

# Improving the way Ofsted inspects education

## Where you work

Are you responding in an official capacity on behalf of an organisation?

Yes

## About your organisation

Please provide the name of your organisation

Centre for Food Policy, City St Georges University of London

## About you

Please tell us in which capacity you are completing this survey (select all that apply):

Charity, third sector, academic, research or policy professional

Please tell us where you work:

**Other (please specify):**  
Higher education institution

Does your school or organisation have a faith ethos?

No

## Part 1: how we report

Which specific evaluation areas would you like to comment on? (please select as many as you wish)

I want to comment on:

state-funded schools evaluation areas

initial teacher education evaluation areas

general comments

## Part 1: how we report

## What do you think about our evaluation areas?

### early years evaluation areas

-

### state-funded schools evaluation areas

We welcome Ofsted's ambition to act as a stronger lever for change and encourage the inclusion of food as a thematic area within its inspection framework. Food is crucial in supporting pupil health (Oostindjer et al., 2017), academic attainment (Burrows et al., 2017), and overall wellbeing (Hart, 2016). Schools present an area of unrealised potential to improve children's eating habits both within and beyond schools (Schabas, 2014). The proposed framework lacks reference to food in schools, but we believe this consultation is opportunity for Ofsted to lead a cross-government whole school approach (WSA) to food, using inspections as lever for effective change to improve child health, wellbeing and attainment outcomes.

A WSA to food is recommended to support healthy, sustainable and equitable food in schools, as recognised by the Levelling Up White Paper (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2022), World Health Organization (2021) and the House of Lords (Food, Diet and Obesity Committee, 2024). Defined as "a systems approach to the provision and education surrounding food, including the promotion of a consistent food culture in schools (how food is provided and the ethos around celebration foods food policy (such as regulations on packed lunches) and education (healthy food practices within the curriculum)" (Bryant et al., 2023).

Ofsted can play a key role in monitoring, evaluation and supporting schools to deliver a WSA to food, as part of a larger integrated governance framework so that aims, activities and outcomes are constructively aligned (Rose et al., 2023). We recommend a more coordinated, joined-up, cross government approach to food in schools, with collaboration between schools and their governing bodies, local and national government departments and relevant agencies such as Ofsted and the Food Standards Agency (FSA). Better integrated governance would then support implementation of a WSA to food, and child outcomes. This builds on the FSA School Food Standards Compliance Pilot (FSA, 2024) which found food safety officers could conduct meal standards checks alongside hygiene inspections, with schools happy to facilitate. If this was rolled out nationally, as part of WSA to food governance, Ofsted could play a key role in ensuring accountability by inspecting publishing and actioning of reports.

Leveraging existing policy guidance "Creating a culture and ethos of healthy eating" (Department for Education, 2025), at a school level, we recommend Ofsted also fosters a culture of joined-up collaboration, by promoting a WSA to food stipulating each school's governors, headteacher, school staff, caterers, parents, children and local authority to collaborate on improving child health outcomes, attainment and overall wellbeing. The DfE guidance for Governors (DFE, 2025) clearly states school governors have responsibility for "creating and embedding a great school food culture". Training developed by the National Governors Association and DfE (NGA, 2024) support this requirement, highlighting how school food standards are critical to the governing board's legal duty in support pupil health and well-being.

However, currently a lack of policy coherence and governance structure prevents a WSA to food from being fully realised. To improve coherence and accountability, we recommend:

1. Ofsted be responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the Whole School Approach to food through the new inspection toolkit.
2. Each school board of governors appoint a governor for WSA to food.
3. Inclusion of a mandatory question to governors during inspection about how the school is implementing a WSA to food to support children's health and wellbeing.
4. Ofsted to report how schools implement a WSA to food on the final inspection report card, including compliance with school food standards.

### independent schools evaluation areas

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### further education and skills evaluation areas

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### initial teacher education evaluation areas

-

### general comments

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## What do you think about our evaluation areas?

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Do you have any other ideas we could consider?

To reflect importance of Ofsted leading a whole school approach to food, we propose Ofsted's new report card report on how the school is performing regarding the WSA to food, either in a distinct section or a clearly signposted line within the existing Personal Development domain. This builds on the Levelling Up White Paper pledge to encourage schools to publish outlines of their WSA to food (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2022), brings the WSA to food into sharper public and professional focus, and addresses strong parental support for more visible and stricter enforcement of school food standards (Sustain, 2024).

To support consistent assessment and accountability across all schools, we recommend either:  
(a) a standalone inspection toolkit focused on a Whole School Approach to food be developed, or  
(b) key food-related indicators be integrated into the existing Personal Development and Wellbeing toolkit.

Whichever route is taken it is vital that commentary on food be made visible within the main body of the inspection report

#### References:

Bryant, M., Ohly, H., Crossley, S. et al. (2023). Implementing a whole school food approach: a realist review. *Public Health Nutrition*, 26(4), 721–734. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980022002182>

Burrows T, Goldman S, Pursey K, Lim R. Is there an association between dietary intake and academic achievement: a systematic review. *J Hum Nutr Diet*. 2017 Apr;30(2):117-140. doi: 10.1111/jhn.12407. Epub 2016 Sep 7. PMID: 27599886

Department for Education (2025) Guidance: School food: guidance for governors. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-food-standards-resources-for-schools/school-food-guidance-for-governors> (Accessed: 22 April 2025)

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2022), Levelling Up the United Kingdom: executive summary. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom> (Accessed: 10 February 2025).

FSA (2024) Food Standards Agency publishes final report on School Food Standards compliance pilot. Available at: <https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/news/food-standards-agency-publishes-final-report-on-school-food-standards-compliance-pilot>.

Hart, C. S. (2016). The School Food Plan and the social context of food in schools. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 46(2), 211–231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2016.1158783>

Food, Diet and Obesity Committee (2024), Recipe for health: a plan to fix our broken food system, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5901/ldselect/ldmfdo/19/19.pdf>

NGA (2024) Compliance & legislation: A whole-school approach to food. NGA Training Modules A whole-school approach to food | National Governance Association

Oostindjer, M., Aschemann-Witzel, J., Wang, Q., Skuland, S. E., Egelanddsdal, B., Amdam, G. V., Van Kleef, E. (2017). Are school meals a viable and sustainable tool to improve the healthiness and sustainability of children's diet and food consumption? A cross-national comparative perspective. *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition*, 57(18), 3942–3958. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10408398.2016.1197180>

Rose, K., O'Malley, C., Lake, A.A. and Lalli, G.S., (2023). 'Doing school food!': a practical toolkit for adopting a whole school food approach. *Perspectives in Public Health*, p.17579139231185302.

Schabas, L. (2014). The school food plan: Putting food at the heart of the school day. *Nutrition Bulletin*, 39(1), 99–104.

Sustain (2024) Parent Polling report. Available at: <https://www.sustainweb.org/assets/cfc-parent-polling-report-1713789519.pdf> (Accessed: 22 April 2025).

WHO (2021), Making Every School a Health Promoting School: Global Standards and Indicators, <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/341907/9789240025059-eng.pdf>

## Part 2: how we inspect

Would you like to give your views on these proposals?

Yes

## Part 2: how we inspect

Would you like to give your views on what our proposals mean for early years settings?

No, but I do have comments about what the proposals mean for other areas (that is state-funded schools, independent schools, further education and skills or initial teacher education)

## Part 2: how we inspect

Would you like to give your views on what our proposals mean for state-funded schools?

Yes

## Part 2: how we inspect

Which evaluation area would you like to comment on? (please select as many as you wish)

General comments about the toolkit

Leadership and governance

Curriculum

Developing teaching

Personal development and well-being

Safeguarding

## Part 2: how we inspect

## What do you think about the toolkit for state-funded schools in relation to:

### General comments about the toolkit

Ofsted's proposal to use education inspection toolkits presents a significant opportunity to embed a Whole School Approach (WSA) to food into inspection practice in support of child health and wellbeing.

References for the following sections:

Duncombe, R., Cale, L. & Harris, J. (2018), "Strengthening 'the foundations' of the primary school curriculum", *Education 3-13*, vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 76–88

Food Teachers Centre (2023) Food Education: Fit for the Future. Available at: <https://foodteacherscentre.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Food-Education-fit-for-the-future.pdf> (Accessed: 28 April 2025).

Hart, C.S. and Page, A., (2020). The capability approach and school food education and culture in England: 'gingerbread men ain't gonna get me very far'. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 50(6), pp.673-693.

Food, Diet and Obesity Committee (2024), Recipe for health: a plan to fix our broken food system, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5901/ldselect/ldmfdo/19/19.pdf>

Food For Life (no date), Our Approach: Whole Setting Approach, <https://www.foodforlife.org.uk/our-approach/> (Accessed: 16 April 2025)

LACA (2009), Letters "Prioritising School Lunch Take Up" seeking support for school food agenda, from Ed Balls (Secretary of State), Department for Children Schools and Families, <https://www.laca.co.uk/sites/default/files/files/reports/Department%20for%20Children%20and%20Families%20responds%20to%20meeting%20held%20with%20LACA.pdf> (Accessed: 15 April 2025)

Lalli, G., Smith, K., Woodside, J., Defeyter, G., Skafida, V., Morgan, K. and Martin, C., (2024). A brief review of Secondary School Food Policy (SSFP) approaches in the UK from 2010 to 2022. *Nutrition & Food Science*, 54(2), pp.433-450.

NGA (2024) Compliance & legislation: A whole-school approach to food. NGA Training Modules A whole-school approach to food | National Governance Association

Rose, K., O'Malley, C., Lake, A.A. & Lalli, G.S. 2023, "'Doing school food!': a practical toolkit for adopting a whole school food approach", *Perspectives in public health*, , pp. 17579139231185302-17579139231185302.

Rose, K., Lake, A.A., Ells, L.J. and Brown, L., (2019). School food provision in England: A historical journey. *Nutr Bull*, 44: 283-291. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nbu.12394>

WHO (2015), Finland curbs childhood obesity by integrating health in all policies. Available: <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/finland-curbs-childhood-obesity-byintegrating-health-in-all-policies> (Accessed: 16 March 2024).

WHO (2021) Making every school a health-promoting school – Global standards and indicators. Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240025059> (Accessed: 28 April 2025).

### Leadership and governance

The toolkit provides a clear and detailed overview of the leadership and governance areas; however it lacks any reference to school food, which is a governor responsibility and needs to be included (NGA, 2024). Schools that successfully embed a Whole School Approach to food typically do so through strong leadership and a commitment at governance level (Rose et al., 2023). We propose the toolkit specifically includes which governor/trustee is responsible for food, health and wellbeing across the school; governors and senior leaders to complete National Governors Association and DfE training in a WSA to food and; identify which school staff member is the WSA to Food Lead. This will help to ensure accountability and consistency.

### Curriculum

We recommend that to support a whole school approach to food, inspection of the Cooking and Nutrition section of Design and Technology for KS1 to 3 be separated out to its own inspection. Ofsted data about subject inspections show how 5 years after the new curriculum framework, in 2022/3 only 5% of primary school inspections scrutinised Design and Technology which includes Cooking and Nutrition (Ofsted 2023). This means there is no data about the specific inspection of food education that would support a WSA to food.

Additionally, mandatory Relationship and Sex Education, and Healthy Eating (RSHE) which includes healthy eating is not included in the report either (Ofsted, 2023)

## What do you think about the toolkit for state-funded schools in relation to:

meaning there is little evidence of school inspections including food education. To ensure the exemplary award of the proposed inspection framework can demonstrate accountability for and competence in Personal development and well-being, health education needs to be inspected and reported by Ofsted.

### References:

-Ofsted (2023), Research and analysis Schools commentary: Deep dives in school inspections. Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schoolinspections-statistical-commentaries-2022-to-2023/schools-commentary-deep-dives-inschool-inspections>.

-Ofsted (2024a), Collection Curriculum research reviews. Available:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/curriculum-research-reviews> (Accessed: 7 May 2024).

### Developing teaching

Evidence suggests teachers and governors lack the training and confidence needed to deliver effective food education (Hart and Page, 2020). The ofsted toolkit should reflect this by highlighting the need for food-specific CPD and inclusion of food education within Initial Teacher Training curriculums underpinned by a Whole School Approach to food. England has a least one generation of primary teachers who lack the confidence to teach subjects such as history, music, cooking or PE (Duncombe et al., 2018).

We recommend that, in addition to focusing on the governance and senior leadership teams, ITE programs should also incorporate training on the mandatory school food standards and guidance on how to embed a WSA to food. It is crucial that all school staff are educated on the role that nutrition plays in student well-being and academic achievement (Food Teachers Centre, 2023). By equipping new teachers with a strong understanding of the mandatory school food standards and the importance of embedding a whole school approach to food, we can ensure that they not only advocate for quality school meals but also understand the broader impacts healthy eating can have on children's learning (Lalli, Smith, Woodside et al., 2024).

### Achievement

-

### Behaviour and attitudes

-

### Attendance

-

### Personal development and well-being

We welcome the inclusion of health education within this toolkit, but broader reference to a Whole School Approach (WSA) to food could strengthen it. For example, reference to pupils participating in arts and sporting activities should be expanded to include food and health activities to provide inspectors with the opportunity to acknowledge such activities taking place.

The toolkit should acknowledge the important role that high-quality food education and meal provision play in supporting long-term health, social development, and broader life outcomes. Recent DfE guidance on breakfast clubs reinforces this point, recognising the importance of providing a healthy, balanced morning meal, aligned with the School Food Standards, to support children's well-being and readiness to learn (DfE, 2025). Further, evidence from Finland where schools include mandatory health, exercise, nutrition, and cooking education as part of a systems approach, have halved childhood obesity, demonstrating the untapped potential of a WSA to food supported by monitoring (WHO, 2015). Furthermore, the adoption of a Whole School Approach to food should be explicitly recognised as a best practice framework for delivering on the aims of the toolkit (WHO, 2021).

The inspection toolkit defines an exemplary school as one that makes a tangible difference to pupil's learning, development, and wellbeing. We argue it is almost impossible to fulfil this criterion without enquiring about school food as it is essential to these outcomes (Anderson et al., 2018; Spencer et al., 2017) and that WSA to food be included within this exemplary standard.

### Inclusion

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### Early years in schools

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### Sixth form in schools

-

### Safeguarding

It is essential that Ofsted supports the enforcement of the School Food Standards, which are a statutory requirement and form an important aspect of safeguarding within schools (Food, Diet and Obesity Committee, 2024). Within this, the 2025 Breakfast Clubs Early Adopter Guidance (DfE, 2025) reinforces the protective role that nutritious breakfast provision plays in safeguarding children's physical health and well-being,

What do you think about the toolkit for state-funded schools in relation to:

while also helping to reduce lateness and absenteeism – two issues aligned with Ofsted's wider safeguarding and inclusion aims.

The governing board holds overall responsibility for school food provision and plays a key role in fostering and maintaining a whole school food culture that supports health, learning, and financial sustainability (DfE, 2025). The School Food Plan's checklist for governors sets out specific duties, including monitoring adherence to the standards and ensuring robust food policies are developed and effectively implemented (School Food Plan, 2014).

This governance role supports alignment with Ofsted's inspection framework, which considers pupils' personal development, including healthy eating, as part of its criteria for evaluating school quality (Ofsted, 2023). The National Governance Association advocates for the appointment of a named governor for wellbeing or food, recognising that dedicated leadership in this area can play a pivotal role in tackling inequalities, enhancing nutrition education, and increasing the uptake of school meals (NGA, 2024). Complementing this, the professional network LACA underscores the value of strong collaboration between governors, caterers, and school leaders to ensure high-quality meals and greater accountability in catering contracts (LACA, 2009). The Food for Life programme further support this agenda by offering practical toolkits and training, enabling governors to promote a whole school approach to food that connects healthy eating with educational attainment and environmental sustainability (Food For Life, no date); taken together, these initiatives highlight the importance of strengthening the role of school food governors as a powerful mechanism for embedding lasting improvements in the quality, equity, and impact of school food provision.

Ofsted is well placed to provide oversight in this area (Rose et al., 2019) and could do so effectively by including school food standards compliance as a discrete evaluation element.

## Part 2:how we inspect

In relation to state-funded schools, what do you think about our proposed changes to how we carry out an inspection?

The inspection methodology section clearly articulates that they are not meant to add to school leaders' workloads. It also articulates that Ofsted will support this approach by ensuring toolkits consider the standards and expectations already placed on leaders and their provision. We agree with this approach, and reiterate that the school food standards already exist as a mandatory requirement and therefore should not add any additional workload to what should already be taking place inside schools.

In addition to monitoring compliance with the mandatory school food standards, we recommend that Ofsted also consider evaluating and monitoring a school's whole school approach to food. A whole school approach to food integrates healthy eating into the wider school environment and is important for improving students' overall well-being, behaviour, and learning outcomes. This can be achieved without adding extra burden on school leaders, as it aligns with existing practices related to food provision and health education. The Food Standards Agency's School Food Standards Compliance Pilot found that food safety officers could conduct checks of the standards alongside food and hygiene inspections and schools were happy to facilitate this. This provides further evidence that this query will not add to already heavy workloads, but rather ensure measures are being taken to monitor the mandatory standards.

## Part 2: how we inspect

Would you like to give your views on what our proposals mean for independent school inspections?

No, but I do have comments about what the proposals mean for other areas (that is, further education and skills or initial teacher education)

## Part 2: how we inspect



Would you like to give your views on what our proposals mean for further education and skills inspections?

Yes

## Part 2: how we inspect

Which evaluation area would you like to comment on? (please select as many as you wish)

General comments about the toolkit

## Part 2: how we inspect

Would you like to give your views on what our proposals mean for initial teacher education inspections?

Yes

## Part 2: how we inspect

Which evaluation area would you like to comment on? (please select as many as you wish)

General comments about the toolkit

## Part 2: how we inspect

What do you think about the toolkit for initial teacher education in relation to:

**General comments about the toolkit**

We recommend that, in addition to focusing on the governance and senior leadership teams, ITE programs should also incorporate training on the mandatory school food standards and guidance on how to embed a whole school approach to food. It is crucial that future teachers are educated on the role that nutrition plays in student well-being and academic achievement. By equipping new teachers with a strong understanding of the mandatory school food standards and the importance of embedding a whole school approach to food, including food in the National Curriculum (Cooking and Nutrition and RSE&HE) we can ensure that they not only advocate for quality school meals but also understand the broader impacts healthy eating can have on children's learning.

**Leadership**

-

**Inclusion**

-

**Curriculum**

-

**Teaching**

-

**Achievement**

-

**Professional behaviours, personal development and well-being**

-

## Feedback

We are committed to making sure that our consultations are accessible. To enable us to improve our consultation processes and reach, would you be willing to tell us a bit about yourself and how you found this survey?

No - submit survey response

How did you hear about this consultation?

Word of mouth

I found the consultation information clear and easy to understand.

Disagree

I found the consultation easy to find on the Ofsted website.

Agree

I had enough information about the consultation topic.

Agree

I would take part in a future Ofsted consultation.

Agree