

The new Ofsted framework: where do surveys help?

We know from Teacher Tapp data that teachers haven't been glowing about the new Ofsted framework so far, and we will be asking for more reflections as the process unfolds.

Before then, school leaders may be asking: can surveys help with the new requirements?

This post highlights some of the cultural shifts the new framework includes, as well as specific, practical suggestions for questions you may want to ask staff, governors, parents, and pupils.

Emphasis shift: inclusion & content

The new framework has substantial shifts in overall inspection emphasis. These can be summarised as:

1. A shift from curriculum to inclusion: inclusion is now the core lens for inspection, with an interest in outcomes and experiences for all pupils, especially, for example, those with SEND, facing disadvantages, looked-after, persistent absentees etc.
2. Greater emphasis on school context: Inspectors are expected to understand each school's setting, thinking about, for example, its phase, size, fluctuating cohorts and specialist/alternative provisions.
3. A change in tone of the inspection process: a "done with not to" emphasis, with aims for more transparency, guidance and training. The rollout is now underway, so a calibration period is expected.

In practice, leaders are going to need to be confident going on 'learning walks' around their school and discussing how different groups of pupils actually experience the school day - with pupil "case sampling" feeling like a new form of curriculum "deep dive". Leaders need to show awareness and understanding of these groups and their lived experiences of a range of school policies, such as behaviour, attendance and wellbeing.

A collaborative culture

An important shift when it comes to surveying is the expectation of collaboration as part of school improvement and change. As the framework says in the Leadership section:

Leaders provide meaningful opportunities for them [staff and governors] to share perspectives and insights and collaborate throughout any change process.

This is part of the "strong" standards for leadership and governance, and a step up from the "expected" standards. It's the difference between having clear leadership plans and priorities that you share (i.e. ensuring staff 'feel valued and involved in the strategic direction of the school') and having developed these in meaningful collaboration with others. It's not enough to simply share your priorities; it's about finding out what people think, making decisions based on evidence, and articulating plans as part of a regular cycle of good communication.

This idea of iterative improvement is also relevant to building mechanisms for including pupil and parent voices. The new framework has strengthened expectations around parental engagement, with effective work in this area given a mention. Likewise, the framework expects schools to actively seek and act on pupil feedback, ensuring all students, including vulnerable groups, have opportunities to voice their views. This means establishing clear channels for pupil voice, demonstrating how this feedback leads to tangible improvements in policies and practices, and embedding it into the school's culture through dialogue and engagement.

What does this mean in practice?

We will keep an eye on [how the sector is responding](#) so we can keep the Teacher Tapp and School Surveys communities up to date on the trends.

We're also keeping close watch on DfE changes and consultations. When they recommend surveys or specific questions, we'll make sure they're available within School Surveys. But we won't stop there. We're also continuing to create the survey templates that we know are most useful for real-world engagement with your community – short, benchmarked, and straightforwardly easy for people to answer.

For you? Each situation will be different, but continuing to build a collaborative culture is important everywhere and always (regardless of Ofsted!).

Here are some of our suggestions for that.

Staff Surveys: What to consider

Quick Check Ins: how included do your staff feel in decisions? Run a quick diagnostic survey to find out, and set goals for how you plan to strengthen the communication cycle in your setting this year, if needs be.

Your own priorities: As ever, our belief is that the most impactful thing you can ask about is the issue or topic that is most relevant to your situation this term or this year. Whether it's corridor behaviour or a new coaching programme, you decide, and you set the frequency of surveys to support the dialogue around what you are doing.

Some of our most popular templates for staff surveying at present include:

- Workload Review – our version (the full DfE version is available but we recommend ours as a shorter benchmarked version for actionable insights)
- Behaviour Barometer – a selection of our most used behaviour questions
- Job Satisfaction & Wellbeing Survey – a mix of ten questions to uncover views on

communication, support and work opportunities

Pupil Surveys: What to Consider

What are you doing to engage with your pupils, and how are you deciding what to ask them about?

Some schools make impressive use of their School Council to run their own consultations and surveys; others set key stage specific reviews at different times of the year. Here are some of the templates available to help across pupil feedback:

- Belonging and Community – explore what pupils value about their time at school and measure how safe, seen and heard they feel
- Learning Review – a set of questions to uncover pupil views on their learning, the challenge they get, and how they access support
- Lunchtime Listen – gather insights about the whole lunchtime experience including food, time, activities and behaviour

Our anonymous, cohort-based analysis means you can compare results from different year groups, as well as the national benchmarks.

And our new online reporting tool means that you can pivot data according to answers from any question – for example, seeing how the answer to how content pupils feel correlates with their views about their lunchtimes, or how confidence to ask for support sits alongside pupil ownership of learning.

Parent Surveys: What to consider

We know from our Teacher Tapp data that engaging with parents has become more challenging for many schools over the past few years. There is a tricky balance to achieve between involving parents, whilst also keeping expectations and communication manageable. We believe firmly in the value of reaching out – and, crucially, sharing back what's going on – to help build trust and engagement with parents. Read more [here](#)

A sensible starting point may be to use some of the core evaluation questions from the Ofsted survey. You can also zero in on a specific area – for example, support for pupils with SEND or how well learning at home is working – if you want a sharper, more focused review.

You might use surveys as a springboard for further comments or for holding in-person discussions as a follow-up. Or you may decide that is definitely not a good use of your time right now, and instead focus on keeping a steady flow of clear information to parents about what you are doing. Either way, surveying can show you are proactively demonstrating that communicating with parents matters – and that they matter to you.

How often should we run surveys?

The number and frequency of surveys matters far less than making sure each one sits within a healthy, ongoing communication cycle.

Sometimes a survey is the front door to a bigger, collaborative piece of work – focus groups, working parties, the whole lot. Other times, you already know what you are (and are not) planning to do, and the survey is mainly a way of recognising people's views while clearly setting out your direction. Both approaches are perfectly legitimate.

There's no single "right" rhythm. But just like behaviour, communication is never "finished". Getting it right – consistently, calmly, and over time – is a core part of leadership, not an optional extra.

Further ideas and support

If you are an existing member of School Surveys, remember that you can always email or phone us or [book a call](#) if you'd like any help.

If you aren't yet a member and are interested to find out more, please book a demo [here](#), or get in touch via hello@schools-surveys.com.