

# HEADTEACHER

## UPDATE

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## Ofsted's deep dives: A recipe for success

Ever since their introduction in the 2019 framework, the subject deep dive has become one of the most challenging aspects of primary school inspection. In this *Best Practice Focus*, **Suzanne O'Connell** looks at how we can prepare for and navigate deep dives successfully...



# Ofsted's subject deep dives: A guide for primary schools

Ofsted's 2019 Education Inspection Framework (EIF) took a sharp change in direction from its predecessor. No longer were the results at key stage 2 so crucial in a school's judgement. Other factors were given more consideration – specifically the curriculum.

Concern had grown that focusing so firmly on the final outcome of primary education was detracting from its core purpose – to ensure that pupils received a quality education every year, across all subjects.

The EIF was ushered in to redress the balance. Of course results still count, but inspectors are also looking intently for a curriculum that demonstrates clear progression, exacting standards, and a focus on what children know and can do.

The EIF heralded the now infamous three Is – intent, implementation, and impact. The question then became what evidence would inspectors gather

to support their curriculum judgements – and how?

## Deep dives

This is where the concept of the “deep dive” came in. To do an in-depth study of the implementation of the curriculum in a primary school in every subject over a two-day inspection is an impossibility.

Instead, a sample of subjects would be taken and thoroughly explored, with what leaders said checked out against what was happening in classrooms.

Two of these subjects are mandatory – reading and mathematics. And an additional two or three subjects are also chosen for in-depth study.

The results of these deep dives help form a generalised view that can also be tested with some “shallow paddles” in other subjects. The evidence collected from the deep dive informs the all-important “quality of education” judgement.

The roll-out of the EIF saw plenty

“Inspectors will ask teachers how the school's curriculum informs their choices about content and sequencing”

of anxiety in primary schools. The pressure on subject leaders was of particular concern – suddenly pushed into the limelight when it came to discussions with inspectors, some inexperienced members of staff found themselves in the interrogation chair.

Small primary schools in particular were anxious about how subject leaders could fulfil their Ofsted duties while leading several subjects and undertaking their classroom teaching too.

So in this *Best Practice Focus*, I will offer some support to senior leaders and subject leaders to help

you ensure that your school is prepared for inspection in relation to the deep dives. I will consider:

- What the school inspection handbook has to say about the deep dive.
- Three case studies of schools recently inspected.
- The role of curriculum research reviews and subject reports.
- Ten tips for subject leaders.
- A template for evaluating your curriculum.

## What Ofsted has to say

So, what does the handbook (Ofsted, 2019b) have to say about deep dives?

First, the subjects chosen for the deep dives are discussed during the preparatory telephone call that takes place between the lead inspector and the headteacher. This call (it may be more than one) is divided into two sections and the decision about the deep dives forms part of the second section, described as the “educationally focused conversation”.

When it comes to “evaluating

the quality of education” the curriculum is the key focus. The deep dive is the primary way in which inspectors form an understanding of a school's curriculum. The number of deep dives depends upon the size of the school and the inspection team, however in primary schools inspectors will always carry out:

- A deep dive in reading.
- A deep dive in mathematics.
- A deep dive in one or more foundation subjects.

In small schools (with fewer than 150 pupils) adjustments will be made to fit in with the shorter inspection of one day.

## Content of the deep dive

The activities that make up the deep dive include:

- Talking about the curriculum with leaders.
- Joint visits to lessons.
- Work scrutiny.
- Talking to and observing pupils in addition to joint visits to lessons.
- Discussions with teachers.

However, not all of these activities may be carried out, depending on the size of school and inspectors.

Below is a summary of the most important points relating to deep dives in the inspection handbook (Ofsted, 2019b).

## Talking about the curriculum with leaders

Ofsted inspectors want to see what the school wants the pupils to learn. This covers:

- The extent to which there are clear end-points.
- Whether subject content is broken down into appropriately sized steps and sequenced to build towards those end-points.
- The rigour of subject-specific planning, where appropriate. Ofsted defines “rigour” as “ensuring that the curriculum keeps to subject-specific questions, methods, conventions, rules and practices and how the subject discipline builds new

knowledge”. Using a thematic approach is not ruled out but specifically subject-focused content has to be evident within it.

## Joint visits to lessons

The lessons that inspectors decide to visit will be selected depending on discussions with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils, and work scrutiny. The purpose is to see the curriculum in action and the visits will be conducted jointly with the headteacher, subject leader or other leaders as appropriate. It is not about evaluating the teacher and teaching is not graded.

## Work scrutiny

The purpose of work scrutiny is to help inspectors check the sequence and the incremental build-up of knowledge and skills. Ofsted's guidance on inspecting the curriculum (2019c) suggests that each deep dive will include:

- A review of a minimum of six workbooks (or pieces of work) in lessons they visit.
- Scrutiny of work in depth from at least two year groups.
- Inspectors will be looking to see whether pupils' books support other evidence that what the school has set out to teach has been covered.

## Discussions with pupils

Inspectors will want to speak to groups of pupils both formally and informally. Their purpose is to find out what pupils have learned and how their teachers have helped them. Discussions will take place without the teacher being present.

## Discussions with staff

Inspectors will ask teachers how the school's curriculum informs their choices about content and sequencing to support pupils' learning and how the training and support that they receive helps them to deliver the content effectively.

## Reading deep dive

All schools will receive a “learning

to read” deep dive. This focuses on:

- Pupils who are reading below age-related expectations (the lowest 20%).
- The teaching of phonics.
- How children are helped to become confident, fluent readers.

Inspectors will listen to “several low-attaining pupils in years 1 to 3” reading from unseen books that are appropriate to their stage of progress. They will also consider:

- The school's policy for teaching reading.
- Phonics assessments.
- Phonics screening check results.
- Lesson visits.

When possible, inspectors will also listen to children reading to a familiar adult. Inspectors will take into consideration how long a child has been at the school. The views formed by inspectors on reading will contribute to the “quality of education judgement”. Their judgement will take into account:

## Expectations

- The school is determined that every pupil will learn to read, regardless of their background, needs or abilities.
- All pupils, including the weakest readers, make sufficient progress to meet or exceed age-related expectations.

## Range

- Stories, poems, rhymes, and non-fiction are chosen for reading to develop pupils' vocabulary, language, comprehension, and love of reading.
- Pupils are familiar with and enjoy listening to a wide range of stories, poems, rhymes, and non-fiction.

## Phonics

- The school's phonics programme matches or exceeds the expectations of the national curriculum and the EYFS Early Learning Goals (DfE, 2021).
- The school has clear expectations of pupils' phonics progress term by term, particularly from reception to year 2.
- The sequence of reading books shows a cumulative progression in phonics knowledge that is matched

closely to the school's phonics programme.

- Teachers give pupils sufficient practice in reading and re-reading books that match the grapheme-phoneme correspondences they know, both at school and at home.
- Reading, including the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics, is taught from the beginning of reception.
- The on-going assessment of pupils' phonics progress is sufficiently frequent and detailed to identify any pupil who is falling behind the programme's pace.
- If they do fall behind, targeted support is given immediately.
- The school has developed sufficient expertise in the teaching of phonics/reading.

## Maths deep dive

Inspectors will consider what steps have been taken to ensure the following:

## Content

- Pupils understand and remember knowledge, concepts, and procedures, including knowledge of efficient algorithms.
- Pupils are ready for the next stage.
- There are opportunities for mathematical reasoning and problem-solving.
- Pupils' mathematical knowledge is developed and used, where appropriate, across the curriculum.

## Teaching

- Teaching models new procedures and uses resources and approaches that enable pupils to learn.
- All teachers have sufficient mathematical and teaching content knowledge to deliver topics effectively.

## Planning

- Sequences knowledge, concepts, and procedures – systematically.
- Draws connections across different ways of looking at mathematical ideas.
- New material is introduced in manageable steps.
- There are opportunities to revisit knowledge, concepts, and procedures.

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- There is flexibility – gaps identified can be followed up.

**Assessment**

- Pupils behind age-related expectations are provided with opportunities to learn the mathematical knowledge and skills they need to catch-up.
- There are objective assessments that demonstrate readiness to move on to new or more complex content.
- Pupils have sufficient understanding and competence to succeed in the tasks given.

**Olney Infant Academy**

This Buckinghamshire infants school has 215 pupils on roll and headteacher Sarah Armitage was appointed in September 2020.

After an inspection in June 2022, the school is judged to be outstanding in all areas. The report (Ofsted, 2022a) states: “Leaders make sure that the content of the curriculum is planned with great precision, for example in mathematics, history and physical education, so that pupils learn knowledge in depth. Pupils retain knowledge they have acquired very well and apply it to new learning very effectively.”

**Deep dive subjects**

**Early reading, maths, history, PE**

The choice of deep dive subjects was made during the phone call discussion with inspectors. PE was being led by a PE teacher: “It made sense to choose PE as an area that is a strength of the school, and PE was being taught both days,” explained Ms Armitage.

History was chosen because there was a lot of history being taught over the course of the inspection. As a small school, timetable issues were a consideration, but the choice of subject could have been either history or geography.

Ms Armitage added: “We looked at the timetable together to see what would fit as well as what would be an appropriate deep dive. One of our subject leaders was part-time and this also had to be taken into consideration.”

**Background and preparation**

Olney Infant School became an academy in 2011. Its last inspection was in 2008 when it was rated as outstanding, three years

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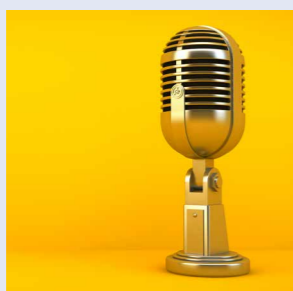
before its conversion. In 2017 it joined the Inspiring Futures through Learning multi-academy trust.

Ms Armitage and her team had been expecting the inspection: “We were hoping for outstanding but it’s still an anxious time. However, we felt that the inspection team were fair, and they listened to what we had to say.”

The school had done some preparation but not much more than they would have done anyway in order to continue to improve: “We had had the support of the trust’s subject specialists who are advisors helping us to be the best we can be – not specifically focused on inspection but it covers some of the same ground.

“We’d done our own deep dives as senior leaders,” she added.

**THE HTU PODCAST: OFSTED INSPECTION**



This episode from September 2022 tackles Ofsted school inspections, offering practical advice, tips and anecdotes for primary schools to help you thrive when the inspectors come calling.

Featuring two experienced headteachers, a key topic of conversation is subject deep dives – how they are working in practice and how schools can best prepare for them without adding to workload, including practical tips for subject and middle leaders.

Visit <https://bit.ly/3RKLMRJ>

**Subject leader discussions**

The PE teacher is an early career teacher and is being mentored by a specialist leader of education from the local middle school, which Olney has close ties with. Ms Armitage explained: “Our PE lead went into the inspector’s meeting with his mentor. The inspectors were relaxed about who went into the meetings, so the maths lead and early reading lead were accompanied by the strategic subject leads from the trust.”

The intention wasn’t for the colleague to respond to the questions but to boost confidence and act as support if necessary. The inspectors commented that although the trust’s involvement was commendable the subject leaders would have been perfectly capable of conducting the meetings without this additional support.

**Visits to lessons**

Inspectors dipped in and out of lessons over the course of the two days. “No stone was left unturned,” Ms Armitage said. They worked alongside the subject leaders and were constantly asking questions. “If the inspectors didn’t see the same thing as the leader had indicated, in class, for example, they would come back and you had opportunity to provide more evidence.”

**Conversations with pupils**

The inspection was very much focused on the bottom 20% and they used the school’s collection of evidence from their “learning journeys”.

“We were able to explain how everything was collected and how the learning journeys worked,” Ms Armitage said.

Ms Armitage is also the school curriculum lead and sat in on the meeting with the history lead. She describes how the inspectors gave them opportunity to clarify the language that the children would be familiar with: “For example, we encourage children to see themselves as historians. The

inspectors hadn’t received the answers they were expecting initially. When they returned to the children and framed their questions slightly differently using the vocabulary the children were familiar with they had different results.”

**Pupils’ work**

Inspection of books took place during the lesson visit and in the subject leader meetings, but inspectors also kept hold of a selection of learning journeys at the end of day one: “They came back next morning with high praise for what they had seen. They would follow threads through from observation in the classroom, checking that they ran all the way from intent to implementation.”

**Advice to other schools**

Ms Armitage is clear about how important it is to be prepared: “Feel confident to push back if they are not seeing what you know is there – without being confrontational you can have that conversation.”

Overall, the inspection was different from the ones Ms Armitage has experienced before and she felt that the school was in a more powerful position and part of a conversation: “It was very fair but equally very robust. There was no opportunity to hide anything, even if you wanted to.”

**Next steps**

Ms Armitage explained: “We are always pressing on and forever adapting, that’s why we continue to be an outstanding school. We have never sat back. Now we are focusing on assessment and want to increase children’s independence in gathering evidence – through videoing their work, for example.”

**Exminster Community Primary School**

Exminster is a community school in Devon with 418 pupils which was inspected in September, receiving a judgement of good across the board under the leadership of headteacher Sarah Whalley.

The inspectors’ report (Ofsted, 2022b) states: “The curriculum in each subject is well organised. Beginning in the early years, leaders set out a clear route through the content. Leaders are always adding to and improving

the curriculum. Over time, pupils gain detailed knowledge. As a result, pupils in key stage 2 are able to hold sophisticated discussions, for example about social history.”

**Deep dive subjects**

**Early reading, maths, history, RE**

The deep dive subjects were chosen during the 90-minute discussion with the lead inspector. History was chosen because of the amount of work that they had already put into its development and RE because of the way that it was evolving.

Originally RE was the only subject to follow an externally written scheme at Exminster: “On reflection we felt that we were trying to cover too much and that we should do less but better,” explained Ms Whalley. “This led to a great deal of adaptation and made it a subject that would be worthy of a deep dive.”

On the second day of the inspection the inspectors wanted to see that the strengths they had noted in the chosen deep dives were followed across other subjects in the school including languages, art and PE.

**Background and preparation**

In 2013 and 2017, Exminster was judged to be good by inspectors. In September 2022 Ofsted returned, this time for a full inspection (the school had been expecting a Section 8).

Exminster had been developing their curriculum for around five years. Ms Whalley explained: “The impetus started when we realised that our early years children had developed a high level of independence that was not necessarily evident in some of the older students.

“We wanted to ensure that children were able to lead their learning right through the school. For example, history was at the beginning more focused on factual knowledge rather than on what it means to be a historian. This curriculum development had already been in progress when the new framework came in.”

Subject leaders did do some tweaking according to the new framework but only to ensure that it was more subject-orientated than it perhaps had been. Ian Moore, deputy headteacher at Exminster, worked hard with subject leaders to ensure that a

structured build-up of knowledge and a progressive framework was in place.

**Subject leader discussions**

Exminster is lucky to have many experienced specialists who were able to bring their knowledge to the task of restructuring their curriculum. This was embedded by the time they were contacted by Ofsted.

However, there were still some subjects where work was in-progress, but inspectors could see how the more developed areas of the curriculum were providing the model for these areas.

Ms Whalley was in the meeting with the history lead and Mr Moore with the RE lead: “The discussion was very much focused on intent, implementation and impact. The inspectors wanted to know ‘why are you doing it this way?’”

**Visits to lessons**

Inspectors observed lessons across year 1, 4 and 6 for history and three year groups for RE. In every lesson a key thread was SEND – they wanted to know who the SEND children were and how they were accessing the curriculum. Children eligible for Pupil Premium were also on their list for particular scrutiny.

**Conversations with pupils**

A group of mixed year 4 and 6 children were selected and the inspector gave them the words

“women and history” and “housing” to discuss. Ms Whalley said: “The children were easily able to debate these topics and their level of discussion was amazing. It showed how embedded the school’s approach is across the curriculum.”

Ms Whalley and Mr Moore believe that Exminster’s strength in such discussions is partly attributable to the development of oracy across the school.

**Pupils’ work**

Inspectors looked at books in lessons but also outside the classroom. This book scrutiny included the school’s art books and inspectors matched the content they found there to curriculum plans.

Exminster has developed its “Rainbow Values” of enjoyment, potential, inclusion, community, motivation, engagement and thinking. Inspectors were able to see the impact that these had through the conversations with pupils and through the work they produced.

**Advice to other schools**

The subject leaders had created position statements prior to the inspection. This was not for the purpose of inspection but did help towards it when the time came. It helped them to reflect on their subject and identify what the next steps should be.

Ms Whalley emphasises that

subject leaders need support to do this work, including time: “Subject leaders need time to develop their overview of the subject across the school, how it’s developing and to look at the impact. Intent and implementation should now be in place so it’s up to subject leaders to be clear about impact.”

A key feature of curriculum improvement has been the “book looks” at the beginning of staff meetings: “One subject and a subject focus are selected each week and all the staff look at the books. Lots of good ideas come from this and it provides us with the opportunity to reflect on where we are and where we’re going.”

**Next steps**

In some subjects there is still work to be done but subject leaders are eager to continue to improve the curriculum: “It will always be a work in progress and this is also important for inspectors to see,” Ms Whalley adds. “We’re also keen on developing more links with the community and encouraging our pupils to have aspirations for their place in it.”

**Gilthill Primary School**

This primary school in Kimberley, Nottingham, has 211 pupils on roll and is led by headteacher Nicholla Allison. The school was inspected in September 2022 and rated good across the board.

The report (Ofsted, 2022c) states: “Leaders understand the



school's strengths and priorities for further development. They have recently developed subject curriculums that are ambitious. Some subjects are further on in their development than others. In the subjects that are well developed, leaders have thought carefully about the important knowledge they want pupils to learn and the order in which they will learn it."

**Deep dive subjects**  
**Early reading, maths, history, science**

During the initial phone call Ms Allison talked about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school had been working hard on history and had developed the curriculum. It was a good opportunity to show how they would continue to develop the other subjects.

She explained: "We hadn't really focused on science and I felt it was best to be honest. I knew what we were good at and what needed development. I knew they would spot this anyway and that honesty would be the best approach. It would be worse to try and cover up any gaps."

The inspector said that they would do a "shallow paddle" on the second day to check on the extent to which the deep dives could be applied to other areas of the curriculum.

**Background and preparation**  
Gilthill was inspected in 2014 and again in 2018, receiving a good rating. It converted to academy status in 2018 and was inspected as an academy in September 2022 as part of the East Midlands Education Trust.

It is Ms Allison's first headship, having taken up the post in September 2021: "I looked at the curriculum and we knew we had work to do. I decided to focus on history and geography initially. We had started the journey but it was by no means complete. The inspection provided an opportunity to talk about what was in place and the pedagogy around that."

When Ms Allison arrived at the school she did her research into curriculum design and implemented a strong approach: "There was already curriculum," she explained, "but it needed clearer definition. There was a

“They have to make generalised statements based on what they see from a very small sample. If you think you have evidence to show that this isn't the case, point this out”

great aim in place but it needed to be translated more into the actual implementation."

Gilthill's vision is "We aim to inspire today's children to embrace tomorrow's challenges" and its curriculum design model includes:

- Communication.
- Learning values.
- Learning threads.
- Curriculum content maps.

They knew to expect an inspection and Ms Allison had prepared carefully for the phone call along with her senior leadership team: "We knew what we were going to say."

**Subject leader discussions**  
Gilthill is a small school and covering key members of staff was an issue that needed careful management. Ms Allison explained: "For example, when the maths teacher was having a meeting, a teaching assistant needed to take the class. We talked about this with inspectors and they were sympathetic to the situation. "Every member of staff at Gilthill has more than one responsibility so some days were heavy for them. I tried to ease this by them going in together so they were not on their own and felt supported. This also meant that they could bounce ideas off each other and prompt one another."

**Visits to lessons**  
Inspectors were very thorough and followed up the comments made by leaders, checking them out for implementation in the classroom and through discussions with teachers and non-teaching staff. They asked one teacher: "If you were brand new to the school today what would you teach and what knowledge would the children leave with?"

**Advice to other schools**  
"It's important to be proactive in the inspection if they raise something that you think needs a conversation around it – ask for one," urged Ms Allison. "Sometimes they have to make generalised

statements based on what they see from a very small sample. If you think you have evidence to show that this isn't the case, point this out. Such a lot rides on inspection. Prepare carefully for your phone call. I knew inspection was coming – preparation helped me feel more in control."

**Final thought**  
"One of the proudest moments for me," Ms Allison added, "was when the inspectors commented that our school 'feels like a family'. "We have worked really hard to maintain this inclusive approach and to build a learning environment that is supportive and nurturing for all."

**Curriculum research**  
Ofsted's research reviews bring together research evidence about high-quality education in each subject. At the time of writing, they have now been published in English, computing, PE, history, music, geography, languages, mathematics, RE and science (see further information). This material is important to be aware of as it will inform inspectors as to what they should be looking for. They refer to the "conception of subject quality" and make a clear link between the deep dive and the information collected in the research review.

The documents are lengthy, for example the PE research review is 90 pages. However, for people with a specific interest in the subject, such as subject leaders, they are important reading and highlight key considerations for each subject.

Not everyone agrees with Ofsted engaging in this kind of research review. Should a regulatory body be so closely identifying what should be taught? Some subject associations have challenged the selection of content for the Ofsted publications and have made challenges to the citations.

However you feel about this, the point is that this is currently the material being used by Ofsted to

guide its inspectors in evaluating what they find. As such subject leaders should take note, whether they agree or not.

**Ten tips for subject leaders**

**Keep children's learning as the focus:** Don't get sidetracked into mock deep dives or undue emphasis on paper shuffling. Sometimes simple can be best and what inspectors want to see is the experience and learning of the children in the classroom. Be evaluative of the activities you take on as subject leader – is this really improving the education of our children?

**Know your subject in your school:** Be clear about what is being taught, where and why. Know what knowledge and skills it is important for children to accumulate over the years and how this is delivered in your school. Use the table (opposite) to check your understanding against key areas. Share this with a colleague to check their perception too. Talk to pupils, parents and staff about their understanding of how your subject is working in the school, what is being learnt and the extent to which it is retained. Be ready for the inspector to "drill down" – where is this element of your subject being covered in your school?

**Keep a check on children's books:** How you do this is up to you and your school to decide, but it can be beneficial. A regular book scrutiny or "book look" that is shared between staff involves you in a little triangulation of your own and can reveal gaps or difficulties that colleagues are experiencing with the content.

**Be aware of the content of the research reviews:** Some of Ofsted's research reviews can be hard going but the content of them is what is informing inspectors. There are summaries of many of these reviews written by subject associations that can help you navigate them and which highlight the key points.

**Ambition-sequence-progression:** Ofsted wants to see a clearly structured curriculum that aims high for the children in the school, including those with SEN.

**Table 1. Know your subject in your school: Questions to consider when preparing for a deep dive**

How has your curriculum been designed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What framework have you used?</li> <li>- Is there clear subject coverage, progression and sequencing?</li> <li>- Are there clear end-points?</li> </ul>
Do you as subject leader 'know' your subject in your school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does what's taught in classrooms match what is intended?</li> <li>- What are the strengths and weaknesses in your subject in this school?</li> </ul>
Do you know what knowledge and skills are important in your subject?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you keep informed?</li> <li>- Do you have clear pedagogical knowledge?</li> <li>- What CPD do you engage in?</li> <li>- How do you help other members of staff access this knowledge too?</li> </ul>
Does it match the scope and ambition of the national curriculum?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do children learn key subject vocabulary?</li> <li>- Are you familiar with the national curriculum?</li> <li>- Are all aspects of the national curriculum covered in your curriculum and do you know when they are?</li> </ul>
How does your curriculum fit with your school's aims?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are your school's aims?</li> <li>- What are your aims for this subject in this school?</li> <li>- What do you want to achieve?</li> <li>- How does your subject link with other subjects?</li> </ul>
Can inspectors see how it is broken down into manageable chunks leading to the end-point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do concepts taught now link with those taught before and those to come?</li> <li>- How does content build across year groups to the end-point you have identified?</li> <li>- Is your curriculum logically sequenced?</li> <li>- Are pupils prepared for the learning that is coming?</li> </ul>
How are other teachers in the school supported?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do they know how their lessons fit into the overall sequence?</li> <li>- Do they know the key concepts that pupils need to take from the lesson?</li> <li>- Can they come to you for help and clarification?</li> <li>- How are expectations shared between staff?</li> </ul>
How do you ensure that there are high expectations for pupils with SEND?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do you work with the SENCO?</li> <li>- How do you check on the expectations that teachers have for their SEND pupils?</li> <li>- How are interventions organised?</li> </ul>
Do the children's books demonstrate your intentions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does the content of the books reflect what you have told inspectors?</li> <li>- How are misconceptions addressed?</li> </ul>
How do you know that your curriculum is effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do the children know more, remember more and are able to do more as they move through the school?</li> <li>- Can your pupils talk about their learning?</li> <li>- Can your pupils recall what they have learnt from previous years?</li> <li>- Do the children enjoy this subject?</li> </ul>
What does your assessment practice look like?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do teachers and children record learning?</li> <li>- How does this recording inform your understanding of the effectiveness of the curriculum?</li> <li>- How does this recording help you support individual children?</li> </ul>
What resources and schemes do you use and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How have you selected these?</li> <li>- Are you satisfied with them?</li> <li>- How have you adapted them to suit your context?</li> <li>- How do they match with the curriculum?</li> </ul>
What are your next steps for this curriculum subject?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you need to improve and how do you know this?</li> <li>- What strategies will you use to help you improve?</li> </ul>

Whatever your preferred style of curriculum design, you must be able to demonstrate how knowledge is presented progressively across year groups in a clearly identified sequence. The case study schools talked about the "threads" they have crafted, linking the learning between year groups. Be clear about what these "threads" are for you.

**Engage in CPD:** The role of CPD in your school cannot be emphasised enough. Even if your budget and time is limited, try sharing ideas, information and good practice whenever you can. Look to other local schools and expertise – many good ideas don't have to be paid-for but are happening in the school next door. Take colleagues with you if you can or at least

arrange feedback at year meetings even if it is only a five-minute bulletin of a new idea.

**Not on your own:** Whatever the subject is, leaders should know that there is help out there from colleagues, associations and, of course, the school staff themselves. You need to work alongside colleagues and having a whole school curriculum framework should mean that you are able to adapt other subjects' sequencing to your own curriculum area.

**Negotiate some time:** Subject leaders need time to reflect, evaluate and visit. They need time to coach colleagues and seek out resources. Not easy, in times of tight budgets and dwindling

**INFORMATION & REFERENCES**

- ▶ DfE: *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage, March 2021:* <https://bit.ly/3Hht16C>
- ▶ Ofsted: *Education Inspection Framework, May 2019a (last updated July 2022):* <https://bit.ly/3r09rXr>
- ▶ Ofsted: *School inspection handbook (EIF), May 2019b (last updated July 2022):* <https://bit.ly/2U4dUan>
- ▶ Ofsted: *Guidance: Inspecting the curriculum, May 2019c:* <https://bit.ly/3UuYe9m>
- ▶ Ofsted: *Curriculum research reviews:* <https://bit.ly/3F74luT>
- ▶ Ofsted: *Olney Infant Academy Inspection Report, September 2022a:* <https://bit.ly/3VUm5QN>
- ▶ Ofsted: *Exminster Community Primary School Inspection Report, November 2022b:* <https://bit.ly/3ilPOxM>
- ▶ Ofsted: *Gilthill Primary School Inspection Report, November 2022c:* <https://bit.ly/3P3Qx99>

reserves. However, allocating some time recognises the value of the work being done and will be appreciated by those who only recently have found themselves on the front line of inspection.

**Always a work in progress:** Inspectors will want to see a thirst for continuous improvement. What are your plans for the future of your subject in your school? You have identified your strengths and weaknesses? It is how you translate these into concrete next steps that show your evaluative judgement and clarity of thinking.

**Be open and honest:** A common thread running through the experience of our three schools is the importance of being honest. If there are gaps in your subject then inspectors will see it. They are triangulating their evidence from talking to you, looking in books and asking teachers/pupils. It is a rigorous approach and the worst thing is to be caught-out papering over cracks. Show where any weaknesses are on your plan to improve and be honest about why they have arisen and what strategies you are using to address them.