

The DofE and excellence in Ofsted inspections

From September 2019, Ofsted will apply a new framework when inspecting education providers in England – with a greater focus on how well schools and colleges provide for all pupils' personal development.

Inspectors will assess a range of evidence, including the quality of education and variety and take-up of extracurricular activities.

For a school to be judged outstanding, it must give pupils access to a “wide, rich set of experiences”, in the curriculum and through extracurricular activities – and make sure the most disadvantaged pupils consistently benefit from this approach.



The DofE difference

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a world-renowned mark of achievement that can encourage all pupils – regardless of their background or academic ability – to expand their talents and interests, broaden their horizons and develop their character.

The DofE often features positively in school inspection reports. The below is not exhaustive, but gives examples of how the DofE can map against Ofsted criteria.

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Schools are crucial in preparing pupils for their adult lives, teaching them to understand how to engage with society and providing them with plentiful opportunities to do so. In this judgment, therefore, inspectors will seek to evaluate the quality and intent of what a school provides (either directly or by drawing on high-quality agencies and providers, for example The Duke of Edinburgh's Award...), but will not attempt to measure the impact of the school's work on the lives of individual pupils.”

Ofsted school inspection handbook, 2019

The DofE and pupils' personal development

What Ofsted will look for	What the DofE offers
The school develops pupils' character — defined as 'a set of positive personal traits, dispositions and virtues that informs their motivation so that they reflect wisely, learn eagerly, behave with integrity and cooperate consistently well with others'.	The DofE takes pupils outside the comfort zone of the classroom and their social circle, broadens their horizons and gives them a positive approach to overcoming challenges and reaching goals.
	Young people choose their own activities and set their own targets – so their level of achievement depends on their own enthusiasm, commitment and self-motivation.
	This boosts their independence, responsibility and ability to reflect on the impact of their actions. They learn to work well and respectfully with others, become more confident and expand their aspirations.

two thirds

of young people said their DofE improved their motivational skills.

76%

said it helped their communication skills.

three quarters

said it helped them understand their own strengths and weaknesses better.

What Ofsted will look for	What the DofE offers	
The school develops pupils' confidence, resilience and knowledge so they can keep themselves mentally healthy.	<p>The DofE is widely recognised by teachers, higher and further education leaders and employers as one of the best models for encouraging and celebrating qualities like confidence and independence.</p> <p>Planning and executing their expedition gives young people resilience, determination and self-reliance, while for many giving back to their community by volunteering can bring benefits for their own mental health.</p>	<p>two thirds of Leaders said the DofE helped young people stay calm and overcome anxiety in new situations.</p> <p>85% said it helped young people adapt their thinking when things change.</p> <p>82% said it helped young people take things in their stride and look for solutions.</p>
The school develops responsible, respectful and active citizens, able to play their part and become actively involved in public life as adults.	<p>The DofE connects participants with new people and perspectives — whether in their expedition group, in clubs or teams for their Physical and Skills sections, or in their community when volunteering — fostering respect for others and an understanding of the value of active citizenship.</p> <p>Volunteering encourages young people to play a part in their schools and communities, helping others and supporting causes they believe in, and for many the impact goes well beyond their DofE.</p>	<p>77% of young people said volunteering made them feel more responsible.</p> <p>two thirds carried on volunteering after achieving their Award.</p> <p>69% said volunteering gave them a sense of achievement.</p>
The school develops pupils' understanding of how to keep physically healthy, eat healthily and maintain an active lifestyle — including giving opportunities for pupils to be active during the school day and through extra-curricular activities.	<p>Every young person chooses a physical activity as part of their DofE — anything from football and hockey to rock climbing, gym sessions or yoga.</p> <p>The choice is down to the participant — they can pick something they enjoy, so keeping fit regularly becomes fun. They can discover new abilities and boost their self-esteem as their performance improves.</p>	<p>61% of young people said they were fitter as a result of their DofE.</p> <p>more than half said their DofE let them try a new sport or physical activity.</p> <p>nearly half said they took part in sports or physical activity more often.</p>



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The importance of the DofE to Bohunt cannot be overstated. At a school level it gives us an aspirational partner to work with; at a staff level it provides a community of people committed to development and excellence; at a student level it provides a wealth of experiences, some new, some hard, all exciting, that help them now and in the future.”

Neil Strowger, Headteacher, Bohunt School, Hampshire

What Ofsted will look for	What the DofE offers	
The school promotes an inclusive environment that meets the need of all pupils, and equality of opportunity so all pupils can thrive together, understanding that difference is a positive, not a negative, and that individual characteristics make people unique.	<p>The DofE is challenging but inclusive. It's non-competitive and achievable by all young people, giving them the chance to achieve and develop – regardless of ability, background, gender, race, religion or sexual orientation.</p> <p>Each participant's programme is personal to them. Everyone is on a level playing field, with young people of different backgrounds, beliefs and circumstances able to interact and work towards a common goal.</p>	<p>64% of young people said their DofE helped them understand other people better.</p> <p>60% said it made them more responsible.</p> <p>85% said it had boosted their teamwork skills.</p>
The school promotes readiness for the next phase of education, training or employment so that pupils are equipped to make the transition successfully.	<p>Doing their DofE gives young people skills and attributes they can use in later life. Research shows that 95% of UK senior managers regard so-called 'soft skills' as equally or more important than exam results alone — and 90% said they were more likely to employ a candidate who demonstrates achievements beyond grades.</p> <p>Leading employers look favourably on a DofE Award for the employability skills it develops, including confidence, resilience and teamwork.</p> <p>The breadth of a DofE programme means young people also discover new passions and talents which can influence their future careers.</p>	<p>77% of young people said their DofE had given them many new skills.</p> <p>61% said it would give them an advantage in the job market.</p> <p>57% wanted to do their DofE because it was attractive to employers.</p>
The school provides for pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development.	<p>The independence and self-determination central to a DofE programme can increase young people's curiosity about themselves, other people and the wider world.</p> <p>Setting goals and overcoming challenges helps them learn more about their capabilities, as they discover they can achieve things they might not have thought possible.</p> <p>A DofE programme – particularly the Volunteering section – gives young people the chance to engage with new parts of their community, challenging and developing their own perspectives, and increasing their understanding of others' faiths, feelings and values.</p>	



Other benefits of running the DofE

Behaviour and attitudes

Ofsted will consider how leaders and staff create a “safe, calm, orderly and positive environment” and the impact this has on pupils’ behaviour and attitudes.

What Ofsted will look for	What the DofE offers	
Pupils’ motivation and positive attitudes to learning, and a positive and respectful culture in which staff know and care about pupils.	DofE Managers and Leaders report an increase in pupils’ confidence, motivation, responsibility and reliability, which can transfer to the classroom. Their commitment to the school and to extra-curricular activities improves as they work towards their DofE goals. Students develop positive relationships with teachers as they interact with them outside of the classroom, and staff can increase their understanding of students’ abilities, interests and aspirations.	57% of teachers said running the DofE had improved the way students respond to them in lessons. 78% said it had improved the understanding and respect between teachers and students.

Leadership and management

Ofsted will assess how leaders, managers and those responsible for governance ensure the education the school provides has a positive impact on all pupils.

What Ofsted will look for	What the DofE offers
Leaders’ high expectations of all pupils – including those who are ‘harder to reach’ – and how far these are embodied in leaders’ and staff’s day-to-day interactions with pupils.	Introducing the DofE gives all pupils the chance to push themselves and achieve, regardless of their backgrounds or academic abilities. The DofE engages staff with their colleagues and students, giving them opportunities beyond their day-to-day role, enhancing their experience and positively influencing their career progression.
How leaders and governors have spent the pupil premium, their rationale and its intended impact.	The use of the pupil premium for DofE activities has proven a popular and cost-effective way for schools to achieve positive outcomes. Among others, schools have used it to support alternative curriculum programmes, subsidise expeditions and residentials, provide equipment and resource, subsidise staff costs and contribute to staff and volunteer expedition training.

Running the DofE gives teachers valuable leadership and management experience, enhancing their professional development in their core teaching role, helping their career progression and benefitting the school as a whole.

In a 2018 survey of teachers and headteachers who help run the DofE, almost half of teachers believed volunteering had given them professional development opportunities – and 70% said positive student-teacher working relationships make a DofE school different.

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The skills I have learnt as a DofE Manager have enabled me to progress in my career. DofE is such a central part of the extra-curricular programme at Windsor Girls’ School and it’s enabled me to build positive relationships with students, staff and parents. It has allowed me to develop my own communication and teamwork skills which are vital in my role as a Head of Year.”

Charlotte Castle, DofE Manager, Windsor Girls’ School

The Knights Templar School

Case study

The Knights Templar School is a successful state school in Hertfordshire which has been offering the DofE to its pupils for more than 30 years.

Around 200 Knights Templar students are doing a DofE programme at any time, with large numbers achieving their Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards.

Headteacher Tim Litchfield says: "I see the benefits of the DofE throughout our school: young people challenging themselves, students taking leadership responsibilities, a great work ethic, respectful and courteous students. All of these characteristics raise standards and aspirations.

"I can see our young people grow throughout the different stages of their programme into confident, self-assured young adults. Having an Award on their record of achievement is often the first thing that potential employers will look at."



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The students who do their DofE become a lot more confident, a lot more responsible and a lot more reliable, which actually feeds into when we have them in class.”

Danuta Clarkson, Handsworth Grange, Sheffield

Further information

For further details email info@DofE.org or visit DofE.org

