

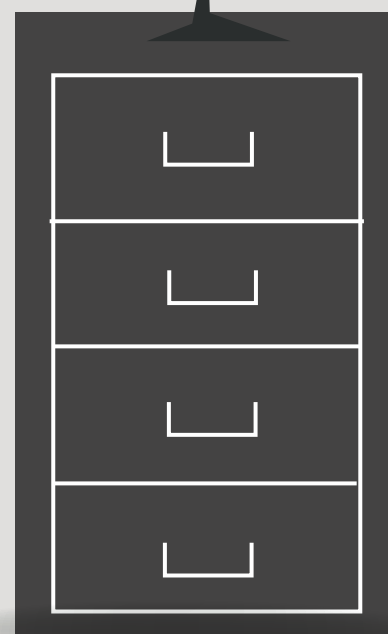


 **Pathways**

Revised
and updated
2017

A Guide to Preparing for Successful Inspection

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About the author

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Who is this guide for?

The guide is for anyone working in schools in the primary phase. Elements of it apply to classroom teachers and teaching assistants. It contains guidance on two distinct levels for middle and senior leaders. A section for governors emphasises the need for a strategic overview of the way the school is working. The sections of most interest to each of these groups are set out clearly on [page 3](#).

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

This guide is designed to support schools in understanding inspection and preparing for an inspection visit. Inspection findings have repeatedly shown that vision, rigour and consistency at all levels generate highly successful schools.

Achieving this does not happen overnight. A successful school needs to build up systematic ways of working, year in, year out, that drive improvement or the maintenance of very high achievement.

How to use this guide

The guide draws heavily on Ofsted's guidance for inspectors and interprets this in the context of a working primary school facing an inspection. The ideas and guidance it contains, however, are designed to be used over a period of time to establish the school firmly and permanently as an inspection-ready school.

This guide is best used to generate a common understanding of the inspection process among staff, either as a resource in itself, or through its use in professional development targeted at the four highlighted groups. In many schools sessions will be led in-house but external trainers may also bring a valuable alternative perspective. The guidance contains no quick fixes, but recommends rigour and systematic approaches that strengthen a school's ability to respond calmly, professionally and positively to an inspection.

A guide to the sections

Each of the sections sets out clearly what inspectors are looking for as they interpret Ofsted's inspection handbook and other guidance. Their expectations stem from three overarching themes, set out on [page 4](#), that are consistent in all parts of the inspection framework.

“We have developed a consistent and synchronised cycle of monitoring and evaluation which gives the school a rhythm and a structure. The cycle has ... always remained focused on pupils achieving the highest possible outcomes.”¹

Ofsted



Classroom practice

The first section focuses entirely on classroom practice, which is at the heart of any inspection. Dispelling some myths, it suggests how a focus on learning can pay dividends when planning. Much of this section also applies to teaching assistants (TAs) and their support work in classrooms.

Leadership responsibility

In primary schools, the allocation of leadership responsibilities, paid and unpaid, varies considerably with the size of the school. This guidance divides responsibilities into those that relate mainly to leadership of an element of the school (middle leaders) or mainly to whole-school responsibilities (senior leaders), but there will inevitably be some overlap. So a mathematics coordinator who is also a deputy head responsible for pupil welfare might dip into the sections for both middle and senior leaders for different parts of their role. The combination of the two sections covers the whole spectrum of primary leadership responsibilities.

The section on middle leadership has a strong emphasis on self-evaluation; to avoid repetition, this applies equally in the broader context to senior leaders and governors. The section on senior leadership has a strong emphasis on demonstrating the school's capacity to improve; again this is just as important for middle leaders.

Governance

The governing body holds the school to account for its performance, so there is a lot of overlap between governance and senior leadership in these areas. Governors may well wish to extend their involvement with the guidance beyond the section aimed specifically at them.

Teachers	Middle leaders	Senior leaders	Governors
	Governors might focus on these sections		
Senior leaders should cover all sections to gain a clear overview across the school			
Middle leaders might start on these sections and move on to the next			
Class teachers and TAs might start here			
Teachers	Middle leaders	Senior leaders	Governors



Overarching themes

Inspectors gather evidence on how well the school is doing. Time is short in an inspection so the more evidence there is of improvement, or that high standards and quality are being maintained, the better. Several themes are common to all aspects of inspection, whether about outcomes for learners, teaching, behaviour and welfare, or leadership and management.

Always consider impact

The school's capacity to improve further depends on its track record of success in improving achievement or maintaining it at a high level.

Prepare for inspection by setting out, in every context:

- ➔ what action the school has taken
- ➔ why this action was needed
- ➔ what impact this action had on teaching and achievement.

Judgements over time

Inspectors take account of pupils' outcomes and staff input over a period of time, not just during the inspection itself. Much of this evidence comes from pupils' recorded work in books or displays, and also from listening to pupils reading.

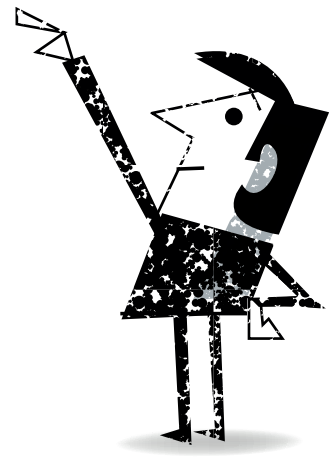
Make cumulative records available, remembering that, if the school sets its sights on a judgement of outstanding:

- ➔ consistency among staff over time, in all areas of practice and in all year groups, is a critical factor in the school's success
- ➔ consistently good teaching from year to year, with a good deal of it outstanding, is likely to be essential, but there is no expected percentage of outstanding teaching.

Combating disadvantage

The emphasis on different groups of pupils during an inspection is there because considerable government funding goes into supporting pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. A record of the achievement of pupils in any identifiable group may be needed in an inspection. Keep records of, for example, the attainment, progress and attendance of pupils with these characteristics:

- ➔ the full range of Special Educational Needs and children with disabilities (SEND)
- ➔ the identifiable range of ethnic and language backgrounds
- ➔ different ability groupings on entry
- ➔ disadvantaged pupils supported through the Pupil Premium.



Definitions of key terms

Achievement

Achievement is an overarching evaluation of how well pupils are doing, taking into account pupils' starting points, their capability, the progress they are making and the attainment they have reached. To report the evaluation, the Ofsted terms *outstanding*, *good*, *requires improvement* and *inadequate* are used when referring to the whole school or groups of pupils.

Pupil Premium

The *Pupil Premium* is additional government funding to combat disadvantage. Schools receive the funding for pupils known to be eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), or those who have been eligible in the past six years, and for children in the care of the local authority or those who have left care.

Attainment

Within a school, *attainment* refers to a spot measurement at a point in time of where a pupil has reached on the relevant assessment scale. When aggregated, this assessment data indicates how well a school is performing against national standards. The terms *lower-attaining*, *average-attaining* and *higher-attaining pupils* are sometimes used to set out three broad categories for analysis.

Standards

Standards and *attainment* are often used synonymously, but usage generally places *standards* in the national context and *attainment* within the school context in the key areas of reading, writing and mathematics. National standards refer to the average percentages, across the country, reaching the expected standard at the end of Year 6, for example, and to the average point score nationally at that age.

Progress

Progress is a measure of how fast pupils are learning. In a lesson and over short periods of time it is very much an informal assessment made by a teacher or an observer. Over a longer period, say at least half a term, assessment data enables schools to record pupils' gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers can then use these to check whether a pupil is on track to meet the standards expected by the end of each key stage. When aggregated, a key statistic is the proportion of pupils making expected progress, and more than the expected progress. This can also be set out as the average gain over the relevant time period.



Teachers

Teachers are at the front line of any inspection, as about half of the inspectors' time is usually spent observing teaching. Remember, though, that the inspection team is evaluating teaching through the school as a whole and each lesson observed will be just one part of the evidence they collect. Inspectors will also use evidence from pupils' books to see how much progress pupils are making and what teaching over time has contributed to this.

Dispelling some myths

Myth 1: Teaching style — Ofsted has no preferred teaching style. Inspectors focus on how well pupils are learning, the standards they reach and the progress they make.

Myth 2: Lesson structure — inspectors have no preferred lesson structure. All sorts of ways of splitting up a lesson can work, as long as pupils are interested, are learning well and time is not wasted.

Myth 3: Lesson plans — you are not required to produce lesson plans for an inspection. Inspectors will see how well a lesson has been planned by the way it is taught.

Myth 4: Changes of plan — there is no good reason to stick to a lesson plan if it is not working. Teaching involves on-the-spot decisions to change direction when learning is not going well. In its inspection handbook, Ofsted provides facts about its inspection processes and seeks to 'dispel myths about inspection that can result in unnecessary workloads in schools'.²

Being inspection-ready

Helping lesson observations go smoothly

Inspectors spend as much time as they can in lessons, focusing on how well pupils are learning. They also focus on the progress made by different groups of pupils, such as those supported through the Pupil Premium, those who have SEND, the most able pupils and those who speak English as an additional language.

You need to focus on these pupils, too, not just during an inspection but throughout the school year. This means it is helpful always to have available:

- ➔ a seating plan identifying which pupils fit into the different groups of pupils in the school
- ➔ a list of pupils and their targets.

To help observations go smoothly during an inspection, make sure that an observer has access to pupils' exercise books or other records of work.

What inspectors are looking for

Inspectors are not looking for specific features of teaching in any lesson. Some activities, though, whether done by the whole class, groups or individual pupils, generate faster learning than others. Inspectors may well notice when the following features are present:

- ➔ **Pupils are fully engaged in challenging work that makes them think deeply.** Some activities are better at doing this than others.

✗ Colouring in outlines that have little bearing on the learning and simply fill the time.

✓ Having a lively debate in a group and agreeing a view to present to the whole class.

- ➔ **Pupils gain knowledge, skills and understanding rapidly, with no ceiling on what they can achieve.** Barely passable progress is just not good enough for any pupil.
- ➔ **High-flyers get challenged and struggling pupils get targeted support.** Everyone doing the same thing all the time rarely works.
- ➔ **Teachers check on learning and, sometimes, change plans in response.** It is important to cover the whole class and not just sample work from one or two pupils.
- ➔ **Teachers' questioning deepens learning and assesses how well pupils are doing.** Open-ended questions that demand extended responses are best.

✗ Is it...? Do they...? Can anyone remember the name of...?

✓ How does...? Why do...? What would happen if...?

- ➔ **Pupils' recorded work is well presented, shows clear progress and is regularly and helpfully marked.** This applies to every subject in the curriculum.
- ➔ **Marking lets pupils know how well they are doing and how they can improve their work.** Specific action points, with time to respond, help pupils do better next time.
- ➔ **TAs help pupils to learn, not just keep them on task and give out resources.** Training TAs to do this pays dividends.
- ➔ **Particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils are learning purposefully,** with adults actively supporting activities and assessing achievement regularly.

Toolkit links

➔ Teaching Assistants: A Guide to Good Practice



Lesson planning

It is good practice for teachers to routinely make their lesson plans available to inspectors during observations. However, complicated planning templates are not needed and keeping things simple is usually best. The key elements are few in number.

- ➔ **What are pupils going to learn?** What gains in knowledge, understanding and skill are expected? A single learning objective for a lesson sets high expectations for all pupils.
- ➔ **What activities will challenge pupils to think deeply about their work?** How will the activities involve pupils in some hard thinking that shapes their learning? This will determine the lesson structure and pace of learning.
- ➔ **How will pupils who struggle be supported and high-flyers be stretched?** What different resources, modified activities or additional support will some pupils need to help them reach the same objective? How will high-attaining pupils deepen their learning without becoming bored with tasks that are too easy for them? Inspectors will not expect completely individualised activities in every class, but planning for a broad range of ability and other groups to support rapid learning.
- ➔ **How will you assess how well the pupils are learning?** What strategies will you use to identify what all pupils in the class, not just a few, have learned? This critical part of teaching is often lost in a rushed plenary and deserves more time and thought.

TOP TIP

Focus learning objectives on what pupils will *learn*, not what they will do.



Choose activities that demand higher-order thinking and have a real sense of purpose and challenge.

TOP TIPS

Choose activities that demand higher-order thinking and have a real sense of purpose and challenge.

Separate learning objectives from assessment criteria. Use the criteria at the end to decide how much pupils have learned. For example:

Learning objective	Assessment criteria
To use paragraphs successfully to organise several ideas within a single theme.	Ideas are clearly signposted in each paragraph; paragraphs are in a coherent sequence; paragraphs hold together well.

Focus pupils' thinking on what they are learning. For example, ask pupils to use the criteria to assess their own (or other pupils') work.



Middle leaders

In primary schools, middle leaders take on a wide range of roles. In larger primary schools, they often take on subject and other responsibilities. In a small school, these responsibilities might fall on senior leaders. In very small schools, there may be too few staff to have designated middle leaders and some of the responsibilities may fall on class teachers.

Range of responsibilities

In all schools, though, a range of responsibilities for areas of the school, rather than whole-school matters, need to be carried out by staff. This section is for you if you lead:

- a subject or group of subjects, such as mathematics or creative subjects
- an aspect of the school, such as SEND
- a stage of education, such as the Early Years Foundation Stage, or a year group.

The term *area* is used to mean any subject, aspect, stage or year for which a member of staff takes responsibility.

Being inspection-ready

Helping the inspection go smoothly

The amount of time inspectors spend with middle leaders varies. In reading, writing and mathematics, they are more likely to speak with subject leaders than in other subjects. Where subjects, year groups or stages perform differently, inspectors will spend time with middle leaders to get to the bottom of the issue. This means you need to have a good understanding, backed by secure evidence, of:

- pupils' attainment and progress in your area
- the quality of teaching in your area
- where improvements are needed and what is being done
- how achievement has improved.

To help discussions go smoothly, case studies are often helpful. It is a good idea to have a few available, detailing additional input for:

- pupils where intervention for reading, writing and mathematics has been successful — the programme that was used, how well the intervention went, how much faster they made progress and how this improvement was measured
- those with SEND — what support strategies were used, how pupils responded and whether this helped them catch up with other pupils.

Two middle leadership tracks

Middle leaders often exercise their leadership responsibilities in two distinct but complementary ways. One is to focus on the attainment and progress of individual pupils. The other is to focus on the performance of their area as a whole. Both are important aspects of the role.

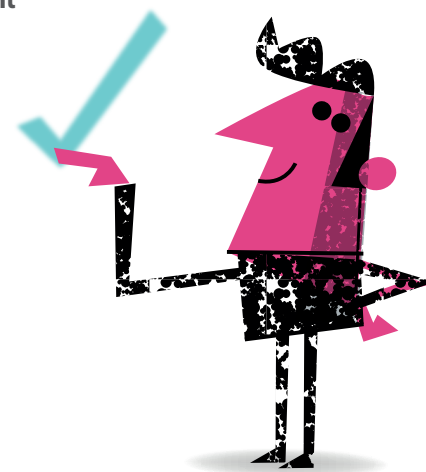
What inspectors are looking for

With a spotlight on individual pupils:

- The use of assessment data to **identify pupils who are not on track to achieve their targets**. This goes hand in hand with an understanding of why their progress is slow. In the Early Years Foundation Stage this might lead to a formal assessment process to identify any SEND.
- An assurance that **identified pupils are supported well so that they get back on track quickly**. This might involve additional in-class support, extra teaching or the use of different resources.
- **Good, professional communication** among teachers, senior leaders and other staff. This should help to collate information from different sources and cut through red tape to make sure action happens promptly.

With a spotlight on the performance of the area:

- **Knowledge of the performance of pupils in the area** – including different groups – and good identification of underperformance. This needs to take account of aggregate data covering both attainment and progress.
- **Accurate knowledge of the quality of teaching** in the area, with teachers being held to account for performance in their area. This usually involves support and intervention where individual teachers' practice needs improvement.
- **Action being taken to bring about improvement in teaching and achievement** more broadly in their area, with professional development to improve quality in specific elements. Where practice is already outstanding, this is about maintaining its high quality.
- **Consistency of practice and policy implementation**. The best outcomes stem from consistently good practice across the area.
- **Curriculum development**. Maintained schools should have plans in place in each subject to complete the National Curriculum programmes of study by the end of each key stage. Other schools should have a clear rationale for curriculum progression over the full age range of the school.
- **Regular reviews of performance and quality** in the area, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This might involve a range of staff including middle leaders, senior leaders and, on occasion, external specialists.



Self-evaluation and improvement

As a middle leader, you need to know all there is to know about your area so that you can participate fully in the school's self-evaluation processes. You must also have a good understanding of your area in the national context so that you can lead improvement and find solutions to issues that arise.

Some schools keep an annual self-evaluation record across the aspects covered in Ofsted's *School inspection handbook* for each area of the school. This is not a requirement, however. What really matters is that every middle leader has a good grip on the following areas:

Have you got a clear understanding of achievement in your area?

- ➔ Is there a clear record of the area's performance (attainment and progress), recent trends and the broader implications for the school as a whole?
Focus on actions you have taken to deal with underachievement, rather than spending a long time explaining why it occurred.
- ➔ What account have you taken of Ofsted's subject reports for the area and any thematic reports that might be relevant?
(These reports keep you up to date on key national subject developments.)

How quickly is the area improving (or maintaining high quality)?

- ➔ How does the improvement plan for the area reflect the areas identified for improvement?
Clear actions are critical to bring about rapid improvement. Milestones help judge how effective the changes have been.

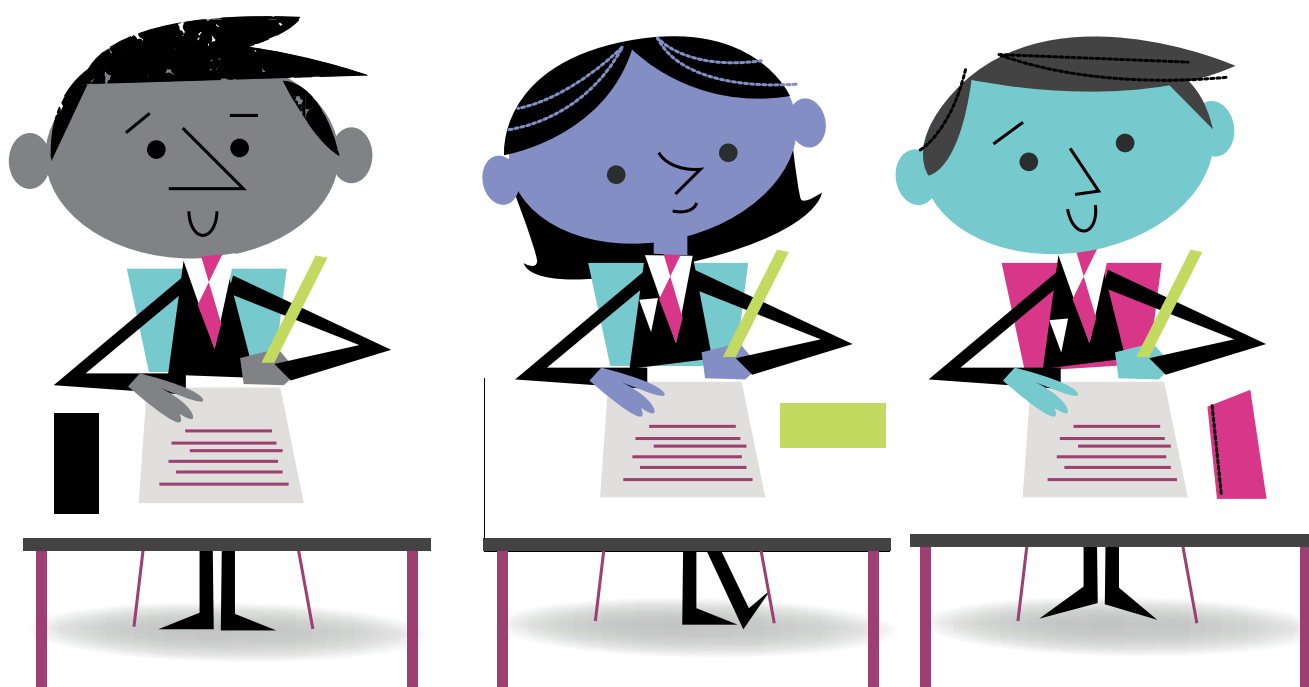
TOP TIPS

Make sure your data analysis includes both average point scores and the percentage achieving thresholds. On their own, neither gives the full picture of pupils' attainment or progress.

Keep, and regularly update, a folder for the area. Material on attainment, progress and teaching can be added when new information is available.

Make sure you have data for the full range of pupil groups in the school, to help identify differences.

Highlight improvements and what has brought them about.



Senior leaders

Senior leaders, and the headteacher especially, set the high professional standards to which all staff work. One hallmark of a successful leader is the ability to take a broad view, weigh up arguments, consult and make decisions about conflicting priorities. The smaller the school, the broader and more numerous become the responsibilities. In the largest schools, though, senior leaders can often sharpen the focus of their role considerably.

Whole-school duties

In most schools, senior leaders carry out a range of whole-school duties. Some of these may be delegated to middle leaders, particularly in the smallest schools. This section is for you if you lead:

- ➔ a key aspect of education such as the curriculum or teaching
- ➔ the school's ethos, behaviour, safeguarding, the care of pupils and the promotion of British values
- ➔ financial and business aspects of the school's work.

Being inspection-ready

Helping the inspection go smoothly

- ➔ Make sure you can always provide up-to-date progress data from your internal assessments. When nationally published results can be nearly a year old, it is important to show where the school is now, not just where it was a year ago.
- ➔ Where you can, present your data in a way that is consistent with national data. Building your own transition tables to match those produced in RAISEonline means inspectors can readily interpret the most up-to-date figures without the need for further calculation or analysis.
- ➔ Consider what standardised test data you might provide to the inspectors that shows your pupils' progress and their attainment in relation to national norms. *The Report of the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group* said: 'Standardised tasks and test items can be a useful tool in supplementing teacher judgement and assessment. ... Used well, as part of an overall assessment scheme (particularly when accessing resources of an established quality) they can offer a quicker and less burdensome way for a teacher to check progress, to feed into a wider professional conversation.'³
- ➔ Having brief summaries of key information available usually helps, with a need to delve into the detail only if the situation is not crystal clear.
- ➔ Make sure you are a confident and experienced observer of teaching, as you may well be able to take part in joint observations with an inspector. The resulting discussions and sharply focused feedback to teachers will often prove very valuable in demonstrating positive aspects of the school's leadership.

Toolkit links

- ➔ Pathways: A Guide to Lesson Observation



What inspectors are looking for

- ➔ **A culture of high aspirations**, shared among pupils, parents and staff, that drives the school forward relentlessly. This creates an exciting environment in which pupils learn.
- ➔ **Continued reflection by staff on their classroom practice**. Observations and learning walks identify areas to improve and others to revisit to sharpen teaching and learning.
- ➔ **A culture of improvement** that includes individual teachers' performance (appraisal) as well as improving teaching across the school (professional development).
- ➔ **Consistency of practice and policy implementation** across the school. Many successful organisations do well by focusing on getting things right all of the time.
- ➔ **Assessment data being used in two ways** — to check how well individual pupils are doing, and collated as a management tool to understand the school's performance.
- ➔ **Middle leaders and staff being held to account** for pupils' progress in their area. Regular, minuted meetings provide clear evidence of challenge and support.
- ➔ **Evidence of observations of learning and checks on pupils' work**, with feedback to teachers. Joint observations with middle leaders or external partners support consistency of practice.
- ➔ **Clear evidence of routinely identifying a problem, taking action to solve it, and checking it worked**. This showcases the school's capacity to improve even further.
- ➔ **A broad and balanced curriculum**, with pupils making rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics, gaining knowledge and skills in a range of other subjects, and applying their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. The curriculum in all schools should promote fundamental British values such as democracy, liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those who have different faiths and beliefs.
- ➔ **Accurate and robust self-evaluation**, using a full range of evidence. Key priorities for improvement are shared widely and are built into all action plans.
- ➔ **Rigorous safeguarding arrangements**, meticulously applied and recorded. These lead to the promotion of safe, caring practices and a culture of safety.
- ➔ **High levels of engagement with parents and the community**. Parent View is well used by parents and carers and they are secure in their view of their child's school.



Demonstrating the capacity to improve

- ➔ Nothing causes tension like the debate between senior leaders who know they are doing all the right things and an inspector who just cannot see the impact. Quite simply, the inspection process evaluates the capacity to improve through a track record of success. Outcomes, not green shoots, are what count.

How do you show that teaching is better?

- ➔ How useful is your record of which teachers have had a programme of support; which have improved and which have moved on?
- ➔ Having a brief but full picture, backed up by data on pupils' progress and teaching quality, and some case studies, means you show action and its impact.
- ➔ How has teaching improved through whole-school or group professional development?
- ➔ Sharply focused *before* and *after* observations can feed weekly professional development sessions and show how key areas of practice, such as teachers' questioning, have improved and had an impact on pupils' learning.

How do you show that pupils are making faster progress?

- ➔ How clear is your analysis of the progress made by different groups of pupils during the year?
- ➔ Regular and accurate assessments that allow for progress measures to be shown as annual gains can give a clear view of progress in terms of a subject or one group of children compared with another. They also allow for comparisons with previous analyses.

How do you show additional support funding has brought better results?

- ➔ How can you better link your financial breakdowns with the attainment and progress of pupils supported through the Pupil Premium?
- ➔ Pupil Premium funding can be categorised and then analysed to see how one strategy compares with another, and to compare the progress these pupils make with that of others.

TOP TIPS

Keep slim 'capacity' folders with just a few years' worth of material in them. Archive the rest and replenish regularly.

Keep 'capacity' folders live, varied and focused on showing the impact of your actions.

Toolkit links

➔ The Pupil Premium:
Making it Work in
Your School

Governors

The governing body of any school is coming under increasingly detailed scrutiny. Many governing bodies have newly become employers of their staff as the number of academies and free schools grows. This change has also seen the development of smaller governing bodies with fewer committees and governing bodies that are responsible for a number of schools.

As a result, governing bodies have needed to become much more businesslike in the way they work. The most effective governors are those who have significant expertise outside the school that they can contribute to the discussions and decisions of the governing body. And, above all, schools need governors who can bring time and commitment to the role.

Inspectors will seek a meeting with the chair of the governing body and as many other governors as they can. This section is for all governors, therefore, as you could be one of the governors available for discussion during an inspection. It applies equally to members of local governing bodies, where they exist within an overarching governance framework.

Knowledge and insight

To be an effective governor, you need to know a lot about your school (or schools). Information is not enough, though. What really matters is having an insight into what it all means and what the governing body should do, if anything, in response.

Being inspection-ready

Helping the inspection go smoothly

- ➔ Make sure your school has a clear statement of its governance arrangements, setting out relationships with committees and (where they exist) central trusts. Putting these in diagrammatic form often makes things clearer.
- ➔ Be one of a range of governors who, if they are available, can answer inspection questions confidently, with understanding and commitment. Fielding the chair alone does not promote the corporate nature of the governing body.
- ➔ Make sure you have an up-to-date knowledge of the school's overall performance, but also its areas of strength and where improvement is needed. Make comparisons with the national picture, too, as local comparisons are not helpful to inspectors.
- ➔ As part of the school's self-evaluation, make sure you are reviewing the effectiveness of the governing body. Suggest that it puts together and maintains a record of key areas where the governing body has had the greatest impact.

What inspectors are looking for

- ➔ **A clear understanding of the strategic direction of the school, shared with staff.**
Governors need a vision of the school as it might be over the next few years so you can match external demands while improving or maintaining high achievement.
- ➔ **Knowledge of where the school stands in comparison with national benchmarks.**
This applies to attainment and progress, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics, but also includes the achievement of the early learning goals.
- ➔ **An understanding of how different groups of pupils perform** — both attainment and progress figure here. How far ahead or behind is a group when compared with other pupils in the school? Does this group make better or worse progress than nationally?
- ➔ **Knowledge of how good teaching is in the school.** As well as celebrating outstanding practice, governors need to know what action the school is taking to deal with a teacher's underperformance and what improvement has taken place.
- ➔ **A performance management strategy that supports improvement.** Governors must be sure that they are agreeing pay increases only for staff whose performance is strong.
- ➔ **Ways the school overcomes disadvantage using specific funding,** such as the Pupil Premium or primary sports funding. Governors need to explain what difference their policies and decisions have made to the pupils in the school.
- ➔ **Compliance with statutory duties,** particularly in respect of safeguarding practice and policy. There are also many legal responsibilities for the school's budget and maintaining it in balance.
- ➔ **Full governor involvement in self-evaluation and improvement planning.** Deciding priorities on the basis of an evaluation is highly challenging but rewarding.



Challenge and support

Governance is a careful balance of challenge and support in which the governing body is seen as a 'critical friend'. Additionally, the governing body has to hold the school to account and undertake a number of statutory duties.

Governors are often uncertain about how far they can challenge a confident headteacher or other senior leader, particularly in a large governing body. But it is in just these cases where the challenges are needed to ensure that the school is not heading for, or already in, a period of decline.

How do you and other governors challenge your headteacher?

Think strategically, as a critical friend to the headteacher, and ensure that professional challenges in meetings are recorded. Areas that can generate challenges include whether:

- ➔ the main priority in the school actually reflects the school's latest assessment data
- ➔ the spending decisions in the last year have actually resulted in improved standards
- ➔ the time taken to resolve an issue is too long, especially over weak teaching.

How do you and other governors support the school?

Support for the school must never be allowed to become uncritical, or the whole purpose of the governing body in holding the school to account is then subverted. Some particular areas where headteachers and other staff need the support of the governing body are in:

- ➔ holding an agreed consistent line against vociferous opposition
- ➔ supporting sensible decisions made but subsequently challenged
- ➔ backing good ideas that take the school forward, particularly where they draw in substantial additional funding.

TOP TIPS

A small governing body with around ten members and few committees is decisive and highly effective.

Ensure that minutes of governing body meetings show challenges and decisions made, as well as action points.

Arrange specialist training in interpreting attainment and progress data. This is a worthwhile investment that brings better evaluation and planning.



Preparing for inspection

This section is directed primarily at headteachers and other senior leaders.

What to do when inspectors are on the way

First, do not panic, and take the following three steps calmly. You are required to inform parents about the inspection and this should take priority.

An inspection is unlikely to be deferred. If most of the pupils are in school, the inspection will take place, even if the headteacher is not there. Ofsted's guidance on this is listed at the end of this guide.

Step 1: Tell people what is happening

- ➔ Inform parents and carers by letter home (and text message if you text parents), through the school website and with a notice at the school.
- ➔ Inform all governors, including members of a local governing committee, and find out who might be available for a meeting with inspectors, and when would be the best time to hold it. The lead inspector should give some flexibility.
- ➔ Inform the relevant organisation for your school from the local authority, diocese, sponsor, sponsor chain, federated school, on-site resource base, and alternative provision.
- ➔ Decide which room inspectors can use as a base and get it set out.
- ➔ Decide which senior staff you would like to become involved in joint observations with inspectors, if the lead inspector agrees.

Step 2: Prepare some documents

Make a copy of brief, clear documents for each inspector. These should already be available in school but do need to be double-checked for accuracy, for example for staff changes. You might include:

- ➔ a curriculum outline, and its organisation at subject level, with approximate time indications
- ➔ most recent self-evaluation documents and school improvement plan
- ➔ a school organisation chart, showing the way the senior and middle leaders relate to the staff as a whole
- ➔ a staff list, giving responsibilities and staff codes, if used
- ➔ timetables for the days of the inspection
- ➔ a plan of the school with room, class, year or other identification numbers.



Step 3: Assemble documents for the inspectors' team room

Make a single copy of other documents available in the inspection team room. This can include any folders you have built up that are featured earlier in this booklet. It might include any ongoing reviews of progress with the actions in the school's improvement plan. Information for the team room might include:

- ➔ aggregate internal in-year assessment data that highlights the attainment and progress of groups of pupils
- ➔ a review of the impact of the use of Pupil Premium and primary sports funding
- ➔ the performance management policy, with anonymised information about the outcomes of the most recent round completed
- ➔ recent minutes and papers of the governing body
- ➔ behaviour records, and records of bullying and racist incidents.

Make sure your single central record is up to date and is not missing information that should have been entered. An inspector is likely to discuss this with the key safeguarding person in the school as one of the first things they do on the first day of the inspection. Although it is possible to correct any minor administrative matters at that stage, the inspector will explore any more serious issues in more depth.

In using this booklet, you may have identified particular material that would support your school during an inspection. To avoid missing them when an inspection actually arrives, list other documents and folders you might wish to include.



Long-term preparation during the year

School life needs to go on without staff and governors feeling perpetually under threat of inspection. Even when an inspection seems long overdue, it is very hard to predict more accurately than the approximate school year in which an inspection might take place. In any case, the list of schools scheduled for inspection changes frequently. Some schools move down the list as risk assessments include other schools whose outcomes may not be holding up strongly or where there are concerns about behaviour. This means it is better to take a long-term view and build up a resource of relevant documents and data as part of the school's normal evaluation practices.

In particular, keeping a self-evaluation record in the four broad areas covered by Ofsted's *School inspection handbook* (shown in bold below) can be done, a bit at a time during the year, so that an up-to-date self-evaluation is always available, should it be needed.

You might wish to set up your own calendar with timings to suit your school. It might look something like this:



Autumn	Spring	Summer
September Update achievement based on the previous summer's results. Update leadership and management with any curriculum changes. Include references to leadership successes during the past year that have led to better teaching, faster progress and higher standards.	January Update teaching based on new observations from the autumn term, taking account of new or returning staff. Update achievement once RAISEonline is published, and to include the analysis of early internal assessments.	May Undertake an annual review of safeguarding and child protection matters, revising policy and procedure where needed. Update behaviour and safety and leadership and management to include new data, approaches and risk assessments.
November Update achievement and leadership and management with the latest support arrangements from your website on the use of Pupil Premium and other additional funding.	March Update behaviour and safety to include new data on attendance and recorded incidents, particularly where they show improvement during the year.	June Analyse the results of the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check (and for Year 2 pupils, if applicable) and update achievement .
		July Update teaching to take account of the full year's observations, linking observed quality of teaching to the progress of those pupils indicated by interim or external data, including by any standardised tests you have used.

Further reading

Ofsted makes changes to its inspection framework from time to time and frequently updates its inspection handbook to support schools and inspectors. These documents, and Ofsted's guidance on inspection safeguarding, are freely available on Ofsted's website. It is worth keeping up to date with the latest inspection guidance as it can influence how you prepare for inspection.

As the documents can change termly, the references to them are given here. The easiest way to find them in one visit is to follow this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-inspections-of-maintained-schools>

This contains the following documents, among many more:

- ➔ *The common inspection framework: education, skills and early years*, Manchester: Ofsted, August 2015, No. 150065

- ➔ *School inspection handbook*, Manchester: Ofsted, August 2016, No. 150066

This web page also contains briefings for inspectors on a wide range of topics including the Early Years Foundation Stage and children's centres.

The web page above includes links to Ofsted survey reports and examples of best practice. The survey reports also suggest where improvement is needed nationally. It is worth checking how your school matches up to survey findings and whether improvements might be needed.

Additionally, the guidance on deferral of inspections is on the Ofsted website at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/deferring-ofsted-inspections>.

Endnotes

- 1 Ofsted (2011) *A systematic approach to effective school self-evaluation: Eliot Bank Primary School* (130083), © Crown Copyright 2011. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141124154759/http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-systematic-approach-effective-school-self-evaluation>
- 2 *School inspection handbook*, Manchester: Ofsted, August 2016.
- 3 *Eliminating unnecessary workload associated with data management. The Report of the Independent Teacher Workload Review Group*. March 2016.

