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Guidance

# Ofsted inspections: myths

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The purpose of this document is to confirm facts about the requirements of Ofsted and to dispel myths that can result in unnecessary workloads in schools. It should be read alongside the School inspection handbook (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015>).

It is intended to highlight specific practices that are not required by Ofsted. Inspectors must not advocate a particular method of planning, teaching or assessment. It is up to schools themselves to determine their practices and for leadership teams to justify these on their own merits rather than by reference to the inspection handbook.

## **1. Lesson planning**

Ofsted does not require schools to provide individual lesson plans to inspectors. Equally, Ofsted does not require schools to provide previous lesson plans.

Ofsted does not specify how planning should be set out, the length of time it should take or the amount of detail it should contain. Inspectors are interested in the effectiveness of planning rather than the form it takes.

Ofsted does not expect tutor groups/form time to include literacy, numeracy or other learning sessions. Schools can use form time as they wish.

## **2. Self-evaluation**

Ofsted does not require self-evaluation to be graded or provided in a specific format. Any assessment that is provided should be part of the school's business processes and not generated solely for inspection purposes.

## **3. Grading of lessons**

Ofsted does not award a grade for the quality of teaching or outcomes in the individual lessons visited. Inspectors do not grade individual lessons. Ofsted does not expect schools to use the Ofsted evaluation schedule to grade teaching or individual lessons.

## **4. Lesson observations**

Ofsted does not require schools to undertake a specified amount of lesson observation.

Ofsted does not expect schools to provide specific details of the pay grade of individual teachers who are observed during inspection.

## **5. Pupils' work**

Ofsted does not expect to see a particular frequency or quantity of work in pupils' books or folders. Ofsted recognises that the amount of work in books and folders will depend on the subject being studied and the age and ability of the pupils.

Ofsted recognises that marking and feedback to pupils, both written and oral, are important aspects of assessment. However, Ofsted does 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 be effective and efficient in promoting learning.

While inspectors will consider how written and oral feedback is used to promote learning, Ofsted does not expect to see any written record of oral feedback provided to pupils by teachers.

If it is necessary for inspectors to identify marking as an area for improvement for a school, they will pay careful attention to the way recommendations are written to ensure that these do not drive unnecessary workload for teachers.

## **6. Evidence for inspection**

Ofsted does not expect schools to provide evidence for inspection beyond that set out in this inspection handbook.

Ofsted will take a range of evidence into account when making judgements, including published performance data, the school's in-year performance information and work in pupils' books and folders, including that held in electronic form. However, unnecessary or extensive collections of marked pupils' work are not required for inspection.

Ofsted does not expect performance and pupil-tracking information to be presented in a particular format. Such information should be provided to inspectors in the format that the school would ordinarily use to monitor the progress of pupils in that school.

Inspectors will consider performance information, data and analysis in whatever format the school uses. There are no predetermined expectations on how schools present performance information or data.

Ofsted does not require teachers to undertake additional work or to ask pupils to undertake work specifically for the inspection.

Ofsted will usually expect to see evidence of the monitoring of teaching and learning and its link to teachers' professional development and the teachers' standards, but this should be the information that the school uses routinely and not additional evidence generated for inspection.

Ofsted does not require schools to provide evidence for each teacher for each of the bulleted sub-headings in the teachers' standards.

Ofsted does not expect to see photographic evidence of pupil's work. Ofsted is very aware of teachers' workload and inspectors are happy to speak to pupils during an inspection about what they have learned.

Ofsted does not require schools to hold on to books and other examples of pupils' work for pupils who left school the previous year.

Ofsted does not require schools to predict their attainment and progress scores. It is impossible to predict attainment and progress as examination and test results for each cohort are compared nationally and this cannot be done until after the examinations or tests.

Attainment of past pupils does not determine inspection outcomes. Published attainment data can inform inspectors' key lines of enquiry, and inspectors take published data into account in evaluating outcomes. However, in reaching a judgement about outcomes, inspectors will give most weight to progress, particularly the progress of pupils currently in the school.

There is no expectation about how primary schools should carry out assessment or record pupils' achievements in any subject, including foundation subjects. Schools will not be marked down because they are not 'tracking' science and foundation subjects in the same ways that they may be doing in English and mathematics.

The overall effectiveness judgement for an inspection does not predetermine the outcome of any subsequent inspection.

## **7. Performance management**

Inspectors will not check on the process for the performance management arrangements for school leaders and staff and Ofsted does not require schools to provide anonymised lists of teachers meeting or not meeting performance thresholds for pay progression.

Ofsted does not expect headteacher performance objectives to include targets relating to the proportion of good or better teaching. Ofsted does not have specific expectations about the content of, or approach to, headteacher performance management.

Inspectors do not expect school leaders to set teacher performance targets based on commercially produced predictions of pupil achievement, or any other data set, from which they would then hold teachers to account.

There is no expectation that schools need to have policies relating to staff behaviour in any particular format. Inspectors will not expect to see a separate code of conduct document and Ofsted does not have any specific expectation as to the content of any such policy.

## **8. Safeguarding**

There is no expectation or statutory requirement for the routine checking of personnel files by inspectors. Inspectors may look at a small sample of personnel records. Ofsted does not have expectations about the format in which staff records are maintained.

Ofsted does not expect schools to retrospectively apply for references for staff appointed prior to and continuously employed since the introduction of the vetting and barring requirements.

Ofsted does not expect schools to take any specific set of steps about site security. Schools should assess the risks posed within their own context and take appropriate and proportionate steps to keep children safe. In particular, inspectors do not have a pre-determined view on the need for perimeter fences. They will consider each school's site security on its own merits.

## **9. Statutory provisions**

Ofsted will report on any failure to comply with statutory arrangements, including those relating to the workforce, where these form part of the inspection framework and evaluation schedule (Part 2 of the 'School inspection handbook (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015>)).

## **10. Leadership and governance**

As many governors or trustees as possible are invited to meet inspectors during an inspection.

For academies, inspectors meet those directly responsible for management and governance, including the CEO/their delegate (or equivalent), the chair of the board of trustees and other trustees.

An inspector may talk to the chair of governors by telephone if s/he is unable to attend a face-to-face meeting with the inspector in school.

For academies, the headteacher and CEO/their delegate (or equivalent) are invited to observe the inspectors' final team meeting.

All those responsible for governance need to know the outcome of the inspection as soon as possible. Individual governor representatives must keep the outcomes confidential until the school has received the final inspection report.

## **11. The curriculum**

Inspectors will discuss with school leaders their curriculum vision and ambitions for their pupils, including consideration of EBacc subjects as part of their curriculum offer.

Inspectors will not expect all schools to be at similar stages of EBacc implementation, nor will inspectors pay particular attention to where the school is currently. There is no benchmark or single route to the successful implementation of a curriculum with the EBacc at its core, although inspectors will evaluate how a school's curriculum plans contribute to the government's ambition.

Inspectors will not expect school leaders to have developed and to present separate plans about EBacc, or to provide additional information outside of their normal curriculum planning.