

Unpacking Ofsted's revised inspection model: Learning from the first inspections

Facilitator: Carole Loader

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Introductions – SDN Mesma Group



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Panel one:



Lauren Spurling
Head of Apprenticeship Academic Quality, Anglia Ruskin University



Becki Lee
Director of Quality, Impact Futures Group



Oliver Rees
Curriculum Tutor, the PMA

Panel one:



Malin Patel
CEO, Enterprise4All



Kathryn Pogson
**Head of Teaching, Learning and
Innovation, Kirklees College**

Today's aims

- Share points of interest
- Hear early reflections from panel members
- Capture outstanding questions or emerging concerns
- Gather your feedback on what you would like us to cover next

Poll

Overall, do you consider the changes to be:

- Mainly positive
- Positive with some negative aspects
- Neutral
- Negative with some positive aspects
- Mostly negative
- Unsure



Three key documents

Documents

	<u>Further education and skills inspection toolkit: for use from November 2025</u> PDF, 670 KB, 59 pages
	<u>Further education and skills operating guide for inspectors: for use from November 2025</u> HTML
	<u>Inspection information for further education and skills providers: for use from November 2025</u> HTML

Details

Find guidance for further education (FE) and skills inspections in England:

- **FE and skills inspection toolkit** – what inspectors and providers use to discuss the quality of provision on inspection
- **FE and skills inspection operating guide** – a step-by-step guide for inspectors on how to inspect an FE and skills provider
- **Information about FE and skills inspections** – for provider staff and leaders, parents and carers and the wider public

This guidance will replace the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) from 10 November 2025.

4 learning points from inspections to date

#1

Three key principles of inspection

Principle 1

- Throughout the inspection, the toolkit will help you to gather evidence to celebrate the provider's strengths, validate leaders' priorities and progress and highlight where improvement is needed. In doing so, you will consider the extent to which learners and apprentices:
 - achieve – academically and personally
 - belong – feel that they belong to and are valued as part of the provider community
 - thrive – benefit from the right systems, processes and levels of oversight, so that they are kept safe and are able to flourish, and/or fulfil their potential, whatever their background or individual needs



These prompts align closely with the evaluation areas in the toolkit and will give you assurance that you are building a clear and typical picture of all aspects of the provider's work.

Principle 2

- Leadership, inclusion and whether there is an open and positive safeguarding culture are key areas of focus when gathering evidence.

Principle 3

- The 'expected standard' in the evaluation areas in the toolkit is the starting point for planning your inspection activities.

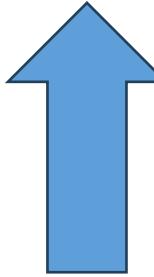
#2 It's not a checklist but...

Grading inclusion

Needs attention	Expected standard	Strong standard		Strong standard
<p>Inclusion is likely to be graded 'needs attention' when the expected standard has not been met.</p> <p>This may include when one or more of the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Leaders have only recently started to take appropriate action to identify and assess learners' and apprentices' needs and to reduce barriers to their learning and/or well-being.Inconsistent practices have a negative impact on a particular group of learners or apprentices.Leaders' actions, including, for example, the use of high needs funding to support learners and apprentices, do not have the positive impact that leaders intend.Leaders have not ensured that staff receive the necessary training required to help them to identify and support the needs of learners and apprentices well.Leaders understand the needs of learners and apprentices but do not share well enough this information with staff at relevant subcontracted provision or work and community placements,	<p>Inclusion meets the 'expected standard' when all the following apply:</p> <p>Leaders and staff establish a culture in which learners' and apprentices' needs are met and learners and apprentices are welcome and, in most cases, feel supported to fulfil their potential, whatever their particular needs.</p> <p>Leaders and staff quickly and accurately identify learners' and apprentices' learning and support needs. When these emerge or change, staff adapt programmes and provide suitable support in order to meet the needs of learners and apprentices.</p> <p>Leaders take an appropriate 'graduated' approach (a continuous cycle of 'assess, plan, do and review' that helps learners and apprentices to receive an appropriate level of support), which generally meets learners' and apprentices' needs well. Staff receive suitable training and support to implement this approach.</p> <p>Where learners and apprentices face barriers to their learning and/or well-being, leaders take appropriate action for the period of need and do not reduce their high expectations of those learners/apprentices.</p>	<p>Inclusion meets the 'strong standard' when the 'expected standard' has been met and all the following apply:</p> <p>Leaders and staff establish strategies that consistently enhance the opportunities and experiences of all learners and apprentices, in particular those who are disadvantaged, those with SEND or high needs, those who are known (or previously known) to social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, including those without level 2 English and/or mathematics.</p> <p>Leaders ensure that the barriers to learners' and apprentices' learning are reduced swiftly and consistently. They systematically review and adapt any support offered in a way that makes a significant difference to learners' and apprentices' experiences and opportunities.</p> <p>Leaders carefully monitor the progress of all learners and apprentices, in particular those groups listed above. Leaders make good use of data to understand the needs of their learners and apprentices.</p> <p>Leaders' work on inclusion is embedded in their organisational culture and practices and has a significant and consistent impact on learners' and apprentices' opportunities and experiences.</p>		<p>Leaders consistently identify when additional learning support is no longer required or can be reduced, so learners and apprentices are well prepared to become more independent and to move on to the next stage of their learning and employment.</p> <p>Leaders make proactive and evidence-informed adaptations to their inclusion strategy, as appropriate, which have a consistently positive impact on these learners' and apprentices' education.</p>

#3 Transparency

Urgent Improvement	Needs attention	Expected standard	Strong standard	Exceptional



Principal 3

'The 'expected standard' in the evaluation areas in the toolkit is the starting point for planning your inspection activities.'

Ofsted: Operating guide for inspectors

#4 Workload before & during inspection



Managing the impact of a framework change



Lauren Spurling
Head of Apprenticeship Academic Quality, Anglia Ruskin University



Becki Lee
Director of Quality, Impact Futures Group



Oliver Rees
Curriculum Tutor, the PMA

5 minute quick chat

Answer one or both of the following:

- How else can we successfully manage a change of framework with our own team?
- In relation to inclusion, is there anything you have noticed from inspection reports that you think warrants flagging to others?

Experience of early inspections



Malin Patel
CEO, Enterprise4All



Kathryn Pogson
**Head of Teaching, Learning and
Innovation, Kirklees College**

5 minute quick chat

Answer one or both of the following:

- From what you heard in the last panel, is there one thing you plan to take away to action?
- Any quick-fire questions you'd like us to ask any of the panellists (we'll send responses out if we run out of time!)



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Poll

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Professional Development:

Apprenticeship compliance for your role – Starting 25 February

The apprenticeship accountability framework – 6 March

Using AI to map Functional Skills into Delivery – 18 March

Data management in apprenticeships – Starting 23 March

Apprenticeship compliance for leaders – Starting 15 April

Claiming apprenticeship LSF – 2025/26 – Starting 17 April

Advanced progress review practice – Starting 15 May

For full event details and to book, visit: www.strategicdevelopmentnetwork.co.uk/sdnevents

Next up in this series: 6 Inclusion

**All online SDN-Mesma Ofsted Education
Inspection Framework change events are
free to access throughout 2025 and 2026.**

Using Cognassist's specialist analysis of inspection report data and SDN Mesma Group's insights from recent inspection experiences, the session will highlight emerging trends and what they mean in practice for how providers plan, lead and demonstrate inclusion.

[Inclusion insights from the revised Ofsted EIF inspection reports - 16 April](#)



**UNPACKING OFSTED'S REVISED
EDUCATION INSPECTION FRAMEWORK**

**Session 6: Inclusion insights from the revised
Ofsted EIF inspection reports**

Hosted by

Lou Doyle
Co Founder and Director
SDN Mesma Group

Guest speaker

Chris Quickfall
CEO
Cognassist

cognassist

Thank you for joining us!

You will receive access to the recording and slides shortly

Contact us

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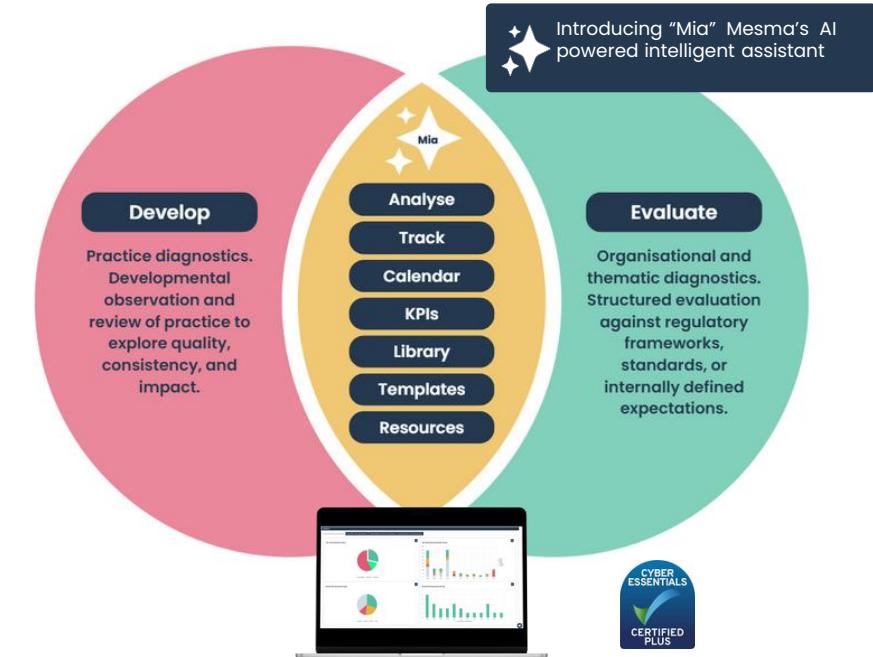


Tempted for a demo?

[>>Click here to register <<](#)

5th February | 12:00 - 12:30

- New price plans
- Introducing 'Track' - the new name for Improve
- Provider success stories
- Secure AI powered diagnostics



Mesma reframes quality assurance from a reporting exercise to a structured diagnostic and improvement process.

It helps organisations to understand at speed why performance looks the way it does, not just whether standards are met.



We'd love to see you IRL!



Curriculum, Quality and Retention - Keeping Learners on Track and Ofsted-Ready
Tuesday, February 24th, 2026 at 2:00 PM - 2:50 PM

This session will explore approaches to curriculum design, quality assurance, and learner engagement. It will consider current expectations, emerging themes in inspection and accountability, and how providers can support positive learner outcomes while maintaining strong quality standards.

Session Speakers



[Tickets and information - The apprenticeships conference](#)



Designing for Quality: Collaborative Approaches to Apprenticeship Assessment

2 March 2026 12:00-13:00 GMT

Workshop

Share session

Jogita Govind L&D Operations Manager LEAP Apprenticeships p... Rob Nitsch CEO Federation of Awarding Bo...

Mr Chris Cherry Strategic Associate SDN Mesma Group

Workshop Topic Quality Assessment & Assurance

The Yes Factor: Business-to-Business Practices That Turn Employer Interest into Action

2 March 2026 15:45-16:45 GMT

Workshop

Share session

Lou Doyle Co founder and Director SDN Mesma Group Jagdeep Soor FIEP Managing Director Queen Alexandra Charity

Dena Wyatt Head of Apprenticeships Specsavers

Workshop Topic Employer Partnerships & Pathways

[Tickets and information - ATC 2026](#)

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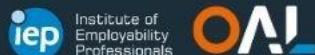


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Nominations close 20th March

Compliance
Leader of the
Year

Rising
Star of
the Year

Outstanding
Contribution to
Quality
Improvement

Compliance
Team of the
Year

Quality
Champion of
the Year

Quality
Improvement
Leader of the
Year

Quality
Collaboration

Quality
Improvement
Initiative of
the Year

Social Mobility
Quality
Improvement
Initiative of the
Year

Quality Team of
the Year

Quality
Improvement
Professional of
the Year

Compliance
Professional of
the Year

New category for 2026:
Inclusion Initiative of the Year

