

# School inspection updates

Autumn 2023





## Outline of session

- The current context
- Safeguarding
- Inspection timings
- Leadership and governance
- Other policy updates



# The current context

# Inspecting in a post-COVID context

- We recognise that this is a very difficult time to be a school leader.
- Some children and families have struggled to adjust to normal routines. Some have mental health issues and external support services are under pressure.
- Maintaining good attendance has become more challenging.
- Many headteachers point to an ongoing impact on behaviour.
- This is recognised by inspectors, who are interested in how leaders are responding.



# Schools can't be everything to everyone

To what extent have leaders done all that can be reasonably expected in the time available and circumstances in which they work?



# Continuous improvement

- The vast majority of our work is carried out smoothly and without issue.
- But we are listening to where we can improve and where we need to provide more reassurance.
- We want to make inspection as positive an experience for school leaders and teachers as it can be.





# Safeguarding

# Culture of safeguarding

- In our handbook, we have updated our definition of a culture of safeguarding.
- A key update is the emphasis on an open and positive culture.
- Safeguarding is about protecting children from serious harm.
- Inspectors will look beyond ensuring that schools meet statutory requirements.





# Inspecting safeguarding

- The inspecting **safeguarding guidance** has been incorporated into the handbook.
- Be aware of the **KCSIE** changes (Sep 2023).
- We have clarified what we mean by **ineffective** safeguarding.
- We have included a definition about a safeguarding '**culture**'. This makes clear that we expect schools to have an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first and protects them from serious harm. (para 367)
- We have added more clarity on what we mean when we say that schools need to make **minor** safeguarding improvements - that do not have an immediate impact on the safety of pupils. Schools could still be judged as good or better.
- Changes to **report writing**
- Schools judged **inadequate** solely due to ineffective safeguarding will have an early monitoring inspection. This will normally take place around 12 school weeks from when the graded inspection took place.

**Webinar** – 18 October [16:30 – 17:30] [Registration \(gotowebinar.com\)](https://gotowebinar.com)

# Ineffective safeguarding



Examples include:

- Insufficient action being taken to remedy weaknesses following a serious failure of safeguarding arrangements.
- Safeguarding allegations about staff members not being handled appropriately.
- Clear evidence of serious failures in safeguarding practice that lead pupils or particular groups of pupils to not be safe in school.
- Statutory requirements, such as breaches of the requirements for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, not being met.



## Early monitoring inspections

- If a school is judged to have ineffective safeguarding but all other inspection judgements are good or better, we will return by the end of the next term.
- These inspections will broadly follow the processes used for other monitoring inspections but will predominantly focus on whether safeguarding is now effective.
- These inspections have 3 possible outcomes depending on whether safeguarding is subsequently deemed effective.

# Minor improvements

- We have added a paragraph to our handbook on minor safeguarding improvements.
- This clarifies that if inspectors identify minor improvements to a school's safeguarding practice during an inspection then they will give the school a chance to rectify these before the end of the inspection.
- These will be areas where there is little to no impact on children and they will not be indicative of wider cultural issues.



# The single central record

- Inspectors use 'Keeping children safe in education' to check the single central record.
- We check the record early in the inspection to provide time for any issues to be potentially rectified.
- The DfE's single central webinar is a very useful source of reference and is used by inspectors in our training too.
- Remember, the SCR is an important safety mechanism for guarding against predatory adults who pose risks to children.





# Inspection timings

## Normally...

- A school judged **outstanding** or **good** will usually be inspected within the 4 academic years following its last inspection.
- A school judged **requires improvement** or **inadequate** will usually be inspected within two and a half years.



## However....

There are several reasons why the picture is more complicated:

- the pause to inspections during the pandemic meant that we have extended the period for many schools
- in November 2020, the government lifted the inspection exemption for outstanding schools
- the government has also asked us to inspect every school at least once before August 2025.





# The timing of inspections (paras 34-42)

- Normally, a G1 or G2 school will usually be inspected every 4 academic years
- A school judged RI or inadequate will usually be inspected within two and a half years
- New schools – normally within third year of operation
- However, the picture is currently a bit more complicated and this can affect timing:
  - Impact of the pandemic for some schools
  - changes in relation to previously exempt schools
  - the government has asked us to inspect every school at least once by July 2025
  - RAAC and implications if a school is on the DfE published list

## See links:

[School inspection handbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114122/school-inspection-handbook-2019.pdf) paras 34-42

[When will my school be inspected? - Ofsted: schools and further education & skills \(FES\) \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2022/09/20/when-will-my-school-be-inspected/)

[Ofsted statement for schools affected by RAAC - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-statement-for-schools-affected-by-raac)

## Further information

In our school inspection handbook, and in the June 2023 blog, we provide more detail on inspection timings for:

- Schools with a good or outstanding judgement who have had an ungraded inspection that recommended a follow-up graded inspection
- Schools with a good or outstanding judgement
- Schools with a requires improvement judgement
- Schools with an inadequate judgement
- Previously exempt schools
- New schools awaiting their first inspection
- Schools that have undergone a significant change





# Leadership and governance





## Trust updates

- Definitions
- We will make sure we meet with relevant leaders at all levels during an inspection.
- Inspectors must meet with the chair of the board of trustees when inspecting academies.



Other policy updates...



## Other updates to our guidance

- Updated code of conduct.
- Changes to the way we consider the impact of COVID-19.
- Attendance at feedback meetings.
- Sharing provisional outcomes.

# Attendance (see paras 292-295):



- We will expect attendance to be a **high priority** for leaders
- A **strong understanding of the causes** of absence, particularly for persistent and severe absence (*what analysis is the school are doing and how it is feeding into the overall approach for improving attendance?*)
- A **clear strategy** in place that takes account of those causes to improve attendance for all
- Attendance is **improving** towards and beyond national, pre-pandemic levels.

## See links:

- [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)
- [Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/toolkit-for-schools-communicating-with-families-to-support-attendance)
- [Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence)
- [Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence | Ofsted webinar – YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)
- **Webinar** – 19 October [16:30 - 17:30] [Registration \(gotowebinar.com\)](https://gotowebinar.com)



# Changes to the inspection handbook

- Code of conduct – clarifying providers for providers, leaders and inspectors (para 94)
- For academies, the CEO may attend team meeting or delegate (para 250)
- Clarification as to who can attend final feedback (para 150) sharing provisional judgements (para 151)
- Updates to the behaviour and attendance sections
- Clarification of 'disadvantaged': includes SEND, PP and those known to SC (para 18)
- When looking at reading, inspectors will focus on those most in need of help
- Greater clarification of what we mean by leaders and trust staff, e.g. chair
- Greater clarification of what we mean by capacity to improve (para 180)
- Clarification on school's obligations re separation by sex (para 355-358)

# Outstanding schools

- The bar has been raised – but it is achievable - outstanding does not mean perfection
- That being said – the judgement is challenging and exacting
- It is about performing exceptionally in an area, and this is consistent and secure
- Profile of Southwark inspections in 2022-2023
- We looked at London G1 primary schools inspected in two terms in the last academic year
  - Where they changed judgement or were at risk of declining – some common factors:  
curriculum planning / quality in subjects other than Eng or maths; reading / phonics / weaker readers; checking on pupils' understanding, knowledge; link between EY and KS1/2/ Staff training in relation to the curriculum / subject knowledge

# Myths

- Inspectors grade lessons and give individual feedback
- Inspectors use work scrutiny to evaluate teachers' marking
- Inspectors want to see lesson plans and detailed curriculum plans
- Deep dives are pre-determined
- Bullying among pupils has to be non-existent
- Inspectors look at the single central record early as it is the most important piece of safeguarding evidence
- There is a national quota for how many schools can be judged as outstanding
- Schools have to wait until the inspection is over if they want to raise concerns
- Headteachers are not allowed to tell anyone about their inspection outcome
- Most schools are unhappy with their inspection outcome and process

# Thank you

— ...



# Questions...

