



Ofsted: Give us your views

- **Attainment and achievement**
- **Safeguarding**
- **Conduct of inspections**
- **Lesson observations**
- **Judgements on behaviour**

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Keeping up the pressure on Ofsted

The NUT is determined to raise members' concerns with Ofsted. We want a school evaluation system that supports schools, rather than punishing them.

If your Ofsted inspection paints a picture of your school that you don't recognise, we want to know. Please contact your NUT association/divisional secretary or your regional office.

Please keep sending your inspection stories to us at inspections@nut.org.uk.

If it seems that Ofsted inspectors aren't taking account of Christine Gilbert's latest guidance, the NUT will take further action.

Making a complaint to Ofsted

Schools can contact Ofsted during or after an inspection if they have any concerns.

- Ofsted helpline: **03001 231 231**
- Ofsted education helpline: **03001 234 234**
- To make a formal complaint, write to the National Complaints Team at Ofsted.
For details visit www.ofsted.gov.uk and click on 'How to complain' at the bottom of the homepage.



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Facing an Ofsted inspection?

**ACTION PLAN FOR
SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES**





NUT members have expressed their anger about the new-style Ofsted inspections. NUT General Secretary, Christine Blower, met Christine Gilbert, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, to make sure members' voices were heard at the top of Ofsted. This briefing highlights Ofsted's responses on key issues.

We know that Ofsted is a key issue of concern for many NUT members. Please use the information in this briefing to keep members informed on the new framework. We're also asking that, after any Ofsted inspection, you hold an NUT meeting in your school to discuss it. Please fill in the enclosed report card and send it back to the NUT.

Safeguarding

On safeguarding, Christine Gilbert has confirmed that, "safeguarding grades of satisfactory or good do not limit the overall effectiveness to those grades... a school judged to be satisfactory in its safeguarding arrangements may still be judged to be outstanding..."

She also said that no school would be judged inadequate because unauthorised adults had entered the premises.

She reiterated, however, that the 'limiting judgement' for safeguarding means that if it is judged 'inadequate', the overall effectiveness of a school is unlikely to be judged higher than 'inadequate'.

Some members have told us that, despite their school having met the statutory requirements for safeguarding, their school had been downgraded to 'inadequate'. Ofsted is clear that such a judgement should not be made in those circumstances.

Attainment and achievement

On attainment, Christine Gilbert said: "A school may be judged to be outstanding if attainment is average, or even low, provided that learning and progress are outstanding...all schools, whatever their circumstances, have the opportunity to be judged outstanding for their overall effectiveness... There is nothing in the evaluation schedule or the guidance we have issued to inspectors which suggests otherwise."

The NUT is not convinced that inspectors are taking sufficient account of children's actual progress in their learning in general, rather than coming up with pre-conceived ideas based on national curriculum levels. Nevertheless, schools can use this statement by Christine Gilbert as a way of testing whether inspectors are conforming to Ofsted's own criteria.

Action Plan

Conduct of inspections

On reports of bullying behaviour by members of an inspection team, Christine Gilbert insisted that “there is no place for offensive or aggressive behaviour”. She urged any teacher who had experienced what she characterised as “inappropriate conduct during an inspection” to use Ofsted procedures to resolve it.

“If inspectors make inappropriate comments, or inappropriate demands for documentation when seeking evidence about compliance with requirements, your members should contact us,” she said.

Lesson observations

On lesson observations, Christine Gilbert has clarified that “judgements made through short observations can only relate to the part of the lesson observed and not to the quality of teaching in the lesson as a whole.”

Some members have expressed concern about the use of short lesson observations for judgements of teaching quality.

Christine Gilbert responded that in cases where a series of observations of less than 20 minutes are made, a grade should only be given for what it is possible to evaluate. She gives as an example the effectiveness of support for pupils with special needs.

Judgements on behaviour

Many members are concerned about inspectors evaluating pupil behaviour on the basis of the conduct of a single child within a classroom. Christine Gilbert has said that inspectors should, “take care not to over-emphasise the behaviour of one individual with an identified behavioural difficulty...”.

Christine Gilbert pointed out that inspectors should base their judgement on the school’s documentary evidence and pupils’ and parents’ views, combined with what is observed.



What to do when faced with an Ofsted inspection

The new School Inspection Framework came into force in September 2009. Full NUT guidance for members, including head teacher members, is available on www.teachers.org.uk.

This guidance summarises what the NUT's school group should do prior to an inspection.

NUT representatives are advised to convene a meeting of NUT members in the school to discuss the forthcoming inspection. Key issues to discuss include:

The Ofsted staff questionnaire

The decision to use the questionnaire rests with the head teacher. The Union believes that staff should complete it, highlighting the positive achievements of their school and the pupils they teach.

Joint lesson observations involving inspectors and head teachers

Teachers have a right to refuse such observations. Where appropriate, head teachers will need to be reminded of that right.

Lesson plans and classroom observation

In the run-up to an inspection, members may be faced with demands for additional lesson plans, increased documentation and more lesson observations. Such demands can lead to excessive workload and stress.

It is vital that head teachers understand that inspectors will seek to corroborate what the school says about itself in its 'SEF'. If the school says it carries out intricate and detailed planning, that is what inspectors will check. Conversely, if the school says it carries out economical, fit-for-purpose planning, again, that will form the basis of Ofsted's judgements. NUT members will need to make sure that head teachers only ask for the minimum planning necessary as excessive planning will not only cause excessive workload but increase the possibility of a negative judgement.

Prior briefing of staff by the inspection team

The head teacher should request from the inspection team a briefing meeting for staff, prior to inspection.

The conduct of inspections

The conduct of inspections and the behaviour of inspectors should be monitored by members. Information from the inspection process is vital if any complaint needs to be made.

The Ofsted complaints process

Ofsted has made it absolutely clear that a complaint by a school against unfair judgements or the conduct of inspectors will not be detrimental to the school. It is vital that the head teacher and the governing body complain in these circumstances. Members who feel that the inspection has been unfair should contact their local NUT representative as soon as possible.



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