

The quality of education

169. Inspectors will take a rounded view of the quality of education that a school provides to all its pupils, including the most disadvantaged pupils (see definition in paragraph 86) and pupils with SEND. Inspectors will consider the school's curriculum, which is the substance of what is taught with a specific plan of what pupils need to know in total and in each subject.
170. Inspectors will consider the extent to which the school's curriculum sets out the knowledge and skills that pupils will gain at each stage (we call this '**intent**'). They will also consider the way that the curriculum developed or adopted by the school is taught and assessed in order to support pupils to build their knowledge and to apply that knowledge as skills (we call this '**implementation**'). Finally, inspectors will consider the outcomes that pupils achieve as a result of the education they have received (we call this the '**impact**').

Intent

171. In evaluating the school's educational intent, inspectors will primarily consider the curriculum leadership provided by school, subject and curriculum leaders.
172. The judgement focuses on factors that both research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to an effective education where pupils achieve highly. These factors are listed below.
- The school's curriculum is rooted in the solid consensus of the school's leaders about the knowledge and skills that pupils need in order to take advantage of opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. In this way, it can powerfully address social disadvantage.
 - It is clear what end points the curriculum is building towards and what pupils need to know and be able to do to reach those end points.
 - The school's curriculum is planned and sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before and towards its clearly defined end points.
 - The curriculum reflects the school's local context by addressing typical gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills.
 - The curriculum remains as broad as possible for as long as possible. Pupils are able to study a strong academic core of subjects, such as those offered by the EBacc.
 - There is high academic/vocational/technical ambition for all pupils, and the school does not offer disadvantaged pupils or pupils with SEND a reduced curriculum.

Curriculum flexibility

173. The curriculum sets out the aims of a programme of education. It also sets out the structure for those aims to be implemented, including the knowledge and skills to be gained at each stage. It enables the evaluation of pupils' knowledge and skills against those expectations.
174. All pupils in maintained schools are expected to study the basic curriculum, which includes national curriculum⁶⁷, religious education and age-appropriate relationship and sex education⁶⁸. Academies are expected to offer all pupils a broad curriculum⁶⁹ that should be similar in breadth and ambition.
175. We will judge schools taking radically different approaches to the curriculum fairly. We recognise the importance of schools' autonomy to choose their own curriculum approaches. If leaders are able to show that they have thought carefully, that they have built a curriculum with appropriate coverage, content, structure and sequencing, and that it has been implemented effectively, then inspectors will assess a school's curriculum favourably.

Curriculum narrowing

176. Our research has shown that some schools narrow the curriculum available to pupils, particularly in key stages 2 and 3. Our research also shows that this has a disproportionately negative effect on the most disadvantaged pupils.⁷⁰ In key stage 1, inspectors need to check that pupils are able to read,⁷¹ write and use mathematical knowledge, ideas and operations so they are able to access a broad and balanced curriculum at key stage 2. In secondary education, inspectors will expect to see a broad, rich curriculum. Inspectors will be particularly alert to signs of narrowing in the key stage 2 and 3 curriculums. If a school has shortened key stage 3, inspectors will look to see that the school has made provision to ensure that pupils still have the opportunity to study a broad range of subjects, commensurate with the national curriculum, in Years 7 to 9.

⁶⁷ The national curriculum sets out requirements for English, mathematics, science, physical education and computing in key stages 1–4; for art and design, design and technology, geography, history and music in key stages 1–3; for languages in key stages 2–3; and for citizenship in key stages 3–4.

⁶⁸ Schools will be required to teach relationships education (key stages 1 and 2), relationships and sex education (key stage 3 and 4) and health education (all key stages 1–4) from September 2020.

⁶⁹ The Education Act 2002 for state-funded schools and section 1A of the Academies Act 2010 for academies. State-funded schools are also required to: teach basic curriculum; promote the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. Maintained schools must teach the national curriculum. Academies must include English, mathematics, science and religious education in their curriculum.

⁷⁰ See our curriculum commentary phase 1: www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-commentary-october-2017.

⁷¹ Some schools are exempt from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS, where this is the case, the expectation would be that pupils are able to read and write fluently by Years 5 to 6.

177. At the heart of an effective key stage 4 curriculum is a strong academic core: the EBacc. The government's response to its EBacc consultation, published in July 2017, confirmed that the large majority of pupils should be expected to study the EBacc. It is therefore the government's national ambition that 75% of Year 10 pupils in state-funded mainstream schools should be starting to study EBacc GCSE courses nationally by 2022 (taking their examinations in 2024), rising to 90% by 2025 (taking their examinations in 2027). This is an ambition, and not a target for any individual school. Inspectors will not make a judgement about the quality of education based solely or primarily on its progress towards the EBacc ambition. Nevertheless, it is an important factor in understanding a school's level of ambition for its pupils. It is, therefore, important that inspectors understand what schools are doing to prepare for this to be achieved, and they should take those preparations into consideration when evaluating the intent of the school's curriculum.

Cultural capital

178. As part of making the judgement about the quality of education, inspectors will consider the extent to which schools are equipping pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. Our understanding of 'knowledge and cultural capital' is derived from the following wording in the national curriculum:⁷²

'It is the essential knowledge that pupils need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.'

Sources of evidence specific to curriculum intent

179. Inspectors will draw evidence about leaders' curriculum intent principally from discussion with senior and subject leaders. Inspectors will explore:

- whether leaders are following the national curriculum and basic curriculum or, in academies, a curriculum of similar breadth and ambition
- how carefully leaders have thought about what end points the curriculum is building towards, what pupils will be able to know and do at those end points, and how leaders have planned the curriculum accordingly. This includes considering how the intended curriculum will address social disadvantage by addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills
- how leaders have sequenced the curriculum to enable pupils to build their knowledge and skills towards the agreed end points

⁷² Sections 3.1 and 3.2, 'National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4', Department for Education, 2014; www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4.

- how leaders have ensured that the subject curriculum contains content that has been identified as most useful, and ensured that this content is taught in a logical progression, systematically and explicitly enough for all pupils to acquire the intended knowledge and skills
 - how the curriculum has been designed and taught so that pupils read at an age-appropriate level.
180. Inspectors will bear in mind that developing and embedding an effective curriculum takes time, and that leaders may only be partway through the process of adopting or redeveloping a curriculum. If leaders have an accurate evaluative understanding of current curriculum practice in their school and have identified appropriate next steps to improve curriculum quality and develop curriculum expertise across the school, inspectors will evaluate 'intent' favourably when reaching the holistic quality of education judgement. They will recognise that the criteria for a judgement of good are the best fit.
181. Inspectors will also consider any documents that leaders normally use in their curriculum planning, but will not request materials to be produced or provided in any specific format for inspection.

Implementation

182. In evaluating the implementation of the curriculum, inspectors will primarily evaluate how the curriculum is taught at subject and classroom level.
183. Research and inspection evidence suggest that the most important factors in how, and how effectively, the curriculum is taught and assessed are that:
- Teachers have expert knowledge of the subjects that they teach. If they do not, they are supported to address gaps in their knowledge so that pupils are not disadvantaged by ineffective teaching.
 - Teachers enable pupils to understand key concepts, presenting information clearly and encourage appropriate discussion.
 - Teachers check pupils' understanding effectively, and identify and correct misunderstandings.
 - Teachers ensure that pupils embed key concepts in their long-term memory and apply them fluently.
 - The subject curriculum is designed and delivered in a way that allows pupils to transfer key knowledge to long-term memory. It is sequenced so that new knowledge and skills build on what has been taught before and pupils can work towards clearly defined end points.
 - Teachers use assessment to check pupils' understanding in order to inform teaching, and to help pupils embed and use knowledge fluently and develop their understanding, and not simply memorise disconnected facts.

Developing understanding, not memorising disconnected facts

184. Learning can be defined as an alteration in long-term memory. If nothing has altered in long-term memory, nothing has been learned. However, transfer to long-term memory depends on the rich processes described above. In order to develop understanding, pupils connect new knowledge with existing knowledge. Pupils also need to develop fluency and unconsciously apply their knowledge as skills. This must not be reduced to, or confused with, simply memorising facts. Inspectors will be alert to unnecessary or excessive attempts to simply prompt pupils to learn glossaries or long lists of disconnected facts.

The school's use of assessment

185. When used effectively, assessment helps pupils to embed knowledge and use it fluently, and assists teachers in producing clear next steps for pupils. However, assessment is too often carried out in a way that creates unnecessary burdens for staff and pupils. It is therefore important that leaders and teachers understand its limitations and avoid misuse and overuse.
186. Inspectors will therefore evaluate how assessment is used in the school to support the teaching of the curriculum, but not substantially increase teachers' workloads by necessitating too much one-to-one teaching or overly demanding programmes that are almost impossible to deliver without lowering expectations of some pupils.
187. The collection of data can also create an additional workload for leaders and staff. Inspectors will look at whether schools' collections of attainment or progress data are proportionate, represent an efficient use of school resources, and are sustainable for staff. The Teacher Workload Advisory Group's report, 'Making data work',⁷³ recommends that school leaders should not have more than two or three data collection points a year, and that these should be used to inform clear actions.
188. Schools choosing to use more than two or three data collection points a year should have clear reasoning for what interpretations and actions are informed by the frequency of collection; the time taken to set assessments, collate, analyse and interpret the data; and the time taken to then act on the findings. If a school's system for data collection is disproportionate, inefficient or unsustainable for staff, inspectors will reflect this in their reporting on the school.

⁷³ 'Teacher workload advisory group report and government response', Department for Education, 2018; www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-workload-advisory-group-report-and-government-response.

Sources of evidence specific to curriculum implementation

189. The following activities will provide inspectors with evidence about the school's implementation of its intended curriculum:
- discussions with curriculum and subject leaders and teachers about the programme of study that classes are following for particular subjects or topics, the intended end points towards which those pupils are working, and their view of how those pupils are progressing through the curriculum
 - discussions with subject specialists and leaders about the content and pedagogical content knowledge of teachers, and what is done to support them
 - discussions with classroom teachers about how often they are expected to record, upload and review data
 - observations of and interviews with pupils or classes who are following this curriculum in lessons, including scrutinising the pupils' work⁷⁴
 - reviews of schemes of work or other long-term planning (in whatever form subject leaders normally use them), usually in discussion with curriculum leaders.
190. Inspectors should refer to the 'Lesson visits and work scrutiny' section in Part 1 of this handbook for guidance about what constitutes an appropriate sample of pupils.
191. In order to triangulate evidence effectively, inspectors will ensure that they gather a variety of these types of evidence in relation to the same sample of pupils. Inspectors will also ensure that the samples of pupils they choose are sufficient to allow them to reach a valid and reliable judgement on the quality of education offered by the school overall. Guidance on how to ensure that this evidence is both sufficiently valid and reliable is set out under 'Overarching approach to inspection' in Part 1 of this handbook.

Impact

192. When inspectors evaluate the impact of the education provided by the school, their focus will primarily be on what pupils have learned.
193. Inspection experience and research show that the most important factors to consider are that:
- A well-constructed, well-taught curriculum will lead to good results because those results will reflect what pupils have learned. There need be no conflict

⁷⁴ Work for some pupils, such as those who have profound or multiple learning difficulties, includes relevant assessment information such as photographs, video and records of observations made by teachers and teaching assistants.

between teaching a broad, rich curriculum and achieving success in examinations and tests.

- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND acquire the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.
- National assessments and examinations are useful indicators of pupils' outcomes, but they only represent a sample of what pupils have learned. Inspectors will balance outcomes with their first-hand assessment of pupils' work.
- All learning builds towards an end point. Pupils are being prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment at each stage of their learning. Inspectors will consider whether pupils are ready for the next stage by the point they leave the school or provision that they attend.
- Pupils in sixth form are ready for the next stage and are going on to appropriate, high-quality destinations. Inspectors will also consider this.
- If pupils are not able to read to an age-appropriate level and fluency, they will be incapable of accessing the rest of the curriculum, and they will rapidly fall behind their peers. (See paragraphs 280–282).

Inspectors will not use schools' internal assessment data as evidence

194. Inspectors will not look at non-statutory internal progress and attainment data⁷⁵ on section 5 and section 8 inspections of schools.⁷⁶ That does not mean that schools cannot use data if they consider it appropriate. Inspectors will, however, put more focus on the curriculum and less on schools' generation, analysis and interpretation of data. Teachers have told us they believe this will help us play our part in reducing unnecessary workload. Inspectors will be interested in the conclusions drawn and actions taken from any internal assessment information, but they will not examine or verify that information first hand. Inspectors will still use published national performance data as a starting point on inspection.
195. Inspectors will use the official IDSR as a starting point and get to see first hand the quality of education as experienced by pupils and understand how well leaders know what it is like to be a pupil at the school.
196. Inspectors will ask schools to explain why they have decided to collect whatever assessment data they collect, what they are drawing from their data and how that informs their curriculum and teaching.

⁷⁵ This does not include relevant assessment information (such as photographs, video and records of observations) made by teachers and teaching assistants for pupils who have profound or multiple learning difficulties.

⁷⁶ Although they will consider the school's use of assessment.

Sources of evidence specific to curriculum impact

197. Inspectors will gather evidence of the impact of the quality of education offered by the school from the following sources:

- the progress that pupils are making in terms of knowing more, remembering more and being able to do more
- nationally generated performance information about pupils' progress and attainment. This information is available in the IDSR, which is available to schools and inspectors, and will be analysed for its statistical significance in advance by Ofsted's data and insight team
- first-hand evidence of how pupils are doing, drawing together evidence from the interviews, lesson visits, work scrutinies and documentary review described above (see 'Implementation – sources of evidence')
- nationally published information about the destinations to which its pupils progress when they leave the school⁷⁷
- in primary schools, listening to a range of pupils read
- discussions with pupils about what they have remembered about the content they have studied
- how well pupils with SEND are prepared for the next stage of education and their adult lives.⁷⁸

198. Inspectors will recognise that some schools are in turn-around, including when they have been brokered into a MAT or rebrokered from one to another. In these schools, the quality of education may have been poor and may now be showing significant and sustained improvement. In these situations, nationally generated performance data may lag behind the current quality of education in the school and so inspectors will view the national data in this context.

Reaching a single quality of education judgement, drawing together intent, implementation and impact

199. Inspectors will **not** grade intent, implementation and impact separately. Instead, inspectors will reach a single graded judgement for the quality of education, drawing on all the evidence they have gathered and using their professional judgement.

⁷⁷ Destinations of KS4 and KS5 pupils: 2017, Department for Education, 2018; www.gov.uk/government/statistics/destinations-of-ks4-and-ks5-pupils-2017.

⁷⁸ Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years, Department for Education and Department of Health, January 2015, section 8, preparing for adulthood from the earliest years; www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25.