



School inspections

Parent poll
July 2023

Parentkind
Bringing together home & school

Parentkind poll on school inspections

Summary of findings

- A majority of parents believe there is a value to having independent inspections of schools and are generally quite cautious with suggestions to make inspections less frequent or less transparent.
- However, while agreeing strongly with the principle of independent inspections, parents were not particularly supportive of some of Ofsted's current approaches. For example, only 24% of parents supported Ofsted's current approach to automatically rating school as "requires improvement" or "inadequate" for safeguarding failures, and only 16% of parents supported the idea of publishing a single headline grade for the school.
- Parents raised specific criticisms around several elements of the current approach to inspections – 36% of parents find Ofsted reports difficult to understand, 59% do not find them particularly useful as a parent and 71% don't feel they tell parents the most important things they need to know about schools' performance. In practice, only a little over half of parents looked at Ofsted reports when choosing their child's school, and Ofsted reports were rated as being of a low importance in parents' ultimate decision over which school to attend.
- In open comments, parents repeatedly raised issues around the adversarial nature of inspections and were supportive of suggestions to make inspections less stressful and avoid the issues associated with a negative headline grade, and focus instead on helping schools to improve.
- Over 70% of parents supported suggestions to separate safeguarding from Ofsted's broader inspections and to handle this aspect of assessment differently and more frequently. A similar proportion of parents were also very supportive of changes that would help focus on improvements over on-the-spot assessment, such as giving schools 3 months to rectify problems prior to reinspection and publishing of a graded Ofsted report.
- Parents also strongly supported the suggestion that Ofsted reports have more information about inspection rating areas, such as Quality of Education and Leadership and Management, and potentially extending these to include other factors around the school environment, rather than focusing too heavily on a school's overall rating.

Methodology

Parentkind's poll on school inspections was carried out online between 20th June and 5th July 2023, with recruitment through Parentkind's own panel of parent contacts and through social media. Responses from both channels provided almost identical responses. In total, 819 parents with school age children in England responded.

Key findings

General views on inspections and assessment

- 86% of parents agree, and 56% strongly agree that it's important for parents to be informed about school inspections and have the opportunity to give their views. When asked about Ofsted reports themselves, 24% of parents agree that they take into account parents views (51% disagree).
- 84% of parents agree, and 50% strongly agree, that schools receiving low Ofsted ratings should be given the opportunity to be reassessed more quickly to be able to demonstrate that they have resolved issues from the previous inspection.
- 85% of parents agree Ofsted reports should include feedback about how well a school communicates and engages with parents
- 62% of parents value having an independent body assessing how well their child's school is performing (26% disagree)
- 17% of parents agree that schools with the highest Ofsted rating don't need to be inspected as frequently (71% disagree, 51% strongly disagree)

The most important factors for parents when considering a school for their child

- School offers a broad and balanced curriculum (60%)
- Reputation of the school (43%)
- Ease of travel to school (39%)
- Views of parents with a child at the school (35%)
- Latest Ofsted inspection report (8%)

When choosing a school for their child, 38% of parents read the school's most recent Ofsted report in full, 17% looked at the overall grade only and 39% did not look at Ofsted reports at all.

Ofsted reports

- 40% of parents agree reports are easy to understand (36% disagree)
- 24% of parents agree reports are useful to them as a parent (59% disagree)
- 25% of parents agree reports help parents to understand a school's strengths and weaknesses (61% disagree) and 23% of parents agree reports help a school to make improvements to quality of education (60% disagree)
- 17% of parents agree reports tell parents the most important things they need to know about a school's performance (71% disagree, 44% strongly disagree)
- 13% of parents agree reports provide an accurate assessment of a school's performance (76% disagree, 48% strongly disagree)

Safeguarding

- 78% of parents agree (53% strongly agree) with the suggestion that safeguarding should be inspected separately by Ofsted and not form part of a school's overall Ofsted rating, with schools failing on safeguarding required to resolve issues within a fixed time period. (14% disagree)
- 71% of parents would agree with the suggestion that safeguarding should be inspected and rated separately by Ofsted, with the most recent safeguarding rating included in full Ofsted reports but graded separately to the overall Ofsted rating. (18% disagree)
- 61% of parents agree with the suggestion that safeguarding should be inspected as part of overall Ofsted inspections and taken into account in the overall grade, but with failings assessed in terms of seriousness rather than automatically resulting in an overall “requires improvement” or “inadequate” rating. (25% disagree)
- 24% of parents agree with the current approach whereby safeguarding is inspected as part of overall Ofsted inspections and any failure on safeguarding should prevent a school from being given a “good” or “outstanding” rating (59% disagree)

Frequency of inspections

65% of parents support conducting safeguarding evaluations every 1-2 years, and 49% of parents support conducting full inspections at least once every 4-5 years

Communicating inspection results

- 16% of parents are satisfied with the current approach of having one single overall grade for the school as a whole, e.g. Outstanding, Good (72% dissatisfied, 49% very dissatisfied)
- 47% of parents would support having an overall grade for the school as a whole, plus separate grades for each of the inspection areas, e.g. Quality of Education, Leadership and Management (41% disagree)
- 55% of parents would support providing separate grades for each of the inspection areas, but no overall grade for the school as a whole (28% disagree)
- As a separate suggestion to the inspections process, 70% of parents would support giving schools a 3 month period following an inspection to fix any issues before being reinspected, with a report published after the reinspection (14% disagree)

Open comments

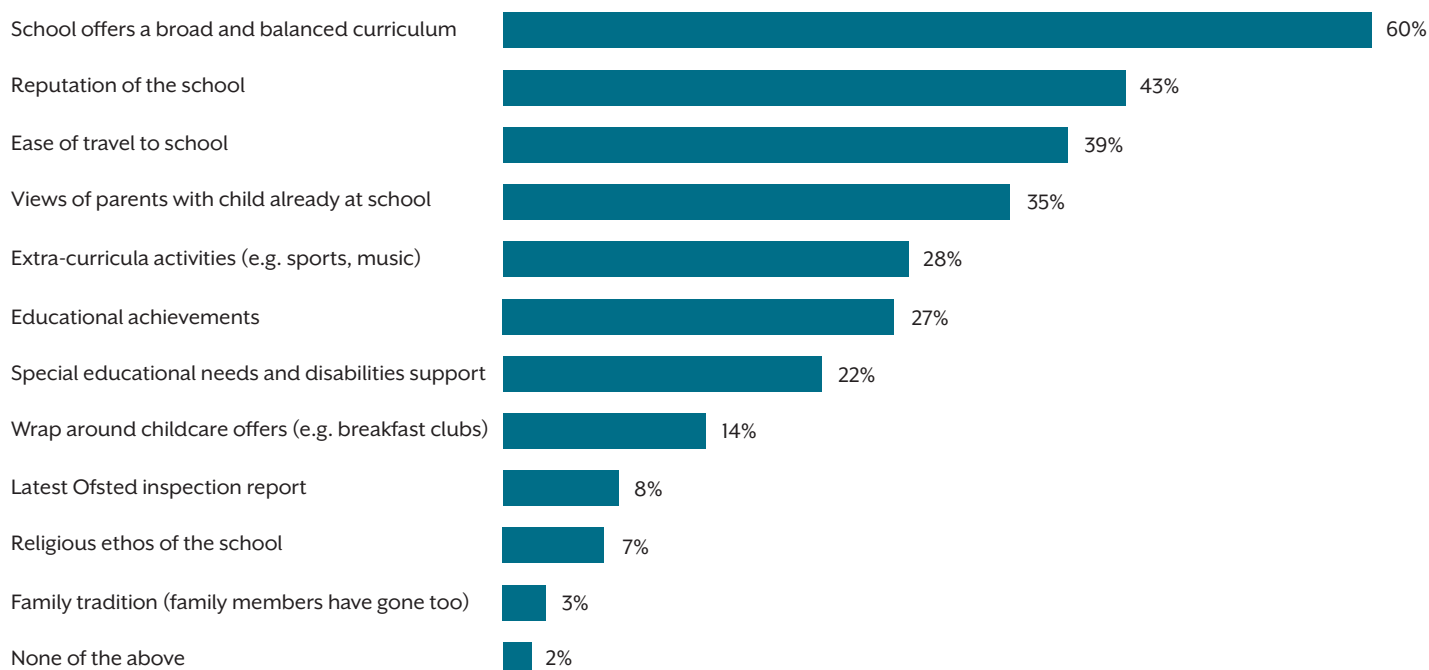
The most common elements raised by parents in 512 open comments included;

- Ofsted inspections should be more collaborative/supportive (127 mentions)
- Inspection system needs overhauling / is not fit for purpose (114 mentions)
- Ofsted inspections are too pressurised and stressful for teachers (109 mentions)
- Reports don't truly represent how good the school is (108 mentions)
- Additional factors should be taken into account in inspections (70 mentions)
- The inspection system has the wrong priorities (58 mentions)
- There should be no single grading system for schools (56 mentions)
- Concerns around the negative consequences / punitive aspect of inspections (48 mentions)

Appendix

<i>To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</i>							
Answer choices	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Response total
I value having an independent body assessing how well my child's school is performing	19.32% 158	42.54% 348	12.10% 99	10.88% 89	14.79% 121	0.37% 3	818
It is important for parents to be informed about school inspections and have the opportunity to give their views	56.13% 458	29.41% 240	7.11% 58	2.57% 21	4.53% 37	0.25% 2	816
Ofsted reports should include feedback about how well a school communicates and engages with parents	49.45% 404	35.25% 288	7.96% 65	4.04% 33	2.82% 23	0.49% 4	817
Schools with highest Ofsted rating don't need to be inspected as frequently	5.50% 45	11.98% 98	10.64% 87	20.29% 166	50.61% 414	0.98% 8	818
Schools receiving low Ofsted ratings should be given the opportunity to be reassessed more quickly to be able to demonstrate that they have resolved issues from the previous inspection	49.94% 407	33.87% 276	7.98% 65	3.44% 28	4.05% 33	0.74% 6	815
						Answered	819
						Skipped	0

**What do you consider to be the most important factors when choosing a school for your child?
Please tick up to 3 options.**



Which best describes how you've used Ofsted reports when choosing your child's school?

Answer choices		Response percent	Response total
1	I read the school's most recent Ofsted report in full	37.75%	308
2	I checked the school's Ofsted grading, but did not feel the need to read the report in full	17.16%	140
3	I did not look at the school's most recent Ofsted grade or report	39.34%	321
4	None of the above	5.76%	47
		Answered	816
		Skipped	3

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Ofsted reports:

Answer choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Response total
Are easy to understand	8.68% 71	31.78% 260	22.49% 184	20.17% 165	16.14% 132	0.73% 6	818
Take into account the views of parents	3.55% 29	20.34% 166	22.30% 182	28.31% 231	23.04% 188	2.45% 20	816
Help parents to understand a school's strengths and weaknesses	5.87% 48	19.19% 157	13.45% 110	28.12% 230	32.89% 269	0.49% 4	818
Tell parents the most important things they need to know about a school's performance	5.01% 41	12.35% 101	11.12% 91	27.26% 223	43.64% 357	0.61% 5	818
Help a school to make improvements to the quality of education provided	5.77% 47	17.32% 141	15.36% 125	24.57% 200	35.38% 288	0.60% 13	814
Are useful to me as a parent	6.60% 54	17.73% 145	16.26% 133	25.79% 211	33.25% 272	0.37% 3	818
Provide an accurate assessment of a school's performance	4.03% 33	8.68% 71	10.39% 85	28.36% 232	48.04% 393	0.49% 4	818
						Answered	819
						Skipped	0

Currently, safeguarding (ie, what schools do to keep children safe) is reviewed as part of the full, graded Ofsted inspections. Schools which fail on safeguarding, even for minor administrative errors, can only be given ratings of “inadequate” or “requires improvement” even if all other factors (e.g. quality of education, leadership and management) would otherwise have led to a rating of “good” or “outstanding”. There have been some suggestions that safeguarding should be treated differently, and inspected separately. To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following suggestions:

Answer choices	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know	Response total
Safeguarding should be inspected separately by Ofsted and not form part of a school's overall Ofsted rating. Schools that fail safeguarding inspections would be required to resolve any issues within a fixed period of time.	52.63% 430	25.58% 209	6.36% 52	7.96% 65	6.12% 50	1.35% 11	817
Safeguarding should be inspected and rated separately by Ofsted. The most recent safeguarding rating should be included in Ofsted reports from a full inspection, but reported separately to the overall Ofsted rating.	39.93% 325	30.84% 251	9.71% 79	8.23% 67	9.58% 78	1.72% 14	814
Safeguarding should be inspected as part of overall Ofsted inspections, and any failure on safeguarding should prevent a school from being given a “good” or “outstanding” rating.	11.69% 95	12.55% 102	15.13% 123	24.97% 203	33.83% 275	1.85% 15	813
Safeguarding should be inspected as part of overall Ofsted inspections and taken into account in the overall grade, but failings should be assessed in terms of seriousness and not automatically result in an overall “inadequate” or “requires improvement” rating.	28.17% 229	32.72% 266	11.44% 93	10.21% 83	15.01% 122	2.46% 20	813
						Answered	819
						Skipped	0

How frequently do you think safeguarding processes should be inspected by Ofsted?

Answer choices			Response percent	Response total
1	Every year		36.43%	298
2	Every two years		28.61%	234
3	Every three years		15.53%	127
4	Every four years		4.65%	38
5	Every five years		6.36%	52
6	Don't know		8.44%	69
			Answered	818
			Skipped	1

How frequently do you think schools should be given a full, graded inspection by Ofsted?

Answer choices			Response percent	Response total
1	Every year		6.49%	53
2	Every two years		11.63%	95
3	Every three years		20.44%	167
4	Every four years		14.20%	116
5	Every five years		34.39%	281
6	Don't know		12.85%	105
			Answered	817
			Skipped	2

Ofsted has used different approaches to communicating school ratings over time, and there have been a number of different ideas for how school ratings could be presented. How satisfied or dissatisfied would you be with the following approaches to grading your child's school following an Ofsted inspection:

Answer choices	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know	Response total
One single overall grade for the school as a whole (e.g. Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, Inadequate)	14.29% 35	11.78% 96	10.43% 85	23.44% 191	48.83% 398	1.23% 10	815
An overall grade for the school as a whole, plus separate grades for each of the inspection areas (eg. Quality of Education, Pupil outcomes, Leadership and management, etc.)	16.46% 134	30.10% 245	11.18% 91	18.06% 147	23.10% 188	1.11% 9	814
Separate grades for each of the inspection areas, but no overall grade for the school as a whole	21.70% 176	32.80% 266	16.28% 132	12.08% 98	15.78% 128	1.36% 11	811
Giving schools a 3 month period following an inspection to fix any issues before being reinspected, with a report published after the reinspection.	37.18% 303	32.88% 268	14.23% 116	6.13% 50	8.10% 66	1.47% 12	815
						Answered	818
						Skipped	1

Do you have anything else you would like to add about inspections, or how they could be changed?

Answer choices	Response percent	Response total
1 Open-ended question	100%	512
		Answered
		Skipped
		512
		307