

The Ofsted Education Inspection Framework

ECA networking event
June 2026

What we'll cover in this workshop

- An outline of the key changes in the EIF
- Early feedback from schools – how does the new framework feel?
- The inspection in practice: before, during and after
- The governance descriptors
- The governors' role in inspection
- Case studies and governor experience
- What knowledge, understanding and evidence governors need to shine in the inspection
- Supporting your school through the process

Introduction

- Ofsted published a new education inspection framework (EIF) following a consultation in 2025: the “Big Listen”. In total, they received more than 6,500 responses to the consultation.
- The new framework commenced in November 2025, starting with a small number of volunteer schools.
- The education inspection framework sets out how Ofsted inspects registered early years settings, maintained schools, academies, non-association independent schools and further education and skills provision in England.
- Inspections provide independent, external evaluation and identify what providers need to improve in order to become better.

Key documents

- Inspection information for state-funded schools
- School inspection operating guide for inspectors
- State funded school inspection toolkit
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-toolkit-operating-guide-and-information>

Key changes

Ofsted has replaced the old single-word judgements of Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate with a new five-point scale:

- Urgent improvement
- Needs attention
- Expected standard
- Strong standard
- Exceptional

There is no “overall effectiveness” judgement and each inspection area is graded on this scale, using a “secure fit” approach.

The areas evaluated in inspection

- Safeguarding
- Inclusion
- Curriculum and teaching
- Achievement
- Attendance and behaviour
- Personal development and wellbeing
- Early years (if applicable)
- Post-16 provision (if applicable)
- Leadership and governance

The report card


Ofsted

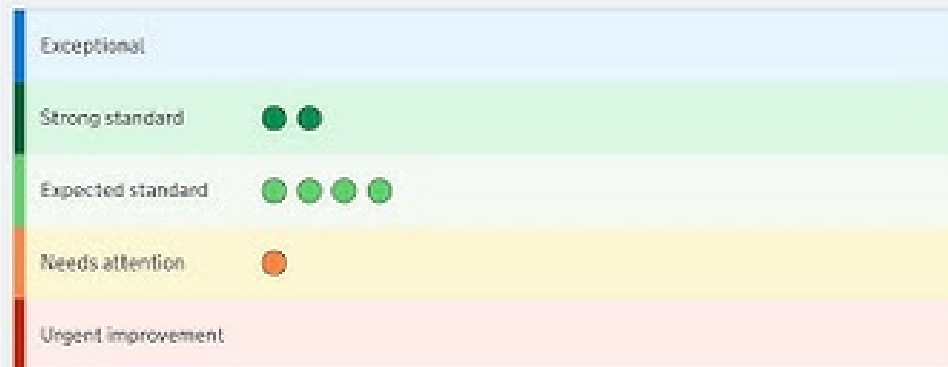
[Home](#) > [Search](#) > [Primary School](#)

Primary School

Address: School Lane, Old Town, Home County, HG4 5DF

Unique reference number (URN): EG12345

Inspection report: 25 June 2024



Safeguarding standards met

[Show](#)

Strong standard  [What does this mean?](#) 

Curriculum and teaching

[Show](#)

The nominee

- Schools can choose to nominate a senior member of staff to support planning, communication and engagement throughout the inspection. Their involvement helps the inspection to run smoothly.
- It is not compulsory to have a nominee. Schools will not be at any disadvantage if they do not nominate someone.
- The nominee should have thorough knowledge of how the school operates on a day-to-day basis.

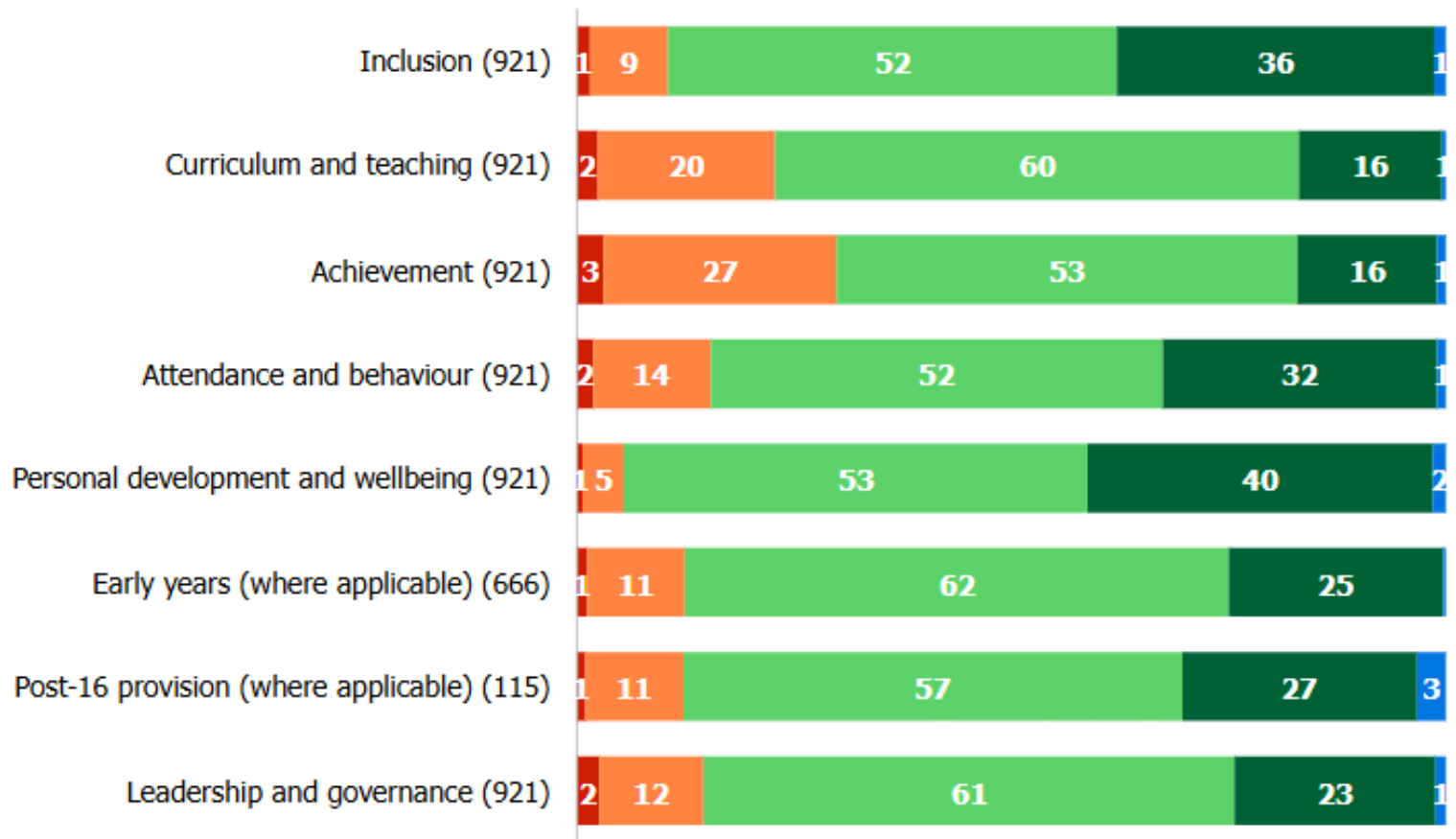
When will my school be inspected?

The removal of the overall effectiveness grade has **not changed the basic timetable** for how often schools are inspected under Ofsted; schools are still scheduled roughly every four years if they meet expectations, or more often if they fall below that level.

Early feedback from inspections

Early feedback from volunteer and pilot schools suggests that inspections feel more collaborative and improvement-focused, but also more intensive, data-driven and exacting about inclusion and foundational knowledge.

State funded school inspections and outcomes – the first 921 inspections



■ % Urgent improvement ■ % Needs attention ■ % Expected standard ■ % Strong standard ■ % Exceptional

Culture and “feel” of inspections

- Leaders consistently report that inspections feel more “done with than done to”, with permanent HMIs leading teams, more professional dialogue and a warmer tone, including explicit attention to staff wellbeing during the visit.
- Despite this, scrutiny is described as everywhere: inspectors are highly visible around the school, spend more time in classrooms and corridors, and put strong emphasis on lived daily culture rather than staged practice.

Preparation in advance of inspection

- Download and know the handbook and inspection toolkit inside out
- List of documents and information included in the inspection documents and in the EPHA checklist: following notification of a full inspection
<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/info-and-documents/ofsted/>
- Agree in advance which governors/Trustees will meet the inspectors

Governance is back in the framework

Inspectors will consider the extent to which governors:

- Are knowledgeable about their **statutory duties** and carry them out effectively
- **Support and challenge** the school's leaders effectively, using the best methods to assure themselves of the quality and impact of different aspects of the school's work
- Understand their role as the responsible body, where applicable, in considering and addressing **leaders' workload and wellbeing**

Inspectors will consider the extent to which governors:

- Assure themselves that leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's context and are **prioritising the actions for improvement** that will have the greatest impact on pupils
- Ensure that systems for **monitoring and quality assurance** are fair, valid and constructive, and provide leaders and staff with high-quality feedback to inform continuous improvement
- Hold leaders to account appropriately and effectively for the impact of the school's **professional learning programme for staff**
- Hold leaders to account appropriately and effectively for the school's support and provision for **disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing**

The meeting with governors

“Governors are most effective in Ofsted when they are calm, consistent and evidence-focused, with a clear grasp of the school’s strengths, weaknesses and next steps.”

- The Lead Inspector will meet those responsible for governance, on a call if necessary.
- Likely to be on Day 2 of inspection

Engaging with the trust executive

- Lead Inspector will meet trust leaders who have delegated responsibility. Where trusts are large, this may be more than one person.
- They will establish how all leaders make sure delegated responsibilities are carried out effectively, including how leaders assure themselves that systems are working as intended.

Case study:

an average-sized primary school

February 2026

The meeting:

Held on day 2, 90-minute meeting with the Lead Inspector
The Chair of Governors and one governor

Key questions that were asked

- Do you know what priorities the school are working on?
- Are governors aware of disadvantaged pupils and what this means for the school?
- What training do governors receive?
- How do you ensure the mental health and wellbeing of the head and other senior leaders?

Case study: an average-sized primary school

Report recommendations for governors

Leaders, including governors, should ensure that systems for checking the quality and impact of provision are used consistently, so that governors can provide effective challenge, particularly around pupils' progress over time.

Top tips

- If the safeguarding and attendance governors are not able to attend be sure that governors attending have the necessary knowledge and data to be able to talk effectively about these 2 areas of governance and school life
- Ensure that minutes effectively capture the challenge and questions that governors ask of leaders

Prepare the people, not just the papers

- Agree in advance who will meet inspectors (chair, vice, safeguarding, curriculum/SEND leads) and meet briefly beforehand to align key messages.
- Remind governors they can use notes and documents in the meeting; it is not a memory test, and it is better to refer to accurate information than guess.

Know your story

- Be clear about the school's key strengths, priority areas for improvement and what has changed since the last inspection (curriculum, teaching, behaviour, leadership).
- Anchor everything in the school improvement plan and self-evaluation so that governors tell a consistent narrative.

Case study: a secondary school December 2025

The meeting:

8.00 am Day 2, meeting with the Lead Inspector

Nearly all governors! 45+ minutes

Key questions that were asked

- How does the governing body hold the school to account.
- The inspector asked with reference to pupil premium grant, is the board comfortable about outcomes for SEND and high achievers
- Inspector asked about toxic masculinity, casual homophobic, sexist, misogynist comments between pupils.
- How do you know that children are safe at this school?

Case study: a secondary school

Any comment/recommendations for governors

- The meeting was in person. I asked all governors who wished to attend to do so. Most did which meant we had too many. This was a conscious decision to demonstrate governors' commitment to the school in a visible way but also to maintain engagement of governors. I took the view that it would be very demotivating for a governor to not be asked to attend and also that it would allow the best answers to be provided.
- Tone was very relaxed - Inspector spoke without notes and did not take notes.

Top tips

- It was a positive experience and felt like we were being given the opportunity to demonstrate all the good work we do.
- I would still have had everyone attend. For the reasons stated above.

Focus on impact and evidence

- Prepare 5–6 concrete examples of how the board has challenged and supported leaders and what difference this has made (e.g. reading outcomes, attendance, SEND provision).
- **Use meeting minutes, link governor reports, visit notes and monitoring schedules as evidence rather than describing work in general terms.**

Be strong on safeguarding

- Ensure all governors can explain safeguarding arrangements, how they gain assurance that policies work in practice, and how concerns or patterns are monitored and followed up.
- The safeguarding/link governor should be ready with recent visit reports, records of policy review and how training needs are identified.

Case study: a small primary school

The meeting:

50 minute meeting on day 2 (in person)

Chair of Governors with the Vice-Chair, who is also the Governor responsible for Safeguarding

Key questions that were asked

- How do we hold the Headteacher to account?
- How frequently do Governors visit the School for monitoring? What do the Governors do? Do Governors visit individually or in groups?
- Describe the Governors' interface with safeguarding processes and controls
- Describe the various audits that the Governors carry out
- How do the Governors support the well-being of the Head Teacher?

Case study: a small primary school

February 2026

Top tips

Preparation is absolutely key.

- The inspection experience was very different to that which we experienced 3 years ago
- The report covers all aspects of the School and is well focussed on each aspect
- HMI came across as being supportive and was able to offer advice and support on many aspects
- To have achieved 7 green dots for expected standard is viewed as an excellent achievement for the School

Understand funding and inclusion

- Be ready to explain how pupil premium, recovery funding and other grants are allocated, monitored and evaluated for impact on disadvantaged and SEND pupils.
- Show how the board tracks attendance, exclusions and behaviour trends, and how it challenges leaders where groups are not doing as well.

Be ready for Ofsted: regular activity through the year

- Monitor the School Improvement Plan
- Governing Body self evaluation
- Safeguarding
- Quality of education
- Monitor the curriculum and hold school leaders to account
- Statutory duties and compliance
- Data – pupil outcomes, attendance, behaviour
- The budget
- The school website
- Effective minutes that demonstrate challenge and support

Key documents

- Headteacher's report
- IDSR – Inspection Data Summary Report
- SEF – self-evaluation form
- SDP – School Development Plan
- Pupil Premium statement

Case study: a 2-form entry primary school

January 2026

The meeting:

Day 2, late afternoon

6 governors in attendance – with specific responsibilities able to answer questions

Key questions that were asked

- Who was responsible for the HT wellbeing?
- How were the Trustees involved?
- How did we monitor safeguarding?
- About the use of our SEN hub – who leads / plans and the future plans for it.

Case study: a 2-form entry primary school

Top tips

- Having our minutes on the website meant that they already had a lot of the information that they needed.
- Make sure that your minutes are robust and show clear challenge.
- Have important docs to hand – anything that you might need to recall. Key stats – PPG, SEN etc.
- Have a list of strengths of the school that you are ready to share! Even if they don't ask, just tell them.

Minutes of meetings

- Ofsted generally wants governing body minutes to show **effective governance**, not a transcript of everything said. They should make clear the **challenge and support** governors gave to leaders, the **questions asked**, the **decisions made**, and the **actions agreed**.
- Minutes should show that governors are **fulfilling their strategic role** and holding leaders to account.

Good practice in the minutes – discussion

- Share examples of minutes, discuss and highlight good practice.
- What do you include in your minutes that will help demonstrate that governors are meeting the expectations of Ofsted?

Good practice in the minutes – ideas

- **Highlight** questions and challenge
- Note impact of governor discussion and decision
- Record action to be taken: column, summary box
- Matters arising
- Demonstrate compliance: policies, audits
- Governor training and monitoring visits

Governor monitoring visits

- Ofsted would expect a governor monitoring visit report to be **brief, factual, and linked to a clear focus** such as the school improvement plan, safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, or curriculum.
- It should show **what was seen, heard or checked**, what questions were asked, and what the visit suggests about progress or next steps, rather than sounding like a lesson observation or personal judgement.

Governor monitoring visit reports

What Ofsted likes

- Reports that show governors are **checking implementation, not just receiving information.**
- Evidence that visits are **planned in advance, linked to priorities, and reported back to the board.**
- Neutral language that stays within governors' **strategic role** and avoids comments on teaching quality unless directly relevant to the agreed focus.

Compliance with statutory and contractual requirements

- Delegation/decision planner
- Governance arrangements and structures
- Statutory policies
- Website compliance
- Audits
- Responsibilities in relation to other laws, including employment, equality, data protection and so on...

The final feedback meeting – end of Day 2

Those who may attend the inspectors' final feedback meeting include:

- the headteacher
- for an academy, the CEO (or equivalent)
- any appropriate person the headteacher or CEO wants to be present to assist and support them
- the chair of the board of governors/trustees and as many governors as are available;
- the clerk to the governors (or equivalent), may also attend to take notes (if necessary, there may be more than one note-taker)
- a representative from the local authority (for maintained schools; and academies if Ofsted is likely to grade safeguarding as 'not met')
- a representative from the sponsor and/or the diocese

The final feedback meeting

- The lead inspector will make sure that the inspection team has connected the evidence gathered and reflected on it proportionately, which will help leaders to understand the final feedback.
- Attendance at the meeting is voluntary.
- The [operating guide for schools](#) gives further information about what the lead inspector will discuss during the feedback meeting.

The Lead Inspector will make it clear...

... that leaders should share the inspection findings with all governors/trustees, and whoever else they consider appropriate, which may include colleagues, family members, and/or their wider support group; however, the information should not be made public or shared with parents until the report card is published.

Thank you!

Thank you for your time, your contribution and your commitment to your school.

Being a clerk can be a lonely job, but you play a vital part in keeping your governors focused and on track!