

# School inspection update

March 2018 | Issue: 13

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## Message to inspectors from the National Director, Education

Welcome to the thirteenth edition of 'School inspection update' (SIU).

In December, we published updated versions of the section 5 and section 8 school inspection handbooks, effective from January 2018.

These updates were limited to:

- reflecting the outcome of the second consultation exercise on short inspections
- a change in policy to requires improvement monitoring
- a change to inspecting performance management arrangements in schools.

Schools that receive a judgement of requires improvement are subject to monitoring. From January 2018, this will not normally apply to a school that has been judged as requires improvement for the first time. However, a school that receives two or more successive overall effectiveness judgements of requires improvement will normally be monitored between 12 and 24 months following publication of the report that resulted in the most recent requires improvement judgement.

In section 5 inspections, we have changed the focus on performance management arrangements. This is now less about checking the process and more about how school leaders seek to improve teaching and learning and how the school uses continuing professional development (CPD) to support improvement and develop staff. The wording of the section 5 handbook has been refined to reflect this.

For short inspections, we have made three main changes:

- From January 2018, we only convert a short inspection to a section 5 inspection – normally within 48 hours – if there are serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education.
- When there are no significant issues with safeguarding or behaviour, but inspectors identify potential concerns about either the quality of education or leadership and management, the inspection will not convert. Instead, we



will publish a letter setting out the school's strengths and areas for improvement. A section 5 inspection will take place later, typically within one to two years, but clearly no later than the statutory timeframe for inspection. This gives the school time to address any weaknesses and seek support from appropriate bodies. In the meantime, the letter makes clear that the school's current overall effectiveness judgement has not changed, so the school remains good.

When inspectors think a school may be showing marked improvement towards an outstanding judgement, they will not now convert the inspection. Instead, we will publish a letter confirming that the school is still good and setting out the school's strengths and priorities for further improvement. A section 5 inspection will then take place within one to two years. This gives the school time to consolidate its strong practice. We will, however, consider requests from schools for early inspections, with regional directors having discretion to decide on this.

I believe this fresh approach reflects our aim to act as a force for improvement through inspection. This is one of our priority areas, as highlighted in [Ofsted's Annual Report](#) published in December 2017 and in our [corporate strategy](#) document.

We want to catch schools 'before they fall'. We also want to reduce workload, use our evidence to help schools improve and provide constructive support. Short inspections are a valuable tool to this end and I am confident that this new approach will help to minimise the burden on schools.

In this edition of SIU, we provide:

- clarification on inspecting 'non-exempt' schools and 'exempt' schools
- guidance on gathering data from schools and completing evidence forms
- guidance on inspecting schools designated as having a religious character
- clarification of the 'coasting' definition and middle schools
- information on:
  - Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils
  - the careers statutory guidance for schools
  - the revised teacher assessment frameworks for 2018/19.

I am very heartened by the amount of positive feedback about inspections I have received over the last few weeks on social media and when I have been speaking at events.

The overwhelming theme of this feedback has been of friendly, professional, smiling inspectors carrying out supportive inspection with a high degree of collaborative discussion about what's going on in the school. There is a real sense of inspection being done 'with the school' not 'to the school'. Many thanks to all of you for doing an important but difficult job in a positive, humane way.

I write this as the snow falls outside during a week hampered by the 'Beast from the East'. I hope all your travels have been safe and uneventful.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Harford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'S' and a trailing flourish.

**Sean Harford HMI**  
**National Director, Education**

## School inspection handbook clarification – non-exempt schools

Outstanding special schools, pupil referral units (PRUs) and maintained nurseries are 'non-exempt', meaning that they continue to receive routine inspection. Under the new short inspection guidance, they are treated similarly to good schools. Where inspectors are concerned that non-exempt outstanding schools may be declining to requires improvement, then the inspector will convert the section 8 short inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately. However, where the school may be declining to good, then the inspector will write a letter indicating that the school remains outstanding, but that the next inspection will be a section 5.

## School inspection handbook clarification – exempt schools

Other than outstanding special schools, PRUs and maintained nurseries, all other outstanding schools are exempt from routine inspection, and so inspectors need to immediately address any potential change in overall effectiveness identified at a section 8 NFD inspection. So, if inspectors are concerned that the school may have declined from outstanding then they will need to take immediate action by converting the NFD inspection to a section 5.

This means that the policy remains exactly the same for exempt outstanding schools as it has been until now and will **not** be changing to reflect the approach to non-exempt schools.

## Implications for inspectors

When conducting a section 8 NFD inspection of an exempt school, if the evidence gathered indicates that the school may no longer be outstanding, inspectors may continue to use their discretionary power under section 9 of the Education Act 2005 and convert the inspection to a section 5. This includes when they think the school may have declined to good.

Inspectors will note that this approach is different for non-exempt schools (that is, outstanding alternative provision, special schools and maintained nurseries) and exempt schools (all other schools that have been judged outstanding). This is a deliberate distinction. Non-exempt schools are subject to routine inspection and it is therefore appropriate that their next inspection could be scheduled as a section 5 if they may have declined to good. However, because exempt schools are not subject to routine inspections, any potential change of grade must be addressed when inspectors are on site. They do this through deeming the inspection a section 5, because continued exemption may not be appropriate.

Inspectors are reminded that a decision to deem a section 8 inspection to be a

section 5 inspection does **not** pre-determine the outcome of the section 5 inspection.

Paragraph 17 of the 'School inspection handbook' will be amended to reflect this.

## Gathering data from schools and completing evidence forms

Following on from the article included in the September 2017 special edition SIU (available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-update-academic-year-2017-to-2018](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-update-academic-year-2017-to-2018)), we would like to remind inspectors of the correct process for gathering information from schools during an inspection and completing the evidence form.

Inspectors should only ask schools to provide data and other information in the format that the school would ordinarily use themselves. We do **not** expect schools to provide evidence for inspection beyond that set out in the 'School inspection handbook'. This aligns with our 'Clarification for schools' section in the handbook. In particular:

- Ofsted **does not** expect performance and pupil-tracking information to be presented in a particular format. Such information should be provided to inspectors in the format that the school would ordinarily use to monitor the progress of pupils in that school.
- Ofsted **does not** require teachers to undertake additional work specifically for inspection.

## Inspecting schools designated as having a religious character

In the November 2016 edition of SIU (available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-newsletter-academic-year-2016-to-2017](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-newsletter-academic-year-2016-to-2017)), we set out what inspectors should check on inspection in regard to the requirement of schools with a religious character to arrange section 48 inspections.

Following recent requests for clarification in this area, we would like to remind inspectors of the following points about schools designated as having a religious character:

- Around one third of all publicly funded schools fall into this category.
- Ofsted does **not** inspect the content of religious education (RE) and collective worship in these schools. This is covered by the separate inspection that is arranged through the relevant religious authority: section 48 inspections.
- The failure of the governing body to arrange a section 48 inspection within the prescribed period is a failure to discharge a statutory responsibility, and

can be considered as part of the evidence for a section 5 inspection when assessing leadership and management. This can be reflected in the governance narrative under the leadership and management section of the report.

- When reporting under section 5, inspectors should refer to the school's religious character and the existence of a current section 48 inspection report (where there is one) in the 'Information about this school' section of the section 5 inspection report.

## Coasting definition and middle schools

'Coasting' is a measure used by the Department for Education (DfE) for its own purposes and is given no particular emphasis by Ofsted, other than being one of a basket of measures taken into consideration at inspection.

The DfE has now clarified that it will use the coasting definition as an indicator to prompt regional schools commissioners (RSCs) to consider the issues that schools experience and the solutions they have put in place, but is not intended as a label.

When inspecting a middle school, inspectors should be particularly cautious about what the 'coasting' measure indicates. Inspectors will want to be aware of the following information provided to RSCs in DfE 'Schools causing concern' guidance:

'The majority of middle schools are deemed to be secondary schools but, due to the age range, pupils are subject to the coasting definition relating to key stage 2, rather than the coasting definition relating to key stage 4. A pupil may, however, only have attended a middle school for a short time before they took the key stage 2 tests and may still have a number of years left at the school. For this reason, RSCs will give consideration to the wider context when a middle school meets the coasting definition. This will include giving consideration to the progress made by pupils from the point of entry to the middle school to when they leave, which may be demonstrated by robust and, where possible, externally benchmarked school data.'

Additionally, when considering the 'coasting' measure for junior schools, inspectors should note that pupils at junior schools, on average, have lower progress scores, despite their average attainment being as good as/higher than attainment in primary schools, and may therefore be defined as coasting.

The coasting definition does not apply to nursery schools, infant or first schools because they do not have the relevant data. Legislation for schools that meet the coasting definition does not include 16 to 19 provision because of the complexity of these routes. The coasting provisions do not apply to special schools or alternative provision schools.

The statutory guidance was refreshed and amended by the DfE in January, and is available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2).

## Revised teacher assessment frameworks for 2018/19

The DfE has published revised statutory teacher assessment frameworks for English reading, mathematics and science for key stage 1, and English writing and science for key stage 2. They are for use from the 2018/19 academic year onwards.

Following last year's public consultation on primary assessment, schools will not be required to conduct statutory teacher assessment in English reading and mathematics at the end of KS2 from the 2018/19 academic year onwards. Consequently, there will be no statutory frameworks for these subjects at KS2 from the 2018/19 academic year.

- The statutory guidance for teacher assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 1 is available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-assessment-frameworks-at-the-end-of-key-stage-1](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-assessment-frameworks-at-the-end-of-key-stage-1).
- The statutory guidance for teacher assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 2 is available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-assessment-frameworks-at-the-end-of-key-stage-2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-assessment-frameworks-at-the-end-of-key-stage-2).

## Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils

In December 2014, Ofsted published a national survey 'Overcoming barriers: ensuring Roma children are fully engaged and achieving in education' [www.gov.uk/government/publications/ensuring-roma-children-achieve-in-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ensuring-roma-children-achieve-in-education).

Despite the national attention this report received and the setting up of a ministerial working group on tackling inequalities experienced by the Gypsy and Traveller communities, outcomes over the last three years for these pupils have continued to decline. They remain by far the lowest achieving pupil groups in both primary and secondary schools, as evidenced by the Prime Minister's 'Race disparity audit' (October 2017): [www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-disparity-audit](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/race-disparity-audit).

In addition, the independent Roma Support Group's report 'Exclusion of Roma pupils' ([www.romasupportgroup.org.uk/?p=4994](http://www.romasupportgroup.org.uk/?p=4994), October 2017) found that Roma pupils are the group most likely to be excluded from school. It featured the 12 local authorities with the highest number of Roma pupils nationally (Birmingham, Bradford, Coventry, Derby, Doncaster, Kent, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Peterborough, Rotherham and Sheffield). The report highlighted the exceptionally high exclusion rates in some local authorities (Rotherham and Sheffield) compared with very low exclusion rates in others (Birmingham, Bradford, Coventry and Newcastle).

The report proposed the following recommendations:

- A national inquiry to understand the scale of exclusions of Roma pupils and to include a particular focus on what happens to young people in the years that follow a permanent exclusion.

- A review of the current mechanisms of the appeal system for exclusion focusing on the experience of parents and the transparency of the governor panel.
- Reinstating a dedicated mechanism within the DfE to monitor issues relevant to GRT pupils.
- Ensure that there is a dedicated and knowledgeable senior leader in local authorities who can drive strategies for improving outcomes for Roma pupils, especially in areas which show a disproportionate level of Roma pupil exclusions.
- Better safeguards to ensure the new system of academies are accountable for their approach towards the education of GRT pupils.

The DfE has accepted the findings from the report and is taking it into account as it develops its future policy in this area. It has commissioned an external review on exclusions and carried out visits to local authorities to identify good practice. It has already found that low exclusions are not necessarily a sign of good practice, for example if GRT pupils leave by other means such as agreement from parents to home educate.

In November 2017, representatives from Ofsted met with the GRT parliamentary group, ahead of Lord Soley's Private Members' Bill on home education (available [here](#)), which was introduced in the House of Lords later that month. The group has raised with Ofsted its concerns for GRT pupils around: home education; bullying; the high proportion of children in care; educational outcomes; and exclusions.

## Implications for inspectors

Inspectors should always be mindful of provision and outcomes for GRT pupils during inspections. They should focus in greater depth when these groups represent a significant number in a school. Regions may wish to include a focus on this as part of their regular discussions with local authorities, particularly in the 12 local authorities referred to above.

## Careers statutory guidance for schools

The DfE published its statutory guidance 'Careers guidance and access for education and training providers' on 5 January 2018. This follows the government's career strategy<sup>1</sup> to build a world-class system that will help young people choose the career that is right for them.

The need for a new careers strategy was backed by a number of recent studies that found the current state of careers education and guidance to be inconsistent in

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-strategy-making-the-most-of-everyones-skills-and-talents](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-strategy-making-the-most-of-everyones-skills-and-talents).

delivery. The studies also show that there is still some way to go before all schools can demonstrate the best practice identified by the Gatsby Foundation and encapsulated in their eight benchmarks for good careers provision.

The statutory guidance sets out details of a new legal duty to ensure that there is an opportunity for a range of education and training providers to access all Year 8 to 13 pupils to inform them about technical education and apprenticeships.

There is a clear timetable for implementing the strategy, including the expectation that every school now begins using the Gatsby benchmarks to improve career provision and that these are fully met by the end of 2020. There is a simple online tool, Compass, that allows schools easily and quickly to assess themselves against progress in meeting these benchmarks. The guidance recommends all school use this.

It is expected that:

- every school begins to offer every young person at least one encounter with employers per year, from Years 7 to 13 by 2020
- from September 2018, every school appoints a named person to the role of careers leader
- from September 2018, every school publishes details of its careers programme.

The strategy places a strong emphasis on deepening and broadening science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) activities in schools, including ensuring that some employer encounters are STEM related. The strategy also announces a £2 million pilot to explore new approaches to employer engagement and early careers activities in primary schools.

The statutory guidance is available at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-guidance-provision-for-young-people-in-schools).

## Implications for inspectors

Inspectors need to be mindful of the government's careers strategy and the Gatsby Foundation careers guidance benchmarks, and should expect to see these becoming more commonplace within schools through the work of the Careers and Enterprise Company. Inspectors should focus on the impact and quality of careers guidance and not on the compliance with specific steps, and how well a school is preparing pupils and students for their next steps – whatever they might be. How Ofsted inspects the quality of careers education, information and guidance will continue to be governed by the 'Common inspection framework' and 'School inspection handbook'.

## Recent useful publications/announcements relevant to inspections

### Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges

The DfE has published advice for schools and colleges on how to prevent and respond to reports of sexual violence and harassment between children.

The guidance is available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges).

### Schools causing concern

On 9 February 2018, the DfE updated the statutory guidance on local authorities' and regional schools commissioners' responsibilities relating to schools causing concern, to clarify the indicators that are taken into account for warning notices.

The guidance is available at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2).

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