

**SICI**

The Standing International  
Conference of **Inspectorates**  
Better Inspection, Better Learning

  
**Ofsted**  
raising standards  
improving lives

# A research-informed approach to inspecting the quality of education in schools in England

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# Inspection and research: five sets of relationships

# The Ofsted 2022-2027 strategy

- 4 values
  - Children and learners first
  - Independent
  - Accountable and transparent
  - Evidence-led
- 8 strategic priorities

## To fulfil our aims, we have set 8 strategic priorities:

- [Inspections that raise standards](#)
- [Right-touch regulation](#)
- [Making the most of our insights](#)
- [The best start in life](#)
- [Keeping children safe](#)
- [Keeping pace with sector changes](#)
- [Accessible and engaged](#)
- [A skilled workforce](#)

# The purpose(s) of inspection

In her January 2023 speech at the University of Oxford, HMCI outlines multiple purposes for inspection that are relevant to the areas of research:

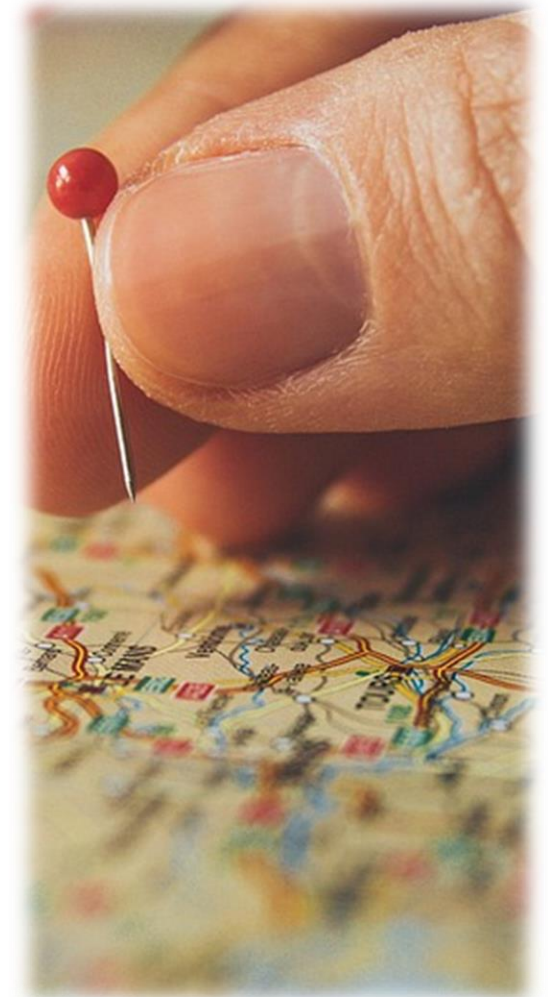
- Inspection as information and assurance to parents
- Inspection as the basis for action by others
- Inspection as insight for teachers, leaders and headteachers

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- A vertical stack of approximately 15 books of various sizes and colors, including white, black, and grey covers, piled on top of each other.
- Grounding inspection **criteria** in research evidence
  - Grounding inspection **methodology** in research evidence
  - **Sharing aggregated insights** from our inspection work
  - Undertaking **complementary research** to deepen our insights
  - **Engaging with** other forms of research outside of Ofsted

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# Subject reports

- 'Striking the right note' (The music subject report, September 2023)
- 'Levelling the playing field' (PE, September 2023)
- 'Getting our bearings' (Geography, September 2023)
- 'Rich encounters with the past' (History, July 2023)
- 'Coordinating mathematical success' (Maths, July 2023)
- 'Finding the optimum' (Science, February 2023)





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# Deepening our insights

## Independent commissions from government

- Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges (June 2021)
- Review of tutoring in schools: phase 1 findings (October 2023)
- Careers guidance in schools and further education and skills providers (September 2023)

## Internal commissions from the Chief Inspector

- Behaviour in schools, part 1 (October 2023) and part 2 (ongoing)

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# Research reviews

- Designed to support and inform those leading the thinking on subject education in schools.
- When selecting literature for the reviews, we drew on research that aligns with the established principles for how we inspect quality of education.
- We looked at relevant research on curriculum, teaching, assessment, school systems and policies.
- We included a range of research, including academic papers, research from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), large-scale international studies, and secondary evidence.

# Research reviews (2)

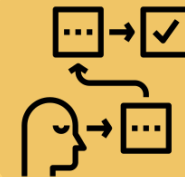
Curriculum: scope, components, sequencing, and rigour



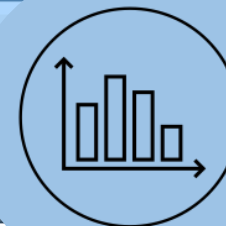
Pedagogy



Assessment



Systems



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# Research to inform inspection design

Between 2017-19, our research activities led us to recognise:

- The schools sector lacked coherence about 'curriculum'
- Focusing on published outcomes had negative consequences for curriculum design (such as 'teaching to the test')
- Curriculum narrowing was a problem in schools in certain key stages
- Foundation subjects suffered from a lack of teacher subject knowledge and professional development
- A focus on curriculum and knowledge in our inspection work would benefit pupils' education

# A focus on curriculum and knowledge

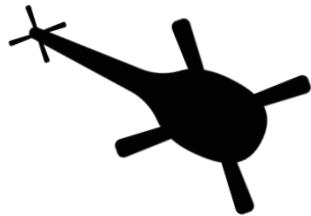
- Seeking educational explanations for why, in cognitive terms, some learners acquire the necessary schema, whereas others, who are equally capable, do not.
- Use of schema theory to explore whether weak outcomes for learners could be due to gaps in knowledge.
- We see the impact of this in the way pupils respond to assessments taken at the end of key stage 2 (year 6), when most are age 11.



# Inspection criteria (paragraph 443)

- Leaders adopt or construct a curriculum that is ambitious and designed to give all pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils (including pupils with SEND), the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. This is either the national curriculum or a curriculum of comparable breadth and ambition.
- Pupils study the full curriculum; it is not narrowed:
  - in primary schools, a broad range of subjects (exemplified by the national curriculum) is taught in key stage 2 throughout each and all of Years 3 to 6
  - in secondary schools, the school teaches a broad range of subjects (exemplified by the national curriculum) throughout Years 7 to 9. The school's aim is to have the EBacc at the heart of its curriculum, in line with the DfE's ambition where this applies, and good progress has been made towards this ambition.

# Inspection methodology



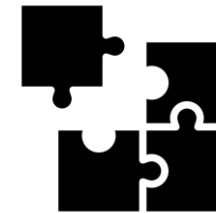
## Top-level view

Breadth and ambition  
Leaders' work on  
curriculum development



## Deep Dives

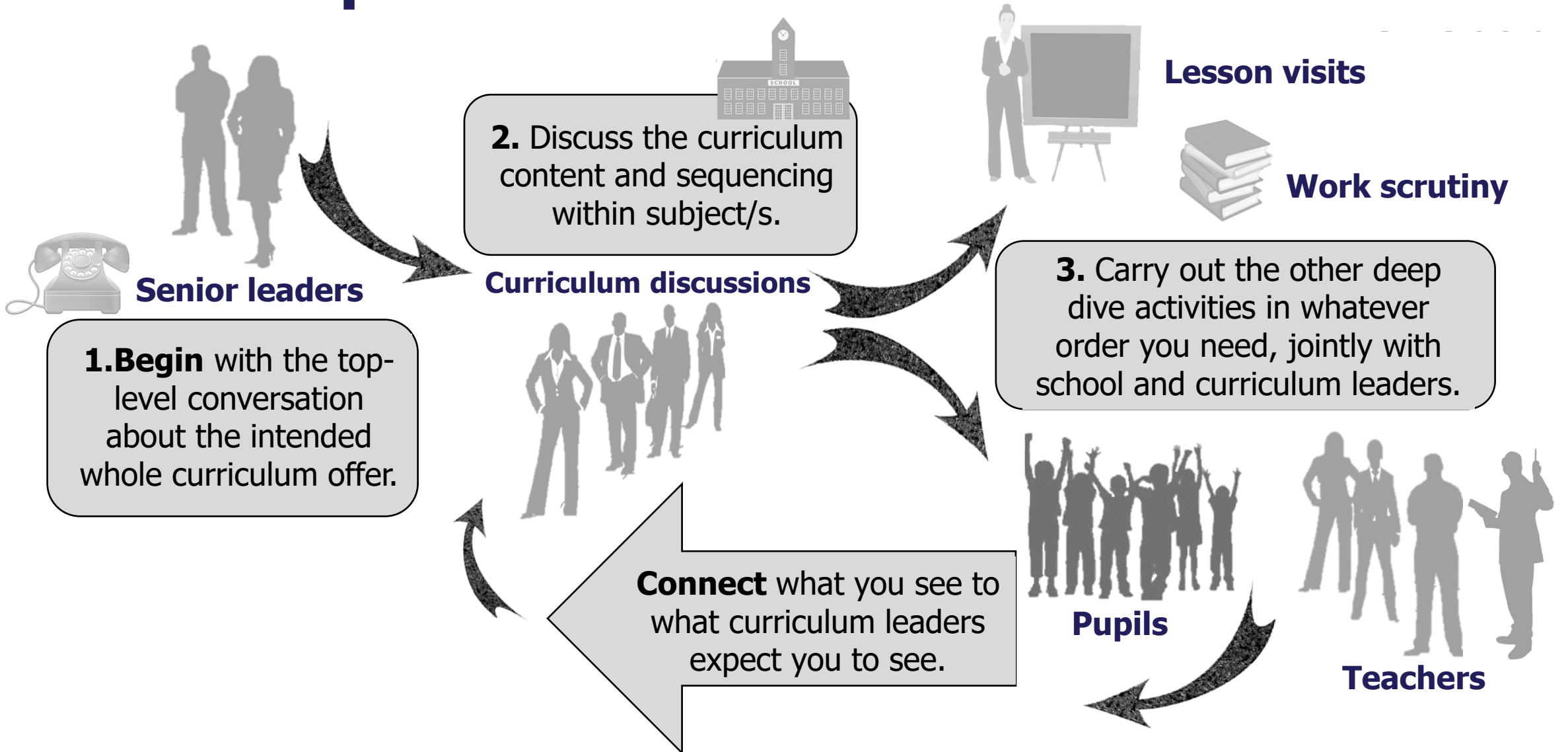
Gathering evidence  
from 3-6 subject areas  
in collaboration with  
leaders



## Bringing it together

Curriculum features  
Further evidence

# The deep dive

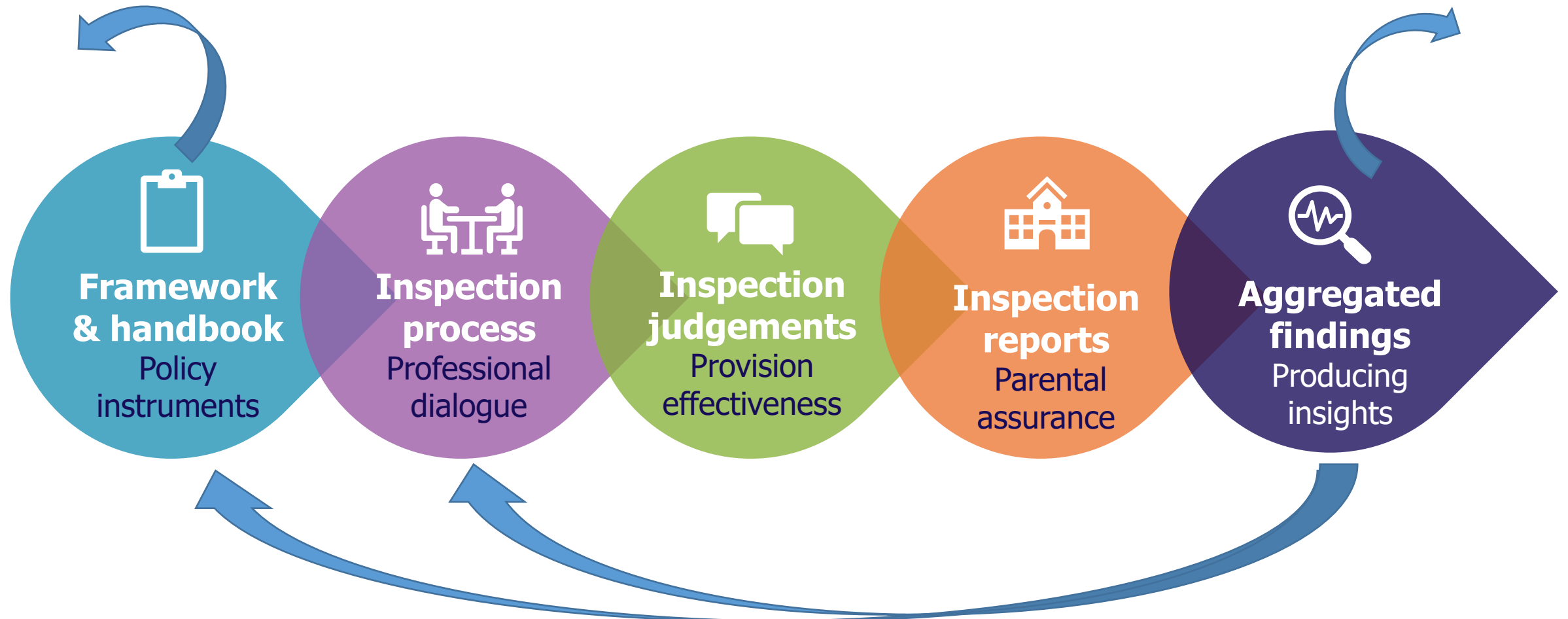


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# Feedback loops and research



# Feedback loops and research



# Ofsted on the web and on social media

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