

OFSTED Inspection and Governance Webinar

16 December 2022

This is a full transcript of the webinar apart from minor edits for clarity and deletion of general chat and repetitions.

It also includes the substantive slides.

It was transcribed by www.askaclerk.co.uk

The video and my summary of the most helpful points from the session can be found here:

www.askaclerk.co.uk/ofsted-inspection-and-governance-webinar-summary-transcript

You are welcome to share this transcript with governance colleagues.

INTRODUCTION/UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE

Speaker: Lee Owston, Deputy Director for Schools and Early Education

My name is Lee Owston. I'm one of His Majesty's Inspectors and I'm Deputy Director for Schools and Early Education. I'd also like to introduce Belita Scott who is a Schools Senior HMI in the Northeast, Yorkshire and Humber and Sandy Hayes who is a Schools Senior HMI in the Policy, Quality and Training team.

We have a range of resources that you can access. We publish updates to our Handbook; normally we try and keep that to a minimum because we want people to be assured that obviously inspections we are undertaking any academic year are consistent, but any updates we publish on www.gov.uk/ofsted

We often publish separate blogs and press releases to advertise particular aspects or to draw people's attention to what has changed within quite lengthy handbooks and documents and we also have research reviews and other publications from time to time that shine a light on particular aspects of practice.



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Outline of the session

- Understanding governance
- What is effective governance?
- Meeting governors on inspection
- How does governance inform our judgements?
- How do inspectors provide feedback on governance?

So first, what is governance and how do we look at governance on inspection, particularly given that there's been a change in the educational landscape over the last 10 years and we have local authority maintained schools as well as academies, standalone and multi-academy trusts.

Then I'll hand over to my colleagues Belita and Sandy to take you through some of the finer details about what does that mean for you if you're a governor and your school is due an inspection.

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How we find out governance arrangements in different types of school



- Schools, and especially MATs, operate a wide variety of leadership and governance models. It's therefore essential that inspectors establish who is responsible and accountable for leadership and governance.
- It's also really important that inspectors speak to those responsible for leadership and governance during an inspection.

Inspections and governance

So in terms of understanding governance I think it's fair to say that governance arrangements can sometimes be really complex. That matches some of the complexity that I've just mentioned in terms of the structure of schools and the education landscape certainly over the last say eight to 10 years.

The first thing I want to clarify is how we seek to understand governor arrangements in your school, given that there can be very different arrangements depending on the type of school that we're inspecting.

So the first thing that we need to do as an inspector is understand who is responsible and accountable for leadership and management, which does sit with governance, but how is that organised and what responsibilities may or may not be delegated to varying levels of governance, again whatever that structure might be.

Inspectors will look at the school's website as one of the first activities they do, often before they even contact a school or have spoken to the Headteacher. The information that's available on a school's website can really help a lead inspector understand how a school's governance is structured.

So for example if you are part of a multi-academy trust then certainly inspectors will be looking for example for the scheme of delegation, so that document that outlines what different levels of governance, if there are different levels within the trust, are responsible for.

That means that when we're thinking through with the Headteacher and those early telephone calls what we can do and when in terms of who we meet with, what activities we undertake, we can be sure that we are speaking to absolutely the right individuals.

During the telephone call inspectors will:



- **establish** what the governance structure of the school is
- **clarify** where the responsibility and accountability lies
- **confirm** arrangements for meetings the school and MAT leaders
- **request** that a governance representative is present at the final feedback meeting

During that telephone call obviously inspectors will want to talk about governance, but essentially they'll want to clarify with the Headteacher what the governance structure of the school looks like.

They'll want to know as I've said who is responsible for what and where does the ultimate accountability lie and then we'll get into some of the logistical arrangements, who could meet with us on what day at what time. Lead inspectors will be as flexible as possible within the two days that they have.

We recognise that governors have day jobs and other activities in their diary because they didn't know that the inspection would be necessarily coming at that point in time and therefore we try to make sure that the arrangements ensure as many people come and meet with inspectors as possible.

We recognise that that's not always possible and sometimes while a face-to-face meeting is always preferable it might be that lead inspectors have to pick up the phone and speak to the Chair of Governors for example if they're on holiday or if they just simply can't make the two-day window of inspection.

The other element we discuss is obviously that invitation to the wider governing body, not just those that we've managed to speak to throughout the course of the process but every governor can come and listen to the final feedback meeting which comes at the end of the usually two-day process.

Governance structures

- Throughout our handbooks we use the phrase 'those responsible for governance', I just wanted to take this opportunity to clarify that these will be different people in maintained schools and academies.
- In a maintained school this will usually be the school governors.
- In a standalone academy, it will usually be trustees and sponsors.
- In an academy that is part of a MAT the situation can be even more complex.

A little bit more now about that complexity of the governance arrangements. We absolutely want to speak to those that have the accountability and are now holding leaders in the school and the Headteacher in the school to account. Again that is different depending on whether you're an academy or a local authority maintained school.

So if you're a local authority maintained school it's more straightforward in that we will speak to the governing board, the governors in the school. Slightly different in academies in that we have trustees and sponsors who are ultimately responsible and obviously we will want to talk to the Chair of Trustees, we want to talk to a representative sample in terms of the work that they're doing.

Governance accountability

- In schools that are part of MATs, the board of trustees are the accountable entity and governance body. In some cases, trustees may have devolved some of these responsibilities to local governing bodies (LGBs).
- Inspectors must meet with trustees as they have the overall responsibility for governance. However, they may also meet with LGBs where relevant.
- It is the role of those responsible for governance to help inspectors ensure they are speaking to the right people.
- **It is really important for LGB members to be familiar with their scheme of delegation.** If you are a governor in a school and you're unclear what your role would be in an inspection, it might be helpful to have a conversation with your school about what they anticipate your involvement to be.

But we also know that sometimes we can have another layer of governance in a multi-academy trust. We can have trustees, we can have the interplay between the trustees and the CEO and we often find that we also have local governing boards as well.

So it's important, if this is the structure in your particular academy or school, that actually it's crystal clear to inspectors the roles and responsibilities for example between trustees in terms of perhaps a higher level board and what is the local governing board and governors responsible for.

Having that crystal clear will help us understand who it is that we have to speak to and when we do speak to them what it is that we can ask them about in terms of what have you given them as their areas for focus.

So if you are a trustee or if you're also a governor on a local governing board it's important for you yourselves to be familiar with that scheme of delegation, because it's up to the Headteacher and governors to help the lead inspector who is new to your school, the stranger if you like in the equation, to understand exactly how governance works in your school.

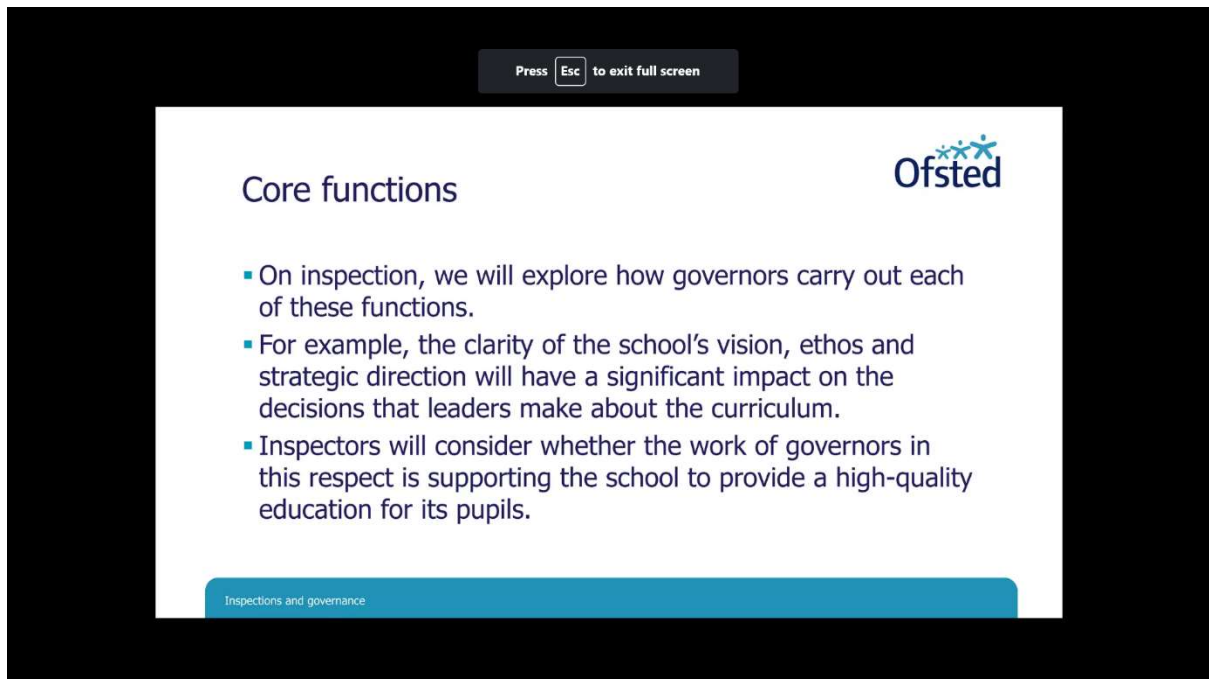
If you're unclear in terms of what your role would be in an inspection it's probably the best idea to have a conversation with your school and your Headteacher so that they can share with you what you might anticipate in terms of your own involvement within the structure of your school.

You'll hear in a moment from my colleagues about how inspection will work, but again depending on how your school has structured governance obviously that conversation with the Headteacher and others will be really useful.

I'm going to hand over to Belita and Sandy who are going to talk about effective governance and then what does it feel like to be a governor during an inspection, what can you expect from us in terms of the process. Over to you Belita.

WHAT IS EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE?

Speaker: Belita Scott, Schools Senior HMI in the Northeast, Yorkshire and Humber



The image is a screenshot of a presentation slide. At the top, there is a dark grey bar with the text 'Press Esc to exit full screen'. Below this, the slide has a white background. In the top right corner, the Ofsted logo is visible. The main title of the slide is 'Core functions'. Below the title, there is a bulleted list of three points. At the bottom of the slide, there is a blue bar with the text 'Inspections and governance'.

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Core functions

- On inspection, we will explore how governors carry out each of these functions.
- For example, the clarity of the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction will have a significant impact on the decisions that leaders make about the curriculum.
- Inspectors will consider whether the work of governors in this respect is supporting the school to provide a high-quality education for its pupils.

Inspections and governance

Thanks Lee. So let's look at the three core functions of governing boards first. You will know already that in the Governance Handbook the DfE defines effective governance as fulfilling those three core functions no matter what type of school or how many schools they govern, academy schools and LA maintained schools.

So those functions:

1. to ensure a clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
2. holding executive leaders to account for the performance of the school and its pupils and the performance management of staff
3. overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure that its money is well spent, including the pupil premium.

On inspection our inspectors explore how governors carry out each of these three functions. For example, the clarity of the school's vision, ethos and strategic direction will have a significant impact on the decisions that leaders make about the curriculum. Inspectors consider whether the work of governors in this respect is supporting the school to provide a high-quality education for its pupils.

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Statutory duties

- Those with governance/oversight roles are responsible for ensuring that the school fulfils its **statutory duties**. For example:
 - under the Equality Act 2010
 - in relation to the Prevent duty
 - for safeguarding.
- Note that when inspectors look at statutory duties, they are not checking compliance; they need to find out how governors ensure that the school is compliant.
- For example, though we would not expect governors to be 'checking' the school's single central record, we would look at whether they are seeking the assurance from the school that they are keeping it up to date and that the designated safeguarding lead is carrying out their duties.

Inspections and governance

Now on to the statutory duties of governing boards. So those with governance oversight are responsible for ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties.

Some examples are under the Equality Act 2010, in relation to the Prevent Duty and safeguarding. On the inspection I was on last week the lead inspector delved about all of those aspects during the meeting with governors.

It's important to note that when inspectors are looking at statutory duties they're not just checking compliance, they're seeking to ascertain how governors ensure that the school is compliant.

For example we wouldn't expect governors to be checking the school's single central record of recruitment checks themselves, we'd look to see whether they're seeking assurance from the school that they're keeping it up-to-date and that the Designated Safeguarding Lead is carrying out their duties.

In that inspection last week it was mentioned in the minutes that governors had asked the Headteacher about the single central record.

Governance documents

- By 8am on the day of the inspection, schools must provide inspectors with:
 - minutes of governors meetings (for maintained schools)
 - minutes of trust board meetings (for academies)
- Inspectors will review these documents to look at how governors fulfil their core functions and statutory duties.
- These documents do not need to be in any specific format.

The governance documents that inspectors consider. The initial notification call is made by the inspection support team. They also send a list of information that schools must make available to inspectors by eight o'clock on the first day of the inspection on site and part of this is strategic documents about the school.

So examples for maintained schools are minutes of governing body meetings. For academies, minutes of trust board meetings and any other relevant strategic documents about governance or the trust that the school may have.

Our inspectors look at the documents to triangulate how governors carry out the three core functions and their statutory duties. The documents don't need to be in any specific format, they can be digital or paper. What I would say is time is limited, we wouldn't want to see the last 12 copies of governing body minutes; one, two or three is quite sufficient.

Examples of how a trustee or governor fulfils their role



- Maintaining strategic oversight of a range of education issues within the school including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special needs, staff workload and teacher recruitment.
- Looking at data and evidence to ask questions and have challenging conversations about the school.
- Engaging with pupils, staff, parents and the school community.

Inspections and governance

A few examples of how a trustee or governor fulfils their role



- Addressing a range of education issues within the school including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special needs, staff workload and teacher recruitment.
- Checking on the school's performance. Looking at data where necessary to ask questions about standards and have challenging conversations with school leaders about the school. Ofsted doesn't look at internal data, but that doesn't mean that governors should not be looking at it as part of their oversight of the school.
- Engaging with pupils, staff, parents and the school community.
- In your governance meetings, think about what that is telling you and what else you need in order to understand what is going on in the school.

Inspections and governance

Now some examples of how a trustee or governor fulfils their role. This isn't an exhaustive list but we just wanted to highlight a few examples of how governors and trustees actually fulfil their roles.

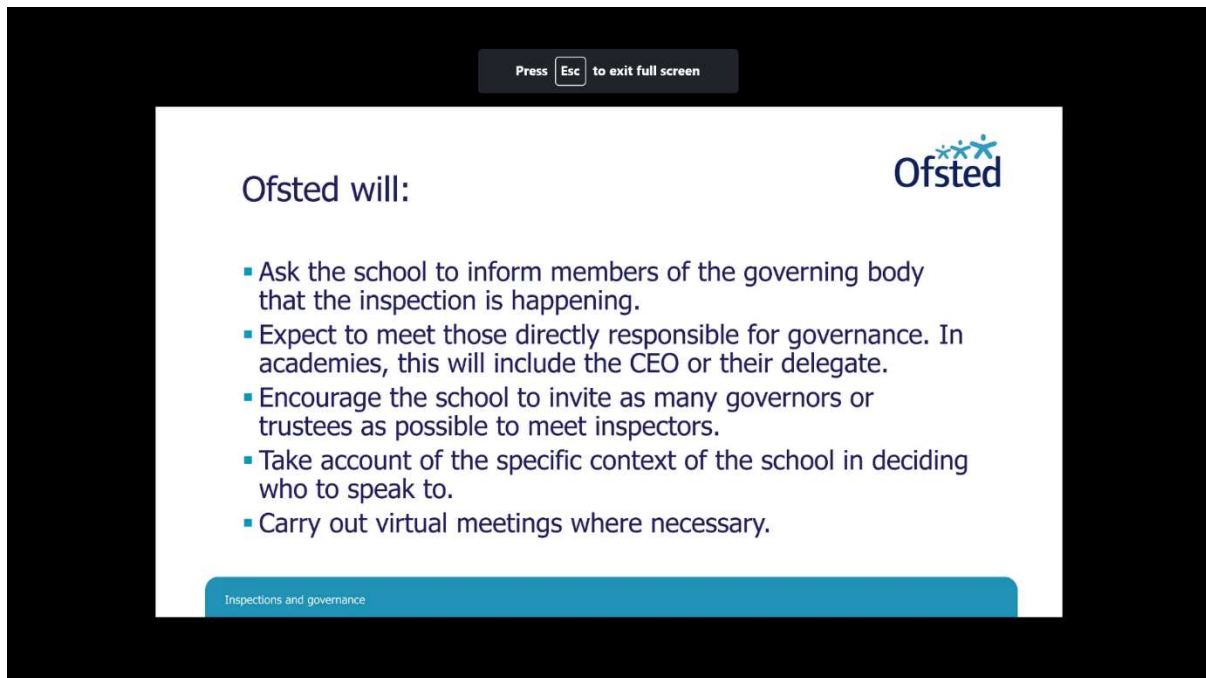
By governors addressing a range of educational issues within the school including disadvantaged pupils, pupils who've got special needs, staff workload and teacher recruitment. You could be asked about all of these, we could read about them in your minutes.

Checking on the school's performance, looking at data where necessary to ask questions about standards and having challenging conversations with school leaders about the school. Just because OFSTED doesn't look at internal data doesn't mean that governors shouldn't be looking at it. Governors need to review performance data in key areas to ensure they have an oversight of the school.

Governors need to engage with pupils, staff, parents and the school community. Again last week the school I was in did annual surveys of their staff, of their pupils and of parents and the analysis of those surveys informed school development planning. In your governance meetings think about the information you access, what is it telling you and what else do you need to understand about what is going on in your school. Over to Sandy.

MEETING GOVERNORS ON INSPECTION

Speaker: Sandy Hayes, Schools Senior HMI in the Policy, Quality and Training team



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Ofsted will:

- Ask the school to inform members of the governing body that the inspection is happening.
- Expect to meet those directly responsible for governance. In academies, this will include the CEO or their delegate.
- Encourage the school to invite as many governors or trustees as possible to meet inspectors.
- Take account of the specific context of the school in deciding who to speak to.
- Carry out virtual meetings where necessary.

Inspections and governance

Thank you Belita. So now we're going to think about what it's like in the on-site part of the inspection, what your experience might be as a governor if your school is being inspected.

When the lead inspector speaks to the Headteacher we will ask the Headteacher to notify and inform members of the governing body that the inspection's happening.

When our administration team inform the school that the inspection is happening they send a bundle of letters and information to the Headteacher and in that bundle is a letter for governors. When I spoke to a Headteacher earlier today of a school that I'm inspecting tomorrow I reminded him that that letter is addressed to all governors, not just the Chair of Governors.

So it's a document that he's now made sure that his governors have got so that they're all fully informed of the inspection that's going ahead. In that letter it makes it very clear that we will encourage the school to invite as many governors or trustees as possible to meet inspectors during the inspection.

These meetings may have to include a virtual option using video or telephone calls. Ideally we like to meet governors face to face but we will do what it takes to speak to as many governors as possible. We like to meet governors as part of a group but again we'll be flexible according to governor availability.

In academies we will expect to meet those who are directly responsible for management and governance, so that will include the CEO or their delegate, it will include the Chair of the Board of Trustees and other trustees.

The scheme of delegation is important here. We will take account of the specific governance structure within a school or a trust when deciding who we speak to, so again it's worth as a board thinking about who should be speaking to inspectors, who might not necessarily need to speak to inspectors as set out in your scheme of delegation.

The purpose of these meetings

- The purpose of meeting governors or trustees is to find out how they fulfil the core functions outlined in the previous section of this slidepack, and demonstrate the key features of effective governance.
- Inspectors are likely to explore the following:
 - How do you ensure that the core functions of governance are carried out effectively?
 - What is your strategic vision for your school?
 - How do you hold executive leaders to account?
 - How do you ensure the school complies with its statutory duties?

Thinking about the meetings that inspectors will have with governors, the purpose of looking at governance on inspection is to identify whether governors are carrying out the three core functions of governance effectively.

So the purpose of the meeting of governors or trustees is to find out how they fulfil these core functions and whether the way in which they fulfil these functions demonstrates the key features of effective governance.

What inspectors are doing, we're wanting to explore how governors carry out the individual functions, so we might be asking questions such as:

“How do you ensure that the core functions of governance are carried out effectively in your school?”

“What is your strategic vision for your school?”

“How do you hold executive leaders to account?”

“How do you ensure that this school complies with its statutory duties?”

So we're wanting to know how governors ensure that the right things happen. We're wanting to know about those processes that are in place, how you know what's working well in your school.

HOW DOES GOVERNANCE INFORM OUR JUDGEMENTS?

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Leadership and management judgement 

- The leadership and management judgement is about how leaders, managers and those responsible for governance ensure that the education that the school provides has a positive impact on its pupils.
- The effectiveness of governance will impact on the leadership and management judgement of the school.
- At the core of this judgement is whether those responsible for governance ensure that the education that the school provides has a positive impact on its pupils, an important factor in this is whether governors understand their respective roles and perform these in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the school.

Inspections and governance

So how does our inspection of governance inform our judgements? We inspect it as part of our judgement that we make about leadership and management, so we don't report a specific grade for governance, but we consider how effective it is as part of looking at the wider leadership and management.

I mentioned a moment ago that we consider whether governance is carried out in line with the DfE's framework for effective governance, so let's just remind ourselves what that is.

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Strategic leadership	Accountability	People
Structures	Compliance	Evaluation



This will be very familiar to you because it's set out clearly in the DfE's Governance Handbook, but inspectors use this framework to help look at the extent to which those responsible for governance are carrying out those core functions effectively.

When evaluating how effectively governors are carrying out their functions we'll refer to these key features, so it is just reminding ourselves of what they are.

- The first one is strategic leadership that sets and champions vision and ethos and strategy.
- Then we have accountability that drives up educational standards and financial performance.
- Then we have to consider are the people with the right skills and the right experience and the right qualities and capacity carrying out governance in the school?
- Have we got structures in place in governance that reinforce clearly defined roles and responsibilities?
- Are governors ensuring the school complies with statutory and contractual requirements?
- Is this a governing board that's monitoring itself, that's improving the quality and the impact of its work?

So the effectiveness of governance as I've said impacts on our leadership and management judgement of the school, so if governance is not effective in a school it's likely that that will have a negative impact and leadership and management is less likely to be judged Good.

At the core of this judgement is us understanding whether those responsible for governance ensure that the education that the school provides is having a positive impact on its pupils. An important factor in this is whether governors understand their respective roles and perform those roles in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the school.

So let's have a think in a practical sense what that might mean on inspection. We don't just ascertain the effectiveness of governance in our meetings with governors, we use the information we get from those meetings and we triangulate it with everything else we gather on inspection through discussions, through lesson visits, through looking at documents, through a whole range of evidence and then we look at how effectively governance is impacting upon those things.

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Ineffective governance example – curriculum narrowing



Inspections and governance

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Ineffective governance example – curriculum narrowing 2



- As well as establishing how effective governance is, inspectors will triangulate the information gained through discussions with the information they are seeing on inspection.
- If a school offers a narrow range of subjects that do not prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain, the quality of education the school offers will be poor.
- If this is the case, the school leaders are not being effectively challenged about decisions they have taken about the curriculum.
- The governors are therefore not holding them to account effectively.

Inspections and governance

So looking at the example of the curriculum, if this was a school where we found that the school offered a narrow range of subjects, that doesn't prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life in modern Britain, then we would be identifying that the quality of education the school offers is poor.

So taking that forward, if this is the case then the school leaders are not being effectively challenged about the decisions they have taken with regard to the curriculum and that means they're not being effectively held to account, which is one of those core functions of governance.

Ineffective governance example – single central record



Inspections and governance

Ineffective governance example – single central record 2



- If the single central record is not completed or checked well enough, then the school is not effectively safeguarding its pupils.
- If this is the case, the school is failing to meet its statutory requirements.
- Governors are directly responsible for ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties. If they are not doing this, governance is ineffective

Inspections and governance

Taking that into another example let's have a think about the notion of looking at the single central record. If we went into a school and we found that the single central record is not completed well enough, it's not checked well enough, then we would have indications that the school is not effectively safeguarding its pupils.

Now if that were the case the school would be failing to meet its statutory requirements and governors are directly responsible for ensuring that the school does fulfil those statutory duties, so if they're not doing that then governance would be judged to be ineffective.

We've used this example about the single central record because we know there are misconceptions around what governors' roles are when it comes to checking and understanding the single central record.

It's worth us saying that the single central record is part of the statutory duties and when it comes to those statutory duties we expect governors to perform a strategic function not an operational one.

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Governors and the single central record



- We know there are misconceptions around governor roles when it comes to the single central record.
- When it comes to their statutory duties, we expect governors to perform a strategic function, not an operational one.
- Their duty is to make sure these processes are happening and that the school is fulfilling its duties – but it is not their role to check it themselves.
- Governors must assure themselves that the SCR is being kept up to date and is compliant with requirements. A way of assuring themselves may be through regularly talking to leaders about their processes and how they keep the record up to date.

Inspections and governance

So the governors' duty is to make sure that the processes are happening and that the school is fulfilling its duties, but it's not the governors' role to actively maintain a single central record for themselves. Governors need to assure themselves that it is being kept up-to-date and it is compliant, but they are not the ones responsible for actually doing so.

For example governors might assure themselves that these things are happening by regularly talking to leaders about the processes they go through and how leaders themselves ensure that the records are up-to-date. It's the strategic level that governors are responsible for.

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To clarify:



- We do not expect governors to be checking the single central record themselves.

Inspections and governance

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Governance on monitoring inspections

- The purpose of monitoring is to support and challenge leaders and those responsible for governance.
- Through monitoring, inspectors will evaluate how leaders and those in governance roles are improving the school.
- Inspectors will focus on the extent to which those responsible for governance understand their roles and perform them in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the school.
- Inadequate schools and schools that have received a grade of requires improvement in their two most recent inspections will receive monitoring inspections.

Inspections and governance

So onto governance on monitoring inspections. Inadequate schools and schools that have received a grade of Requires Improvement in their two most recent inspections will receive a monitoring inspection – an ungraded inspection.

On monitoring inspections we don't assign a grade for leadership and management. However, during these inspections inspectors focus on the extent to which those responsible for governance understand their roles and perform them in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the school.

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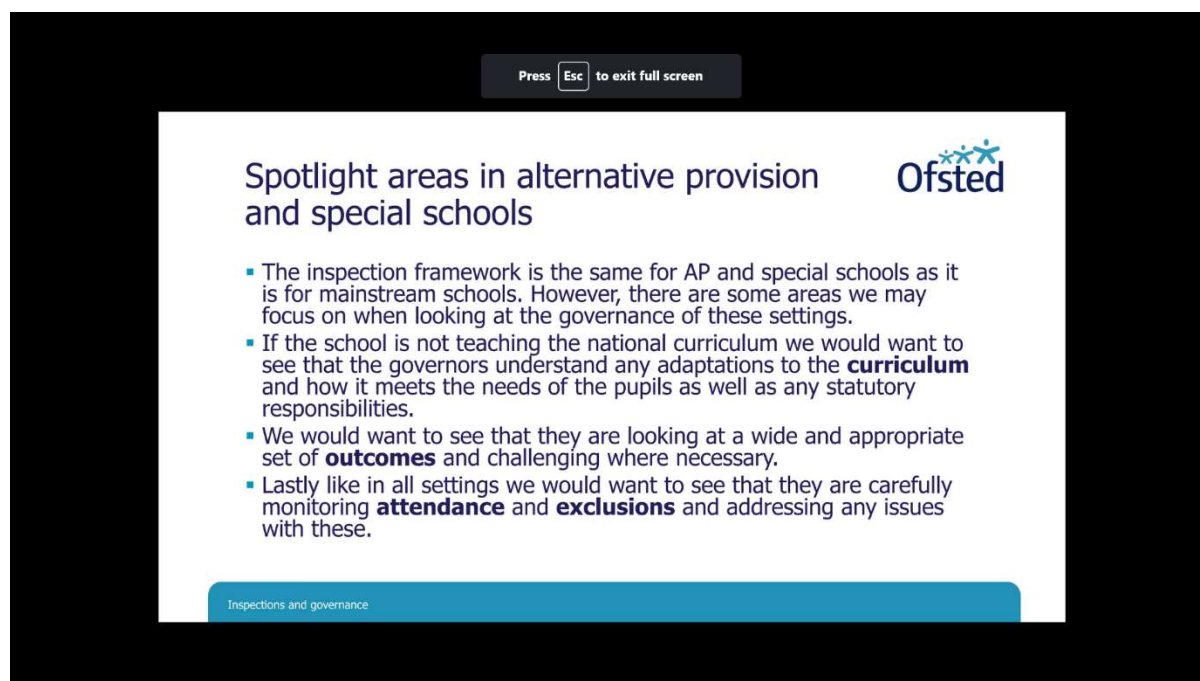
Governance on monitoring inspections 2

- On monitoring inspections, we do not grade leadership and management.
- Inspectors focus on the extent to which those responsible for governance understand their roles and perform them in a way that enhances the effectiveness of the school.
- They focus on the actions taken by leaders and those responsible for governance to tackle the areas that led to the school being judged to require improvement or be inadequate.
- In the report letter, they make a judgement on whether leaders have made sufficient progress to improve the school.

Inspections and governance

In these inspections our inspectors focus on the actions taken by leaders and those responsible for governance to tackle the areas that led to the school being judged to Require Improvement or to be Inadequate at its graded inspection.

In the report letter we make a judgement on whether leaders have made sufficient progress to improve the school.



The screenshot shows a presentation slide with a black background. At the top center, there is a small grey box with the text "Press Esc to exit full screen". The slide content is on a white rectangular background. The title "Spotlight areas in alternative provision and special schools" is in a dark blue font. To the right of the title is the Ofsted logo, which consists of the word "Ofsted" in a dark blue font with three blue stars above it. Below the title is a bulleted list of four points. At the bottom left of the white area, there is a small blue box with the text "Inspections and governance".

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Spotlight areas in alternative provision and special schools

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- The inspection framework is the same for AP and special schools as it is for mainstream schools. However, there are some areas we may focus on when looking at the governance of these settings.
- If the school is not teaching the national curriculum we would want to see that the governors understand any adaptations to the **curriculum** and how it meets the needs of the pupils as well as any statutory responsibilities.
- We would want to see that they are looking at a wide and appropriate set of **outcomes** and challenging where necessary.
- Lastly like in all settings we would want to see that they are carefully monitoring **attendance** and **exclusions** and addressing any issues with these.

Inspections and governance

Spotlight areas in alternative provision and special schools are curriculum, outcomes, attendance and exclusions.

The inspection framework is the same for alternative provision and special schools as it is for mainstream schools. However there are some areas we may focus on when looking at the governance of these settings.

If the school isn't teaching the national curriculum we'd want to see that the governors understand any adaptations to the curriculum and how it meets the needs of pupils as well as any statutory responsibilities.

If I can give you an example, so perhaps a school that isn't teaching the national curriculum might be a special school where the pupils that attend the school all have profound and multiple learning difficulties.


So it wouldn't be the national curriculum, but our inspectors would look at the curriculum that was being delivered. In that type of school one of the areas they would always look at would be personal social and health education.

We'd want to see governors looking at a wide and appropriate set of outcomes and challenging leaders where necessary.

Lastly like in all settings we'd want to see that they're carefully monitoring attendance and exclusions and addressing any issues with these.

HOW DO INSPECTORS PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON GOVERNANCE?

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Final feedback meeting 

- Inspections usually end with a final feedback meeting with the school. This is the lead inspector's meeting, where the LI will discuss the provisional grades for each judgement and the key findings of the inspection, including any recommendations for improvement.
- If you can't attend the final feedback meeting, any findings from it may be shared with you so long as they are clearly marked as confidential and provisional.


Inspections and governance

So our inspections usually end with a final feedback meeting with the school. This is the lead inspector's meeting.

The lead inspector discusses the provisional grades for each judgement and the key findings of the inspection, including any recommendations for improvement.

As you would expect the Headteacher and other senior leaders are invited to attend this meeting as well as the CEO of a multi-academy trust, a representative from the local authority and perhaps from the diocese and those responsible for governance.

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Attendance at the final feedback meeting 

- As expected, the headteachers and other senior leaders are invited to attend this meeting, as well as the CEO of the MAT (if there is one), a representative from the local authority and those responsible for governance.
- Who may attend this meeting in a governance role depends on whether the school is a maintained school or an academy.
- In maintained schools, governors and the clerk to governors are invited to attend.

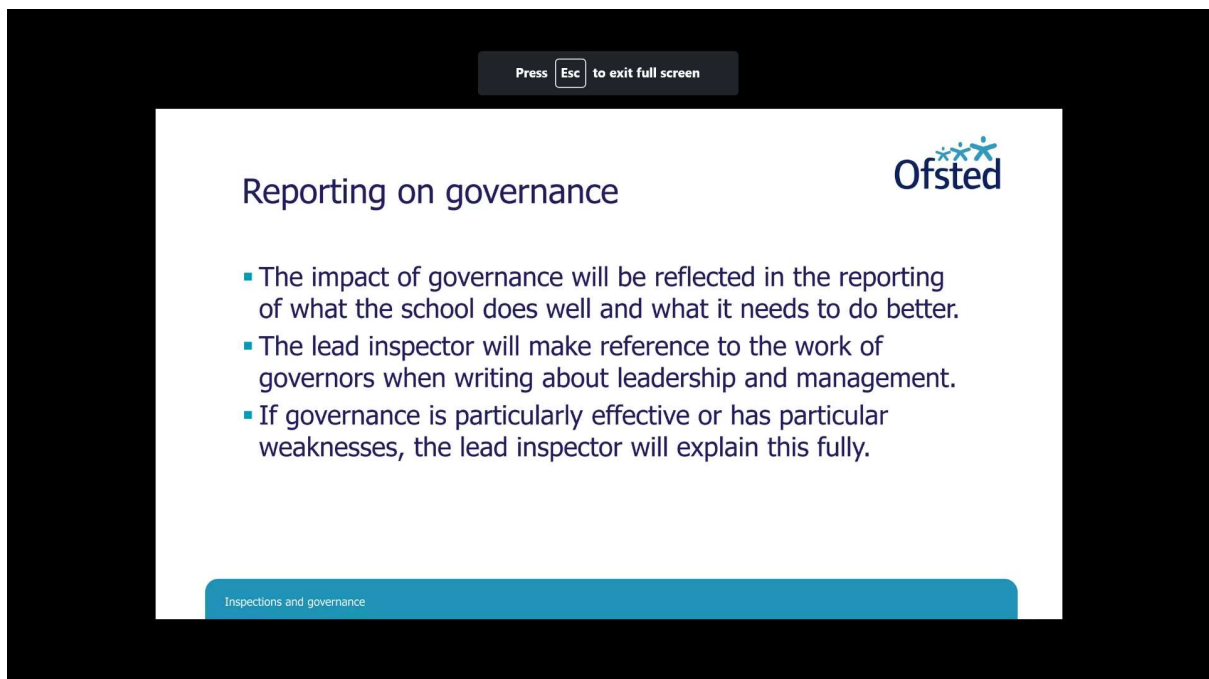
Inspections and governance

It's really important that as many of those responsible for governance do attend. We've trained our inspectors on the importance of these meetings and providing as much feedback as possible to aid the school on its journey to improvement.

Who attends this meeting in a governance role depends on whether the school is a maintained school or an academy. In a maintained school, always, governors and the Clerk to Governors are invited to attend.

In academy schools the Chair of Trustees, trustees and the Clerk may attend. In some cases local governing bodies may also attend these meetings at the discretion of the lead inspector. This actually depends on the scheme of delegation for the individual academy.

It's really important that as many of those involved in governance attend, especially if a school is judged to Require Improvement or to be Inadequate, because all of those involved in the leadership and management of that school need to start working straight away.



The image is a screenshot of a presentation slide. At the top, there is a black bar with a white button that says "Press Esc to exit full screen". Below this is a white slide with the Ofsted logo in the top right corner. The title "Reporting on governance" is in the top left. The main content is a bulleted list of three points. At the bottom left of the slide, there is a blue bar with the text "Inspections and governance".

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Reporting on governance

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- The impact of governance will be reflected in the reporting of what the school does well and what it needs to do better.
- The lead inspector will make reference to the work of governors when writing about leadership and management.
- If governance is particularly effective or has particular weaknesses, the lead inspector will explain this fully.

Inspections and governance

Then reporting on governance. So the impact of governance will be reflected in the reporting of what the school does well and what it needs to do better.

The lead inspector who writes the report makes reference to the work of governors when writing about leadership and management. If governance isn't particularly effective or if it has particular weaknesses then the lead inspector will explain those strengths or weaknesses thoroughly.

QUESTIONS FROM VIEWERS

“I'm an LGB member, will I be expected to meet with the inspector?”

Speaker: Lee

I think that will depend on again the scheme of delegation and what responsibilities the local governing board may have. We obviously want to talk to those with overall governance responsibility, so if it's in a multi-academy trust and that tends to be where there are local governing boards they'll obviously have trustees and sponsors that we absolutely want to speak to as well.

It will then depend whether we have conversations with the LGB depending on what's been delegated to them, so I think it's know your scheme of delegation, know how that sets out what you are and are not responsible for, because then you can come best prepared to the meeting because inspectors will very much focus on the key features of effective governance, but always within the context of what it is you are actually responsible for.

No inspector will come and ask you questions about things that are beyond the realms of what governors should be doing, that's why we use the DfE's Governance Handbook and guidance as our guide, but also beyond what the scheme of delegation or the school has set out specific to you, depending on where in that governance structure you may sit.

So I think know yourself, what it is that you're specifically responsible for and I know governors because I've been one myself in the past we all get involved probably far beyond what our official responsibilities and roles are, but actually in terms of the questioning and the discussion that you'll have with an inspector it would be all linked back to the things that you are accountable for.

What are the key documents governors need to look at to prepare for inspection?

Speaker: Sandy

I think the first thing is to be aware of the School Inspection Handbook, we publish everything that we do in our School Inspection Handbook.

It is worth governors reminding themselves of some of the things we've touched upon in terms of the DfE's guidance for governors, the Handbook for governors, because that's where it sets out very clearly what those features of effective governance are and that's quite helpful because that document does include some ways in which governors can take stock of their own work and be aware of how effectively they are carrying out their roles.

The main thing is to know that in inspection we are trying to find out how governors are carrying out those three core functions and that they're ensuring that the school fulfils its statutory duties, so any documentation around those they may also find helpful.

Speaker: Lee

Can I jump in there and say – and this applies not only to governors but to everybody else who works in schools who then has a role to play in terms of inspection – we do not expect anybody no matter what role you play within your school to produce something solely for OFSTED.

So please don't have reams of documentation in files that sit on a shelf and often gather dust just waiting for that time when an inspector might call. Because actually we want to know what do you find most useful as governors, what is it that you use day to day, week to week to support you in your role in holding leaders in school to account.

Yes, you may ask leaders and staff for particular types of evidence yourself as a governor to assure yourself that you know the school is carrying out its functions, but actually please don't do anything just for the sole purpose of documenting or recording something for that once in five years probably, if you're a good or better school probably even longer, opportunity to speak to inspectors.

Because we're not about increasing anybody's workload in terms of specific things for inspection, but obviously people do want to feel well prepared. Understand the Handbook, understand what's expected of you and what inspectors will ask, but please don't produce mountains of other evidence because it's just not needed.

Speaker: Belita

Something that is a really effective bit of evidence is the Headteacher's report to governors, because governors you're in charge of that and what goes into that so that's a really good bit of evidence for us to have a look at, it's got lots of information in.

Then we see the questions in the minutes that you've asked of the Headteacher and senior leaders, really effective.

"My school's location and pupil base has a deprivation factor of four, how would this impact on OFSTED's view in relation to SATs results 2022?"

Speaker: Belita

I think we would be interested in that and that would come through in the lead inspector's initial telephone call with the Headteacher or the Principal. The lead inspector gathers all kinds of contextual information in those first two telephone calls before even coming on to site.

So the lead inspector will have done lots of preparation already but really needs the context from the school from the Headteacher and that informs the inspection plan and then informs the inspection all the way through.

So if I talk about again the inspection I was on last week, we got such a lot of contextual information on that first call, all about covid, yes about levels of deprivation. We also got to know which staff were in school, which were off because of illness, so I think it's a really good lesson for governors, for Headteachers to be really well prepared for that initial telephone call.

Speaker: Sandy

Can I just add something to that as well, which is the actual SATs results, the SATs data, are one very small part of a wide, wide range of evidence we look at when we make judgements about the quality and the impact of a school's curriculum.

In that initial phone call we spend a lot of time unpicking with the Headteacher how the curriculum works, how it's put together and then we go further and we look at it in more and more depth through our deep dives and our evidence that we gather about the quality of education.

Ultimately we're trying to ascertain whether the curriculum that the school is intending for its pupils to learn is ambitious enough for those pupils, it's going to get them to those high end points that the school would want and then through our deep dive work we find out how well those pupils are learning that curriculum.

All of that helps us to understand why a set of SATs results look the way they do, what is it that pupils know that sits beneath those SATs results. So it's all part of a much, much bigger picture that goes way beyond just a set of data.

“Why are schools notified last minute of an OFSTED inspection for usually the next day?”

Speaker: Sandy

I can understand and particularly if you're, as a governor short notice can be particularly inconvenient in terms of the busy lives that we all lead. We've been through all sorts of iterations of different lengths of notification, different types of notification. I've been with OFSTED for over 10 years now and I know three or four different ways in which we've contacted schools.

We've arrived at where we've arrived at at the moment largely because we find that if schools have a lot of notice of an inspection it can drive workload. People feel obliged to do lots of preparation and lots of things ready for an inspection and if they've got several days or even a weekend's worth of notice that can encourage people to work incredibly hard and as we've said it's so important that we make the message clear that we don't want people to do extra things for an inspection.

So we want to see the school as it runs and as it operates on a normal basis. I absolutely understand that for governors that's tricky and I think that's probably where I would reiterate the conversation I had with my Headteacher today, which is among the bundle of things that lands in a Headteacher's inbox is a letter for governors and it's really important that the Headteacher remembers that actually governors don't know that the inspection is happening and they need to be informed that it's happening.

It's one of the things that a lead inspector will discuss with a Headteacher almost at the very beginning of their conversations that they need to inform all governors and they need to extend that invitation to as wide a group of governors as possible or relevant to take part in the inspection.

So we do understand that it can be difficult as a governor to respond to that quickly, which is why we are always happy to have a conversation via phone or video call to make sure that governors can be part of the inspection.

Speaker: Lee

Can I just jump in and say as a Deputy Director it's a conversation that we have quite frequently in terms of comments such as that. I'm suggesting that that question was aimed at why can't we have longer, but equally we get lots of questions particularly from parents who often say actually you should just turn up unannounced at my child's school because I want you to see it as it is.

We've landed on the one day, or half a day, notification call because we think that is the right balance between giving people enough time to do some of the logistical arrangements, acknowledging that often it's governance that has to fit in with that and often comes later just because governors are not necessarily in the school at the point at which that phone call is made, but equally we realise that just turning up on the door unless there's something significant or an

emergency nature to the work that we're doing wouldn't be appropriate either for every single school.

So we do review it regularly and we get every possible opinion and option to what we could do and over time we've certainly trialled a lot of different approaches, but we think with the current framework that this hits the right spot in terms of giving just enough time without adding unduly to leaders and staff workload.

Can I round off by saying to people in terms of the role of a governor in an inspection it's essentially one meeting you're requested to attend, a 30- to 40-minute meeting which is a discussion. So the inspector will be coming with questions that they want to ask in terms of what they've seen around the school, what they've already spoken to leaders about.

They'll be coming with that list of the three key functions and the effectiveness of governance and it is essentially a conversation about exploring all of those elements with you. Other than that there isn't, other than attending feedback if you can make it and the option is always there, there isn't anything else that you need to do as a governor or a governing body.

We look at minutes, but that's just to get a sense of what you've discussed previously and if inspectors have managed to look at those minutes before they meet with you then you can expect some questions around, oh it was interesting that I noticed that in your last meeting you challenge the Headteacher about...can you just tell me a little bit more about why you did that, what's happened as a result.

So other than that you are not expected to be in school or involve yourselves in any other activities that inspectors might undertake, so I think it's preparing for that conversation and being confident that you know the school as a governor, you know the priorities that the Headteacher is setting because hopefully they've shared and agreed them with you.

Then you can evidence the influence that you're having in terms of why you're asking the Headteacher a particular question, why you're asking for a particular piece of evidence and therefore what you've done with that and hopefully what has come from that as an impact or as a result.

So inspection is essentially about a series of professional conversations and dialogues and a professional conversation with governors is one part of the process.

Please do not worry that you may say the wrong thing because actually it takes quite a bit of evidence to tip an inspection judgement one way or the other and certainly inspectors will not be dwelling on one thing that you may have said in a meeting as the only thing that will tip an inspection judgement one way or another, it will always be an accumulation of evidence from multiple sources that leads to the overall judgement.

That's only right because that's the way we ensure that our inspections are robust and accurate and fair, so even if you think you might have said the wrong thing please do not go away and worry and panic because I'm not here to say whether it was right or wrong, but actually it's just part of a much bigger picture and one thing on its own is certainly not a determining factor.

So hopefully that's a reassuring note to end on, that however you get involved in inspection whenever that inspection might come you feel now better prepared for that conversation and for what inspectors may be doing in school over that two-day process.

End of Webinar