



Ofsted inspection update: September 2021

Ofsted has published its '[Schools and early education inspection update: September 2021](#)'. This article outlines what has been highlighted to inspectors in the update to help you stay up-to-date with the latest on how Ofsted is conducting inspections. Read on for more detail!

What's inside?

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Changes to school inspection handbooks

Ofsted revised its '[School inspection handbook](#)' and '[School inspection handbook: section 8](#)' ahead of its full programme of graded inspections, which resumed in September 2021. For the latest on the updates to Ofsted's handbooks, read our [Up-to-speed on: Changes to Ofsted's Inspection Handbooks](#), and to find out more about the key changes, read Ofsted's summary of changes for [section 5](#) and [section 8](#) inspections.

Statutory induction and the early career framework

The term 'early career teacher' (ECT) has replaced 'newly-qualified teacher' (NQT), and new teachers are entitled to a two-year structured professional development programme based on the [reformed early career framework](#) and protected non-contact time to focus on their development. For more details on the changes, read our [Up-to-speed on: Changes to Statutory Induction from September 2021](#).

Ofsted has strengthened the expectation that inspectors should meet with ECTs, their mentors and their induction tutors during inspection where possible, and should ask schools which approach to delivering the statutory induction they are following.

Sexual harassment and abuse in schools

Ofsted's review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges

Ofsted's handbooks were updated using its ['Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges'](#), and the DfE's ['Keeping children safe in education'](#) (KCSIE). For the full details on Ofsted's review and the changes to KCSIE, read our [Up-to-speed on: Ofsted's 'Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges'](#) and [Up-to-speed on: Changes to 'Keeping children safe in education' from September 2021](#).



Inspectors will not investigate individual allegations, but they will ensure allegations are reported to the appropriate authority if this has not already happened.

Ofsted expects schools to have created a culture where sexual abuse and harassment are unacceptable, never tolerated, and are taken seriously when reported. Inspectors will review schools' safeguarding records, speak to school leaders and staff about how they support pupils to raise concerns and how they respond, and explore how the curriculum addresses these sexual abuse and related issues. Inspectors may also talk to pupils about these matters during their formal and informal conversations.

Training for schools on challenging sexism

Ofsted's September 2021 update signposts the organisation [UK Feminista](#), which provides training and resources to enable a whole-school approach to dealing with sexism, including gender stereotyping, sexual harassment and sexist language.

Education and the curriculum

Curriculum catch-up after coronavirus-related restrictions

In recognition of the disruption to pupils' education caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Ofsted will inspect the strategies school leaders are using to help pupils catch up

on the learning they have missed. The September 2021 update states that inspectors should consider whether school leaders:

- Take actions that are appropriate for the subject and phase.
- Use assessment wisely.
- Identify the knowledge that is most significant when choosing what to insert into an adjusted curriculum.
- Ensure that pupils still have the time they need to repeat or practise crucial content so that they remember it in the long term.
- Choose teaching activities that are time-efficient and most effective to ensure that the planned content is learned.
- Ensure that tutoring and the main curriculum work effectively together, while minimising negative consequences.

“Making adjustments to the curriculum does not mean lowering expectations or narrowing some pupils’ experiences. All pupils need to be given opportunities to learn the key content.”
– Ofsted (2021)

To read more about what inspectors will look at regarding curriculum catch-up, click [here](#).

Curriculum leaders

Inspectors will work with schools to ensure conversations with curriculum leaders can take place without majorly disrupting to their day-to-day work. The September 2021 update states that inspectors should:

- Be as flexible as possible in gathering the necessary evidence without causing undue disruption to the school day.
- Work with school leaders during inspections to understand what would normally be happening on this particular school day and what is different because of the inspection, e.g. if teachers are out of class.
- Understand that some schools, especially small schools, will not have a separate lead for each subject – Ofsted does not expect or require schools to adopt any particular staffing structure or curriculum approach.
- Talk to staff or groups of staff who can give inspectors the insight they need to understand the school’s approach, be they a specific separate subject leader or not.
- Try to avoid carrying out deep dives into more than one subject with the same curriculum leader.

- Welcome any senior leader who wants to be involved in curriculum discussions, particularly, but not necessarily only, when subject leaders are inexperienced in that role.

Inspectors will not scrutinise or hold individual teachers to account, nor grade individual subjects.

Curriculum narrowing

The September 2021 update reminds inspectors to judge schools' curriculum provision, particularly in KS3, based on its ambition and breadth, and not the length of time it takes up. Inspectors are asked to consider whether the curriculum offered at each key stage, and for the full range of pupils, is rich, ambitious and well-sequenced, and how the school ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects, at least in line with the ambition of the national curriculum. Lead inspectors must call the duty desk when a school has a shortened KS3, and when a maintained school does not seem to be offering the full set of national curriculum subjects. To read more about what inspectors will look at regarding curriculum narrowing, click [here](#).

Mathematics deep dives in primary schools

As stated in Ofsted's '[Inspecting the curriculum](#)' guidance, in primary schools, inspectors will always carry out deep dives in reading and one or more foundation subjects, and will often carry out a deep dive in mathematics. The September 2021 update reminds inspectors that deep dives in mathematics in primary schools are at lead inspectors' discretion and are not compulsory.

Inspecting RE and collective worship

Inspectors may choose to carry out a deep dive in RE, and inspect RE and collective worship in schools that are not designated as having a religious character. Ofsted does not, however, inspect the content of denominational education or collective worship in most schools designated as having a religious character. For the full details of how Ofsted inspects RE and collective worship, including the use of section 48 inspections, click [here](#).

Character education

As part of its 'personal development' judgement, Ofsted will look at '[character education](#)' – 'character' is defined as: "A set of positive personal traits, dispositions and virtues that informs [pupils'] motivation and guides their conduct so that they reflect wisely, learn eagerly, behave

with integrity and cooperate consistently well with others. This gives pupils the qualities they need to flourish in our society.”

Engagement model

The engagement model is the assessment for KS1 and KS2 pupils working below the standard of national curriculum assessments and not engaged in subject-specific study, and is statutory from 2021/2022 in state-funded schools. The September 2021 update advises inspectors to note that the engagement model should not replace existing planning or assessment systems, recognise that schools have autonomy over how it is implemented, and not expect to see an ‘engagement curriculum’.

The early years foundation stage (EYFS)

Revisions to the EYFS framework and ‘Development Matters’

Ofsted’s September 2021 update refers to the updated versions of the [‘Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage’](#) and its accompanying non-statutory guidance, [‘Development Matters’](#). For more details on the changes, read our [Up-to-speed on: Changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage \(EYFS\) Framework](#). Ofsted will continue to inspect in line with the principles and requirements of the EYFS.

Disapplications to the EYFS

Early years providers should note that the disapplications that were in place due to the coronavirus pandemic are no longer in place; however, during inspection, inspectors will want to know if a provider has previously relied on the disapplications. No paperwork or evidence is required for this. Ofsted will not judge providers on what they were doing previously, but will look at whether any previous reliance on the disapplications is impacting provision or the children who attend the provider. Inspectors will look at what the provider is doing to get back on track, and how it is addressing learning gaps to ensure that children are ready for their next stage of education.

Reception baseline assessment

The Reception baseline assessment is statutory from September 2021. It should be completed within the first six weeks of pupils joining Reception. The September 2021 update advises inspectors to be aware that Reception baseline assessments may be taking place when they

are inspecting in the Autumn term, and be mindful that they look beyond assessment data and examine the rounded education that pupils receive.



A few good practice tips:

- Follow the latest EYFS framework and ‘Development Matters’.
- Ensure you do not rely on the expired EYFS disapplications.
- Hold the Reception baseline assessment within the first six weeks.

Good practice

Reporting procedures and wording

Sharing provisional inadequate judgements with LAs

Ofsted will no longer copy the LA into early notifications of provisional ‘inadequate’ judgements of maintained schools and academies – this notification will now solely be sent to the DfE. LAs will now receive notification of an inadequate outcome only when the final moderated judgement has been made.

Publishing a section 5 report after a school closes

When a school has been inspected under section 5 but has closed before Ofsted publishes its report, the inspectorate will still publish the report against the unique reference number of the school as it existed at the time of inspection. Inspectors are advised to make this policy clear to school leaders if they are told that the school may close before the inspection report has been published.

Reporting on off-rolling

Ofsted has introduced standard wording for any inspection where off-rolling has been identified. Ofsted’s definition of off-rolling can be found on the right.

To read more about how Ofsted inspects and reports on off-rolling, including its new standard wording, click [here](#).



Off-rolling: “The practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil.”

– Ofsted (2021)



Writing about fundamental British values

Ofsted has clarified that the phrase 'fundamental British values' must only be used when referring to the legally defined fundamental British values of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance. Reports must use the full phrase in the first instance and can use 'British values' in subsequent mentions, though it must be clear these are the same thing.

Reporting the governance of academies

The September 2021 update states that inspectors should make sure that they properly reflect the legal governance of academies in the school report. This means:

- In the 'school details' section of the report, the appropriate authority will always be the board of trustees.
- The chair of the trust should always be named in the next field, not the chair of any local governing board. The chair of the trust is the legal head of governance, irrespective of any delegation – the trust board may delegate, but it remains accountable and responsible for all decisions made.
- If a local governing board has delegated powers from the board of trustees, this should be made clear in the 'information about this school' section of the inspection report; the inspector may also name the chair of that board, but this should not appear in the 'school details' section.

Mock inspections

Beyond being familiar with the handbooks, Ofsted does not believe that schools need to do anything to prepare for inspections, so does not carry out nor endorse preparatory mock inspections. Ofsted therefore does not find it acceptable for inspectors to:

- Carry out an Ofsted-style inspection, except when contracted to do so by Ofsted.
- Refer to themselves as an 'Ofsted inspector' or 'OI' when providing commercial services, e.g. consultancy.
- Purport to speak on behalf of Ofsted in giving advice to schools, except when explicitly asked to do so by Ofsted.
- Give schools a judgement, estimate, forecast or contingent judgement in respect of any part of the Ofsted framework, except when this is part of a contracted Ofsted inspection.

- Go against Ofsted's [conflicts of interest policy and procedure](#) when considering carrying out any activity that may conflict, or could be perceived to conflict, with Ofsted's values and their role as an inspector.

Next steps

- Read Ofsted's update: [Schools and early education update: September 2021](#)
- Browse our resource pack: [Ofsted Preparation Resource Pack](#)
- Complete our checklist: [Ofsted Preparation Checklist](#)
- Check out our article: [Up-to-speed on: Ofsted Inspections in 2021](#)

Bibliography

Ofsted (2021) 'Schools and early education inspection update: September 2021'
<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-and-early-education-inspection-update-academic-year-2021-to-2022/schools-and-early-education-inspection-update-september-2021>> [Accessed: 9 September 2021]