final report with the school. This will normally be within 30 working days of the end of the inspection. As set out in paragraph 128, we expect leaders to share the inspection outcomes and findings with governors/trustees and whoever they deem appropriate. The outcomes and findings should be shared with governors/trustees, irrespective of whether they attended the meeting, and irrespective of what other role they may hold (for example, a teacher governor). Leaders may also share inspection outcomes, in confidence, with others not involved in the school, provided the information is not made public or shared with parents. This may include leaders' colleagues, family members, medical advisers, and/or their wider support group. We may also send the draft report to the DfE (Department for Education) and other bodies. This will only take place following moderation or quality assurance.

156. If the school wishes to make a formal complaint, we will follow the process set out in our published complaints procedure. We will respond to any complaint before we finalise and send the report to the school. If the school has previously chosen to highlight some minor points of clarity or factual accuracy on the draft inspection report, it will not normally be able to submit a formal complaint or challenge later. We will publish the final report on our reports website 5 working days after sending it to the school.

Figure 1: Ofsted's post-inspection and complaints procedure



The inspection evidence base

157. The evidence base for the inspection must be retained in line with our published privacy notice.

Quality assurance and complaints

158. All inspectors are responsible for the quality of their work. The lead inspector must ensure that inspections are carried out in accordance with the principles of inspection and the [code of conduct](#).

159. We monitor the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes and HMI/Senior HMI visit some schools, or monitor remotely to quality assure inspections. We may also evaluate the quality of an inspection evidence base. The lead inspector will be responsible for giving team inspectors feedback about the quality of their work and their conduct. In very rare circumstances, if we find a weakness in the inspection process, we may carry out a further visit to [gather additional evidence](#).

160. We invite all schools to take part in a voluntary post-inspection survey in order to contribute to inspection development. The link for this survey is provided with the final inspection report to the school.

Handling concerns and complaints

161. The great majority of our work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise during the inspection, they should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible, in order to resolve issues before the on-site inspection activity is completed. Any concerns raised, and actions taken, will be recorded in the inspection evidence. If there are any concerns that are not possible to resolve with the lead inspector during the inspection, the headteacher, another senior leader, the local authority or a trust representative can contact a senior Ofsted leader using the number provided as part of the notification process. In exceptional circumstances, this might lead to the inspection being paused (see [pausing inspections](#)).

162. If an issue remains unresolved, the school or responsible body can contact Ofsted on the working day after the end of the inspection. This will be an opportunity for the school to raise informal concerns about the inspection process or outcomes, ask about next steps or highlight information that they feel was not fully considered during the inspection. This will be directed to a senior inspector who is independent of the inspection to discuss and to resolve, where appropriate, at the earliest opportunity.

163. If it is not possible to resolve concerns during the inspection or through a telephone call the day after the inspection, the school may wish to lodge a formal complaint when it receives the draft report. The lead inspector will ensure that the school is informed that it is able to make a formal complaint and that [information about how to complain is available on GOV.UK](#).

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