

SECTION 8 INSPECTIONS FROM SEPTEMBER 2021

The Section 8 inspection handbook was updated for September 2021. www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-8-school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook-section-8-for-september-2021 This document explains the different types of S8 inspection, recent changes to the process, and circumstances in which it may convert to a full S5 inspection. **Changes to the latest S8 inspection handbook are shown in coloured font.**

DIFFERENT TYPES OF S8 INSPECTION

- 1/ Schools that were judged as good **or outstanding** at their last full inspection are usually notified between 10.30am and 2pm on the day before a S8 inspection begins. The inspection will take place over 2 days.
- 2/ Schools that require improvement, have serious weaknesses, or are in special measures, **will be notified the day before the monitoring inspection occurs** which lasts for 1 day. (Schools were previously given up to 2 days' notice.)
- 3/ Schools may have a 'no formal designation inspection' due to issues brought to Ofsted's attention. They may be notified on the day before the S8 inspection or have 15 minutes notice. Inspection will usually last for 2 days.
- 4/ Schools for which Ofsted has serious concerns about behaviour will be given 15 minutes notice of an unannounced behaviour inspection. The inspection will last for 1 day.

REQUIREMENTS AND MYTHS FOR ALL INSPECTIONS

See paragraphs 68 to 73 for full details about inspection requirements and myths, most of which are summarised below: www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook#before-the-inspection

Inspectors will consider how well leaders have designed and implemented the curriculum but there are no set requirements. Statements of intent for each subject aren't expected. Ofsted does not have preferred models of remote education, requirements to use specific digital platforms, or to monitor pupils' use of the internet.

Self-evaluation should be useful for school improvement. It doesn't require a particular format or be written for Ofsted. Schools don't need to carry out a certain number of lesson observations or use the evaluation schedule to grade teaching. Inspectors will not grade individual lessons or provide evidence to be used by school for performance management or capability proceedings.

Schools are not asked to prepare documents for Ofsted beyond the pupil premium strategy. There are no requirements to provide information about spending and progress for individual pupils who are eligible for the PP. Analysis of within-class or within-school attainment gaps for PP and their peers is not expected.

Ofsted doesn't advocate certain approaches to lesson planning, marking, feedback, assessment or recording pupil achievements. There is no requirement to provide inspectors with lesson plans, tracking data or predictions of progress and attainment. Inspectors don't expect a certain frequency or quantity of work in pupils' books, or to be provided with photographic evidence of pupils' work. Teaching approaches should be appropriate to the circumstances and promote learning. Schools make these decisions and senior leaders should be able to justify their reasons.

Inspectors don't expect schools to use a particular format for performance management. Headteacher objectives do not have to include the proportion of good and outstanding teaching. Schools don't need to collect evidence against the sub-headings of the teachers' standards or set appraisal targets predicting pupil achievement. Ofsted doesn't ask for pay details of teachers who are observed or anonymised lists of staff who have met thresholds for pay progression.

Ofsted does not expect schools to keep staff records in a set format as long as legal requirements are met. Schools do not need to apply retrospectively for DBS and other pre-employment checks for staff appointed before, and continuously employed since, the introduction of DBS requirements. Ofsted does not have set requirements for site security such as always expecting a perimeter fence to be in place.

APPLIES TO ALL TYPES OF S8 INSPECTION

COVID: Inspectors will consider the disruption caused by COVID and the response of leaders; this will be taken into account when evaluating schools. www.gov.uk/guidance/inspecting-schools-guide-for-maintained-and-academy-schools

Expectations of conduct for inspectors and school staff: www.gov.uk/guidance/conduct-during-ofsted-inspections

Parent leaflet and guide to inspection: www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspections-a-guide-for-parents

Schools can ask to defer a S8 inspection when they are notified but it is only likely to be granted in exceptional circumstances. **COVID restrictions may be a relevant factor.** www.gov.uk/guidance/deferring-ofsted-inspections

First day of inspection: Inspectors do not arrive on site before 8am. They will show identity badges on arrival and ask to see the headteacher who can check their identities by calling Ofsted on **0300 123 4234**.

Safeguarding: Inspectors will always review how pupils are kept safe and check if a safeguarding culture is established. They will ask if there have been incidents since the last inspection and record school's response. Arrangements should be in place to protect pupils online and offline, to identify those needing early help or at risk, to secure support or make a referral to external services. Schools need procedures for safe recruitment and to manage allegations about adults. It shouldn't be assumed that pupils don't suffer harassment or online sexual abuse, even if there are no reports; a whole-school approach is necessary, including a behaviour policy with appropriate sanctions, pastoral support and a planned curriculum for relationships and health education. If safeguarding isn't effective, the S8 inspection converts to a full inspection. Inspectors and schools should be familiar with the following guidance:

- Keeping children safe in education 2021: www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2 Part 1 of KCSIE can be downloaded separately and should be read by all staff.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2
- Positive environments where children can flourish: www.gov.uk/government/publications/positive-environments-where-children-can-flourish
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused: www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children: www.gov.uk/government/publications/sexual-violence-and-sexual-harassment-between-children-in-schools-and-colleges

Concerns and complaints: If the headteacher has concerns during inspection, they should be raised immediately with the lead inspector. If an issue can't be resolved, the complaints procedure is at: www.gov.uk/complain-ofsted-report NAHT members can ring their helpline on 0300 30 30 333 (option 1) to discuss the matter. www.naht.org.uk/

All S8 inspections end with a feedback meeting, led by the lead inspector and usually attended by the headteacher, senior leaders, chair and governors/trustees, clerk, LA representative or academy sponsor, and the CEO of a MAT.

After inspection: The lead inspector prepares the report which should be consistent with the final feedback. It is quality assured before a draft is sent to school, **usually within 18 working days**. The draft is confidential to staff, as decided by school, and governors/trustees. **School has 5 working days to comment on the draft report. Schools should receive the final report within 30 working days** and, if there hasn't been a complaint, it will be published on Ofsted's website 3 working days later. Schools should inform parents that the report has been published.

Outcomes: Section 8 inspections don't provide graded judgements against the evaluation schedule. If concerns arise, it can convert to a full inspection in which a school may be awarded any grade from outstanding to inadequate.

Quality assurance: Lead inspectors are responsible for the quality of the team's work. HMI may visit schools or review inspection evidence. Schools are invited to take part in post-inspection evaluation of the process.

SECTION 8 - GOOD AND OUTSTANDING SCHOOLS

Overview and timing: Good schools and outstanding schools may have a 2-day S8 inspection every 4 years roughly unless selected for a full inspection. (S8 inspections last 1 day for schools with 150 or fewer pupils but 2 days for special schools regardless of size.) Outstanding schools are likely to have a S8 inspection if the last full inspection was after Sept 2015. The purpose of a S8 inspection is checking whether overall effectiveness is unchanged. It starts with an assumption that school remains good/outstanding and tests this through activities and a constructive, challenging, professional dialogue between the inspectors and school. Due to COVID, S8 inspections may be up to 6 terms later than expected. Inspectors don't attempt a full inspection in a shorter timeframe; instead, the focus is mainly on the quality of education and reviewing aspects of behaviour, personal development, and safeguarding.

Inspection outcomes are based on the framework in place at the time of visiting schools. New judgements will reflect school's performance against the current framework which has more demanding criteria for outstanding.

Notification: Schools are usually called between 10.30am and 2pm on the day before inspection. Ofsted's administrator speaks to the headteacher or the most senior staff member available. The administrator sends an email with notification of inspection, a letter to inform parents, and links to online questionnaires for staff and pupils. Schools should take reasonable steps to inform all registered parents of pupils about the inspection. The letter for parents explains how to use Parent View and other ways to contact the inspectors. Schools should encourage parents to complete Parent View by placing a link on the website. If parents raise serious issues, inspectors will discuss them with school, but do not investigate complaints. If the Parent View response rate is low, inspectors may take other steps to gather their views. They will consider the results of parental surveys by school. Schools should encourage staff and pupils to complete their questionnaires by 3pm on the first day of inspection.

Phone call: The lead inspector speaks to the headteacher on the day before inspection which may take 90 minutes, or longer if detailed discussions of COVID's impact are needed. There could be 1 or 2 phone calls with a break in-between. The headteacher isn't expected to have specific details or evidence to hand, and if they want a colleague to join the call, inspectors should try to accommodate this. The conversation is intended to help the inspector and headteacher build a professional relationship and inform focus areas for the inspection. There are 2 areas to discuss:

1/ A longer conversation about educational issues and COVID's impact on development plans; Ofsted recognises the demands and disruption faced by schools. The headteacher is asked about school's context, challenges, current performance, and progress since the last inspection including any areas for improvement previously identified. The inspector seeks the headteacher's view of strengths and weaknesses, particularly for the curriculum, how teaching supports pupils to learn the curriculum, standards achieved, and pupils' behaviour, attitudes and personal development. Other issues may be raised to plan the inspection schedule and allow time for leaders and governors to present evidence about school's current performance, key improvements, the ability to accurately identify weaknesses and areas for development, and their capacity to move the school forward.

2/ A shorter discussion about practical arrangements including safety protocols for COVID. This includes informing parents about inspection and the importance of Parent View, checking if school has SEND/nursery provision or manages after-school clubs, and asking if any pupils attend off-site provision. Meetings are arranged with staff, the chair and governors/trustees, and members of the MAT if relevant. Some meetings may be carried out by video/phone. Senior leaders are invited to participate in inspection activities and team meetings. The inspector checks governance arrangements as there are many models and schemes of delegation. A meeting or phone call is requested with a representative of the LA, diocese, sponsor or responsible body. Schools may ask questions or raise concerns such as perceived conflicts of interest. The inspector confirms the information that is needed from school, and it will help their preparation if schools can provide the details as soon as possible.

Information: School should make the following information available by 8am on the first day of inspection:

- The single central record.
- School timetable, times of day, and any previously planned changes during the inspection period.
- A staff list **which indicates early career teachers**, any staff in school usually employed elsewhere in a MAT, details of staff absences, and if any teachers can't be observed, for example due to capability procedures.
- Records and analysis of exclusions, incidents of poor behaviour, bullying, racism, discrimination, derogatory language, sexual harassment, and pupils removed from the school roll.
- Up-to-date attendance data including analysis by pupil groups.
- Referrals to the designated safeguarding lead, any concerns passed on to the LA with brief details of the resolution. A list of pupils with open cases and/or a multi-agency plan with LA children's services.
- Self-evaluation summary and any external evaluation reports of school.
- School improvement plan and any planning to set out a longer-term vision including the school or trust's strategy.
- Documents about governors/trustees' work and priorities; schemes of delegation for an academy within a MAT.
- Maps and practical information, i.e. wi-fi access

Preparation: The lead inspector may contact school again to clarify matters during their preparation; for example, if details are missing on the school's website. They will review details held about school such as the inspection data summary report, inspection reports, surveys or monitoring letters, complaints and warning notices. Inspectors will check published information available from the DfE, Education and Skills Funding Agency, and regional school commissioners. They review the inspection findings of LA's children services and local area SEND provision. The inspector devises a timetable based on their analysis and conversations with school leaders. The timetable may be adapted as new evidence becomes available or other issues emerge.

The quality of education is the main focus of inspection to check whether it is line with the evaluation schedule for good/outstanding. Inspectors evaluate curriculum aims and how well it is sequenced and structured. Curriculum implementation is checked to see if it matches school's intentions and is delivered in a well-sequenced series of lessons, providing opportunities for pupils to progress through the curriculum. **(Transitional arrangements allow schools until March 2022 to fully design the curriculum.)** Inspectors evaluate how well all pupils, including those with SEND, gain knowledge and skills across the curriculum, achieving well and ready for the next stage of education. They consider how well reading and early maths are taught in EYFS and KS1 as part of a broad curriculum. A deep dive of reading is carried out and may occur in maths. The range of subjects taught at KS2 is explored and there is a focus on the teaching of reading and how pupils access the curriculum by reading fluently with comprehension. Inspectors check if the curriculum has been narrowed inappropriately, allowing for the school's context, **use of remote education, and COVID.**

Inspectors check that teachers have good subject knowledge, present content clearly, check for understanding, identify misconceptions and provide clear feedback to pupils **including remotely where applicable.** Any provision for two- and three-year-olds will be observed to assess if staff understand young children's typical development and characteristics, teaching through the 3 prime areas of learning and meeting their needs.

Criteria for judging the quality of education in a section 8 inspection are taken from the evaluation schedule at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook#quality-of-education

Behaviour: Inspectors check if school has high expectations for behaviour with approaches applied consistently and fairly by staff and having a positive impact on pupils' conduct. Staff should ensure pupils follow routines, minimising low-level distractions and avoiding disruption to lessons and the daily life of school. Inspectors consider whether leaders, staff and pupils have created a positive environment in which bullying isn't accepted. If poor behaviour, discrimination and derogatory language occur, they should be dealt with quickly and appropriately, and not allowed to spread. Serious behaviour concerns could mean the S8 inspection converts to a full inspection.

Personal development: Inspectors review aspects of pupils' personal development and school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development without making a judgement against all of the criteria in the evaluation schedule. **Where the usual opportunities for personal development were disrupted by COVID, inspectors will consider how school has found alternative approaches since reopening to all pupils in March 2021.**

Leadership and management: Inspectors review national progress and attainment data and will ask senior leaders for their interpretation of educational performance. Inspectors do not ask for internal progress and attainment data about pupils. Inspectors consider how leaders engage with staff to account for the main pressures on them; this includes recognising the limitations of assessment and not using it in a way that causes unnecessary burdens. **COVID is likely to have affected assessment arrangements and inspectors will seek to understand how staff are being supported to reduce the risk of excessive workload.** Inspectors consider the extent to which staff are free from bullying and harassment. Serious concerns could mean the S8 inspection converts to a full inspection.

Feedback meeting: The inspection ends with a brief feedback meeting that usually includes the headteacher, senior leaders, the chair and governors/trustees, clerk, the CEO of a MAT, a LA representative for maintained schools or an academy sponsor. During feedback, the lead inspector clarifies:

- whether the school remains good/outstanding and if safeguarding is effective.
- judgements made and any recommendations for improvement.
- the range of evidence collected.
- that the main findings explained orally during feedback may differ from the text of the report; this is because oral feedback is for the school whilst the report is written for parents.
- that the main findings are confidential although they may be shared with staff and governors. They should only be shared when the final inspection report is received.
- the procedure for making a complaint about the inspection.
- the process for publishing the section 8 inspection report.

Outcomes and next steps: There are 4 outcomes for section 8 inspections of good and outstanding schools which have different implications with Ofsted. The report will always report on the effectiveness of safeguarding.

1) School continues to be good/**outstanding**. (The most common outcome.) School receives this information during the final feedback meeting. They will normally receive another section 8 inspection approximately every 4 years.

2) School remains good with sufficient evidence of moving to outstanding. The lead inspector informs school that within 1 to 2 years, there will be a full inspection which may change its overall effectiveness. This allows the school to consolidate strong practice and continue improvements. There is a discussion about areas of provision that may be a useful focus for the next inspection which is recorded in Ofsted's evidence. The timing is decided by Ofsted's regional director although schools may request an early inspection. The report will confirm that the school remains good and highlight reasons why inspectors believe the quality of education is better than good.

3) School remains good/**outstanding**, but a full inspection may not have reached the same judgement in the lead inspector's judgement and there will be a full inspection, usually within 1 to 2 years. There will be a discussion with school about subjects, themes, or areas of provision that may be a useful focus for the next inspection. The inspection report will explain that the school remains good, what it is doing well and what needs to improve.

4) Evidence suggests a good/**outstanding** school may be inadequate in one or more key areas due to serious concerns about the quality of education, curriculum breadth (**allowing for COVID catch-up plans**), behaviour, safeguarding, or off-rolling. If so, the S8 inspection converts to a full inspection, usually within 48 hours. **For outstanding schools only, the S8 inspection converts to a full inspection if it may be declining to requires improvement.** When an inspection converts, it doesn't determine the outcome, and schools may be graded from inadequate to outstanding. If an HMI was leading the S8 inspection, they will continue with the full inspection. If it was led by an inspector, they may continue, or an HMI may take the lead. More inspectors may join the team to help reach a full set of judgements.

Relevant section of S8 inspection handbook: www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-8-school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook-section-8#section-8-inspections-of-good-and-outstanding-schools

SECTION 8 - SCHOOLS THAT REQUIRE IMPROVEMENT

Overview and timing: Schools that require improvement have another full inspection within 30 months of the original report's publication, **but it may be up to 6 terms later due to COVID**. The timing is at the discretion of the regional director although headteachers may write to them to raise issues about school's context and the timing of inspection. Schools don't need to write a separate action plan but should amend existing plans to address the areas for improvement. After the first RI judgement, schools don't usually have a S8 inspection, but they are likely after 2 or more successive RI judgements. The inspection usually occurs between 12 and 30 months after the last full inspection **but it may be up to 6 terms later**. It lasts for one day and is usually led by an HMI. The regional director may decide that a monitoring inspection isn't necessary for some schools; this could be when leadership and management was judged good at the S5 inspection, or there has been a recent change of school leadership.

Notification: **The lead inspector calls school the day before a monitoring visit; (previously, schools were given up to 2 days' notice.)** If the headteacher is unavailable, they will speak to the most senior member of staff. The inspector should seek to ensure that the headteacher will be present for the inspection and will arrange to speak to the CEO of a MAT, or an equivalent role where school is part of a wider structure. School will be asked to inform the governing body and LA/responsible bodies about the monitoring visit as the inspector will wish to speak to them. Once the arrangements are confirmed, Ofsted emails school with formal notification of the inspection.

Phone call: During an initial call, the lead inspector explains the purpose of a monitoring visit and asks if there are issues to be aware of, i.e. timetable changes, **COVID measures**. There will be a discussion about how aspects of the quality of education are improving. The inspector and leader decide on activities to test out school's assertions and gather evidence of the impact of actions taken by leaders and governors since the full inspection. The inspector asks about other areas which have been a focus for school improvement, for example attendance, and progress made over time. All requests to defer an inspection will follow Ofsted's policy (see page 2) which considers the headteacher's presence important for monitoring schools that require improvement. It **may** be deferred if the headteacher is out of school, unless the absence is likely to be prolonged, for example due to ill health.

Preparation: The lead inspector's preparation includes reviewing school's inspection history, particularly the areas for improvement, recent performance data, Parent View responses, school's self-evaluation summary which should have specific information about the curriculum and governance, details about the school's curriculum on their website, any complaints made to Ofsted, and if warning notices have been issued.

Activities: Inspectors will meet with the headteacher, senior leaders, chair and governors/trustees, and the CEO or LA representatives to discuss improvements since the full inspection. Inspectors need evidence about progress against key areas to ensure leaders and governors are acting effectively, **particularly for getting back on track following COVID**, rather than focusing on peripheral matters. Inspectors review the impact of support for school as well as the challenge from external partners. They consider action plans, but this isn't the main focus, which is ensuring pupils receive a good quality of education and an effective curriculum, **including remote learning where applicable**. Inspectors use criteria from the full inspection handbook to evaluate the quality of education. www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook#quality-of-education

Inspectors have discussions with staff, observe learning and behaviour, scrutinise pupils' work, talk to pupils about their progress, and review minutes of GB meetings. They consider submissions on Parent View, and, if possible, talks to parents. Inspectors are seeking to identify any barriers that are preventing school from moving to good or outstanding. There will be a discussion with the headteacher about the next steps for school before the inspector reflects on the evidence, drafts the monitoring report and considers if further challenge or support is required. The inspector decides whether to recommend that the school is ready for a full re-inspection.

Feedback meeting: The inspection ends with a feedback meeting for senior leaders and representatives of the governors/trustees including the CEO or equivalent role. If there are concerns, such as the effectiveness of leadership and governance, or a lack of urgency in tackling weaknesses, the inspector shares this with school and makes recommendations for more urgent action or intervention. If the concerns are serious or hadn't been identified previously, Ofsted may bring forward the next full inspection. In this situation, the inspector will arrange to speak to the governing board/board of trustees, or as many governors/trustees as possible; this may occur after the inspection with an option for video or phone calls. In exceptional circumstances, due to immediate concerns, the S8 inspection may convert a full inspection, usually within 48 hours, with more inspectors deployed. The S8 inspection may also convert to a full inspection, usually within 4 weeks, where school is improving.

Outcomes: The key judgement is whether school is, or isn't, taking effective action to tackle areas for improvement from the full inspection and is on track to becoming good. The inspector may recommend a full inspection is brought forward if there has been good progress or may decide that school needs more time and recommend the full inspection occurs later in the 30-month window. A letter is published by Ofsted about the monitoring visit which covers: school's context and evidence gathered; whether areas for improvement are being tackled effectively; the impact of work to improve school which always includes the quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of leadership and governance; the effectiveness of action taken and progress over time; the suitability of plans to address weaknesses and any recommendations; whether school is taking effective action to ensure pupils receive a good quality of education and develop an effective curriculum; and any further priorities for improvement arising from the visit. The letter explains any barriers preventing the school from becoming good.

Next steps: Within 30 months, RI schools are re-inspected **although it may occur up to 6 terms later**. If the full inspection finds that school hasn't improved to good, the lead inspector will decide whether it continues to require improvement or may be inadequate. If key aspects of performance remain less than good but school has made improvements in some areas with signs of a general upward trend, the judgement is likely to be RI again; this means that school will have another monitoring visit and full inspection within the next 30 months; (this cycle of inspections continues after each successive judgement of RI.) Otherwise, school may be judged as inadequate.

Relevant section of S8 inspection handbook: www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-8-school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook-section-8#monitoring-inspections-for-schools-judged-requires-improvement

SECTION 8 - INADEQUATE SCHOOLS

Overview and timing: A school found to have serious weaknesses or placed in special measures is classed as a 'school causing concern.' www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-causing-concern--2 Maintained schools receive an academy order and academies may be required to join a trust or be rebrokered. In these cases, schools will become new sponsored academies and the trust or LA needs to prepare a statement of action about facilitating the transition. Schools do not usually have S8 inspections during transition unless the process hasn't been finalised after 9 months; (it can occur within 3 to 6 months if there were serious safeguarding concerns.) After opening as a sponsored academy, the first full inspection usually occurs in the third year of opening, **but this may be up to 6 terms later due to COVID**. The sponsored academy may have a S8 inspection beforehand in exceptional circumstances.

Some academies that are judged inadequate may not be required to join a trust or be rebrokered. Instead, they will be monitored by Ofsted and have a S5 inspection within 30 months **although this may be up to 6 terms later**. Maintained nursery schools found to be inadequate are monitored by Ofsted but don't receive an academy order.

A school found to be inadequate isn't required to write a separate action plan. They should amend existing plans or prepare a plan to tackle the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted. The LA or trust board must submit a statement of action to HMCI within 10 working days of school receiving the inspection report. The statement will be reviewed by inspectors who provide feedback on its fitness for purpose within 10 working days. If the statement isn't fit for purpose, the LA or trust will be informed and asked to address the issues urgently and resubmit a revised version. Inspectors re-evaluate the revised statement and confirm its fitness for purpose.

The first monitoring inspection of a school found to be inadequate usually occurs within 3 to 9 months of the S5 inspection report being published. If, after a programme of S8 inspections lasting up to 30 months, the school has not been removed from a category of concern, it must have another full inspection. A school in special measures may have up to five S8 inspections, but the aim is removing school from a category of concern within 18 to 24 months. Schools that remain in special measures for 30 months should be the exception.

Notification: **The lead inspector calls school the day before a monitoring visit; (previously, schools were given up to 2 days' notice.)** If the headteacher is unavailable, they will speak to the most senior member of staff. The inspector will arrange to speak to the CEO of a MAT, or an equivalent role where school is part of a wider structure. Schools are asked to inform the governing body and LA/trust about the visit as the inspector will wish to speak to them. Once the arrangements are confirmed, Ofsted's administrator emails school with formal notification and a link to an online questionnaire if the inspector wants to gather staff views. Staff are encouraged to submit the questionnaire by 3pm on the first day of inspection. All requests to defer an inspection follow Ofsted's policy (see page 2). The headteacher's absence is not usually a reason to defer monitoring inspections of schools that are judged inadequate.

Phone call: During an initial call, the lead inspector explains the purpose of a monitoring visit and asks if there are issues to be aware of, i.e. timetable changes, **COVID measures**. The inspector and leader will discuss how aspects of the quality of education are improving and agree activities to test out the school's assertions. If there are other areas for improvement that have been a focus for leaders, for example attendance or behaviour, inspection activities to review progress will also be agreed.

Preparation: The lead inspector's preparation includes reviewing school's inspection history, particularly the areas for improvement and any subsequent monitoring reports, to build a picture of what has been happening to the school over time. They will consider recent performance data, Parent View responses, school's self-evaluation summary which should have specific information about the curriculum and governance, details about the school's curriculum on their website, any complaints made to Ofsted, and warning notices if they have been issued. Inspectors will also review inspection findings of the LA's children services and local area SEND provision.

Focus: Inspectors will consider school's response to the inadequate judgement, evaluating how much progress has been made **whilst taking account of COVID**, and how well placed it is to move out of the category of concern. Areas for improvement identified in the full inspection are the main focus, but if other significant issues arise, they

will be monitored and reported upon. The work of governors/trustees will be assessed to see if they are making an effective contribution to leadership and management and school's performance. Inspector will consider: whether school's actions are addressing the key issues to make rapid improvements; how effectively school has adapted existing plans to meet the new challenges; the impact that governors have on improvements; whether leaders and governors are taking action to give pupils a better quality of education and an effective curriculum; if leaders are strengthening school's capacity to improve and ability to make a significant impact on all weaknesses; and if leaders' actions are improving pupil progress and raising attainment, particularly if it was low previously.

Activities: During the first monitoring visit, inspectors will meet the headteacher, the chair of the GB/board of trustees and as many governors/trustees as possible, a representative of the LA, or the CEO of a MAT. Activities are planned to gather evidence of action taken and impact against the areas for improvement. Activities may include talking to pupils, meeting staff, reviewing documentation, reviewing pupils' work and lesson visits. The inspector evaluates how well the statement of action and improvement plans are being implemented. They must review the impact of external support and challenge, particularly in relation to the statement of action. If school is taking effective action and making good progress, the monitoring visit may convert to a full inspection.

Feedback: At the end of a monitoring visit, the inspector gives verbal feedback about evidence gathered, the effectiveness of school's actions and progress against areas for improvement, the impact of support for school improvement, and the fitness for purpose of the statement of action and improvement plans. The inspector only identifies new priorities to monitor in future if they are essential. If the inspection hasn't converted to a S5 inspection, school is informed that it remains in a category of concern. If it has successfully converted, the lead inspector notifies Ofsted's regional duty desk that school is no longer a cause for concern. The inspector will explain that the monitoring report may differ from verbal feedback although the judgements won't change unless quality assurance deems it appropriate. **A school in special measures will be told whether they may employ early career teachers** although trainee teachers on employment-based training programmes may be appointed.

Outcomes and next steps: The key judgement is whether leaders are/aren't taking effective action towards the removal of serious weaknesses or special measures. Schools receive a monitoring report and covering letter to be published on Ofsted's website. It explains strengths and weaknesses in the actions taken by leaders and governors to secure progress against priorities and ensure pupils receive a good quality of education and an effective curriculum. New issues will only be identified if they are essential to school's development, for example, concerns about governance or use of the pupil premium. Any significant changes in school's context are reported. The first monitoring report includes a judgement on the fitness for purpose of the statement of action and improvement plan.

A school taking effective action is on course to have serious weaknesses removed within 30 months; otherwise it may continue in this category, or require special measures, when the full inspection takes place. These issues will contribute to Ofsted's decision about whether to carry out further monitoring inspections. If they do take place, the same process is followed and the S8 report will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of school's actions towards removal of serious weaknesses. Leaders need to demonstrate that school's capacity to improve is strengthening and they are having an impact on accelerating pupils' progress and raising attainment, particularly in schools where attainment is low. Inspectors must consider the impact of external support and challenge for school.

'Serious weaknesses' may also be referred to as 'requires significant improvement.'

A school taking effective action is on course to move out of special measures within 18 to 24 months. Further monitoring inspections will report on the impact of the trust's support, along with external support and challenge for school improvement. **If school cannot employ early career teachers and isn't due a S8 inspection, they must write to the regional director seeking permission with reasons for the request.** A decision that school no longer requires special measures used evidence from previous monitoring visits, the rate of improvement, school's ability to meet the needs of all pupils, and the capacity for sustained improvement without over-relying on external support or one or two individuals within the school. The decision to remove special measures is not subject to further moderation.

Relevant section of S8 inspection handbook: www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-8-school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook-section-8#monitoring-inspections-for-schools-judged-inadequate

SECTION 8 - NO FORMAL DESIGNATION

Overview: Schools that aren't in a category of concern may be inspected if significant issues are brought to Ofsted's attention, for instance, concerns about pupils' safety, a serious breakdown in leadership, or declining standards. Ofsted reviews other information held about school before the regional director decides whether to carry out an inspection. S8 inspections with no formal designation focus sharply on the specific issues without reviewing all of the relevant section of the evaluation schedule. They are often led by an HMI, regardless of school's size, and typically last for 2 days. The size of the inspection team is based on the complexity of the issues brought to Ofsted's attention. The HMI will brief other inspectors about the focus of the monitoring visit and the key lines of enquiry.

School leaders and governors are responsible for the effectiveness of safeguarding, and governors must ensure that statutory safeguarding requirements are being met. Safeguarding concerns may raise questions about the effectiveness of leadership and governors' ability to hold the school to account; the inspection will focus on both aspects and go into more depth if necessary. The lead inspector determines the precise focus of inspection and leaders will be made aware of this from the start. An inspection may begin with a focus on safeguarding, but it may widen to cover leadership and management or other aspects of the provision where appropriate. If the inspectors are sufficiently concerned about the overall standard of education, it may convert to a full inspection.

Notification: Occasionally, the inspection is conducted without notice with the HMI calling school about 15 minutes before arriving on site. However, most schools are informed the day before an inspection begins, in which case the HMI may arrange a second call with the headteacher. The HMI must clarify the inspection's purpose during the initial call with the headteacher, or, if it is conducted without notice, explain the reasons at the earliest opportunity after arriving at school. Schools aren't required to inform parents about the inspection although the HMI should invite them to do so as it will give parents an opportunity to offer their opinions using Parent View. After the call, Ofsted confirms the inspection arrangements in a notification letter, or, if there is no prior notice, notification is provided by the HMI on arrival. Schools aren't required to provide information before the start of the inspection although they may choose to offer documents to the HMI.

If the inspection arises from a qualifying complaint to Ofsted, the HMI informs school that the focus will be on whole-school issues raised by the complaint rather than carrying out an investigation of the specific issue raised. They will not seek the views of parents about the particular complaint. If the complainant has asked for confidentiality, the HMI must take all practicable steps to ensure that their identity is not disclosed to the school.

Preparation: Inspectors review any qualifying complaint(s) received as well as issues raised by the investigation, other information including the previous S5 inspection report and S8 reports if they exist, the IDSR, information from the pre-inspection call with the headteacher, and any documents emailed to the HMI by the school.

Activities: The meeting at the start of the inspection may involve all of school's senior leaders although the headteacher may decide that a smaller meeting will limit interruptions to school routines. The meeting covers the inspection's focus and other issues about school. The headteacher and senior leaders must have an opportunity to explain school's position on the matters raised and identify where evidence may be found. The HMI will maintain an ongoing dialogue with the headteacher and senior leaders to ensure they understand any emerging issues; this means that feedback at the end of inspection, especially when it is challenging, shouldn't be a surprise. The types of activities and evidence sought are similar to a full inspection although it will depend on the issues being reviewed.

If the inspection focus is safeguarding, activities will strongly concentrate on the issue and related concerns from pre-inspection evidence. There will be reviews of the single central record, safeguarding policy, referrals to school's safeguarding lead and cases passed on to the LA designated officer and resolution, records of relevant staff training, and procedures for dealing with staffing issues. There will be a check of school's internet safety procedures, a review of the PSHE curriculum and links to pupils' safety and welfare, a review of persistent absence cases and

exclusions data, and any issues about poor pupil behaviour. Discussions will be held with pupils and staff, and parental views will be gathered using Parent View and by meetings with parents, if possible. Inspectors will consider other issues that affect care, safety or child protection which do not appear to have been addressed fully.

Feedback: The feedback meeting usually takes place at the end of the inspection. If concerns have been raised, they will be reported to school leaders at the meeting. The HMI and headteacher should discuss which members of staff, if any, will attend the feedback meeting if it may be challenging or raise sensitive issues. The feedback will cover the range of evidence gathered, findings about the issues that caused school to be inspected, and whether safeguarding is effective. The feedback should identify any strengths and areas for improvement in relation to safeguarding and the specific areas of focus for the inspection. The lead inspector will inform school that the text of the report may differ from the oral feedback.

Outcomes and next steps: Inspectors don't make judgements against all parts of the evaluation schedule for the areas of focus; they may make specific recommendations about what school needs to do to tackle the weaknesses in that area. However, if there are sufficient concerns against some core areas of the evaluation schedule, the HMI may convert to a section 5 inspection which provides graded judgements and a full inspection report. Alternatively, if any concerns identified are not serious concerns, the HMI may recommend that the next full inspection is brought forward. The timing would be decided by Ofsted's regional director.

Where safeguarding is, or becomes, a focus, of the inspection, the HMI will review all of the evidence and report whether safeguarding is effective. If there are relatively minor shortcomings and the school is able to resolve them on the day, inspectors can make an assessment that safeguarding is effective. If safeguarding is not effective and/or pupils are at risk, the lead inspector will carry out a section 5 inspection.

Relevant section of S8 inspection handbook: www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-8-school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook-section-8#no-formal-designation

SECTION 8 - UNANNOUNCED BEHAVIOUR INSPECTIONS

Overview: Ofsted may carry out an unannounced behaviour inspection of a school due to concerns about pupils' behaviour and attitudes. This could arise from previous inspection reports, parents' views, complaints, LA information, or exclusions and attendance data. Inspections are usually conducted by one inspector and last for one day. It judges the effectiveness of actions by leaders and governors, usually since the last inspection, to improve behaviour. Ofsted's approach is guided by research and inspection evidence about factors related to positive behaviour and attitudes in school. In the S8 handbook, these factors are:

- *a calm and orderly environment in the school and classroom which is essential for pupils to be able to learn.*
- *setting clear routines and expectations for pupils' behaviour for all aspects of school life, not just the classroom.*
- *a strong focus on attendance and punctuality to minimise disruption.*
- *clear and effective behaviour and attendance policies with clearly defined consequences that are applied consistently and fairly by all staff.*
- *pupils' motivation and positive attitudes to learning - as they are important predictors of attainment. Developing positive attitudes can have a longer-term impact on pupils' approach to learning tasks in later stages of education.*
- *a positive and respectful school culture in which staff know and care about pupils.*
- *an environment in which pupils feel safe, and in which bullying, discrimination and peer-on-peer abuse (online or face-to-face) are not accepted and are dealt with quickly, consistently and effectively whenever they occur.*

Notification: The inspector calls the school, 15 minutes before arrival, to announce the inspection to the headteacher, if available, or to another senior member of staff. If the call isn't answered, the inspector informs school on arrival. Arrangements for the day are made once the inspector is in school. Inspection begins around 8.15am but not before 8am. The inspector meets briefly with the headteacher before leaving to observe the start of the school day. Afterwards, they will meet again for a discussion and the headteacher will be informed whether the inspection is taking place because of a qualifying complaint.

Preparation: The lead inspector's preparation includes: reviewing comments about behaviour and attendance from the latest inspection reports; evaluating school's behaviour policy which should be available on the website; checking if any pupils attend alternative provision; analysing exclusion data, particularly repeated use of fixed-term exclusions or groups being affected disproportionately; reviewing the most up-to-date information about attendance and persistent absence, paying attention to data for pupil groups; checking for complaints about school. The lead inspector will decide on the key issues and lines of enquiry for the inspection although the focus may change on the day due to the evidence gathered.

Activities: The lead inspector meets with senior staff briefly to inform them of the key issues and lines of enquiry. Another meeting is arranged to discuss emerging findings and follow up issues. Meetings will not overlap with breaks, lunchtime, or the start and end of the school day as these must be observed. The types of activities that are usually carried out are shown at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-8-school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook-section-8#annex--inspection-activities-relating-to-behaviour Most activities focus on observing short parts of lessons and informal times of the day to evaluate behaviour and attitudes and school's culture. To ensure that typical behaviour is seen during the day, the inspector won't carry out joint observations with the headteacher or staff. A particular focus is placed on low-level disruption. Discussions take place with leaders, staff and pupils. There is at least one discussion with a group of pupils whose behaviour the school has helped to improve over time. The inspector may ask a senior member of staff to be present during scrutiny of school documents to answer any questions that arise.

Evidence is gathered about the impact of actions taken by leaders and governors so that inspectors are able to evaluate pupils' behaviour, the management of behaviour, and school's culture. Inspectors will consider any relevant issues from the previous inspection report about pupils' behaviour and whether these have been tackled effectively. If evidence gathered during the inspection shows behaviour, welfare and safety or other aspects of school may be inadequate, and pupils are at risk of harm, it may convert to a full inspection after discussion with Ofsted's duty desk.

Feedback meeting: As the inspector will observe pupils leaving school, the feedback meeting cannot take place before then. The inspector offers feedback to the headteacher, other senior staff as appropriate, the chair of the GB/board of trustees and as many governors/trustees as possible, the CEO of a MAT if applicable, and a representative from the LA or academy sponsor. The feedback will cover the judgements made and any recommendations for improvement, evidence collected, that the findings are confidential although they may be shared with staff and governors, the procedure for making a complaint about the inspection, and the process for publishing the S8 inspection report.

Outcomes and next steps: Inspectors judge the effectiveness of actions taken by leaders and governors since the last inspection to improve behaviour and secure positive attitudes to learning. The S8 report will include either:

- For schools where behaviour was previously judged to require improvement, whether leaders and managers have/haven't taken effective action to improve behaviour and secure consistently positive attitudes to learning.
- For schools where behaviour was previously judged to be good or outstanding, whether leaders and managers have/haven't taken effective action to maintain the high standards of behaviour and positive to learning.

The monitoring report should cover pupils' conduct, attitudes to learning, behaviour management, school culture and how it promotes good behaviour, how staff speak to pupils and parents and if they consistently reinforce the school's expectations of behaviour, and the way in which the headteacher and other leaders model the behaviour expected of all staff and provide them with support to promote good behaviour. The monitoring report will have recommendations for school about what needs to improve in managing pupils' behaviour. How well this is addressed will be followed up during the school's next inspection.

Relevant section of S8 inspection handbook: www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-8-school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook-section-8#unannounced-behaviour-inspections