

## School Inspection Update

March 2015 | Issue: 2

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### Message to inspectors from the National Director, Schools

Welcome to issue 2 of *School Inspection Update*. I hope the articles in this latest edition are helpful in keeping you up to date on the issues arising since I last wrote to you.

As part of our on-going evaluation process (following the revision of the *School inspection handbook* from September 2014) a second review has been carried out to assess the impact of policy on inspection practice, drawing on reports and evidence bases from inspections that took place during the second half of the autumn term.

Following this second review, can I please remind you all to place greater emphasis, in line with the handbook changes from September, on the following areas in section 5 inspection reports.

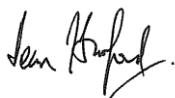
- The impact of assessment and the school's curriculum: the strongest reporting focuses on evaluation and not description, making clear why the contribution of the curriculum and assessment to pupils' achievement is effective or not.
- While it is good that careers guidance is achieving greater prominence in reporting, inspectors need to evaluate and comment on this crucial area where it is weak, not just where it is effective.
- How well the school promotes pupils' behaviour and safety: please think about the breadth of evidence needed to report in a rounded way on this important area, taking account of the contribution of the school's ethos to good behaviour. This is particularly important when these aspects are graded more highly than the school's overall effectiveness. The best reporting also gets underneath the culture of safeguarding at the school, reporting the impact of the school's approach to safeguarding in the widest sense, portraying the provision convincingly in ways that extend beyond a sense of compliance to requirements.
- The effectiveness of provision in the sixth form: when this is judged to be better/worse than the overall effectiveness of the school, please be clear as to why this is the case. Inspectors should also ensure they consider vocational provision where it is offered, not just academic courses.

I also want to take this opportunity to raise the issue of marking. I recognise that marking and feedback to pupils, both written and oral, are important aspects of assessment. However, as inspectors we should not expect to see any specific frequency, type or volume of marking and feedback; these are for the school to decide through its assessment policy. Marking and feedback should be consistent with that policy, which may cater for different subjects and different age groups of pupils in different ways, in order to promote learning effectively. These activities need to be useful for pupils and sustainable for teachers. As a



result, the [clarification document](#) has been amended to reflect this. If it is necessary to identify marking/feedback as an area for improvement for a school, inspectors must pay careful attention to the way recommendations are written to ensure that these do not drive unnecessary workload for teachers.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean Harford".

**Sean Harford HMI**  
**National Director, Schools**

### Consistently low attendance

The 2013/14 attendance figures for the lowest 10% of schools are [now available](#). They are 94.9% in primary schools and 93.4% in secondary schools. When considering whether a school's attendance is consistently low and showing little sign of sustained improvement (an indicator for inadequate behaviour and safety), it should be compared with the 2013/14 figures.

### 2014 floor standards

The primary school floor standards for 2014 were published by the DfE alongside the primary school performance tables on 11 December 2014 (in section 7 of Main text: [SFR50/2014](#)). When drafting the 'Information about this school' in reports, inspectors should now compare a school's 2014 performance against the 2014 floor standards. For 2014 performance, a primary school is deemed to be below the floor standards when **all** of these criteria apply:

- fewer than 65% of pupils achieve Level 4 or above in all of reading, writing and mathematics
- fewer than the median percentage (94%) make expected progress in reading
- fewer than the median percentage (96%) make expected progress in writing
- fewer than the median percentage (93%) make expected progress in mathematics.

Results of English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests will not be taken into account in the floor standards. Since 2013, the attainment threshold has risen from 60% to 65% and the median percentage for each subject has also increased. Only state-funded mainstream schools with 11 or more eligible pupils are included in the floor standard calculations (Quality and methodology information: [SFR50/2014](#)).

The secondary school floor standards for 2014 were published by the DfE alongside the secondary school performance tables on 29 January 2015 (in section 4.4 of Main text: [SFR02/15](#)). When drafting the 'Information about this school' in reports, inspectors should now compare a school's 2014 performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 against the 2014 floor standards. For 2014 performance, a secondary school is deemed to be below the floor standards when **all** of these criteria apply:

- fewer than 40% of pupils achieve five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics GCSEs
- fewer than the median percentage (74%) make expected progress in English
- fewer than the median percentage (67%) make expected progress in mathematics.

It is not possible to compare last year's figures with this year's due to the [substantial changes](#) which have affected the calculation of the 2014 Key Stage 4 performance measures. Schools are eligible for inclusion in the floor standard measure if they are a state-funded mainstream school, are open (including those proposed to close) and had more than 10 pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 (Main text: [SFR02/15](#)).

### Progress 8 opt in

In February 2015, the DfE sent every secondary school data indicating how it would have performed against Progress 8 for its 2014 results ('shadow Progress 8 data'). This information is intended to help each school plan for the new performance measures and decide whether to opt in to the new accountability system based on Progress 8 one year early, in 2015. The window for schools to opt in closes at the end of June 2015. Schools must obtain the agreement of their governing bodies before opting in. Information on Progress 8, including updated DfE guidance and the terms and conditions for early opt-in, is [here](#).

Shadow Progress 8 data for 2014 results have not been provided to Ofsted and must not be requested by inspectors, although schools of course may choose to discuss the data with inspectors. The 2014 shadow data reflects curriculum decisions that schools made before the introduction of Progress 8 and so does not give an accurate indication of how results will look when the new measure is implemented for all schools in 2016.

For the 2015 results, all schools will have access to their own Progress 8 data, whether or not they have opted in. Inspectors will take into account 2015 Progress 8 data for schools that have opted in, along with a range of other data. Inspectors will not take into account 2015 Progress 8 data for schools that have not opted in, unless the school chooses to show the data to them.

### Inspection of school and academy sixth forms

#### *Interim minimum standards*

The 2014 performance tables were published on 29 January 2015. Inspectors should now compare a school's 2014 performance against the 2014 16-19 interim minimum standards. A school may fail to meet the vocational minimum standard, the academic minimum standard or both. A school sixth form, a sixth form college and a general FE college will be seen as underperforming if its 2014 results show that fewer than 45% of students achieve an average point score per entry in:

- vocational qualifications of 194 points
- academic qualifications of 172 points.

Since 2013, the point scores have remained the same but the percentage of students has been raised from 40% to 45%. Any provider with fewer than 11 students taking either vocational or academic qualifications will be excluded from the corresponding minimum standard.

The 2014 unvalidated sixth form PANDA contains the school's performance against the 2014 minimum standards. This information for each school is published in the interim minimum standards file in the downloads section of the DfE [performance tables](#) website.

For a sixth form that does not meet one of the minimum standards, the DfE will give notice to the school that its performance is inadequate and needs to improve, as stated [here](#). The local authority should issue a warning notice unless there is a particular reason not to do so (see [Schools causing concern statutory guidance for local authorities, January 2015](#)). In the *School inspection handbook*, the grade descriptors for inadequate sixth form provision include 'achievement does not meet the current national 16-19 minimum standards'. If a school sixth form, including academy sixth form and 16 to 19 academy, is judged inadequate, the Regional School Commissioner will consider appropriate improvement action, and the local authority should issue a warning notice to a local authority maintained school.

### ***Sixth form PANDA and achievement***

The 2013/14 sixth form PANDA based on unvalidated data has been released. Inspectors should consider this along with the level 3 value added reports, performance tables, data provided by the school and inspection evidence. They should take account of progress from different starting points shown in the level 3 valued added subject data, including for the most able students. When evaluating achievement, inspectors should give due weight to retention, and consider how this relates to curriculum provision and careers guidance, explaining any links in the report. Until the validated 2013/14 PANDA is available, inspectors should continue to take into account the 2012/13 PANDA data on retention for GCE qualifications alongside more recent information provided by the school on retention for subjects and courses. Inspectors should also continue to use the 2012/13 PANDA data on GCSE English and mathematics transition alongside more recent information provided by the school when evaluating the progress of students who joined the sixth form without grade C in these subjects. Inspectors should explain any difference between the evaluation of achievement and indications in the published data.

### ***Decoupling of A and AS levels***

Changes to A and AS level qualifications are phased over three years, with the first subjects being taught from September 2015 and some decisions still to be made. The current situation can be found on the [Ofqual website](#). Inspectors should be familiar with the [guidance](#) published in February 2015 by the Skills Funding Agency which includes a useful set of examples of how students can be enrolled each year on combinations of AS and A level courses. The DfE and Association of Colleges have produced [information for schools](#) and colleges on implementing the A level reforms. Inspectors should check how well schools are preparing for the changes to enable them to meet the needs of their students.

## Maintaining confidentiality during inspection

Inspectors are reminded to ensure that all feedback from parents, pupils and staff remains anonymous, but also ensure that any concerns about safeguarding are reported to the appropriate agency. It is essential to maintain purposeful dialogue during feedback and communicate judgements clearly, frankly and sensitively without compromising the identity of contributors. Further details are available in paragraphs 63 and 64 of *The framework for school inspection*.

## Representation from local authorities, academy chains or other relevant responsible bodies

The *School inspection handbook* asks inspectors to:

- request either a face-to-face meeting or a telephone call with a representative from the local authority, academy chain or other relevant responsible body; this does not apply to stand-alone academy converters
- request that, where possible, a representative from the local authority, academy chain or other relevant responsible body is present at the inspection feedback; this does not apply to stand-alone academy converters.

In the case of free schools, studio schools and UTCs, the 'other relevant responsible body' may be the Education Adviser appointed by the DfE to work with the school. Inspectors should consider inviting these colleagues to attend, because in doing so we are providing the DfE the opportunity to support and challenge such schools in the same way as the local authority would a maintained school or an academy trust one of its schools. However, such meetings, whether local authority, academy trust or Education Adviser is invited, are not for such representatives to challenge judgements or interfere with the inspection process.

## Free school, studio school and UTC notifications

Ofsted has an agreement with the DfE to notify it of any inspections, including monitoring visits, of academies, including free schools, studio schools and UTCs. Inspection service providers should ensure that they notify the DfE of inspections **and** the publication of reports using the following addresses:

- Free schools, UTCs and Studio Schools - [open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:open.FREESCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk)
- Academies - [CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CausingConcern.SCHOOLS@education.gsi.gov.uk)

When completing reports, lead inspectors **must not** delete the appropriate address.

## Inspections of Early Years Initial Teacher Training (ITT) leading to Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS)

The Secretary of State for Education has asked Ofsted to extend its initial teacher education (ITE) inspection remit to include the inspection of Early Years Initial Teacher Training (ITT). This means that providers of training leading to the award of Early Years Teacher Status (EYTS) (for those working with children from Birth to 5) will be inspected in exactly the same

way, alongside those offering QTS and HEI validated FE teacher training, from April 2015. This will ensure a more streamlined approach for initial teacher training providers who will be subject to one quality inspection arrangement for all of their initial teacher training provision. The ITE inspection handbook will be amended to reflect this change and republished in March 2015.

ITE inspections take place in a two-staged process with inspectors visiting schools, colleges and settings in the summer term to observe trainees and focus on the quality of training and in the autumn term to observe newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and former trainees and focus on how well prepared they were by their training for teaching and employment.

### Disqualification by association – trainee teachers

The Childcare Act 2006 disqualifies certain people from providing early years and childcare provision, being involved in the management of such provision, or employing someone who is disqualified. The law also provides that an individual is disqualified if he or she lives in the same household as a disqualified person or in a household where a disqualified person is employed. In the case of trainee teachers on placement, risk assessment is not formally required, unless the trainee is employed and paid directly by the school (as in paragraph 14 of the DfE guidance issued February 15). It is up to the school offering the placement to review the available information and decide whether or not any risk assessment is needed. The training provider must be open about any information they hold on their students and share it appropriately before the student begins any placement. For further guidance, please refer to paragraph 71 of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.

### Workload challenge

The Workload Challenge consultation, conducted by the DfE between 22 October and 21 November 2014, asked teachers and leaders about 'unnecessary and unproductive' workloads within schools. 53% of the sample respondents said that the burden of their workload was created by accountability or perceived pressures of Ofsted. As a result, the following actions for Ofsted have been put forward in the government's response to the Workload Challenge:

- Clarification from Ofsted about what is and is not required by inspectors
- Review of how Ofsted reports are written to avoid creating 'fads' in certain practices
- Shorter Ofsted inspections of good schools from September 2015
- Ofsted to consider how to further simplify and shorten the *School inspection handbook* for September 2016, and continue to work to improve the quality of inspections.

In addition, Ofsted has committed not to make substantive changes to the handbook or framework during the academic year, except where changes to statute or statutory guidance make it necessary.

The government's [full response to the consultation](#) can be accessed on GOV.UK



## Ofsted content on GOV.UK

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## Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

The Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill has completed its passage through Parliament and was granted Royal Assent on 21 February 2015. The Act places a statutory duty on named organisations, including schools, to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Monitoring and enforcement primarily will be through existing inspection mechanisms.

Ofsted already inspects how well schools carry out their safeguarding and other duties. In particular, inspectors consider the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements to ensure that there is safe recruitment and that all pupils are safe. This includes the approach to keeping pupils safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, and what is done when it is suspected that pupils are vulnerable to these. Inspectors also consider how well leadership and management in schools ensure that the curriculum: prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life in modern Britain; actively promotes fundamental British values; and promotes tolerance of and respect for all groups of people through the effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

## Online safety – protecting our children from radicalisation and extremism

The UK Safer Internet Centre in collaboration with the Home Office and the DfE has published a special bulletin on radicalisation and extremism to all Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) across the UK. The bulletin echoes the heightened level of concerns particularly in response to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria and also highlights the unprecedented online threat posed to children across the UK. The UK's terror threat level remains 'severe' after it was raised from 'substantial' in response to recent conflicts in the Middle East. While many LSCBs have well established PREVENT programmes, the bulletin

emphasises that these dangers are on a much broader scale and encourages all LSCBs to consider these recent and changing risks. The full bulletin is available [here](#).

### **Pupil premium reviews**

A [guide for effective pupil premium reviews](#) has been developed by the Teaching Schools Council working with Sir John Dunford, Pupil Premium Champion. Inspectors should familiarise themselves with the guide, so that they are aware of its contents and can signpost it to schools.

It has been developed for system leaders and school leaders, and provides a framework which reviewers and supported schools can use to support pupil premium reviews. The guide sets out a six-step process for a review, including self-evaluation by the supported school and the creation of an action plan for the school by the reviewer. There are also case studies from a reviewer and three schools that have previously commissioned reviews.

### **PE and Sport Premium:**

#### **Reporting on the use of PE and sport funding in primary school inspections**

A review of recently published reports has raised concerns about inspecting the use of PE and Sport Premium. Not all inspectors are reporting on how effectively school leaders are spending this funding, or the difference it is making to the quality of primary PE and school sport provision.

Inspectors are required to report upon:

How effectively the school uses the primary school PE and Sport Premium to improve the quality and breadth of PE and sport provision. This includes increasing participation in PE and sport so that all pupils develop healthy lifestyles and reach the performance levels they are capable of. This must be recorded and coded on an evidence form, and summarised in the report (*School inspection handbook*).

Reports must include a clear judgement about how effectively school leaders are spending their funding including the reasons why, and what they are aiming to achieve. Inspectors must also comment on the impact this funding is having since its introduction in 2013, on improving the quality of PE teaching, raising pupils' participation and performance in sport, and promoting their physical health.

This judgement should be based on firm evidence gained from observing pupils in PE lessons or after school clubs, in discussions with school leaders and governors, and with pupils. Inspectors are reminded to check details of a school's PE and sport provision on their website prior to an inspection.

### **Early years pupil premium (EYPP)**

The DfE has published [guidance](#) on the early years pupil premium (EYPP) which will be rolled out nationally from April 2015. This is in addition to the pupil premium for children from Reception to Year 11. The EYPP is additional funding for early years settings to support the education of disadvantaged 3 and 4 year olds and therefore will affect schools where there is nursery provision for these ages of children. The EYPP is currently being trialled in the



following seven local authorities; Blackpool, Bristol, Cambridgeshire, North Yorkshire, Northamptonshire, Hackney and Stoke-on-Trent.

### **Change to the persistent absence threshold from school year 2015/16**

From the beginning of the academic year 2015/16, the government is reducing the threshold for persistent absence from 15% to 10%. For the 2014/15 academic year, the DfE will publish persistent absence levels at both 15% and 10%. This information is in the January 2015 [School census guidance](#) and was sent to local authorities via the DfE's December email.

### **School exclusion**

In February 2015, the DfE published [statutory guidance](#) on the exclusion of pupils from local authority maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units. This guide is for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion and explains the powers and duties of bodies.

### **Statutory guidance on school teachers' pay and conditions**

The latest [statutory guidance](#) on school teachers' pay and conditions was published in September 2014. It includes the Teachers' Standards at Annex 1.

### **Making the best use of teaching assistants**

The Education Endowment Foundation has published new guidance to support schools to unlock the potential of teaching assistants (TA) in English schools.

The guidance makes seven evidence-based recommendations to help schools maximise the impact of teaching assistants.

The guidance is available [here](#).