



Hampshire  
County Council

Improvement and  
Advisory Service

HIAS MOODLE OPEN RESOURCE

# Literacy and the new Ofsted School Inspection Toolkit

**How literacy acts as a cross-cutting judgment  
lever in inspections**

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Final version

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# Overview

## This document contains

- a summary of the new Ofsted *State-funded school inspection toolkit* (2025), highlighting all the statements that refer, explicitly and implicitly, to literacy practice in the classroom and support for struggling readers and writers, and distilling what these mean for teachers and literacy leaders.
- an appendix of statements directly quoted from the new Ofsted *State-funded school inspection toolkit* (2025), providing the basis for this summary

## Points to consider when using this resource

This document is a focused summary and should not be mistaken for the full version of the Ofsted inspection toolkit. Ofsted has directly published the guidance and criteria by which it judges schools under each category, openly accessible online<sup>1</sup>. When schools are preparing for inspection, this summary is intended to make a useful contribution to understanding expectations, not to be a substitute for familiarity with the original document.

*I used Co-Pilot (Microsoft, <https://copilot.microsoft.com>) to generate an initial draft of this summary of the new Ofsted inspection framework through the lens of literacy and reading intervention. I have subsequently checked each item within this document against the original Ofsted State-funded School Inspection Toolkit and have made additions, corrections and changes as needed. I confirm that no content generated by AI has been presented as my own work.*

*Joanna Kenyon, 14 May 2026*

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<sup>1</sup> [State-funded school inspection toolkit version 1.1](#) (accessed online 21 April 2026)

# Literacy and the new Ofsted School Inspection Toolkit

In the 2025 framework, support for struggling readers and writers is evaluated across the four key sections *Inclusion, Curriculum and Teaching, Achievement* and *Leadership*, rather than through a single “literacy” section.

Although the toolkit **does not list “literacy” as a standalone judgement**, Ofsted is explicit that:

- **Inability to read and write well is a critical barrier to learning**
- Failure to address this barrier **undermines inclusion, curriculum access and achievement**
- When unaddressed, literacy weakness can justify an **urgent improvement** judgement even if other systems appear in place

Inspectors will triangulate this through:

- lesson observations
- work scrutiny
- case sampling of vulnerable pupils
- discussions with leaders about support and intervention

# How do the *Toolkit* evaluation statements apply to literacy?

## Inclusion

Inclusion statements explicitly refer to students considered vulnerable, including **students with SEND, disadvantaged students, those known to children's social care and those who may face other barriers to learning**. Students with literacy difficulties are included in this group and frequently cross-over with other protected factors.

### Exceptional

- Pupils with literacy difficulties' needs are met, barriers are reduced exceptionally well and they **are supported to highly positive outcomes and a strong sense of belonging**.
- The school's approach to supporting struggling readers and writers is **highly embedded, evaluative and demonstrably impactful**, sustaining inclusion over time.

### Strong standard

- The school **swiftly and effectively addresses literacy barriers** through well-matched teaching, targeted intervention and classroom scaffolding.
- The **progress** of pupils who struggle with literacy is **rigorously monitored and strategies are effectively adjusted** as needed so they make a **sustained difference**.
- Staff demonstrate strong expertise in supporting literacy needs across subjects.

### Expected standard

- The school **accurately identifies pupils who struggle with reading and writing** and provides timely, appropriate support that reduces barriers to learning.
- Teachers have **appropriate training** that ensures they understand how literacy difficulties affect curriculum access and how to adapt teaching to support these pupils.
- Literacy support is embedded in everyday practice, not solely through withdrawal programmes.

### Needs attention

- Literacy-related barriers are recognised but **support is uneven or reactive**, limiting pupils' ability to participate fully.
- Leaders have **only recently begun to take action** to assess and address literacy-related barriers to learning.
- Interventions for struggling readers and writers **lack coherence or demonstrable impact**.

### Urgent improvement

- The school **fails to identify pupils with significant barriers to learning**, including those who struggle with reading and/or writing, resulting in pupils being **unable to access the curriculum**.
- Support for pupils with literacy needs is **ineffective or absent**, meaning pupils fall further behind over time.

## Curriculum and Teaching

Curriculum and Teaching statements include a sustained focus on evaluating how well the school supports pupils to secure **strong foundations to access the curriculum**, including older pupils whose development of language and communication, reading and writing are not at their age-appropriate level. Inspectors are looking to see a curriculum that is **designed to extend pupils' language and vocabulary, both spoken and written, and increase their reading competency across all subjects**.

### Exceptional

- The curriculum and teaching enable pupils who previously struggled with literacy to **be successful academically and communicate confidently**, preparing them exceptionally well for current and later learning and for future success.
- Literacy instruction is **highly systematic, cumulative and transferable across subjects**.

### Strong standard

- Teaching deliberately ensures that pupils **consistently develop their language and vocabulary, and increase their reading competency** across all subjects.
- Pupils with literacy difficulties receive **precisely targeted instruction**, enabling strong progress and removing barriers to learning.
- Teachers routinely check understanding and close literacy gaps swiftly.

### Expected standard

- Curriculum content is **made accessible to pupils who struggle with reading and writing** through high-quality inclusive teaching.
- Teachers **explicitly teach subject-specific literacy** and adapt instruction to support access and progress.
- Pupils learn the same curriculum goals, supported appropriately.

### Needs attention

- Literacy teaching and adaptation are **inconsistent**, meaning some pupils cannot reliably access learning.
- Reading and writing demands are not always made explicit.

### Urgent improvement

- Teaching **does not enable pupils who struggle with reading and writing to learn the curriculum**, resulting in widespread gaps in knowledge.
- There is **little or no explicit teaching of the reading and writing the subject requires**, despite clear evidence that pupils need it.
- Teachers do not adapt teaching when pupils cannot read, write or understand subject-specific language.

## Achievement

Inspectors focus on evaluating the factors that evidence indicates contribute most strongly to pupils' achievement, which include **securing important foundational knowledge in language and communication, reading and writing** so that pupils can access the whole curriculum, and **reading fluently at an age-appropriate level**. When inspectors evaluate achievement in secondary schools, they consider the extent to which gaps in knowledge are tackled for pupils who are at the early stages of securing their foundational knowledge (including **reading fluency**).

Within the Achievement section, inspectors consider the extent to which **pupils read widely and often, with age-appropriate comprehension**, and whether there is a **strong culture of reading across the school**.

### Exceptional

- Pupils with a history of weak literacy have been **supported to achieve consistently high outcomes and are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps, including a strong grounding in English** and mathematics.

### Strong standard

- Pupils who previously struggled with reading and writing **make strong progress and show increasing independence**, producing **high quality work** across the curriculum.
- Literacy gaps close because provision is **well matched and sustained**.

### Expected standard

- Pupils, including those with literacy difficulties, **make appropriate progress from their starting points**.
- Literacy support means that **gaps in foundational knowledge or skills** (accurate and fluent reading, handwriting, spelling, writing composition) **are closing quickly**.

### Needs attention

- Progress for struggling readers and writers is **too slow or uneven**.
- Achievement data shows enduring literacy-related **gaps which hinder learning**.
- Leaders are taking appropriate actions to address gaps in foundational knowledge and skills, but these are at too early a stage to determine impact on pupils' achievement.

### Urgent improvement

- Gaps in foundational knowledge are **not tackled quickly or effectively**.
- Pupils, particularly those who struggle with reading and writing, **make poor progress over time**, and gaps widen rather than close.
- Outcomes show that pupils with literacy difficulties are **consistently underachieving**, limiting access to future learning and qualifications.

## Leadership and Governance

The Leadership and Governance section focuses on strategic decision making, implementation, effective monitoring and impact on standards and the experiences of pupils, as well as the creation of a culture of professional learning and development as a key driver of school improvement.

### Exceptional

- Leadership ensures **literacy support is evidence-informed, rigorously evaluated and continually refined**, resulting in sustained exceptional outcomes for pupils with literacy difficulties.
- Governance holds leaders to account robustly for **excellence in literacy and curriculum access**.

### Strong standard

- Leaders provide **clear strategic oversight** of literacy support.
- Staff receive **high-quality professional development** in effective literacy teaching.
- Literacy improvement **contributes clearly to inclusion and achievement**.

### Expected standard

- Leaders ensure systems are in place to **identify and support struggling readers and writers**.
- The impact of literacy teaching and intervention is monitored and refined.

### Needs attention

- Leaders recognise literacy concerns but **do not yet secure consistent impact**.
- Evaluation of literacy support is under-developed.

### Urgent improvement

- Leaders **do not understand the scale or severity of reading and writing difficulties** among pupils.
- Leaders fail to ensure that **effective literacy support or intervention** is in place for pupils who need it.
- Leaders do not evaluate whether teaching and interventions **improve pupils' reading and writing**, despite evidence of ongoing failure.
- Governance does not hold leaders to account for **weak literacy outcomes and poor curriculum access**.

# Overview

Across the toolkit, Ofsted is unequivocal:

**When pupils cannot read or write well enough to access the curriculum, and the school does not address this effectively, it constitutes a serious failure.**

- At its strongest, literacy support is **systemic, explicit and transformative** (Exceptional).
- At its weakest, unaddressed literacy difficulties can justify **Urgent improvement** across multiple sections.

## Inclusion

### How literacy contributes

- Reading and writing difficulties are explicitly recognised as **barriers to learning**.
- Inspectors consider whether these barriers are **identified early, understood accurately and removed effectively**.
- Literacy support must enable pupils to participate **fully and independently**, not merely be present in intervention timetables.

### Judgement implications

- **Urgent improvement:** Pupils with weak literacy are effectively excluded from learning because barriers are not addressed.
- **Expected standard:** Literacy needs are identified and supported so pupils can access learning and make progress from their starting points.
- **Exceptional:** Pupils with significant literacy difficulties achieve confidently and participate fully across the curriculum. Their literacy needs are exceptionally well addressed.

## Curriculum and Teaching

### How literacy contributes

- Inspectors evaluate whether the curriculum is **made accessible**, given pupils' reading and writing starting points.
- Teaching must **explicitly address the literacy demands of subjects**, including development of vocabulary, reading comprehension and extended writing.
- Adaptation is judged on **impact**, not intent.

### Judgement implications

- **Urgent improvement:** Curriculum and teaching assume literacy skills pupils do not have, preventing access to learning.
- **Expected standard:** Literacy is taught explicitly so pupils can access subject content.
- **Exceptional:** Literacy teaching is systematic, cumulative and transferable across subjects.

## Achievement

### How literacy contributes

- Reading and writing underpin progress in all subjects; inspectors view literacy as a **key determinant of achievement**.
- Inspectors consider whether pupils who struggle with literacy **close gaps over time**.

### Judgement implications

- **Urgent improvement:** Pupils with weak literacy make persistently poor progress.
- **Expected standard:** Pupils with literacy difficulties make appropriate progress from starting points.
- **Exceptional:** Pupils demonstrate fluent, confident reading and writing, enabling high achievement.

## Leadership and Governance

### How literacy contributes

- Leaders are expected to **know the scale and impact of literacy difficulties** in their school.
- Inspectors look for **strategic oversight**, evaluation of impact and well-informed professional development.

### Judgement implications

- **Urgent improvement:** Leaders do not understand or address serious literacy weaknesses.
- **Expected standard:** Leaders ensure systems support struggling readers and writers.
- **Exceptional:** Literacy improvement is evidence-informed, rigorously evaluated, sustained and highly effective.

## Whole-framework insight for inspection

- Literacy is a **cross-cutting judgement lever**: weaknesses in reading and writing can legitimately pull **multiple sections** towards *Needs attention* or *Urgent improvement*.
- Conversely, **exceptional literacy practice** strengthens judgements across inclusion, curriculum, achievement and leadership.
- Inspectors will prioritise **impact on pupils**, particularly those who struggle most, over paperwork or programme descriptions

### Literacy is not “one more initiative”.

It is the mechanism through which inclusion works, the curriculum is accessed, achievement is secured and leadership impact is demonstrated.

# Appendix of direct quotations

The following statements are quoted directly from Ofsted’s [State-funded Schools Inspection Toolkit](#), without interpretation. These quoted statements are not the full content of each section.

## Inclusion

### Page 10:

*Inspectors focus on gathering evidence relating to the factors that statutory and non-statutory guidance, research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to inclusion.*

- *embedding a culture in which early and accurate assessment of pupils’ needs is prioritised*
- *using the information from the assessment of pupils’ needs to implement a continuous cycle of planning, actions and review in order to reduce barriers to pupils’ learning and/or well being*

### Page 12

*In gathering evidence about identifying, assessing and meeting needs, and reducing barriers, inspectors consider the extent to which:*

- *leaders understand that the most effective inclusion strategy begins with everyday high quality inclusive teaching, which has most benefit for the pupils who find learning hardest and reduces the need for individual adaptations*
- *leaders have established a culture in which staff understand the range of barriers that pupils may face to their learning and/or well-being, including those specific to their community and the school’s context; they quickly and accurately identify pupils facing these barriers*
- *leaders make sure pupils receive effective support, consult with external specialists and implement their advice as necessary, and ensure that appropriate reasonable adjustments are made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and the SEND Code of Practice*

### Inclusion grading tables pages 14-16

Needs attention	Expected standard	Strong standard
<p><i>Leaders have only recently started to take action to identify and assess pupils’ needs or reduce barriers to pupils’ learning and/or wellbeing</i></p> <p><i>Weaknesses or inconsistencies of practice have a negative impact on a particular group of pupils</i></p>	<p><i>Leaders identify pupils’ needs quickly and accurately, including any emerging or changing needs. This includes the needs of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children’s social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well being.</i></p> <p><i>Typically, the support they provide reduces barriers to these pupils’ learning</i></p>	<p><i>Leaders and staff establish strategies that consistently enhance the opportunities and experiences of [these pupils]</i></p> <p><i>Leaders and staff rigorously monitor the progress of these pupils and consistently ensure that any barriers to success are swiftly and effectively addressed. Strategies are systematically and skilfully adjusted as needed, so that they make a sustained difference to pupils’ opportunities and</i></p>

	<p><i>Leaders take a graduated approach, which means pupils' needs are generally met. Staff receive suitable training and support to implement this approach.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders have a secure understanding of these pupils' needs and the progress they make.</i></p>	<p><i>experiences. Well analysed, quantitative and qualitative data underpins leaders' decisions.</i></p>
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<b>Urgent improvement</b>	<p><i>Leaders do not identify and assess pupils' needs effectively. This has a significant negative impact on how well the school supports pupils' learning and/or well-being.</i></p> <p><i>Support for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being is ineffective.</i></p>
<b>Exceptional</b>	<p><i>Exceptional standards of inclusion have been sustained over time so that barriers to learning and/or well-being for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, are reduced exceptionally well to ensure highly positive outcomes and experiences for pupils</i></p>

## Curriculum and Teaching

### Page 17

*Inspectors focus on gathering evidence relating to the factors that statutory and non-statutory guidance, professional standards, research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to high-quality curriculum and teaching. These factors are:*

- establishing strong foundations in communication and language, reading, writing and mathematics so that pupils can access the rest of the curriculum and gain later success, including academic achievement, good health and well-being*

### Page 18

*During all inspections, inspectors must evaluate how effectively pupils are enabled to secure strong foundations to access the curriculum. This involves evaluating how effectively the school supports pupils who are at the early stages of communication and language, reading, writing and mathematics, including older pupils whose development is not at their age-appropriate level.*

### Page 19

*In gathering evidence about securing strong foundations for all pupils, inspectors consider the extent to which:*

- for primary-age pupils (and for older pupils where necessary), the curriculum prioritises accurate and fluent word reading, spelling, handwriting and mathematics*
- leaders prioritise 'keeping up' rather than 'catching up', quickly dealing with any identified gaps in pupils' knowledge*

- *the curriculum is designed to extend pupils' language and vocabulary, both spoken and written, and increase their reading competency across all subjects*
- *all pupils are explicitly taught how to communicate effectively through spoken language (oracy), articulate ideas, develop understanding and engage with others through speaking, listening and communication*
- *teaching of reading is rigorous and sequenced, and develops pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment; at all key stages, reading attainment is assessed accurately and gaps are tackled quickly and effectively, so that all pupils can access the whole curriculum*

## **Page 20**

*For older pupils, including those in key stage 2 and beyond who have not yet secured the strong foundations they need to access the curriculum, inspectors consider the extent to which:*

- *assessment accurately identifies any gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge in communication and language, reading, writing and mathematics*
- *ongoing, targeted teaching and practice are prioritised so that pupils quickly catch up*
- *relevant leaders and other staff are supported to develop the expertise and experience to provide effective additional support and regularly check whether this is having the intended impact*
- 

*For pupils at the early stages of learning English as an additional language, inspectors consider the extent to which:*

- *leaders and teachers recognise that these pupils already speak at least one language, and do not lower their expectations of them*
- *teachers assess pupils' English language proficiency accurately and regularly*
- *teachers recognise that providing opportunities for pupils to talk with staff and peers during lessons is particularly important; teachers help pupils articulate what they know and understand by scaffolding, modelling, extending and developing their ideas*
- *teachers focus on the vocabulary pupils need, including subject-specific vocabulary, to help them understand new concepts; they keep explanations clear and precise*
- *teachers develop and extend pupils' language carefully and deliberately, with plenty of repetition*
- *teachers ensure that pupils learn to read using systematic synthetic phonics as soon as possible, so that they have access to a wide range of literature that will accelerate their understanding of English*

## **Page 22**

In gathering evidence about an inclusive curriculum and teaching, inspectors consider the extent to which:

- *staff know how to identify and remove barriers to achievement for their pupils through effective curriculum design, formative assessment and adapting their practice to meet pupils' needs*
- *reasonable adjustments or adaptations to the curriculum or teaching for specific pupils' needs are well targeted and effective in reducing barriers; adaptations focus on pupils' long-term success rather than short-term fixes; leaders consider the possible downsides of any adaptations and mitigate these*

Needs attention	Expected standard	Strong standard
<p>Leaders have considered appropriate adaptations to teaching for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children’s social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, but these adaptations are not well matched to pupils’ needs.</p>	<p>Leaders ensure that the curriculum is generally taught well. Teachers draw on their knowledge of pupils’ needs and starting points and an evidence-informed understanding of effective teaching and how pupils learn.</p> <p>Leaders ensure that all pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read are taught to do so through systematic synthetic phonics.</p> <p>Leaders and staff are particularly aware of pupils who have not yet secured the necessary foundations in communication and language, reading, spelling, handwriting and mathematics. They take appropriate action to secure this foundational knowledge.</p> <p>Leaders and staff generally use assessment well to check understanding and make changes to teaching and/or the curriculum, as necessary. Leaders and staff are clear about the importance of high-quality teaching, supplemented with targeted academic support.</p> <p>Any reasonable adjustments or adaptations to the curriculum or teaching for particular pupils are generally considered and implemented carefully. EHC plans are properly considered when designing and delivering the curriculum.</p>	<p>Leaders ensure that the curriculum is consistently taught well. Highly effective teaching is embedded across subjects and year groups. Teaching ensures that pupils consistently develop their language and vocabulary, both spoken and written, and increase their reading competency, across subjects.</p> <p>The school’s approach to the curriculum and teaching for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children’s social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being is implemented consistently well across the school to remove barriers to achievement for these pupils.</p>

<b>Urgent improvement</b>	<p><i>Teachers' expectations are too low, either for all pupils or for particular groups.</i></p> <p><i>Adaptations or reasonable adjustments do not meet pupils' needs or they reflect low expectations for particular pupils or groups.</i></p>
<b>Exceptional</b>	<p><i>Exceptionally high standards in the curriculum and teaching have been sustained. Across all subjects and phases, well-planned, effective and highly responsive teaching quickly and securely develops the knowledge and skills pupils need to be successful.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders' actions have a transformational impact on the learning of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to learning and/or well-being. These pupils are now exceptionally well prepared for current and later learning, and for future success.</i></p>

## Achievement

### Page 27

*Inspectors focus on gathering evidence relating to the factors that statutory and non-statutory guidance, professional standards, research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to pupils' achievement. These factors are:*

- *securing important foundational knowledge in language and communication, reading, writing and mathematics so that pupils can access the whole curriculum*
- *reading fluently at an age-appropriate level*
- *securing the knowledge and skills pupils need before undertaking more complex tasks*
- *ensuring that pupils make progress from their starting points, in that they know more, remember more and can do more; they learn what is intended, and develop broad and deep subject knowledge across the curriculum*
- *equipping pupils to produce high-quality work that reflects the breadth and depth of their learning v equipping pupils to achieve well in national tests and examinations, where relevant, and across the wider curriculum*
- *preparing pupils, at each phase, for the next stage of education, training or employment*

### Page 29

*When inspectors evaluate achievement in schools with secondary-age pupils, they consider:*

- *the extent to which gaps in knowledge are tackled for pupils who are at the early stages of securing their foundational knowledge (including reading fluency), so that they can access the wider curriculum*

*When inspectors evaluate the achievement of pupils with SEND in specialist or mainstream settings, they:*

- *consider pupils' starting points and the progress they make from them; inspectors also want to understand the curriculum pathways of individuals or groups, and whether leaders have identified the right priorities for them and are ensuring that they make good progress*

**Page 30**

*In gathering evidence about foundational knowledge, inspectors consider the extent to which:*

- *pupils have the age- and phase-appropriate knowledge and skills they need to progress to the next stage of learning, including:*
  - *language and communication skills that enable them to access the full curriculum*
  - *accurate and fluent reading*
  - *compositional skills*
  - *accurate spelling*
  - *legible and fluent handwriting*
  - *mathematical knowledge*
- *pupils read widely and often, with age-appropriate comprehension*
- *a strong culture of reading is embedded across the school, shown by pupils' confidence in and enjoyment of reading, which sets them up to be lifelong readers*

*In gathering evidence about achievement across the wider curriculum, inspectors consider the extent to which:*

- *secondary-age pupils develop detailed knowledge and skills across the key stage 3 curriculum, preparing them well for key stage 4 and more advanced study post-16*
- *pupils have the necessary knowledge, skills and/or qualifications for the next stage of their education, employment or training, including a strong grounding in English and mathematics*

**Achievement grading tables, pages 32-35**

Needs attention	Expected standard	Strong standard
<p><i>Although many pupils achieve well, a significant minority have gaps in their learning, which hinders their achievement.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders have only recently started to take action to improve achievement. While their actions are appropriate, they are at an early stage. This means it is too soon to determine the impact of this work.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders are taking appropriate action to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being. However, currently, a significant minority of these pupils do</i></p>	<p><i>Pupils develop the foundational knowledge and skills they need, including language and communication skills. Pupils who are at the start of their education (and older pupils, where necessary) largely secure the necessary accuracy and fluency in word reading, spelling, handwriting and number facts. Any gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge or skills are closing quickly.</i></p> <p><i>Disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being generally make suitable progress from their starting points. They develop appropriate knowledge and skills to</i></p>	<p><i>Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, consistently achieve well, develop detailed knowledge and skills, and produce high-quality work across the curriculum.</i></p>

<i>not achieve well from their starting points.</i>	<i>enable them to progress to the next stage. Any gaps in their knowledge or skills are closing quickly.</i>	
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<b>Urgent improvement</b>	<i>Pupils lack the foundations of communication, reading, writing or mathematical knowledge (taking into account that some pupils with SEND may not establish these foundations). Gaps in foundational knowledge are not tackled quickly or effectively.</i>
<b>Exceptional</b>	<i>Leaders' actions have a transformational impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being. These pupils now achieve consistently high outcomes and are exceptionally well prepared for their next steps. The difference between the attainment rate of the school's disadvantaged pupils and that of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally is far narrower over time than the difference between the attainment rate of all disadvantaged pupils nationally and that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.</i>

## Leadership and Governance

### Page 72

*Inspectors focus on gathering evidence relating to the factors that statutory and non-statutory guidance, professional standards, research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to leadership and governance.*

*These factors are:*

- having a clear and strategic approach to improvement, in which leaders accurately monitor the school's context and prioritise actions that address the most significant barriers to learning*
- managing the school as an organisation effectively, including organising staff strategically and removing barriers and distractions from core classroom activities*
- leaders making decisions in the best interests of pupils, including prioritising the experiences and outcomes of the groups listed above*
- leaders having a reflective understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and taking effective action to engage the school community to improve and/or to sustain high standards*
- having a coherent professional learning programme for all staff that is rooted in a culture of purposeful collaboration, focuses on building collective expertise and enables expert teaching across all subjects and phases*

### Page 74

*In gathering evidence about strategic leadership, inspectors consider the extent to which leaders:*

- have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high-quality education to all pupils, and uphold high educational standards that prepare pupils from all backgrounds for their next phase of education and life*
- take a strategic approach to improvement, in which they carefully identify the right priorities to ensure the best possible outcomes and experiences for pupils*

In gathering evidence about governance, inspectors consider the extent to which governors/trustees:

- assure themselves that leaders have an accurate understanding of the school’s context and are prioritising the actions for improvement that will have the greatest impact on pupils
- hold leaders to account appropriately and effectively for the impact of the school’s professional learning programme for staff
- hold leaders to account appropriately and effectively for the school’s support and provision for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children’s social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well being

**Page 75**

In gathering evidence about professional learning and expertise, inspectors consider the extent to which:

- leaders establish a strong culture of staff professionalism, which includes a commitment from all staff to continuous improvement in their expertise and effectiveness
- leaders ensure that staff have access to high-quality, evidence-informed, sustained and coherent professional learning programmes that build expertise and are aligned to balance the priorities of whole-school improvement, subjects/teams/phases and individual needs

**Leadership and Governance grading tables, pages 77-79**

Needs attention	Expected standard	Strong standard
<p>Leaders have a broad awareness of the school’s strengths and areas for development, but their actions lack precision and/or do not identify the underlying causes of any weakness and/or have unintended consequences for pupils or particular groups of pupils.</p>	<p>Leaders understand the school’s context, strengths and areas for development. They have a clear rationale for their improvement priorities and largely take appropriate action to drive improvement across all key stages and areas of the school’s work. If an aspect of the school’s provision falls short of the expected standard, this is dealt with quickly and effectively.</p> <p>Governors/trustees ensure that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined, take account of context, and make sure that resources, including digital technologies, are used effectively. They typically support and challenge leaders appropriately, giving due regard to leaders’ and staff well-being and workload.</p>	<p>Leaders use their detailed and insightful analysis of school performance to evaluate the effectiveness of their provision. They accurately identify, monitor and act on priorities for improvement, leading to consistently strong standards across all areas of the school’s work or rapid improvement in any areas where this is not the case.</p> <p>Leaders have developed a highly effective culture of professional learning and expertise in which staff take responsibility for their own learning and are keen to continually improve their expertise. Leaders ensure that there is a professional learning and expertise curriculum that is informed by the best available evidence, including research, and is precisely matched to priorities for</p>

	<p><i>The professional learning and expertise programme is evidence-informed, of high quality and designed to build expertise. It draws on evidence and includes planned opportunities to apply and embed practice to build an effective team of teachers and staff, including ECTs and trainees, where relevant. Leaders protect time for professional learning.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders act in the best interest of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children’s social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being.</i></p>	<p><i>whole-school improvement, subjects/teams/phases and individual needs.</i></p>
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<b>Urgent improvement</b>	<p><i>Leaders do not identify and/or prioritise the right issues or take suitable or timely action to deal with them.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders’ decisions are not taken in the best interests of pupils.</i></p>
<b>Exceptional</b>	<p><i>Exceptionally high standards of leadership and governance have been sustained. Governors, other leaders at all levels, and all staff make a strong, positive contribution to the school’s strategic priorities. This leads to continued improvement and/or sustained high standards in all areas of the school’s work.</i></p> <p><i>Leaders’ actions have a transformational impact on the outcomes and experiences of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children’s social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being. These pupils achieve and thrive.</i></p>

# HIAS English team

The HIAS English team offer a wide range of high-quality services to support schools in improving outcomes for learners, including courses, bespoke consultancy and in-house training.

For further details referring to English, please contact:

- **Emma Tarrant (primary):** [emma.tarrant@hants.gov.uk](mailto:emma.tarrant@hants.gov.uk)
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