

Ofsted Inspection of FE & Skills

W2W Solutions Briefing Sheet



The information below is a summary of the key information from the Ofsted *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2009* as per the Latest News item at www.w2wsolutions.co.uk. We have read the document and sifted out the highlights for you - this is our interpretation of this information and should not be used as an official source of information.

Ofsted have now released the Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills from September 2009. The Handbook is the full version of the summary that was released earlier in July. Click [here](#) to visit the Ofsted website to download the handbook.

General Guidance

Selection - Ofsted will select providers to inspect the following year based on a range of indicators but the following indications have been given:

- satisfactory at previous inspection - likely to be inspected at least every four years
- good or outstanding at previous inspection - up to six years between inspections with interim assessment within three years after an inspection
- new providers - not inspected unless at least 12 months performance data is available

The final point isn't much consolation for providers who have been inspected on relatively new contracts recently, where judgements were restricted due to lack of historical information, but at least this is less likely to happen in the future.

Scope of Inspection - where providers are contracted to deliver more than one type of provision eg learner responsive and employer responsive (apprenticeships, Train to Gain or employability programmes) the inspection will cover all types of provision. Sub contracted provision would be covered within the provider's own inspection if they hold a direct contract with LSC or DWP, or at the time of the prime contract inspection if they don't hold a direct contract.

Notice - two to three working weeks' notice will be given. Providers will receive the notification letter including the planning meeting agenda. The lead inspector will telephone the provider to confirm arrangements for the planning meeting and start the process of inspection.

Nominee - the nominee role remains fairly similar to the current role, but more work will be involved in communicating details of the inspection to learners, employers and stakeholders rather than helping to plan the inspection. They will still participate in feedback meetings as they do at the moment.

Information for Inspectors - the nominee will need to provide the following information:

- numbers of learners in 14–16, 16–18 and 19+ age groups in subject areas.
- overall number of learners in age groups and levels in learner responsive age groups and E2E; employer-responsive provision; informal adult learning; nextstep; DWP employability programmes.
- lists of programmes at each level.
- geographical spread of premises and learners, particularly apprentices and Train to Gain.
- range and location of subcontractors.

No new data forms have yet been published.

Planning Meeting - usually by telephone with the nominee/most senior member of staff. The agenda can be found on page 19 of the Handbook. This is quite different from the current planning meeting to account for the focus on learner feedback and the approach to agreeing the timetable.

Timetable - there is going to be less scope for providers to influence this. Providers will have to supply a timetable of group and individual learning sessions taking place during the inspection period. The lead inspector will use this to select the sessions learners and employers to be seen during the inspection. **They will not normally indicate which sessions they plan to see.**

Workplace visits - providers will need to supply details of learners who aren't normally at the main sites eg work place, external venues. The lead inspector will decide which workplace visits they wish to undertake and will ask the nominee to inform those employers involved. Where possible the visits will be planned to observe a member of staff carrying out activities with learners, but they may visit the learner regardless of this! They may also carry out telephone interviews.

Pre-inspection Briefing - this replaces the existing PIC and seems much more detailed. It will still identify key themes and areas for exploration during inspection as well as those that don't require detailed investigation. The PIB appears to have wider evidence base including feedback from learners or employers, the development plan and LSC or funding body provider briefings.

Documentation - the requirement for documentation will be kept to a minimum as inspectors wish to see working documents not things prepared for inspection. The following documents may be requested:

- strategic and operational business plans
- development plan, operating statements, subject area plans, staff development plans and action plans arising from inspection, programme review or self-assessment
- details of staff qualifications and experience
- details of staff development activity in the last two years
- evidence of compliance with safeguarding requirements eg list of current CRB check
- reports from internal and external verifiers
- observation reports
- timetables and schedules of activity involving learners (showing locations and staff)
- complete and up-to-date data on learner numbers and learners' achievements
- minutes from key meetings
- evidence of the effectiveness of learner support activities.

This is similar to the original base room list, but excludes client files, examples of work etc.

Observation - the main activity of inspectors should be direct observation of the provider's work. Judgements on quality of teaching, training and assessment will be based on the LLUK professional standards for the lifelong learning sectors (click [here](#)). Formal observations of activities will be of sufficient length to ensure clear judgements can be made and a grade awarded. The person observed will usually be given a grade and summary of strengths and areas for development. The provider will receive feedback on the quality of session but a profile of the grades awarded will not be provided. Short, focused observations of activities usually lasting approximately 15 minutes will look at specific aspects such as learner support, use of ITC, attendance and personalised learning. Those being observed will not receive feedback for these sessions.

Learners Views - a template will be provided to distribute, electronically if possible, to all learners and employers inviting them to respond to the inspection team, using email where possible usually by the week prior to the inspection. Meetings will be arranged during the inspection to enable learners to meet inspectors, including meetings with samples of learners selected by inspectors and open invitation meetings.

Informing Learners - all learners and employers must be advised about the inspection, including details of how they may inform the inspectors of their views. Electronic posters will be provided to display on an internal intranet, website, notice board etc.

Less than 10 learners - the old regime would not normally inspect subject areas with fewer than 10 learners. This appears to have been removed.

Feedback - processes are similar to the current system, with a key difference being recommendations. These will cover the weakest areas of performance that are hindering the provider's improvement and will provide precise, specific areas for improvement.

Report Format - there will now be a summary report for users including main findings and views of learners and employers. The Record of Main Findings will form part of the report. Providers will have one day to comment on the factual accuracy of the report before publication within 25 days of the inspection. Providers are expected to ensure that all learners are made aware of the findings of the inspection.

Grades - the same grading regime applies but illustrative grade characteristics have been provided in many of the key questions. Below is the illustrative grade table for overall effectiveness, but all of them make interesting reading and will no doubt help providers grade their own self assessment more accurately in line with Ofsted guidance and work out the minimum standards they should be aiming for in key areas.

Grade	Description
Outstanding	Overall effectiveness is likely to be outstanding when the quality of provision and leadership and management are at least good and outcomes for learners are outstanding. There has been exceptional improvement, or previously outstanding performance has been securely maintained, as a result of highly effective leadership and management and provision, which enable learners to meet ambitious targets. Equality and diversity and safeguarding are likely to be at least good.
Good	Overall effectiveness is likely to be good when either the quality of provision or leadership and management are at least good or outcomes for learners are at least good. Overall performance has improved greatly or has consolidated and improved on previously good performance. Leadership and management and provision enable learners to achieve realistic but challenging targets.
Satisfactory	Overall effectiveness is likely to be satisfactory when the quality of provision, leadership and management and outcomes for learners are all at least satisfactory. There is a trend of improvement in the overall performance, despite a few remaining weaknesses. Leadership and management and provision enable learners to meet targets which lead to satisfactory progress. Systems are embedded sufficiently to enable further improvement.
Inadequate	Overall effectiveness is likely to be inadequate where one or more of the following are judged to be inadequate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capacity to improve • outcomes for learners • the quality of provision • leadership and management • safeguarding • equality and diversity.

Reinspection - the same criteria for reinspection applies. A monitoring visit will take place six to eight months after the last full inspection with a full reinspection taking place at between twelve and fifteen months similar to the old system.

Common Inspection Framework

Safeguarding - the CIF provides much clearer guidance as to what the standards are that providers will be measured against. Our concern is that at the moment many providers are likely to fall down on question A3 - How safe do learners feel? To achieve a satisfactory grade, learners need to know how to recognise unfair, unsafe or abusive treatment by others and what action to take to protect themselves and other learners and should understand and use internet safety measures.

Question C3 - How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners? covers the requirement to have a policy that is reviewed annually; to comply with ISA legislation from October 2009; to provide appropriate training on safeguarding for all staff, governors and volunteers, which is regularly updated. To achieve a satisfactory grade, governors/supervisory bodies and senior managers should receive regular reports; there should be a central list showing appropriate checks have been carried out on all staff, including governors/trustees and volunteers; all staff should have received at least basic awareness training in safeguarding; learners should have received information and/or training on health and safety, and be aware of unfair, unsafe and abusive practices and how they can access help and support; learners' views on safety matters should be sought and acted upon.

As this is a limiting grade all providers need to start to plan now to ensure they achieve the minimum standard while obviously striving for the outstanding! *W2W Solutions can provide support and training in this area.*

Learner Involvement - there is great focus on involving learners in developing policies, provision and activities throughout the CIF. This builds on the learner voice concepts and involvement strategies that are common in the FE sector. The implication is that Ofsted will expect to see similar strategies across all provisions, not just colleges and LSC provision. This is something that DWP providers need to start looking at if they haven't already. Question C5 focuses solely on how effectively the provider engages with users to support and promote improvement.

Skills for Life - there are many references within the CIF of learners receiving help to develop literacy, numeracy, language and key skills. This is much more explicit than in the previous CIF.

IT - the use of technology and e-learning is highlighted within the CIF. It has long been expected to use ITC within Skills for Life and other appropriate provisions, and it appears that this approach is gathering momentum.

Equality & Diversity - CIF question B1 and B4 mention the use of materials and teaching methods that are sensitive to, and promote, equality of opportunity and good race relations as well as how staff maximise opportunities to promote equality of opportunity and awareness of diversity.

Ofsted will be looking at two principles, how effectively a provider is narrowing any achievement gap between groups of learners and how effectively they promote equality and diversity and tackle discrimination. The collection and systematic use of equality data to monitor the achievement gap is already becoming a key focus during inspection, and will obviously be a formal part of it in the future.

Question C4 also highlights the need to reinforce learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity, and preparation for living and working in a multiracial society, through their programme, in tutorials and at reviews.

To achieve a satisfactory grade there should be active promotion of equality and diversity; the staff profile should reflect that of the learner population; the impact of equalities policies and action plans should be monitored and targets set for improvement. If providers do not analyse outcomes for learners to monitor the impact of equality and diversity policies, they may end up with an inadequate grade. This is a limiting grade!