

# Short inspections of good schools

Maintained schools and academes – consultation document

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This consultation seeks your views on proposals for changes to the short inspection approach for good maintained schools and academies from October 2017.

The closing date for this consultation is Thursday 18 August 2017.

If you would like a version of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231 or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

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## About Ofsted

1. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people and in education and skills for learners of all ages.

## Purpose and background to the consultation

2. This consultation seeks your views on proposals for changes to the short inspection approach for good maintained schools and academies from October 2017. The changes will also affect non-exempt outstanding schools.<sup>1</sup> Your views will help to refine and improve our inspection approach.
3. This document sets out our proposals for:
  - extending the window for the conversion of short inspections into section 5 inspections to take place within a maximum of 15 working days after the short inspection, from the current 48-hour period<sup>2</sup>
  - some schools receiving a section 5 inspection instead of a short inspection where Ofsted's risk assessment indicates that inspectors may need to gather more evidence to reach a judgement about the school.
4. We will use the information gathered through this online consultation and through other consultation activity to finalise the revised arrangements for inspection. We expect to implement the changes to inspection from October 2017.
5. We will publish the main findings and our response to the consultation on our website.

## Where we are now

6. Since September 2015, Ofsted has inspected good schools using short inspections under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005. Short inspections start from the assumption that the school remains good. Short inspections last for one day and the purpose is to determine whether the school continues to provide a good standard of education for the pupils and that safeguarding is effective.

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<sup>1</sup>Certain types of schools that were judged outstanding for overall effectiveness at their most recent section 5 inspection are currently not exempt schools and must be inspected within the prescribed interval. These are special schools (including maintained special schools, special free schools, alternative provision academies and non-maintained special schools), pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools. However, these schools are eligible for a section 8 short inspection.

<sup>2</sup> Whenever we refer to a converted inspection in this document, we mean the section 5 inspection that continues from the short inspection after the decision to convert. When we say that the converted inspection will now take place within 15 days, we mean that the first day of the ongoing section 5 inspection is within 15 working days from the first on-site day of the short inspection.

7. A short inspection does **not** result in individual graded judgements. It does **not** change the overall effectiveness grade of the school. Since their introduction, two thirds of short inspections have confirmed that the school continues to be a good school without the need for any additional inspection activity.<sup>3</sup>
8. However, in some cases, inspectors need to gather further evidence and so a more in-depth section 5 inspection takes place.<sup>4</sup> In these instances, the short inspection converts to a section 5 inspection, with a larger team returning to the school within 48 hours. A section 5 inspection results in individually graded key judgments and an overall effectiveness grade for the school.
9. Approximately three in 10 short inspections convert to a section 5 inspection. There are three possible reasons for this:
  - inspectors have concerns about safeguarding, or
  - there is evidence of improved performance that suggests the school may be outstanding, or
  - there is insufficient evidence to satisfy inspectors that the school remains good, or there are concerns.
10. We will continue short inspections and conversions. However, we want to make some changes to address the issues schools and inspectors have raised with us that are caused by the practical challenges of conducting conversions within 48 hours.

## What we are proposing to change

11. We welcome your views on our proposals for changes to the short inspection approach for good maintained schools and academies from October 2017.
12. In this consultation, we are proposing two changes to take effect from October 2017:

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<sup>3</sup> Ofsted internal data based on 2,314 short inspections conducted between 1 September 2015 and 31 December 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Inspections carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended) (the Act) are required to report against all the areas prescribed by section 5. The judgements that inspectors make, including on the school's overall effectiveness, and how they arrive at them are set out in detail in the 'School inspection handbook', Ofsted, August 2016; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015). Section 8(2) of the Act enables HMCI to conduct inspections for a range of purposes; their focus is selective. Section 8 short inspections of good and non-exempt outstanding schools focus and report specifically on whether: the school has maintained its good or outstanding performance; safeguarding is effective; the leaders, managers and governors demonstrate capacity for continued improvement; and how well areas for improvement identified at the previous section 5 inspection have been addressed. For more detail, please see 'School inspection handbook - section 8', Ofsted, August 2016; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-short-monitoring-and-unannounced-behaviour-school-inspections](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-short-monitoring-and-unannounced-behaviour-school-inspections).

- **Proposal 1:** short inspections that convert to a section 5 inspection will now do so within a period of up to 15 working days of the short inspection. The conversion inspection would be at any point during that period, although we will aim to carry it out as soon as possible. If the conversion inspection is due to safeguarding concerns, our expectation is that it will continue to be within 48 hours.
  - **Proposal 2:** some good schools will receive a section 5 inspection from the outset instead of a short inspection if published information, Ofsted's regional intelligence and Ofsted's risk assessment process indicate that there will be a need to collect more evidence than is routinely gathered on a short inspection to reach a judgement about the school. All other good schools will continue to receive a short inspection.
13. These proposals are based on a careful consideration of our experience and the feedback we have received since September 2015. We want to continue to improve the inspection experience for schools as well as our delivery of inspections.
  14. These proposals will apply to all good maintained schools and academies. Good and outstanding maintained nursery schools, special schools and pupil referral units will continue to receive a short inspection that may convert to a section 5 inspection if necessary, over the time period set out in proposal 1.
  15. In order to build our understanding of the impact of these changes for schools and inspectors, Ofsted will pilot aspects of the proposed arrangements during the consultation period. In particular, we will test both an up to 10 day and an up to 15 day period between the short inspection and the follow-on section 5 inspection. This will provide us with vital information about the factors that make successful delivery more or less likely.

## **Proposal 1: short inspection conversion inspections within 15 working days**

16. From October 2017, we propose to extend the window for converting a short inspection to a section 5 inspection from within 48 hours to within a maximum of 15 working days.<sup>5</sup> We will aim to return to carry out the conversion inspection as soon as possible within the 15 working days.
17. School senior leaders tell us that they understand and support short inspections. Ofsted regularly gathers the views of school leaders: in 2016, 78% of senior leaders told us that short inspections for good schools had been a positive change in the way Ofsted inspects, compared to 71% in 2015.<sup>6</sup> Short

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<sup>5</sup> Whenever we refer to a converted or conversion inspection in this document, we mean the section 5 inspection that continues from the short inspection after the decision to convert.

<sup>6</sup> This information was gathered by YouGov in June 2016 in response to a commission from Ofsted.

inspections take a proportionate approach based on the assumption that a school continues to be good. They are collaborative and they encourage constructive and professional dialogue between inspectors and school leaders. The cumulative impact of this is that they are less confrontational and less high-stakes than previous approaches to inspection. This proposal will retain the benefits of short inspections: the considerable majority of good schools will continue to experience a short inspection without a conversion.

18. Schools' experience of conversion within 48 hours can sometimes be negative. The decision to convert is often taken mid-afternoon and an inspection team usually arrives on site early the next day to gather a wider range of evidence. School leaders who have undergone converted inspections tell us that it can be overwhelming both to understand the reasons for conversion and adjust to the arrival of the extended team. This is particularly the case for secondary schools where the incoming team is often large. A number of schools that have gone through a conversion have told us that they would rather have had a section 5 inspection from the outset.
19. The extension of the period of conversion to a maximum of 15 working days will make the conversion experience more manageable for school leaders. They will have time to discuss and understand the lead inspector's decision to convert throughout the afternoon of the short inspection. They will no longer have to do this while accommodating, in a very short space of time, the arrival of a significantly expanded team to conduct the section 5 inspection.
20. We want to make inspection better for Ofsted inspectors (OIs), the majority of whom are serving school leaders.<sup>7</sup> The current policy of conversion within 48 hours creates uncertainty for serving practitioner inspectors; the possibility of immediate conversion makes it hard for them to predict how long they will need to be out of their schools. They do not know whether the short inspection they are leading or teaming on will convert and therefore they do not know whether they will be on inspection beyond the first day.
21. The proposed window of up to 15 working days for conversion means that serving practitioner inspectors will know in advance what inspection activity to plan for in a particular week, unless there is an exceptional reason to convert instantly, usually on safeguarding grounds.
22. The proposed approach will enable Ofsted to eliminate the current inefficient practice of holding OIs on contingency. At present, OI team inspectors, who are

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<sup>7</sup> Under section 114 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) are appointed by Order in Council by Her Majesty. They are to serve in accordance with the terms of their appointment as determined by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI); [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/114](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/114). Under Part 2 to Schedule 12 of the same Act, HMCI may delegate any of his/her functions to HMI or to 'any additional inspector'. The latter are mainly serving or recent practitioners directly contracted by Ofsted and are commonly referred to as 'Ofsted inspectors'; [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/schedule/12](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/schedule/12).

predominantly serving school leaders, are held on contingency in the expectation that they will participate in a section 5 inspection that is the result of a short inspection converting. However, because of the 48-hour conversion period, they frequently do not find out until the evening before inspection exactly where they will inspect the following day. If fewer short inspections than predicted convert to section 5 inspections in any particular week, then a substantial number of serving practitioner OIs on contingency are stood down and will not inspect. This is an inefficient practice, and one that fails to capitalise on the skills and commitment of hard-working school leaders who have made time to work with Ofsted. The maximum 15-day window will allow sufficient time to plan and schedule inspection work in advance, minimising last-minute changes and unused days.

23. This proposed change will, therefore, increase Ofsted's efficiency in using all its inspectors and enable us to continue to benefit fully from the knowledge and expertise of those serving practitioners.
24. We recognise that the gap of up to 15 working days between the converted short inspection and its conclusion as a section 5 inspection could lead to some schools working intensively on issues unnecessarily. If this occurs, we recognise that teachers' workload could increase in this period as a result. With this in mind, we want to reassure schools that we will seek to make the conversion period as short as we possibly can. We also want to make clear that inspectors will have seen the school on the short inspection day and so will already have collected evidence on the general learning environment. As a result, extra time spent by the school on, for example, renewing displays of work will make no difference to the overall judgement for the school and would thus be a waste of teachers' valuable time. The lead inspector of the short inspection will speak to the whole staff near the end of the short inspection day to explain the conversion process. The inspector will also seek to reassure classroom teachers that there would be no need to do any extra preparation for the follow on inspection.

## **Proposal 2: section 5 inspections for some good maintained schools and academies**

25. We propose that, from October 2017, some good schools should have a section 5 inspection from the outset instead of a short inspection. Assuming that a short inspection is a suitable inspection for all good schools has proved to be unhelpful in some cases where it is clear that the school is in complex circumstances that need a full inspection.

26. We will select these good schools for section 5 inspection through our standard risk assessment process.<sup>8</sup> Stage one of this process is to analyse a school's published historical data and additional risk information. This information includes whether a school is below the floor standard, has high or persistent absence and/or has high levels of repeat exclusions. As part of our assessment, we will also take account of concerns triggered where a significant number of parents have expressed negative views about the school. In stage two of the process, Ofsted's regions apply their local knowledge and intelligence to this information. They conduct a desk-based review that includes consideration of the outcomes of any inspections, qualifying complaints by parents, statutory warning notices and any other significant concerns that are brought to Ofsted's attention. If this risk assessment leads the Ofsted regional director to conclude that a short inspection would be highly likely to convert to a section 5 inspection, we propose that Ofsted carries out a section 5 inspection without the prior short inspection.
27. The decision to carry out a section 5 inspection rather than a short inspection does not mean that the outcome of the inspection will be pre-determined. The purpose of a section 5 inspection is to gather enough evidence to substantiate the full set of inspection judgements. Any inspection outcome and grade profile is possible. This is borne out by our experience since September 2015. Over a quarter of section 5 inspections following conversion have resulted in the school remaining good, while a further quarter have improved to outstanding.<sup>9</sup>
28. Our view is that, because conversions are sometimes difficult to manage for schools and we can often predict where they will be necessary in order to gather more evidence, it is sensible to limit the number of unnecessary conversions.
29. This proposed change is not about predetermining the outcome of inspections. Rather, through this change, we will be able to recognise the circumstances of individual schools in our inspection approach and give those schools a better experience of inspection.

## Conduct of short inspections

30. We are not proposing any changes to the purpose of a short inspection or to the short inspection methodology. A school's experience of a short inspection when inspectors are on site will be the same as it is now, whether a conversion is needed or not.

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<sup>8</sup> A note setting out Ofsted's risk assessment process for schools can be found here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-standards-for-official-statistics).

<sup>9</sup> Since the introduction of short inspections up to 31 December 2016, 770 short inspections have converted. Of these schools, 23% were judged outstanding following the section 5 inspection, 26% were judged good, 40% were judged to require improvement and 10% were found to be inadequate.

31. We will not change how we conduct short inspections that do not convert to a section 5 inspection. The rate of short inspections that have not converted has been about seven out of 10 good schools to date. We expect this proportion to increase because the one in five schools that will receive a section 5 inspection from the outset are those that are highly likely to convert. The schools that continue to receive short inspections will, therefore, be those that are less likely to convert to section 5.
  
32. The only proposed change to how we conduct short inspections is to the conversion process. We are proposing that inspections that need to convert should do so in the period up to a maximum of 15 working days following the original short inspection. This is to make conversions more manageable for schools and inspectors.

## The consultation process

33. We welcome your responses to this consultation paper. The consultation opens on 15 June 2017 and closes on 18 August 2017.
34. The information you give us will inform our approach to short inspections of good schools.
35. We will publish a response to the consultation this summer before the end of the academic year.

## Sending back your response

36. There are three ways of completing and submitting your response:
  - Online electronic questionnaire - visit [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ShortInspections](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ShortInspections) to complete and submit an electronic version of the response form.
  - Download and email – visit our website to download a Word version of the response form that you can complete on your computer: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/short-inspections-of-good-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/short-inspections-of-good-schools)  
When you have completed the form, please email it to Kelly-Anne Smith at **inspection.consultation@ofsted.gov.uk** with the consultation name in the subject line.
  - Print and post  
Visit our website to print a Word or PDF version of the response form that can be filled in by hand: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/short-inspections-of-good-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/short-inspections-of-good-schools).

When you have completed it, please post it to:

Schools Policy Team  
Floor 8  
Ofsted  
Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

## Questionnaire for short inspections of good schools

### Confidentiality

The information you provide will be held by us. It will only be used for the purposes of consultation and research to help us to become more effective, influence policies and inform inspection and regulatory practice.

We will treat your identity in confidence, if you disclose it to us.

Are you responding on behalf of an organisation?

- Yes  please complete Section 1 and the following questions  
 No  please complete Section 2 and the following questions

### Section 1

If you would like us to consider publishing the views of your organisation, please indicate this below.

Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 2

Please tell us in which capacity you are completing this survey (please choose one option):

Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headteacher or school senior leader	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pupil/student	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other school staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent/carer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academy trust representative	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local government representative	<input type="checkbox"/>
Representative group or union representative	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inspector	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other, please tell us			

If you are responding in a professional capacity, please specify where you work:

A primary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	A special school	<input type="checkbox"/>
A secondary school	<input type="checkbox"/>	A maintained nursery school	<input type="checkbox"/>
A pupil referral unit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please tell us			

## Experience of short inspections

1. Have you experienced a short inspection which has converted to a section 5 inspection?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Extending the window of conversion

- 2 To what extent do you agree or disagree with Ofsted's proposal to extend the window of conversion for a short inspection (section 8 inspection) to a section 5 inspection from the current 48 hours to within a maximum of 15 working days?

For more information about this proposal see paragraphs 16-24 of this consultation document.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

### Section 5 inspections

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that schools whose short inspections (section 8 inspections) are likely to convert to a section 5 inspection should instead receive a full section 5 inspection from the outset?

For more information about this proposal see paragraphs 25-29 of this consultation document.

Strongly agree  <input type="checkbox"/>	Agree  <input type="checkbox"/>	Neither agree nor disagree  <input type="checkbox"/>	Disagree  <input type="checkbox"/>	Strongly disagree  <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know  <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please tell us the reasons for your answer:

4. What factors do you think Ofsted should take into account when considering whether to conduct a section 5 inspection of a good school from the outset, rather than a short inspection that may then convert?

## What did you think of this consultation?

One of the commitments in our strategic plan is to monitor whether our consultations are accessible to those wishing to take part.

### How did you hear about this consultation?

- Ofsted website
- Ofsted News, Ofsted's monthly newsletter
- Ofsted conference
- Twitter (@ofstednews)
- Another organisation (please specify, if known)
- Other (please specify)

**Please tell us what you thought of this consultation by answering the questions below.**

	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Don't know
I found the consultation information clear and easy to understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I found the consultation easy to find on the Ofsted website.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I had enough information about the consultation topic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I would take part in a future Ofsted consultation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Is there anything you would like us to improve or do differently for future consultations? If so, please tell us below.**

## Additional questions about you

Your answers to the following questions will help us to evaluate how successfully we are communicating messages from inspection to all sections of society. We would like to assure you that completion of this section is optional; you do not have to answer any of the questions. All responses are confidential.

Please tick the appropriate box.

### 1. Gender

Female <input type="checkbox"/>	Male <input type="checkbox"/>
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### 2. Age

Under 14 <input type="checkbox"/>	14–18 <input type="checkbox"/>	19–24 <input type="checkbox"/>	25–34 <input type="checkbox"/>	35–44 <input type="checkbox"/>	45–54 <input type="checkbox"/>	55–64 <input type="checkbox"/>	65+ <input type="checkbox"/>
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### 3. Ethnic origin

(a) How would you describe your national group?

- British or mixed British
- English
- Irish
- Northern Irish
- Scottish
- Welsh
- Other (specify if you wish)

(b) How would you describe your ethnic group?

<b>Asian</b>		<b>Mixed ethnic origin</b>	
Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian and White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black African and White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Caribbean and White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other Asian background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other mixed ethnic background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Black</b>		<b>White</b>	
African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any White background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Any other ethnic background</b>	
Any other Black background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Chinese</b>			
Any Chinese background (specify if you wish)	<input type="checkbox"/>		

#### 4. Sexual orientation

Heterosexual <input type="checkbox"/>	Lesbian <input type="checkbox"/>	Gay <input type="checkbox"/>	Bisexual <input type="checkbox"/>
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#### 5. Religion/belief

Buddhist	<input type="checkbox"/>	Muslim	<input type="checkbox"/>
Christian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sikh	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hindu	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other, please state:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	

#### 6. Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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