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Guidance

Summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts

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Introduction

This guidance is designed to support inspectors in carrying out summary evaluations of multi-academy trusts (MATs). It sets out the process and range of evidence-gathering activities that inspectors undertake from the start of the summary evaluation until the publication of the summary evaluation letter. Summary evaluations are carried out in line with the policy agreed by the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted.

The summary evaluation explores the extent to which the MAT is delivering a high quality of education and improving pupils' achievement. The process set out in this guidance reflects our long-standing approach to summary evaluations of MATs, but also includes some refinements to the previous approach which are intended to improve the process.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has the duty to inspect academies at prescribed intervals under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/section/5>). Further, under section 8(2) of the same Act, HMCI has the power to inspect schools, including academies, in circumstances where she is not required to do so under section 5. There are also general duties/functions that are relevant to these summary evaluations.

By carrying out batched inspections of academies within a single MAT, and carrying out a summary evaluation of the quality of education provided by the MAT, HMCI is able to:

- better fulfil her general duty to keep the Secretary of State (SoS) informed about matters connected with her remit
- perform her functions for the general purpose of encouraging and promoting improvement within her remit^[footnote 1]

It is important to note that summary evaluations of MATs are not inspections and are carried out with the cooperation and consent of the MAT, being reviewed. They consider key information about the MAT, which includes academy inspection outcomes, discussions with MAT leaders and survey visits to some of the MAT's academies. Their aim is to give the MAT helpful recommendations on aspects that could be improved, and to recognise where the MAT is having a positive impact on the quality of education that its academies provide.

MAT summary evaluation process

Evidence is collected at the MAT level through a number of section 5 and section 8 inspections that are due to be carried out in academies within the MAT. These inspections follow procedures set out within the school inspection handbook (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif>) and the section 8 inspection handbook (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-8-school-inspection-handbook-eif>).

The overall process consists of 2 stages:

- Stage 1 – batched inspections: section 5 and section 8 inspections are carried out in a number of academies over a period of time, not exceeding 2 terms. Typically, batched inspections are spread over a single school term, but could also be within the same week if we have reason to carry out the summary evaluation within a short period of time.
- Stage 2 – summary evaluation: once the section 5 and section 8 inspections have been completed and all of the inspection reports have been published, the MAT summary evaluation is carried out. This may be within the same term, or the term following the completion of the academy inspections. Inspectors will meet the leaders of the MAT, discuss the findings of the individual inspections and overall educational quality across the MAT. Inspectors will also meet trustees. During this stage, inspectors visit individual academies or sites to capture the views of academy leaders and staff in relation to the impact of the MAT's work.

At stage 2, the MAT summary evaluation is completed within a single week. At the start of the week, inspectors will visit the MAT to meet key personnel such as the chief executive officer (CEO) or equivalent and members of the executive team. They will discuss the outcomes of the section 5 and section 8 inspections of academies and collect and consider further evidence to demonstrate the impact of the MAT's work.

During the week, and with the agreement of the MAT, inspectors carry out one or more survey visits to academies within the MAT (either those inspected during stage 1 or other academies not inspected as part of the batched inspections). This is in order to gather specific evidence in relation to points that emerge from discussions with leaders and trustees. They also carry out separate telephone surveys with academies in the MAT that were not inspected during stage 1 or visited as part of stage 2 of the process.

Inspectors also hold meetings with the key MAT personnel during the week in order to review evidence and share emerging findings.

Clarification for MATs

We strive to ensure that our activities do not place undue burden on providers.

At stage 1 of the process, we will:

- inspect academies within the MAT that are already due an inspection
- expect to see academies as they normally operate

We will not:

- carry out any academy inspection solely because we have decided to carry out a MAT summary evaluation
- expect MATs to make any specific preparations for the benefit of inspectors
- expect MATs to undertake any activity specifically for the purpose of the summary evaluation

At stage 2 of the process, we will:

- with the agreement of the MAT, only visit a sample of academies not inspected during stage 1
- carry out a telephone survey of principals in some academies that were not inspected during stage 1

We will not (except where the MAT and the lead Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) both think it will be beneficial):

- visit any academies that were inspected during stage 1
- visit any academies that are in a category of concern, so as to ensure that local academy leaders remain focused on acting on the recommendations provided to them following their full inspections and are not put under undue burden

Selection of MATs for summary evaluations

At the moment, we are not carrying out a programme of summary evaluations that will see every MAT evaluated within a certain window. In selecting MATs for summary evaluations, we will aim to cover a broad range of MATs, not just those that may be a cause for concern. This is to ensure that we can gain an accurate and balanced understanding of the contribution that MATs make to the school system, highlighting areas of strength that may be disseminated more widely and provide insight into any weaknesses.

Each year, we aim to select from a wide range of MATs so that the overall sample is broadly representative of the sector.

In selecting a MAT for a summary evaluation, we will take account of a range of information, including:

- the number of academies within the MAT.
- the make-up of the MAT, for example whether it is mostly made up of primary, secondary, special schools or alternative provision
- the number of pupils on roll at the MAT's academies
- the make-up of schools' rolls within the MAT, for example proportions of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), pupils who speak English as an additional language, pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and pupils who are disadvantaged
- the number of academies within the MAT that are due for inspection within the coming terms, relative to the size of the MAT.
- previous inspection outcomes, including changes in the performance of individual academies over time, reflecting where there have been significant improvements or decline
- previous summary evaluation outcomes (where relevant)
- progress measures and pupils' attainment at academy level and across the MAT
- the number and nature of any complaints received about academies within the MAT
- any warning notices that may have been issued by the SRS to any academies within the MAT.
- any other intelligence that indicates good practice within a MAT or that raises concern, for example, regarding the safeguarding of pupils
- any requests from the SRS; these requests may be submitted by the relevant regional schools commissioner acting on behalf of the SRS^[footnote 2]

All academies selected for inspection must be due to be inspected (under section 5 or section 8 of the Education Act 2005) within the same academic year in accordance with:

- our standard inspection windows
- the maximum permitted interval between inspections prescribed by regulations (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2009/1564/made>)
- the monitoring inspection arrangements for schools judged to be causing concern or as requires improvement, under section 8(2) of the Act
- our guide for inspecting academies and free schools (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/inspecting-schools-guide-for-maintained-and-academy-schools>)

The academy inspections at stage 1 may include section 8 inspections of good and outstanding schools and monitoring inspections of schools that are causing concern or are judged as requires improvement. Section 8 'no formal designation' (NFD) inspections are not 'due' inspections, but these may be included in the batched inspections if they provide relevant evidence about the impact of the work of the MAT. Inclusion of NFD inspections in the batched inspections at stage 1 is at the discretion of Ofsted's regional directors. Regardless of the circumstances, NFD inspection outcomes may be considered by inspectors during a summary evaluation in the same way as any other inspection outcomes.

Academy inspections

Academies that are inspected during stage 1 will be notified of their inspection in the usual way. The inspections will be carried out under section 5 or 8 of the Education Act 2005 and in accordance with the education inspection framework (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>), the school inspection handbook (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif>) and the section 8 inspection handbook (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-8-school-inspection-handbook-eif>). Each academy will receive its own inspection report in accordance with statutory requirements.

Arrangements for section 5 and section 8 inspections

During each section 5 or section 8 inspection, inspectors will consider evidence and make judgements exactly as they would normally, following the procedures set out within the relevant handbooks. In doing so, inspectors will recognise that responsibility for some aspects of the education that the school provides may be held at school-level and some may be set by the leaders of the MAT. They will gather evidence accordingly. As MAT structures vary widely, it is important that inspectors form a clear picture of the specific arrangements that apply early on in the academy inspection. This is critical in all cases, whether the inspection has been carried out as part of batched inspections or not.

Inspectors will be sensitive to the context of each MAT. We understand that each MAT operates in unique circumstances; therefore the way in which different MATs function will vary, for example as to how curriculum leadership and subject areas are organised. We do not have any specific expectations as to what a MAT should or should not delegate, or as to how a MAT makes decisions.

Before stage 1, the inspector with oversight of MATs within the relevant Ofsted region will organise a review of all information we hold about the MAT and any relevant information that may be publicly available. This could include scrutiny of schemes of delegation and other information published by the MAT or its individual academies, depending on the MAT's specific arrangements, such as its approach to curriculum design and implementation, recruitment and continuing professional development. Other information may include previous inspection outcomes, complaints and regional intelligence. The same inspector will ensure that this information is shared with the inspectors leading the academy inspections at stage 1, so that the latter understand the way the MAT is structured and operates. This will assist them in considering any relevant information about the impact the MAT is having in improving the quality of education in individual academies.

Inspectors carrying out section 5 and section 8 inspections of academies within a MAT will gather information about the use, quality and impact of any support and direction that the MAT gives to its academies. For example, this may include guidance on curriculum planning or to improve pupils' behaviour.

Evidence will be gathered during meetings with the academy principal, the chair of trustees or equivalent of the MAT (as the body responsible for the governance of the academy) and, if available, a representative of the MAT (to be determined by the MAT). Evidence from these discussions will contribute to the judgements made as part of the section 5 or section 8 inspection where it relates directly to the quality of education provided in the academy, safeguarding and the outcomes for its pupils.

When any of this evidence relates to the wider MAT, rather than the quality of education provided by the academy being inspected, this will be considered as part of the evidence base for stage 2 (the summary evaluation) but will not be taken into account in reaching judgements about the academy. Where relevant, individual academy inspection reports must reflect the impact that the MAT is having on the quality of education offered by the academy and on raising pupils' achievement.

Before the MAT summary evaluation

Notifying the MAT

The MAT will be notified of the summary evaluation (stage 2) by the lead HMI. This will typically take place up to 5 working days before the start of the evaluation. Subject to the availability of the CEO or their equivalent, HMI will ask to speak to the most senior executive officer available.

If the lead HMI is unable to make contact with the MAT, they will leave a voicemail (where possible) stating the date and time at which the message was left. The lead HMI will continue trying to contact the MAT, and keep a note of the times at which they tried to do this.

Once the lead HMI has spoken to the CEO or their equivalent, they will send formal confirmation to the MAT by email, copying the email to Ofsted's inspection support team. The email will include a letter confirming the summary evaluation.

The purpose of the notification call is for the HMI to:

- formally announce the summary evaluation
- alert the MAT to the fact that there will be some telephone surveys and survey visits to academies during the week, to be agreed with the MAT.
- make arrangements for activities, including preparations for discussions with seniors leaders, such as trustees, independent members (<https://www.nga.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/Governance-structure-roles-and-responsibilities/Academy-trusts/Members-of-the-academy-trust.aspx>) and directors, senior officers and other staff/partners
- outline the process to be followed and provide an opportunity for the MAT to raise any initial questions
- request that relevant evidence be made available during the on-site week, making clear that we do not expect information to be provided in any particular format or that the MAT should not do work specifically for the summary evaluation
- discuss the timetable for activities and remind the MAT that the summary evaluation letter will be published on Ofsted's reports website (<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>)

In explaining the arrangements, the HMI will:

- indicate the format of the summary evaluation process
- explain the extent to which other senior staff can be engaged in the activities
- indicate the likely range of documentation that inspectors will need to access when they are on site (see the section on arrangements for the stage 2 on-site visit)
- ask for any existing evidence that the MAT considers would enhance inspectors' understanding of the impact of the MAT.
- discuss the arrangements for keeping in touch with the CEO of the MAT, or their equivalent, throughout stage 2 and agree the process for final feedback
- confirm arrangements/contact details for the purpose of our post-review survey
- make domestic arrangements (inspectors' room, parking and other facilities)
- indicate inspectors' intended arrival and departure times

Inspectors will usually arrive at the MAT premises on Monday (or the first day of the working week) around midday, and around 9am on days thereafter, and usually leave by 6pm. These times are advisory; inspectors may arrive later and leave earlier. Inspectors will, of course, work within the MAT's standard office hours.

The telephone call is an important opportunity to initiate a professional relationship between the lead HMI and MAT leaders. As with academy inspection notification calls (detailed in the school inspection handbook (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif>)), the call has 2 elements:

- a reflective, educationally focused conversation about the MAT, where the HMI may discuss any particular areas of interest stemming from the information that they have reviewed in preparation for stage 2 of the summary evaluation
- a shorter planning conversation that focuses on practical and logistical issues

Summary evaluations are carried out with the cooperation and consent of the MAT. If the MAT indicates that it is not willing or able to do so, then the HMI will contact the relevant regional director who will, in turn, share this information with the relevant regional schools commissioner.

Requests for a deferral

We may, in exceptional circumstances, decide to defer a summary evaluation (stage 2).

Where MATs have concerns about the timing of a summary evaluation, they may submit a deferral request, with any supporting reasons, to the lead HMI at the point of notification. The lead HMI will notify the duty Senior HMI in the appropriate region as soon as possible. As summary evaluations are carried out with the cooperation and consent of the MAT, our usual policy on deferrals (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deferring-ofsted-inspections>) will not apply.

Each request for deferral will be considered on its merits and we will make every effort to accommodate the specific circumstances of the MAT, so that the summary evaluation can proceed. The decision to defer is at the discretion of the relevant regional director. If deferral cannot be agreed and the summary evaluation cannot proceed, the regional director will share this information with the relevant regional schools commissioner.

During the summary evaluation

The following elements will usually be included in a MAT summary evaluation:

- published inspection outcomes from the batched inspections carried out at academy level and the evidence bases from those inspections
- a telephone survey of academies that were not inspected during stage 1 or visited as part of stage 2
- evidence from the visit to the MAT, that includes discussions with key leaders, and survey visits to some of the academies within the MAT

Arrangements for the stage 2 on-site visit to the MAT

Inspectors will show their identity badges on arrival. They will ensure that the CEO of the MAT, or equivalent, is informed of their arrival. Inspectors will ensure that evidence-gathering activities start promptly. These activities will normally last for 2 to 3 days.

The lead inspector will meet briefly with the CEO, their equivalent or other representatives at the beginning of the first day to:

- introduce team inspectors and other attendees
- confirm arrangements for meetings with key staff, as agreed with the MAT, over the course of the week
- confirm arrangements for providing feedback during and at the end of the evaluation
- discuss practical issues, including plans for survey visits and telephone surveys

MAT structures are diverse, reflecting the values, ethos and ambition of each MAT. We have no fixed view of what constitutes the best arrangement; neither do we have a preference for how a MAT operates. We do not require or expect MATs to use any particular structure or curriculum approach. MATs have discretion in designing and implementing policies, such as in relation to the curriculum, in order to meet the needs of pupils in their academies. Inspectors will, therefore, avoid advocating any particular structure or arrangement. However, inspectors will comment on the effectiveness of the arrangements that are in place, based on the evidence they gather. The DfE has guidance about governance structures in MATs (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>), which includes information about effective arrangements in relation to checks and balances.

There is no expectation that the MAT will prepare evidence specifically for the benefit of inspectors. Inspectors are likely to encounter a variety of approaches and arrangements. They will accept existing evidence in whatever format, provided by the MAT. They may take into account information such as:

- if available, a summary of any self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the work of the MAT, including the overall quality of education within the MAT's academies and arrangements for supporting and improving this
- any strategic plans for education within the MAT, including details of partnership arrangements, commissioning, brokerage and any evaluation reports
- documentation about arrangements for monitoring, challenge, intervention and support of the MAT's academies
- any documentation or strategy in relation to curriculum design and implementation, and any evaluation of impact
- any documentation or strategy in relation to improving pupils' behaviour, including the use of exclusion and any forms of off-rolling
- any documentation or strategy in relation to the recruitment, training and continual professional development of academy staff at all levels
- any data sets about the performance of the MAT and any analyses thereof
- case study material regarding targeted academy improvement work and its impact on MAT academies
- a list of key staff, with roles and responsibilities
- information regarding strategies used to improve the standards of governance in individual academies and across the MAT.

The focus of the summary evaluation, and discussions with MAT leaders, is the quality of education provided, and how well pupils are doing across the MAT rather than how individual academies or pupils within them are performing.

MAT leaders should also be prepared to discuss with inspectors how they may have adapted plans and/or strategies to support academies and pupils across the MAT, to recover lost ground caused by the disruption to learning during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Inspectors will not assess this aspect of the MAT's work separately. Rather, they will want to be reassured that the MAT's strategies, plans and any self-evaluation have been adapted suitably to cater for the needs of its academies and pupils, and meet the challenges caused by the pandemic.

The purpose of the meetings with key leaders and representatives of the MAT board is to share and discuss any key areas of focus drawn from the lead HMI's preparation in advance of the summary evaluation, including an analysis of the inspection outcomes of the MAT's academies. In addition, meetings will provide an opportunity for the MAT to present, and HMI to review, further evidence that demonstrates the impact of the MAT's work. Discussions will centre on the quality of education across the MAT, and the arrangements put in place by the MAT to oversee, challenge and support its academies. Inspectors will also consider the outcomes of telephone surveys carried out during the summary evaluation and evidence gathered during survey visits. Every opportunity will be provided to the MAT to present relevant evidence.

Inspectors will collate, analyse and assess the evidence about the MAT gathered during the inspection of individual academies, and discussions with MAT leaders.

Inspectors will gather, analyse and record evidence using electronic evidence gathering (EEG). Inspectors are responsible for compiling, securing and assuring the quality of the evidence base.

What inspectors may consider

Inspectors will consider all the evidence gathered to support their findings. While discussions and the evidence presented may be wide-ranging, they will be firmly focused on impact, both for the pupils served by the MAT and in terms of raising standards and the quality of education offered, including through improving the performance of its academies.

Inspectors will, in practice, tailor their areas of focus to the circumstances of the MAT. The following examples are not a checklist or exhaustive, but may be some areas that inspectors will likely concentrate on.

Taking into account the individual MAT's scheme of delegation and governance structure, inspectors are likely to explore:

- the impact the MAT has on its academies, including what elements of education are uniform across the MAT, where the MAT allows academies more autonomy and how the MAT addresses underperformance; this is not to make a judgement about the MAT's preferred approach, rather it is about enhancing inspectors' understanding of the MAT's operating model and the impact this has on improving outcomes for its pupils
- whether curriculum decisions are made centrally or locally at the academy level and the impact on the pupils. We have no preferred model of curriculum decision-making; again, the focus here is the impact on raising standards and meeting pupils' needs
- how policies are made, implemented, reviewed and evaluated, and the impact they have on pupils
- what the MAT's intentions and ambitions are, especially in relation to the curriculum taught within its academies, and how these are communicated, understood, implemented and monitored across the MAT.
- how the MAT identifies its strengths and weaknesses, including in terms of the quality of education provided by individual academies, and how it secures improvements
- the effectiveness of leadership of the MAT, including how staff recruitment, development and management work across the MAT
- how the MAT trustees work with the MAT leaders, including how they set priorities, monitor their implementation and constructively hold leaders to account
- how MAT trustees review their own effectiveness and how independent members assess whether the MAT is performing well
- governance arrangements within the MAT, and how MAT-level decision-making takes account of the needs of local leaders and individual academies
- the MAT's work in relation to safeguarding and management of pupils' behaviour and attitudes

In relation to the curriculum and the quality of education offered at the academies in the MAT, inspectors are likely to explore:

- how the curriculum is designed and the extent to which the MAT makes curricular decisions and/or maintains oversight of the academy's decisions
- how curriculum development is informed and by whom
- the extent to which the curriculum serves the needs of academies in the MAT and those of their pupils
- how the curriculum is implemented, and how its impact is monitored and improved
- how the MAT balances support and intervention
- the extent to which good practice is disseminated effectively and weak performance identified and tackled

In terms of the leadership and management of, and across, the MAT, inspectors will be likely to explore:

- the MAT's system of checks and balances
- the extent to which, and how, the MAT supports the improvement of its academies, including its effectiveness in analysing strengths and weaknesses either across the MAT or in individual academies
- the MAT's approach to recruitment, retention and development of staff at all levels
- the effectiveness of governance arrangements, including in the exercise of delegated responsibilities^[footnote 3]
- how the MAT ensures that the pupils in its care are kept safe
- how all levels of the MAT, from local academy leadership teams all the way up to the independent members, hold each other to account and how they know that the MAT is having a positive impact on its academies and the quality of education it offers
- how policies are implemented and reviewed, and whether they are adapted to meet local need

Inspectors will also explore how the MAT and its academies manage pupils' behaviour and attitudes, including:

- how relevant policies are developed, implemented and monitored for their effectiveness
- how the MAT ensures that behaviour management leads to well-behaved and well-motivated pupils with positive attitudes
- the extent to which the MAT's challenge and support of its academies is helping to improve pupils' behaviour and attendance
- how staff at all levels are supported in implementing behaviour policies
- how the MAT uses and monitors exclusions
- where relevant, the MAT's approach to the use of any alternative provision and and/or managed moves

As mentioned, the examples set out above are not exhaustive nor intended as a checklist. Inspectors will explore these themes with MAT representatives and staff at all levels, including local academy leaders, local governors and teachers. What is discussed in these meetings will be shaped by the emerging strengths and weaknesses from the batched inspections in stage 1 and any evidence from discussions with MAT leaders and other activities in stage 2. Inspectors will tailor their evidence-gathering activities and exploration of particular themes to the circumstances of the MAT.

Arrangements for the survey visits

During the evaluation, inspectors may also visit academies in the MAT. These visits are not inspections of the individual academies. Their purpose is to gather further evidence about the impact of the MAT and an opportunity for MAT leaders to demonstrate such impact. The visits are not intended to gather information about the academy and will focus on discussions with academy leaders, including local governors (where relevant), staff and pupils about their experiences of being part of a MAT.

The lead HMI will discuss and agree with MAT leaders which academies will be visited. Normally, they will aim to exclude academies that were inspected during stage 1. Also, these visits will not typically include academies that are subject to monitoring inspections by Ofsted, for example because they have been judged to be causing concern or requiring improvement.^[footnote 4] This is to ensure that those schools are given sufficient space to carry out the necessary improvements by acting on the recommendations following their full inspections, and so that they are not put under undue burden. If MAT leaders feel strongly that a visit by inspectors to such an academy would provide compelling evidence of the impact of the MAT's work, inspectors may visit it. The decision to do so is at the discretion of the lead HMI.

The visits are intended to be short, typically no more than a couple of hours. They may involve discussions with academy staff, local governors and pupils, or other activities, as agreed between the lead HMI and MAT leaders.

Although the academies visited are not being inspected, in exceptional circumstances (for example, when a serious concern about safeguarding arises during the visit) we may have reason to inspect the academy at a later date. Depending on the circumstances, this may mean that the feedback to the MAT and/or publication of the summary evaluation letter may be delayed so that the outcome of that inspection can be considered fully as part of the summary evaluation.

Arrangements for the telephone surveys

Evidence gathered from the batched section 5 and section 8 inspections carried out as part of stage 1 will be supplemented, whenever possible, by a telephone survey of principals of other academies within the MAT that were not inspected during stage 1.

Inspectors will carry out the telephone surveys during the stage 2 week. The lead HMI will, in consultation with MAT leaders, select a representative sample of academies not inspected during stage 1.

In the telephone surveys, inspectors are likely to explore:

- how well the MAT understands the quality of education it offers, and in particular its strengths and weaknesses
- the measures in place to further enhance strengths and address weaknesses
- how the MAT knows it is having a positive impact on the quality of education provided for its pupils

Reviewing safeguarding

Safeguarding children is a responsibility shared by all in the system, as set out in statutory guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-early-years-education-and-skills>). This applies to all 'practitioners', which the statutory guidance defines as those working with children and their families in any capacity.

Inspectors may consider how far MAT leaders and managers have put in place effective arrangements to:

- identify children who may need early help or are at risk of neglect, abuse, grooming or exploitation
- help prevent abuse by raising children's awareness of safeguarding risks, and how and where to get help and support if they need it
- help those children who are at risk of abuse and need early help or statutory social care involvement, keeping accurate records, making timely referrals where necessary and working with other agencies to ensure that they get the help they need
- manage allegations about adults who may be a risk, and check the suitability of staff to work with children and vulnerable adults

Recording evidence

The evidence base may be scrutinised or disclosed externally following the summary evaluation as part of quality assurance arrangements, or in the event of a legal challenge or complaint. Inspectors will highlight or identify any information that was provided in confidence.

Inspectors will record the main points of discussion and the team's findings when keeping in touch with, or feeding back to, MAT leaders.

Inspector team meetings

The team will meet briefly each day during the course of the summary evaluation. This may be by telephone when inspectors are visiting academies that are a significant distance from the site at which the team is based.

The team will share initial findings, discuss hypotheses, corroborate evidence and consider any additional evidence-gathering that could be helpful to clarify the work of the MAT. The team will keep the lead HMI fully aware of any developments. Wherever possible, a representative from the MAT, typically the CEO or their equivalent, will be invited to attend meetings as an observer.

Feedback to the MAT

Inspectors will offer oral feedback on their findings to senior leaders, such as trustees, independent members and directors, senior officers and other staff/partners to promote professional dialogue. Constructive dialogue between inspectors and MAT staff is important, in particular between the lead HMI and the CEO or equivalent and/or their representatives.

Before the end of the summary evaluation (stage 2), inspectors will ensure that the MAT is clear:

- about the inspectors' view of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the quality of education offered across the MAT
- that the main points provided orally in the feedback will be referred to in the text of the summary evaluation letter, subject to quality assurance
- about the procedures leading to the publication of the letter

- about what to do if the MAT has a complaint

On the final day of the summary evaluation, inspectors will meet to draw their evidence together and agree the provisional summary findings of the evaluation. The discussion will typically cover the aspects outlined in the arrangements for the on-site visit section, in addition to any other specific areas of focus that the lead HMI determined relevant. Inspectors will also agree recommendations that will be recorded in the summary evaluation letter. The CEO or their equivalent may attend this meeting as an observer.

After inspectors have reached their provisional findings, these will be presented and briefly explained to senior executives and board representatives of the MAT. While any oral feedback should be consistent with the findings, all findings will be subject to moderation and quality assurance by senior Ofsted staff. This will be clearly explained to the MAT leaders during feedback.

After the summary evaluation

The summary evaluation letter

The findings from the summary evaluation will be set out in a letter to the MAT's CEO or equivalent, and copied to the SpS and the chair of the MAT board. The letter will highlight specific areas of strength, and areas where the support and challenge that the MAT offers its academies can be improved. It will report the range of evidence considered and outline the most recent inspection outcomes for all academies within the MAT. It must be stressed that summary evaluations do not result in graded or binary judgements. The judgements that inspectors make about the MAT's impact, strengths and weakness, will always be in narrative form. It will be published on the Ofsted reports website (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/deferring-ofsted-inspections>).

The format of the letter will be as follows:

- introduction
- summary of main findings – the key headlines that are explained in more detail in the letter
- range of evidence
- context
- main findings
- findings on safeguarding
- recommendations

Before publication, the lead HMI will give the MAT the draft letter. The MAT will normally have 5 working days to comment on the draft letter, including on any matters of factual accuracy.

All comments received will be considered by inspectors, and addressed before the letter is finalised and published. This will occur usually within 28 working days from the last day of the summary evaluation.

Quality assurance of summary evaluations

Responsibility for assuring the quality of the summary evaluation lies with the lead HMI. The draft letter will be checked to ensure that the wording is clear and coherent. In addition, the letter will be signed off by the relevant regional director.

Any concerns and complaints will be handled in line with Ofsted's complaints procedure (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure>).

Conduct during summary evaluations

Inspectors will uphold the highest professional standards in their work and treat everyone they encounter during inspections fairly and with respect and sensitivity. Inspectors will at all times adhere to Ofsted's conduct during Ofsted inspections (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/conduct-during-ofsted-inspections>) guidance.

1. As set out in sections 118(3) and 119(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/40/section/118>).
2. The circumstances in which the SpS may elect to make such a request through the regional school commissioner could include seeking advice about a particular MAT, or MATs more generally, or a number of schools within a MAT.
3. The governance handbook (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook>) sets out the purpose of governance, which is to provide confident, strategic leadership, and to create robust accountability, oversight and assurance for educational and financial performance. Inspectors will explore how those responsible for governance, at all levels, in the MAT are carrying out their functions.
4. Not all schools judged as requires improvement will receive monitoring inspections. Where the relevant region has determined that a requires improvement school will not be receiving a monitoring inspection, the school may be selected for a visit as part of the summary evaluation.

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