

Dear Colleague

As Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, my aim is simple: I want the best possible education for all pupils in England. Since I came to Ofsted, I have been determined to reform inspection so that it is higher quality, is more consistent and has ever greater impact on improving education.

To this end, I have made radical changes to the way Ofsted inspects. I have established that only good is good enough through the introduction of the 'requires improvement' grade. Inspectors do not tell teachers how to teach. They do not grade individual lessons but, in dialogue with the headteacher, make an assessment of the overall quality of teaching in the school. Inspectors do not require schools to produce lengthy policy documents. Inspection reports are now much simpler, clearer and more readable for parents and carers. From September, my reforms will go even further.

Over recent years, we have seen major improvements in our education system. There are more children in good or outstanding schools now than ever before and standards are rising. We have a generation of inspiring headteachers and it is their leadership and the hard work of teachers that have brought about this change. Make no mistake, however: there is still a long way to go. We are some way behind our top international competitors. Regional variation in performance is still wide and the underachievement of youngsters from disadvantaged homes remains substantial and unacceptable.

If further improvement is to come, it is headteachers, their leadership teams and teachers who will lead this transformation. When it comes to making a difference to the lives of children and young people across the country, you are the most influential people in England.

In this letter, you will read about the next phase of significant new reforms that Ofsted will introduce in September 2015. These changes are designed to recognise and encourage great leadership. Together with your leadership, these reforms will

help to ensure that children receive the education they deserve.

### **Short inspections for good schools**

The vast majority of good schools stay good at their next inspection. In light of this, I believe it is the right time to introduce more proportionate inspections for these schools.

From September, all schools that were judged good at their last inspection will receive a short inspection approximately once every three years, led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). Short inspections will focus on the quality of leadership, the capacity of leaders to drive improvement and the effectiveness of safeguarding.

Short inspections will start from the assumption that the school continues to be good and will encourage greater professional dialogue. At the beginning of a short inspection, HMI will have an extended discussion with the headteacher about what the leadership team is doing to sustain a good quality of education in the school. This is not an exhaustive list, but HMI may ask how well leaders:

- have built, or are developing, a school culture that is calm, orderly and aspirational so that teachers can teach and pupils can learn
- have a grip on the school and fully understand its strengths and weaknesses
- know how different groups of pupils currently at the school are achieving across a range of subjects
- have removed any excuses for underachievement and are prepared to go the extra mile to compensate for family background
- know the quality of teaching and are prepared to confront complacency wherever they find it
- have communicated their strategy for raising standards to parents, governors and key stakeholders
- ensure that pupils have access to good quality materials, for example textbooks, readers and library books that they can use in classrooms and at home.

HMI will make only two judgements in a short inspection: that the school continues to be good; and that safeguarding is effective. If HMI consider that the school may have improved to outstanding, are unable to gather sufficient evidence to confirm that the school remains good, or have concerns, then they will quickly convert to a section 5 inspection and bring in a team to make the full range of inspection judgements.

Special schools, pupil referral units and maintained nursery schools that are judged outstanding will also benefit from short inspections. Under legislation, these settings are not exempt from routine inspections if they are judged outstanding, but I am keen to recognise the work that they are doing in the same way as for good schools.

### **A common inspection framework**

From September, I will be introducing the new common inspection framework. This builds closely on the changes made in school inspection over the past few years. When we consulted on the new framework last year, around eight in 10 of the schools and parents who responded supported this approach.

The common inspection framework emphasises the impact of leaders' work in developing and sustaining an ambitious culture and vision in their school. Inspectors will also look at leaders' work to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and they will continue to place the effectiveness of safeguarding at the heart of every inspection. When considering pupils' outcomes, inspectors will want to see that the pupils currently at the school are making good progress.

There will be a new judgement on personal development, behaviour and welfare. This will include a focus on pupils' confidence and self-assurance as learners, their pride in achievement and the impact behaviour has on outcomes. Inspectors will also look at how schools help pupils make choices about the next stage of their education, employment, self-employment or training as they prepare for life and work in Britain today.

The judgements about the effectiveness of early years provision and 16 to 19 study programmes are now aligned with judgements on similar provision in other settings so that pupils and parents can make informed choices.

### **Changes to the inspection workforce**

I am radically reforming Ofsted's inspection workforce. From September 2015, the inspection of schools will no longer be outsourced. Instead, we will contract directly with new Ofsted Inspectors, with HMI leading the great majority of inspections.

As a direct result of these changes, hundreds of serving leaders will join forces with HMI to deliver inspections. By September, seven out of 10 of our new Ofsted Inspectors will be current practitioners who are leading in good or outstanding schools. HMI and Ofsted Inspectors will train together and work closely together in Ofsted's regions. These proven leaders will help to improve the quality and consistency of inspection. Ofsted will benefit from having the expertise and first-hand insight of these current leaders in our inspection teams. In return, Ofsted Inspectors will gain inspection expertise that they can use and apply to build capacity in their

own schools and beyond. They will also have the opportunity to feed back to HMI what is and is not working well with inspections and so help shape the future of inspection.

### **Exceptional leaders**

Throughout England today, there are exceptional headteachers who are not only improving the prospects of children in their own schools but are also transforming the life chances of youngsters in underperforming schools elsewhere, particularly in the most challenging areas. I am determined that Ofsted will recognise these system leaders.

From September, when inspectors identify a leader who has played a key role in turning around other institutions, I will send a letter to that headteacher to acknowledge their exceptional leadership. A copy of this letter will go to the Secretary of State and I will use my Annual Report to feature those leaders who have been recognised in this way.

To be recognised as an exceptional leader, a number of criteria will have to be met, including that:

- the supported school is recognised as having particular challenges, for example a higher than average proportion of disadvantaged pupils
- normally, the supported school will have improved by two grades since the last inspection, from inadequate to good or from requires improvement to outstanding
- the improvement can be linked demonstrably with the support and challenge provided by the exceptional leader.

I will also maintain my commitment to supporting headteachers whose schools are not yet good but whose leadership is making a significant difference. I will continue to write by letter, therefore, to those headteachers to affirm my support. Within reason, Ofsted will always be flexible on the timing of re-inspections of requires improvement schools where a new headteacher has recently been appointed to improve standards. To this end, I would encourage you to write to your Ofsted Regional Director to explain your situation.

### **Complaints about Ofsted**

Finally, Ofsted should be transparent in the way it handles complaints made about inspection. We have always handled such complaints fairly and openly, but this September I will go further. Each of Ofsted's regions will set up a high-level scrutiny committee made up of Senior HMI and school leaders who are not involved in

carrying out inspections for Ofsted. These scrutiny panels will assess and rule on the internal reviews of complaints about inspection. Their decisions will be binding on Ofsted. The membership of these committees will be resolved in the next couple of months so that they can start their work in September. We will publish the names of the committee members on our website in due course.

### **The impact of these reforms**

I hope that these reforms will encourage schools to focus on what is best for their pupils, rather than concentrating on what they think is required for inspection. In fact, the new school inspection handbook includes details of specific practices that are not required by Ofsted.

Ofsted's mission remains unchanged. Our inspections will remain as rigorous as ever. As Chief Inspector, I will continue to shine a spotlight on underperformance, even when this is uncomfortable for those involved.

I encourage you to share this letter with your staff, governors and parents. All our inspection materials, further information and some short videos explaining the changes from September 2015 are available on the [Ofsted website](#).

Thank you for all the hard work you and your staff and governors are doing to raise standards and improve children's lives. I know you are as committed as I am to improving education for all. I hope you have a chance to rest this summer and reflect on the year that has gone before preparing for the challenges of the new academic year ahead.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Wilshaw".

**Sir Michael Wilshaw**  
**Her Majesty's Chief Inspector**