

# Annual Report

2022–2023



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.

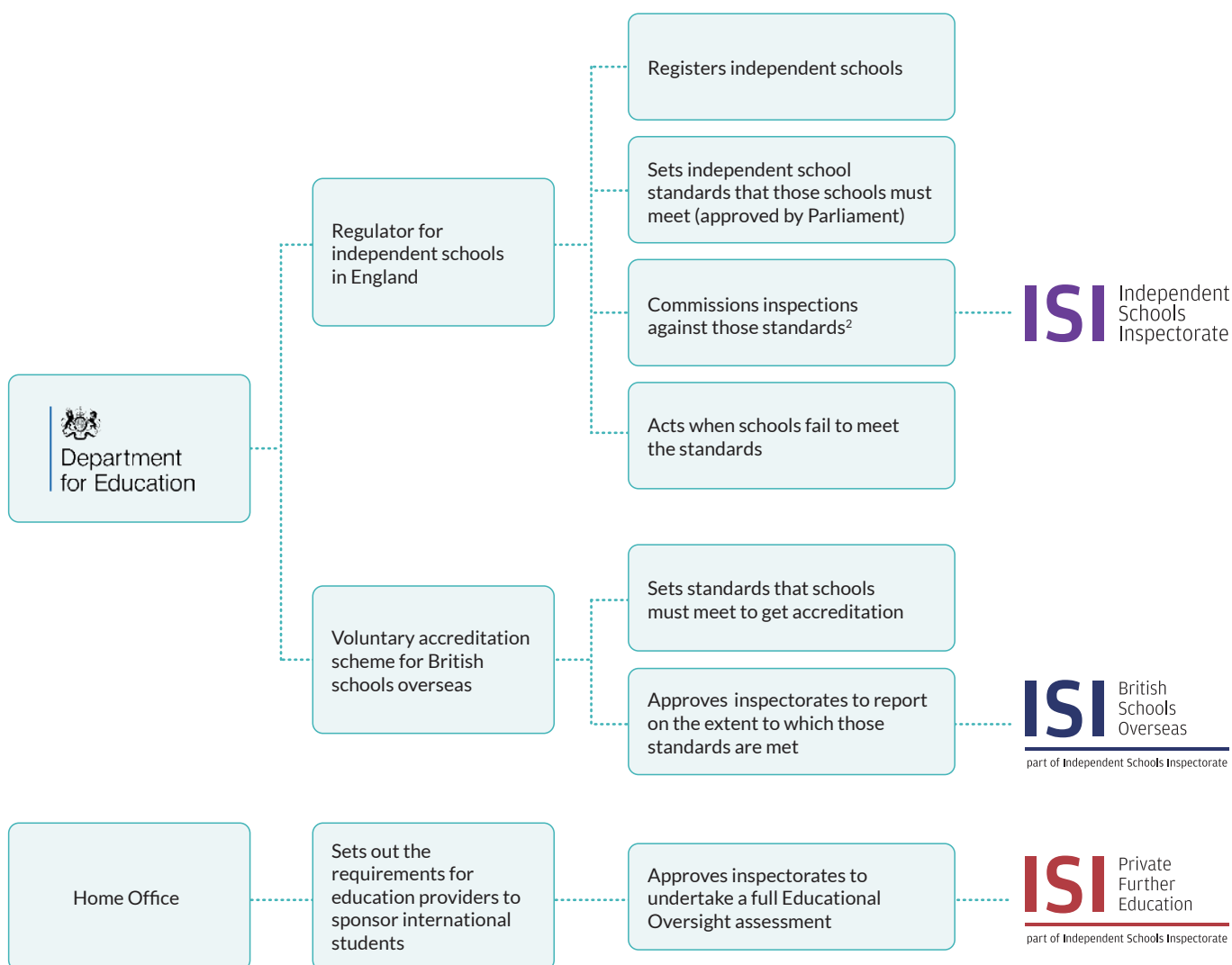
# Role and remit



ISI is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools<sup>1</sup> in England.

Our inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards are met.

We are also approved by the Department for Education to inspect British schools overseas, and by the Home Office to inspect private further education colleges and language schools.



1 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. This approval is outlined in section 87A of the Children Act 1989 and section 106 of the Education and Skills Act 2008. Associations include: The Heads' Conference, The Society of Heads, The Girls' School Association, The Independent Association of Prep Schools, The Independent Schools Association, The Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools, The Independent Schools' Bursars Association

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

# Foreword



## 2022–2023 has been a time of transition for ISI.

In July 2023 we completed the cycle of routine school inspections which started in 2016, extended by one year because of the Covid pandemic. Since 2016, ISI has completed 3,406 routine and non-routine inspections, the most inspections that ISI has undertaken in a single inspection cycle. We also undertook 233 private further education inspections and 109 inspections of British schools overseas.

In September 2021, when routine school inspections commenced following Covid suspension, we had seven terms' worth of inspections to complete over the remaining six terms of the inspection cycle. The commitment and hard work of our employees and inspectors have enabled us to complete the cycle on time.

During the 2022–23 academic year, ISI conducted 656 inspections of association schools. The majority of schools we inspect demonstrate strong practice in the quality of education they provide and in their provision for the welfare of pupils, including boarders. 88.7 per cent met all of the Independent School Standards.

Throughout this year, we have also been focusing on the development of our new inspection framework, effective from September 2023. This was a comprehensive and collaborative process. We are extremely grateful to schools and other stakeholders for their constructive and valuable engagement. Throughout, we have emphasised the importance of effective internal quality assurance and its links to external quality assurance through inspection.

Our new framework takes as its foundation the existing requirement for leaders to actively promote the wellbeing of pupils, as defined in the Children Act 2004. This rightly emphasises the

importance of pupils' wellbeing, while providing a structure through which the work of schools can be assured. Feedback to our consultation demonstrated strong support for our proposals. However, we heard the nuance and made some changes before commencing our pilot programme. We have removed one-word evaluations while maintaining clarity of judgement. Our consultation methodology received good practice accreditation from *The Consultation Institute*.

Throughout the consultation and pilot programme we refined our inspection methodology into four principles. These are manageability, collaboration, triangulation and typicality, and proportionality. These have been shaped by our engagement with schools, and we are confident they will support a positive culture of school accountability in the sector. This includes ensuring that inspections remain robust, whilst reflecting the complexity and interconnectedness of school life.

In March 2023, the Secretary of State for Education renewed our appointment as an independent inspectorate and the Department for Education approved our new framework. We will continue to provide independent, robust and nuanced external assurance for the regulator, schools, parents and pupils.

Our priority for the 2023-24 academic year will be to embed the new framework while developing our British Schools Overseas and Private Further Education remits. We will continue to support all schools and stakeholders in understanding the nature, reach and benefits of an effective inspection process.

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Vanessa Ward  
Chief Inspector-CEO

# Completing the inspection cycle

ISI's last inspection framework was published in 2016 and has been used throughout the current inspection cycle. This was extended to seven years by the Department for Education due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on routine inspections.

In total, ISI undertook 3,406 inspections between April 2016 and July 2023. These included 647 non-routine inspections<sup>3</sup>, which were commissioned by the Department for Education.

Schools in continuous membership of an association since the start of the inspection cycle all received a regulatory compliance inspection (RCI) and an educational quality inspection (EQI). For other schools, the number of routine inspections was dependent on when a school joined its association and the timing and type of its inspections with their previous inspectorate.

Year	RCI	EQI	Non-routine	Total
Summer 2016	77	0	30	107
2016-2017	234	181	85	500
2017-2018	390	69	116	575
2018-2019	246	152	138	536
2019-2020	123	156	108	387
2020-2021	20	15	82	117
2021-2022	141	282	105	528
2022-2023	132	331	193	656
<b>Total</b>	<b>1363</b>	<b>1186</b>	<b>857</b>	<b>3406</b>

<sup>3</sup> Non-routine inspections are additional inspections, progress monitoring inspections and material change inspections. Further information about each inspection type is available on page 9

# Planning a new inspection cycle

The new inspection cycle starts in September 2023. It provided an opportunity to review and develop our principles and methods of inspection. This process started in autumn 2021, with initial proposals published in May 2022.

## Consultation

Throughout the process we have been committed to giving all feedback conscientious consideration. In total, over 1,000 individuals and organisations responded to our formal consultation.

Overall, 79.1 per cent of stakeholders strongly agreed or agreed with ISI's initial proposals. In response to more nuanced qualitative feedback, the structure of the framework was simplified and pupils' education, training and recreation was given greater prominence.

We commissioned *The Consultation Institute* to provide an independent quality assurance review of the process. This provided third party assurance that good practice had been adopted.

## Pilot programme

Throughout the year ISI completed four phases of pilot visits. These included extensive discussions with school leaders, staff and pupils. The final piloting visits tested the proposed timescale and methodology of inspections using the new framework.

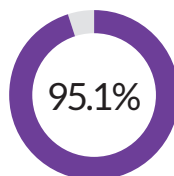
We were fortunate that many schools volunteered to take part and represented the range of different schools across the sector.

## Webinars and documentation

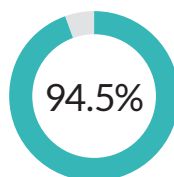
Between April and May, we hosted a series of

**4** WEBINARS FOR SCHOOLS around our updated principles and methods of inspection.

These were attended by over **3,400 SCHOOL LEADERS**



of attendees agreed that the **WEBINARS WERE USEFUL**



of attendees agreed that the webinars **IMPROVED THEIR UNDERSTANDING** of how ISI will inspect schools from September.

In July 2023, we published final versions of our inspection framework and inspection handbook, along with other supporting documentation and resources.

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# Updating ISI's principles and methods of inspection

ISI's new inspection framework is an evolution of our current inspection methodology, with key aspects of our inspection practice remaining the same. From September 2023:

- We will continue to inspect against the Independent Schools Standards and other regulatory requirements. These are set by Parliament and outline the statutory expectations for all independent schools in England.
- We will continue to capture what is distinctive about individual schools, their culture and ethos.
- We will also continue to inspect schools routinely twice within a six-year inspection cycle, or as directed by the Department for Education.

Some other principles and methods of inspection have been updated:

- We are moving to a single type of routine inspection. This will promote clarity and consistency in our reporting over time, and simplify the inspection process for schools.
- We are placing children and their wellbeing at the centre of our inspection process. This is reflected in our updated inspection report structure.
- We will provide more nuanced evaluations, reflecting the complexity and interconnectedness of school life. Each section will include clear statements about whether the school meets or does not meet relevant standards. We will also highlight any areas of significant strength.
- We will create opportunities for professional development and the sharing of good practice across the sector. These will include the introduction of an associate inspector role from year two of the inspection cycle.

## Principles of inspection

ISI has four inspection principles on which our updated inspection practice is built. These are:



### Manageability

Inspections should not cause unnecessary workload for the school or for the inspection team



### 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 at the school over time



### Proportionality

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

## The year in numbers

656

Total association  
school inspections

331

Educational quality  
inspections

132

Regulatory compliance  
inspections

44

Additional  
inspections

71

Progress  
monitoring  
inspections

78

Material change  
inspections

88.7

Percentage of  
schools meeting all  
standards

23

British  
schools overseas  
inspections

29

Educational oversight  
inspections in private  
further education

100

Reporting  
inspectors

527

Team  
inspectors

3,400+

Attendees at  
ISI webinars

43

Appearances at sector  
conferences

1.1M+

ISI website  
page views

1,025

Consultation  
responses

# Inspection quality



**Our internal quality assurance systems allow us to monitor every aspect of the inspection process. We use the information we gather to guide our inspector training and support, inspection processes and performance reviews.**

## Pre-inspection

We have a thorough and in-depth recruitment process for inspectors, during which their independence, skills and competency are assessed at every stage. Their initial training comprises a number of face-to-face training days, assessed inspection shadowing and assessed tasks.

All of our inspectors are required to be part of a continuous development programme, which includes training on inspection methodology and regular updates on safeguarding requirements and any changes to the regulations. Training is both in-person and online. Over the last year ISI has delivered over 40 hours of face-to-face training and published 18 online video modules. All of our inspectors are required to adhere to the ISI inspector code of conduct.

## On inspection

Inspectors work closely with school leaders where appropriate on inspection, and leaders are encouraged to raise any matters or concerns as early as possible directly with the inspection team. All reporting inspectors leading inspections are encouraged to telephone a team of experienced duty inspectors who are available whenever inspections are active for guidance where needed.

A selection of inspections is monitored by an experienced reporting inspector or Senior Director to ensure quality and consistency across our work. Experienced inspectors meet regularly with Senior Directors at ISI in order to ensure the process continually develops as a result of the things we learn from inspections.

## Post-inspection

School leaders and inspectors are issued with a survey at the end of every inspection, which asks for feedback on how the inspection was conducted. All of the responses are considered and used to inform our inspector training and inspection processes.

All draft inspection reports are reviewed by a quality assurance editor who checks that the evaluation reached on inspection is supported by the evidence which has been gathered, and that the report is written in accordance with ISI protocols.

ISI meets regularly with the school associations to discuss thematic issues arising from inspections and to answer any questions they have on behalf of their members.



# Inspection outcomes

ISI inspects against the Independent School Standards and other relevant regulations, which are set by Parliament.

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

All inspection reports are published on the ISI website and can be downloaded at [isi.net/reports](https://www.isi.net/reports). The website provides the ability to search by location.



**Part 1:** Quality of education



**Part 2:** Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils



**Part 3:** Welfare, health and safety of pupils



**Part 4:** Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors



**Part 5:** Premises of and accommodation at schools



**Part 6:** Provision of information



**Part 7:** Manner in which complaints are handled



**Part 8:** Quality of leadership in and management of schools

## Types of inspection<sup>5</sup>

### Educational quality inspection

**Type:** Routine

**Frequency:** Once during inspection cycle

**Focus:** Providing assurance on the quality of education and a selection of other policies and practices

### Regulatory compliance inspection

**Type:** Routine

**Frequency:** Once during inspection cycle

**Focus:** Providing assurance that a school's policies and practices are compliant with the regulations

### Material change inspection

**Type:** Non-routine

**Frequency:** Upon request from the Department for Education

**Focus:** Commissioned when a school applies to change the terms of its registration, for example by extending its age range

### Progress monitoring inspection

**Type:** Non-routine

**Frequency:** Upon request from the Department for Education

**Focus:** Commissioned when a school has failed to meet the standards on an inspection and is visited again to inspect for improvement

### Additional inspection

**Type:** Non-routine

**Frequency:** Upon request from the Department for Education

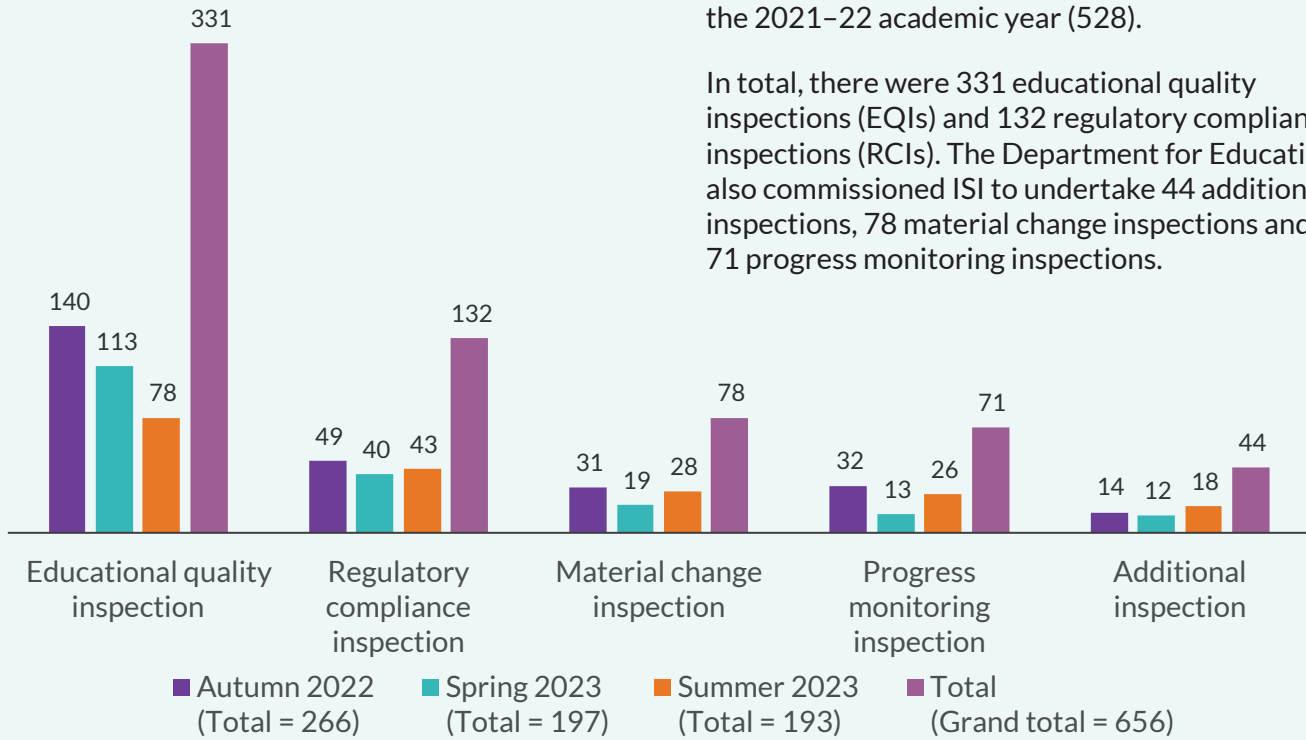
**Focus:** Commissioned when the Department for Education have reason for a school to be inspected urgently

<sup>5</sup> From September 2023, ISI will be moving towards a single type of routine inspection

## Number of inspections

In order to complete the current inspection cycle, ISI undertook 656 inspections this year. This represents a 24.2 per cent increase compared to the 2021–22 academic year (528).

In total, there were 331 educational quality inspections (EQIs) and 132 regulatory compliance inspections (RCIs). The Department for Education also commissioned ISI to undertake 44 additional inspections, 78 material change inspections and 71 progress monitoring inspections.



## Percentage of schools meeting all standards

	Autumn 2022	Spring 2023	Summer 2023
Schools inspected	266	197	193
Met all standards	228	176	178
% meeting all standards	85.7	89.3	92.2
% not meeting all standards	14.3	10.7	7.8

### Standards not met (by part)

Not met one or more part	74 (11.3%)
Not met Part 1: Quality of education	7 (1.1%)
Not met Part 2: Spiritual, moral, social and cultural	4 (0.6%)
Not met Part 3: Welfare, health and safety	71 (10.8%)
Not met Part 4: Suitability of staff	32 (4.9%)
Not met Part 5: Premises and accommodation	7 (1.1%)
Not met Part 6: Provision of information	5 (0.7%)
Not met Part 7: Complaints handling	7 (1.1%)
Not met Part 8: Leadership and management	74 (11.3%)

# National minimum standards for boarding schools

ISI also inspect schools against the statutory national minimum standards for boarding schools (NMS). In total, we inspected 253 schools where accommodation is provided by boarding schools. The NMS compliance rate for the year was 89.3 per cent.

## Standards not met (by standard)

NMS 1 – Statement of boarding principles and practice	0%
NMS 2 – Management and development of boarding	10.3%
NMS 3 – Inclusion, equality and diversity	0%
NMS 4 – Boarding accommodation	0%
NMS 5 – Boarders’ possessions	0%
NMS 6 – Provision and preparation of food and drinks	0.8%
NMS 7 – Boarders’ health and wellbeing	0.4%
NMS 8 – Safeguarding	8.3%
NMS 9 – Safety of boarders	3.2%
NMS 10 – Fire precautions and drills	1.2%
NMS 11 – Boarders’ induction and individual support	0.4%
NMS 12 – Contact with parents/carers	0%
NMS 13 – Securing boarders’ views	0%
NMS 14 – Complaints	1.2%
NMS 15 – Promoting positive behaviour	0%
NMS 16 – Preventing bullying	0%
NMS 17 – Promoting Good relationships	0%
NMS 18 – Activities and free time	0.4%
NMS 19 – Staff recruitment and Checks on other adults	4.3%
NMS20 – Staffing and supervision	0.4%
NMS21 – Prefects	0%
NMS22 – Educational guardians	0.4%
NMS23 – Lodgings and host families	0%

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# Safeguarding



**Safeguarding is embedded throughout the regulatory requirements that ISI inspects against and evaluated on every inspection.**

Our inspectors consider evidence relating to a school's safeguarding arrangements and culture throughout an inspection.

In 2022–23, standards relating to the welfare, health and safety of pupils (part three) were not met by 71 schools.

## Concerns about schools

The Department for Education – as regulator for independent schools in England – considers all concerns received about schools.

ISI passes all concerns received to the Department for Education who decide what action to take in response.

This may involve commissioning ISI to undertake a non-routine inspection focusing on aspects of provision relevant to one or more concerns. ISI does not investigate individual concerns about schools.

## Safeguarding partners

This year ISI hosted two virtual updates for Local Authority Designated Officers (LADOs), Designated Officers for Allegations (DOFAs) and safeguarding children partnerships.

The webinars were attended by over 100 LADOs and 100 per cent agreed that the sessions improved their understanding about the role and remit of ISI.

## Ofsted joint working

Under ministerial direction, ISI and Ofsted have a joint working arrangement based on the exchange of knowledge and understanding. This results in an annual report by Ofsted to the Secretary of State for Education, which is published on the GOV.UK website.

In 2022–23, both inspectorates produced and delivered training to inspectors on inspecting safeguarding in education settings. A joint programme of inspection shadowing ran throughout the autumn term, with a particular focus on the inspection of safeguarding and relationships and sex education. Furthermore, learnings were shared between inspectorates on running consultations and on inspecting gender separation in co-educational schools.

# British schools overseas



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

BSO is a voluntary inspection scheme for overseas schools, established by the British government. This ensures schools provide their pupils with the skills and qualifications they need to enter or re-enter the British education system.

The scheme helps to inform parents about how the standards in these schools measure up against the standards that apply to independent schools in England. To remain accredited, schools must have an inspection every three years, and the inspection must show that its provision meets all the standards.

In 2022–23, we undertook **23** BSO inspections across **15** countries. The map below presents the location of schools accredited by ISI in the past year:



# Private further education

ISI is approved by the Home Office to conduct Educational Oversight inspections of private further education (PFE) colleges and English language schools in England and Wales.

PFE is responsible for carrying out inspections of education providers applying for, or renewing, a Student sponsor licence. This is a licence granted by the Home Office to education providers to sponsor international students to come to the UK under the Student Visas points-based system.

In 2022–23, ISI undertook 29 inspections of private further education colleges and English language schools.

## Breakdown of grades



# Responding to complaints



## ISI welcomes feedback from individuals, schools and other organisations.

We are committed to dealing with complaints consistently, fairly and sensitively within a clear timeframe.

Whilst most inspections do not lead to a complaint, we take seriously any complaint we receive and will respond to it in accordance with our policy.

We value and prioritise open relationships between schools and inspection teams on inspection. Our inspectors are trained to ensure clear and regular communication with the school throughout the inspection process. The reporting inspector will meet school leaders regularly and will try to resolve any issues as quickly as possible.

In 2022–23, we received **20** formal complaints.

	2022–23	2021–22
Formal complaints	20	11
School inspection related	18	11
BSO inspection related	0	0
PFE inspection related	2	0
Non-inspection related	0	0

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

The adjudicator can consider whether:

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

If the adjudicator upholds part or all of their complaint, the response will outline which aspects of the complaint have been upheld and why. The response will include any steps ISI will take as a result.

Of the four referrals that were completed by the end of the academic year, 75% were found to have followed the process correctly.

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