## Ofsted’s new framework: longer inspections and shorter notice

Ofsted has launched the consultation on its eagerly-anticipated new inspection framework, proposing longer inspections for ‘good’-rated schools and a plan to send inspectors in to schools earlier for “collaborative” preparation time with leaders.

The draft new framework, which will be published online at 10.30am, will dictate how inspections of schools and other educational establishments are carried out from September 2019.

Alongside previously-announced plans to shake up inspection of the quality of education and management of behaviour in schools, Ofsted will enact proposals to spread “short” inspections of ‘good’-rated schools over two days instead of one, and introduce new on-site preparation sessions that could see inspectors arrive in schools just two-and-a-half-hours after leaders are first informed of their planned visits.

[Read more: What’s changing for schools in Ofsted’s new inspection framework?](https://schoolsweek.co.uk/new-ofsted-inspection-framework-whats-changing-for-schools/)

Once implemented, it will also see the watchdog take a more “holistic” and curriculum-focused approach to rating the quality of education in schools, while inspectors also seek to clamp down on “teaching to the test”, the narrowing of the curriculum and illegal off-rolling.

Details of the focus on curriculum also appear to include proposals to judge a school on how well it is preparing to meet the government’s “ambition” of 90 per cent of pupils taking GCSEs in EBacc subjects.

One union leader said the target was “misconceived” and “unachievable” – as there aren’t even enough modern foreign languages teachers in the system to cope.

The framework proposals are the culmination of two years’ work by chief inspector Amanda Spielman and her team.

“Two words sum up my ambition for the framework: substance and integrity,” Spielman will say in a speech today.

“The substance that has all children and young people exposed to the best that has been thought and said, achieve highly and set up to succeed.

“And the integrity that makes sure every child and young person is treated as an individual with potential to be unlocked, and staff as experts in their subject or field, not just as data gatherers and process managers. And above all that you are rewarded for doing the right thing.

“Ofsted is committed to making sure that any changes to the inspection framework and approach are fair, reliable and valid.”

A new quality of education judgement will look at how providers are “deciding what to teach and why, how well they are doing it and whether it is leading to strong outcomes for young people”, she will say.

“This will reward those who are ambitious and make sure that young people accumulate rich, well-connected knowledge and develop strong skills using this knowledge.

“This is all about raising true standards. Nothing is more pernicious to these than a culture of curriculum narrowing and teaching to the test.”

## Ofsted plans more inspector face-time

In doubling the amount of time inspectors spend in ‘good’ schools, Ofsted hopes to ensure the process of confirming that schools remain at that level is water-tight.

However, with no extra money from government going into the inspectorate to pay for the new framework, Ofsted’s most senior inspectors – Her Majesty’s Inspectors – will have to spend more time in the field.

“Currently they carry out a lot of what we call quality assurance work, the complaints work that we do in and around their inspection work,” said Sean Harford, Ofsted’s national director of education.

“By deploying that more smartly and thinking about how we do that quality assurance work, we can get the HMI specifically, and some [other inspectors], in front of the providers having the kind of conversations that we know providers actually value.”

Under new on-site inspector preparation proposals, lead inspectors will spend an afternoon at schools they are due to inspect the following day. Schools will be informed of their impending visit by no later than 10am on the day before the inspection, and the lead inspector will arrive no earlier than 12.30pm, staying until no later than 5pm.

The change is likely to prompt concerns among schools that their inspections will in effect start earlier, but Matthew Purves, Ofsted’s deputy director for schools, insisted it would be “really clear” the afternoon “is about preparing with the school and giving the school a role in preparation rather than it being a phone call and sending a document”.

The time would be used to check documents and discuss things like the schedule of the inspection, activities that would normally eat into the beginning of an inspection.

He said schools involved in pilots of the proposal had been “really positive”.

“Unprompted, they have told us about things like being able to have dialogue with the inspector, being able to set things up, and the next morning being less of a cliff-edge and less of an unknown for them.”

The main changes that will affect schools.

## 1. Inspections of ‘good’ schools increased to 2 days

Ofsted is proposing that its “short” inspections of ‘good’-rated schools will take place over two days, rather than one, as they do at the moment.

Although the principle of such visits – to confirm whether schools deserve to remain ‘good’ or to be marked up or down – will remain the same, Ofsted’s bosses want to ensure that there is opportunity “to gather sufficient evidence while on inspection to confirm that a school remains good under the new criteria”.

Inspectors will still be able to upgrade to a full inspection if they feel a ‘good’ school has got better or worse.

## 2. Ofsted could arrive within 2.5 hours

The watchdog wants to introduce on-site inspector preparation for all inspections.

Whereas now inspectors carry out such preparation remotely the day before they visit a school, Ofsted is proposing that from September, this preparation will take place in the school on the afternoon before inspection, in “collaboration” with school leaders.

In practice, this will mean that schools will receive a call from Ofsted no later than 10am, informing them of the inspection, and the lead inspector will arrive on site no earlier than 12.30pm the same day.

This time with senior leaders will then be used “to gain an overview of the school’s recent performance and any chances since the last inspection”, and the lead inspector will then leave the site no later than 5pm.

## 3. Personal development, behaviour and welfare judgment split

Amanda Spielman revealed last October that Ofsted plans to scrap its current **personal development, behaviour and welfare** judgment and replace it with two separate judgments: **behaviour and attitudes** and **personal development**.

The watchdog hopes this change will “enhance the inspection focus on each [area] and enable clearer reporting on both”.

Ofsted believes that the behaviour and attitudes of learners of all ages bring to learning “is best evaluated and judged separately from the provision made to promote learners’ wider personal development, character and resilience”.

In practice, this means that schools’ management of behaviour and discipline will be considered separately to how they look after their pupils and encourage them to grow.

## 4. There’s a new ‘quality of education’ judgment

Spielman has already announced that the **quality of teaching, learning and assessment** judgment (which Ofsted has admitted is too focused on outcomes) [will be replaced with an overall **quality of education** judgment.](https://schoolsweek.co.uk/spielman-to-reveal-new-inspection-judgment-headings/)

This, Ofsted states, will “[de-intensify the inspection focus on performance data](https://schoolsweek.co.uk/curriculum-will-be-central-focus-in-new-ofsted-framework/) and place more emphasis on the substance of education and what matters most to learners and practitioners”.

In practice, this means that pupil outcomes won’t be the main factor for inspectors when considering a school’s judgment. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment will still be judged, but will be “viewed in the context of the provider’s curriculum”.

The new quality judgment will be built around a “working definition of the curriculum”, which is set out in the draft framework and factors in elements like behaviour and workload.

Ofsted wants to take a “holistic approach to considering the quality of education, rather than artificially separating the leadership of the curriculum from teaching, and separating teaching and the use of assessment from the impact this has on the outcomes that learners achieve”.

## 5. Ofsted won’t use internal performance data, but will ask about workload

In its consultation, Ofsted proposes that inspectors “will not use schools’ internal performance data for current pupils as evidence during an inspection”.

This data, Ofsted warned, has “limitations”, and inspectors will not be able to assess whether it is an “accurate and valid representation of pupils’ learning across the curriculum”.

Instead, inspectors will be tasked with gathering “direct evidence” on the quality of education, and hold “meaningful discussions with leaders about how they know that the curriculum is having an effect”.

However, inspectors will ask schools to explain why they collect the data they do, what they draw from it and how it informs their curriculum and teaching.

Spielman and co believe that this will help reduce unnecessary workload for teachers, but won’t have a “negative effect on our [its] ability to judge effectively the quality of education in a school”.

## 6. Private schools’ specialisms will be taken into account

Ofsted is responsible for inspecting “non-association independent schools”, those private schools that are not inspected by organisations like the Independent Schools Inspectorate, to check they meet the government’s independent school standards.

Some of these private schools offer a specialist curriculum, like a faith-based curriculum, and Ofsted has now set out how it will assess these schools against its new quality of education judgment.

Under the proposals, inspectors will judge a school primarily on the non-specialist element of its curriculum, because all schools are required to study a “broad, rich curriculum”.

However, if a school delivers a “substantial” number of required subject areas through a specialist curriculum – for example through faith-based content – inspectors will consider evidence from said specialist curriculum. This will also happen if there is “insufficient evidence” from the non-specialist curriculum.

## 7. Emergency private school inspections will lead to quicker follow-ups

As well as routine inspections of private schools, Ofsted is required to carry out “additional inspections” when commissioned to do so by the Department for Education.

These can include emergency inspections, those commissioned following a material change to the running of the school and visits to monitor progress.

Following these inspections, Ofsted simply rules on whether the independent school standards are being met, but does not issue schools with an updated graded judgment. This means that some keep a positive rating, despite evidence seen by Ofsted to the contrary, and some retain a negative rating, despite evidence of improvement. [(We’ve written about this a lot).](https://schoolsweek.co.uk/private-schools-repeatedly-fail-school-standards-but-stay-open/)

Now Ofsted intends to “recognise and acknowledge sooner” where schools have improved or declined. In practice, this will mean Ofsted will be more likely to bring forward a standard inspection.