A broad and balanced curriculum: key findings from Ofsted

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To cover:

- Inspecting a broad and balanced curriculum – the EBacc and beyond
- Some key findings from the first year of the new Common Inspection Framework – curriculum and impact
- Dispelling myths
- Updates from Ofsted’s School Inspection Handbook
Common Inspection Framework
Common Inspection Framework

Inspectors make a judgement on the **effectiveness of leadership and management** by evaluating the extent to which leaders, managers and governors:

- provide learning programmes or a curriculum that have suitable **breadth, depth and relevance** so that they meet any relevant statutory requirements, as well as the needs and interests of children, learners and employers, nationally and in the local community

- successfully plan and manage learning programmes, the curriculum and careers advice so that all children and learners get a good start and are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment
Leadership and management – inspectors will consider:

- the design, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum, ensuring breadth and balance and its impact on pupils’ outcomes and their personal, development, behaviour and welfare

- how well the school supports the formal curriculum with extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to extend their knowledge and understanding and to improve their skills in a range of artistic, creative and sporting activities.
Leadership and management – grade descriptors

Outstanding (1):
- The school’s actions have secured substantial improvement in progress for disadvantaged pupils. Progress is rising across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics.
- The broad and balanced curriculum inspires pupils to learn. The range of subjects and courses helps pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in all aspects of their education, including the humanities and linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technical, social, physical and artistic learning.

Good (2):
- The broad and balanced curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn. The range of subjects and courses helps pupils acquire knowledge, understanding and skills in all aspects of their education, including the humanities and linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technical, social, physical and artistic learning. This supports pupils’ good progress. The curriculum also contributes well to pupils’ behaviour and welfare, including their physical, mental and personal well-being, safety and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Inadequate (4):
- The unbalanced and poorly taught curriculum fails to meet the needs of pupils or particular groups of pupils.
School Inspection Handbook

**Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** – inspectors will consider:

- scrutiny of pupils’ work, with particular attention to pupils’ effort and success in completing their work, both in and outside lessons, so that they can progress and enjoy learning across the curriculum

- how well assessment draws on a range of evidence of what pupils know, understand and can do across the curriculum

- the impact of the teaching of literacy on outcomes across the curriculum

- the impact of pupils’ mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills on outcomes across the curriculum

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Outcomes – inspectors will evaluate:

- the extent to which all pupils progress well from their different starting points and achieve or exceed standards expected for their age nationally (at the end of a key stage), or within the school’s own curriculum.

- the extent to which all pupils attain relevant qualifications so that they can and do progress to the next stage of their education into courses that lead to higher level qualifications or into jobs that meet local and national needs.

- pupils’ academic and vocational achievement across the curriculum.

Inspectors will pay particular attention to whether the most able pupils are making progress towards attaining the highest standards and achieving as well as they should across the curriculum.
Evidence gathering

- Discussions with leaders and teachers to understand the rationale for the organisation and delivery of the curriculum
- Discussion with leaders and governors about the evaluation of the impact of the curriculum – measuring impact and refining practice
- How effective is professional development to support teachers in delivering a broad and balanced curriculum?
- Evidence about progression in pupils’ knowledge, understanding and skills in individual subjects and across the curriculum
- The extent to which pupils are prepared well for key points of transition - next steps Year 7-13 and beyond – pupil, parent, staff and employers voice
- The impact of the curriculum on pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, mental and physical health and well being
- Assessment of the quality and impact of Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance
1 year on: what have we found?
Evaluation shows:

**Strengths:**

- Where leaders review the curriculum regularly and are checking the impact on outcomes for all pupils they remodel it to help all pupils perform well.
- Rising to challenges of assessment and qualifications reform - fleet of foot with strong staff development.
- Leaders are attuned to research findings, Ofsted survey findings, key messages which can inform how the curriculum can be developed to improve outcomes and pupils’ personal development.
- CEIAG – integral to the curriculum and pupils’ progression, helping pupils experience and learn about options for their future with good links to employers/colleges locally.
- Where engagement with businesses was a priority for leaders it fully supported pupils confidence, ambition and achievement.
- Recognition that challenge is for all not just the most able pupils.
Evaluation shows:

**Weaknesses:**

- Poor coordination of numeracy and literacy across the curriculum – pupils struggle to read and access learning
- Poor support from middle leaders to develop pedagogy – notably in mixed ability classes in Key Stage 3
- Pupils in Key Stage 3 repeat work from primary school – bored pupils, frustrated by the lack of challenge
- Lack of understanding and coherence in assessment and the curriculum – lack of oversight, low expectations
- Fragmented poorly planned timetabling, lack of coherence across the curriculum, slow to tackle issues as a result of teacher vacancies – lacking innovation to sustain a good curriculum despite teacher shortages
Some positive examples
The curriculum is planned carefully to make it relevant to pupils in the school. It is broad and balanced, providing pupils with opportunities to link ideas together through termly themes. For example, in the theme ‘From Frostin to Bostin’ pupils compared the two geographical locations of Chamonix in France with the Black Country.

Each curricular theme has a ‘stunning start’, a visit or visitor and a finale to the project when parents are invited into school. Pupils benefit from a wide range of trips and visitors to school. Team-building opportunities, the curriculum themes, visits and residential experiences captivate the pupils’ enthusiasm for learning and enhance their progress and personal development.

Crestwood Park Primary School, West Midlands
Section 5 inspection, June 2016
Overall effectiveness: ‘good’
Curriculum leadership

The curriculum is first rate. Subject directors, working directly for the trust, offer cutting-edge, up-to-date materials, advice, support and mentoring for teachers in the school. The high level of consistency across the trust enables subject directors to ensure that assessments are accurate and give consistent advice and support to all teachers. The curriculum provided for those who enter the school with low literacy levels is excellent, with a rich menu of appropriate interventions available to boost pupils’ spelling and reading skills. A wide range of trips and visits, including an annual residential trip for the whole of Year 8, is used extremely well to considerably enhance learning.

British values are promoted strongly across the curriculum. Detailed planning of the curriculum ensures that there are many opportunities to address issues related to extremism, democracy and the rule of law.

Outwood Academy Adwick, Doncaster
Section 5 inspection, February 2016
Overall effectiveness: ‘Outstanding’
Curriculum supporting effective transition

The curriculum at Oakfield Academy is a strength of the school. The headteacher’s vision of an all-through curriculum from Year 5 to Year 8 has been realised and there are no artificial barriers between a ‘primary’ curriculum in years 5 and 6 and a ‘secondary’ one in years 7 and 8.

Pupils’ journeys through the school are thus seamless and this continuity helps them to make good progress. Leaders keep the curriculum under constant review and, as a result, it is well tuned to the needs of pupils.

Oakfield Academy, Somerset, 9-13 middle school.
Section 5 inspection, March 2016
Overall effectiveness: ‘good’
Meeting pupils’ and local area needs

The headteacher’s vision of the curriculum has enhanced the academic rigour expected of the pupils. At the same time there are clear work-related qualifications that provide for the needs of all pupils. A new engineering course will be introduced to Year 10 from September, meeting the needs of the local economy. This has recruited well and will complement the well-established and successful hair and beauty course.

Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully through varied activities and opportunities, for example a recent project looking into the history of the local area in the Second World War when persecuted children were evacuated to the town. It provided pupil leadership opportunities and left an indelible memory on pupils about the generosity of the human spirit at times of moral crisis.

Harwich and Dovercourt High School, Essex
Section 5 inspection, June 2016
Overall effectiveness: ‘Good’
CEIAG in the curriculum

Many pupils have high aspirations for themselves. Pupils in Year 11 are well informed about the different opportunities that are open to them and progression rates into further education, including into the sixth form, training and/or employment are high.

Careers education, information, advice and guidance is not as well established in Years 9 and 10. Leaders acknowledge that there is further work to be done to embed careers education throughout the curriculum.

Ferndown Upper School, Dorset
Section 5 inspection, May 2016
Overall effectiveness: ‘Good’
Progression in CEIAG

Pupils’ careers education and guidance meets requirements in the main school, beginning in Year 9 with a group of local employers giving information. This is followed in Year 10 by two weeks of work experience. The range of placements available is extended through the school’s financial support for pupils travelling to London. The Year 11 careers conference gives pupils good opportunities to gain awareness of local post-16 opportunities for study, employment or apprenticeships. ‘Business breakfast’ brings business students in the sixth form into direct contact with local enterprises. All this is useful, but delivered through a small number of collapsed timetable days, such as the financial capability day. This limits pupils’ opportunities to consolidate their learning and the school’s opportunities to check what pupils have learned.

Harwich and Dovercourt High School, Essex
Section 5 inspection, June 2016
Overall effectiveness: ‘Good’
Myths
Key messages

• **Clarification for schools**
  - Inspectors **must not** advocate a particular method of planning, teaching or assessment

  • Lesson planning – no specific requirements to produce plans for Ofsted, no requirement about how planning is set out, we assess impact

  • Self-evaluation – for schools to determine format and business as usual for the school

  • Lesson observations – no grading of lessons, teaching or outcomes in a lesson

  • Pupils’ work and marking – no specific requirements for quantity, frequency or type
• **Section 5 changes**
  • Clarified details about who inspectors need to meet with to inspect governance at the school

  • Inspectors need to give consideration to governors’ development and how they improve their performance

  • Amended the grade descriptors in outcomes to reflect changes to national assessment and accountability measures

  • Staff and pupil surveys are online, no paper copy
Key messages: pupil groups

Most able
• Inspectors should report in a meaningful way so that it is clear whether or not schools are challenging the most able pupils

Disadvantaged
• Pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route

Most able disadvantaged
• Inspectors should include a focus on the most able disadvantaged
Thank you