

Up-to-speed on: changes to Ofsted's inspection handbooks

From 4 May, some inspections under the '[Education inspection framework](#)' (EIF) will restart and will take place on site, including section 8 monitoring inspections. Ofsted has updated a number of its inspection handbooks to reflect changes to inspection methods due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This article breaks down what schools need to know.

Key points

The key points are as follows:

1. [All the inspection remit handbooks have been updated](#)
2. [Inspections will mostly be carried out on site](#)
3. [The impact of coronavirus will be discussed during the preparation phone call](#)
4. [Inspectors will look at how schools have identified pupils' learning gaps](#)
5. [The quality of remote education between March and August 2020 will not impact the 'quality of education' judgement](#)
6. [Ofsted will not use teacher assessed grades from 2020 and 2021](#)
7. [Inspectors will pay close attention to how safeguarding approaches have been adapted](#)
8. [Attendance between March 2020 and March 2021 will not impact Ofsted's judgement](#)
9. [Inspectors look at how school leaders supported the school community throughout the coronavirus pandemic](#)
10. [Inspectors will gather evidence about the use of catch-up funding](#)
11. [Inspectors will consider EYFS disapplications in early years settings](#)
12. [Coronavirus will not be the sole factor in driving inspection judgements](#)

Read on to learn more about each key point.



All the inspection remit handbooks have been updated

Ofsted has an inspection handbook for each of the following remits:

- Registered early years provision ('[Early years inspection handbook for Ofsted registered provision](#)')
- Maintained schools and academies ('[School inspection handbook](#)')
- Non-association independent schools ('[Non-association independent schools handbook](#)')
- Further education and skills ('[Further education and skills handbook](#)')

There is also the '[School inspection handbook: section 8](#)'. All of the remit handbooks and the section 8 handbook have been updated, mainly to reflect additional considerations for inspectors when inspecting settings during the coronavirus pandemic. This article will primarily focus on key changes to the 'School inspection handbook'. Please note: the section 8

handbook refers users to the 'School inspection handbook' to view additional information on coronavirus considerations.

Ofsted has also updated the EIF; however, the changes are minor and just reflect that the remit handbooks have been updated.



Inspections will mostly be carried out on site

Ofsted has confirmed that inspections will be carried out on site, but that it may be practical to carry out some elements of the inspection remotely, e.g. to involve pupils, parents and governors who cannot attend the school site. Any remote elements of the inspection will be agreed with the headteacher at the start of the inspection.



The impact of coronavirus will be discussed during the preparation phone call

During the preparation phone call with the headteacher, the lead inspector will seek to understand the specific impact coronavirus has had on the school community and how school leaders responded to the situation. How the school implemented the curriculum remotely will also be discussed and the lead inspector will ask whether any elements of remote education remain in place at the time of inspection.

The lead inspector and the headteacher will also agree coronavirus safety protocols that the inspection team will follow. Due to the additional points that need to be covered, Ofsted has advised that the call may last longer than 90 minutes.



Inspectors will look at how schools have identified pupils' learning gaps

Ofsted recognises that between March and July 2020, schools were not required to provide full education to all pupils due to coronavirus and may not have been doing so. Throughout an inspection, inspectors will seek to understand how the school adapted and prioritised the curriculum from September 2020. Inspectors will explore how the school implemented the curriculum remotely and will pay close attention to how schools have identified pupils' learning gaps and new starting points and how these have been responded to in curriculum planning.



The quality of remote education between March and August 2020 will not impact the 'quality of education' judgement

Ofsted has stated that it does not have a preferred model for remote education and that the quality of remote education between March and August 2020 will not impact its judgement on the school's quality of education.

Inspectors will discuss the decisions that school leaders have made in relation to remote education and how they have been implemented. Inspectors may also discuss remote education with teachers, parents and pupils and review completed work and teaching materials. If a school is still delivering remote education, inspectors may observe remote teaching and review materials.



Ofsted will not use teacher assessed grades from 2020 and 2021

Ofsted has confirmed that it will not use teacher assessed grades from 2020 and 2021 when making judgements under 'quality of education'.

Inspectors will consider any available external data; however, they will be mindful about the age of the data, especially around statutory assessment and qualifications, when making judgements. Inspectors will not expect or accept internal school data either instead of or in addition to published data.



Inspectors will pay close attention to how safeguarding approaches have been adapted

Inspectors will focus on how school leaders adapted their safeguarding approaches during the coronavirus pandemic to make sure that vulnerable pupils were prioritised for on-site education and safeguarding procedures remained effective for all pupils, including those who were learning from home. Inspectors will also discuss how safeguarding arrangements have changed over time due to the pandemic and how school leaders have ensured they remain effective.



Attendance between March 2020 and March 2021 will not impact Ofsted's judgement

Attendance patterns will be discussed during an inspection to understand how coronavirus has impacted the school; however, attendance between March 2020 and March 2021 will not impact Ofsted's judgement of a school. Inspectors will consider the school's context and the steps leaders have taken to ensure the best possible attendance rates since March 2021.



Inspectors will look at how school leaders supported the school community throughout the coronavirus pandemic

Inspectors may look at a number of areas when trying to understand how school leaders have supported the school community, including the following:

- How remote education was implemented and monitored and how staff were prepared for remote education
- How vulnerable pupils were kept safe and prioritised for on-site education
- How parents were kept up-to-date with developments and changes
- How coronavirus-related staff absences impacted on the running of the school
- How staff and pupils' wellbeing have been supported

A number of coronavirus-related points have been added to the 'good' criteria under the 'leadership and management' judgement, e.g. managing staff workload proactively in response to coronavirus.



Inspectors will gather evidence about the use of catch-up funding

The 'School inspection handbook' confirms that inspectors will gather evidence about the use of coronavirus catch-up funding, alongside the pupil premium. Inspectors will focus on:

- The level of funding received by the school in the current academic year and levels of pupil premium received in previous years.
- How leaders and governors have spent the funding, their rationale for this spending, and its intended impact.
- The learning and progress of disadvantaged pupils, as shown by published outcomes data.

Inspectors will consider EYFS disapplications in early years settings

Inspectors will consider any circumstances where disapplications of the EYFS requirements are applicable and where the setting has used 'reasonable endeavours' to meet the existing learning and development requirements.

When determining inspection judgements, inspectors will take account of all failures to meet the EYFS requirements, even where they have been modified. If inspectors judge the setting not to have an acceptable standard of care and/or quality of education, the specific early years judgement and overall effectiveness will be 'inadequate'.

Coronavirus will not be the sole factor in driving inspection judgements

The 'School inspection handbook' states that a school will be 'inadequate' under a particular judgement if one of more of the 'inadequate' criteria applies, unless that criteria applies solely due to the impact of coronavirus.

What's next?

- Read out [Up-to-speed on: Ofsted Inspections in 2020/2021](#) to find out what inspection activity is taking place for the rest of this academic year and beyond.
- We will be updating our 3-Minute Reads on the [full inspection handbook](#) and [section 8 handbook](#) shortly, which will break down all the changes to the handbooks.

Bibliography

Ofsted (2021) 'Education inspection framework' <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>> [Accessed: 20 April 2021]

Ofsted (2021) 'Ofsted: coronavirus (COVID-19) rolling update' <<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofsted-coronavirus-covid-19-rolling-update>>

Ofsted (2021) 'School inspection handbook' <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif>> [Accessed: 20 April 2021]