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Today's slides - www.qualityassurededucation.co.uk/learning-partnership

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Walk this way 2026 - Using Curriculum and Strong Foundations walks to drive impact

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Participate in discussion - you can use either the chat function or via your microphone. Raise your hand and we can answer your questions



Turn on your camera - our delivery partners and yourself will get more from the session when you can see each other



Mute your microphone - background noise can affect the quality of your experience and that of the group



If the call freezes; hang fire and we will be back shortly!

Learning Partnership.

Session 2 Objectives

- ✓ Examine the recent changes to the Ofsted Inspection Framework, relating to learning walks and curriculum discussions
- ✓ Explore the context and meaning of Strong Foundations
- ✓ Explore how discussions with leaders and pupils can develop useful quality assurance information

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The key notion…

Quality Assurance through learning walks and case sampling is not just for Ofsted. It is a fundamental approach that leaders can systematically undertake to provide rich and accurate evidence in order to celebrate, validate and highlight.

It is my opinion that schools who know the most about the provision of all groups of pupils are best-placed to develop improvement strategies that secure the best outcomes possible.

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The typical shape of inspections

Lens	Focus area
Leadership	Leaders' priorities, actions and the impact of these.
Curriculum, teaching and achievement	Strong foundations and subject clusters
Inclusion	Case sampling and learning walks with leaders (Eg SENCO, Inclusion, Pastoral, Attendance etc)

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How will we do this in primary schools? (1)

- Team inspectors will carry out learning walks in EY and KS1 on the morning of day 1.
- Inspectors will consider leadership, inclusion and the experiences of pupils in the case sample.
- The curriculum, teaching and achievement focus for these learning walks will be on 'strong foundations'.
- As part of these learning walks, inspectors will hear some lower attaining pupils reading an unfamiliar book to a familiar adult.

How will we do this in primary schools? (2)

- One team inspector will consider 'strong foundations' for older pupils (KS2), including meeting with the SENCo/inclusion leader on the afternoon of day one.
- Other team inspectors will carry out learning walks in KS2 on the afternoon of day one, broadening evidence across foundation subjects and following up on emerging evidence.

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CURRICULUM AND TEACHING		
NEEDS ATTENTION	**EXPECTED STANDARD**	**STRONG STANDARD**
Leaders' ambitions for the curriculum and teaching are appropriate, but weaknesses or inconsistencies in implementation have a negative impact on pupils in general or on a particular group. Leaders have only recently started to take action to improve the curriculum and teaching. While their actions are appropriate, they are at an early stage. This means it is too soon to determine the impact of this work. Leaders have considered appropriate adaptations to teaching for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, but these adaptations are not well matched to pupils' needs	Leaders have an accurate and informed understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the school. They draw on this when deciding how to deploy staff and allocate resources, and to identify when timely action is needed to bring about improvement. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is suitable and well planned for each subject and year group. It identifies clear end points and is appropriately sequenced to build on what has already been taught and learned. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is generally taught well. Teachers draw on their knowledge of pupils' needs and starting points and an evidence-informed understanding of effective teaching and how pupils learn. Leaders make sure that teachers have, or gain, the expertise they need for the subjects and phases they teach. Leaders ensure that all pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read are taught to do so through systematic synthetic phonics. Leaders and staff are particularly aware of pupils who have not yet secured the necessary foundations in communication and language, reading, spelling, handwriting and mathematics. They take appropriate action to secure this foundational knowledge. Leaders and staff generally use assessment well to check understanding and make changes to teaching and/or the curriculum, as necessary. Leaders and staff are clear about the importance of high-quality teaching, supplemented with targeted academic support. Any reasonable adjustments or adaptations to the curriculum or teaching for particular pupils are generally considered and implemented carefully. EHC plans are properly considered when designing and delivering the curriculum.	Leaders make astute decisions about how the curriculum and teaching should adapt and evolve, based on their evidence and insight about how well pupils have learned what was intended. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is of a consistently high quality across subjects and year groups. Leaders have a sophisticated understanding of the differences between subjects, so that pupils' learning at each stage can be secured quickly and shaped carefully in the anticipation of future learning. Leaders ensure that the curriculum is consistently taught well. Highly effective teaching is embedded across subjects and year groups. Teaching ensures that pupils consistently develop their language and vocabulary, both spoken and written, and increase their reading competency, across subjects. Teachers consistently make highly effective choices about what to teach, and when and how to teach it, in the context of the subject, phase and pupils' needs The school's approach to the curriculum and teaching for disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being is implemented consistently well across the school to remove barriers to achievement for these pupils

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INCLUSION		
NEEDS ATTENTION	**EXPECTED STANDARD**	**STRONG STANDARD**
Leaders have only recently started to take appropriate action to identify and assess pupils' needs or reduce barriers to pupils' learning and/or well-being. Weaknesses or inconsistencies in practice have a negative impact on a particular group of pupils. Leaders' use of alternative provision has limited positive impact on pupils' learning and/or well-being	Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately, including any emerging or changing needs. This includes the needs of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing. Leaders have high expectations for these pupils. Typically, the support they provide (following specialist advice if needed) reduces barriers to their learning and/or well-being. Leaders take a graduated approach (as explained earlier), which means pupils' needs are generally met. Staff receive suitable training and support to implement this approach. Leaders have a secure understanding of these pupils' needs and the progress they make. They use appropriate evidence to inform their pupil premium strategy, including when selecting approaches to take. The strategy and approaches are generally understood and implemented by staff. The qualified SENCo has sufficient authority within the leadership structure to make a positive difference for pupils with SEND. Leaders are committed to, and understand, their role in the local area partnership's strategy to improve the experiences of, and outcomes for, pupils with SEND. Where appropriate, they ensure that local partnership strategies have a positive impact on pupils at the school. Leaders support pupils who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, including looked-after and previously looked-after children, well. Staff work effectively, including with the virtual school, so that pupils' personal education plans generally improve their learning opportunities and experiences. Alternative provision is commissioned appropriately and is used in pupils' best interests. Leaders take responsibility for the education and welfare of pupils who are placed in it.	Leaders and staff establish strategies that consistently enhance the opportunities and experiences of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being. Leaders and staff rigorously monitor the progress of these pupils and consistently ensure that any barriers to success are swiftly and effectively addressed. Strategies are systematically and skilfully adjusted as needed, so that they make a sustained difference to pupils' opportunities and experiences. Well analysed, quantitative and qualitative data underpins leaders' decisions.

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ACHIEVEMENT		
NEEDS ATTENTION	**EXPECTED STANDARD**	**STRONG STANDARD**
Although many pupils achieve well, a significant minority have gaps in their learning, which hinders their achievement. Leaders have only recently started to take action to improve achievement. While their actions are appropriate, they are at an early stage. This means it is too soon to determine the impact of this work. Pupils' attainment and progress are inconsistent or not as good as they need to be over time. Leaders are taking appropriate action to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being. However, currently, a significant minority of these pupils do not achieve well from their starting points.	On the whole, pupils are ready for the next stage of education, employment or training. They generally have appropriate knowledge and skills across the curriculum, as reflected in the quality of their responses and the work they produce. Pupils develop the foundational knowledge and skills they need, including language and communication skills. Pupils who are at the start of their education (and older pupils, where necessary) largely secure the necessary accuracy and fluency in word reading, spelling, handwriting and number facts. Any gaps in pupils' foundational knowledge or skills are closing quickly. On the whole, pupils achieve well. This will be reflected in their attainment and progress in national tests and examinations, which are broadly in line with national averages, including for disadvantaged pupils. Disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or wellbeing generally make suitable progress from their starting points. They develop appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to progress to the next stage. Any gaps in their knowledge or skills are closing quickly.	Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, those with SEND, those who are known (or previously known) to children's social care, and those who may face other barriers to their learning and/or well-being, consistently achieve well, develop detailed knowledge and skills, and produce high-quality work across the curriculum. Typically, this achievement will be reflected in above-average outcomes in national tests and examinations over time, including for disadvantaged pupils. Any gaps are quickly narrowing. All pupils, including the groups above, are consistently well prepared for the next stage in their education, employment or training.

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Why are ‘strong foundations’ so important?

- ✓ Strong foundations statistically lead to better educational attainment, health and well-being
- ✓ Communication and language skills by the age of 5 are a strong indicator for future success
- ✓ According to the *Education Policy Institute Annual Report (2025*), attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils at EYFS (4.7 months), KS2 (10 months) and KS4 (19.1 months) show that strong foundations for the most vulnerable pupils are essential to be secured as soon as possible
- ✓ The supposition is that, if we can get early education right for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, we can get it right for everyone else



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As leaders, which elements of learning could we look for when considering 'strong foundations?

In 60 seconds, make as long a list as you can!



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As leaders, which elements of learning could we look for when considering 'strong foundations?

- ✓ Ability to express ideas and understand others
- ✓ Fluency in reading and spoken language
- ✓ Fluency in writing, including spelling, handwriting, composition, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation
- ✓ Basic calculation and number sense
- ✓ General knowledge and Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- ✓ Executive function (i.e. attention, memory, self-regulation etc)





- ✓ **Curriculum clarity:** define exactly what foundational knowledge is needed
- ✓ **Structured sequencing:** build fluency with scaffolding before introducing complexity
- ✓ **Adequate rehearsal time:** plan space for repetition and retention
- ✓ **Responsive teaching:** adjust pacing and class interactions based on formative assessment
- ✓ **Explicit behaviour teaching:** embed routines and persistence strategies in everyday classroom life.

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Strong Foundations Audit Tool

For school leaders

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STRONG FOUNDATIONS IN EARLY YEARS

Richness of written vocabulary and handwriting

Richness and deliberacy of independent activity

Richness of the contextual curriculum

Richness of inclusion and adaptation

Richness of spoken vocabulary

Richness of phonics teaching

Richness of adult interactions

Richness of songs, rhymes and stories

Richness of the reading environment

Richness of formal teaching

Richness of relationships

Richness of resilience, self-care and independence

Richness of routines

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What might we be looking at on a learning walk?

1. Agreed pedagogies, lessons structures and teaching approaches

- ✓ Have you worked on any specific pedagogies, lesson structures or teaching approaches collectively as a staff?
- ✓ Is your strategic rationale for this showing evidence of impact?
- ✓ What is the impact of any CPD that has been offered in respect of this?
- ✓ How consistent is this across multiple classes?
- ✓ To what extent can you see the impact of this work in pupils' books, or pupil voice?

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What might we be looking at on a learning walk?

2. Focus on the development of strong foundations in maths

- ✓ What are the strong foundations in maths that you have identified for each year group? How does the classroom environment make this obvious?
- ✓ How, specifically, does the teaching input (and subsequent support/resources) promote the development of strong mathematical foundations?
- ✓ What evidence is there of pupils having opportunities to rehearse for long enough before they undertake independent work? When do they revisit this work?
- ✓ When do pupils have opportunities to catch up with strong foundations of maths if they are behind? What do they have to say about this?
- ✓ What is the ***impact*** of your maths curriculum on strong foundations? How is this coming through in mathematical fluency, accuracy in books, or through pupil explanations, for example?

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What might we be looking at on a learning walk?

3. Focus on the development of strong foundations in phonics and reading

- ✓ What are the strong foundations in phonics and reading that you have identified for each year group? How does the classroom environment make this obvious?
- ✓ How does the teaching input, chosen texts, story-time or class novel contribute to the development of strong phonics and reading foundations?
- ✓ How fluently do pupils read their own reading books? Are they well matched to their knowledge and ability? Is this the same for vulnerable groups of pupils?
- ✓ How are texts adapted across the curriculum to allow all pupils to access them?
- ✓ When do pupils have opportunities to catch up with the strong foundations of phonics and reading if they are behind? What do they have to say about this?
- ✓ What is the ***impact*** of your phonics and reading curriculum on strong foundations? How is this coming through in reading and spelling fluency, accuracy in books, or through pupil explanations, for example?

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What might we be looking at on a learning walk?

4. Focus on the development of strong foundations in writing

- ✓ What are the strong foundations in writing that you have identified for each year group? How does the classroom environment make this obvious?
- ✓ How does the teaching sequence contribute to the development of writing foundations? Are these foundations well modelled by staff?
- ✓ How fluently and accurately do pupils write? Is this improving over time? Is this the same for vulnerable groups of pupils?
- ✓ How do pupils who have challenges with writing have their work adapted across the foundation subjects so that they can fully access the intended learning
- ✓ When do pupils have opportunities to catch up with the strong foundations of writing if they are behind? What do they have to say about this?
- ✓ Can pupils explain how they are getting better at writing?
- ✓ What is the ***impact*** of your writing curriculum on strong foundations? How is this coming through in handwriting fluency, accuracy, stamina, SPAG? Can you see this clearly in books?

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What might we be looking at on a learning walk?

5. How well pupils are knowing, remembering and doing more through the WHOLE curriculum

- ✓ How obvious is the key knowledge and vocabulary for this lesson or unit of study? Where is it displayed and shared?
- ✓ How often and in what circumstances, do pupils have the opportunity to develop and use such vocabulary?
- ✓ What role do adults have through interactions to model and use this knowledge and vocabulary?
- ✓ Do pupils use this vocabulary accurately, including its spelling?
- ✓ How are adaptations made for those who need additional support with the key knowledge and vocabulary of the lesson?
- ✓ What can pupils recall from the most recent learning? What about last week? Last term? Last year? Etc
- ✓ What are standards of handwriting and presentation like in foundation subject books, where used?

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What might we be looking at on a learning walk?

6. Universal provision and individual support

- ✓ What is your definition of universal classroom provision?
- ✓ If we walked into any classroom in your school, what would we see, relating to universal classroom provision? What about targeted provision
- ✓ What is the impact of universal classroom provision? What are you seeing and hearing to prove this?
- ✓ How well are individual pupils being supported? How closely does this provision match that set out in their learning plan?
- ✓ Are personal targets SMART? Roles well understood?
- ✓ How well are targets being reviewed and reset where appropriate?
- ✓ What is the ***impact*** of this work?

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And finally...

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Please follow this QR code link to the session feedback survey. If you would like to follow up anything discussed today, please feel most welcome to email me at **phil@qualityassurededucation.co.uk**

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