

Further education and skills inspection update

October 2015 | Issue: 1

Message from the National Director, Education

Welcome to the start of another inspection year and to the first edition of 'Further education and skills inspection update'. This new publication will be used to communicate key messages to inspectors and providers and will be published three times a year.

As many of you will know, on 1 September 2015, I started my new role as National Director, Education with responsibility for inspection policy across early years, schools and further education and skills remits. This structural change coincides with the introduction of the new 'Common inspection framework'¹ that is now being used on inspections in all education remits. I will be supported by three Deputy Directors, one for each remit, and appointments to these permanent roles will be announced shortly.

I am grateful to Lorna Fitzjohn, former National Director for further education and skills for providing me with a detailed insight into the remit and I know Lorna will continue to work with colleagues from the sector in her role as Regional Director for the West Midlands.

As we have just started our first inspections under the new arrangements, I would like to draw your attention to the final versions of the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook'², and 'Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills from September 2015'³ that have now been published. While these documents

¹ *Common inspection framework*, 150065, Ofsted, August 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/common-inspection-framework-education-skills-and-early-years-from-september-2015.

² *Further education and skills inspection handbook*, 150076, Ofsted August 2015;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015

³ *Inspecting safeguarding in early years, education and skills from September 2015*, 150067, Ofsted;
www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-early-years-education-and-skills-from-september-2015.



are substantially the same as those that we published in draft form on 15 June 2015, we have made some minor amendments to aid clarity and readability following the helpful suggestions that were made. I would particularly draw your attention to two changes:

- **Governance** – We have sought to sharpen the section in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook' about governance in the leadership and management judgement. Governors and those responsible for governance have a pivotal role in colleges and providers. I agree that we need to be crystal clear about what inspectors will look at and this section has now been expanded to reflect this.
- **Recognition of exceptional leaders** – From September, when inspecting providers, lead inspectors will be looking to identify exceptional leaders. At the planning meeting they will seek information as to whether the provider being inspected is either supporting other providers or receiving support as detailed at paragraph 58 (final bullet point) of the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook'.

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

- the supported provider is recognised as having particular challenges, for example a higher than average proportion of disadvantaged learners
- normally, the supported provider 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.

Where the lead inspector considers that the relevant leader has made a substantial contribution to the improvement in the provider, they should capture the details on an evidence form marked 'exceptional leader'. This should include any such activity over the previous 12 months. Following the inspection, a copy of the evidence form should be sent to the further education and skills policy team mailbox: lands@ofsted.gov.uk

Where the Chief Inspector considers that the contribution made by that leader deserves particular recognition, he will send a letter to that leader to acknowledge their exceptional leadership. A copy of this letter will go to the Secretary of State and the Chief Inspector will use his Annual Report to feature those leaders who have been recognised in this way.

I know that many providers have already attended a further education and skills specific event to aid familiarisation with the new framework and arrangements for inspection. All providers should have received an invitation to an event. If you have not yet received an invitation and would like to attend an event, please email lands@ofsted.gov.uk

I look forward to working with you and the further education and skills sector and to writing to you in the next edition of this update.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sean Harford".

Sean Harford HMI
National Director, Education

Inspection and area reviews

The Department of Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department of Education recently announced the first of the new cycle of area reviews and have provided further guidance. This can be seen here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-education-and-training-institutions-area-based-reviews

Ofsted will inspect all colleges and providers in accordance with the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook' and frequencies and types of inspections set out on pages 6 to 10 of the handbook. Ofsted will thereby contribute regular quality assessment of providers to area reviews and quality improvement with respect to providers found to be inadequate or judged 'requires improvement'.

Ofsted will not be involved in any decision making with respect to the outcomes of area reviews and will not be a part of the area review steering groups (although Ofsted is represented on the area based review advisory group). Ofsted is providing inspection outcome data on relevant post-16 providers to Skills Funding Agency for the area review steering groups to use.

As is set out in page 10 of the handbook, a newly merged college will normally be inspected as a new provider within three years of the merger.

Inspection and the Prevent duty

The duty upon further education and skills providers to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism' in the exercise of their functions is now in force.

Ofsted will consider evidence that there is a clear approach to implementing the Prevent duty and keeping learners safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism as part of the 'effectiveness of leadership and management' key judgement. The implementation of the Prevent duty will be considered as an aspect of safeguarding. On every short and full inspection, inspectors will make the

judgement as to whether the provider's arrangements for safeguarding learners are effective.

This is set out in Ofsted's further education and skills inspection handbook: www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-andbook-from-september-2015 (especially pages 38-42 including the grade descriptors); and

'Inspecting safeguarding in education, early years and skills settings': www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-early-years-education-and-skills-from-september-2015 (especially pages 4-6).

Inspections will be informed by the government guidance with respect to the Prevent duty: www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance.

Forthcoming publications

We will be publishing the following two survey reports this term:

- The survey on apprenticeships focuses on evaluating how well the current apprenticeships prepare employees for a future in a skilled occupation. This survey also identifies the benefits of current apprenticeships to employers, individuals and the economy. This report will be published in October.
- The survey on provision for learners with **high needs** explores the difference the introduction of the Children and Families Act 2014 is making on the lives and prospects of young people with high needs in a sample of 26 further education and skills providers. This report will be published in November.

We are about to publish some good practice case studies on **English for speakers of other languages**, and the implementation of strategies for developing provision in **English and mathematics**. We publish several case studies each term on the following link: www.gov.uk/government/collections/ofsted-examples-of-good-practice-in-further-education-and-skills

Sir Michael Wilshaw will publish his **Annual Report** in early December.

New surveys

We are planning two new surveys for this coming year. One will be a follow-up to our previous survey on the **16 to 19 study programmes**, three years on. The other survey will focus on the early implementation of the **Prevent Duty**. In addition, we will be carrying out a survey for BIS in relation to the ICT curriculum.

We will let you know further details in our next update.

Summary of main questions raised following the launch events

What weighting will be given to historical performance data?

When judging outcomes for learners, our focus will be on the progress that current learners make from their starting points. However, inspectors will also look at historical data to understand trends for recent cohorts of learners.

Now that 70% of Ofsted Inspectors are current practitioners, will every inspection team comprise of 70% current practitioners?

No. While we have significantly increased the number of serving practitioners and will continue to do so, the composition of inspection teams will vary from inspection to inspection. While many inspection teams will comprise of at least one serving practitioner, and larger teams are likely to have more than one serving practitioner, some teams may not include a serving practitioner. Our aim over time is to have at least one serving practitioner on every inspection team.

Will Ofsted continue to use subject specialist inspectors on inspection?

Yes. Inspectors will use their subject knowledge to gather evidence from their own subject area and will inspect more widely in other subjects to contribute evidence to the judgments made about the quality of the provision type(s) being inspected and the CIF key judgements.

Where a provider offers a single subject area or where a provider has a high proportion of learners in specialist provision, a subject specialist inspector will usually be deployed on the team.