

What's changed in the Ofsted handbooks?

On 13 April 2018, Ofsted updated their section 5 and section 8 handbooks and made a few noteworthy changes.

The major changes

Ofsted added an additional reason for a short inspection to be converted to a full inspection. Section 8 inspections will now convert to section 5 inspections when an inspector believes that a school may be **inadequate in one or more of the section 5 graded judgements**.

Ofsted also **extended the usual timeframe for a 'good' school to receive a short inspection from three years to four**. The maximum timeframe for inspection of a good school remains five years from the end of the academic year the previous inspection took place.

Finally, they aligned the re-inspection window for schools requiring improvement, schools with a serious weakness and schools in special measures to **up to 30 months** (previously 30, 18 and 24 months respectively).

The minor changes

With regards to monitoring inspections for schools requiring improvement to become good or 'outstanding', where a school's leadership and management were judged to be good in their most recent inspection, or where leadership has changed since the previous section 5 inspection, the regional director may decide that the school does not require a monitoring inspection, having taken account all contextual information – this is unlikely to be the norm.

There were some small wording changes included in the changes. Where a school judged as 'requires improvement' appoints new leadership after the judgement, the school will be re-inspected no later than 30 months after the publication of the previous report. This paragraph previously stated 'headteacher' instead of 'leadership'.

Further additions

Ofsted also embedded three previously determined changes into the handbooks, namely:

A 48-hour turnaround where concerns are raised

If, during a short inspection of a good school, serious concerns are raised about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, the short inspection will be converted to a full section 5 inspection, usually within 48 hours. Inspections will also be converted where evidence suggests that a school is likely to be judged as 'inadequate' overall.

Some outstanding schools also receive short inspections: nursery schools, special schools and pupil referral units. If, during a short inspection of an outstanding school, inspectors see evidence indicating that a school is likely to be judged as inadequate, the short inspection will be converted into a section 5 inspection, usually within 48 hours.

A section 5 inspection within two years where a school is unlikely to reach its current judgement

If, during a short inspection of a good school, or a non-exempt outstanding school, inspectors are not confident that the school would receive its current grade if a section 5 inspection was conducted, they will send a letter to the school setting out their strengths and priorities for improvement. A section 5 inspection will then take place, typically within one to two years, but no later than five years since the school's previous full inspection. The short inspection's findings will not result in a change to the school's previous judgement for overall effectiveness.

A section 5 inspection within two years where a good school is moving towards outstanding

If, during a short inspection of a good school, inspectors identify practice indicating that the school is moving towards outstanding, they will send a letter setting out the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. A section 5 inspection will then take place "typically" within the next two years and "possibly much sooner".