

Guidance

Ofsted code of conduct

Guidance on the conduct of inspectors and Ofsted's expectations of providers during inspection or wider regulatory activity.

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[Ofsted](#)

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Applies to England

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Ofsted exists to be a force for improvement through intelligent, responsible and focused use of inspection, regulation and insights. This is our guiding principle and is reflected in [our strategy](#).

The primary purpose of inspection or regulation under all our frameworks is to bring about improvement in education provision for learners of all ages and in the care of children and young people. We refer collectively to those we inspect as 'providers' (of education, skills or care).

This guidance applies to all inspection and wider regulatory activity in all Ofsted's remits: early years, education and skills, and social care. It also applies to all providers.

When inspectors are carrying out inspections or visits, the lead inspector will explain the expectations set out in this guidance and will ask providers to read it. They will make providers aware that they should raise any concerns that the inspection team has not acted in accordance with the code as soon as possible. This is in order to resolve issues before the inspection or visit is completed, where possible. At appropriate points, inspectors will confirm with providers that they have provided or given access to all relevant evidence.

At the end of the inspection or visit, the lead inspector will remind providers that it is their responsibility to have acted in accordance with our expectations. This includes being open, transparent and honest and providing all relevant evidence to allow for a fair and accurate outcome.

Expectations of inspectors

It is important that inspectors establish and maintain a positive working relationship with providers, based on courteous and professional behaviour. Inspectors will take all reasonable steps to prevent undue anxiety and to minimise stress during the inspection or regulatory activity. We expect our inspectors to uphold the highest professional standards in their work, to act with integrity and to treat everyone they meet fairly, with respect and with sensitivity.

In meeting this expectation, inspectors will:

- evaluate objectively, be impartial and inspect without fear or favour
- uphold and demonstrate [Ofsted's values](#) at all times
- evaluate provision in line with our frameworks, national standards or regulatory requirements
- base all evaluations on clear and robust evidence
- declare all actual and perceived conflicts of interest and have no real or perceived connection with the provider that could undermine the objectivity of the inspection or regulatory activity
- report honestly and clearly, ensuring that judgements are fair and reliable
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy, respect and sensitivity
- act in the best interests and well-being of service users, prioritising the safeguarding of children and learners at all times
- establish and maintain appropriate professional and physical boundaries when talking to both children and adults
- build an appropriate rapport with children while remaining alert to the dynamics of their role as inspectors and respecting the limits of their relationship with children
- maintain purposeful and productive communication with providers and inform them of judgements sensitively, but clearly
- respect the confidentiality of information as far as possible, particularly about individuals and their work
- respond appropriately to reasonable requests

- take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues
- use their title (such as His Majesty's Inspector, Regulatory Inspector or Ofsted Inspector) only in relation to their work for Ofsted
- on inspections or visits carried out jointly with other inspectorates, be clear with providers as to the roles and responsibilities of the respective inspectorates

At all times, we require inspectors to act in accordance with our internal policies and procedures on expected standards of behaviour and conduct, and [the Civil Service code](#).

The majority of our work is carried out smoothly and without incident. If concerns do arise, they should be raised with the lead inspector as soon as possible, in order to resolve issues before the inspection or visit is completed. We will record any concerns raised, and actions taken, in the inspection evidence.

If it is not possible to resolve concerns during the inspection or visit, or through submitting comments in response to the draft report, the provider may wish to lodge a formal complaint on receipt of the final report. The lead inspector will ensure that providers are informed that they are able to make a formal complaint and that [information about how to complain](#) is available on GOV.UK.

Expectations of providers

Inspection and regulatory activity rely on the integrity and cooperation of providers. We expect providers to be open and transparent, maintain a positive working relationship with inspectors and inspection support staff, and to uphold the highest professional standards. In meeting this expectation, providers should:

- be courteous and professional, treating inspectors and inspection support staff with respect
- approach the inspection or regulatory activity with integrity and be open, transparent and honest. This includes providing evidence – or access to evidence – that will enable the inspector to report honestly, fairly and reliably about their provision. It means not withholding or concealing evidence, or providing false, misleading, inaccurate, or incomplete information

- enable inspectors to observe the normal functioning of the provider, and not make arrangements that might mislead inspectors,
- act in the best interests of children and learners, and put their well-being, education and care above the provider's interests or reputation
- provide opportunities for inspectors to meet with children and learners and staff
- expect that inspectors will usually need to both observe practice and talk to staff or children and learners (and employers where relevant) without a manager or registered person present, and when necessary, facilitate for that to happen
- work with inspectors to take all reasonable steps to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
- ensure the safety of inspectors while on their premises
- maintain purposeful and productive communication with the lead inspector and the inspection team
- bring any concerns about the inspection or visit to the attention of the lead inspector promptly and in a suitable manner
- make inspectors aware of any CCTV cameras and ensure that there is a private room without CCTV available for inspectors to discuss inspection evidence and hold confidential discussions

If providers do not act in accordance with these expectations, this may have an impact on the leadership and management judgement and/or affect providers' suitability to remain registered.

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