

## Neurodiversity, SEMH and inclusion as inspection reality

### Why this matters for Ofsted

Under the renewed FE & Skills approach, **Ofsted** is not asking providers to become experts in every diagnosis or neurodivergent profile.

What inspection is testing is whether inclusion is **embedded, responsive and experienced consistently by learners**, particularly when progress begins to falter.

Neurodiversity and SEMH sit at the centre of this shift.

### Inclusion is no longer judged by intent

Inspection evidence increasingly focuses on:

- how quickly staff **notice learners falling behind**
- how confidently teaching, support or feedback is adapted
- whether adjustments are **purposeful, proportionate and reviewed**
- how effectively support **fades towards independence**

Strong intentions are assumed.

**Consistency and impact** are the differentiators.

### Why neurodiversity and SEMH matter here

Many learners who struggle with anxiety, confidence, self-regulation or processing load:

- do not have an EHCP
- may not disclose a need
- may not identify as “SEND”

Ofsted are not asking:

*“Did the learner self-disclose?”*

They are effectively asking:

*“What did staff notice and what changed as a result?”*

This is why **universal, low-friction practice** matters as much as targeted support.

## What inspectors are listening for

Where inclusion is secure, inspectors often hear:

- staff explaining **why** adjustments were made
- tutors describing how practice **changed in response to learner need**
- leaders evidencing how CPD **improved staff confidence and judgement**
- learners articulating that they feel **supported, understood and able to progress**

Where inclusion is weaker, gaps often appear as:

- reliance on self-disclosure
- generic SEND training with no evidence of impact
- slow or inconsistent responses to disengagement
- data collected but not used to inform action

## CPD is part of the inspection story

Ofsted are not counting courses attended.

They are testing whether CPD has:

- strengthened professional judgement
- increased staff confidence to respond early
- resulted in **observable changes** in learner experience

In this context, inclusion is a **leadership and culture issue**, not a specialist function.

This is where inclusion moves from intent to evidence and from support to system capability.

## A leadership question

**If an inspector asked, “How do you know your inclusion approach is working?” What evidence would you show beyond policies and training logs?**

That question naturally draws attention to:

- learner experience
- staff confidence
- curriculum design
- CPD impact
- leadership coherence

Which is exactly where inspection attention now sits.

