



Northumberland
County Council

Ofsted update 2024

Autumn Term 2024

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Ofsted updates 2024

- One-word Ofsted judgements for state schools are being scrapped with immediate effect. This does not apply to early years, FE, independent or children's homes.
- Graded inspection begin on the 23rd September 2024. Ungraded will resume on the 7th October.
- Notification for graded and ungraded inspections will now be carried out from 9.30am on the Monday of the week we will inspect the school, unless it is a week with a Monday bank holiday.
- From this academic year, four grades will be awarded across the existing sub-categories: quality of education, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management, the Department for Education (DfE) has announced.
- School report cards will be introduced from September 2025, which will provide parents with a "comprehensive assessment of how schools are performing and ensure that inspections are more effective in driving improvement".
- The government has said it will prioritise improvement plans for schools identified as struggling, rather than relying on changing management.
- From early 2025, regional improvement teams will be introduced to work with underperforming schools to address areas of weakness.
- Overall effectiveness judgements will not be discussed in the final feedback.
- [Summary of changes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/summary-of-changes-to-ofsted-inspections)

'Suspend and return' policy

412. If, on a graded inspection, inspectors consider that safeguarding is likely to be judged ineffective, the action they take will depend on the school's wider context:

- if, had safeguarding arrangements been judged effective, the school would still have at least one judgement graded 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate', the inspection will conclude as normal.
- if, had safeguarding arrangements been judged effective, all judgements would have been good or outstanding, inspectors will need to consider, based on the information available to them at that time, whether leaders are capable of resolving the issues identified with safeguarding within 3 months. If they consider that this is the case, the inspection will be suspended to give the school an opportunity to resolve those issues and we will return within 3 months. The school will not be placed in a category of concern at this stage, as the inspection will not have concluded. We will send a letter to the school, copied to the Secretary of State, setting this out, and explaining the next steps. In order to be able to suspend the inspection, inspectors will need the school to agree, before the suspension is confirmed, that they will pass this letter to parents. We will return to the school, as set out in our [gathering additional evidence policy](#), to complete the inspection by gathering additional evidence on whether safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- if there are no wider concerns (as set out in the first bullet), but inspectors consider that there is not a realistic prospect that leaders will be capable of resolving the issues identified with safeguarding within 3 months, they will conclude the inspection as normal and judge the school to have [serious weaknesses](#).

In brief, the suspend and return policy

- If **safeguarding** is likely to be **ineffective** but all other judgements seem to be good or better, and leaders are capable of resolving the issues identified with safeguarding **within 3 months** the inspection will be paused and a report will not be published.
- A letter will be sent indicating the concerns raised.
- Inspectors will **return within 3 months**, the inspection will resume, and then the report will be published.
- Minor SCR omissions or errors which can be rectified by the end of the inspection should not result in the inspection being paused.

Ungraded inspection updates

Specific matters for ungraded inspections

157. On an ungraded inspection, **inspectors may consider** any of the areas set out in the sections [Evaluating the quality of education](#), [Evaluating behaviour and attitudes](#), [Evaluating personal development](#) and [Evaluating leadership and management](#). However, inspectors **will not carry out deep dives** on ungraded inspections.

Inspectors usually focus on:

- **leadership and management** – inspectors will consider whether leaders take effective action to sustain and/or improve performance across all areas of the school’s work, and whether they make decisions in the best interests of children
- **quality of education** – inspectors will consider the extent to which pupils achieve well and are well prepared for their next steps
- **behaviour** – inspectors will consider whether the school is a safe and positive environment for pupils and whether pupils get the support they need
- **attendance** – inspectors will consider whether school staff are doing all they reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance
- **pupils’ personal development** – inspectors will consider the extent to which pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school

Specific matters for ungraded inspections continued

Inspectors **will also consider** staff's well-being (including workload) (see ['Evaluating leadership and management'](#)). They will be particularly alert to any evidence that the school may be gaming or off-rolling. Definitions of these can be found in the ['evaluating gaming on a graded inspection'](#) and ['evaluating a school's approach to inclusion and off-rolling on a graded inspection'](#) sections.

- 158. On ungraded inspections, inspectors will normally take the **same approach to inspecting safeguarding** as they use on a graded inspection. This is set out in the ['safeguarding' section](#).
- 159. If the lead inspector has concerns about any of the above, this could be evidence that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. This will result in the school receiving a graded inspection around 1 to 2 years later (see [outcomes of an ungraded inspection](#)). The four possible outcome remain the same.
- 160. If the lead inspector has serious concerns, they will usually deem the inspection to be a graded inspection within 48 hours (see [outcomes of an ungraded inspection](#)).

Link to update webinar: [Ofsted Youtube channel](#)

Link to blog by Lee Owston: [Changes to ungraded inspections - Ofsted: schools and further education & skills \(FES\) \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

What will happen on the morning of the notification?

- Notification for graded and ungraded inspections will now be carried out from 9.30am on the Monday of the week we will inspect the school, unless it is a week with a Monday bank holiday, or a deferral has been requested.
- The inspection team will start with the premise the school has maintained standards on an ungraded inspection.
 1. Contact to arrange educationally focused conversation.
 2. [Educationally focused conversation](#) will take place.
 3. Following this conversation there will be reflection time;
 - the lead inspector can reflect and finalise the focus areas, including the rationale.
 - the leaders in school can reflect and think about anything else they want to share.
 4. Then a planning call will take place; the day 1 timetable will be finalised.
 5. Day 2 timetable will be planned at the end of day 1.

The educational focused conversation:

110. Inspectors will use this conversation to understand:

- any changes to the school's context, and the progress it has made since the previous inspection, including any **specific progress on areas for improvement identified at previous inspections** that remain relevant under the current inspection framework
- the **specific impact of COVID-19 on the school** and how leaders are responding to the ongoing impact. We recognise that responding to COVID-19 has placed great demands on leaders and detailed discussions of this may be required to understand the school's context
- **the headteacher's assessment of the school's current strengths and areas for further improvement, particularly in relation to the curriculum**, the way teaching supports pupils to learn the curriculum, the standards that pupils achieve, pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and pupils' personal development
- where the school is an academy, **the role of trust leaders**, including which decisions they make centrally, and which are delegated to the headteacher and/or other school leaders (see ['approach to the trust in school inspections'](#) section below)
- **the specific areas or subjects of the school curriculum that inspectors should focus on during the inspection (for graded inspections, this will include which subjects will receive a deep dive)**

Approach to evaluating the quality of education on ungraded inspections

305. In evaluating the quality of education for ungraded inspections, inspectors will usually focus on:

- the extent to which pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged (including those with SEND) are **able to read, write and use mathematical knowledge**, ideas and operations to an **age-appropriate level and fluency** so that they are able to **access a broad and balanced curriculum**
- the extent to which pupils develop detailed **knowledge and skills across the curriculum** and, as a result, achieve well and are ready for the **next stage of education, employment or training**
- the extent to which teachers have **good knowledge of the subjects** they teach, present subject matter clearly, **check pupils' understanding** systematically, **identify misconceptions** accurately and provide clear, direct **feedback** to pupils, including remotely where applicable

306. In considering the initial scope of inspection activity, inspectors will take into account the top-level view formed through the educationally focused conversation with leaders [the educationally focused conversation](#), the official IDSR and the school's previous inspection report. Inspectors will consider the school's context and they may consider any of the factors set out in the evaluation criteria for graded inspections that they consider appropriate.

307. Inspectors will also be alert to any evidence which suggests that the school's curriculum has been narrowed inappropriately (taking account of the context, including any remote education and wider impact of COVID-19).

Approach to evaluating the quality of education on ungraded inspections continued

308. In order to gather broad evidence about the **quality of education** in the school, inspectors will focus inspection activities on **one or more groups of subjects**. Normally, inspectors will carry out **joint visits** to lessons, review **pupils' work** and **speak to pupils** about their learning.

309. On ungraded inspections, inspectors will **apply these activities flexibly** in order to gather sufficient evidence about particular aspects of the quality of education relevant to that inspection. On graded inspections, they will gather evidence as set out in [paragraph 247](#).

310. **Groups of subjects may include**, but are not limited to:

- recognised subject groupings (such as the arts or the humanities)
- early English (including reading) and mathematics knowledge and skills (regardless of age)
- any other selection of subjects that are relevant given the school's context
- In primary schools, inspectors will normally consider early English and mathematics knowledge and skills and at least one other group of subjects from the wider curriculum.

Evaluation of an ungraded inspection

These are the overarching aims when evaluating the school during an ungraded inspection:

- Are pupils achieving well?
- Is the school a safe and positive environment?
- Is the school doing all it reasonably can to achieve the highest possible attendance?
- Are leaders taking effective action to maintain and/or improve standards?
- Do leaders make the decisions in the best interest of children?
- Are pupils well prepared for life beyond school?

There is a clear focus on the **IMPACT** of the school's work.

Focus areas

- There will be 3 to 4 focus areas.
- 2 will focus on the quality of education.
- The other 1 or 2 will focus on another aspect of school life, for example, behaviour, PSHE, attendance.
- In primary schools, inspectors will normally consider early English and mathematics knowledge and skills and at least one other group of subjects from the wider curriculum.
- In secondary schools, 2 groups of subjects including links to T levels, 6th Form, etc. There will be a specific focus depending on the context of the school. For example, lower attainers don't achieve well in 4 subjects (focus area).

Example of focus areas in the quality of education

The lead inspector in consultation with leaders will select a group of subject and consider a particular focus.

For example:

- How effectively all pupils secure early English and mathematics knowledge, particularly for the lowest 20%/vulnerable pupils.
- The quality of education in history, geography and science, including the impact of leaders' work to ensure assessment is of a high quality.

What could it look like in school?

Focus area: How effectively all pupils secure early English and mathematics knowledge, particularly for the lowest 20%/ vulnerable pupils.

Timetabling: Visiting classrooms with leaders 9.00am to 11.00am

Activities to gather evidence:

- Visiting specific phonic lesson with a focus on lowest 20%.
- Observe pupils reading with an adult.
- Look at English and mathematics books at the same time.
- Visit the early years to observe adult interactions, how does the provision use and share stories, rhymes and songs.
- Visit key stage 1 English and mathematics lessons.
- Support for older pupils in the early stages of learning English and mathematics.

Example of focus areas in the wider school

A focus area of behaviour could be too broad so the focus area could look at:

- The school's work to reduce bullying

A focus area linked to the new online safety curriculum could be:

- The school's work to ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Inspecting the quality of education in a graded inspection

Inspecting the curriculum

Inspection method to assess 'quality of education'

- **Top-level view:** inspectors and leaders start with a top-level view of the school's curriculum, exploring what is on offer, to whom and when, leaders' understanding of curriculum intent and sequencing, and why these choices were made.
- **Deep dive:** then, a 'deep dive', which involves gathering evidence on the curriculum intent, implementation and impact over a sample of subjects, topics or aspects. This is done in collaboration with leaders, teachers and pupils. The intent of the deep dive is to seek to interrogate and establish a coherent evidence base on quality of education.
- **Bringing it together:** inspectors will bring the evidence together to widen coverage and to test whether any issues identified during the deep dives are systemic. This will usually lead to school leaders bringing forward further evidence and inspectors gathering additional evidence.

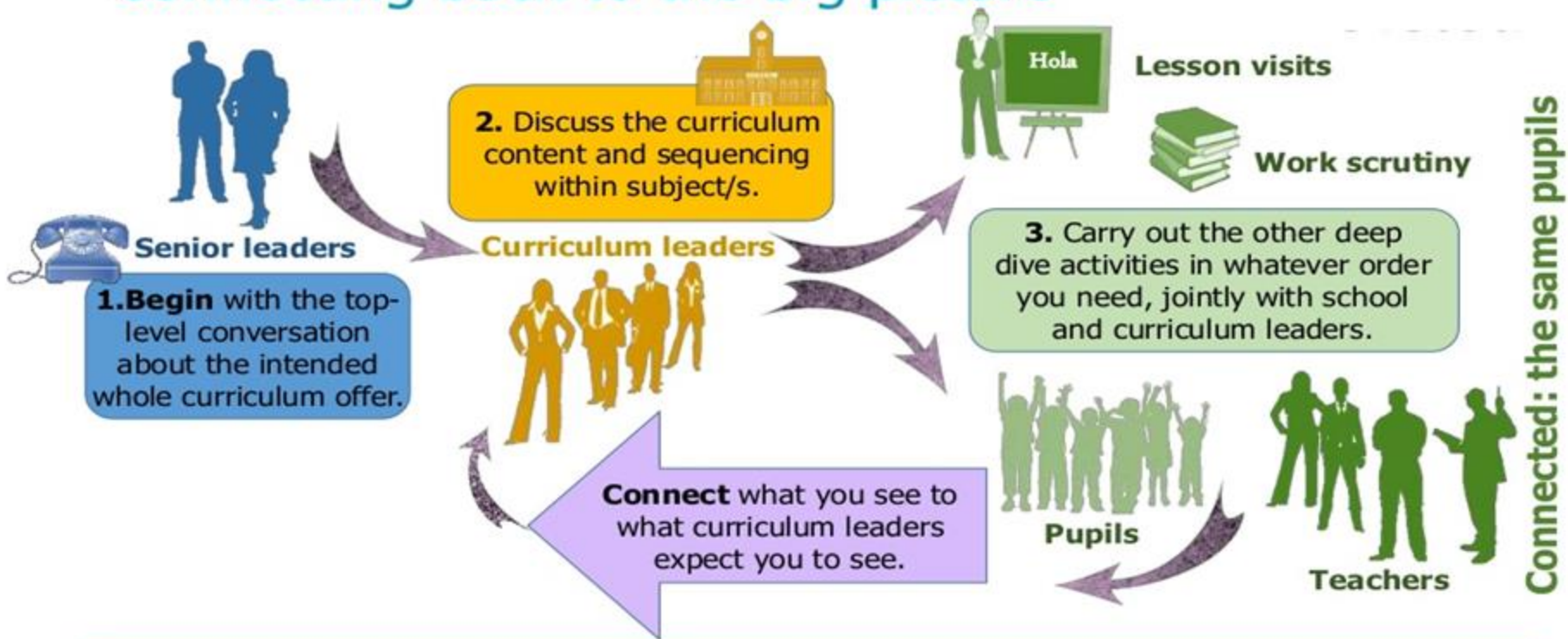
Inspecting the curriculum

The deep dive includes the following elements:

- evaluation of **senior leaders'** intent for the curriculum in this subject or area, and their understanding of its implementation and impact
- evaluation of **curriculum leaders'** long- and medium-term thinking and planning, including the rationale for content choices and curriculum sequencing
- visits to a deliberately and explicitly connected **sample of lessons** **
- **work scrutiny** of books or other kinds of work produced by pupils who are part of classes that have also been (or will also be) observed by inspectors
- discussion with **teachers** to understand how the curriculum informs their choices about content and sequencing to support effective learning
- discussions with a group of **pupils** from the lessons observed.

****subject leaders should be able to talk about what is being taught on the day of the inspection.**

Connecting back to the big picture



Cycle of impact and related school improvement questions

Cycle of Impact

Continuous Professional Development

- Training (impact)
- Performance management
- Subject knowledge/reading experts

Monitoring

- The curriculum (planning)
 - Teaching and learning (pedagogy)
 - Work scrutiny
 - Learning walks
 - Environment
 - Pupil voice
- Pupil progress review meeting
- Governor meetings/challenge
- Policies - consistency

School Development Plan

- Strengths/areas for development
- Actions/milestones/timescales
 - Expected impact
 - Targets?

Continuous Professional Development

Monitoring

Cycle of Impact

Analysis of data/pupil outcomes

School Development Plan

School Self-evaluation

Analysis of data/pupil outcome

- Key data outcomes
- Pupil groups
- Other year groups
- Question level analysis

School Self-evaluation

- Quality of Education
- Behaviour and attitudes
- Personal Development
- Leadership and Management
- Early Years

Possible questions for subject leaders to consider as part of the school improvement cycle

- How long have you been the lead for this subject?
- Can you talk about your XXX programme of study? (broad question to get you to talk)
- How did you decide what content needs to be deeply **embedded into long-term memory**?
- How does the curriculum progress from **EY to year 6**
- What **precise knowledge** are children being taught in EYFS to build their early understanding of XXX? How does this progress and develop into key stage 1? For example, do pupils have a secure understanding of substantive concepts like empire, trade and tax or build knowledge of chronology? (an example would be great here)
- Can you give an example to explain your thinking and demonstrate how the **building blocks of your curriculum content** builds to the **intended end points**?
- What are the fundamental components that need to be taught well, the golden nuggets that ensure pupils are ready for the next stage of their education? (lesson to lesson, term to term, year to year?)
- How do teachers **check what pupils know**? Are activities planned to revisit previously learned content and build up the security and sophistication of pupils' knowledge?
- Is **vocabulary** precisely identified, how are staff ensuring that pupils have secure knowledge of it?

- In the broadest terms how do you use **assessment**? Address gaps in knowledge? **Check for understanding**?
- Has crucial knowledge been taught and have **gaps been identified**? What do you do about it?
- How do you support pupils who are at the **early stages of reading** so that they can **access your subject specific content**?
- What do pupils **know and remember** as a result of teaching? How does this prepare them for future learning?
- **Ambition for all pupils**? How are **pupils with SEND** considered in curriculum design?
- How are SEND pupils supported in the classroom?
- How do you enrich the experience for pupils in XXX? (Extra-curricular activities: trips, first hand experiences).
- How do you support **subject knowledge** – leader expertise? Staff training? Support for struggling staff? ECTs?
- What **pedagogical choices** have you made to support teaching, learning and assessment?
- What **CPD** has been undertaken to ensure staff have the subject knowledge to teach the subject area?
- How do you know the **curriculum is successful**? Talk about the **monitoring** you do.

- How often is the subject taught?
- Are pupils in early years ready for the **demands of the national curriculum?** Are key stage 1 pupils ready for the demands of key stage 2 curriculum?
- What **transition** arrangements are in place?
- What are the **strengths** of your curriculum?
- What are the **areas for development?**

- Does what you see in lessons match what is planned? How does it fit into the planned wider curriculum? (why this? why now?).