

Purpose of this document

This document brings together questions and answers arising from recent Ofsted briefings, webinars and pilot inspections under the renewed Further Education and Skills (FES) inspection framework. It is intended as a practical, sector-facing reference for leaders, quality teams, apprenticeship teams and governance.

The FAQ will be updated on a **monthly rolling basis** with questions from members.

Questions in this FAQ are shared with Ofsted and their formal response included here.

How to raise a question

We welcome questions, points of uncertainty and issues for clarification

Please: - **Email us with your questions** as they arise. - **Let us know when you receive your Ofsted notification call**, as we are tracking how the renewed framework is operating in practice and will use anonymised themes to update this FAQ.

Your contributions will help ensure that this remains a live, practitioner-informed resource.

Contents

Purpose of this document.....	1
How to contribute and raise a question	1
Section 1: Data, systems and evidence	2
Section 2: Compliance, eligibility and funding.....	2
Section 3: Self-assessment and quality improvement.....	2
Section 4: Inclusion and SEND	2
Section 5: Learning walks and observations	3
Section 6: Case sampling	3

Section 1: Data, systems and evidence

Q: Do inspectors want direct access to systems such as APTEM, or only exported data?

A: Inspectors may view live systems if this is helpful, but there is no requirement to provide access. What matters is that data is accurate, accessible and staff are confident in explaining it. Providers should ensure key systems can be demonstrated by staff who use them routinely.

Q: Will Ofsted still issue learner, employer and staff surveys?

A: In pilot inspections, Ofsted did not issue their standard surveys. In full inspections, the normal survey process is expected to resume. Providers' own learner and employer surveys can be used as evidence of learner and employer voice.

Section 2: Compliance, eligibility and funding

Q: Are compliance teams involved in inspections under the renewed framework?

A: Yes. Compliance and onboarding processes form part of the learner journey and are explored through learning walks, case sampling and evidence review, including pre-enrolment, induction, progress monitoring and completion or withdrawal.

Q: Will inspectors check right-to-work and funding eligibility evidence?

A: Inspectors may review eligibility and right-to-work evidence where relevant, but the primary focus remains on quality of education, safeguarding, inclusion and learner experience.

Section 3: Self-assessment and quality improvement

Q: Are providers required to submit a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) or Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) aligned to the new toolkit?

A: No. Submission of SARs and QIPs is optional. Ofsted is interested in how providers evaluate their performance and secure improvement, not in the format or alignment of specific documents. Self-assessment is for the provider, not for Ofsted.

Section 4: Inclusion and SEND

Q: Are inspectors interested only in individual SEND cases or also in whole-provider systems?

A: Both. Inspectors look for an embedded culture of inclusion (strategy, staff capability, curriculum design, support systems) and how this translates into effective, personalised support for individual learners and apprentices.

Q: Will one learner's negative experience disproportionately affect inspection outcomes?

A: No. Inspectors seek typicality and patterns across the provision. Individual experiences are considered in context and alongside wider evidence.

Q: What definition of SEND is used for inspection purposes?

A: The issue of definition (EHC plans only versus a broader interpretation of learning difficulties and disabilities) has been raised and acknowledged as requiring national clarification. Current practice indicates a broad, contextual understanding rather than reliance solely on statutory plans.

Section 5: Learning walks and observations

Q: Who decides what is included in learning walks?

A: Learning walks are collaborative and provider-led. Leaders decide what to showcase within the themes of inclusion; curriculum, teaching, training and achievement; and leadership. Walks may be physical or virtual and may involve discussion as well as observation.

Q: Do inspectors only observe sessions involving learners in the case sample?

A: No. Inspectors observe a wide range of live and recorded activity. Case-sampled learners' work is included within broader evidence gathering but inspection activity is not restricted to them.

Section 6: Case sampling

Q: How many learners or apprentices are typically included in case sampling?

A: Usually around two per inspector, selected by the lead inspector in discussion with the provider, with a focus (where relevant) on learners facing barriers to learning or wellbeing.

Q: Are providers expected to prepare formal case studies?

A: No. Case sampling draws on existing learner records, progress information, support plans, discussions and observation. Providers are not expected to produce written case studies for inspection.

(This document will be expanded with additional sections as further questions are collated.)