

Consultation: Improving the way Ofsted inspects education

The safeguarding elements in schools

NB: This document does not provide a comprehensive overview of the entire consultation document. We advise that you read the whole document before submitting a response.

Why Change?

- To raise standards in schools
- Ofsted says that its 'Big Listen' consultation showed that everyone wanted overall effectiveness grades (the 'single-word judgements') to be removed. But there were different views on what to replace it with. Parents and carers favoured clear assessment of a wider set of categories; professionals leaned towards narrative descriptions of performance. The proposals aim to meet both preferences.
- Ofsted says: "We also want to build a much more constructive and collaborative relationship with the sectors we inspect. That starts with more **transparency**. We will make sure our inspection materials **are easy to understand**, and that toolkits **support continuous improvement**. We want to take any mystery out of inspection, so providers can be **clear about what we will and, importantly, will not look at.**"

The Consultation

- The proposals: [gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-the-way-ofsted-inspects-education/improving-the-way-ofsted-inspects-education-consultation-document#proposal-2-education-inspection-toolkits](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/improving-the-way-ofsted-inspects-education/improving-the-way-ofsted-inspects-education-consultation-document#proposal-2-education-inspection-toolkits)
- **The consultation will run for 12 weeks, from 3 February to 28 April.**
- Consultation response: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ofsted2025/>
- The proposed changes will not come into affect until after Autumn half term.

Report Cards

- The report cards will give parents and stakeholders a better idea of schools' strengths and areas for development.
- There are 9 areas for evaluation in schools (including safeguarding) with additional areas of early years and sixth form, where appropriate.
- Ofsted plans to inspect schools on a new five-point grading scale, ranging from “causing concern” at the lowest end, through “attention needed”, “secure” and “strong”, to the highest rating of “exemplary”.
- A school could be rated as “exemplary” in an area if graded as at least “secure” across all evaluation areas and consistently “strong” within an evaluation area.
- Most schools are expected to be rated as “secure”.
- For Safeguarding however, the outcome is only “**met/unmet**”. Alongside this, a summary of safeguarding practice and recommendations will be provided.

Our evaluation of this provider

Causing concern	Attention needed	Secure	Strong	Exemplary
	Achievement	Leadership and governance	Attendance	
		Curriculum	Behaviour and attitudes	
		Developing teaching	Inclusion	
		Personal development and well-being		
		Sixth form		
Safeguarding evaluation				
Safeguarding		Met	Show	

Ofsted wants to know your thoughts on:

- The layout
- The chosen evaluation areas - any missing?
- The 5-point scale

School Inspection Toolkit

assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67927f1ebcd53eb4d9fad612/school_inspection_toolkit_draft_for_consultation.pdf

- The inspection framework and separate handbook will be replaced by a **School Inspection Toolkit**
- The toolkit will contain the standards against which Ofsted will inspect providers. They are underpinned by statutory and non-statutory guidance, professional frameworks and expectations and research relevant to the different stages and types of education.
- This toolkit contains a specific section on how safeguarding will be inspected

School Inspection Toolkit

Safeguarding

All schools should have an open and positive safeguarding culture that promotes the welfare of and puts pupils' interests first. Leaders must ensure they follow the Department for Education's latest statutory guidance in 'Working together to safeguard children' and 'Keeping children safe in education'.

This means schools:

- protect pupils from **maltreatment and harm, whether it is within or outside the home, including online**. They are vigilant, maintaining an attitude of 'it could happen here'
- act as a safeguarding partner in line with 'Working together to safeguard children'
- are open and transparent, sharing appropriate information with others and actively seeking expert advice when required, making sure all safeguarding decisions are accessible for appropriate scrutiny, accepting of challenge to ensure the right decisions are made, and recognising that safeguarding issues might occur in any provision at any time to ensure that all those who work with pupils are trained well in their responsibility to pupils to support them to be safer and are empowered to speak out and act upon where there may be concerns
- **recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation**
- actively seek and listen to the views and experiences of pupils, staff and parents, taking prompt action to deal with any concerns
- have appropriate safeguarding and child protection arrangements, which:
 - identify pupils who may need early help and be a partner in multi-agency working
 - identify pupils and who are at risk of harm or who have been harmed. This can include, but is not limited to, neglect, abuse (including by their peers), grooming, exploitation, sexual abuse and online harm
 - secure the help that pupils need and, if required, refer in a timely way to those who have the expertise to help
 - manage safe recruitment and allegations about adults who may pose a risk to pupils
 - take into account the additional safeguarding challenges that pupils, including disabled pupils, those with SEND and those who are non-verbal, may face.
- are receptive to challenge, and reflect on their own practice, to ensure that the impact of safeguarding policies, systems and processes are kept under continual review
- must maintain, if they are maintained schools, a single central record of pre-appointment checks, in paper or electronic form
- must maintain, if they are academies, a single central record, in paper or electronic form, that details the checks carried out in each academy within the trust. There is no requirement to maintain an individual record for each academy, but the information should be recorded in such a way that the details about individual academies can be provided separately.

Ofsted wants to know, how helpful/comprehensive is this?

School Inspection Toolkit

Not met	Met
Culture	
<p>Leaders and/or those responsible for governance have not ensured a culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and pupils are kept safe and feel safe.</p> <p>There is a closed culture. Leaders are not open to challenge and/or do not learn from issues or incidents.</p> <p>Pupils have little confidence that the school will tackle concerns about safety, including risk of abuse, because leaders have not taken their views seriously and/or dealt with relevant concerns.</p>	<p>Leaders and/or those responsible for governance have established a culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and pupils are kept safe and feel safe.</p> <p>All staff are vigilant and carry out their responsibilities effectively in keeping pupils safe.</p> <p>Leaders, staff and those responsible for governance are receptive to challenge and are reflective about their own practices. This means that the impact of safeguarding policies, systems and processes is kept under continual review.</p>
Safeguarding information for all staff to know and act on	
<p>Leaders and/or those responsible for safeguarding do not fulfil their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding information for staff, as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children' and part one of 'Keeping children safe in education'.</p> <p>Leaders, staff and/or those responsible for governance do not know and/or fulfil their roles in safeguarding pupils.</p> <p>Serious failings in safeguarding practice leads pupils, or particular groups of pupils, to be unsafe.</p>	<p>Leaders, staff and those responsible for governance know and fulfil the statutory requirements for safeguarding.</p> <p>Staff understand the indicators of possible safeguarding concerns and follow the school's systems confidently and consistently.</p>
Management of safeguarding	
<p>Leaders and those responsible for governance do not fulfil their responsibilities in relation to management of safeguarding, as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children' and part two of 'Keeping children safe in education'.</p> <p>Leaders and those responsible for governance do not fulfil their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty.</p> <p>Those responsible for governance do not exercise strategic oversight of all aspects of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils.</p>	<p>Leaders and those responsible for governance fulfil their responsibilities in relation to management of safeguarding, as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children' and part two of 'Keeping children safe in education'.</p> <p>Leaders fulfil their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty.</p>

Ofsted wants to know, how helpful/comprehensive is this?

School Inspection Toolkit

Safer recruitment	
<p>Leaders and those responsible for governance do not fulfil their responsibilities in relation to safer recruitment, as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children' and part three of 'Keeping children safe in education'.</p> <p>Statutory requirements are not met. For example, there are breaches of the requirements of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).</p>	<p>Leaders and those responsible for governance fulfil their responsibilities in relation to safer recruitment, as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children' and part three of 'Keeping children safe in education', including alternative provision, host family arrangements and private fostering.</p> <p>Leaders and those responsible for governance have rectified minor safeguarding issues identified during the inspection and/or are taking steps to resolve them. Pupils are kept safe and feel safe.</p>
Safeguarding concerns or allegations	
<p>Leaders and those responsible for governance are not fulfilling their responsibilities in relation to reporting, referrals and record-keeping, as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children' and part four of 'Keeping children safe in education'.</p> <p>Leaders and those responsible for governance do not handle safeguarding allegations against adults appropriately.</p> <p>The school is not aware of its duty in relation to referrals to the DBS.</p>	<p>Leaders and those responsible for governance are fulfilling their responsibilities in relation to reporting, referrals and record-keeping, as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children' and part four of 'Keeping children safe in education'.</p>
Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment	
<p>Leaders and those responsible for governance do not fulfil their responsibilities in relation to child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment, as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children' and part five of 'Keeping children safe in education'.</p> <p>Leaders do not handle allegations of sexual abuse swiftly and appropriately. This is likely to lead to pupils being put at risk of significant harm.</p>	<p>Leaders and those responsible for safeguarding fulfil their responsibilities in relation to child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment, as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children' and part five of 'Keeping children safe in education'.</p>

Ofsted wants to know, how helpful/comprehensive is this?

Reflections

- **Question:** What do you think of the layout of the report card?
- **Question:** What do you think of the evaluation areas? Any others you suggest?
- **Question:** What do you think of the 5-point scale?
- **Question:** How helpful/comprehensive are the standards for safeguarding that are outlined in the toolkit?
- **Question:** To what extent do the proposed changes help with the aims outlined on slide 2 (to improve standards, easier to understand and clearer about what will and won't be inspected)?
- **Question:** What do you consider are the likely workload and well-being implications of these proposals?
- **Question:** What could Ofsted do to help reduce or manage any unintended consequences of these changes?

Share your feedback with the official consultation at smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ofsted2025

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