

# School inspection update

July 2017 | Issue: 10

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## Message to inspectors from the National Director, Education

Welcome to issue 10 of the School inspection update (SIU). I know that Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) across the country will be looking back at a very busy, but hopefully satisfying year. I also know that we are all looking forward to a little more rest and relaxation during the summer months.

The school year nearly at an end has seen us further embed the common inspection framework. When we brought in the framework in September 2015, I promised that, while we would continually evaluate its effectiveness, we would keep it stable at least until August of this year. I think this is important for inspectors and schools to ensure a level playing field and to help minimise schools' and inspectors' workloads. Our ongoing evaluation of the common inspection framework gives us confidence that we can extend this stability until September 2019 when we will introduce the new common inspection framework. This will give schools and inspectors further certainty over what we will inspect over the next two years. It will also allow us to research into those areas that we know require a deeper look during inspection and identify those areas that need little, or no attention in future. We will be engaging with inspectors, schools and researchers between now and September 2019 to ensure that we develop the new framework by drawing on the best expertise and knowledge available.

The school remit conferences in April gave us the chance to hear from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) about why thinking about the curriculum is so important to our future inspection policy work. Amanda has elaborated further on this in her speech at the [Wellington Festival of Education](#) on 23 June. At the April conferences, we also heard from Christine Counsel, Kevan Collins and Tim Oates about their views, which challenged us to think about the vital role played by the curriculum in education. The conferences were part of the launch of the curriculum survey work, which is now really gathering pace. Our surveys and evaluation team, led by my colleague Amelia Walker has been working with inspectors in the first phase to gather evidence on curriculum practices in schools across the country. There is an update on this important work, which will build a firm foundation for the new common inspection framework, in this issue of SIU.



Also in this issue, we have:

- clarified our policy position about the timing of inspection of new schools
- amended and re-stated who from multi-academy trusts can attend inspection team meetings
- emphasised the Department for Education (DfE) guidance on what is required for schools' personnel records and its impact on inspection.

Finally, this summer term we have been piloting a series of short inspections in the South East and North West regions whereby, if inspectors judge that they need to convert to a full section 5 inspection, we do so within up to 10 or 15 days of the short inspection. This is rather than the current conversion within 48 hours. We are piloting this approach as part of the current consultation on short inspection conversions (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/short-inspections-of-good-schools>). We are very keen to hear from inspectors, schools and others on this issue; so please make time to respond before the consultation closes on 18 August. Depending on the outcome of the consultation, we may need to update the school inspection handbook with any necessary procedural changes. As such, any other minor amendments for the section 5 and section 8 handbooks will be carried out in the autumn term, after consideration is given to the findings from the short inspection consultation.

Thank you for all the work you do for Ofsted on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector and I wish you a restful summer when you can take a break.

Best wishes

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

**Sean Harford HMI**  
**National Director, Education**

## Policy statement for inspecting new schools and schools that undergo a change in status

This [statement](#), which sets out how Ofsted will select new schools for inspection, was updated on 16 June 2017 to clarify some points of detail about the policy. This includes:

- the definition of an academy converter
- the timing of the first short inspection of a new academy with a good predecessor school
- the timing of inspections for schools that undergo significant change
- the type and timing of the first inspection of a new sponsor-led academy.

## Engaging with CEOs or equivalents in multi-academy trusts (MATs)

Our March edition of this newsletter contained an article on engaging on inspection with CEOs or equivalents in MATs, and we followed it up with clear guidance to inspectors in briefings conducted over the Easter period. The March article incorrectly stated that the chair of the board of trustees should be invited to attend the final team meeting; it is the MAT CEO or equivalent that should be invited to the final team meeting.

Our IT systems will be updated to ensure that MAT CEOs are automatically notified of inspections of schools within their trust and also receive a copy of the inspection report. However, this will take some time to build into our business processes.

### Implications for inspectors

Until our systems have been updated inspectors are reminded that they must ensure the CEO or equivalent has been informed of the inspection and must make arrangements to meet them as part of the inspection.

The CEO or equivalent should be invited to join the headteacher in observing the final team meeting and attend the final feedback meeting to the school. It is important the lead inspector makes it clear that observers invited to attend the final team meeting are there to listen to the scrutiny of evidence and corporate judgements made by the inspection team. As appropriate, the lead inspector may request that observers clarify key points during the meeting.

Copies of reports, including short inspection letters, should be sent to the CEO.

## Safeguarding and reporting concerns about online activity

We would like to draw attention to a potentially harmful social media challenge to young people called 'the Blue Whale Challenge'. This international challenge, labelled

as a game, is being heavily promoted on social media sites. The reference to 'blue whale' is the first part of this challenge, which encourages children and young people to self-harm by drawing, with a blade, a blue whale on themselves. The challenges continue over 50 days and become more serious and dangerous in nature.

Internationally, there have been reports of several deaths that have been attributed to the challenge. The police are warning parents to be vigilant about this challenge.

### Implications for inspectors

Inspectors may hear about concerns linked to the 'challenge' from parents and through discussions with pupils and staff. As with all such concerns, inspectors must ensure that they remain alert to the risks posed in schools and other settings. If an inspector sees or hears anything that gives them cause for concern in relation to the 'challenge', they should report it immediately to the leaders of the school, college, children's home or any other setting being inspected. Inspectors must also inform their regional management team immediately so that Ofsted can inform the appropriate authorities.

### Clarification on checking school personnel records

Following publication of the March edition of this newsletter, we have been asked to clarify the following section of the article on 'Safeguarding – checking records':

There may be rare occasions when inspectors also ask to see additional information about staff suitability checks, for example if the records in the SCR are not entirely clear. These records could include staff personnel files and inspectors have a general power to inspect any records kept by a school that are relevant to the inspection.

We published this information following a number of challenges from schools who did not think that inspectors had the power to look at individual staff files. The update makes clear that HMCI has the power to look at any records kept by the school or relating to the school. This power is delegated to HMIs and OIs when inspecting.

The reason the update refers to 'rare' occasions when inspectors would look at files is to encourage a proportionate approach. If the inspector finds that the school's single central record (SCR) meets requirements, they may choose to check a few records to triangulate that evidence, but our view is that inspectors do not need to spend much time on this.

Provided the recruitment checks are compliant with statutory guidance (paragraphs 101 to 111 of Keeping children safe in education<sup>1</sup>), the inspection team must focus their attention on the key lines of enquiry for the inspection, gathering evidence about

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<sup>1</sup> Keeping children safe in education, DfE, March 2015; [www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2)

how well the school safeguards pupils through the impact of policies and practices, including the awareness and understanding of these by staff, and the views of pupils. There is no expectation or statutory requirement for the routine checking of personnel files by inspectors.

## Looking ahead to a 'special edition' of School inspection update in September 2017

At the end of the first week of September, we will be publishing a 'special edition' of SIU. In that special edition, we will provide in-depth guidance and updates on a range of assessment and examination matters that have implications for inspectors.

This will include:

- **A further update about the impact of reformed qualifications and new grading structures for GCSE and technical qualifications.** We will revisit guidance issued from Ofqual about the new examinations and grading structure, including using data about the proportion of pupils attaining 'strong' and 'standard passes'. In our March issue, we stated that inspectors will need to be aware of volatility in the system, especially at centre-level, as a result of reformed qualifications and establishing the new grade boundaries as the first sets of data emerge. We will be explaining why such volatility and potential swings in examination results can occur and why inspectors should not be overly influenced by this as an indication of either improving or declining standards. We will be providing additional guidance on gathering evidence about the curriculum, leadership and teaching.
- **'Gaming the system' and patterns of entry.** Since June 2016, we have continued to sharpen our focus on gathering evidence about the patterns of entry for qualifications at key stage 4, with significant subject overlap. We have guided inspectors to examine carefully such entry patterns and report robustly about the detrimental impact this can have on the school curriculum and opportunities for pupils. In our special edition update, we will review our findings and return to how inspectors should garner this kind of evidence in making their judgements about the leadership, design and implementation of the curriculum.
- **One year on from Progress 8.** In our recent editions of SIU, we have provided inspectors with guidance about:

  - how the Progress 8 score is calculated
  - how the measure is relative to the whole school population across the country
  - as a relative measure, explained why the national average Progress 8 score for mainstream schools is zero.

Throughout the year, we have returned to our key messages about the inherent problems in trying to predict progress scores and reiterated that inspectors should not ask for such information from schools. In the

forthcoming special edition, we will provide further guidance for inspectors about what we know from the findings of the first year of Progress 8 and how inspectors should use the tables in 'Analyse school performance' (ASP) and the new inspection dashboard.

- **New data tools for inspectors and schools.** We are reforming the inspection dashboard to make it simpler and easier to use for inspectors and schools. We will be updating inspectors at our September school remit conferences about the key measures in the new style dashboard and why the use of data for small groups and outliers must be treated with caution. The special edition will help inspectors understand how to work with schools when faced with any of the new data packages that schools may be using.
- **Primary assessment.** We will provide a further update about the guidance we issued when inspectors are interpreting teachers' assessments of writing and the continuing uncertainties that exist in 2017.

## Replacement for RAISEonline

The DfE has released the replacement service for RAISEonline. This replacement system is called 'Analyse school performance' (ASP). It is now available and additional data will be added to ASP over the coming months. Ofsted users of RAISEonline will have received an email from DfE in April giving access to the new ASP system.

### Implications for inspectors

The new system will not contain all the data necessary for inspection. Additional data and functionality will be released during summer 2017. As such, **inspectors should continue to use the data available in the existing RAISEonline summary report and inspection dashboard to prepare for inspections, until 2017 datasets are released in the autumn term.**

The previous RAISEonline system will remain available until Monday 31 July 2017.

If you have issues getting access to RAISEonline or ASP, please contact: [Inspection.Dashboard@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:Inspection.Dashboard@ofsted.gov.uk) (link sends e-mail).

For all other queries regarding RAISEonline please contact: [EDD.Helpdesk@education.gov.uk](mailto:EDD.Helpdesk@education.gov.uk) (link sends e-mail).

## Curriculum survey update

In January 2017, HMCI commissioned an in-depth survey to examine the curriculum in primary and secondary schools. Over the next 6 to 12 months, inspectors (HMI and OIs) will be contributing to the evidence base for this new major national survey on the curriculum in maintained schools and academies.

The inspector networks, coordinated by school HMI national leads, will be used to gather information from routine section 5 and section 8 inspections. HMI national leads are also undertaking focused survey visits to some schools. We are working with

subject associations and a panel of external experts to garner further research evidence for the survey.

The core purposes of the curriculum project are to:

- influence wider thinking on the role and importance of the curriculum in education
- inform inspection policy and future framework development
- inform policy making in the DfE.

In the first phase of the survey, our HMI national leads are establishing inspector networks of OIs and HMI; we expect these networks to develop over the next nine months. These subject networks will be a place where subject specialists can share what they are finding on inspection to develop a coherent picture about the curriculum, its design and impact in schools nationally. We want HMI and OIs to join these networks so that across our eight Ofsted regions we have good coverage for the survey. A set of slides detailing the development work for the new inspection framework, used at the Festival of Education, is available on this link: [www.slideshare.net/Ofstednews](http://www.slideshare.net/Ofstednews)

## Clerking Competency Framework

The DfE published the Clerking Competency Framework in April 2017. This document contains the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to provide professional clerking to the governing boards of maintained schools, academies and MATs.

### Implications for inspectors

Inspectors should be aware of the Clerking Competency Framework as it may be used by governing boards to:

- understand the role of professional clerking and how it can improve the quality of governance in an organisation
- help with recruiting a clerk
- set their clerk's objectives and inform their performance appraisal process
- identify where improvement may be required in the services they receive from their clerk.

The updated Governance Handbook, the new Competency Framework for Governance and this new framework for clerking form a trio of resources that set high expectations for the role of governance in the education system. All three resources can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governance-handbook).

## National Citizen Service

National Citizen Service (NCS) is a part-residential youth programme that is available to all young people aged 16–17.

The Government invests at least £1,300 for each young person to take part and NCS asks for a £50 contribution from parents/carers to secure a place. However, there are bursaries available for families unable to meet that cost. To date, over 300,000 teenagers have participated with another 100,000 due to take part this year.

NCS is a three- to four-week programme that runs outside term-time. Young people work in teams, take part in outdoor adventure activities and contribute to their community. The programme offers participants the opportunity to boost their CV and increase their confidence. Participants develop a social action project to deal with a local issue that they are passionate about and spend 30 hours putting the project into action in their community.

Schools and colleges, including maintained schools, academies, pupil referral units, special schools and independent schools can work with NCS local delivery partners to help young people sign up for this experience. The latest NCS impact report can be found [here](#).

## Implications for inspectors

Inspectors should be aware that the service is now established in legislation through the National Citizen Service Act 2017. Secondary schools are likely to be referring to participation in the programme during inspections, for example as part of provision for pupils' personal development or their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors are not expected to reference NCS every time a school is involved in the programme. However, where schools present evidence about the involvement in this, it would be appropriate for the report to comment on the impact of the service on relevant aspects of the school and outcomes for participating pupils.

## Recent publications/announcements relevant to inspections

### National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) analysis of headteacher retention

In April, the NFER published a follow-up report looking at headteacher retention. This report, [Keeping Your Head: NFER analysis of Headteacher Retention](#), followed the NFER's [Engaging Teachers: NFER analysis of teacher retention](#) report, which was published in September 2016.

### Consultation report on change to maintained school governance

Following a consultation on a change to the regulatory framework for the governance of maintained schools, which ran from 12 January to 26 February 2017, the DfE laid before parliament amended regulations that will create a power, from September 2017,

which allows governing bodies to remove an elected governor. The amended regulations also made some technical changes that came into force in May 2017.

The Explanatory Memorandum contains more details and can be found, along with the amendments, at: [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/487/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/487/contents/made).

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