

School inspections

A guide for parents¹

This document applies to Ministry of Defence schools.

Age group: 0–19

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¹ 'Parents' refers to mothers, fathers and/or carers.

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Why does Ofsted inspect schools?

We inspect schools to provide information to parents, to promote improvement and to hold schools to account for the public money they receive. School inspections are required by law. We provide an independent assessment of the quality and standards of education in schools, and check whether pupils are achieving as much as they can.

Who inspects schools?

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) carry out the inspections of Ministry of Defence schools.

How long do inspections last?

A school judged to be good at its last inspection normally receives a short inspection (see section on 'short inspections' below). Outstanding schools are risk assessed to determine whether an inspection might be necessary. A standard inspection usually lasts two days and the number of inspectors on the inspection team will vary according to the size and nature of the school.

A school judged as requires improvement at its last inspection will be subject to monitoring from Her Majesty's Inspectors to check its progress and is inspected within a period of two years. If at that inspection it is still judged as requires improvement, there will be further monitoring, and another inspection will take place within a further two years. If at this inspection it is still not good, it is highly likely that it will be judged inadequate and deemed to require additional measures.

What judgements do inspectors make?

Inspectors will make graded judgements on the following areas using the four-point scale:

- Effectiveness of leadership and management
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare
- Outcomes for children and learners.

Where applicable, inspectors will also make a graded judgement on the effectiveness of the early years (FS1 and FS2) or sixth form provision in the school.

We give schools an overall grade from 1 to 4:

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

The school must take all reasonable steps to make sure that parents of pupils at the school receive a copy of the report.

Short inspections

A school judged to be good at its last inspection normally receives a short one-day inspection approximately every three years. Short inspections are conducted by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) in primary schools with fewer than 600 pupils on roll and by two HMI in all secondary schools and large primary schools. The purpose of a short inspection is to determine whether the school continues to provide a good standard of education and whether safeguarding is effective. If there is sufficient evidence of improved performance, and it is reasonable to believe that the school may be judged outstanding, we will carry out a standard two-day inspection instead, usually within 48 hours. Similarly, if HMI have insufficient evidence to satisfy themselves that the school remains good, or there are concerns, we will carry out a standard two-day inspection instead, usually within 24 hours.

Schools should inform parents of pupils at the school that the report of the short inspection has been published

How much notice do you give to a school before you inspect?

Most schools receive notice of their inspection within two days of the start of the inspection.

What happens during an inspection?

Inspectors look at the school's self-evaluation and analyse the pupils' progress and attainment. They talk to the headteacher, governors, staff, and pupils, and consider your views as a parent. They spend most of their time observing a wide range of lessons and looking at the quality of teaching in the school and its impact on learning and progress. They also look at the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils at the school, the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and how well the school is led and managed.

How can I make my views known?

If you are the registered parent of a child at the school, the school will send you a letter notifying you of the dates of the inspection. This letter provides you with details and options for providing your views. Our survey site, Parent View, is the main source we use to gather parents' views about a school. Inspectors will use the views expressed on Parent View when inspecting your child's school.

Can I speak to the inspectors?

You may have the chance to speak to the inspectors during the inspection, for example at the start of the school day. The inspection administrators will be happy to pass on messages to the inspectors and may be able to arrange telephone conversations if you are unable to speak to them in person. Their contact details will be in the letter that tells you about the inspection. Please remember that inspectors cannot deal with complaints concerning individual pupils or settle disputes between you and the school.

What happens after the inspection?

The lead inspector reports her or his judgement to the headteacher, School Governance Committee and representative of the Directorate of Children and Young People (MOD). The inspectors' findings are published in a report for the school, parents and the wider community. Inspection reports provide information about the effectiveness of the school's work and contain recommendations about what the school should do to improve further. Reports are published on our website: <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Where can further details be found about school inspections?

The *Common inspection framework: education, skills and early years*² sets out the principles that apply to inspection and the main judgements that inspectors make when conducting inspections.

The *School inspection handbook*³ and *School inspection handbook – section 8*⁴ set out the statutory basis for inspections, what schools can expect at inspections and provide guidance for inspectors on making their judgements.

What happens if I have concerns about the inspection?

Complaints are rare but we treat them very seriously. You can find out more on our website at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure, or by calling our helpline on 0300 123 4666.

If you need any more information about our work, please visit our website or call our helpline.

² *Common inspection framework*, Ofsted, June 2015; www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015.

³ *School inspection handbook*, Ofsted, June 2015; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015>

⁴ *School inspection handbook – section 8*, Ofsted, June 2015; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-short-monitoring-and-unannounced-behaviour-school-inspections>

What happens if I have concerns about my child's school?

If you are concerned about your child's school, you should start by talking directly to the teachers or headteacher or, if necessary, the School Governance Committee or Directorate of Children and Young People (MOD). If you are not satisfied with the responses you receive Ofsted may be able to help.

You can find out more on our website or by calling our helpline.

Helpline: 0300 123 4666

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