

# Annual review of inspections

## 2024–25



Department  
for Education

ISI is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other regulatory requirements are met.

**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

## Contents

<a href="#">About ISI</a>	4
<a href="#">Foreword</a>	5
<a href="#">Quality assurance of education</a>	6
<a href="#">Inspection of association independent schools</a>	9
<a href="#">How we report inspection findings</a>	10
<a href="#">Inspection types explained</a>	11
<a href="#">Inspection outcomes</a>	12
<a href="#">Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance</a>	17
<a href="#">Section 2: Pupils' education, training and recreation</a>	18
<a href="#">Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing</a>	19
<a href="#">Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society</a>	20
<a href="#">Safeguarding</a>	21
<a href="#">Additional insights</a>	22
<a href="#">Inspection of British schools overseas</a>	23
<a href="#">Inspection of private further education colleges and English language schools</a>	26
<a href="#">Inspection quality</a>	28
<a href="#">Hearing feedback</a>	31

## About ISI

ISI is accountable to the UK Government and appointed to inspect a range of education settings in England and British schools overseas.

These cover over 1300 association independent schools and further education colleges which together educate over half a million children and young people.

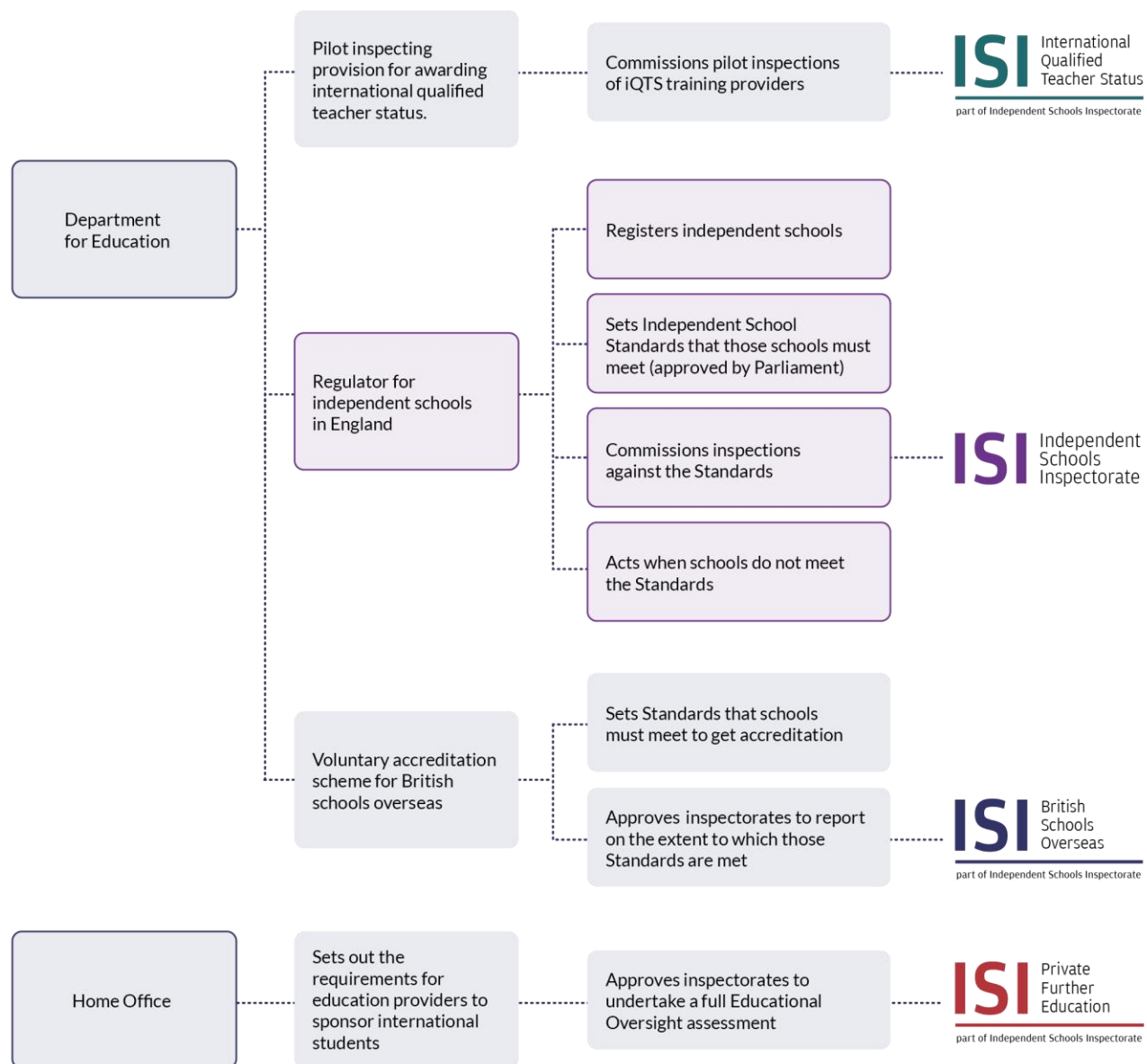
We are appointed to develop and implement inspection methodology for courses leading to international qualified teacher status.

ISI is formally approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations affiliated to the Independent Schools Council:

- The Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (AGBIS)
- The Girls' School Association (GSA)
- The Heads' Conference (HMC)
- Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS)
- The Independent Schools Association (ISA)
- The Independent Schools' Bursars Association (ISBA)
- The Society of Heads

This approval is outlined in section 87A of the Children Act 1989 and section 106 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

Ofsted inspects independent schools in England which are not members of associations affiliated to the Independent Schools Council.



## Foreword

This review of ISI inspections during 2024-25 builds on insights shared in our ISI Annual Report 2023-24. We present thematic insights from each section of the national framework for association independent schools, and information on all remits inspected by ISI.

We share an overview of what is working well in schools, drawing on inspectors' reporting of positive aspects of leaders' decision-making and its impact for pupils. We also share insights about what could improve through our thematic analysis of both recommended next steps and areas for action from inspections during this period.

ISI's four inspection principles of manageability, collaboration, triangulation and typicality, and proportionality guide the practice of our inspectors and form the basis of a shared understanding of our inspection methodology.

We invite all school leaders to complete our post-inspection survey, and we value the feedback we receive. We include an overview of this feedback. We ask school leaders for their views on the extent to which our four principles were followed on inspection and include an overview of their feedback in this review.

We continue to develop our methodology for hearing the views of pupils during inspection, which builds on our 'three levels of school culture' approach. During this year, we have developed our pupil questionnaire by working with external partners specialising in questionnaire methodology.

Our ISI BSO inspections evaluate the extent to which international schools which offer an English curriculum and who want BSO accreditation meet the Department for Education's BSO Standards. We introduced a revised BSO inspection framework in January 2025. This framework is aligned to our national framework and informed by what we have learned since introducing our national framework in September 2023. Ofsted's monitoring of ISI BSO highlighted our rigorous inspection practice.

In the previous academic year, we partnered with the Department for Education in the successful pilot phase of inspections of providers of international qualified teacher status (iQTS). Feedback from the pilot phase has informed the introduction of the iQTS framework for inspections this year. ISI looks forward to conducting inspections of iQTS providers from September 2025.

We continue to grow our team of directors and employed senior inspectors, who lead and quality assure inspections across all remits. We welcome the specialist expertise they bring to our inspection work.

We have been delighted to welcome over 450 senior leaders from the sector to our national inspection teams either as team or reporting inspectors during the year. We have also recruited over 30 team inspectors internationally for ISI BSO inspections.

ISI continues to bring its deep understanding of school inspection to the wider accountability and regulatory system. Our regular meetings with both the Department for Education and Ofsted enable us to share knowledge and insight that support and strengthen education for pupils in the schools and colleges we inspect.



**Vanessa Ward**  
Chief Inspector-CEO

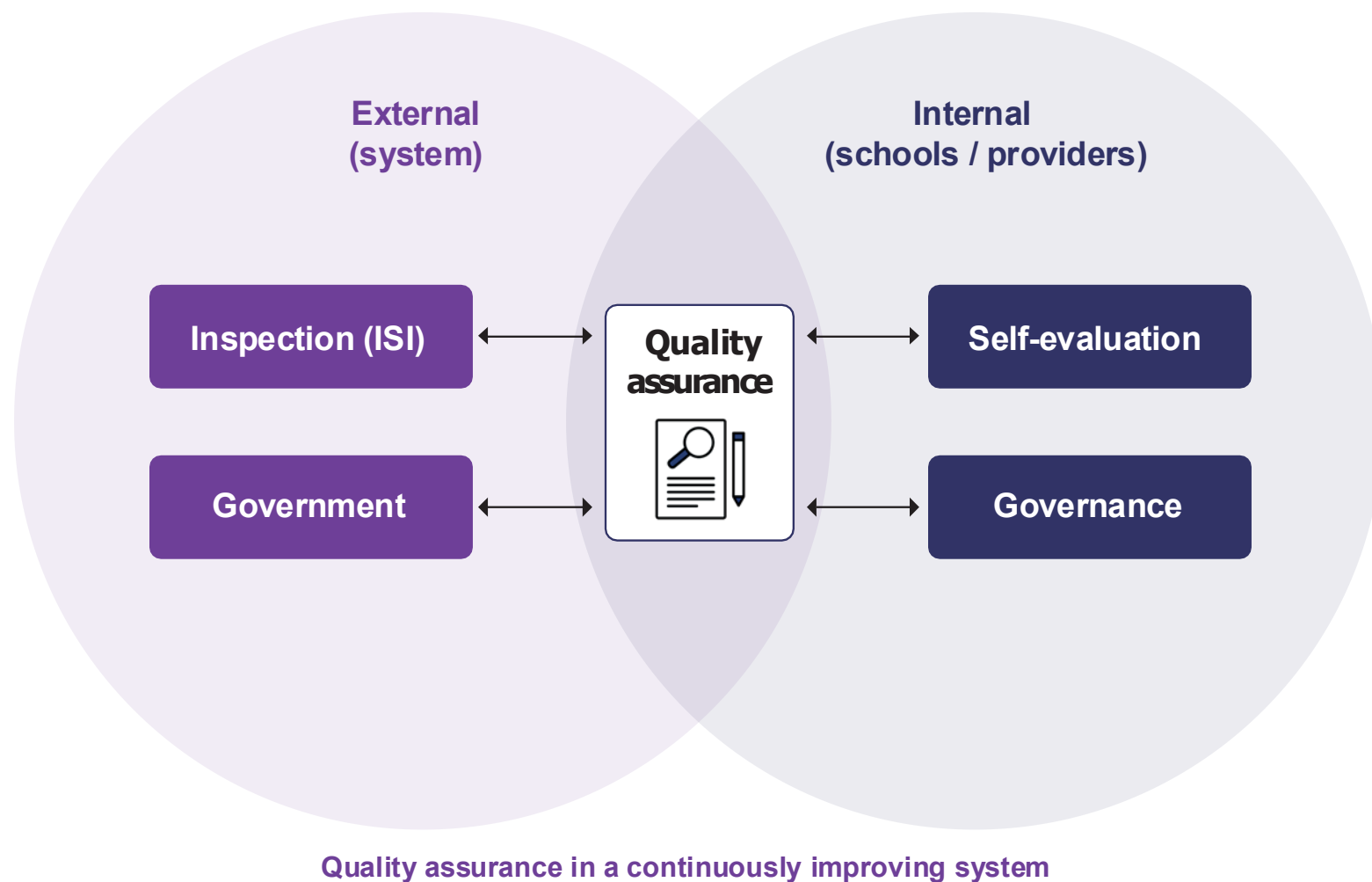
## Quality assurance of education

We have a unique opportunity to strengthen understanding of the quality assurance of education. Our clear focus during inspection on the statutory requirements of the Independent School Standards ensures that school leaders and governors are aware of their accountability in running an independent school. Our inspectors bring up-to-date knowledge of school leadership and our training prepares them for the responsibility of evaluating a school's provision.

We are committed to promoting rigorous quality assurance of education. We share our methodology contained in our inspection handbook so that school leaders have insight into ISI's approach to quality assurance.

This year we held a team inspector conference alongside our regular training programme, to further develop inspectors' knowledge of the framework and understanding of quality assurance. The conference focused on inspection principles and pupil progress.

We also delivered keynotes and webinars across the sector, discussing inspection methodology and inspection insights at association conferences. In addition, we introduced Early Career Teachers to ISI inspections through the Independent Schools Teacher Induction Panel.



# Promoting wellbeing through inspection

Our inspections focus on evaluating all aspects of education through the lens of pupils' wellbeing as included in the Independent Schools Standards and defined in the Children Act 2004.

Our reports are structured thematically. This page shows how the Standards, the Act and our framework align with our inspection role.

Every inspection evaluates whether arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils meets the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education and other related statutory guidance.

## Independent School Standards

Part 8, Section 34(1)(c) of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 states that:

“The Standard about the quality of leadership and management is met if the proprietor ensures that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school actively promote the wellbeing of pupils.”

## The Children Act 2004

For the purpose of paragraph 34(1)(c) wellbeing is defined by reference to section 10(2) of the Children Act 2004.

- Physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Protection from harm and neglect
- Education, training and recreation
- Contribution to society
- Social and economic wellbeing

## ISI Inspection Framework

ISI's inspection framework takes the statutory definition of wellbeing and places it at the centre of evaluation, reflecting its importance in the Independent School Standards.

- Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance
- Section 2: Pupils' education, training and recreation
- Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Section 4: Pupils' social and economic wellbeing and contribution to society

## SAFEGUARDING

## Sharing knowledge and insight

ISI is committed to working collaboratively with other organisations and partners to promote and share effective practice around the quality assurance of education. This includes activities at both national and international level.

### The Department for Education

ISI shares accountability data and thematic insight through regular keeping-in-touch meetings, and termly and annual accountability meetings.

### Ofsted

We continue to work closely with Ofsted, particularly in relation to the inspection of registered early years settings.

ISI inspectors attend joint training activities and senior staff at Ofsted and ISI meet regularly to ensure a consistent approach to the inspection of these early years settings.

Under ministerial direction, ISI and Ofsted have a joint working arrangement based on mutual exchange of knowledge and understanding at a corporate, operational and strategic level. This results in an annual report from HMCI (Ofsted) to the Secretary of State.

ISI submitted an organisation response to Ofsted's consultation on improving the way Ofsted inspects. Our contribution shared learnings from our own introduction and implementation of a new inspection framework, with particular focus on the inspection of independent schools and registered early years settings.

### Estyn

In the academic year ending July 2025, senior leaders from ISI and Estyn met to share approaches to inspection, and this will continue. We are exploring opportunities to shadow inspections to be scheduled early in the 2025-26 academic year.

### Education Advisory Forum (EAF)

EAF is a board advisory group made up of highly experienced and qualified experts in their own field, and education specialists.

EAF acts as a stimulus for high-quality strategic thinking to inform the continuous development of ISI's inspection methodology.

### Association Inspection Meeting (AIM)

AIM meets termly and promotes understanding and dialogue between ISI and the associations in membership of ISC on the regulatory requirements and quality assurance of education.

### Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI)

ISI is represented as a national co-ordinator for the UK at SICI.

SICI is an association of national and regional inspectorates of education in Europe. It was founded in 1995 and there are currently 37 member inspectorates.

National co-ordinators support the implementation of SICI's strategic plan and meet annually, together with the general assembly.

### Institute of Regulation

ISI continues with its membership of the Institute of Regulation.

The Institute of Regulation was established in 2021 to provide resources and a professional network for everyone working in and/or interested in regulation.



# Inspection of association independent schools in England

Information and insights in this section relate to ISI inspections  
carried out between 1 September 2024 and 31 July 2025

## How we report inspection findings

The focus of ISI inspections is to report the extent to which schools meet the statutory Independent School Standards (referred to as ‘the Standards’) and other regulations, including those relating to safeguarding, early years and boarding.

These are the requirements that school proprietors agree to meet when applying to register their school with the Department for Education – the regulator for independent schools in England.

Our reports include clear statements on the impact of provision for pupils and the extent to which the school meets the Standards. Our reports also provide a nuanced evaluation of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school’s provision.

Our reporting focuses on the skills, knowledge, and outcomes of decision-making of leadership and management at the school.

All Standards and regulatory requirements are mapped under appropriate sections of our inspection framework.

### Recommended next steps

Every ISI inspection report contains at least one recommended next step. These are helpful development points for the school. Recommended next steps are based on evidence collected by the inspectors and are discussed with school leaders as part of the collaborative inspection process.

### Areas for action

If one or more Standards are not met, areas for action are included in the report. These clearly refer to the Standard or Standards that are unmet, including outlining the improvement needed.

### Early years

Inspectors consider how effectively leaders actively promote the wellbeing of all children in early years when making judgements for the whole school.

A school’s provision for children from birth to five is also inspected in accordance with the requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework.

Provision for children in a setting that is registered with Ofsted is evaluated and reported separately in accordance with the requirements of Ofsted’s inspection framework and associated guidance.

We use the statutory definition of wellbeing as the foundation of our approach to inspection. This is reflected in the structure of our inspection framework and routine inspection reports:



SECTION 1  
Leadership and management, and governance



SECTION 2  
Pupils’ education, training, and recreation



SECTION 3  
Pupils’ physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing



SECTION 4  
Pupils’ social and economic wellbeing and contribution to society



Safeguarding

Inspection types explained

Routine inspections

Each school is typically inspected routinely once every three years. The inspection report follows the structure of ISI's inspection framework.

Material change inspections

These occur when a school applies to change the terms of its registration with the Department for Education. For example, by changing premises.

Additional inspections

These occur when the Department for Education has reason for a school to be inspected urgently.

Progress monitoring inspections

These occur when a school has not met the standards at the previous inspection. Inspectors focus on the extent to which leaders have addressed the areas for action.

Number of inspections of independent schools in England

Autumn (total: 190)



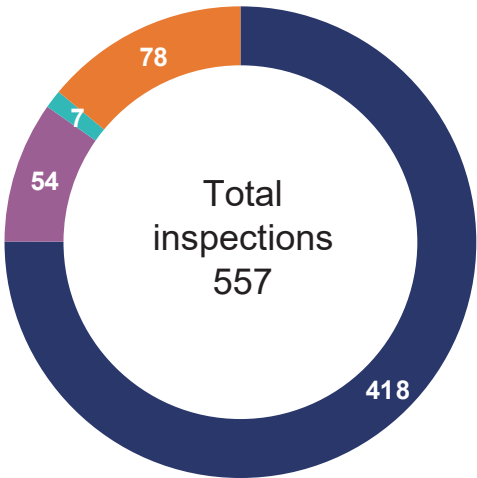
Spring (total: 205)



Summer (total: 162)



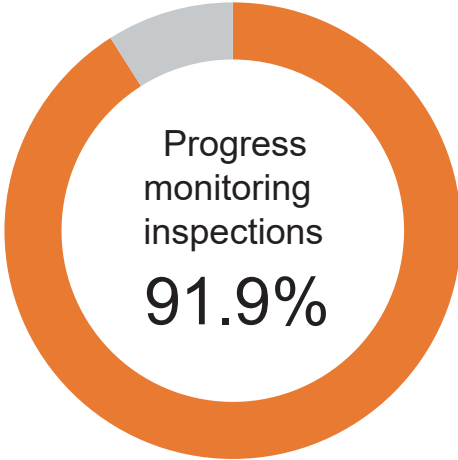
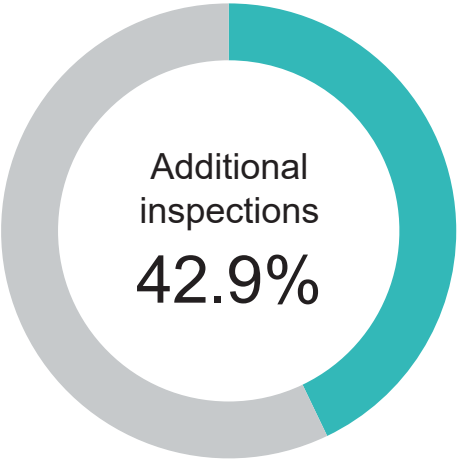
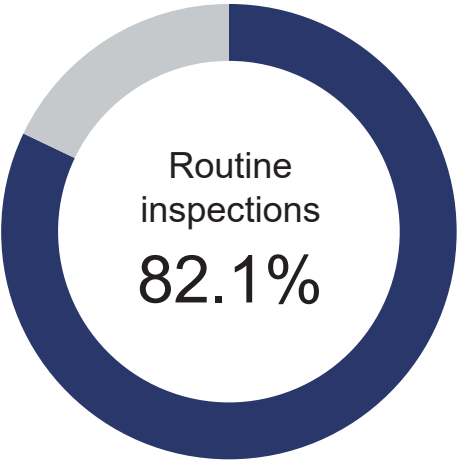
- Routine inspections (total: 418)
- Material change inspections (total: 54)
- Additional inspections (total: 7)
- Progress monitoring inspections (total: 78)



# Inspection outcomes

The extent to which schools met the Standards

Inspection type	TOTAL
Routine inspections	82.1%
Material change inspections	98.1%
Additional inspections	42.9%
Progress monitoring inspections	91.9%
TOTAL	84.4%



# Inspection outcomes

## Standards met (by part)

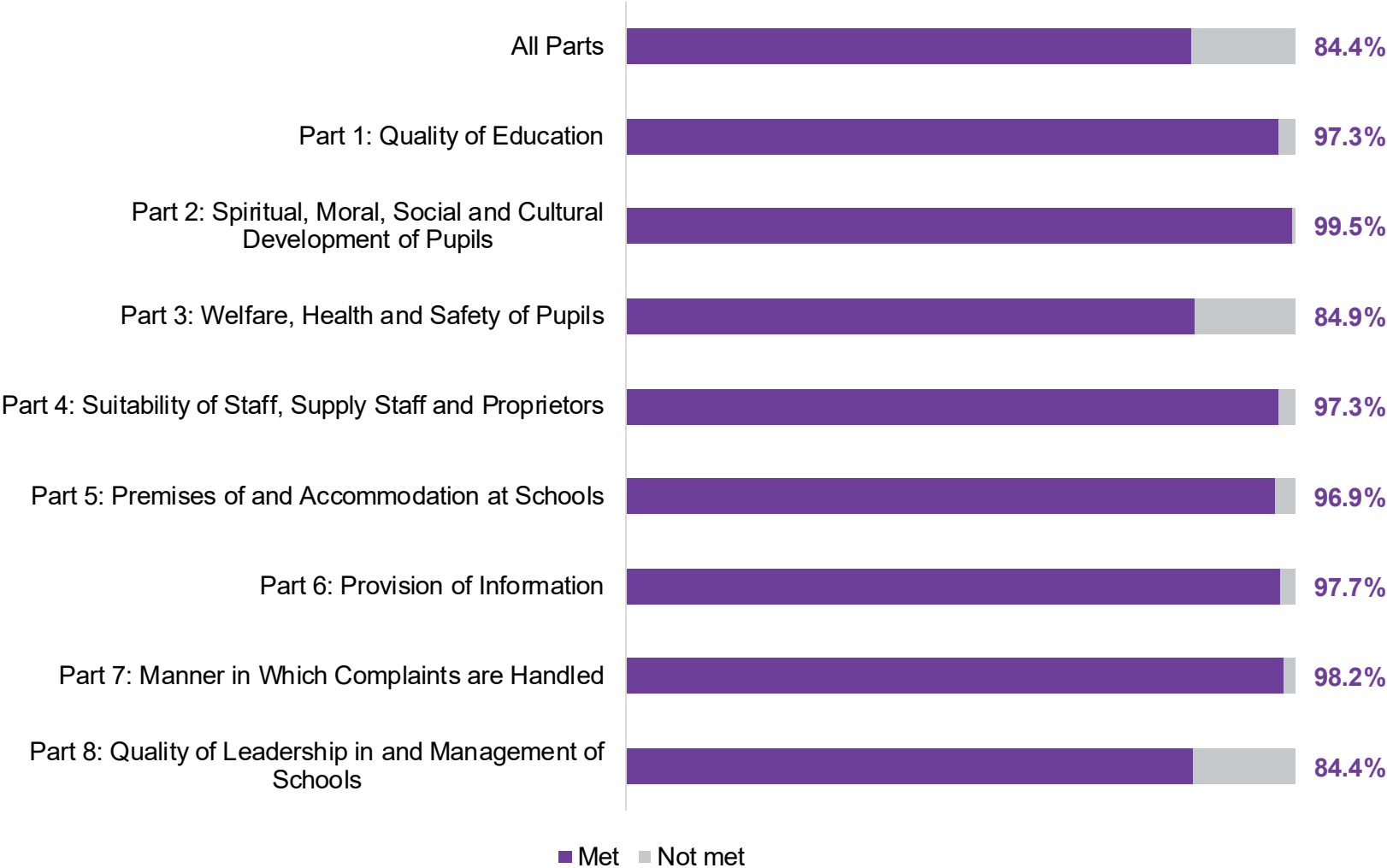
The Standards are split into eight parts and cover all aspects of school life.

In total, 84.4% of schools met all of the Standards.

The majority of unmet Standards related to the welfare, health, and safety of pupils.

This includes situations where safeguarding arrangements did not follow relevant statutory guidance. Inspectors found that in some of these schools, leaders did not have due regard to statutory guidance to manage and improve attendance.

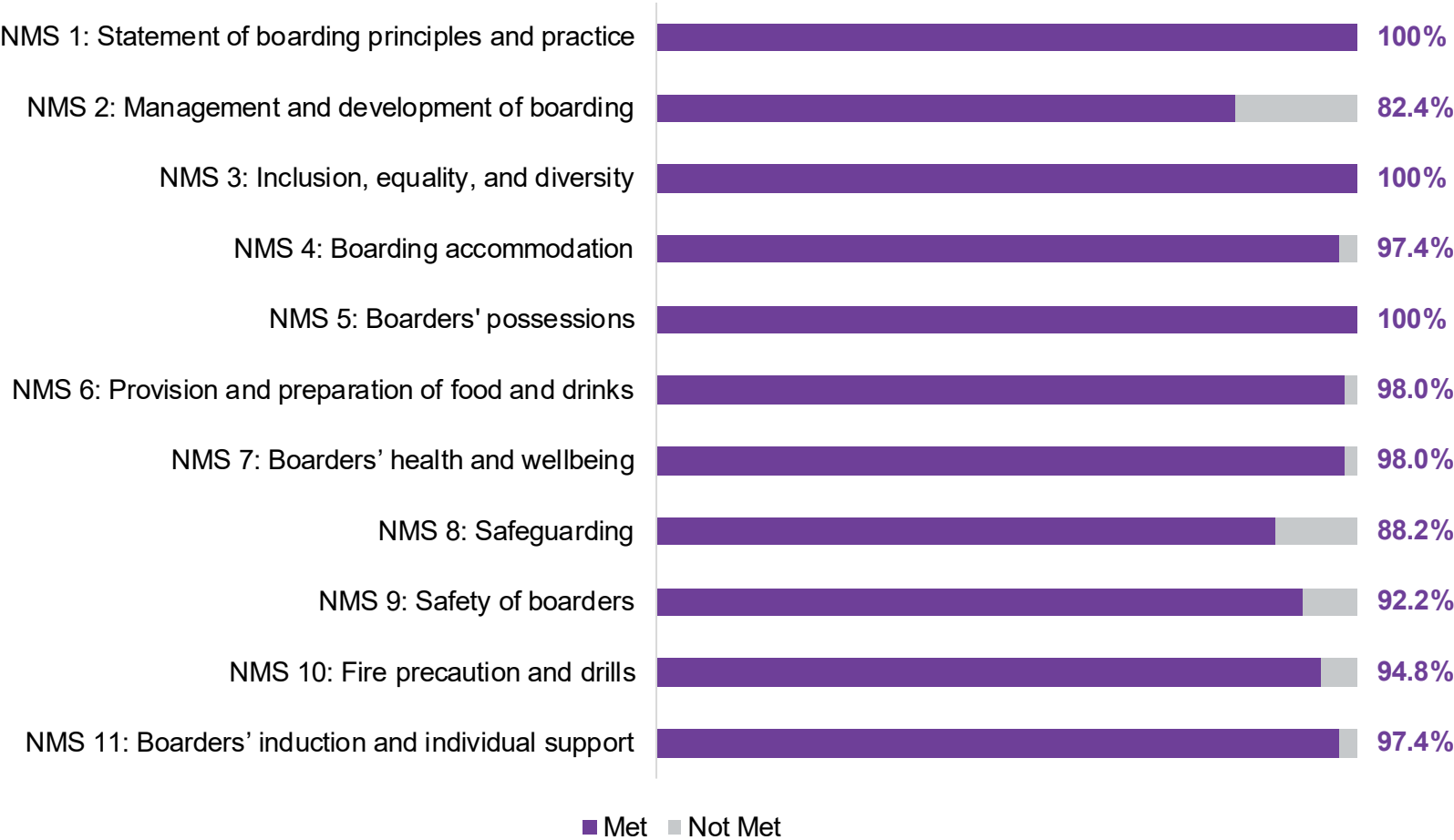
In schools which did not meet the Standards, inspectors found examples where leaders had a limited understanding of the requirements relating to safer recruitment checks.



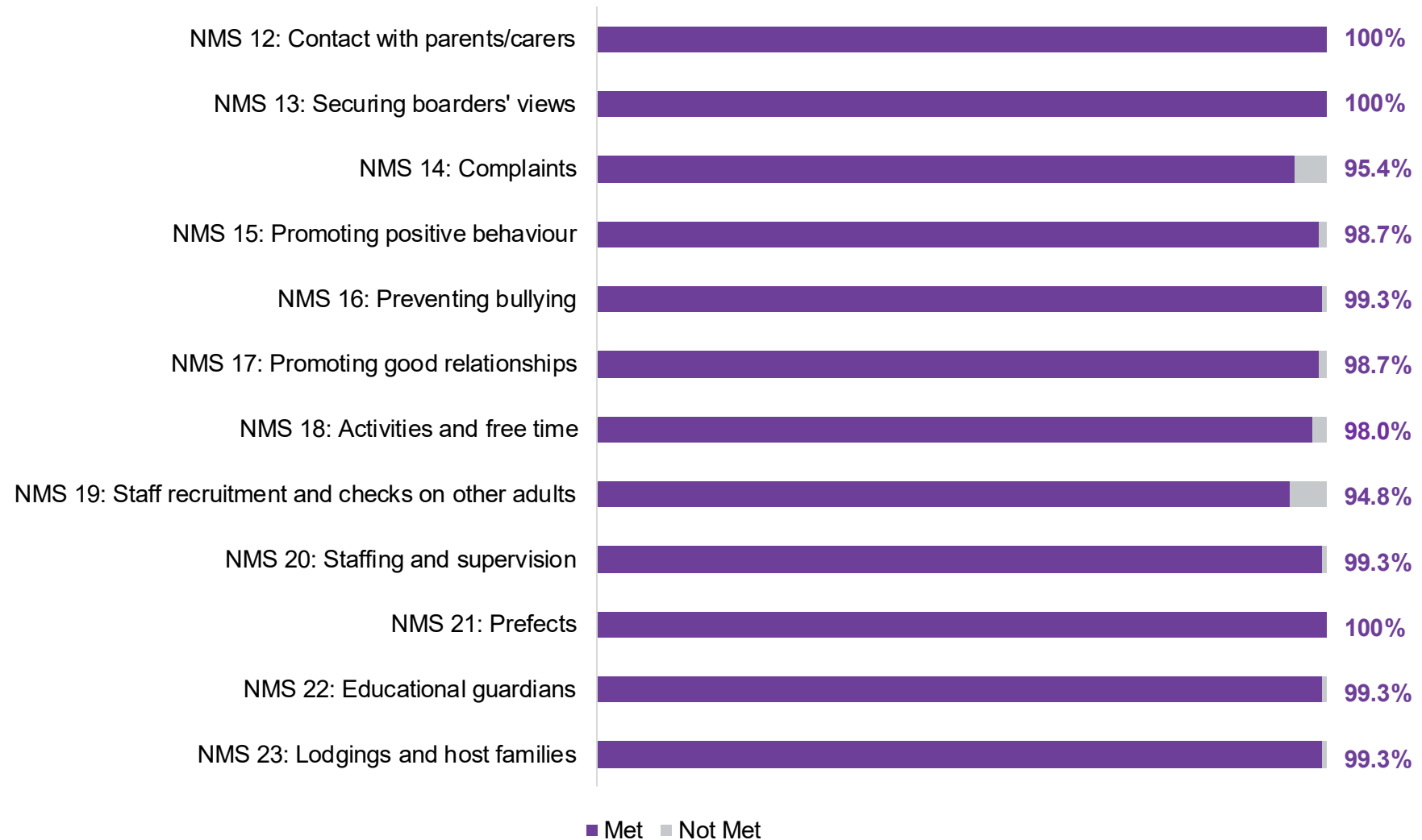
# Inspection outcomes (Boarding)

## National minimum Standards (NMS) for boarding schools

ISI inspected 154 schools that provide accommodation to pupils.



**Inspection outcomes (Boarding) - continued**  
National minimum Standards (NMS) for boarding schools



# Inspection outcomes

## Registered early years settings

Early years settings must register with Ofsted if they have children below the age of two.

ISI is approved to inspect early years registered settings linked to association independent schools, on behalf of Ofsted.

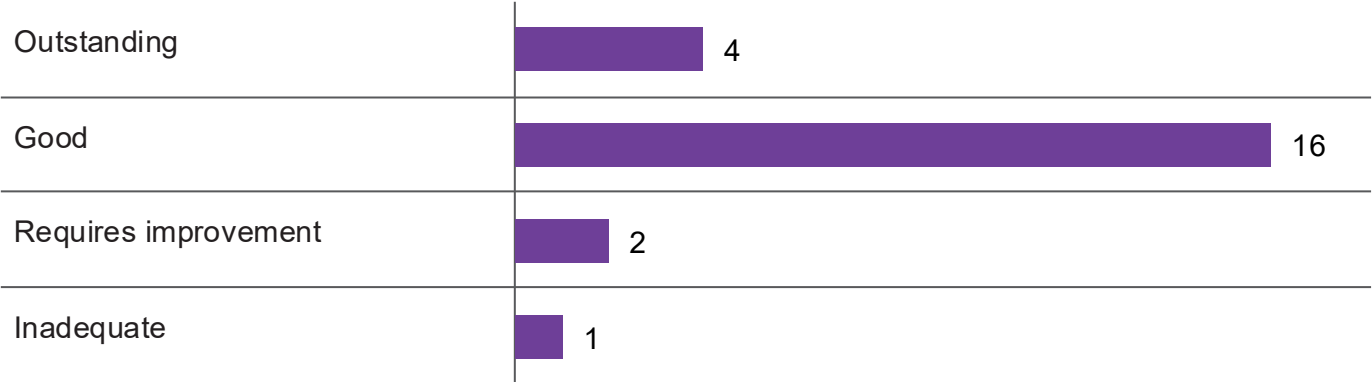
We usually inspect these settings at the same time as the independent school inspection.

The inspection of an Ofsted registered early years setting is conducted with reference to the requirements of Ofsted’s inspection framework.

Ofsted has four grade descriptors for a provision’s overall effectiveness:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Inadequate

During the period, ISI inspected 23 registered early years settings.





## SECTION 1

# Leadership and management, and governance

## Our inspection activity

Inspectors consider how leaders at all levels fulfil their responsibilities effectively and demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role across all aspects of school life relating to the Standards.

Those with governance responsibility, including trustees and proprietors, must assure themselves that leadership skills are in place and that leaders fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that Standards are met consistently.

Leaders and managers must demonstrate their understanding and management of risk, ensure effective safeguarding culture and practice, and actively promote the wellbeing of pupils (as defined by the Children Act 2004).

## Where it is working well

Inspectors found that leaders are knowledgeable and have good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Leaders' actions and decision-making arising from self-evaluation enabled them to promote pupils' wellbeing.

Inspectors found many examples of effective governance with proprietorial and governing bodies supporting school leaders and carefully checking the quality of provision and outcomes for pupils. Governors with safeguarding responsibilities were well informed about the school's processes.

## What could improve

Our review of recommended next steps and areas for action indicate that in some schools, leaders were not identifying and managing risks effectively and/or policies were not up to date and did not always accurately reflect the practice of the school.

Policies were sometimes not made available to parents as required by statutory guidance. In some cases, inspectors found that schools could improve the frequency of progress reports to parents.

## SECTION 2

# Pupils' education, training and recreation

## Our inspection activity

Inspectors consider how effectively leaders implement the school curriculum, taking into account pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs.

Teachers' planning and assessment must enable all pupils to develop skills and understanding, acquire new knowledge and make good progress.

Leaders must ensure that pupils develop emotional, intellectual, social and creative skills. This includes ensuring access to a good range and choice of recreational activities.

Where pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) leaders must ensure that planning and teaching takes their needs into account so they make good progress.

## Where it is working well

Leaders continue to ensure that the curriculum is wide-ranging and ambitious which enables pupils to develop their knowledge and skills across a range of subjects.

Inspectors found examples where the teaching and learning strategy is embedded and applied consistently by teachers. This enabled pupils to receive tailored support so that they make good progress from their starting points.

Inspectors found that schools provide pupils with extensive opportunities to develop their interests and skills across a wide range of co-curricular activities. Leaders adapt the range of activities on offer to meet pupils' changing needs and interests, which further increases levels of participation.

## What could improve

In some schools, information about the prior attainment of pupils could be used more effectively to enable pupils needing additional support to be identified and to ensure that pupils receive sufficient challenge.

Inspectors found that in some schools, feedback to pupils could be more effective in helping pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work.

## SECTION 3

# Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

## Our inspection activity

Inspectors consider how effectively leaders encourage pupils' mutual trust and respect for other people, their spiritual and moral knowledge and understanding, and their physical education. Leaders must ensure that pupils receive applicable relationships education or relationships and sex education.

Leaders must also ensure that the school has a behaviour policy which is understood by staff and pupils and is implemented fairly and consistently.

An effective anti-bullying strategy must be in place which actively prevents and minimises bullying at the school. Inspectors also consider the provision and maintenance of premises and accommodation.

## Where it is working well

Leaders support pupils' wellbeing through well-planned academic and pastoral provision and targeted support. As a result, pupils develop their self-awareness and self-esteem which builds pupils' confidence in their learning.

## What could improve

Inspectors found that in some schools, the behaviour policy could be implemented and applied more consistently in cases of low-level disruption in lessons. In some schools, assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding in relationships and sex education could be used more effectively to inform future teaching and to meet the needs of all pupils.

Inspectors found that in some schools, leaders did not have due regard to revised statutory guidance to manage and improve attendance.

Inspectors found that some schools needed to carry out more rigorous fire assessments and ensure that premises are maintained safely, with works relating to health and safety being carried out in a timely manner.

## SECTION 4

# Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

## Our inspection activity

Inspectors consider how effectively the school prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in British society.

Pupils should receive human, social and economic education, be encouraged to show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to society more widely.

Inspectors also consider pupils' access to accurate, up-to-date, impartial careers guidance so that they can make informed choices about a broad range of career options which helps them to fulfil their potential.

## Where it is working well

School leaders continue to support pupils to develop their social and cultural knowledge and understanding.

Leaders provide a variety of meaningful opportunities for pupils to volunteer and to make a positive contribution to their school and the local community. These opportunities support pupils to develop their confidence, communication and leadership skills.

## What could improve

In some schools, inspectors recommended improvements in the provision of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, such that pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of economics and managing finances. It was also recommended that some schools improve the use of assessment in relationship and sex education to inform future teaching and learning.

Inspectors found that some schools could improve their careers guidance programme to ensure that pupils receive independent, high-quality information about career pathways, including for post-16 options.

# Safeguarding

## Our inspection activity

Inspectors evaluate the measures that leaders have in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils, as required by statutory guidance.

This includes evaluating the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding practice and culture, effective implementation of policy and working with other agencies.

## Where it is working well

Leaders ensure that staff receive up-to-date training in line with statutory guidance. This enables leaders to manage safeguarding concerns appropriately.

Leaders promote a positive safeguarding culture where adults understand their responsibilities to help protect pupils from harm. In these schools, safeguarding procedures are clear to all and are followed diligently, including when working with safeguarding partners beyond the school.

## What could improve

Inspectors found that leaders did not always ensure that the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) has the status and authority to fulfil their role, with all arrangements reflecting statutory guidance.

Inspectors also found that in some schools, leaders did not ensure that timely safeguarding recruitment checks were completed or recorded accurately for adults working at the school.

## Additional insights

### Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)

In many schools, leaders identify the individual needs of pupils and employ suitable strategies to meet pupils' needs effectively.

In some schools, inspectors found that the school's teaching strategies could be improved for pupils who have SEND. In some cases, leaders should ensure that effective practice is shared between subject areas in order to ensure consistency of support.

### Boarding

In a small number of schools, inspectors found that boarders required a larger range of opportunities to help pupils develop their social, creative and physical skills. Inspectors also found examples of schools which required a higher standard of accommodation and food provision.

A small number of areas for action also concerned staff training and leaders' knowledge of statutory guidance, such that staff are appointed in required roles and there is a clear procedure for reporting concerns.

### Early years

In most schools, early years provision ensures that children make a good start to their school careers. Children enjoy a wide range of engaging activities to promote their development and to lay firm foundations for their future learning.

In a small minority of schools, leaders do not ensure that the welfare requirements of the early years foundation stage are consistently met.

# **Inspection of British schools overseas**

**Information in this section relates to inspections carried out  
between 1 September 2024 and 31 July 2025**

## Our inspection activity

ISI is approved by the Department for Education to inspect British schools overseas (BSO).

BSO is the UK government voluntary accreditation scheme for overseas schools.

The benefits of BSO include being listed as a British school overseas on GOV.UK and being eligible to offer induction to early career teachers who hold qualified teacher status.

To retain BSO status, schools must be inspected every three years and continue to meet all Standards.

This year ISI completed 37 BSO inspections in 22 countries.

## Ofsted monitoring of ISI BSO inspections

Ofsted monitors all approved BSO inspectorates and reports on the quality and effectiveness of their inspections.

Ofsted reported that:

- ISI inspectors demonstrate an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding. They follow ISI's code of conduct and receive positive feedback from the schools they inspect
- ISI inspectors ensure inspection quality by checking on the depth and rigour of inspection evidence on site. These arrangements are further strengthened through a central quality assurance system led by ISI's senior inspectors
- evidence bases are thorough and detailed and fully support the judgements recorded in inspection reports
- ISI inspectors are trained and supported well. This leads to high-quality inspection practice
- ISI's inspections of safeguarding in BSO schools are thorough and accurate
- inspection reports are factual and informative. They provide clear recommendations for leaders and judgements align with ISI's inspection framework
- on some occasions, inspectors recorded less detail relating to special educational needs and/or disabilities compared to other aspects of provision.

## BSO inspection framework launch May 2025

ISI's new BSO inspection framework and handbook came into effect in May 2025, following four inspection pilots carried out in March and April 2025.

This new framework, and the principles of inspection methodology, align with the framework for routine association school inspections in England.

However, there are also important differences between BSO and national inspection processes regarding pre-inspection timelines which are outlined in the new handbook.

We have replaced the pre-inspection visit with a pre-inspection webinar to inform school leaders about the inspection framework and the process of inspection.

[isi.net/about/what-we-do/bso](https://isi.net/about/what-we-do/bso)

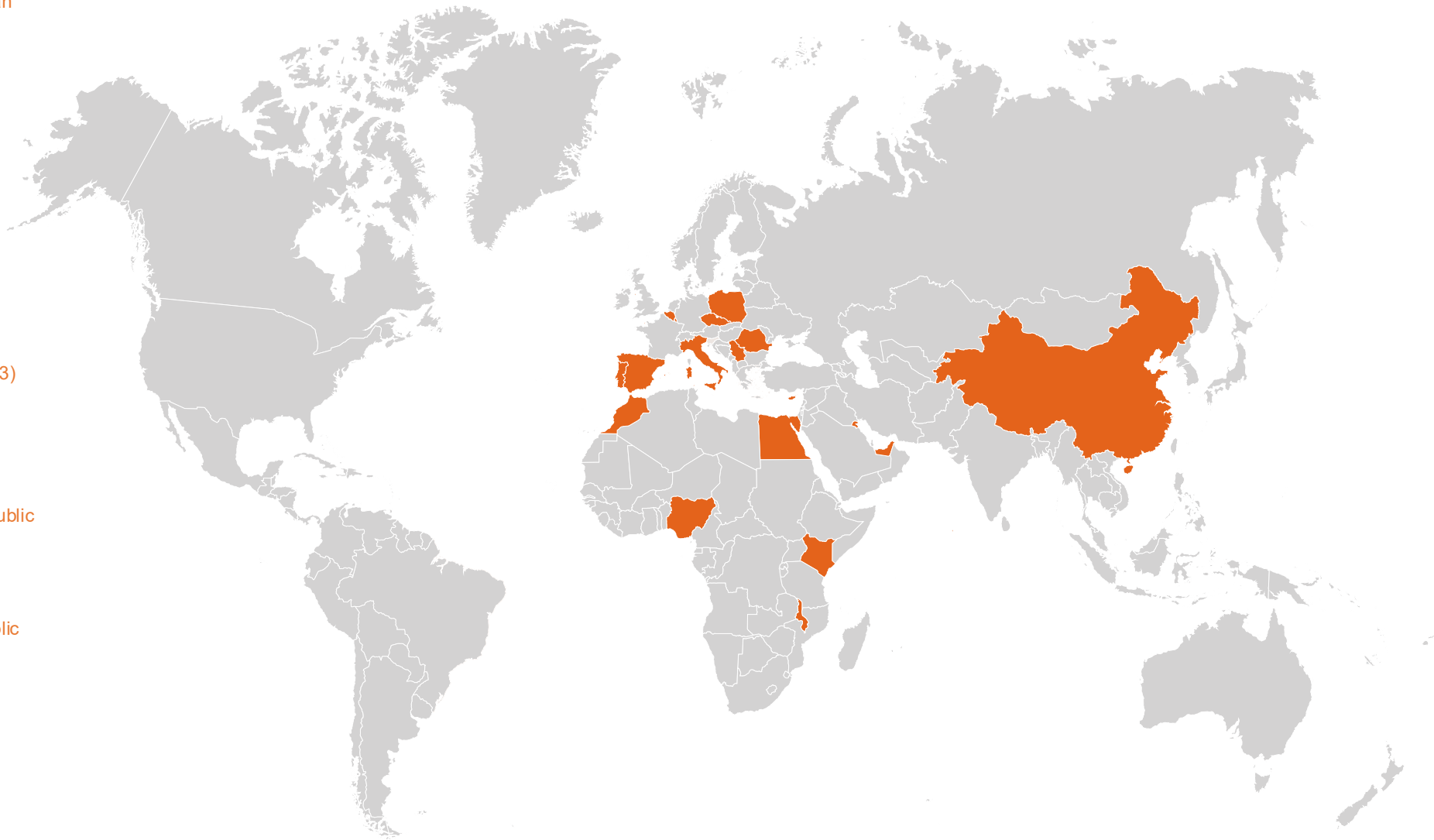




# BSO inspection map

We completed 37 BSO inspections across 22 countries.

- Abu Dhabi, UAE
- Rome, Italy
- Castletown, Isle of Man
- Dubai, UAE (3)
- Warsaw, Poland
- Nicosia, Cyprus (2)
- Madrid, Spain
- Constanta, Romania
- Mombasa, Kenya
- Giza, Egypt
- Nairobi, Kenya (2)
- Shanghai, China
- Kasungu, Malawi
- Luxembourg
- Hong Kong
- Bucharest, Romania (3)
- Milan, Italy
- Porto, Portugal
- Lagos, Nigeria
- Valencia, Spain
- Olomouc, Czech Republic
- St Andrew, Guernsey
- Cairo, Egypt
- Timisoara, Romania
- Prague, Czech Republic
- Beijing, China
- Belgrade, Serbia
- St Saviour, Jersey
- Kuwait City, Kuwait
- Brussels, Belgium
- Casablanca, Morocco



# **Inspection of private further education colleges and English language schools**

**Information in this section relates to inspections carried out  
between 1 September 2024 and 31 July 2025**

## Our inspection activity

ISI is appointed by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales.

This voluntary programme fulfils the inspection requirements necessary when applying for or renewing a licence to sponsor international students to come to the UK on a student visa.

From September 2025 ISI will be consulting widely on proposals to review the student educational oversight of inspections framework. We plan to introduce the renewed inspection framework in January 2026.

ISI private further education inspections:

- report the extent to which colleges and language schools meet the Educational Oversight Standards.
- assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision.
- where applicable, make recommendations outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

## PFE Inspection Outcomes

28

Number of inspections

### Inspection outcomes

13

Exceeds expectations

12

Meets expectations

3

Does not meet expectations

# Inspection quality

Information and insights in this section relate to the period between 1 September 2024 and 31 July 2025

# Inspector Training

Reporting inspector training has focused on high quality inspection practice, including the implementation of the inspection framework and methodology, and understanding of key documentation and guidance.

We have also focused training on inspecting the impact of leaders' decision-making on the wellbeing of pupils, and the inspection of safeguarding in schools.

During the academic year, reporting inspectors have attended six mandatory training events, including three in-person conferences.

Twenty-seven reporting inspectors have been recruited in this academic year and have successfully completed their initial training. They have either completed their shadow inspections in the summer term 2025 or will do so during autumn 2025 or spring 2026.

Newly recruited inspectors are supported, and their work is rigorously quality assured, through inspection monitoring.

We have increased the number of inspectors who lead inspections of registered early years settings linked to association independent schools.

Training in the inspection of early years provision in schools continues to form an important part of our reporting inspector and team inspector training.

Inspectors of the early years attend regular training to ensure the quality of inspections of registered early years settings. They have also attended Ofsted training events and conferences to ensure a consistent approach to these inspections.

# Code of conduct

Inspectors adhere to a code of conduct. Inspectors are required to uphold the highest professional standards in relation to all who are involved in the process of inspection, before, during and after the inspection.

All inspectors must regularly inform ISI about any conflicts of interest. This includes a duty to inform us of any connections they have to the schools or colleges we inspect.



## On inspection

The size of the inspection teams is determined by the size and context of the school.

The inspection is led by a reporting inspector, with support from a number of team inspectors.

Inspection teams reach provisional judgments at the end of the on-site inspection and share these with school leaders. Our duty inspectors and senior inspectors provide quality assurance support to inspectors throughout the on-site inspection.

The reporting inspector must contact the inspector on duty if the emerging evaluation of the inspection team is that one or more of the Standards is likely to be unmet. The inspector on duty will probe the evidence and provide constructive support and challenge to the evaluation process.

During the inspection, inspectors take care to preserve confidentiality and to protect the privacy of the pupils and staff. Inspectors know what to do if they receive a disclosure relating to safeguarding during the inspection.

## Post-inspection

The reporting inspector is responsible for writing the inspection report and submitting the inspection evidence to ISI.

All inspections are subject to rigorous quality assurance which includes consideration of the inspection evidence and the draft inspection report. Some inspections are subject to enhanced quality assurance. This can include on-site or remote quality assurance by a monitor and/or a full or partial review of the inspection evidence.

ISI invites all schools to share their reflections on their inspection experience in a post-inspection survey. ISI has a formal complaints process that is regularly reviewed.

## Surveys for pupils

In 2024, ISI began work with Public First, a policy and research consultancy, in reviewing our pre-inspection pupil survey. This process involved a number of phases, beginning with a literature review exploring existing survey evidence, ethical implications of surveying young people and an analysis of ISI's current approach to surveys.

Public First reviewed ISI's current survey and analysed it in terms of accessibility and content. Revised survey questions were piloted in a range of schools, representative of the different types of schools we inspect. As part of this pilot programme, Public First ran 'cognitive interviews' with pupils where they were able to understand the way in which pupils thought about and responded to the proposed questions.

Following this phase, ISI leaders reviewed and adapted the pupil survey in order to reduce potential ambiguity and ensure that we ask questions in a manner which pupils find accessible, including for younger pupils.

As a result of this work, a new version of the ISI pupil survey is being launched for use by schools during inspections in autumn 2025. This survey will be given to a wider range of year groups of pupils in school, with pupils from Year 4 onwards now completing the surveys.

We continue to refine the ways in which we gather the views of pupils.

# Hearing feedback

Information and insights in this section relate to the period between 1 September 2024 and 31 July 2025

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## ISI inspection principles

We have four inspection principles on which our inspection practice is built.

### Manageability

Inspections should not cause unnecessary workload for the school or provider.

Inspectors will not expect or request leaders to produce documentation specifically for inspection.

### Collaboration

Inspectors will seek to work alongside school leaders and staff where appropriate to do so, discussing evidence and sharing emerging findings.

### Triangulation and typicality

Inspectors will consider a range of evidence when forming evaluations on inspection.

Inspectors will look for evidence of what would be typical provision for pupils over time.

### Proportionality

Inspectors will consider the reasonableness of leaders' decision-making and the impact of those decisions on pupils' learning, experience and safety.

**Manageability  
of the  
inspection**

**Collaboration  
with the  
school**

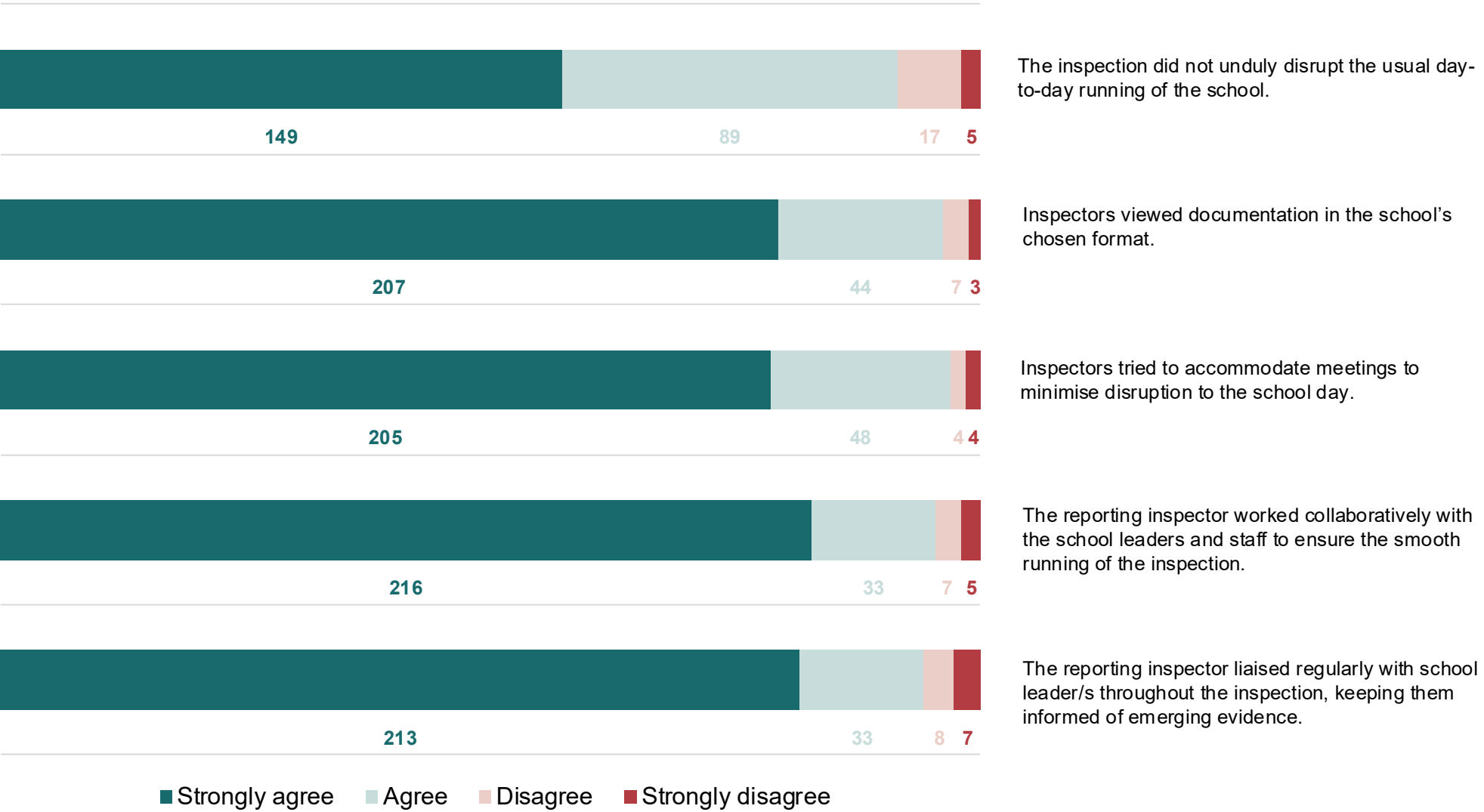
**Triangulation  
and typicality  
of evidence**

**Proportionality  
in reaching  
judgements**

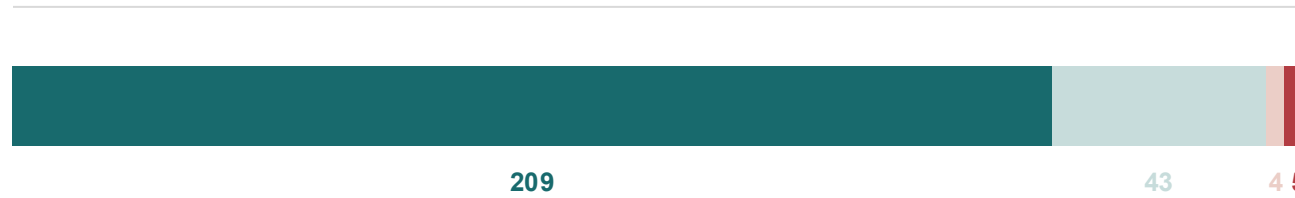


# School feedback

We are committed to listening to the views and experiences of the schools and providers we inspect. Every school receives a post-inspection survey following routine inspection. We received 261 survey responses from 370 routine inspections. The questions we ask seek to understand school leaders' views of the extent to which ISI inspectors demonstrate our principles in practice.



## School feedback - continued



The reporting inspector provided opportunities throughout the inspection for the school leader/s to raise any issues or concerns about the conduct of the inspection and dealt with any issues or concerns promptly.



The reporting inspector offered school leader/s the opportunity to be involved in some inspection activities.



The inspection team gathered evidence from a wide range of sources.



Inspectors did not expect school leader/s to reorganise the curriculum for pupils during the inspection.



Inspectors worked with professionalism, sensitivity and integrity, treating all with respect and courtesy.

■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

## Complaints

ISI's inspection complaints policy is approved by the ISI Board and the Department for Education.

Under the policy, school leaders are invited to contact ISI following an inspection if they wish to raise an issue about an ISI inspection.

If a complaint moves to the formal stage under the policy, school leaders have the opportunity to discuss their complaint with the person undertaking the review of the inspection.

From the 622 inspections completed across all remits in 2024-25 academic year, ISI received 80 formal complaints.

Of complaints received and resolved at time of publication:

- 68% were not upheld
- 24% were partially upheld
- 8% were wholly upheld.

When a complaint is partially or wholly upheld, ISI outlines to the complainant any steps it will take as a result.

Complaints about inspections will be within scope of ISI's inspection policy if they relate to the conduct of inspectors and/or the inspection process and/or the evaluation/s reached. One complaint may contain more than one area that is in scope.

Of complaints received during the academic year 2024-25:

- 44 of the complaints received related to inspector conduct
- 52 to inspection process and
- 78 to evaluations reached.

ISI carefully reviews the complaints we receive in order to consider what we can learn from them. We use the information we receive to inform inspector training and to review our policies and processes where appropriate.

## The role of the independent adjudicator

If a complainant is not satisfied with ISI's response, the complaint can be referred to an independent adjudicator.

ISI has a pool of contracted independent adjudicators.

The independent adjudicator role is not open to any inspector, employee or person currently or previously providing services other than complaints adjudication to ISI. To be appointed, independent adjudicators must demonstrate significant experience and understanding of complaint handling and/or quality assurance.

The adjudicator considers whether:

- ISI followed its policy properly in handling their complaints; and/or
- ISI reached a reasonable decision in response to their complaint

If the adjudicator upholds part or all of a complaint, the response will outline which aspects of the complaints have been upheld and why.

Of the 13 referrals that have received independent adjudication, ten were found to have followed process and reached a reasonable decision, and three were partially upheld.

[isi.net/who-we-are/make-a-complaint](https://www.isi.net/who-we-are/make-a-complaint)



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