

# Inspections where Ofsted is unable to contact the school the day before

Briefing for section 5 inspection

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## Inspections where Ofsted is unable to contact the school the day before

1. This briefing sets out the process for carrying out a section 5 inspection where it has not been possible for the lead inspector or the ISP<sup>1</sup> to speak to the headteacher<sup>2</sup> of the school to notify him/her of the inspection<sup>3</sup> on the afternoon of the day before the inspection is due to start, because the school's telephone has not been answered.
2. *For integrated inspections of education and welfare only* - these inspections will be cancelled if no contact is made by the social care inspector and lead inspector by 2pm on the afternoon of the day before the inspection is due to start.

### Process

3. The lead inspector normally telephones the school at, or shortly after, noon on the working day before the start of the planned inspection. Where the lead inspector is unable to get through to the school to speak to the headteacher, s/he should leave the following message, where such facility exists:  
  
*Hello my name is [state name] [HMI/AI]. I am calling on behalf of Ofsted and I wish to speak to the headteacher or in the absence of the headteacher the most senior member of staff. I will call back again shortly.*
4. The lead inspector should log this call (an *Inspection notification telephone log* template is available for use) and then continue to telephone the school at regular intervals, leaving a similar message (and logging each call) until s/he finally makes contact with the school.
5. If the lead inspector is unable to make telephone contact with the school by 2pm, s/he should contact the Ofsted helpdesk to discuss the situation. Normally, the helpdesk will advise that the inspection will continue and will advise that the ISP will continue to try and make contact with the school.
6. The ISP will make its first telephone call as soon as possible after 2pm, and by 2.30pm at the latest. If contact is made with the school by this time, the ISP should arrange for the lead inspector to speak directly to the school to discuss inspection arrangements. The inspection will go ahead under normal procedures, although there will be revised deadlines for completing *Parent View* and the staff questionnaire (see paragraph 9).

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<sup>1</sup> Inspection service provider.

<sup>2</sup> In the absence of the headteacher, the most senior member of staff.

<sup>3</sup> This is Ofsted's method of notifying the appropriate authority of the school.

7. If the ISP is unable to make effective contact with the school by 2.30pm, the ISP will leave the following telephone message, where such facility exists:

*Hello my name is [state name] and I work for [Serco/Tribal/CfBT] an inspection service provider for Ofsted. Unfortunately, we have been unsuccessful in trying to contact your school by telephone since noon today to inform you that your school will be inspected tomorrow [state date].*

*I will shortly be emailing you details about your inspection. The email will be sent to [state email address(es)]. My email will enclose a letter for you to copy and distribute to parents as soon as possible. If you pick up this message before 4.30pm today, I would be grateful if you could contact me on [state ISP contact number] in order for me to arrange for the lead inspector to talk through the inspection arrangements with you.*

8. Email is the primary method for sending documentation to the school. Although the email address cannot be confirmed with the school at this stage, ISPs can verify the email address, for example, via the school's website, ITS, or by checking with the local authority. Where the school does not have an email address, ISPs should consider faxing the documentation, where this is available.
9. Following the telephone message (or call where the ISP is unable to leave a message), the ISP will email the school the following information:
- A letter confirming the inspection, which includes a list of documents that the lead inspector would like the school to have available at the start of inspection
  - Inspection notification letter to parents. This includes an extended deadline for parents to complete *Parent View* **by 11am on day two** of the inspection.
  - Inspections guide for parents, which the school is also required to issue to all parents.
  - Questionnaire for staff, which includes an extended deadline for return **by 9am on day two** of the inspection.
  - *Where there is one inspector* Lead inspector's curriculum vitae
  - *Where there will be more than one inspector* Inspection team members' curriculum vitae.
10. The ISP will confirm with the lead inspector the action that has been taken and the lead inspector will then plan for the inspection on the basis that the school is unaware of the inspection.
11. The ISP will, however, continue to try to contact the school up until 4.30pm (and complete the telephone call log as appropriate). If the ISP manages to speak to the school, or the school contacts the ISP, after the notification email has been sent the ISP should arrange, if possible, for the lead inspector to speak directly to the school. Where this happens, the inspection will go ahead

under normal procedures, although the revised deadlines for completing *Parent View* and the staff questionnaire will be applicable.

12. If no contact can be made by 4.30pm, the inspection will still take place the following day.

**On the morning of the inspection (where the LI/ISP has failed to speak to the school on the afternoon of the day before the inspection)**

13. The lead inspector will telephone the school at around 8am on the morning of the inspection, before s/he arrives at the school. The lead inspector will say:

*Good morning, my name is [state name] [HMI/AI] and I am telephoning on behalf of Ofsted. Please could I speak to the headteacher?*

14. If the secretary asks why you are calling you can say:

*I am telephoning in connection with an [email/fax] that Ofsted sent yesterday afternoon. I cannot disclose any further information without speaking to the headteacher.*

15. If the secretary informs you that the headteacher is not present ask for the deputy headteacher or the most senior member of staff at the school. No information is to be given to the secretary.

16. When the headteacher takes the call:

*Good morning, my name is [insert name] [HMI/AI] and I am calling on behalf of Ofsted. I hope you will have seen the [email/fax] we sent yesterday afternoon, giving notice that I will be leading an inspection of your school this morning. I need to meet with you to discuss the inspection arrangements in more detail, and this is a courtesy call to let you know that I will be arriving at the school within the next 30 minutes.*

**Discussion with the headteacher**

17. The lead inspector must be sensitive to the possible reaction of the headteacher if s/he is not aware of the inspection.
18. The lead inspector will not have had the opportunity to look at the school's self-evaluation in advance and will therefore offer to discuss it with the headteacher at the initial meeting. The lead inspector must also stress to the headteacher the importance of distributing the inspection notification letter to parents as soon as possible, in order for them to complete *Parent View* by 11am on the second day of the inspection.

## **Deferral request**

19. If the headteacher requests a deferral of the inspection, Ofsted will decide whether this should be granted in accordance with Ofsted's policy on the deferral of inspections.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Deferral of school inspection*, Ofsted, 2013 [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/deferral-of-inspections-information-for-schools](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/deferral-of-inspections-information-for-schools).