Achievement of pupils at the school

1. This section deals with academic achievement. Other, broader aspects of achievement, such as those reflected in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, are taken into account in the evaluation of other areas for which there are key judgements and when reporting on the overall effectiveness of the school.

2. When judging achievement, inspectors must have regard for pupils’ starting points in terms of their prior attainment and age. This includes the progress that the lowest attaining pupils are making and its effect on raising their attainment, and the progress that the most able are making towards attaining the highest grades.

3. Inspectors should pay particular attention to whether more able pupils in general and the most able pupils in particular are achieving as well as they should. For example, does a large enough proportion of those pupils who had the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics achieve A*/A GCSE grades in these subjects by the age of 16?

4. Inspectors should summarise the achievements of the most able pupils in a separate paragraph of the inspection report.

5. Inspectors should not insist that there must be three years’ worth of data or that these data must show good progress or achievement, before judging a school’s overall effectiveness to be good. A school can be good overall if teaching, leadership and management, and behaviour and safety are good, and if there is sufficient evidence that progress and/or achievement of current pupils are good as well. This is often the case when a school is improving from requires improvement, serious weaknesses or special measures. However, inspection reports must state that this is the case and explain clearly why the school is good despite published data that appear not to support that judgement.

6. National curriculum levels are being removed from September 2014. In 2014/15, Year 2 and Year 6 pupils will not have been taught the new curriculum. Therefore, the 2015 Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 assessments and tests will be on the old national curriculum and will be the last to be reported on against levels.

7. In 2014/15, most schools, academies and free schools will have historic performance data expressed in national curriculum levels, except for those pupils in Year 1. Inspectors may find that schools are tracking attainment and progress using a mixture of measures for some, or all, year groups and subjects.

8. As now, inspectors will use a range of evidence to make judgements, including by looking at test and examination results, pupils’ work and considering pupils’ own perceptions of their learning. Inspectors will not expect to see a particular
assessment system in place and will recognise that schools are still working towards full implementation of their preferred approach.¹

9. However, they will:

- spend more time looking at the range of pupils’ work in order to consider what progress they are making in different areas of the curriculum
- talk to leaders about the school’s use of formative and summative assessment and how this improves teaching and raises achievement
- evaluate how well pupils are doing against relevant age-related expectations as set out by the school and the national curriculum (where this applies).²

10. Inspectors will consider how the school uses assessment information to identify pupils who are falling behind in their learning or who need additional support to reach their full potential, including the most able.

11. In arriving at judgements about progress, inspectors will usually consider how well:

- pupils’ work shows that, where possible, they have the knowledge, understanding and skills expected for their age as set out by the curriculum and assessment system
- all pupils are set aspirational progress targets and that they are on track to meet or exceed these, and where possible, expected standards by the end of each key stage
- assessment, including test results, targets, performance descriptors or expected standards are used to ensure that all pupils make the progress

¹ Further advice and guidance to support schools in selecting an appropriate system may be found by following the links below:
Department for Education (DfE) Assessment Principles; Assessment Innovation Fund winners; Department for Education (DfE) National curriculum and assessment from September 2014: information for schools; Report of the NAHT Commission on Assessment; Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) case studies one and two.
² Schools are likely to use a combination of relevant national curriculum expectations and performance descriptors where they apply (see below), and expectations set by the school for other subjects and age groups through the chosen assessment system. For the end of each key stage, the government will set the expected standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science. In between, it is for schools to determine where pupils must be in relation to that standard. For Key Stage 1, the DfE will provide performance descriptors for expected national standards in mathematics, reading and writing. It will provide a single descriptor of the expected standard for science. For Key Stage 2, the DfE will provide performance descriptors for expected standards in writing. For science, reading and mathematics, it will provide a single descriptor of the expected standard. The DfE will publish the draft performance descriptors in autumn 2014. At both key stages, tests will be reported against scaled scores rather than levels. Key Stage 4 programmes of study for English and mathematics were published in July 2014 for teaching from September 2015. Science will be published for first teaching from September 2016.
their teachers expect and that more able pupils do work that deepens their knowledge and understanding

- progress in literacy and mathematics are assessed by drawing on evidence from other subjects in the curriculum, where this is sensible
- pupils’ strengths and misconceptions are identified and acted on by teachers during lessons and more widely to:
  - plan future lessons and teaching
  - remedy where pupils do not demonstrate knowledge or understanding of a key element of the curriculum
  - deepen the knowledge and understanding of the most able.

12. Inspectors must take account of:

- **the learning and progress across year groups of different groups of pupils currently on the roll of the school**, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and the most able; evidence gathered by inspectors during the course of the inspection should include:
  - observation of lessons and other learning activities
  - scrutiny of pupils’ work, particularly their written work, to assess standards, progress and the quality of learning of pupils currently in the school
  - the school’s own records of pupils’ progress, including the progress of pupils who attend off-site alternative provision for all or part of the week, and the progress of disadvantaged pupils, or those for whom the Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up premium provide support, and the most able pupils such as those who joined secondary schools having attained highly in Key Stage 2
  - the quality and rigour of assessment, particularly in Key Stage 1
  - in primary schools, how increasing participation in physical education (PE) and sport is helping all pupils develop healthy lifestyles and reach the performance levels they are capable of
  - discussions with pupils about their work
  - the views of parents, pupils and staff
  - discussions with staff and senior leaders
  - case studies of individual pupils
  - in primary schools and some secondary schools, listening to pupils read in order to assess their standards and rates of progress in reading, with a particular focus on weaker readers.

- **pupils’ progress in the last three years**, where such data exist and are applicable, including that of looked after children, disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and the most
able; evidence gathered by inspectors during the course of the inspection should include:

- the proportions making expected progress and the proportions exceeding expected progress in English (or separately in reading and writing) and in mathematics from each starting point, compared with national figures, for all pupils and disadvantaged pupils
- value added data for the school overall and for different groups of pupils and subjects
- use of data below national curriculum Level 1 (if used), including the national data analysis
- any analysis of robust progress data presented by the school, including information provided by external organisations.

- **pupils’ attainment** in relation to national standards (where available) and compared with all schools, based on data over the last three years where applicable, noting any evidence of performance significantly above or below national averages; trends of improvement or decline; and inspection evidence of current pupils’ attainment across year groups using a range of indicators, including, where relevant:
  - the proportion of pupils attaining particular standards
  - capped average points scores
  - average points scores
  - pupils’ attainment in reading and writing
  - pupils’ attainment in mathematics
  - pupils’ attainment in other subjects (as relevant)
  - the outcomes of the most recent phonic screening check and any follow-up screening undertaken by the school
  - Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data
  - attainment as shown by test and examination results available in school, but not yet validated or benchmarked nationally.

13. Inspectors must take particular account of the progress made by disadvantaged pupils compared with that made nationally by other pupils with similar starting points, and the extent to which any gaps in this progress, and consequently in attainment, are closing. Inspectors should first consider the progress and

---

3 Inspectors must evaluate and report on the difference in average point scores in each of English and mathematics in national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2, and at GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4, between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally, and between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils within the school. They must report on the extent to which any such gaps are closing, considering in-school gaps in the context of national gaps. Inspectors should express gaps in terms of grades at Key Stage 4 and periods of time, such as ‘two terms’, at Key Stage 2.
attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared with the national figures on progress and attainment for non-disadvantaged pupils, and how much any gaps are closing. They should then also consider any in-school gaps between disadvantaged pupils’ progress and attainment and the progress and attainment of the other pupils in the school, and how much these gaps are closing. Inspectors should consider the impact of what a school is doing to narrow all of these gaps in progress and attainment between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils, where they exist. Where in-school gaps are narrowing, inspectors should check that this is because the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils is rising, and not because the progress or attainment of non-disadvantaged pupils is falling. Where an in-school attainment gap exists or widens, inspectors should consider whether this is because disadvantaged pupils attain more highly than other pupils nationally, while non-disadvantaged pupils in the school attain even more highly.

14. Inspectors should compare a school’s 2013 performance with the 2013 DfE floor standards. Once the 2014 floor standards are available, inspectors should compare a school’s 2014 results with those.

15. In relation to particular ages or groups of pupils, inspectors must consider the following:

- Evaluation of achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage should take account of the proportions of children who have made typical progress or more from their starting points. An example of typical progress for a child would be to start Nursery or Reception displaying the knowledge, skills and understanding that are typical for her/his age and then to meet the early learning goals by the end of Reception. Children who meet all the early learning goals but who started at a lower level of development than is typical for their age might be said to be making rapid progress. However, a child starting school at a higher level of development who meets all the early learning goals but exceeds none of them is unlikely to have made enough progress. Evaluation of achievement should also consider attainment at the end of Reception in comparison with Early Years Foundation Stage Profile national figures and in terms of how well it prepares children for Key Stage 1.

- For those schools where children are aged three and four years and move to primary school before any nationally comparable assessments are made, the judgement should be based on an evaluation of children’s learning and progress relative to their age and evidence of their starting points.

- Evaluation of achievement in Key Stage 1 should take account of the proportions of pupils who have made typical progress or more from their starting points. For 2014/15, as a broad rule of thumb, Year 2 children who reached a good level of development at the end of Reception ought to be

---

4 December 2014 for Key Stage 2 floor standards and January 2015 for Key Stage 4 floor standards.
reaching **at least** the expected standard by the end of Key Stage 1 (so attaining at least Level 2b in the 2015 assessments). Children exceeding the early learning goals at the end of Reception ought to be exceeding the expected standard at the end of Key Stage 1 and be reaching high standards. Inspectors should take into account of how well pupils with a lower starting point have made up ground, and the breadth and depth of progress made by the most able.

- In schools where pupils have completed part of a key stage elsewhere, inspectors should take this into account when evaluating the pupils’ progress.
- In schools where attainment is not benchmarked nationally – for example in the final year group of a middle school – inspectors should draw on all the available evidence to decide whether attainment is above average, broadly average or low.
- In sixth form provision, inspectors should take account of whether the school meets the 16–19 interim minimum standards specified by the DfE, noting the impact this is likely to have on sixth form effectiveness.
- For those groups of pupils whose cognitive ability is such that their attainment is unlikely ever to rise above ‘low’, the judgement on achievement should be based on an evaluation of the pupils’ learning and progress relative to their starting points at particular ages and any assessment measures held by the school. Evaluations should not take account of their attainment compared with national benchmarks.
- Inspectors should explore and identify the reasons for any difference between the achievement of pupils in resource-based provision and other pupils in the school, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs. When analysing achievement, inspectors should consider carefully the impact that a large provision might have on the overall attainment and progress data for the whole school.

**The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs**

16. The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs must be reported on, including any specialist resource provision managed by the governing body, in addition to the extent to which the education provided by the school meets their needs.

---

5 Interim minimum standards: 40% of students achieve an average point score per entry in vocational qualifications of 194 points; 40% of students achieve an average point score per entry in academic qualifications of 172 points;
17. Inspectors should note that:

- pupils identified with special educational needs may or may not have a disability and disabled pupils may or may not be identified as having special educational needs
- inspectors must not assume that levels of attainment in all special schools will be below those expected of pupils of a similar age nationally
- it is not appropriate to evaluate achievement according to a pupil’s type of disability or special educational need, or whether or not they have been have identified as requiring school support or an education, health and care plan, as explained in the Code of Practice
- levels of identification and definitions of need vary considerably within an area or from one area of the country to another.

18. Inspectors need to take into account the proportion of pupils whose attainment is below that expected for their age and where these are related to cognitive difficulties. The judgement on these pupils’ achievement should be based on an evaluation of their learning and progress relative to their starting points at particular ages, and any assessment measures held by the school. When reaching judgements in these schools, inspectors should consider the impact of these pupils on the school’s overall attainments.

19. Schools may use a range of evaluation tools and evidence to judge whether pupils are making or exceeding the progress expected for their age and starting point. Inspectors must assure themselves that the methods used are robust and that the school’s attainment data are accurate and reliable.

20. Where ’Progression 2010–11’ is used to contribute to the school’s analysis then the starting point for evaluation is that expected progress is the median level for pupils’ age and starting point. It is expected that schools will use national data and RAISEonline for pupils whose attainment can be assessed within national assessment arrangements.

21. As with all progress information, inspectors must be cautious when considering data relating to small groups of pupils. For example, it is important to distinguish between health-related issues and educational provision. Inspectors must also distinguish between pupils’ success towards achieving aspirational targets set by the school and the expected progress for pupils at different ages and starting points.

22. Inspectors should also look at the way the school identifies pupils who have special educational needs. They should find out whether pupils have been

---

6 Progression 2010–11: Advice on improving data to raise attainment and maximise the progress of learners with special educational needs, Department for Education, 2010;
identified as having special educational needs, when in fact their progress has been hampered by weak teaching.

23. Inspectors should:

- note whether pupils who receive additional intervention are demonstrating accelerated or sustained progress – this would indicate whether the intervention is effective
- evaluate the school’s arrangements for ensuring the accuracy of its pupil performance data, as there is no statutory moderation of P scales.
Grade descriptors – Achievement of pupils at the school

Note: These descriptors should not to be used as a checklist. They must be applied adopting a ‘best fit’ approach which relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team.

**Outstanding (1)**

- Pupils make substantial and sustained progress throughout year groups across many subjects, including English and mathematics, and learn exceptionally well.
- From each different starting point, the proportions of pupils making expected progress and the proportions exceeding expected progress in English and in mathematics are high compared with national figures. For disadvantaged pupils, the proportions are similar to, or are rapidly approaching, those for other pupils nationally and in the school.
- The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils at least match or are rapidly approaching those of other pupils nationally and in the school.
- Pupils read widely and often across all subjects to a high standard.
- Pupils acquire knowledge and develop and apply a wide range of skills to great effect in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. They are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- Pupils, including those in sixth form provision and those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, acquire knowledge quickly and develop their understanding rapidly in a wide range of different subjects across the curriculum.
- The learning of groups of pupils, particularly those who are disabled, those who have special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and the most able, is consistently good or better.
- The standards of attainment of almost all groups of pupils are likely to be at least in line with national averages with many pupils attaining above this. In exceptional circumstances, an outstanding grade can be awarded where standards of attainment of any group of pupils are below those of all pupils nationally, but the gap is closing rapidly, as shown by trends in a range of attainment indicators. This may include attainment in reading.

**Good (2)**

- Progress across year groups in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics, is consistently strong and evidence in pupils’ work indicates that they achieve well.
- From each different starting point, the proportions of pupils making expected progress and the proportions exceeding expected progress in English and in mathematics are close to or above national figures. For disadvantaged pupils, the proportions are similar to, or improving in relation to, those for other pupils nationally and in the school.
- The attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils are similar to or improving in relation to those of other pupils nationally and in the school.
- Pupils read widely and often.
- Pupils acquire knowledge and develop understanding quickly and securely in a wide range of subjects. They develop and apply a wide range of skills, in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. This ensures that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment.
- The learning of groups of pupils, particularly those who are disabled, those who have special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and the most able, is generally good.

---

7 Where the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is high, any in-school attainment gaps need not be closing rapidly.
8 Where the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is high, in-school attainment gaps may exist.
Where attainment, including that in reading in primary schools, is low overall, it is improving at a faster rate than nationally, over a sustained period.

Requires improvement (3)
- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because it is not good.

Inadequate (4)
Achievement is likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply.
- From their different starting points, the proportions of pupils making expected progress, or the proportions exceeding expected progress, in English or mathematics are consistently below national figures and show little or no improvement.
- For disadvantaged pupils, the proportions making expected progress or exceeding expected progress from the different starting points in English or in mathematics are consistently well below those of other pupils either nationally or in the school, and show little or no improvement.
- Pupils' learning and progress in any key subject or key stage, which may, depending on the impact on overall achievement, include sixth form provision or the Early Years Foundation Stage as appropriate, indicate they are underachieving.
- Groups of pupils, particularly disabled pupils and/or those who have special educational needs and/or disadvantaged pupils and/or the most able, are underachieving.
- Pupils' communication skills (including reading and/or writing) or proficiency in mathematics are not sufficiently strong for them to succeed in the next stage of education, training or employment.
- Attainment is consistently below floor standards or is in decline and shows little, fragile or inconsistent improvement.
- There are wide gaps in the attainment and/or the learning and progress of different groups.

9 ‘Key’ subjects in primary schools are English and mathematics. In secondary schools, they are English, mathematics, science and any specialist school subjects and/or GCSE subjects with very high levels of entry.

10 Floor standards for 2013, 2014 and 2015 refer to the expected levels of performance set by the government in relation to standards of attainment at Key Stages 2 and 4 and the proportion of pupils exceeding the threshold in 2014 and 2015 for the number of national curriculum levels of progress made in English and mathematics between Key Stages 1 and 2 or between Key Stages 2 and 4.