

Handbook for the non-routine inspections of association independent schools, including residential (boarding) schools and early years settings

Effective from 1 September 2024

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Introduction

1. This handbook is written for inspectors and relates to non-routine inspections of association independent schools from September 2024. This handbook is available to schools and other stakeholders and can be downloaded from the ISI website.
2. This handbook is a working document and will be updated regularly. Inspectors will refer to the values and principles of inspection set out in the [ISI Framework](#) and [Inspection Handbook](#) and apply them appropriately when carrying out non-routine inspections.
3. There are three types of non-routine inspection which the Department for Education (DfE) may commission ISI to conduct:
 - **Material change inspection:** this occurs when a school applies to change the terms of its registration with the DfE, for example by extending its age range.
 - **Progress monitoring inspection:** this occurs when a school has failed to meet the Standards at its previous routine or non-routine inspection. ISI reports to the DfE on the progress leaders have made to improve the school in relation to the unmet Standards.
 - **Additional inspection:** this occurs when the DfE has requested that a school be inspected outside of the routine inspection cycle.
4. The DfE specifies through an inspection commissioning form (ICF) which of the Standards are to be inspected and reported on as part of the non-routine inspection. The ICF can be found on the ISI inspection portal. If inspectors find evidence during the inspection that other Standards may be unmet, these other Standards will be included in the inspection.
5. The DfE specifies the notice period to be given for non-routine inspections in the ICF. If the inspection is to be unannounced, the school is usually contacted up to one hour before the inspection team arrives on site. Where contact cannot be made with the school, inspectors will arrive on site and will ask to speak to the headteacher, or most senior member of staff available, in order to announce the inspection.

Conducting non-routine inspections

6. Inspectors will act with professionalism and sensitivity at all times in line with the inspector code of conduct. If the lead reporting inspector becomes aware of staff undergoing exceptional stress during an inspection, the inspector should contact the ISI office immediately to speak to a senior member of ISI staff.
7. Should a member of school staff experience exceptional stress during an inspection, they (or a colleague) should let the lead reporting inspector know as quickly as possible. The lead reporting inspector will take advice from a senior member of ISI staff about the situation.
8. Should the member of staff experiencing exceptional stress not feel able to speak to the lead reporting inspector, they should telephone ISI on 0207 600 0100. They should explain that their school is currently being inspected and they are concerned for the headteacher's/their own wellbeing and ask to speak to a senior member of staff directly. The senior member of staff at ISI will listen carefully. ISI will advise on the most appropriate way forward, having discussed with the DfE if possible. If possible, school staff should let someone at the school know about their concern, as well as the proprietor/chair of governors.

The timing and duration of non-routine inspections and the inspection team

9. The DfE may request that ISI carry out non-routine inspections at any time and at short notice or with no notice.
10. The duration of non-routine inspections and the size of the inspection team is determined by the context of the school as well as the scope of the inspection. The inspection is led by a lead reporting inspector who may be accompanied by other reporting inspectors. All inspectors will usually attend for the duration of the inspection.
11. Typical deployments for each type of non-routine inspection (this is published here as guidance and may change depending on the needs of the inspection):

| | Number of Reporting Inspectors | Inspection Duration (days) |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Material Change | 1 | 1 |
| Progress Monitoring | 2 | 1 |
| Additional | 2 | 1 |

12. Inspectors will usually arrive at the school no later than 09:00 and leave the school by 18:00 on each day of inspection, although in some instances inspectors may be on-site for longer than this, for instance to evaluate elements of boarding provision. Towards the end of the inspection, the inspection plan will allow sufficient time for the final team meeting when inspectors will discuss the evidence, reach the inspection judgements and draw together the feedback to school leaders, the proprietor and/or governors.
13. Non-routine inspections may be monitored for quality assurance purposes. The role of the monitor is to ensure that the inspection team adheres to ISI's inspection methodology and inspection principles. The monitor may ask questions during meetings with leaders and staff to assure themselves that appropriate evidence is considered by the inspection team. The monitor will support and challenge the inspection team to ensure that the evidence base is robust and supports the judgements reached by the team.
14. The DfE may commission aligned inspections of linked schools, particularly when schools share the same senior leadership team and/or proprietors. Where linked schools are inspected at the same time, lead reporting inspectors will liaise with each other and senior leaders to manage the inspection to minimise disruption and to align inspection activities where appropriate.
15. Inspectors should refer to the following sections of the ISI [Inspection Handbook](#) for guidance on:
 - declarations of conflicts of interest
 - the code of conduct for inspectors and guidance for schools
 - managing sensitive or personal information
 - quality assurance
 - managing safeguarding concerns that arise on inspection.

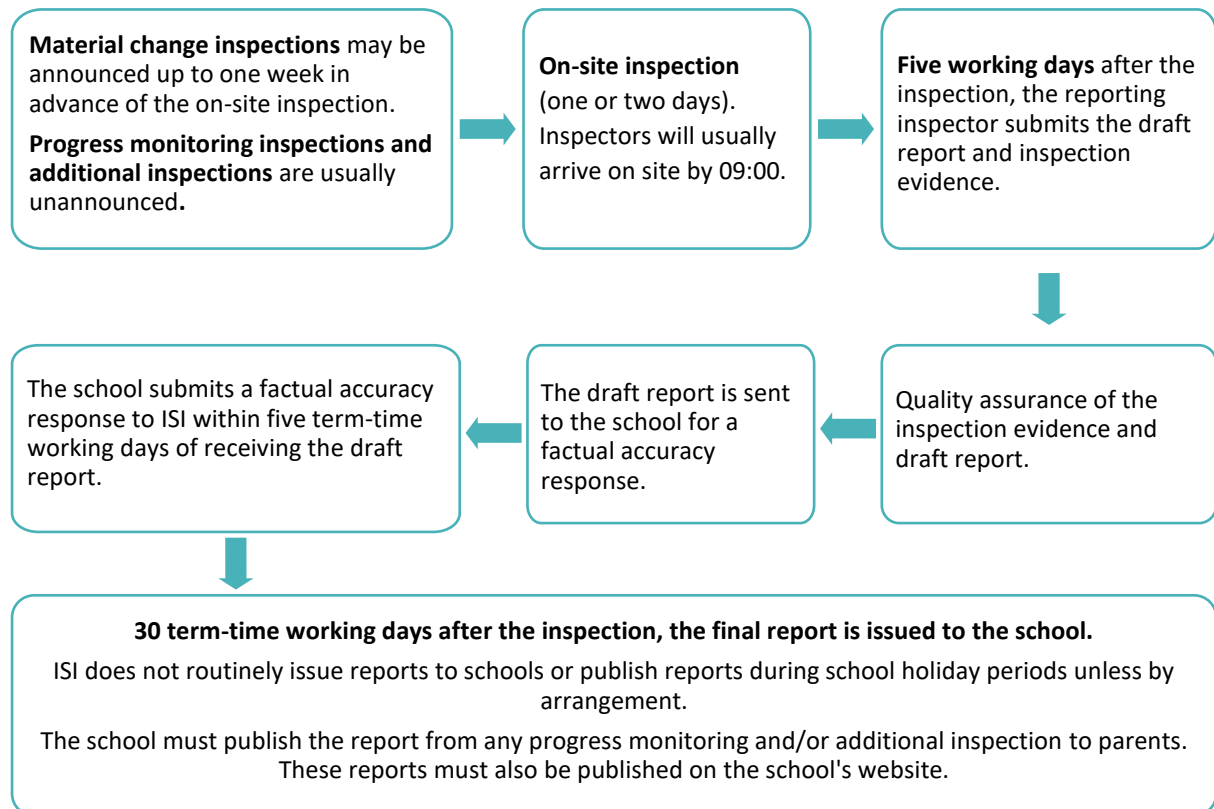
The feedback meeting at the conclusion of the non-routine inspection

16. The feedback meeting with the headteacher will take place after inspectors have reached their judgements and confirmed their evaluations in their team meeting. The proprietor or a representative is invited to attend the feedback meeting. The school may also bring a note taker. All inspectors will attend in addition to any monitoring inspector.

| Table of Attendees at the Feedback Meeting |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The lead reporting inspector 2. Any other reporting inspector on the inspection 3. Any monitoring inspector on the inspection 4. The headteacher 5. The proprietor or their representative 6. A note taker from the school <p>In addition, at their discretion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Inspector or her representative • A representative from the DfE |

The inspection process and indicative timeline for non-routine inspections

17. The following indicative timeline is representative of the inspection process for non-routine inspections. Enhanced quality assurance, including as part of the complaints process, may extend the process. School holidays may also extend the process.



Material change inspection

Purpose and legal basis of a material change inspection

18. The DfE may commission ISI to carry out a material change inspection of an independent school when the school seeks permission from the DfE to make a material change to its registration. The DfE provides guidance [for registered independent schools wishing to make a material change to their registration](#).
19. Registered independent schools wishing to make one of the following changes to their registration [must seek permission to do so from the DfE in advance of implementing the change](#) because these are material changes to a school's registration:
 - change of proprietor
 - change of address
 - change to the age-range of pupils
 - change to the maximum number of pupils (registered capacity)
 - change to whether the institution is for male or female pupils or both
 - starting or ceasing to provide accommodation to pupils (boarding)
 - starting to or ceasing to admit pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)
20. The DfE will consider a school's application to make a material change and decide whether a material change inspection is required. If it decides that one is required, it will commission ISI to schedule an inspection and issue an ICF. A material change inspection can take place at any time. The DfE may decide to grant permission for a material change without the need for an inspection.
21. ISI carries out material change inspections under [section 162\(4\) of the Education Act 2002](#). The purpose of the material change inspection is to consider the implications of the planned material change. The inspection report will state whether the school is likely to meet the relevant independent school Standards if the material change is implemented. The ICF will specify which of the Standards should be the focus of the inspection. The ICF can also include the [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#) or the [National Minimum Standards for boarding schools \(NMS\)](#).
22. A material change inspection is normally carried out by one reporting inspector who will usually attend the school site for one day.
23. The DfE may request that a material change inspection be carried out at the same time as a routine inspection.

Planning a material change inspection

24. ISI will use the information on the ICF to schedule an inspection within the timescale specified by the DfE. The ICF will usually attach the school's material change request that led to the DfE's commission for the inspection.
25. The ICF will always require Standards relating to safeguarding to be reviewed as part of a material change inspection, as well as the specific Standards that are the focus for the inspection.

Preparing for a material change inspection

26. All inspectors must have deep knowledge and understanding of:

- [The ISI Framework](#)
- [The ISI Inspection Handbook](#)
- [The ISSR and DfE guidance](#)
- Safeguarding guidance including [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)
- [The National Minimum Standards for boarding schools](#)
- [The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#).

27. The lead reporting inspector will review the information set out in the ICF for the inspection. If, following review and preparation, the lead reporting inspector considers that the ICF may need to be amended, for example to include other or different Standards, they should raise this at the earliest opportunity with the delivery team (delivery@isi.net) who will liaise with the DfE.

28. Prior to the inspection notification to the school, the lead reporting inspector will review pre-inspection information, including information held by ISI and information available on the school's public website and in the public domain. The lead reporting inspector will ensure that the notification letter to the school contains the relevant information including the Standards that are to be considered as part of the inspection. Inspectors must not access the school's own protected portal in advance of the notification call to the school.

29. The lead reporting inspector must consider the following information when preparing the on-site inspection and record their evidence in the relevant inspection activity form (IAF):

- information contained in the ICF
- previous inspection reports
- information about the context of the school held on ISI's portal and the school's website
- any concerns held by the DfE and recorded on the ISI inspector portal. Those concerns received since the previous inspection must be considered when planning the inspection
- information held on [Get Information About Schools](#), including the name of the proprietor/s and other contextual information. This information must be checked during the pre-inspection call with the headteacher
- any linked provisions – for example, if the school is a member of a group of independent schools, any relevant information from recent inspections of these schools, including any reported evidence about the suitability and capability of the proprietor/s
- relevant school policies and other information for parents available on the school's website
- other information in the public domain, including from the results of an internet search as relevant to the focus of the material change inspection and the Standards specified in the ICF
- any relevant safeguarding information shared with the lead reporting inspector during the pre-inspection phone call to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

30. Where the DfE holds concerns about the school which must be considered as part of the material change inspection, inspectors should clarify to the headteacher which area of provision the concern or concerns relate to. Inspectors will not investigate the specific concern and will

not reveal the source of any concern. They will normally consider any potential wider issues that the concern relates to. Inspectors will assure themselves that the issues a concern raises do not indicate that any Standards are unmet. Inspectors will triangulate evidence to reach their judgements.

31. The lead reporting inspector will use their analysis of the pre-inspection information to plan the inspection. Importantly, inspectors will want to evaluate the evidence of leaders' decision making and the impact of that decision making for pupils specifically in relation to the Standards that are the focus of the material change inspection.
32. Where a material change inspection is carried out by more than one inspector, the lead reporting inspector will liaise directly with the inspection team in advance of the inspection. The lead reporting inspector will brief the inspection team on the content of the ICF (which they will share with the inspection team via the virtual inspection team room) and pre-inspection analysis to ensure that inspectors are clear about the purpose and focus of the material change inspection as well as practical arrangements for the inspection.

Notification and deferral requests for a material change inspection

33. The lead reporting inspector will announce the material change inspection in a phone call to the headteacher up to one week before the planned inspection date. This call will include the date of the inspection and the name/s of the inspector/s involved.
34. Following the notification call, the lead reporting inspector will contact the ISI delivery team to advise them that the school has been informed so that the virtual inspection team room can be opened to the school. The delivery team will send a letter of notification to the school by email.
35. If the school wishes to request deferral of the inspection, the headteacher, or their delegated senior leader, must email ISI explaining the circumstances and the reasons for the request. ISI will forward the deferral request to the DfE. The DfE will decide if the inspection should go ahead or be deferred. While awaiting the DfE's decision, inspection planning will continue.
36. Once the on-site inspection has started, a deferral is no longer possible. In exceptional circumstances, ISI can take the decision to pause an inspection for a short period. Either the lead reporting inspector or headteacher may request a pause by contacting ISI's head office. ISI will seek the views of the headteacher when making a decision and, if possible, will liaise with the DfE. Any decision to pause the inspection is taken by ISI.

The pre-inspection call for a material change inspection

37. When making initial contact, the lead reporting inspector should offer to arrange a time that is most convenient for a longer discussion with the headteacher.
38. The pre-inspection call will firstly focus first on practical arrangements and then include a discussion to understand the context of the school and the nature of the material change. The lead reporting inspector will also clarify the information that inspectors will find helpful to see before the start of the inspection and the information that the school should make available at the start of the inspection.

39. The lead reporting inspector will provide opportunities in the pre-inspection call for the headteacher to ask any questions.
40. During the pre-inspection call, the lead reporting inspector will:
- confirm the date of the inspection and direct the headteacher to this handbook which can be downloaded from the ISI website
 - confirm the identity of the proprietor/s of the school and the headteacher
 - confirm that the proprietor/s will be informed of the inspection and explain that the lead reporting inspector will wish to speak with the proprietor/s during the inspection (this discussion may take place remotely if it is not possible for the proprietor/s to visit the school at short notice)
 - provide the name/s of the reporting inspector/s involved in the inspection and confirm there are no conflicts of interest
 - explain the Standards that will be the focus of the inspection, and that the Standards relating to safeguarding are always included as part of a non-routine inspection
 - discuss the inspection activities that the inspector will need to undertake to gather the evidence to evaluate the extent to which the school is likely to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented
 - share the telephone number of ISI's head office, to be called should any serious issues or concerns arise on inspection which the headteacher feels they cannot raise with the lead reporting inspector
 - propose an indicative time for the final feedback meeting. The lead reporting inspector will make clear that the proprietor/s are invited to the final feedback meeting
 - explain how the inspector will work with the leaders in the school, including through regular keeping-in-touch meetings with the headteacher
 - explain that if inspectors find evidence during the course of the inspection that indicates that other Standards that are not specified as part of the inspection focus may not be met, the lead reporting inspector will raise this at the earliest opportunity with the headteacher and explain that these other Standards will also be included as part of the inspection
 - explain that the virtual inspection team room will be the means of communication with the school and will enable the secure exchange of any documents as required
 - request any additional information that the school should make available at the start of the inspection. This could include:
 - plans of the school premises, including details of any plans relevant to the school's material change request
 - policies and documentation relevant to the Standards that are the focus of the inspection
 - curriculum plans and schemes of work (for example, if a school has requested to extend the age range of pupils)
 - any other information relevant to the material change request
 - discuss practical arrangements including for access to secure Wi-Fi, travel, parking, and any refreshments
 - ask the school to provide a space that can be used as an inspection base, where the inspector can hold confidential discussions and work on their laptop. The lead reporting inspector will keep requirements for the inspection base to the minimum required. For

example, there is no requirement for the school to provide a printer or any stationery products.

Gathering the views of pupils and staff as part of a material change inspection

41. ISI's pupil, parent and staff surveys are not normally made available as part of non-routine inspections.
42. Inspectors will speak with pupils to gather their views and experiences of the school as relevant to the focus of the inspection. Inspectors will meet with the proprietor, school leaders and staff to discuss the provision that is in place, including safeguarding arrangements. In co-educational schools with secondary aged pupils some of the discussions may be held in single-sex groups.
43. School leaders will not be invited to join inspectors' discussions with pupils. Where pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), school staff should ensure that prior to discussions with the pupils concerned, inspectors are aware of the nature of their needs and that appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that the pupil is ready for the discussion.

Reaching judgements for a material change inspection

44. Inspectors will carefully consider the evidence and evaluate it against the Standards and relevant guidance. Inspectors will weigh the evidence, using their professional judgement. Inspectors will reach a judgement about whether the Standards are likely to be met if the material change is implemented.
45. Where a material change inspection is being carried out by more than one reporting inspector, inspectors will meet during the inspection to discuss the emerging evidence and to consider connected evidence that needs to be gathered and evaluated. Inspectors must discuss the evidence fully and provide professional challenge where appropriate.
46. The final judgements are the corporate responsibility of the lead reporting inspector and, where the inspection is carried out by more than one reporting inspector, the inspection team.
47. Judgements made at the end of the inspection are subject to ISI's quality assurance processes and are provisional until the publication of the final inspection report.
48. Inspectors' judgements must be based on their professional evaluation of the evidence at the time of the inspection and must not be influenced by the potential impact on the school, for example, when previously met Standards are found to be unmet at the material change inspection.

Feedback meeting at the conclusion of the material change on-site inspection

49. The table of attendees at the feedback meeting can be found in paragraph 16.
50. At the start of the meeting, the lead reporting inspector will explain:
 - that all judgements are provisional until the publication of the report. It should be made clear that provisional judgements can be shared with close family, the proprietor/s, the

school's governors, leaders and staff, the school's association, and mental health professionals. Provisional judgements should not be shared more widely at this point because they are still subject to ISI's quality assurance process

- that the exact wording of the report is likely to differ from the oral feedback
- the quality assurance process, including the factual accuracy stage
- the process and indicative timelines for quality assurance and publication
- the processes following inspections where one or more of the Standards are judged to be unmet or likely to be unmet
- that all further communication must be to the ISI office and not to inspectors.

51. The lead reporting inspector will:

- explain in enough detail for leaders and the proprietors reasonably to understand how judgements have been reached
- provide clear feedback to the school indicating whether inspectors will recommend to the DfE that the material change should be approved, including any conditions relating to the approval of material change request
- where Standards are not met, indicate whether there are serious and/or multiple failings in the school's provision
- invite questions or comments from school leaders and the proprietors.

Evaluation and reporting on a material change inspection

52. Inspectors will:

- report clearly on the reason for the material change inspection
- report clearly on the actions leaders have planned or implemented to accommodate the material change
- report clearly on leaders' identification and management of any risks associated with the planned material change
- evaluate and report on whether the school is likely to meet the Standards if the material change is implemented
- evaluate and report on any Standards that the school is not likely to meet if the material change is implemented
- report clearly any recommendations to the DfE relating to the material change
- report on any serious and/or multiple failings in provision that have been identified on inspection.

Progress monitoring inspection

Purpose and legal basis of a progress monitoring inspection

53. The DfE may commission ISI to carry out a progress monitoring inspection when the school's previous routine or non-routine inspection has judged that the school does not meet one or more of the [Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), the [National Minimum Standards for boarding schools \(NMS\)](#), the requirements of the [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#), or any other requirements that registered independent schools must comply with or have regard to.
54. The progress monitoring inspection is commissioned so that the DfE can check the progress a school has made to address weaknesses that were identified at its previous inspection. The purpose of the progress monitoring inspection is to check and report to the DfE on the school's progress in addressing any previously unmet Standards and/or other requirements. A progress monitoring inspection of a school can take place at any time during term time.
55. A progress monitoring inspection is normally carried out by two reporting inspectors who will usually attend the school site for one day.
56. ISI will carry out the progress monitoring inspection under [section 109\(1\) and \(2\) of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#).

Planning a progress monitoring inspection

57. ISI will receive an ICF from the DfE. ISI will use this information to schedule an inspection within the timescale specified by the DfE.
58. The ICF will always require the Standards relating to safeguarding to be reviewed as part of a progress monitoring inspection, as well as the specific Standards that are the focus of the inspection.
59. For progress monitoring inspections, the ICF contains a copy of the school's action plan approved by the DfE and a copy of the statutory notice served to the school. The ICF may also contain additional information and/or documentation relevant to the progress monitoring inspection.

Preparing a progress monitoring inspection

60. All inspectors must have deep knowledge and understanding of:
 - [The ISI Framework](#)
 - [The ISI Inspection Handbook](#)
 - [The ISSR and DfE guidance](#)
 - Safeguarding guidance including [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)
 - [The National Minimum Standards for boarding schools](#)
 - [The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#).

61. The lead reporting inspector will review the information set out in the ICF for the inspection. If, following review and preparation, the lead reporting inspector considers that the ICF may need to be amended, for example to include other or different Standards, they should raise this at the earliest opportunity with the delivery team (delivery@isi.net) who will liaise with the DfE.
62. In advance of the inspection, the lead reporting inspector will review pre-inspection information including information held by ISI and information available on the school's public website and in the public domain. The lead reporting inspector will ensure that the notification letter to the school contains the relevant information including the Standards that are to be considered as part of the inspection. Inspectors must not access the school's own protected portal in advance of the notification of the inspection to the school.
63. The lead reporting inspector must consider the following information when planning the on-site progress monitoring inspection and record their evidence in the relevant inspection activity form (IAF):
 - information contained in the ICF, including any action plans that have been submitted to the DfE
 - the school's previous inspection reports
 - information about the context of the school held on ISI's portal and the school's website
 - any concerns held by the DfE and recorded on the ISI inspection portal. Those concerns received since the previous inspection must be considered when planning the inspection
 - information held on [Get Information About Schools](#), including the name of the proprietor/s and other contextual information. This information must be checked with the headteacher at the start of the progress monitoring inspection
 - any linked provisions – for example, if the school is a member of a group of independent schools, any relevant information from recent inspections of these schools, including any reported evidence about the suitability and capability of the proprietor
 - school policies and other information for parents available on the school's website as relevant to the focus of the inspection
 - other information in the public domain, including from the results of an internet search as relevant to the focus of the progress monitoring inspection and the Standards specified in the ICF
 - any relevant safeguarding information shared with the lead reporting inspector during the pre-inspection phone call to the Local Authority Designate Officer (LADO).
64. Where the DfE holds concerns about the school which must be considered as part of the progress monitoring inspection, inspectors should clarify to the headteacher which area of provision the concern or concerns relate to. Inspectors will not investigate the specific concern and will not reveal the source of any concern. They will normally consider any potential wider issues that the concern relates to. Inspectors will assure themselves that the issues a concern raises do not indicate that any Standards are unmet. Inspectors will triangulate evidence to reach their judgements.
65. The lead reporting inspector will use the analysis of the pre-inspection information and the information set out in the ICF to plan the inspection. Importantly, inspectors will want to evaluate the evidence of leaders' decision making and the impact of that decision making for pupils specifically in relation to the Standards that are the focus of the progress monitoring inspection.

66. Where a progress monitoring inspection is carried out by more than one inspector, the lead reporting inspector will liaise directly with the inspection team in advance of the inspection. The lead reporting inspector will brief the inspection team on the content of the ICF (which they will share with the inspection team via the virtual inspection team room) and pre-inspection analysis to ensure that inspectors are clear about the purpose and focus of the progress monitoring inspection as well as practical arrangements for the inspection.

Notification of a progress monitoring inspection and deferral requests

67. Progress monitoring inspections are usually not announced in advance of the inspection.
68. The lead reporting inspection will attempt to contact the school up to one hour prior to inspectors arriving on site to inform the headteacher that inspectors are on their way. In the absence of the headteacher, the most senior member of staff at the school will be notified. This call will be brief and will confirm the inspection remit and purpose, and the name of the inspectors on the team. The headteacher will also be informed if the inspection will be quality assured on-site and/or if a shadow is to be attached to the inspection.
69. If the lead reporting inspector is unable to make contact with the school by telephone after several attempts, the inspection team will arrive at the school unannounced, usually by 09:00. The lead reporting inspector will ask to speak with the headteacher or, in their absence, the most senior member of staff at the school to notify them that the inspection will take place that day.
70. The lead reporting inspector will contact a member of the ISI delivery team as soon as the school has been notified that the inspection is taking place. The delivery team will email the headteacher with confirmation of the inspection including the names of the inspectors. The delivery team will also confirm that the virtual inspection team room has been made available for the school to use if required.
71. Any decision to defer an inspection is taken by the DfE. If the school wishes to request deferral of the progress monitoring inspection, the headteacher, or their delegated senior leader, must email delivery@isi.net explaining the circumstances and the reasons for the request. ISI will forward the request to the DfE. The DfE will decide if the inspection should go ahead or be deferred. Inspection activities will continue pending a decision by the DfE.
72. In exceptional circumstances, ISI can take the decision to pause an inspection for a short period. Either the lead reporting inspector or headteacher may request a pause by contacting ISI's head office. A senior member of ISI staff will consider any requests. ISI will seek the views of the headteacher when making a decision and, if possible, will liaise with the DfE. Any decision to pause an inspection is taken by ISI.

At the start of the progress monitoring on-site inspection

73. The inspectors should meet briefly with the headteacher and/or the proprietor at the beginning of the inspection to:
- introduce the inspection team and confirm there are no conflicts of interest

- explain the reason for the inspection and explain the Standards that are the focus of the inspection. The lead reporting inspector will explain that the school's arrangements for safeguarding are always considered as part of an additional inspection
- direct the headteacher to this handbook which can be downloaded from the ISI website
- confirm the identity of the proprietor/s of the school and the headteacher
- confirm that the proprietor/s will be informed of the inspection and explain that the lead reporting inspector will wish to speak with the proprietor/s during the inspection (this discussion may take place remotely if it is not possible for the proprietor/s to visit the school at short notice)
- confirm arrangements for meetings with the proprietor/s and with school staff
- explain the specific Standards that are the focus of the inspection and talk through the inspection activities that inspectors will wish to carry out to gather the required evidence, including any documentary evidence that inspectors will need to see
- explain that if inspectors find evidence during the course of the inspection that indicate that other Standards that are not specified as part of the inspection focus may not be met, the lead reporting inspector will raise this at the earliest opportunity with the headteacher and explain that these other Standards will also be included as part of the inspection
- explain that the virtual inspection team room will be the means of communication and will enable the secure exchange of any documents as required
- refer leaders to ISI's code of conduct
- share the telephone number of ISI's head office, to be called should any serious issues or concerns arise on inspection which the headteacher feels they cannot raise with the lead reporting inspector
- confirm arrangements for providing feedback at the end of the inspection
- ask the school to provide a space that can be used as an inspection base, where the inspectors can hold confidential discussions and work on their laptop. The lead reporting inspector will keep requirements for the inspection base to the minimum required. For example, there is no requirement for the school to provide a printer or any stationery products.

Gathering the views of pupils and staff as part of a progress monitoring inspection

74. ISI's pupil, parent and staff surveys are not normally made available as part of non-routine inspections.
75. Inspectors will speak with pupils to gather their views and experiences of the school as relevant to the focus of the inspection. Inspectors will meet with the proprietor, school leaders and staff to discuss the provision that is in place, including safeguarding arrangements. In co-educational schools with secondary aged pupils some of the discussions may be held in single-sex groups.
76. School leaders will not be invited to join inspectors' discussions with pupils. Where pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), school staff should ensure that prior to discussions with the pupils concerned, inspectors are aware of the nature of their needs and that appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that the pupil is ready for the discussion

Reaching judgements for a progress monitoring inspection

77. Where a progress monitoring inspection is being carried out by more than one reporting inspector, inspectors will meet during the inspection to discuss the emerging evidence and to consider connected evidence that needs to be gathered and evaluated. Inspectors must discuss the evidence fully and provide professional challenge where appropriate.
78. The final judgements are the corporate responsibility of the inspection team. Inspectors will carefully consider the evidence and evaluate it against the Standards and relevant guidance. Inspectors will weigh the evidence, using their professional judgement.
79. Inspectors will reach a judgement about whether the Standards that the team has considered are met.
80. Judgements made at the end of the inspection are subject to ISI's quality assurance processes and are provisional until the publication of the final inspection report.
81. Inspectors' judgements must be based on their professional evaluation of the evidence at the time of the inspection and must not be influenced by the potential impact on the school, for example where Standards are unmet.

Feedback meeting at conclusion of the progress monitoring on-site inspection

82. The table of attendees at the feedback meeting can be found in paragraph 16.
83. At the start of the meeting, the lead reporting inspector will explain:
 - that all judgements are provisional until the publication of the report. It should be made clear that provisional judgements can be shared with close family, the proprietor, the school's governors, leaders and staff, the school's association, and mental health professionals. Provisional judgements should not be shared more widely at this point because they are still subject to the ISI's quality assurance process
 - that the exact wording of the report is likely to differ from the oral feedback
 - the quality assurance process, including the factual accuracy stage
 - the process and indicative timelines for quality assurance and publication
 - the processes following inspection where one or more of the Standards are judged not to be met
 - that all further communication must be to ISI and not to inspectors.
84. The lead reporting inspector will:
 - make clear to the school leaders whether the school meets the Standards
 - explain in enough detail for leaders and the proprietors reasonably to understand how judgements have been reached
 - where Standards are not met, indicate whether there are serious and/or multiple failings in the school's provision
 - invite questions or comments from school leaders and the proprietors.

Evaluation and reporting a progress monitoring inspection

85. Inspectors will:

- report clearly on the reason for the progress monitoring inspection
- report on the actions leaders have or have not taken to address the unmet Standards from the previous inspection and the impact of these actions
- report on any areas of remaining weakness
- evaluate and report on whether the school meets the Standards that are the focus of the inspection
- evaluate and report on any Standards that the school does not meet
- report on any serious and/or multiple failings in provision that have been identified on inspection.

86. If the school is judged to not meet the Standards that were considered during the progress monitoring inspection, the DfE will decide on any action to take in respect of this.

Additional inspection

Purpose and legal basis of an additional inspection

87. The purpose of the additional inspection is to check that the school complies with the Independent School Standards and any other relevant Standards that are identified in the inspection commissioning form (ICF). An additional inspection is normally commissioned as a result of information held by the DfE which appears to raise concerns.
88. An additional inspection of a school can take place at any time.
89. The DfE may commission ISI to also consider whether the school is likely to meet other requirements that registered independent schools must comply with or have regard to, such as the [National Minimum Standards for boarding schools \(NMS\)](#), the requirements of the [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#), or any other requirements that registered independent schools must comply with or have regard to.
90. An additional inspection is normally carried out by two reporting inspectors who will usually attend the school site for at least one day.
91. ISI will carry out the additional inspection under [section 109\(1\) and \(2\) of the Education and Skills Act 2008](#).

Planning an additional inspection

92. ISI will receive an ICF from the DfE. ISI will use this information to schedule an inspection within the timescale specified by the DfE. The ICF will include the concern or other information that triggered the DfE's commission for the inspection.
93. The ICF will always require the Standards relating to safeguarding to be reviewed as part of an additional inspection, as well as the specific Standards that are the focus of the inspection.

Preparing an additional inspection

94. All inspectors must have deep knowledge and understanding of:
 - [The ISI Framework](#)
 - [The ISI Inspection Handbook](#)
 - [The ISSR and DfE guidance](#)
 - Safeguarding guidance including [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#)
 - [The National Minimum Standards for boarding schools](#)
 - [The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage](#).
95. The lead reporting inspector will review the information set out in the ICF for the inspection. If, following review and preparation, the lead reporting inspector considers that the ICF may need to be amended, for example to include other or different Standards, they should raise this at the earliest opportunity with the delivery team (delivery@isi.net) who will liaise with the DfE.

96. In advance of the inspection, the lead reporting inspector will review pre-inspection information including information held by ISI and information available on the school's public website and in the public domain. The lead reporting inspector will ensure that the notification letter to the school contains the relevant information including the Standards that are to be considered as part of the inspection. Inspectors must not access the school's own protected portal in advance of the notification of the inspection to the school.
97. The lead reporting inspector must consider the following information when preparing the on-site inspection and record their evidence in the relevant inspection activity form (IAF):
- the information contained in the ICF
 - the school's previous inspection reports and any reports resulting from non-routine inspections carried out since the previous routine inspection
 - information about the context of the school held on the ISI portal and on the school's website
 - any concerns held by the DfE and recorded on the ISI inspection portal. Those concerns received since the previous inspection must be considered when planning the inspection
 - information held on [Get Information About Schools](#) including the name of the proprietor/s and other contextual information. This information must be checked with the headteacher at the start of the additional inspection
 - any linked provisions – e.g. registered EYFS provisions or if the school is a member of a group of independent schools, any relevant information from recent inspections of these schools, including any reported evidence about the suitability and capability of the proprietor
 - school policies and other information for parents available on the school's website as relevant to the focus of the additional inspection relating to the Standards specified in the ICF
 - other information in the public domain, including from the results of an internet search as relevant to the focus of the additional inspection and the Standards specified in the ICF
 - any relevant safeguarding information shared with the lead reporting inspector during the pre-inspection phone call to the Local Authority Designate Officer (LADO).
98. Where the DfE holds concerns about the school which must be considered as part of the additional inspection, inspectors should clarify to the headteacher which area of provision the concern or concerns relate to. Inspectors will not investigate the specific concern and will not reveal the source of any concern. They will normally consider any potential wider issues that the concern relates to. Inspectors will assure themselves that the issues a concern raises do not indicate that any Standards are unmet. Inspectors will triangulate evidence to reach their judgements.
99. The lead reporting inspector will use the analysis of the pre-inspection information and the information set out in the ICF to plan the inspection. Importantly, inspectors will want to evaluate the evidence of leaders' decision making and the impact of that decision making for pupils specifically in relation to the Standards that are the focus of the additional inspection.
100. Where an additional inspection is carried out by more than one inspector, the lead reporting inspector will liaise directly with the inspection team in advance of the inspection. The lead reporting inspector will brief the inspection team on the content of the ICF (which they will share with the inspection team via the virtual inspection team room) and pre-inspection analysis to ensure that inspectors are clear about the purpose and focus of the additional inspection as well as practical arrangements for the inspection.

Notification of an additional inspection and deferral requests

101. Additional inspections are usually not announced in advance of the inspection.
102. The lead reporting inspection will attempt to contact the school up to one hour prior to inspectors arriving on site to inform the headteacher that inspectors are on their way. In the absence of the headteacher, the most senior member of staff at the school will be notified. This call will be brief and will confirm the inspection remit and purpose, and the name of the inspectors on the team. The headteacher will also be informed if the inspection will be quality assured on-site and/or if a shadow is to be attached to the inspection.
103. If the lead reporting inspector is unable to make contact with the school by telephone after several attempts, the inspection team will arrive at the school unannounced, usually by 09:00. The lead reporting inspector will ask to speak with the headteacher or, in their absence, the most senior member of staff at the school to notify them that the inspection will take place that day.
104. The lead reporting inspector will contact a member of the ISI delivery team as soon as the school has been notified that the inspection is taking place. The delivery team will email the headteacher with confirmation of the inspection including the names of the inspectors. The delivery team will also confirm that the virtual inspection team room has been made available for the school to use if required.
105. Any decision to defer an inspection is taken by the DfE. If the school wishes to request deferral of the additional inspection, the headteacher, or their delegated senior leader, must email delivery@isi.net explaining the circumstances and the reasons for the request. ISI will forward the request to the DfE. The DfE will decide if the inspection should go ahead or be deferred. Inspection activities will continue pending a decision by the DfE.
106. In exceptional circumstances, ISI can take the decision to pause an inspection for a short period. Either the lead reporting inspector or headteacher may request a pause by contacting ISI's head office. A senior member of ISI staff will consider any requests. ISI will seek the views of the headteacher when making a decision and, if possible, will liaise with DfE. Any decision to pause the inspection is taken by ISI.

At the start of the on-site additional inspection

107. The inspectors should meet briefly with the headteacher and/or the proprietor at the beginning of the inspection to:
- introduce the inspection team and confirm there are no conflicts of interest
 - explain the reason for the inspection and explain the Standards that are the focus of the inspection. The lead reporting inspector will explain that the school's arrangements for safeguarding are always considered as part of an additional inspection
 - direct the headteacher to this handbook which can be downloaded from the ISI website
 - confirm the identity of the proprietor/s of the school and the headteacher
 - confirm that the proprietor/s will be informed of the inspection and explain that the lead reporting inspector will wish to speak with the proprietor/s during the inspection (this

discussion may take place remotely if it is not possible for the proprietor/s to visit the school at short notice)

- confirm arrangements for meetings with the proprietor/s and with school staff
- explain the specific Standards that are the focus of the inspection and talk through the inspection activities that inspectors will wish to carry out to gather the required evidence, including any documentary evidence that inspectors will need to see
- explain that if inspectors find evidence during the course of the inspection that indicate other Standards that are not specified as part of the inspection focus may not be met, the lead reporting inspector will raise this at the earliest opportunity with the headteacher and explain that these other Standards will also be included as part of the inspection
- explain that the virtual inspection team room will be the means of communication and will enable the secure exchange of any documents as required
- refer leaders to ISI's code of conduct
- share the telephone number of ISI's head office, to be called should any serious issues or concerns arise on inspection which the headteacher feels they cannot raise with the lead reporting inspector
- confirm arrangements for providing feedback at the end of the inspection
- ask the school to provide a space that can be used as an inspection base, where the inspectors can hold confidential discussions and work on their laptop. The lead reporting inspector will keep requirements for the inspection base to the minimum required. For example, there is no requirement for the school to provide a printer or any stationery products.

Gathering the views of pupils and staff as part of an additional inspection

108. ISI's pupil, parent and staff surveys are not normally made available as part of non-routine inspections.

109. Inspectors will speak with pupils to gather their views and experiences of the school as relevant to the focus of the inspection. Inspectors will meet with the proprietor, school leaders and staff to discuss the provision that is in place, including safeguarding arrangements. In co-educational schools with secondary aged pupils some of the discussions may be held in single-sex groups.

110. School leaders will not be invited to join inspectors' discussions with pupils. Where pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), school staff should ensure that prior to discussions with the pupils concerned, inspectors are aware of the nature of their needs and that appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that the pupil is ready for the discussion

Reaching judgements for an additional inspection

111. Where an additional inspection is being carried out by more than one reporting inspector, inspectors will meet during the inspection to discuss the emerging evidence and to consider connected evidence that needs to be gathered and evaluated. Inspectors must discuss the evidence fully and provide professional challenge where appropriate.

112. The final judgements are the corporate responsibility of the inspection team. Inspectors will carefully consider the evidence and evaluate it against the Standards and relevant guidance. Inspectors will weigh the evidence, using their professional judgement.
113. Inspectors will reach a judgement about whether the Standards that the team has considered are met.
114. Judgements made at the end of the inspection are subject to ISI's quality assurance processes and are provisional until the publication of the final inspection report.
115. Inspectors' judgements must be based on their professional evaluation of the evidence at the time of the inspection and must not be influenced by the potential impact on the school, for example, where Standards are unmet.

Feedback meeting at conclusion of an on-site additional inspection

116. The table of attendees at the feedback meeting can be found in paragraph 16.
117. At the start of the meeting, the lead reporting inspector will explain:
- that all judgements are provisional until the publication of the report. It should be made clear that provisional judgements can be shared with close family, the proprietor, the school's governors, leaders and staff, the school's association, and mental health professionals. Provisional judgements should not be shared more widely at this point because they are still subject to the ISI's quality assurance process
 - that the exact wording of the report is likely to differ from the oral feedback
 - the quality assurance process, including the factual accuracy stage
 - the process and indicative timelines for quality assurance and publication
 - the processes following inspections where one or more of the Standards are judged not to be met
 - that all further communication must be to ISI and not to inspectors.
118. The lead reporting inspector will:
- make clear to the school leaders whether the school meets the Standards
 - explain in enough detail for leaders and the proprietors reasonably to understand how judgements have been reached
 - where Standards are not met, indicate whether there are serious and/or multiple failings in the school's provision
 - invite questions or comments from school leaders and the proprietors.

Evaluation and reporting an additional inspection

119. Inspectors will:
- report clearly on the reason for the additional inspection

- evaluate and report whether and how the school meets the Standards that are the focus of the additional inspection
- evaluate and report on any Standards that the school does not meet
- report on any serious and/or multiple failings in provision that have been identified on inspection.

120. If the school is judged to not meet the Standards that were considered during the additional inspection, the DfE will decide on any action to take in respect of this.

Change Log

| <u>Version date</u> | <u>Page and paragraph</u> | <u>Change</u> |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1 September 2025 | Title page | Updated title for clarification in relation to early years. |
| 1 September 2025 | Throughout the handbook | Onsite to on-site to align with ISI house style and glossary. |
| 1 September 2025 | Page 7, 13, 19 | Updated text for clarification in relation to the feedback meeting at the conclusion of the non-routine inspection. |
| 1 September | Page 8 | Updated table to clarify timelines including term-time working days and arrangements for issuing and publishing the inspection report. |