Effective practice in inspecting attitudes to learning

Sources of evidence

When making a judgement on pupils' attitudes to learning inspectors should consider evidence from a wide range of sources, including:

- the school's own evaluations
- lesson observations
- learning walks
- visits to whole-school, year group and class assemblies
- scrutiny of a wide range of pupils' work, including the presentation of work and how well pupils respond to written feedback
- meetings with pupils and their work, listening to pupils read and discussing pupils' attitudes to learning
- observation of the quality of pupils' engagement in lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities
- the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school and the quality of their interactions
- information from pupil, parent, staff and governor questionnaires
- meetings with staff
- team discussions
- any additional evaluations and supporting information from other surveys

Inspectors should consider carefully the outcomes from pupil questionnaires to help inform their inspection activities in relation to pupils' attitudes to learning. In particular, the team will want to follow up issues that have arisen from questionnaires as part of their interviews with pupils. It is useful for the reporting inspector (RI) to lead a discussion with the team, or to formulate in advance the specific questions that the team will ask during their meetings with pupils. This will ensure consistency and that the team gathers pertinent evidence that is effective in supporting discussions around any emerging issues.

Team meetings

It is important that RIs plan sufficient time during team meetings to discuss pupils' attitudes to learning. There should be careful consideration of the aspects suggested by the questions listed below and the evidence presented by the team. The discussion should be purposeful, sufficiently detailed and not a rushed 'bolt on' to discussions about standards or teaching. The team should consider how well established positive attitudes

to learning are among pupils and across all classes. The table in Annex 1 provides a useful explanation of the kinds of behaviours that the team should be looking for. The inspector leading on IA2 should consider using a selection of questions from the list below, which are based on the table, as prompts for the team discussion.

To what extent and how well do pupils:

- engage readily in tasks and persevere to bring them to completion, sustaining concentration and avoiding distractions?
- move easily between different lessons and activities and settle quickly to their work?
- engage with new, unfamiliar experiences and ideas, and approach tasks in creative ways to explore new opportunities for their learning?
- engage with tasks delivered remotely by teachers? What is their attitude towards the remote learning offer provided by the school?
- demonstrate curiosity, find delight in challenges and be content with not knowing the answer?
- work to find other solutions and to use a range of methods when their first approach to a problem is unsuccessful or where they want to take their learning further on their own or with their peers?
- act as self-confident learners that reflect thoughtfully on their learning and demonstrate an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses?
- show interest in and enthusiasm for their work, including a positive attitude towards and enjoyment of reading?
- demonstrate appreciation for the learning opportunities that the school provides?
- display a sense of ambition and aspiration for the future?
- demonstrate creativity in their learning and an ability to try out new ideas and to think 'outside the box'?
- work in a range of ways, for example on their own, in small groups and in whole-class settings?
- show respect for the contributions of others and remain calm when there are disagreements?
- demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and around the school?
- relate well to each other and adults?
- apply their knowledge of their own locality as well as awareness of global issues to their learning?

Reporting attitudes to learning

Within IA2, the report should describe how well pupils are developing the key attitudes and behaviours that will support their learning throughout their lives. It should outline clearly how well pupils engage with learning activities and whether they make the most of the opportunities that the school provides. Inspectors will need to consider all aspects

of the inspection requirements as set out in part 2 of the inspection guidance handbook for the relevant sector. However, they should report 'by exception' in their main evaluations, i.e. report on some aspects only where there are particular strengths or significant weaknesses.

This section focuses on what the pupils do and how well they do it. (IA3 and IA4 focus more on the quality of the school's provision and the opportunities for developing attitudes to learning that the school provides.) There should normally be a close between the two. Main evaluations regarding pupils' attitudes to learning should link well to the content of the report in IA4. Similarly, there are close links between pupils' attitudes to learning and the quality of teaching. Pupils' attitudes to learning will also have an impact on the standards they achieve, as described in IA1. Where there are apparent inconsistencies in the judgements between inspection areas, the RI should ensure that the main evaluations explain the reasons why this is the case, and the contents of the supporting evidence should provide suitable justification.

When drawing conclusions on the strength of pupils' attitudes to learning, the team should consider the context of the school and the progress that all pupils make in developing positive attitudes to learning from their starting points. For example, inspectors should consider how well pupils respond to activities that challenge their thinking and how well they persevere when they do not succeed initially.

The content of the report should contain useful examples that give a sense of the attitudes of pupils within the specific school and should not be generic. Effective examples will make explicit the link between the activity the pupils undertake and the specific attitudes that it develops.

Examples that link successfully activities and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils collaborate very effectively from a young age. For example, pupils in the reception class work together purposefully when constructing an ice-breaker ship from cardboard boxes, an idea that they came up with themselves.

Older pupils are respectful of the contributions of others and reflect seriously on ideas put forward by their peers. For example, Year 6 pupils participate thoughtfully in a sophisticated discussion about the consequences of the 1914 football match in no-man's land during the First World War.

Pupils have high levels of trust in the staff and believe strongly that they will always do their best for them. This builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem and helps them become independent learners and thinkers. For example, in the foundation phase, pupils confidently make their own decisions about how and what they learn as they explore all aspects of their environment.

A minority of pupils are slow to settle in lessons and are disengaged for long periods of time. These pupils demonstrate poor attitudes to learning and show limited interest in their work. As a result, they make insufficient progress.

Most pupils behave well during lessons and playtimes. However, a few pupils, particularly boys in the foundation phase, lose interest in tasks easily and disturb others' learning. This is often because they are not active enough or have too few opportunities to try new activities or to lead their own learning.

Most pupils are highly effective in pair or group work. In collaborative activities such as class debates on global issues, they listen carefully and respectfully to each other and offer mature and sensitive support and challenge to their peers' ideas.

Many pupils display positive attitudes to learning. They support each other well and work productively in pairs and groups, such as when they work collaboratively to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different types of theatre stages in drama. Many pupils sustain their interest and engagement in activities to develop their skills and understanding successfully. In music, for instance, they maintain focus and persevere in order to improve the accuracy and quality of their ensemble performance by varying elements such as timbre and tempo. However, a minority of pupils are too passive and do not engage meaningfully in their work.

Pupils show very positive attitudes towards the school and their education. Nearly all pupils behave extremely politely and are very respectful towards each other, all members of staff and visitors, in their lessons and around the school. Many are excellent representatives of the school when talking to visitors, and they take great pride in talking about their work and about school life. They have strong social skills, and discuss issues and express their views maturely with adults.

In most lessons, nearly all pupils behave well, concentrate throughout the lesson and persevere when faced with complex tasks. Many show a high level of resilience when solving problems and take ownership of their own learning. They work diligently to complete tasks independently in the first instance, or discuss with peers before asking the teacher for support. As a result, many pupils make significant progress in developing as independent learners.

Attendance

Under the current inspection framework, there is no specific requirement for inspectors to comment on rates of attendance in their main evaluation for IA2. Rather, inspectors should report by exception where attendance is particularly weak or strong. Due to

COVID-19, there is no published attendance data at a school level for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. However, in their supporting evidence inspectors should always consider:

- the number of pupils who have absence rates well above those of others in the school
- rates of attendance of particular groups of pupils in comparison to the rest of the school, such as those with additional learning needs or pupils who are eligible for free school meals
- comparative rates of attendance for year groups across the school
- whether pupils arrive at school punctually
- whether any deficit in attendance impacts on standards of pupils or groups of pupils

Inspectors should always consider the school's individual context and the impact of COVID-19 on the school community and subsequent effect on attendance.

Inspectors should also consider any additional information provided by the school, including their most up-to-date attendance data. They should take into account any analysis undertaken by schools to identify mitigating factors that may affect overall attendance rates. For example, a high proportion of pupils with serious medical needs that require regular hospital appointments or time at home. Inspectors should use meetings with pupils to pursue any emerging questions related to attendance, such as to gauge whether pupils understand the consequences of poor attendance.

It is important that inspectors remember that this section is about what pupils do rather than the provision the school puts in place to encourage good rates of attendance, such as reward schemes or the use of pupil 'Attendance Ambassadors'. Inspectors should report these kinds of initiatives in IA4, Care, Support and Guidance.