Further education and skills inspection handbook

Handbook for inspecting further education and skills providers under part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, for use from September 2016

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361

Contents

Introduction **3**
Types of providers subject to inspection 3
Part 1. How further education and skills providers will be inspected **5**
Before the inspection 5
Frequency of inspection 6
Types of inspection 7
Scope of inspection 9
Providing information for the inspection 14
During the inspection 18
After the inspection 24
Quality assurance and complaints 26
Short inspections 26
Part 2. The evaluation schedule: how further education and skills providers will be judged **35**
Background to the evaluation schedule 35
The evaluation schedule and grade descriptors **35**
Overall effectiveness 35
Effectiveness of leadership and management 37
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment 42
Personal development, behaviour and welfare 45
Outcomes for learners 49
Evaluating types of provision 52
16 to 19 study programmes 52
Adult learning programmes 55
Apprenticeships 59
Traineeships 61
Provision for learners with high needs 64
Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds 68

Introduction

1. This handbook describes the main activities inspectors undertake when they conduct inspections of further education and skills providers in England under Part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It also sets out the judgements that inspectors will make and on which they will report.

2. The handbook has two parts:

   - Part 1. How further education and skills providers will be inspected.
     This contains information about the processes before, during and after the inspection.
   - Part 2. The evaluation schedule.
     This contains the evaluation criteria inspectors use to judge the quality and standards of further education and skills providers and indicates the main types of evidence used.

3. This handbook is a guide for inspectors on how to carry out inspections of further education and skills providers. It is also available to providers and other organisations to make sure that they are informed about inspection processes and procedures. Inspectors will exercise their professional judgement when using this handbook. It balances the need for consistent inspections with the flexibility needed to respond to each provider's individual circumstances. This handbook applies to inspections from 1 September 2015 under the new 'Common inspection framework: education, skills and early years' (the CIF).[1]

Types of providers subject to inspection

4. Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and this handbook, Ofsted inspects the following providers:

   - further education colleges, sixth-form colleges and independent specialist colleges
   - dance and drama colleges[2]
   - independent learning providers
   - local authority providers
   - specialist designated institutions[3]
   - not-for-profit organisations

[1] 'Common inspection framework for education, skills and early years', Ofsted, August 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015.
[2] Dance and drama colleges are inspected against the principles of the 'Common inspection framework: education, skills and early years' at the request of the DfE.
[3] Specialist designated institutions have specially designated educational status under section 28 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.

- employer providers
- higher education institutions where they provide further education
- prime contractors for the National Careers Service
- 16 to 19 academies and free schools.

Part 1. How further education and skills providers will be inspected

Before the inspection

How providers are selected for inspection

5. Ofsted uses risk assessment to ensure that its approach to inspection is proportionate so that it can focus its efforts where it can have the greatest impact. Risk assessment has two stages.

   - Stage one involves an assessment of each provider, based on analysis of publicly available data.
   - Stage two involves a more in-depth desk-based review of a wider range of available information.

6. Ofsted uses a broad range of indicators to select providers for inspection. Where available, these include:

   - a provider's previous inspection record
   - self-assessment reports
   - performance data
   - destination data
   - change of leaders
   - information provided, or concerns raised, by a funding body, employers, parents, carers or learners
   - the views of learners, parents and carers, and employers, gathered through online questionnaires
   - relevant local intelligence such as labour market information.

7. Indicators may also include any information on significant changes to the type of provision and the number of learners. Relevant information received at any point in the year can be used to select providers. Ofsted will review this information regularly.[4] The outcomes from monitoring visits and support and challenge visits will be taken into account when reviewing the providers selected.

8. Ofsted may also conduct unannounced inspections and monitoring visits at any time.

[4] 'Methodology note: the risk assessment of good and outstanding providers', Ofsted, July 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics.

Frequency of inspection

Providers judged outstanding

9. Providers judged outstanding at their most recent inspection are not normally subject to routine inspection.[5] However, an outstanding provider may receive a full inspection where its performance declines or there is another compelling reason, such as potential safeguarding issues. An outstanding provider may also be inspected as part of Ofsted's survey work, or through a monitoring visit or similar activity.

Providers judged good

10. Providers judged good for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection will usually be inspected within the three years from September 2015. This will normally be a short inspection but may be a full inspection where information suggests that this is the most appropriate course of action, for example if the provider's performance has declined. For more information, see the section on short inspections (paragraphs 114 to 147). A good provider may also be inspected as part of Ofsted's survey work, or through a monitoring visit or similar activity.

Providers judged to require improvement

11. A provider judged to require improvement at their most recent inspection will normally have a full re-inspection within 12 to 24 months of its previous inspection. These providers will be subject to 'support and challenge' visits before the full re-inspection.

Providers judged inadequate

12. Ofsted will monitor providers judged as inadequate and re-inspect them within 15 months of publication of their last full inspection report.[6]

13. A provider judged inadequate will usually have its first monitoring inspection within three weeks of the publication date of the report of its most recent full inspection. Further visits may take place after the first monitoring visit and before the re-inspection.

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[5] The following types of provision are still subject to routine inspection when they have been judged to be outstanding: higher education institutions offering further education; local authority providers; independent specialist colleges; dance and drama programmes; and learning and skills provision in prisons.

[6] Full re-inspections or monitoring visits may not happen in certain circumstances, for example where a provider's funding contract has been terminated.

New providers[7]

14. Where a provider comes into the scope of Ofsted inspection, for example when a provider gains a new contract with, or grant from, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and/or the Education Funding Agency (EFA), it will normally be inspected within three years of the start of the contract or grant.

15. A newly merged college will normally be inspected as a new provider within three years of the merger. This will normally be a full inspection. For inspection purposes, regardless of the type of merger, all merged colleges will be viewed as 'new' colleges.[8] A newly merged college will not carry forward any inspection grades from predecessor colleges. It will have no inspection grade until after the first full inspection.

16. Sixteen to 19 academies/free schools that are re-brokered for performance reasons and are thus being treated as a new 16 to 19 academy will be treated from the point of re-brokerage as a new provider for the purposes of inspection.

17. Any newly merged college or other provider deemed as a new provider may receive a monitoring visit or support and challenge visit to assess risk. Risk concerns arising from this or other sources could give rise to an earlier full inspection.

Types of inspection

Full inspection

18. Providers that are graded as requires improvement or inadequate will have a full inspection as outlined above. Outstanding and good providers may also have a full inspection where, for example, their performance has declined.

Short inspection

19. Providers judged good at their last inspection will normally have a short inspection. Information about short inspections is in paragraphs 114 to 147 of this handbook.

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[7] Sixth form colleges that convert to become 16 to 19 academies will be treated according to their most recent inspection outcome. So those which are outstanding will normally only be inspected if their performance drops, and those that were good will receive a short inspection within three years of the last inspection. Those judged to require improvement will be inspected next within 12 to 24 months and those which were inadequate will be inspected within 15 months. They will be risk assessed and may be subject to monitoring visits or 'support and challenge' visits where that is considered appropriate for risk reasons.

[8] This refers to mergers between colleges or between colleges and higher education institutions.

Survey visits

20. Survey inspection visits may take place at a selected number of providers each year, including those previously judged outstanding or good. They are carried out to explore a specific aspect of a provider's work as part of a programme of surveys based on topics linked to national priorities.

Monitoring visits

21. Ofsted may carry out monitoring visits to explore one or more specific lines of enquiry. These visits may be unannounced. Monitoring visits will normally result in a published report.

22. Ofsted will normally use the following progress judgements:

    - insufficient progress: progress has been either slow or insubstantial or both, and the demonstrable impact on learners has been negligible
    - reasonable progress: action taken by the provider is already having a beneficial impact on learners and improvements are sustainable and are based on the provider's thorough quality assurance procedures
    - significant progress: progress has been rapid and is already having considerable beneficial impact on learners.

Re-inspection monitoring visits to inadequate providers

23. Re-inspection monitoring visits to providers found to be inadequate overall are normally carried out within three weeks of the publication of the inspection report.

24. Other follow-up monitoring visits will normally take place until the full re-inspection is completed, usually within 15 months of the publication date of the most recent full inspection report.

25. The purpose of re-inspection monitoring visits is to:

    - promote rapid improvement for all learners
    - make clear to the provider, learners and other users what steps the provider has taken to improve the provision and how effective these have been
    - inform the funding agencies, government departments and, where relevant, the Further Education Commissioner or equivalent of the progress made in improving provision for learners.

26. The first visit will assess what steps the provider has taken to improve the weak areas identified in the inspection report and recommend priorities for further improvement. Follow-up visits will assess the impact of measures to improve provision for learners and challenge the provider to improve. Ofsted will publish

the findings and share them with funding agencies and the Further Education Commissioner or equivalent (as relevant).

27. Monitoring visits will normally be carried out by one or two inspectors and last up to two days. Inspectors will report against the areas for improvement by themes and will set out priorities for improvement against each theme.

28. Themes are derived from the areas for improvement in the recently published inspection report. They focus on actions that will lead to improvement for learners and not on processes and systems.

29. Ofsted will use the same progress judgements as detailed at paragraph 22 above.

30. The process for the publication and quality assurance of monitoring visit reports is the same as for full inspection reports (see paragraphs 103 to 111 of this handbook).

Support and challenge visits

31. Ofsted carries out support and challenge visits to providers judged to require improvement at their most recent inspection.[9] They may also be carried out at newly merged colleges, other providers being treated as a new provider or where a provider has a change of circumstances. They will also be carried out to review progress of new 14 to 16 full-time provision in colleges.

Pilot inspections

32. From time to time, Ofsted may pilot different approaches to inspection to test, for example, proposed new frameworks. Specific details for this type of inspection will be provided on a case-by-case basis.

Scope of inspection

33. Further education and training provision funded by the Secretary of State for Education/EFA/SFA for which a provider is directly and wholly responsible normally falls within the scope of its inspection. This includes provision funded through advanced learning loans, whether or not the provider receives any other direct funding for further education or training as set out above. Ofsted will select for inspection the provider that has a direct contract with the funding agency, a direct grant, or (where it has neither a contract nor a grant) a loans facility in use. The types of provision that will be inspected are set out in the table under paragraph 41. Subcontracted provision of the direct contract/grant holder is also included in the inspection.

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[9] Support and challenge for further education and skills providers, Ofsted, 2016; www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-and-challenge-for-further-education-and-skills-providers.

34. As part of the inspection, inspectors may inspect any provision carried out on behalf of the provider through subcontract(s) or partnership arrangements, including by subcontractors that hold additional direct contracts of their own. Typically, inspection visits to subcontractors that are in scope are likely to include the inspection of the direct contract holder's arrangements to quality assure and improve the provision.

35. Inspectors will not include provision that the provider operates under subcontracted arrangements on behalf of other providers.

36. Ofsted reserves the right to inspect and grade any subcontractor and its provision as a separate entity against this framework and handbook.

37. Any provision that is part of a pilot scheme or funded through the Employer Ownership Fund or European Social Fund (ESF)-funded provision that does not support a mainstream programme such as apprenticeships or traineeships is normally out of scope for inspection.

Inspecting residential provision in colleges

38. Ofsted inspects residential accommodation in colleges against the national minimum standards for the accommodation of students under 18. The standards apply to 'institutions within the further education sector', as defined by section 91 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, which have residential accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds.[10] These inspections are separate from the inspection of the education and training provision of the college described in this handbook.

39. Inspections are carried out by Ofsted's social care regulatory inspectors. The approach is set out in the 'Framework for inspecting residential provision in further education colleges'.[11] If a college is registered as a care home, the Care Quality Commission inspects the accommodation.

Inspection of religious education and collective worship in relation to Catholic sixth form colleges

40. In the case of these colleges, denominational religious education, the college's Catholic ethos and the content of collective worship will be inspected by the relevant Catholic diocese. Inspectors will not comment on the content of religious worship or on denominational religious education. Inspectors may visit lessons and assemblies in order to help them evaluate how those contribute to students' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

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[10] Further and Higher Education Act 1992; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/13/contents.
[11] 'The framework for inspecting residential provision in FE colleges', Ofsted, 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-framework-for-inspecting-residential-provision-in-further-education-colleges.

What inspectors will cover

41. Inspectors will make overall judgements on the:

- effectiveness of leadership and management
- quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- personal development, behaviour and welfare
- outcomes for learners.

They will also make judgements on each major type of provision, as set out in the table below:

Type of provision	Description of provision
16 to 19 study programmes	Provision funded through the EFA 16 to 18 funding stream for study programmes (except for traineeships and apprenticeships).
Adult learning programmes	Provision funded through the adult education budget, including employability training for learners aged 19 and over, referred for training by Jobcentre Plus. This also includes community learning provision. Adult learning may be funded directly by SFA or through advanced learning loans.
Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships funded via the Secretary of State/ SFA/ EFA.
Traineeships	Traineeships funded as part of the 16 to 18 classroom-based funding stream or as part of the adult education budget for learners up to the age of 24.
Provision for learners with high needs	Provision for learners for which providers receive high-needs funding in addition to 16 to 18 EFA/SFA funding for study programmes and/or 16 to 18 apprenticeships. Learners up to the age of 24 may be eligible for this funding.
Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds	EFA-funded provision linked to full-time enrolled learners aged 14 to 16 only.

42. Inspectors will take account of all types of provision within the scope of the inspection when making the four key judgements in the CIF. They will evaluate the types of provision where there are significant numbers of learners, or a high level of funding, and where learners who are deemed to be particularly vulnerable are enrolled. The quality of provision for learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, a much broader group than those attracting high-needs funding, will always be considered during the inspection of any type of provision. If the number of learners in a particular type of provision is low, it will normally be inspected and reported on, but may not be graded. Sector subject areas will not be graded or reported on separately.

However, inspectors will use their subject expertise to contribute to the evidence base for types of provision and key judgements.

43. The lead inspector will confirm to the provider which types of provision will be graded and reported on separately.

44. Inspections will usually be led by an Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI), assisted by other HMI and/or Ofsted Inspectors.[12] Some inspections will be led by an Ofsted Inspector.

45. The lead inspector's planning will focus primarily on how inspectors will gather first-hand evidence of learners' experiences to evaluate the four key judgements of the CIF and the different types of provision offered by the provider.

46. Inspectors' evidence-gathering will include observations of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as support arrangements, discussions with learners, scrutiny of learners' work and the arrangements made for them to gain experience of work. Inspectors may undertake some inspection activities jointly with providers' staff, such as visits to learning sessions, to evaluate the progress that learners are making.

47. Inspectors may plan visits to learners at work to observe members of the provider's staff and subcontracted staff (if applicable) carrying out teaching or assessment activities with learners. These visits also give inspectors the opportunity to hold discussions with learners and employers, to discuss learning programmes and to look at learners' portfolios, where relevant. Inspectors may also carry out interviews with learners, employers and staff, by telephone or through webinars.

48. The lead inspector will draw up a pre-inspection team briefing for the inspection team, including the nominee (see paragraphs 51 and 52). The purpose of this briefing is to focus inspection activity and identify areas for exploration.

49. The lead inspector's pre-inspection analysis of evidence may include, but will not be restricted to:[13]

- the provider's current self-assessment report or equivalent evaluation report
- the provider's development/quality improvement plan, including any plans for subcontractors
- performance data for the previous three years, where available, including: recruitment data; achievement rates; any value-added data; destination data; and employment rates

[12] An Ofsted Inspector is an inspector who is not a HMI but is deployed by Ofsted in a variety of roles, usually as a team inspector on further education and skills inspection.
[13] Some of these may not be available until Ofsted has notified the provider of the inspection.

- feedback from learners, parents and carers, and/or employers from online questionnaires
- report from the previous inspection or re-inspection
- reports from any surveys Ofsted has carried out in which the provider has been involved
- the reports from any monitoring visits
- any letters following an inspection in which the provider was judged to require improvement
- additional background information about the local economic and social context relevant to the provider.

50. Inspectors will select the learning activities, learners and employers to be seen, taking into account the:

- number of sites
- number of subcontractors
- value of the provider's contract(s) with funding agencies
- geographical spread of learners
- mode of delivery and attendance
- demographics of the learner group
- types of provision.

The role of the nominee in inspection

51. Each provider is invited to nominate a senior member of staff to act as the provider's main link with the inspection team. The nominee should:

- have a detailed understanding of the provider's programmes and operations, including, where appropriate, those of subcontractors
- be sufficiently senior to ensure the cooperation of staff at all levels
- have authority to carry out the role with autonomy.

52. The nominee's responsibilities include:

- providing information for the lead inspector to support inspection planning
- briefing the provider's staff about arrangements
- informing learners and employers about the inspection[14]

[14] Inspectors will identify a number of off-site learners and employers to observe and/or interview. The nominee should ensure that they are notified, as well as any other users and partners who inspectors have said they wish to meet.

- attending all team meetings, including the final team meeting
- coordinating feedback arrangements during and at the end of the inspection
- liaising with the lead inspector, ensuring that documents are available and that staff can attend meetings.

Notification of inspection

53. Notification for all types of further education and skills inspections will normally take place up to two working days before the inspection unless the inspection is unannounced. Ofsted reserves the right to carry out unannounced inspections or monitoring visits.

54. Ofsted will notify the provider in the morning of the notification day and will email the notification letter. The lead inspector will then contact the provider as soon as possible and by the following morning at the latest. The lead inspector should make sure that:

    - good communications and effective working relationships are established
    - the arrangements for the inspection are established.

Providing information for the inspection

55. As soon as the provider has been notified of the inspection, staff should draw together the information in the lists below that is readily available. These should be working documents and not prepared specifically for the inspection. Inspectors keep review of documentation to a minimum. Providers are not expected to prepare anything extra for inspectors.

56. Inspectors should be mindful that the provider will need to accommodate the inspection while still managing day-to-day operations.

57. Requests for a deferral will be handled in accordance with Ofsted's policy.[15]

58. To ensure that the lead inspector has a clear understanding of the scope and range of provision, the nominee will send the following information, as applicable, as soon as possible:

    - current numbers of learners in the following age groups: 14 to 16 (full-time); 16 to 18; 19+
    - current overall number of learners (excluding apprentices) at level 1 or below, level 2, level 3 and level 4, by subject area
    - the current number of intermediate, advanced and higher-level apprentices, according to age groups: 16 to 18; 19 to 24; and 25+, by subject area

[15] 'Deferring Ofsted inspections', Ofsted, 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/deferring-ofsted-inspections.

- the current number of learners following employability programmes and those who have attended in the previous 12 months
- details of learners who are on a study programme but who are not working towards a substantial qualification
- the current number of learners following traineeships and those who have attended in the previous 12 months
- the current number of learners on community learning programmes and those who have attended in the previous 12 months
- the current numbers of learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the number of learners for whom high-needs funding is received
- geographical spread of training premises and learners, particularly work-based learners, according to regions or sub regions, for example a town, county or borough
- location and names of employers
- the names and location of subcontractors.

59. The lead inspector will use the telephone planning meeting to arrange how the following information, where applicable, will be made available to inspectors:

- an overview of the provider's working day, timetables and work-based activity
- strategic and operational business plans
- evidence of the work of governors or other supervisory bodies and their impact, where applicable
- updated information relating to the self-assessment report
- development/quality improvement plans, operating statements, subject area plans, staff development plans and action plans arising from inspection, programme review or self-assessment
- details of staff qualifications and experience and of staff development activity over the last two years
- anonymised information on the performance management of staff
- evidence of compliance with the relevant safeguarding requirements; for example, an up-to-date list of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for staff, as required
- access to the logs that record complaints, incidents of poor behaviour, racist incidents and incidents of bullying or those relating to radicalisation or extremism
- a range of learners' work, including marked work
- records of observations of teaching, learning and assessment or support, information and advice sessions

- timetables and schedules of activity involving learners (showing locations and staff)
- complete and up-to-date data on learner numbers, achievements and destinations
- minutes from key meetings, including those with community links and employers to develop the curriculum
- information about the provider's organisation with staff names and responsibilities
- names and email addresses of any employers and/or subcontractors whose premises the inspection team intends to visit[16]
- details of any changes to normal routines during the week of inspection.

60. The provider will need to inform all subcontractors' staff, current learners, employers and other users about the inspection, emphasising that inspectors may visit any sessions involving learners either on the provider's premises or at other locations, including learners' workplaces.

Planning the inspection with the provider

61. To ensure that the provider understands the inspection process, the lead inspector will hold a pre-arranged telephone planning meeting with the nominee/most senior member of staff.

62. The agenda for the meeting should include:

- introductions and purpose of meeting
- confirmation of the use of the latest version of the CIF
- update on the provider's recent developments, with specific attention to types of provision and relevant local economic and social contexts
- inspection team members and their responsibilities
- the role and responsibilities of the nominee
- scope of the inspection, including the types of provision to be inspected
- in providers that have learner representatives, arrangements for the lead inspector to hold a discussion with them about the inspection process, either before or during the inspection
- arrangements to inform all learners and employers about the inspection through:
  - the links to Learner View,[17] Employer View[18] and the parents'/carers' online questionnaire

[16] This should be given to the inspection team on the first inspection day or agreed during the planning telephone call.

  - systems already established through the provider's learner involvement strategy
- arrangements to collect the views of learners, parents, carers, employers, and external partners during the inspection through:
  - open meetings for learners or learner representatives
  - Learner View, Employer View and the online questionnaire for learners, employers and parents and carers
  - visits/phone/remote tele- or video-conference calls to learners and employers at work
  - informal meetings or individual interviews arranged by inspectors during the inspection
- arrangements for the lead inspector to have information on:
  - numbers participating at the time of the inspection and their geographical distribution, by type of provision, sector subject area and subcontractor, where appropriate
  - lists of learners, for example on apprenticeships, with details of place of work and employers' telephone numbers
  - schedules/timetables of all learning activities, including those delivered by subcontractors
- arrangements for observing teaching, learning and assessments and reviewing learners' work
- arranging meetings for inspectors with key members of staff/management
- arrangements to confirm the location of inspectors at the start of the inspection, where applicable
- documents to be made available during the inspection
- times of, and venues for, team meetings
- domestic arrangements
- health and safety of inspectors
- final feedback, evaluation and reporting arrangements
- arrangements, where applicable, for any additional visitors/observers during the inspection.

63. Meetings with learners and key staff and visits to learners at work or external sites should be agreed as quickly as possible. However, the lead inspector will

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[17] https://learnerview.ofsted.gov.uk.
[18] https://employerview.ofsted.gov.uk.

not tell the provider which teaching or training sessions will be visited in any part of the inspection.

Seeking the views of learners, parents and carers, and employers

64. Learners' views are central to inspection. It is therefore important that all learners have the opportunity to express their views to inspectors. This also applies to employers and any other key stakeholders. Inspectors will consider the views of learners, parents and carers, and employers as part of the risk-assessment process. They will do this before the inspection and during the inspection.

65. Ofsted's online questionnaires, Learner View and Employer View, are intended to gather the views of learners, parents and carers, and employers. Respondents are able to complete these at any time during the year. After notifying the provider of the inspection, Ofsted asks the nominee to tell all learners, employers and parents/carers of learners (where appropriate) that the inspection is taking place. The nominee should ask them to give their views to the inspection team using these online questionnaires.

66. Surveys of learners' views carried out by the provider, funding bodies or other organisations also provide evidence for the inspection, and may indicate themes to explore further. They do not replace dialogue with learners during the inspection or views collected through Learner View.

67. Inspectors will talk to learners, for example, group representatives, the provider's learner governor(s), student council members, and learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This may happen face-to-face or remotely, for instance through a webinar. Ofsted may use other surveys to capture views.

68. Inspectors will take account of views expressed to them by learners, employers, parents and carers, governors, staff and the nominee. Staff and learners must be able to speak to inspectors in private to ensure that their responses are not influenced by the presence of the nominee or senior staff. Meetings during the inspection are likely to include meetings with samples of learners selected by inspectors and open invitation meetings.

69. The lead inspector will also take account of any external views on the provider's performance, for example through briefings from commissioning and funding bodies.

During the inspection

Days allocated to inspection and inspection team members

70. A full inspection will normally last between two and five days on site, although the number of inspectors involved will vary according to the size and complexity

of the provider. Some inspectors may only be required for part of the inspection.

71. Short inspections (see paragraphs 114 to 147) will normally last no longer than two days on site, although the number of inspectors involved will vary according to the size and complexity of the provider. Some inspectors may only be required for part of the inspection.

72. Monitoring visits will usually last between one and two days, depending on the scope of the visit and size of the provider.

73. The inspection team will consist of inspectors who will focus on the four key judgements of the CIF and/or the type(s) of provision selected for inspection.

74. How the team is deployed to gather evidence will depend on the number of learners and sites, the type(s) of provision and range of learning programmes.

The start of the on-site inspection

75. The team briefing letter will provide details about the start of the on-site inspection, including the location and timing of the initial meeting and any other relevant arrangements for the first day.

Gathering and recording evidence

76. Inspectors will spend most of their time collecting first-hand evidence both on- and off-site, including through observing teaching, training and assessment. Inspectors must ensure that observations include attention to the quality of learning for individuals and different groups of learners, either in individual or in group sessions.

77. Inspectors are also likely to review case studies of learners, including potentially vulnerable learners such as learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and young people in care. They may also ask for meetings with members of staff who work with individual learners receiving additional learning support. The inspection team will, wherever possible, meet with a student representative.

78. Other first-hand evidence includes:

- discussions with learners and analysis of their work
- analysis of provider and learner records showing planning for, and monitoring of, learners' individual progress
- learner and employer questionnaires
- meetings with learners, employers, staff, governors, councillors, trustees and the provider's partners where appropriate.

79. Where meetings take place, the key main focus will be on evaluating the impact of actions taken by providers' staff on learners' personal development, their learning and progress and/or their outcomes.

80. During the inspection, inspectors will collect, analyse and record evidence and their judgements on evidence forms. It is essential that the evidence accurately reflects discussions. Inspectors should identify clearly information that was provided in confidence.

81. The evidence forms, together with any briefings, plans or instructions prepared by the lead inspector, and responses from learners and employers, either in hard copy or in emails, contribute to the evidence base. The lead inspector is responsible for compiling evidence and assuring its quality.

Inspecting the quality of teaching, learning and assessment

82. Inspection of this key judgement is based on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and the impact it has on learners' outcomes and personal development. Inspectors will gather evidence from a variety of learning activities, such as:

- direct observation
- evaluation of learning materials and their use by learners
- the use of technology to deliver and assess learning
- examining what learners know, understand, can do and make as a result of their learning.

83. Ofsted has no preferred teaching style. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching by its impact on learning. Providers are not expected to use the Ofsted evaluation schedule to evaluate teaching or individual lessons, or to undertake a specified amount of lesson observations. Teaching staff should plan their lessons as usual. Ofsted does not require staff to provide individual lesson plans to inspectors. Equally, Ofsted does not require staff 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. Inspectors will not grade observations of learning sessions or assessments.

84. Inspectors may accompany an assessor to employers to observe learners' on-the-job skills development. They will evaluate how the learner is progressing compared with their starting point.

85. Inspectors will also conduct short, focused visits to lessons or workshops. These will usually last between five and 15 minutes and may have a specific focus, for example the arrangements for learner support, the use of information and learning technology, attendance or the use of individual learning plans. Inspectors will not normally give feedback to individual members of staff following these sessions.

86. Inspectors will not normally indicate which sessions they plan to observe. The team reserves the right to visit any learner or employer and may cancel or add visits to ensure that sufficient evidence is collected.

Joint observations

87. The lead inspector may invite a member of the provider's staff to observe one or more learning sessions or assessments jointly, including on short, focused visits to lessons or workshops. The provider's observer will share her or his recorded observations with the inspector, who will then provide feedback on those observations before sharing her or his own evaluation of the learning session or assessment.

The use of data

88. Inspection uses a range of publicly available data. Both before and during the inspection, inspectors will analyse the performance of the provider using the most recent validated data. Analysis may be at overall provider level and/or for individual subjects or types of provision. Inspectors will also use the provider's own data. While data alone will not lead directly to judgements, the primary data source that is the relevant measure of success for each type of provision will provide key evidence for judging outcomes for learners.

89. Data inspectors use include, but is not confined to:

- achievement rates
- retention and pass rates
- achievement of the core aim for those on 16 to 19 study programmes
- value-added measures
- achievement and progress in English and mathematics
- minimum standards
- learners' destinations at the end of a programme.

90. Inspectors will discuss the achievement of different groups of learners, such as those previously eligible for free school meals, young people in care, those

eligible for high-needs funding and learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

91. Inspectors will evaluate learners' progress compared with their starting points, based on their rate of learning, acquisition of knowledge and skills and whether they have achieved their individualised, challenging targets.

The self-assessment report

92. Inspectors will use self-assessment reports or equivalent documents to assess risk, monitor standards and plan for inspection. If they are not available in advance, the provider should share the latest report/plan(s) with the lead inspector following notification of the inspection.

93. Where a report is not available at the risk assessment and planning stage, inspectors will use readily available data sources.

94. During the inspection, inspectors will compare their findings with the provider's self-assessment.

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

Meetings during inspection

96. The inspection team holds a number of team meetings. These may include:

- an initial team meeting to brief the inspection team on the shape of the inspection, clarify any issues relating to their roles and receive a brief update from the provider,[19] including, if appropriate, an initial briefing from the provider's managers with responsibility for key judgements of the inspection
- daily meetings for the nominee to hear the emerging judgements and identify any opportunities to provide additional evidence
- a grading meeting on the last day of the inspection to reach judgements about the provider; the main purpose of this meeting is to:
  - agree on and record the overall grades for each type of provision inspected
  - agree on overall grades for:
    a. effectiveness of leadership and management
    b. quality of teaching, learning and assessment
    c. personal development, behaviour and welfare
    d. outcomes for learners
  - judge the provider's overall effectiveness
  - agree the key findings and the improvements needed.

97. The nominee attends all these meetings, although they may not contribute to decisions about inspection judgements. The nominee should observe the same conventions of confidentiality as team members. By taking part in discussions about evidence collected during the inspection, the nominee can help to ensure that all appropriate evidence is taken into account. Any concerns about evidence should be raised with the lead inspector. The nominee reports back to the provider's staff on the progress of the inspection.

98. Inspectors will hold additional meetings with the provider's staff, as agreed at the planning meeting. These will include initial meetings between a key operational manager for each type of provision, with the inspector(s) allocated to that type of provision.

99. The lead inspector will also hold a feedback meeting for the provider and invitees to hear the key messages at the end of the inspection.

[19] Not all inspectors will necessarily attend this meeting.

Reaching final judgements

100. Inspectors will discuss emerging findings regularly with the nominee and, where appropriate, senior staff.

101. The lead inspector will ensure that the inspection team agrees the judgements using the evaluation statements in Part 2 of this handbook. The overall judgements will reflect all the evidence considered by the inspection team and the evidence base must support the judgements convincingly.

Providing feedback

102. Before leaving, the lead inspector should ensure that the provider is clear:

- about the grades awarded for each judgement required
- that the grades awarded are provisional and, although this is unlikely, may be subject to change through moderation and quality assurance
- that the main points provided in the feedback, subject to any change, will be referred to in the text of the report (and may be shared with the Further Education Commissioner or equivalent and funding bodies), although the text of the report may differ slightly from the oral feedback
- about the key findings and recommendations for improvement
- about the procedures leading to the publication of the report
- about the complaints procedure
- where relevant, about the implications of the provider being deemed to require improvement or to be inadequate overall
- that, if the overall effectiveness or the leadership and management of a sixth form college, further education college or specialist designated institution are inadequate, this has implications for the college in relation to appointing newly qualified staff in future years.[20]

After the inspection

Arrangements for publishing the report

103. The lead inspector is responsible for writing the inspection report and submitting the evidence to Ofsted shortly after the inspection ends. The text of the report should explain the judgements and reflect the evidence. The findings in the report should be consistent with the feedback given to the provider at the end of the inspection.

[20] See 'Statutory guidance on Induction for newly qualified teachers (England)', Department for Education, 2013; www.gov.uk/government/publications/induction-for-newly-qualified-teachers-nqts.

104. Inspection reports will be quality-assured before Ofsted sends a draft copy to the provider. The draft report is restricted and confidential and should not be shared externally or published. The inspection process is not completed until the final version of the report has been sent to the provider. Ofsted may share a draft of the inspection report with the Department for Education (DfE), funding bodies, or the Further Education Commissioner or equivalent as necessary.

105. The provider will be informed of the timescale for commenting on the draft. The provider must respond within two working days of receipt of the draft report. The lead inspector will consider any factual inaccuracies identified by the provider and will make changes as appropriate.

106. Typically, providers will receive an electronic version of the final report within 17 working days of the end of the inspection. In most circumstances, the final report will be published on Ofsted's website within 19 working days. Ofsted will tell the provider the publication date when it sends the draft report.

107. If Ofsted decides that a report requires further quality assurance or finds that the provider is provisionally inadequate, the provider will usually receive an electronic version of the final report within 26 working days. In these circumstances, the final report will usually be published within 28 working days.

The inspection evidence base

108. The evidence base for the inspection must be retained for the time specified in Ofsted's guidance.[21] This is normally six months from when the report is published. Information must not be disposed of if it is found that it is still required by Ofsted. Inspection evidence must be kept for longer than six months when:

- safeguarding is ineffective
- the provider is being monitored because it is less than 'good' or an investigation is linked to the inspection, or there is a potential or current litigation claim against Ofsted, such as a judicial review
- a complaint has been made
- inspections are of a very sensitive nature, or are likely to be of national or regional importance due to high levels of political or press interest.

[21] 'Retention and disposing of information'. Inspectors can access this through the engagement hub: https://ofstedengagement-hub.ofsted.gov.uk/user/login?destination=home.

Quality assurance and complaints

Quality assurance of inspection

109. All inspectors are responsible for the quality of their work. The lead inspector must ensure that inspections are carried out in accordance with the principles of inspection and the code of conduct.

110. Ofsted monitors the quality of inspections through a range of formal processes and Senior HMI or HMI may visit some providers to quality assure inspections. Inspection evidence bases and reports are subject to quality assurance monitoring and moderation within Ofsted. The lead inspector will be responsible for feeding back to the team inspectors about the quality of their work and their conduct.

111. All providers are invited to take part in a post-inspection evaluation in order to contribute to inspection development.

Handling concerns and complaints

112. The great majority of Ofsted's work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns arise during an inspection visit, they should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible in order to resolve issues before the inspection is completed. The lead inspector should seek advice where necessary. Any concerns raised and actions taken should be recorded in the inspection evidence.

113. If it is not possible to resolve concerns during the inspection, the provider may wish to lodge a formal complaint. The lead inspector should ensure that the provider is informed of the procedures for making a formal complaint. Information about how to complain is available on Ofsted's website.[22] Complaints must be submitted no more than 10 working days after the publication of any inspection report. Ofsted does not normally delay publication of an inspection report while complaints are investigated. Complainants should not wait for the outcomes of any related Freedom of Information (FOI) request before making a complaint.

Short inspections

The purpose of short inspections

114. This section explains how Ofsted carries out short inspections of further education and skills providers that were judged good at their most recent inspection. Providers awarded a grade of good for overall effectiveness at their previous inspection will usually be inspected within the three years from

[22] 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', Ofsted, 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted.

September 2015. Most will receive a short inspection (see paragraph 10). Short inspections will take place approximately every three years. A short inspection will determine whether the provider continues to provide a good standard of education/training for learners and whether safeguarding is effective.

115. A short inspection letter will **not** make individual graded judgements. It will **not** change the provider's overall effectiveness grade. If the inspection is converted to a full inspection, then inspectors will make the full set of graded judgements using the four-point grading scale (see Part 2).

116. Once a provider has received its first short inspection and is confirmed to be good, further short inspections will usually be conducted at approximately three-year intervals, unless risk assessment identifies that the provider should be selected for a full inspection.

Working with leaders, managers and governors[23] on short inspections

117. As with all other inspections under the CIF, the new model of short inspections is designed to promote constructive, challenging professional dialogue between inspectors, leaders, managers and governors. Inspectors will start the short inspection from the assumption that the provider remains good. They will test this over the course of the short inspection through their inspection activities and ongoing debate and discussions with leaders, managers and governors.

118. Short inspections provide leaders, managers and governors with the opportunity to share with inspectors how they are sustaining and continuing to improve the good quality of provision for learners. Inspectors will test whether leaders, managers and governors have identified weaknesses or areas needing development at the provider. In reaching their judgement about whether the provider remains good, inspectors will focus particularly on the capacity of leaders, managers and governors to identify such areas and tackle them quickly and effectively.

119. Lead inspectors will plan inspections so that leaders, managers and governors have time to present evidence about key improvements in the provision, their assessment of current performance and action planning that supports improvement. At the first meeting, inspectors will discuss the initial lines of enquiry and key issues to be considered during the short inspection. The schedule for each short inspection will be unique, reflecting these areas, so leaders should not expect the schedule to be the same as for other providers or indeed to be asked about the same issues. The initial lines of enquiry may be adapted during a short inspection as new evidence becomes available or other issues emerge. Inspectors will share these with leaders, managers and governors as the short inspection progresses.

[23] Where there is no governing or supervisory body, it is expected that this role will be covered by representatives of the provider.

120. Leaders, managers and governors are **not** required to:

- prepare documentary evidence that is in addition to any standard documents or policies that leaders, managers and governors use for normal day-to-day business
- prepare a self-evaluation or equivalent in a specified format or with specific wording; any assessment they provide should be part of the provider's usual evaluation work and not generated solely for inspection purposes.

121. The main purpose of short inspections is to evaluate:

- whether the provider remains good
- whether safeguarding is effective or not
- the capacity of all leaders, managers and governors to drive continued improvement
- how well the provider has dealt with any areas for improvement identified at the previous full inspection or areas identified as requiring attention following a previous short inspection.

122. In conducting short inspections, inspectors will:

- highlight any significant changes, including improvements, in the quality of provision since the last inspection
- explore the extent to which the areas for development identified at the last inspection have been dealt with and strengths maintained
- explore the extent to which the provider has implemented new requirements for specific learning programmes to a good standard
- identify further areas for improvement.

123. A short inspection will be carried out by one or more inspectors over one or two days,[24] depending on the size and type of provider. Inspectors, who may be HMI or Ofsted Inspectors, will have appropriate expertise in inspecting the particular type of provision.

124. Short inspections provide an opportunity for constructive professional dialogue between inspectors and providers. They focus primarily on the lines of enquiry and key questions identified during the inspector's preparation, together with any areas identified through discussion with leaders, managers and governors; any areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report; and/or next steps from a previous short inspection. Inspectors do not make judgements against all aspects of the CIF that are made during a full inspection.

[24] This is one or two days on site. Additional time is also allocated for the lead inspector to prepare and write the inspection report.

125. The judgements will be fed back to the nominee and principal/chief executive (and others where relevant). A short letter will record the two main judgements and summarise the findings of the short inspection. It will normally be published within 19 working days, unless the inspection becomes a full inspection.

Outcomes of a short inspection

126. There are three possible outcomes for a short inspection. These are explained below and illustrated in the diagram on page 34.

- **Outcome 1** – the provider continues to be a good provider

or

- **Outcome 2** – the provider remains good and there is sufficient evidence of improved performance to suggest that the provider may be judged outstanding, in whch case, the short inspection will be converted to a full inspection

or

- **Outcome 3** – The inspection team has insufficient evidence to satisfy themselves that the provider remains good or there are concerns, in which case, the short inspection will be converted to a full inspection.

127. Inspectors **will always** report on whether or not safeguarding is effective. If safeguarding is not effective, HMI **will always** convert the short inspection to a full inspection.

Providers that remain good (outcome 1)

128. Where HMI judge that a provider remains good they will confirm this judgement in the final feedback to leaders, managers and governors at the end of the short inspection. HMI will also suggest 'next steps' for the provider to work on before the next short inspection.

Converting short inspections to full inspections (outcomes 2 and 3)

129. Where the HMI lead inspector has insufficient evidence to confirm that the provider remains good or has concerns that there is evidence that the provider may no longer be good (which may include concerns about safeguarding), or if there is sufficient evidence of improved performance to suggest that the provider may be judged outstanding, this will be made clear to the provider by the end of the short inspection.

130. In this situation, the HMI lead inspector will convert the short inspection to a full inspection.

131. For outcomes 2 and 3, the short inspection will be converted into a full inspection as soon as possible. This will usually be completed within 15 working

days of the short inspection. More inspectors may join the HMI lead inspector on site. This may include HMI and/or Ofsted Inspectors as team inspectors. The inspection team will gather and evaluate evidence in order to make a full set of graded judgements. The lead inspector from the short inspection will usually continue on the full inspection.

132. A decision to convert the inspection **does not** predetermine the outcome of the full inspection. At the end of the full inspection, the provider may receive any grade on the four-point grading scale.

133. A short inspection letter will not be produced when the short inspection converts to a full inspection. Instead, the provider will receive a full inspection report.

134. The lead inspector of the full inspection will contact the nominee and inform them when the full inspection will start. They will set out the team composition and deployment and areas for further investigation. The inspector may request further evidence and information for planning.

135. Between the end of the short stage and the beginning of the full stage, evidence from the short inspection will be shared with the new team. The lead inspector and that team will build on the evidence to complete the full inspection and avoid repetition or duplication.

136. The full stage of the inspection may move straight to evidence-gathering, without an initial team meeting.

Inspectors' planning and preparation

137. The lead inspector will prepare for the short inspection by reviewing:

- the previous inspection report, especially any recommendations
- the findings of any recent Ofsted survey and/or monitoring visit letters
- any other performance data sources available
- the provider's self-assessment report, if this is available
- responses from Learner View, Employer View and the parent/carer questionnaire (Ofsted's online surveys available for these user groups)
- any other information available to the inspection team.

138. The lead inspector will share with the inspection team:

- essential information about the provider and the timings for the inspection
- a short list of any issues to be investigated, based on a brief analysis of the pre-inspection information
- a brief outline of inspection activity – for example any meetings with managers, staff, learners and employers; this will be finalised on site.

Notification and introduction

139. Ofsted will normally notify the provider up to two working days before the inspection unless the inspection is unannounced. Ofsted reserves the right to carry out unannounced inspections or visits. Ofsted will notify the provider in the morning of the notification day and will email the notification letter. The lead inspector will then contact the provider as soon as possible.

140. During the initial telephone call, the HMI lead inspector will:

- establish contact with the provider's nominee
- confirm the date of the inspection and remind the provider that the letter following the short inspection will be published on Ofsted's website, except where the inspection becomes a full inspection
- explain the purpose of the inspection including the different possible outcomes of the short inspection
- indicate the likely format of the short inspection, including start and finish times, and the types of activities that are likely to be undertaken (the exact activities to be undertaken will be agreed with the provider at the start of the short inspection)
- ensure that the provider alerts all learners, employers, parents and carers about the inspection and that they may give their views by means of Learner View, Employer View and the parent/carer questionnaire
- make initial arrangements for meeting or interviewing governors, managers and members of staff, learners, employers and others
- make arrangements to visit employers or subcontractors as necessary
- confirm that grades will not be given on observations of individual learning sessions.

141. Inspectors should also request, during the telephone call, by subsequent email or at the first opportunity on site, that the following information (where relevant) is available at the start of the inspection:

- lists of learners, their types of provision, subject areas and locations
- lesson/session/workshop timetable information, staff list

- the current self-assessment report or equivalent and any evaluation of the impact of actions taken to date
- recent data on learners' outcomes, performance and progress
- lists of employers and subcontractors.

142. Inspectors should be mindful that the provider will need to accommodate the inspection while still managing day-to-day operations.

143. Requests for a deferral will be handled in accordance with Ofsted's policy.[25]

Feedback at the end of the short inspection

144. The provider should receive oral feedback at the end of the short inspection. The lead inspector is responsible for managing this meeting and agreeing attendance with the nominee.

145. The feedback meeting will follow a similar approach to that for a full inspection (see paragraph 102). The main difference for short inspections is that the feedback meeting will:

- clearly state whether the provider has sustained its good quality of provision and provide feedback including next steps
- indicate whether there are any significant concerns or insufficient evidence to conclude that the provider continues to be a good provider; if either is the case, the inspection will be converted into a full inspection and the process will be explained (there will be no short inspection outcome letter in this case)
- indicate whether there is sufficient evidence of improved performance to convert the inspection to a full inspection (there will be no short inspection outcome letter in this case)
- make clear whether the provider's safeguarding arrangements are judged to be effective or not
- make clear whether the provider has successfully responded to relevant government programmes and requirements since the last inspection
- ensure that the provider is clear about the process where the lead inspector has indicated that the short inspection will be converted to a full inspection.

[25] 'Deferring Ofsted inspections', Ofsted, 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/deferring-ofsted-inspections.

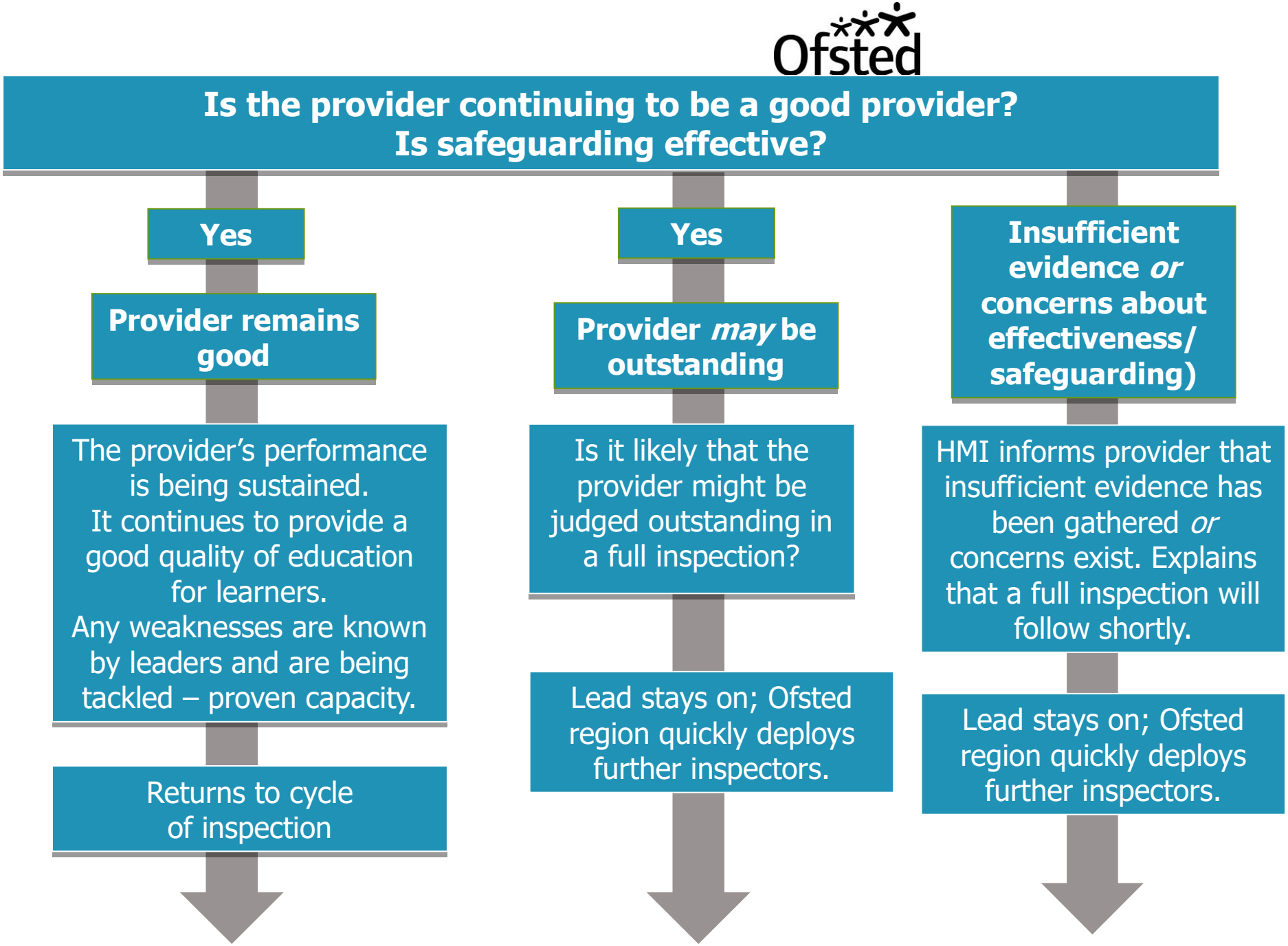
Reporting on the short inspection

146. If the previous quality of provision has been sustained, the provider will receive a report setting out the inspection findings, in the form of a letter giving:

- the date of the inspection
- a brief summary of any significant changes to the context of the provider
- a summary of the type of evidence gathered during the inspection and the context of the provider
- the judgement on whether safeguarding arrangements are effective
- confirmation that the provider remains good
- summary of inspection findings
- any next steps the provider should take.

Quality assurance and publication of the short inspection letter

147. The short inspection letter will be published on Ofsted's website. Quality assurance and publication processes are the same as those for full inspection reports (see paragraphs 103 to 107).


Ofsted
Is the provider continuing to be a good provider?
Is safeguarding effective?
Yes
Provider remains good
The provider's performance is being sustained.
It continues to provide a good quality of education for learners.
Any weaknesses are known by leaders and are being tackled – proven capacity.
Returns to cycle of inspection
Yes
Provider *may* be outstanding
Is it likely that the provider might be judged outstanding in a full inspection?
Lead stays on; Ofsted region quickly deploys further inspectors.
Insufficient evidence *or* concerns about effectiveness/ safeguarding)
HMI informs provider that insufficient evidence has been gathered *or* concerns exist. Explains that a full inspection will follow shortly.
Lead stays on; Ofsted region quickly deploys further inspectors.

Part 2. The evaluation schedule: how further education and skills providers will be judged

Background to the evaluation schedule

148. The evaluation schedule must be used in conjunction with the guidance set out in Part 1 of this document – 'How further education and skills providers will be inspected', and the 'Common inspection framework: education, skills and early years' (the CIF).

149. The evaluation schedule is not exhaustive. It does not replace the professional judgement of inspectors. Inspectors must interpret grade descriptors in relation to the context of the provider and the type(s) of provision being inspected.

150. In line with the CIF, inspectors will make key judgements on the following areas:

- overall effectiveness
- effectiveness of leadership and management
- quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- personal development, behaviour and welfare
- outcomes for learners.

151. Inspectors use the following four-point scale to make all judgements, including, where applicable, on the effectiveness of the different types of provision offered:

- grade 1: outstanding
- grade 2: good
- grade 3: requires improvement
- grade 4: inadequate.

The evaluation schedule and grade descriptors

Overall effectiveness

152. Inspectors must use all their evidence to evaluate what it is like to be a learner at the provider. In making their judgements about a provider's overall effectiveness, inspectors will consider whether the quality of provision is good or whether it exceeds good and is therefore outstanding. If it is not good, inspectors will consider whether it requires improvement or is inadequate.

153. In judging the overall effectiveness, inspectors will take account of:

- the four key judgements
- the overall effectiveness judgements for each type of provision inspected.

154. Inspectors will first judge the effectiveness of each type of provision inspected. The section 'Evaluating types of provision' (paragraph 182) sets out how inspectors will evaluate the overall effectiveness of each type of provision.

155. The inspection report will include a numerical grade for each type of provision inspected and a section that summarises the key findings and explains the effectiveness grading.

156. Inspectors will then grade the four key judgements:

- the effectiveness of leadership and management
- quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- personal development, behaviour and welfare
- outcomes for learners.

157. Where there are differences in grades given for a key judgement or a type of provision, inspectors will consider the following when awarding the grade for overall effectiveness:

- the number of learners in the relevant provision
- the impact of the weaker areas on learners' overall outcomes and experience
- the provider's capacity to improve, taking into account the availability of resources to ensure the sustainability of improvement, the track record of improvement and the impact of recent improvement activity.

158. Inspectors will also make a written judgement about the effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding learners.

Grade descriptors: overall effectiveness

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1)

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding.
- All other key judgements are likely to be outstanding. In exceptional circumstances, one of the key judgements may be good as long as there is convincing evidence that the provider is improving this area rapidly and securely towards outstanding.

■ Safeguarding is effective.

Good (2) ■ The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is at least good. ■ All other key judgements are likely to be good or outstanding. In exceptional circumstances, one of the key judgement areas may require improvement, as long as there is convincing evidence that the provider is improving it rapidly and securely towards good. ■ Safeguarding is effective.
Requires improvement (3) ■ Other than in exceptional circumstances, it is likely that where the provider is judged to require improvement in any of the key judgements, the overall effectiveness will require improvement. ■ Safeguarding is effective.
Inadequate (4) ■ The judgement on the overall effectiveness is likely to be inadequate where any one of the key judgements is inadequate and/or safeguarding is ineffective.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

159. The CIF sets out the overarching criteria for judging the effectiveness of leadership and management.

160. In making this judgement, inspectors will consider:

- how successfully ambitions for the provider's performance are set, reviewed and communicated with staff, learners, employers and other partners and the impact this has on the quality of provision and outcomes for all learners
- how successfully leaders, managers and governors secure and sustain improvements to teaching, learning and assessment through high quality professional development, including developing management and leadership capacity and robust performance management to tackle weaknesses and promote good practice across all types of provision
- the rigour of self-assessment, including through the use of the views of learners, employers and other stakeholders, its accuracy and how well it secures sustained improvement across the provider's work, including in any subcontracted provision
- the strategic priority that leaders and managers give to the provision of English and mathematics to ensure that learners improve their levels of skills in these subjects compared with their starting points
- the extent to which leaders, managers and governors collaborate with employers and other partners to ensure that the range and content of the provision is aligned to local and regional priorities (this may include inviting local employers to sit on their governing or supervisory board)

- how effectively leaders, managers and governors monitor the progress of groups of learners so that none is disadvantaged or underachieves
- the extent to which learners receive thorough and impartial careers guidance to enable them to make informed choices about their current learning and future career plans
- how effectively leaders, managers and governors monitor the progression and destinations of their learners (including whether learners enter secure and sustained employment) and use this information to improve provision
- the extent to which leaders promote all forms of equality and foster greater understanding of and respect for people of all faiths (or those of no faith), races, genders, ages, disabilities and sexual orientations (and other groups with protected characteristics), and how well learners and staff are protected from harassment, bullying and discrimination, including those based with employers and at other sites external to the provider
- how well the provider prepares learners for successful life in modern Britain and promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different backgrounds, faiths and beliefs
- how well the provider prepares learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to become more independent in their everyday life
- the effectiveness of safeguarding practice, including the prevention of radicalisation of learners and compliance with the 'Prevent' duty
- the extent to which provision for all learners can be maintained over time and leaders and governors take action to ensure this.

161. Inspectors should consider whether governors or those in a similar role:

- know the provider and understand its strengths and weaknesses
- support and strengthen the provider's leadership and contribute to shaping its strategic direction
- provide challenge and hold senior leaders and managers to account for improving the quality of learning and the effectiveness of performance management systems.

Sources of evidence

162. Inspectors will obtain a range of evidence from meetings with leaders, managers and governors and first-hand evidence of their work across the provider, including in subcontracted provision. Inspectors will use documentary evidence that the provider supplies to evaluate the impact of the work of leaders, managers and governors, both currently and over time, in conjunction with first-hand evidence that may include that gathered from staff, learners, employers and relevant partners.

Safeguarding

163. Inspectors will always have regard for how well children and learners are helped and protected so that they are kept safe. Although inspectors will not provide a separate numerical grade for this key aspect of a provider's work, inspectors will always make a written judgement in the leadership and management section of the inspection report about whether or not the arrangements for safeguarding children and learners are effective.

164. Ofsted has published a document setting out the approach inspectors should take to inspecting safeguarding in all the settings covered by the CIF. The document 'Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings'[26] should be read alongside the framework and this handbook.

Federations and governance arrangements

165. Many providers are cooperating as groups or federations, with an overarching board and chief executive officer, or similar arrangement, that assume some or all of the responsibilities formerly shouldered by the individual provider's governing body. In the case of such extended management and governance, inspectors will seek evidence of the impact of the overarching board and its staff as well as the provider's local board, committee or governing body, where there are relevant delegated responsibilities.

Grade descriptors: effectiveness of leadership and management

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1)

- Leaders, managers and governors have created a culture that enables learners and staff to excel. They are committed unwaveringly to setting high expectations for staff and learners' conduct and achievement. Working relationships between staff and learners are exemplary.
- Leaders, managers and governors focus on consistently improving outcomes for all learners. They are uncompromising in their ambition. They have the necessary resources to sustain provision of very high quality, including in English and mathematics.
- The provider's actions have secured substantial improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for learners.
- Governors systematically challenge senior leaders so that the effective deployment of staff and resources secures excellent outcomes for learners. Governors do not shy away from challenging leaders about variations in performance across the provider's work, including in subcontracted provision.

[26] 'Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings', Ofsted, August 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-early-years-education-and-skills-from-september-2015.

- Leaders, managers and governors have a deep, accurate understanding of the provider's effectiveness that is informed by the views of learners, staff, employers and other stakeholders. They use this to keep the provider improving by focusing their actions on important areas. They are unflinching in reviewing the impact of their actions.
- Leaders, managers and governors use incisive performance management that leads to professional development that encourages, challenges and supports staff improvement. Teaching is highly effective across the provision including in subcontracted provision.
- Staff reflect on and debate the way they teach. They feel deeply involved in their own professional development. Leaders have created a climate in which staff are motivated and trusted to take risks and innovate in ways that are right for their learners.
- The range of provision offered is carefully considered and based on a thorough understanding and analysis of a wide range of information, including on local and national economic and social contexts. Learning programmes are very well designed, including in collaboration with employers. These learning programmes ensure that they enable learners to acquire knowledge, understanding and skills, including, where relevant, English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, that prepare them well for future progression to further/higher education and/or sustained employment.
- Leaders, managers and governors ensure that the provision of accurate, timely and impartial careers guidance enables learners to make informed choices about their learning programme and that learners are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity exceptionally well so that the ethos and culture of the provider prevent any form of direct or indirect discriminatory behaviour. Leaders, staff and learners do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour. The promotion of fundamental British values is at the heart of the provider's work.
- Learners feel safe and know how to raise concerns. The provider is proactive in assessing safeguarding risks and taking action to prevent them. The provider has a strong track record of raising awareness among staff and learners of safeguarding issues, listening to learners' concerns and acting on them.
- Leaders' work to protect learners from radicalisation and extremism is exemplary. Leaders respond swiftly where learners are vulnerable to these issues. High quality training develops staff's vigilance, confidence and competency to challenge learners' views and encourage debate.

Good (2)

- Leaders set high expectations of learners and staff. They lead by example to create a culture of respect and tolerance. The positive working relationships between leaders, staff and learners support the progress of all learners at the provider.
- Leaders, managers and governors are ambitious for all learners and promote improvement effectively. The provider's actions secure improvement in the quality of provision and outcomes for learners. The provider has the necessary resources to sustain the quality of provision and continue making the necessary improvements.
- Leaders, managers and governors have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the quality of education at the provider, including in subcontracted provision. This helps them to plan, monitor and refine actions to improve all key aspects of the provider's work.

- Leaders, managers and governors use performance management effectively to improve teaching. They use accurate monitoring to identify and spread good practice across the provider, including in subcontracted provision.
- Staff value their continuing professional development. It is having a positive impact on their teaching and the progress learners make. Teaching is consistently strong across the provider or improving rapidly.
- Governors hold senior leaders stringently to account for all aspects of the provider's performance, ensuring that the skilful deployment of staff and resources delivers good or improving outcomes for learners.
- Leaders and managers review the provision well to ensure that the provision offered is relevant to local and/or national priorities.
- Learning programmes are well designed to ensure that learners acquire knowledge, understanding and skills, including, where relevant, in English, mathematics and ICT, so that they can progress to further/higher education and/or sustained employment. Leaders, managers and governors provide impartial careers guidance that enables learners to make informed decisions about their next steps.
- Leaders promote equality of opportunity and diversity, resulting in a positive learning environment. Staff and learners work together to prevent any form of direct or indirect discriminatory behaviour. Leaders, staff and learners do not tolerate prejudiced behaviour and fundamental British values are promoted actively.
- Safeguarding is effective. The provider assesses risk appropriately, taking action to prevent harm and reporting safeguarding concerns. The provider raises awareness of safeguarding issues among staff and learners. The provider listens to and acts on learners' concerns.
- Leaders protect learners from radicalisation and extremism. Staff are trained and are increasingly vigilant, confident and competent to encourage open discussion with learners.

Requires improvement (3)

- Leadership and management are not yet good.
- Safeguarding is effective.

Inadequate (4)

Leadership and management are likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.

- Capacity for securing further improvement, including in subcontracted provision, is poor and the improvements leaders and governors have made are unsustainable, too slow or overly dependent on external support.
- Leaders are not doing enough to tackle poor teaching, learning and assessment. This significantly impairs the progress of learners or groups of learners.
- Leaders are not aware of, or are not taking effective action to stem, the decline in the quality of provision or in outcomes for learners.
- The range of provision offered fails to meet the needs of learners, employers or the local community as reflected by the low proportion of learners who progress to destinations relevant to their career aims.
- The provision does not equip learners with the skills, knowledge or understanding required to enable them to progress to their next steps.
- Leaders are not taking effective steps to secure positive destinations for learners and are not preparing them for life in modern Britain.

- Leaders, managers and governors, through their words, actions or influence, directly and/or indirectly, undermine or fail to promote equality of opportunity. They do not prevent discriminatory behaviour or prejudiced actions and views.
- Safeguarding is ineffective. The provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners do not meet statutory requirements or they give serious cause for concern; or insufficient action is taken to remedy weaknesses following a serious incident.
- Leaders, managers and governors are not protecting learners from radicalisation and extremist views when learners are vulnerable to these. Policy and practice are poor, which means learners are at risk.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

166. The CIF sets out the overarching criteria for judging the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

167. In making this judgement, inspectors will consider the extent to which:

- teaching and assessment methods and resources inspire and challenge all learners and meet their different needs, including the most able and the most disadvantaged, enabling them to enjoy learning and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding
- learners are supported to achieve their learning goals, both in and between learning sessions
- staff have qualifications, training, subject knowledge and experience relevant to their roles and use these to plan and deliver learning appropriate to learners of all abilities, reflect good industry practice and meet employers' needs
- staff identify learners' support and additional learning needs quickly and accurately through effective initial assessment, leading to the provision of high quality and effective support to help learners achieve as well as they can
- staff work with learners to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are tailored to enable all learners to make good progress and prepare for their next steps
- staff assess learners' progress and performance and ensure that assessments and reviews are timely, frequent, fair, informative and reliable
- learners receive clear and constructive feedback through assessment and progress reviews and/or during personal tutorials so that they know what they have to do to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding to achieve their full potential
- employers, parents and carers, as appropriate, are engaged in planning learners' development; they are kept informed by the provider of each learner's attendance, progress and improvement, where appropriate

- teaching, learning and assessment promote equality, raise awareness of diversity and tackle discrimination, victimisation, harassment, stereotyping, radicalisation and bullying
- staff are aware of and plan for individual learners' diverse needs in teaching or training sessions and provide effective support, including making reasonable adjustments for learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- teaching promotes learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- teaching, learning and assessment support learners to develop their skills in English, mathematics and ICT and their employability skills, including appropriate attitudes and behaviours for work, in order to achieve their learning goals and career aims.

Sources of evidence

168. Inspectors will use much first-hand evidence gained from observing learners in learning sessions and, where appropriate, in the workplace and other relevant settings. Inspectors will talk to learners about their work, scrutinise their work and assess how well leaders are securing continual improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. Direct observations in learning sessions and, where appropriate, in the workplace will be supplemented by a range of other evidence to enable inspectors to evaluate the impact that staff and support assistants have on learners' progress over time. Inspectors will not grade the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in individual lessons or during individual observations of teaching or assessment in the workplace.

169. Inspectors may also consider evidence from:

- the provider's own evaluations of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning
- information on learners' starting points, such as initial assessments, and how it is used to plan learning
- discussions with learners about the work they have undertaken, what they have learnt from it, and their experience of teaching and learning over time
- discussions about teaching, learning and assessment with staff, trainers, assessors, support staff and employers
- the views of learners, employers and staff about the quality of teaching, how much challenge learners receive and how quickly leaders tackle poor teaching
- scrutiny of learners' work, including observation of learners at work or during practical training sessions.

Grade descriptors: quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1)

- Learners are curious, interested and keen to learn. They seek out and use new information to develop, consolidate and deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills. They thrive in learning sessions and, where appropriate, use their experiences in the workplace to further develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Learners are eager to know how they can improve their work and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. They capitalise on opportunities to use feedback to improve. Staff check learners' understanding systematically and effectively, offering clearly directed and timely support that has a notable impact on improving learning.
- Staff are determined that learners achieve well. They have excellent subject knowledge and motivate and engage learners, who enjoy the work they complete. Staff have consistently high expectations of all learners' attitudes to learning and learners are set challenging targets to achieve.
- Staff plan learning sessions and assessments very effectively so that all learners undertake demanding work that helps them to realise their potential. Staff identify and support any learner who is falling behind and enable almost all to catch up.
- Staff gather a useful range of accurate assessment information and use this to give learners incisive feedback about what they can do to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills. Learners are committed to taking these next steps and their work shows that almost all are making substantial and sustained progress.
- Staff set work that consolidates learning, deepens understanding and develops skills, and prepares learners very well for their next steps.
- Where appropriate, parents and/or employers are provided with clear and timely information that details the extent of learners' progress in relation to the standards expected and what they need to do to improve.
- Staff are quick to challenge stereotypes and the use of derogatory language, including at work. Resources and teaching strategies reflect and value the diversity of learners' experiences and provide learners with a comprehensive understanding of people and communities beyond their immediate experience.
- Staff promote, where appropriate, English, mathematics, ICT and employability skills exceptionally well and ensure that learners are well-equipped with the necessary skills to progress to their next steps.

Good (2)

- Most learners enjoy their learning across the provision. Teaching challenges them and enables them to develop, consolidate and deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills well.
- Most learners want to know how to improve their learning and act on feedback to help them to improve. Staff listen to, carefully observe and skilfully question learners during learning sessions. They reshape tasks and explanations and provide feedback to tackle misconceptions and build on learners' strengths. This has a positive impact on learning.
- Staff give learners feedback that details what they need to do to improve; many learners act on this to make improvements. This consolidates and deepens learners'

knowledge, understanding and skills and prepares them very well for their future. ■ Staff assess learners' knowledge and understanding frequently to ensure that they are making at least the expected progress throughout their time with the provider, including the time spent at work or on work experience. Staff use this information well to plan activities in which learners undertake demanding work that helps them to make strong progress. They identify and support effectively those learners who start to fall behind. ■ Staff set work that builds on previous learning, extends learners' knowledge and understanding and develops their skills to ensure that they are prepared for their future. ■ Where appropriate, parents and/or employers are informed about learners' progress in relation to the standards expected. ■ Staff challenge stereotypes and the use of derogatory language, including at work. Staff promote equality of opportunity and diversity in teaching and learning. ■ Staff develop, where appropriate, learners' English, mathematics, ICT and employability skills to prepare them for their future progression.
Requires improvement (3) ■ Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good.
Inadequate (4) **The judgement on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following applies.** ■ Teaching and/or assessment is poorly planned. ■ Weak assessment practice means that teaching fails to meet learners' needs. ■ Learners or particular groups of learners are making inadequate progress because teaching does not develop their knowledge, understanding and skills sufficiently. ■ Learners are not developing English, mathematics, ICT or employability skills adequately to equip them for their future progression. ■ Staff do not promote equality of opportunity or understanding of diversity effectively and this disadvantages individuals or groups of learners. ■ As a result of weak teaching, learning and assessment over time, learners or groups of learners make insufficient progress and are unsuccessful in attaining their learning goals and progressing to their planned next steps. ■ Staff lack expertise and the ability to promote learning and learners do not see its relevance to their everyday lives and planned next steps.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

170. The CIF sets out the overarching criteria for judging personal development, behaviour and welfare.

171. In making this judgement inspectors will consider, where relevant and appropriate:

    - the extent to which learners take pride in their work, become self-confident and self-assured, and know that they have the potential to be a successful learner on their current and future learning programmes, including at work

- the proportion of learners who benefit from purposeful work-related learning, including external work experience where appropriate to their learning programmes and/or their future career plans, and how well they contribute to their workplace, including on work experience, as a valued member of the workforce
- how well learners develop the personal, social and employability skills, including English, mathematics and ICT skills, required to achieve their core learning aims and appreciate the importance of these skills in the context of their progression and career aims
- the extent to which learners achieve the specific units of their main vocational qualifications and relevant additional qualifications that enhance their learning and are likely to increase their future employability
- the extent to which learners' standards of work are appropriate to their level of study and/or requirements of the relevant industries so that they can work effectively to realistically challenging academic or commercial deadlines
- learners' use of the information they receive on the full range of relevant career pathways from the provider and other partners, including employers, to help them develop challenging and realistic plans for their future careers
- how well learners know how to protect themselves from the risks associated with radicalisation, extremism, forms of abuse, grooming and bullying, including through the use of the internet, and how well they understand the risks posed by adults or young people who use the internet to bully, groom or abuse other people, especially children, young people and vulnerable adults
- how well learners know how to keep themselves fit and healthy, both physically and emotionally
- the extent to which learners feel and are safe and have a good understanding of how they can raise concerns if they do not feel safe; the confidence that any concerns they may have are taken seriously and followed through appropriately
- learners' understanding of their rights and responsibilities as a learner and, where relevant, as an employee, and as citizens and consumers in the community; and how well they work cooperatively with others in all settings and promote good and productive working relationships with their peers, employees and employers
- the extent to which learning programmes, including enrichment activities, allow all learners to explore personal, social and ethical issues and take part in life in wider society and in Britain
- how well learners attend learning sessions and/or work regularly and punctually, including through participation in any distance learning activities, such as online learning and the use of virtual learning environments

- whether learners comply with any guidelines for behaviour and conduct stipulated by providers or employers and manage their own feelings and behaviour at work and during learning sessions.

Sources of evidence

172. To inform this judgement, inspectors will use evidence gathered during the inspection as well as evidence of trends in learners' development over time. Inspectors will use first-hand evidence from visits to learning sessions and training workshops, including visits to learners at work or on work placements. Inspectors will also gather evidence from interviews with learners, staff, employers and other partners, where documents such as attendance registers may also be used.

173. Inspectors' judgements about learners' personal development, behaviour and welfare are concerned with their attitudes to learning and, where appropriate, to work, and the development of the skills relevant to their learning programme, their everyday lives and their plans for their next steps, including to employment. Inspectors' judgements also take account of learners' ability to keep themselves safe from relevant risks and demonstrate appropriate behaviour for the learning and the work environment. Inspectors will consider the main purpose of the particular type of provision when they prioritise the impact that each of the criteria will have on learners' personal development, behaviour and welfare.

Grade descriptors: personal development, behaviour and welfare

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1)

- Learners are confident and self-assured. Their excellent attitudes to learning have a strong, positive impact on their progress. They are proud of their achievements and take pride in the work they complete with the provider and in the workplace.
- Learners discuss and debate issues in a considered way, showing respect for others' ideas and points of view.
- High quality careers guidance helps learners to make informed choices about which courses suit their needs and aspirations. They are prepared for the next stage of their education, employment, self-employment or training.
- Learners understand how their education and training equip them with the behaviours and attitudes necessary for success in the future as reflected by the excellent employability skills they acquire and the achievement of relevant additional qualifications.
- Learners, where appropriate, participate in purposeful and challenging work experience and placements relevant to their future career plans. These learners often quickly become an asset to the business and make a highly valued contribution.
- Learners are very motivated to learn; attendance and punctuality at learning sessions

and/or work, including work experience, are consistently excellent. They meet challenging deadlines well.

- Staff and learners deal effectively with the very rare instances of bullying behaviour and/or use of derogatory or aggressive language. They work well with the provider to prevent all forms of bullying, including online bullying and prejudice-based bullying.
- The provider's open culture actively promotes all aspects of learners' welfare. Learners are safe and feel safe at all times. They understand how to keep themselves and others safe in different situations and settings. They trust leaders to take rapid and appropriate action to resolve any concerns they have.
- Learners, where appropriate, can explain accurately and confidently how to keep themselves healthy. They make informed choices about healthy eating, fitness and their emotional and mental well-being. They have an appropriate understanding of healthy relationships and are confident in staying safe from abuse and sexual exploitation.
- Learners have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe online and of the dangers of inappropriate use of mobile technology and social networking sites.
- The personal and social development of learners equips them to be thoughtful, caring and active citizens.

Good (2)

- Learners are confident and self-assured. They take pride in their work at the provider and in the workplace.
- Learners' attitudes to all aspects of their learning are consistently positive. These positive attitudes have a good impact on the progress they make.
- Learners show respect for others' ideas and views.
- Learners are punctual and prepared for learning sessions at the provider or in the workplace. They bring the right equipment and are ready to learn.
- Learners value their education. Few are absent and no groups of learners are disadvantaged by low attendance. Learners develop employability skills that prepare them for the world of work, including the achievement of relevant qualifications and deadlines.
- Learners respond quickly to instructions and requests from staff, allowing learning sessions to flow smoothly and without interruption.
- Learners' good conduct reflects the provider's efforts to promote high standards.
- Parents, staff, employers and learners have no well-founded concerns about personal development, behaviour and welfare.
- Staff are quick to tackle the rare use of derogatory or aggressive language, at the provider or in the workplace, and always challenge stereotyping.
- Staff promote clear messages about the impact of bullying and prejudiced behaviour on learners' well-being. Learners work well with the provider to tackle and prevent the rare occurrences of bullying.
- The provider's open culture promotes all aspects of learners' welfare. Learners are safe and feel safe. Learners have the knowledge and understanding, where appropriate, to stay healthy, form positive relationships and to prevent the misuse of technology.
- Learners use impartial careers guidance to make choices about the next stage of their education, employment, self-employment or training.

Requires improvement (3) ■ Personal development, behaviour and welfare are not yet good. ■ Learners are safe and feel safe at the provider and, where relevant, in the workplace.
Inadequate (4) **Personal development, behaviour and welfare are likely to be inadequate if any one of the following applies.** ■ Learners' lack of engagement, motivation or enthusiasm inhibits their progress and development. ■ A significant minority of learners show a lack of respect and self-discipline. Learners ignore or rebut requests to moderate their conduct and are not adequately prepared for progression or the world of work. ■ Attendance rates are consistently low and show little sign of sustained improvement. ■ A significant minority of learners do not understand how and why to live healthy, positive lives both physically and emotionally. ■ Incidents of bullying, prejudiced and discriminatory behaviour, both direct and indirect, are frequent. ■ Learners have little confidence in the provider's ability to tackle bullying successfully.

Outcomes for learners

174. The CIF sets out the overarching criteria for judging outcomes for learners.

175. In making this judgement, inspectors will consider, where relevant and appropriate, the extent to which:

- learners make progress during their programme compared with their starting points, with particular attention to progress by different groups of learners
- learners attain their learning goals, including qualifications, and achieve challenging targets
- learners' work meets or exceeds the requirements of the qualifications, learning goals or industry standards
- learners enjoy learning and make progress relative to their prior attainment and potential over time
- learners progress to relevant further learning and employment or self-employment relevant to their career plans or gain promotion at work
- learners acquire qualifications and the skills and knowledge that will enable them to progress to their chosen career, employment, and/or further education and training that have been planned in line with local and national priorities for economic and social growth
- learners who have severe and complex special educational needs and/or disabilities gain skills and progress to become more independent in their everyday life and/or progress to positive destinations such as employment

- there are any significant variations in the achievement of different groups of learners.

Sources of evidence

176. In judging achievement, inspectors will give most weight to learners' progress. They will take account of learners' starting points in terms of their prior attainment and experience when evaluating progress. Within this, they will give most weight to the progress of learners currently at the provider, taking account of how this compares with the progress of recent learner cohorts, where relevant. Inspectors will consider the progress of learners in all types of provision, not just those who have taken or are about to take examinations or national tests.

177. Inspectors will gather evidence about the progress of current learners through:

- observations in learning sessions and at work
- discussions with learners about their learning and development at the provider and/or employer
- scrutiny of learners' acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills over time as shown in their work
- analysis of the provider's own data, taking account of the quality and rigour of the assessment on which it is based.

178. In scrutinising learners' work, inspectors will consider how well:

- learners are making good progress towards meeting or exceeding the standards expected
- learners are set challenging goals, given their starting points, and are making good progress towards meeting or exceeding these
- learners are gaining and consolidating knowledge, understanding and skills
- learners, including the most-able, do work that deepens their knowledge, understanding and skills or go on to study different content, rather than simply undertaking more work at the same level
- lower-attaining learners are receiving the support they need to ensure that they achieve and progress to higher-level learning or into sustained employment.

179. Inspectors will consider the impact of the provider's action to ensure that all groups of learners achieve and that any gaps in progress and attainment between different groups of learners are narrowed.

180. Inspectors will consider the progress of all learners, including those in subcontracted provision.

181. Inspectors will consider how well learners progress to education, training and employment in line with their plans for their future.

Grade descriptors: outcomes for learners

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1) ■ Across the provider and in different types of provision, including subcontracted provision, current learners make substantial and sustained progress from their different starting points. ■ Learners, and groups of learners, are typically able to articulate their knowledge and understanding clearly and demonstrate the skills they have acquired convincingly. The standard of learners' work is high and, where appropriate, meets industry standards very well. ■ The proportion of learners completing their courses and achieving meaningful qualifications, including, where appropriate, in English and mathematics, that are relevant to their career aims or learning goals is very high or improving rapidly. ■ Learners progress as soon as they are ready to higher-level learning and/or into sustained employment or gain promotion at work. The proportion of learners progressing to positive destinations is very high. ■ Learners are exceptionally well-prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment and have attained relevant qualifications, skills, knowledge and understanding. They progress to positive destinations that are relevant to their career plans.
Good (2) ■ Across the large majority of provision, current learners make consistently strong progress from their different starting points, developing secure skills, knowledge and understanding. ■ The standard of learners' work meets or exceeds that expected for the level of their course and, where appropriate, the relevant industry. Learners from across different groups can explain how they have developed and what they have learnt. ■ The large majority of learners complete their courses and achieve qualifications, including, where appropriate, in English and mathematics; or the rate of improvement in the proportion of learners doing so is increasing rapidly. ■ Learners are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment and have attained relevant qualifications. A high proportion of learners progress to further/higher education, employment or training at a level suitable to meet appropriate career plans.

Requires improvement (3) ■ Outcomes for learners are not yet good.
Inadequate (4) **Outcomes for learners are likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.** ■ Learners' progress is too slow relative to their starting points given the time spent on learning programmes. ■ There are wide gaps in the progress and/or attainment of different groups and these are not improving. ■ The proportion of learners completing and achieving relevant and meaningful qualifications is low or is in decline. Any improvement is insufficient, fragile or inconsistent. ■ Learners have not attained the qualifications, knowledge, understanding or skills they need for the next stage of education, training or employment. ■ The proportion of learners progressing to further/higher education courses, employment or self-employment is low.

Evaluating types of provision

182. The following section provides grade descriptors for each type of provision that inspectors may grade and report on, as appropriate. Inspectors will judge the effectiveness of each provision type under consideration, taking into account

- the effectiveness of leadership and management
- the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- the personal development, behaviour and welfare of learners
- outcomes for learners.

16 to 19 study programmes

183. In order to achieve comparability with the way in which 16 to 19 provision within schools and academies is inspected and judged under the CIF, the grade descriptors below reflect those in the schools inspection handbook.

184. Inspectors will consider how well:

- leaders promote high expectations and use rigorous systems to drive improvement, including through monitoring and developing the quality of 16 to 19 provision and improving the progress and achievement of learners and groups of learners
- study programmes for each learner are planned and managed so that they fully meet the principles of the DfE's 16 to 19 study programmes by providing progression, stretch, mathematics and English for all learners

without GCSE grades A* to C, as well as work experience and non-qualification activities

- teaching and assessment support and challenge learners
- study programmes build on each learner's prior attainment and enable them to make progress and move on to a higher level of qualification when they are ready to do so
- learners receive high quality impartial careers guidance to prepare them for their chosen next steps and to enable them to make well-informed decisions about their future plans
- learners develop personal, social, employability and independent learning skills, and achieve high levels of punctuality, attendance and conduct, including through the contribution of non-qualification or enrichment activities and/or work experience
- learners understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy, both physically and emotionally
- learners, and groups of learners, make progress from their different starting points, remain on their study programme, achieve their core aim and make progress towards a GCSE grade C in English and/or mathematics if they do not already have one
- learners, and groups of learners, progress to the planned next stage in their careers, such as a higher level of education or training, or to employment or an apprenticeship
- the 16 to 19 minimum standards are met where applicable.

185. Inspectors will also consider whether or not arrangements for safeguarding learners are effective.

Grade descriptors: the effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programmes

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1)

- Leaders pursue excellence. They improve provision and outcomes rapidly and reduce achievement gaps between groups, by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as well as learners' retention, progress and skill development.
- Leaders plan, manage and evaluate study programmes so that learners undertake highly individualised and challenging learning that builds on their prior attainment, meets all the principles of 16 to 19 provision and prepares them very well for future employment.
- Learners without GCSE grades A* to C in either English or mathematics follow appropriately tailored courses in English and/or mathematics. The considerable majority make substantial and sustained progress towards grade C or above.

- High quality impartial careers guidance ensures that learners follow study programmes that build on their prior attainment and enable them to develop clear, ambitious and realistic plans for their future. Learners understand the options available and are informed about local and national skills needs.
- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge learners to make substantial and sustained progress in all aspects of their study programme. Teaching enables learners who fall behind to catch up swiftly and the most able to excel.
- Learners are confident and conduct themselves well. They are punctual. They have excellent personal, social and employability skills and undertake high quality non-qualification activities and work experience that are relevant to their study programmes. Attendance rates are high.
- Learners are safe and feel safe. They are thoughtful, caring and respectful citizens. They take responsibility for keeping themselves safe and healthy and contribute to wider society and life in Britain.
- Throughout the time spent on their study programmes, learners and groups of learners make substantial and sustained progress from their starting points. Rates of retention are high for almost all groups of learners. Any gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points are closing.
- Almost all learners progress swiftly to higher levels during their study programme. Almost all learners complete their study programmes, achieve qualifications relevant to their career aims and move on to sustained education, employment, training or an apprenticeship.
- Progress on level 3 qualifications in terms of value added is above average across nearly all subjects.

Good (2)

- Leaders have high expectations. They improve provision and reduce achievement gaps between groups by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning assessment and learners' retention, progress and skill development.
- Leaders plan and manage individualised study programmes that build on learners' prior attainment, meet all the principles of 16 to 19 provision and prepare them well for future employment.
- Learners without GCSE grades A* to C in either English or mathematics follow relevant courses in English and/or mathematics. Many make progress towards grade C.
- Impartial careers guidance ensures that learners undertake study programmes that build on their prior attainment and enables them to develop clear and realistic plans for their future.
- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge learners so that they make strong progress across all aspects of their study programmes. Learners who fall behind are helped to catch up and the most able are stretched.
- Learners develop personal, social and employability skills, including through high quality non-qualification activities and work experience that are relevant to their needs. They are punctual and attendance is high.
- Learners are safe and feel safe. They behave well, respect others and understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy and to contribute to wider society and life in Britain.

■ The great majority of learners and groups of learners make strong progress from their starting points. Gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points are closing. ■ The great majority of learners progress to higher levels during and after their study programme. They complete their study programmes, achieve qualifications relevant to their career aims and move on to sustained education, employment, training or an apprenticeship. ■ Progress on level 3 qualifications in terms of value added is above average or improving across most subjects.
Requires improvement (3) ■ Effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programmes is not yet good. ■ Safeguarding is effective.
Inadequate (4) **Effectiveness of the 16 to 19 study programmes is likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.** ■ Leadership of 16 to 19 study programmes is weak. ■ The principles of the 16 to 19 study programmes are not met. ■ Study programmes are insufficiently challenging or relevant to learners' prior attainment or planned next steps. ■ Weak assessment practice or poor planning mean that teaching fails to ensure that learners achieve their learning goals. ■ Learners, or groups of learners, make inadequate progress from their starting points. ■ Too few learners are retained on their learning programmes or achieve their core aim. ■ Learners, or groups of learners, are ill-prepared for their next steps in terms of attainment, personal skills or behaviours. ■ Too many learners, or groups of learners, are unsuccessful in securing relevant sustained education, employment or training. ■ The 16 to 19 minimum standards are not met for either vocational or academic qualifications. ■ Safeguarding is ineffective.

Adult learning programmes

186. Inspectors will consider, where appropriate, how well:

- each strand of a provider's adult learning programme, such as vocational training, employability training and community learning, has a clearly defined purpose that is well met through each relevant learning programme
- staff work with partners, such as local employer networks, local authorities, Jobcentre Plus, employers and community organisations to ensure that the provision is relevant to local employment opportunities and supports local and national priorities

- leaders, managers and governors focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate in education and training, and work with other partners to widen participation and support learners' progression to further learning and/or employment relevant to their personal circumstances
- leaders, managers and governors use the community learning fund to develop learning programmes and projects that develop stronger communities
- staff work with learners and employers or other partners to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment enable learners to develop personal, social and employability skills that prepare them well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals
- learning programmes enable learners to overcome their barriers to employment and/or to becoming more independent in their communities
- learners' progress and achievements are accurately recorded and used to inform their progression
- individual learners on community learning programmes develop the skills and confidence required to participate in their local community.

187. Inspectors will also consider whether or not arrangements for safeguarding learners are effective.

Grade descriptors: the effectiveness of adult learning programmes

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1)

- Leaders pursue excellence. They improve provision and outcomes rapidly and ensure that all groups of learners succeed, by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as learners' retention and progress, and how they use their skills at work, in their personal lives and in their communities.
- Leaders plan, manage and evaluate each strand of their adult learning programmes so that learners undertake highly individualised and challenging learning that builds on their prior attainment, meets the specific purpose of each programme and prepares learners very well for their next steps, including employment or self-employment.
- The considerable majority of learners make substantial and sustained progress in developing their skills in English and/or mathematics, where required, to enable them to achieve their main learning aims or future plans. A considerable majority of learners whose main learning aim is to improve their skills in English and/or mathematics achieve a qualification in the relevant subject(s) at a higher level than their prior attainment.
- High quality impartial careers guidance ensures that learners follow learning

programmes that build very effectively on their prior attainment and enable them to progress towards clear, ambitious and realistic plans for their future. Learners understand the options available to them and are informed about local and national skills needs or the work of relevant community groups or projects.

- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge learners to make sustained and substantial progress in all aspects of their learning programmes. Teaching enables learners who fall behind to catch up swiftly and the most able to excel. Especially where learners are not working towards a qualification, they receive accurate and reliable records of their achievements and progress towards their individual learning goals.
- Learners' attendance is excellent. Learners are confident and conduct themselves well, according to the requirements of the learning programme or workplace. They are punctual. They have developed excellent personal, social and employability skills, as relevant to their learning programme.
- Learners are safe and feel safe, including at work and in community settings. They are thoughtful, caring and respectful members of their community or workplace. They take responsibility for keeping themselves safe and healthy and contribute to wider society and life in Britain.
- Throughout the time spent on their learning programmes, learners and groups of learners make substantial and sustained progress towards their agreed learning goals. Retention rates are high for almost all groups of learners. Any gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points are closing rapidly.
- Almost all learners progress swiftly to higher levels during their learning programmes. Almost all learners complete their learning programmes, achieve qualifications relevant to their career aims and move on to sustained education, employment, training or an apprenticeship, or are more independent in their personal lives or their communities.

Good (2)

- Leaders have high expectations. They improve provision and reduce achievement gaps between groups by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and learners' retention, progress and skill development, and the extent to which learners use their learning at work, in their personal lives or in their communities.
- Leaders plan and manage individualised learning programmes that build on learners' prior attainment, meet the specific purpose of each strand of their adult learning provision and prepare most learners well to achieve their future plans, including employment or self-employment.
- Many learners make progress in developing their skills in English and/or mathematics, where required, to enable them to achieve their main learning aim or future plans. Most learners whose main learning aim is to improve their skills in English and/or mathematics achieve a qualification in the relevant subject(s) at a higher level than their prior attainment.
- Impartial careers guidance ensures that learners undertake learning programmes that build on their prior attainment and enable them to develop clear and realistic plans for their future.
- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge learners so that they make progress across all aspects of their learning programmes. Learners who fall behind are helped to catch up and the most able are challenged to achieve

particularly well. Especially where learners are not working towards a qualification, they receive useful records of their achievements and progress towards their individual learning goals.

- Learners develop personal, social and employability skills through high quality activities, including work experience or community projects, that are relevant to their learning goals. They are punctual and their attendance is good.
- Learners are safe and feel safe, including at work and in community settings. They behave well, respect others and understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy and to contribute to wider society and life in Britain.
- The great majority of learners and groups of learners make at least expected progress towards their agreed learning targets. Gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points are closing. The great majority of learners are challenged to progress to higher levels or more complex tasks during their learning programmes.
- Most learners complete their learning programmes, achieve qualifications relevant to their career aims or future plans, and move on to sustained education, employment, training or an apprenticeship or are more independent in their personal lives or their communities.

Requires improvement (3)

- Effectiveness of the adult learning programmes is not yet good.

Inadequate (4)

Effectiveness of the adult learning programmes is likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.

- Leadership of the adult learning programmes is weak.
- The identified purpose of each strand of the adult learning programmes is not met.
- Adult learning programmes are insufficiently challenging or relevant to learners' prior attainment or planned next steps.
- Weak assessment practice or poor planning mean that teaching fails to enable learners to achieve their learning goals.
- Learners, or groups of learners, make inadequate progress from their starting points.
- Too few learners are retained on their programmes or achieve their learning goals.
- Learners, or groups of learners, are ill-prepared for their next steps in terms of attainment, personal skills or behaviours.
- Too many learners, or groups of learners, are unsuccessful in securing relevant sustained education, employment or training or, where relevant, do not become more independent in their personal lives or their communities.
- Safeguarding is ineffective.

Apprenticeships

188. Inspectors will consider how well:

- apprenticeships are planned and managed and fully meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship
- the provider's staff engage with employers to plan the training and assessments, agree any additional qualifications to be included, and monitor and support apprentices to progress quickly and achieve to their full potential
- trainers, assessors, coaches and mentors communicate up-to-date subject knowledge that reflects the required industry practice and meets employers' needs
- apprentices develop the vocational and employability skills that enable them to meet the required standards, contribute to their workplace and are relevant to their career aims
- apprentices complete their apprenticeship, progress to their intended job role or other sustained employment, get promoted or, where appropriate, move to a higher level of apprenticeship or qualification
- apprentices contribute to their employer's business
- apprentices develop an understanding of professional standards and current industry practice, including technical skills, and can apply them at work
- apprentices develop attitudes, behaviours and employability skills, including in English, mathematics and ICT, and apply them at work.

189. Inspectors will also consider whether or not arrangements for safeguarding learners are effective.

Grade descriptors: the effectiveness of apprenticeship programmes

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1)

- Leaders pursue excellence. They improve provision and outcomes rapidly and reduce achievement gaps between groups of apprentices by monitoring the quality of training, learning and assessment. Almost all apprentices complete their apprenticeship. They progress and develop relevant skills to meet the required industry standards.
- Leaders plan, manage and evaluate apprenticeships so that apprentices undertake highly individualised and challenging learning that builds on their prior attainment, meets all the requirements for apprenticeships and prepares them very well for future employment, including progression in their current job.
- Development of new provision is carefully planned so that it is in line with local

and national skills strategies and contributes to reducing skills shortages.

- Apprentices who have not already done so achieve qualifications in English and/or mathematics to at least the level required for their apprenticeship. A considerable majority of all apprentices make substantial and sustained progress in developing these skills as required relevant to their vocational area.
- High quality impartial careers guidance ensures that apprentices follow programmes that build on their prior attainment and enable them to develop clear, ambitious and realistic plans for their future. Apprentices understand the options available and are informed about local and national skills needs.
- On- and off-the-job training are particularly well planned in consultation with employers so that they are very well coordinated with apprentices' development at work. Training and assessment support and challenge apprentices to make sustained and substantial progress in all aspects of their programme and to develop excellent skills and knowledge to high industry standards. Training enables apprentices who fall behind to catch up swiftly and the most able to progress quickly to more complex and advanced tasks.
- Apprentices are confident and conduct themselves well. They are punctual. They have excellent personal, social and employability skills and undertake high quality training and assessment activities that enhance their chances of sustained employment in their relevant industry. Their attendance is excellent.
- Apprentices are safe and feel safe. They are thoughtful, caring and respectful members of their company. They take responsibility for keeping themselves safe and healthy and through their work contribute to wider society and life in Britain.
- Throughout the time spent on their programmes, apprentices and groups of apprentices make substantial and sustained progress from their starting points. Rates of retention are high for almost all groups of apprentices. Any gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points are closing rapidly.
- The proportion of apprentices successfully completing their programme within the planned timeframe is very high. Progression to higher-level apprenticeships, further training or study, or to sustained employment and/or to more responsible roles with their employer is very high.

Good (2)

- Leaders have high expectations. They improve provision and reduce achievement gaps between groups of learners by monitoring the quality of training, learning and assessment, and learners' retention, progress and skill development.
- Leaders plan and manage individualised programmes that build on apprentices' prior attainment, meet the apprenticeship requirements and prepare apprentices well for sustained employment.
- Development of new provision is planned so that it is in line with local and national skills strategies and contributes to reducing skills shortages.
- A great majority of apprentices who have not already done so achieve qualifications in English and/or mathematics to the level required for their framework and many apprentices make further progress in developing their skills in these subjects relevant to their vocational area.
- Impartial careers guidance ensures that apprentices undertake a programme that builds on their prior attainment and enables them to develop clear and

realistic plans for their future. ■ On- and off-the-job training are planned well in consultation with employers so that they fit in well with apprentices' development at work. Training and assessment support and challenge apprentices to make sustained and substantial progress in all aspects of their apprenticeship and to develop skills and knowledge to high industry standards. ■ Training enables apprentices who fall behind to catch up and the most able to progress to more advanced tasks. Apprentices develop personal, social and employability skills through a good range of training and assessment activities relevant to their industry. They attend training sessions as required and are punctual. ■ Apprentices are safe and feel safe. They behave well, respect others and understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy and to contribute to wider society and life in Britain. ■ The great majority of apprentices and groups of apprentices make at least the expected progress compared with their starting points. Gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points are closing. ■ The proportion of apprentices successfully completing their programme is high and many of them complete it within the planned timeframe. The majority of apprentices progress to higher-level apprenticeships, further training or study, or to sustained employment and/or to more responsible roles with their employer.
Requires improvement (3) ■ Effectiveness of apprenticeships is not yet good.
Inadequate (4) **Effectiveness of the apprenticeships is likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.** ■ Leadership of apprenticeships is weak. ■ The requirements of the apprenticeship are not met. ■ Apprenticeship programmes are insufficiently challenging or relevant to apprentices' prior attainment or planned next steps. ■ Weak assessment practice or poor planning mean that training fails to enable apprentices to reach the required standards or achieve their learning goals. ■ Apprentices, or groups of apprentices, make inadequate progress from their starting points. ■ Too few apprentices are retained on their programmes or achieve their core aim, including within the planned timeframe. ■ Apprentices, or groups of apprentices, are ill-prepared for their next steps in terms of attainment, qualifications, personal skills or behaviours. ■ Too few apprentices, or groups of apprentices, remain with their employer or gain a suitable position at another employer following their apprenticeship. ■ Safeguarding is ineffective.

Traineeships

190. Inspectors will consider the extent to which:

- well-planned and well-managed individual programmes fully meet the principles and requirements of traineeships, including the provision of work preparation training, training in English and mathematics and high quality work experience that enables individuals to enhance their employability skills
- managers collaborate with employers to ensure that all aspects of each learning programme prioritise the skills and attitudes learners will need for future work
- managers ensure that the provision builds on each learner's prior achievement and enables them to progress to an apprenticeship or sustained employment or, where appropriate, to further study when they are ready to do so
- work experience is an integral part of each traineeship and provides a purposeful and challenging context for learners to develop and practise their skills, including in work-related English and mathematics
- teaching, learning and assessment enable learners to develop relevant vocational and employability skills, attitudes and behaviours so that they are prepared well to move on to apprenticeships or sustained employment or, where relevant, further study as soon as possible, in order to achieve their main learning goals and career aims
- learners progress to an apprenticeship or sustained employment
- learners acquire the sector-specific skills necessary to enable them to progress to their planned next step.

191. Inspectors will also consider whether or not arrangements for safeguarding learners are effective.

Grade descriptors: the effectiveness of traineeships

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1)

- Leaders pursue excellence. They improve provision and outcomes rapidly and reduce achievement gaps between groups of learners by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as learners' retention, progress and skill development.
- Leaders plan, manage and evaluate traineeships so that learners undertake highly individualised and challenging learning that builds on their prior attainment and prepares them very well for future training and employment.
- A considerable majority of learners develop the skills in English and/or mathematics that they will need for their apprenticeship or further training very well.
- High quality impartial careers guidance ensures that learners follow traineeships that build on their prior attainment. The guidance enables learners to develop clear, ambitious and realistic plans for their future. Learners understand the options available to them and they are informed about local and national skills

needs.

- Teaching, learning and assessment, including on work experience, support and challenge learners to make sustained and substantial progress in all aspects of their traineeship. Teaching enables learners who fall behind to catch up swiftly and the most able to excel and progress to an apprenticeship.
- Learners are confident and conduct themselves well. They are punctual. They have excellent personal, social and employability skills and undertake high quality learning activities and work experience that prepare them very well for an apprenticeship or employment with training. Learners' attendance at learning sessions and at work is excellent.
- Learners are safe and feel safe, including at work. They are thoughtful, caring and respectful members of their course and on work experience. They take responsibility for keeping themselves safe and healthy, including at work, and contribute to wider society and life in Britain.
- Throughout the time spent on their traineeship, learners and groups of learners make substantial and sustained progress from their starting points. Retention rates are high for almost all groups of learners. Any gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points are closing rapidly.
- The considerable majority of learners progress to an apprenticeship, or employment with training.

Good (2)

- Leaders have high expectations. They improve provision and reduce achievement gaps between groups of learners by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and learners' retention, progress and skill development.
- Leaders plan and manage individualised traineeships that build on learners' prior attainment and prepare them well for future training and employment.
- Many learners develop the skills in English and/or mathematics that they will need for their apprenticeship or further training well.
- Impartial careers guidance ensures that learners undertake traineeships that build on their prior attainment. The guidance enables them to develop clear and realistic plans for their future.
- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge learners so that they make the expected progress across all aspects of their traineeships. Learners who fall behind are helped to catch up and the most able are supported to achieve more quickly.
- Learners develop personal, social and employability skills well and undertake relevant learning activities and work experience that prepare them well for an apprenticeship or employment with training. Learners attend learning sessions and work experience as required.
- Learners are safe and feel safe. They behave well, respect others and understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy, including at work, and to contribute to wider society and life in Britain.
- The great majority of learners and groups of learners make at least the expected progress from their starting points. Gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points are closing.
- Most learners progress to an apprenticeship, employment with training or further training.

Requires improvement (3)
■ Effectiveness of traineeships is not yet good.
Inadequate (4) **Effectiveness of traineeships is likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.** ■ Leadership of traineeships is weak. ■ The requirements for traineeships are not met. ■ Traineeships are insufficiently challenging or relevant to learners' prior attainment or planned next steps. ■ Weak assessment practice or poor planning mean that teaching fails to enable learners to achieve their learning goals. ■ Learners, or groups of learners, make inadequate progress from their starting points. ■ Too few learners are retained on their programmes or progress to an apprenticeship, employment with training or further training. ■ Learners, or groups of learners, are ill-prepared for their next steps in terms of attainment, personal skills or behaviours. ■ Safeguarding is ineffective.

Provision for learners with high needs[27]

192. Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014[28] explains the current arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Act aims to encourage education, health and social care services to work together. Local authorities must describe the provision available to young people in the area by publicising the 'local offer'. A young person has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she has:

- a significantly greater difficulty in learning than most others of the same age
- a disability that prevents or hinders him or her from using facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream post-16 institutions.

193. Inspectors will consider the extent to which:

- leaders, managers and governors use the funding for learners with high needs so that their individual learning programmes challenge learners to develop their independence and prepare them for their future

[27] A learner with high needs is defined as a young person aged 16 to 18 who requires additional support costing over £6,000 and any young person aged 19 to 24 subject to a learning difficulty assessment or, in future, an education, health and care plan, who requires additional support costing over £6,000.
[28] Children and Families Act 2014; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted.

- learners participate in good quality and individually tailored learning programmes that lead to paid employment where appropriate, including to supported internships, traineeships and apprenticeships and/or greater independence in their everyday lives
- all specialist support, including speech and language development, behaviour management and physiotherapy is coordinated
- the choice of accreditation helps learners progress towards further learning, vocational training, employment and independent living, where appropriate
- procedures for recognising and recording learners' progress and achievement are rigorous and purposeful and support achievement for all learners
- staff have appropriate expertise to support learners or specific groups of learners; and how well learning resources, including assistive technology, are to the required standard and specification and are used to support learners to overcome their barriers to achieving their learning goals
- learners have opportunities to develop their independence, improve their communication skills and make relevant personal choices and decisions
- learners develop skills to enhance their employability and independence in their everyday lives in real-life situations, including meaningful work experience, and how well they take an active part in their local communities
- learners following mainstream qualifications make progress and achieve, compared with all learners on the same programme, and progress into paid or voluntary employment, further learning or other activities.

194. Inspectors will also consider whether or not arrangements for safeguarding learners are effective.

Grade descriptors: the effectiveness of provision for learners with high needs

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1)

- Leaders pursue excellence. They improve provision and outcomes rapidly and reduce achievement gaps between groups by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as well as learners' retention, progress and skill development.
- Leaders, managers and governors use the funding for learners with high needs very effectively. They plan, manage and evaluate the provision so that learners undertake highly individualised and challenging learning that builds on their prior attainment, and prepares them very well for future employment and/or greater independence in their everyday lives.
- Learners develop skills in English and/or mathematics very well relative to their starting points, so that they have the skills in these subjects that they need for the next step in their careers.
- High quality impartial careers guidance ensures that learners follow individualised programmes, including study programmes, that build on their prior attainment. The guidance enables them to develop clear, ambitious and realistic plans for their future. Learners understand the options available to them.
- Teachers and support staff use previous assessments very effectively to support and challenge learners so that they make excellent progress across all aspects of their programmes compared with their starting points and personal circumstances. Staff are especially skilled at assessing learners' progress, adapting activities to support learners whose development is slow and providing more challenging activities for the more-able learners.
- Learners are confident and conduct themselves well. They are punctual. They develop excellent personal, social and employability skills, and undertake high quality learning activities and, where appropriate, work experience that match their needs. Attendance rates are exceptionally high.
- Learners are safe and feel safe. They are thoughtful, caring and respectful citizens. Where appropriate, they take responsibility for keeping themselves safe and healthy and contribute to wider society and life in Britain.
- Throughout the time spent on their programmes, learners and groups of learners make substantial and sustained progress relative to their starting points and personal circumstances. Rates of retention are high for almost all groups of learners. Any gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points or complexity of needs are closing rapidly.
- Where appropriate, learners progress swiftly to higher levels during their programme or to more complex learning activities. Almost all learners, especially those on mainstream programmes, complete their programmes and achieve qualifications relevant to their career aims and move on to sustained education, employment and training or an apprenticeship or are more independent in their everyday lives.

Good (2)

- Leaders have high expectations. They improve provision and reduce achievement gaps between groups by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and learners' retention, progress and skill development.
- Leaders, managers and governors use the funding for learners with high needs well. They plan and manage individualised programmes that build on learners' prior attainment and prepare them well for future employment and/or greater independence in their everyday lives.
- Learners develop their skills in English and/or mathematics well, compared with their starting points, so that they can build on these skills further when they progress to the next step in their careers.
- Impartial careers guidance ensures that learners undertake learning programmes that build on their prior attainment and enables them to develop clear and realistic plans for their future.
- Teachers and support staff use previous assessments well to support and challenge learners so that they progress well across all aspects of their programmes. Staff are skilled at assessing learners' progress, adapting activities to support learners whose development is slow and providing more challenging activities for the more able learners.
- The considerable majority of learners develop personal, social and employability skills through high quality learning activities and work experience relevant to their needs and personal circumstances. They are punctual and attend very well.
- Learners are safe and feel safe. They behave well, respect others and understand, where appropriate, how to keep themselves safe and healthy and to contribute to wider society and life in Britain.
- The great majority of learners and groups of learners make at least the expected progress from their starting points. Gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points or complexity of need are closing.
- The great majority of learners, especially those on mainstream programmes, are challenged to progress to higher levels or more complex learning activities during their programme. Most complete their learning programmes, achieve qualifications relevant to their career aims and move on to sustained education, employment, training or an apprenticeship, or are more independent in their everyday lives.

Requires improvement (3)

- Effectiveness of provision for learners with high needs is not yet good.

Inadequate (4)

Effectiveness of provision for learners with high needs is likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.

- Leadership of provision for learners with high needs is weak.
- The use of funding for learners with high needs is poorly managed.
- Learning programmes are insufficiently challenging or relevant to learners' prior attainment or personal circumstances.
- Weak assessment practice or poor planning mean that teaching fails to enable learners to achieve their learning goals.

- Learners, or groups of learners, make inadequate progress compared with their starting points.
- Too few learners are retained on their learning programmes or achieve their main learning goals.
- Learners, or groups of learners, are ill-prepared for their next steps in terms of attainment, personal skills or behaviours.
- Too many learners, or groups of learners, are unsuccessful in securing relevant sustained education, employment or training and/or are unable to be more independent in their everyday lives.
- Safeguarding is ineffective.

Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds [29]

195. Inspectors will consider the extent to which:

- a member of the senior management team has a leadership role for this provision and is accountable for the education and support for 14- to 16-year-olds, and there is a designated and identifiable area for the sole use of the provision of education and support for these learners
- teachers are equipped with the qualifications, skills and expertise to enable all students to progress across all aspects of their learning programmes, including enrichment and extra-curricular activities
- the curriculum meets statutory requirements for key stage 4, including in English, mathematics and science, and how well staff work with learners to develop individualised learning programmes that combine academic study and vocational training to build on learners' prior attainment and the plans for their next steps
- pupil-premium funding is used effectively to narrow the achievement gap
- care and support are provided for 14- to 16-year-olds in the further education environment
- learners behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning, attend lessons and learning activities and are punctual, including when attending off-site provision
- learners develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding
- learners progress from their starting points
- learners achieve their agreed key stage 4 targets through a combination of GCSE and vocational qualifications, with particular reference to the achievement of English, mathematics and science

[29] Guidance for the requirements for 14- to 16-year-old full-time provision can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/enrolment-of-14-to-16-year-olds-in-full-time-further-education.

- learners achieve qualifications in English and mathematics, especially those supported through the pupil premium, compared with all other 14- to 16-year-olds, and including those who are looked after children and children of service families or from other vulnerable groups.

196. Inspectors will also consider whether or not arrangements for safeguarding learners are effective.

Grade descriptors: the effectiveness of full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds

Note: grade descriptors are not a checklist. Inspectors adopt a 'best fit' approach that relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

Outstanding (1)

- Leaders pursue excellence. They improve provision and outcomes rapidly and reduce achievement gaps between groups by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as well as learners' retention, progress and their development of knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Leaders plan, manage and evaluate the provision so that learners undertake highly individualised and challenging learning that builds on their prior attainment, and meets all the requirements for key stage 4 provision, including that for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The wide-ranging curriculum prepares them very well for future study or training.
- The considerable majority of learners make substantial and sustained progress in developing skills in English and mathematics towards achieving at least a grade C at GCSE.
- High quality impartial careers guidance ensures that learners follow learning programmes that build on their prior attainment and enable them to develop clear, ambitious and realistic plans for their future. Learners have a good understanding of all the options available to them, including apprenticeships, and how they relate to local and national skills needs.
- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge learners to make sustained and substantial progress in all aspects of their learning programme. Teaching enables learners that fall behind to catch up swiftly and the most able to excel.
- Learners are confident and conduct themselves well. They are punctual. They have excellent personal, social and employability skills and undertake a wide range of high quality enrichment activities and practical vocational training that are relevant to their career plans. Learners' attendance is excellent.
- Learners are safe and feel safe, including at off-site premises. They are thoughtful, caring and respectful citizens. They take responsibility for keeping themselves safe and healthy and contribute to wider society and life in Britain.
- Throughout the time spent on their learning programmes, learners and groups of learners make substantial and sustained progress from their starting points. Rates of retention are high for almost all groups of learners. Any gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points are closing rapidly.
- Almost all learners achieve their learning goals and qualifications and move on to sustained education, employment, training or an apprenticeship at a higher

level than their prior attainment and highly relevant to their career aspirations.

Good (2)

- Leaders have high expectations. They improve provision and reduce achievement gaps between groups by monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and learners' retention, progress and development of knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Leaders plan and manage individualised learning programmes that build on learners' prior attainment and meet all the requirements for key stage 4 provision, including for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners. The varied curriculum prepares learners well for future study or training.
- Most learners make progress in developing their skills in English and mathematics towards achieving at least a grade C at GCSE.
- Impartial careers guidance ensures that learners undertake learning programmes that build on their prior attainment and enable them to develop clear and realistic plans for their future. Learners understand the options available to them, including apprenticeships.
- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge learners so that they make at least the expected progress across all aspects of their learning programmes. Learners who fall behind are helped to catch up and the most able are stretched.
- Learners develop personal, social and employability skills through a range of high quality enrichment activities and practical vocational training relevant to their future plans. They are punctual and attendance is high.
- Learners are safe and feel safe. They behave well, respect others and understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy and how to contribute to wider society and life in Britain.
- The great majority of learners and groups of learners make strong progress from their starting points. Gaps in the progress or retention of groups with similar starting points are closing.
- The great majority of learners achieve their learning goals and qualifications and move on to sustained education, employment, training or an apprenticeship at a higher level than their prior attainment and relevant to their career aims.

Requires improvement (3)

- Effectiveness of full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds is not yet good.

Inadequate (4)

Effectiveness of full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds is likely to be inadequate if one or more of the following applies.

- Leadership of full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds is weak.
- The requirements for full-time provision, including those for the curriculum for 14- to 16-year-olds, are not met.
- Learning programmes are insufficiently challenging or relevant to learners' prior attainment or planned next steps.
- Weak assessment practice or poor planning mean that teaching fails to enable learners, or groups of learners, to make adequate progress from their starting points.

- Too few learners achieve qualifications.
- Learners, or groups of learners, are ill-prepared for their next steps in terms of attainment, personal skills or behaviour.
- Too many learners, or groups of learners, are unsuccessful in securing relevant sustained education, employment or training.
- Safeguarding is ineffective.

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