
Office for
Standards
in Education



Ofsted strategic plan 2003–06

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Foreword

I am pleased to present my first strategic plan as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector. The plan sets out Ofsted's longer-term aims and highlights key priorities and activities that will steer the work of the organisation over the next three years.

We aim to improve our departmental organisation and planning, develop greater awareness of the challenges we face over the next three years and intensify our focus on delivery of our existing targets. The plan details how we will continue to meet the challenge of further improving the quality and standards of education through independent inspection and advice, and of helping to ensure and improve the quality and standards of childcare through regulation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Introduction

Ofsted is a non-ministerial government department whose main aim is to help improve the quality and standards of education and childcare through independent inspection and regulation, the wide dissemination of inspection findings and advice to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Subsequent sections of this plan set out in more detail our values and aims.

This plan sets out what we hope to achieve over the next three financial years: the changes we hope to see in Ofsted and those we want to help bring about in the education system.

In carrying out certain duties, Ofsted collaborates closely with other bodies. For example, inspection of certain aspects of further education is carried out jointly with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), and the Audit Commission assists us in local education authority inspections.

Values

Our current statement of values underpins the implementation of this strategic plan. These values place particular emphasis on the need to be professional in all we do by:

- acting with integrity, propriety and political impartiality, and selecting on merit
- putting the public's interests first
- achieving results of high quality and good value
- showing leadership and taking personal responsibility
- valuing the people we work with and their diversity
- innovating and learning
- working in partnership
- being open and communicating well.

We expect to be held accountable for the way in which we conduct ourselves in relation to our values. In our inspection and regulation work, this means:

- improving standards in the care, education and development of young people by:
 - setting the highest expectations
 - seeking to eradicate failure and poor performance
 - stating clearly our views on quality and standards
 - valuing less tangible qualities as well as those that can be measured
 - aiming for an entitlement for all young people to a well-taught curriculum in a supportive environment.
- assuring quality and accountability in the work of all those responsible for them by:
 - assuring the quality of inspection teams
 - focusing on leadership at all levels
 - having clear, public frameworks for inspection and regulation
 - encouraging rigour in self-evaluation.

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- promoting excellence and consistency of treatment and expectation for all by:
 - encouraging and sharing best practice
 - looking out for those at risk of exclusion
 - spelling out these values in all frameworks and guidance
 - adapting and innovating to respond to changing circumstances and in the light of experience
 - reporting independently, truthfully and consistently.
 - protecting through regulation by:
 - ensuring that young children are cared for in accordance with defined standards
 - being on our guard for all forms of abuse
 - safeguarding the needs of the vulnerable.
 - developing our effectiveness, openness and creativity as an organisation by:
 - making our findings easily accessible
 - listening carefully to views from those who use them
 - exhibiting consistent, high standards of professional conduct
 - promoting equal opportunities and valuing cultural diversity
 - working closely with educational partners in government and elsewhere.

Aims

Ofsted's aims are:

- to deliver high-quality inspections of schools, further education for students up to age 19, local education authorities and teacher training, and to provide well-informed, high-quality advice to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills to assist in the formulation and evaluation of government policies concerning education for young people aged 5 to 19 in schools and colleges and the training of teachers of this age group
- to ensure high-quality regulation of childminders and day-care providers, including the delivery of high-quality inspections of childcare and funded nursery education, and to provide high-quality advice to the Secretary of State to assist in the formulation and evaluation of government policies on early years childcare and education.

The underlying purposes of these aims are to:

- improve standards in the care, education and development of young people
- assure quality and accountability in the work of all those responsible for them
- promote excellence and consistency of treatment and expectation for all
- protect through regulation the young and the vulnerable.

In this way Ofsted will support the government's overarching aims, which are to:

- increase standards of education for young people from 0 to 19 years
- improve the life opportunities and employability of young people
- contribute to the promotion of a more inclusive society and productive economy.

To achieve our aims, we need to seek improvement in our own performance. We aspire to:

- develop our openness and creativity as an organisation
- improve departmental organisation and planning

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- develop greater awareness of the challenges we face over the next three to five years and identify emerging risks
 - intensify our focus on delivery of existing key targets
 - improve continuously the effectiveness of our performance within our budget.

Priorities and activities

The business plan describes what we need to do on an annual basis to achieve our aims. They also define the improvements in our own performance we are seeking to achieve. The business plan, in particular, sets out the programme of work we need to do and how we propose to check our progress.

The enactment of the Education Bill 2002 means that from September 2003 our remit for the inspection of independent schools will be extended and our powers of entry to non-school premises concerned with education of 14 to 16 year olds increased. Our regular programme of activities includes:

- keeping the inspection systems under review
- organising and regulating a contracted schools inspection system
- maintaining a register of inspectors
- submitting HMCI's annual report to Parliament on the state of education in England
- publishing school inspection reports on the Internet
- publishing guidance and good practice on aspects of education and childcare
- maintaining a national register of childcare and nursery education providers
- submitting HMCI's annual report on childcare to Parliament.

Within the range of our statutory responsibilities, our priorities over the next three years are as follows:

Inspection of education

- Ofsted will deliver high-quality inspection of schools, further education institutions for students up to 19, local education authorities and teacher training with emphasis on integrity and rigour throughout the inspection process.
- Ofsted will develop the school inspection system so that, in future, inspections will be more responsive to the priorities of schools and the policies of government, and more supportive of school improvement. We value inclusion and will, therefore, seek to be better informed about the views of parents, pupils and the wider community and to disseminate good practice where appropriate. We will also ensure that education inspections are better co-ordinated with other inspection and monitoring activities.

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- Through inspection, Ofsted will seek to contribute to raising standards and attainment. Particular attention will be paid to the secondary phase and to standards in the subjects of the school curriculum.
 - Through inspection, Ofsted will continue to promote race equality in keeping with its duties under the Race Relations Act.

Key activities

- implement new inspection arrangements for schools in September 2003
- complete by September 2005 the inspection of all further education institutions falling within Ofsted's remit
- implement a programme of inspection of the training of further education teachers
- introduce from September 2003 the inspection of all designated recommending bodies for the Graduate Teacher Programme
- monitor the performance of schools facing challenging circumstances to ensure that they make progress towards providing a satisfactory level of education for all their pupils
- evaluate the success of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies
- evaluate the Key Stage 3 Strategy for English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology (ICT) and foundation subjects
- carry through a six-year differentiated programme of inspections of secondary subject and primary initial teacher training inspection programmes
- agree a new leadership framework to be used in section 10 and other inspections, and monitor visits to schools in receipt of a Leadership Incentive Grant
- carry out inspection of special educational needs (SEN) and evaluate the impact of the SEN code and the inclusion framework
- carry out inspection of independent schools to ensure they meet requirements laid down in the Education Act 2002
- examine issues relating to the school workforce, including teachers and other professionals, such as teaching assistants

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- complete by September 2006 the inspection of all 47 Connexions partnerships
 - complete the new five-year cycle of local authority inspections, conducted with the assistance of the Audit Commission, begun in January 2002
 - publish thematic reports examining particular topics across a number of local education authorities
 - contribute to the comprehensive performance assessment of councils.

Inspection and regulation of Early Years provision

- Deliver a programme of regulation and inspection of day care, childminding and nursery education to an increasing number of providers in support of the National Child Care Strategy.
- Evaluate the existing regulatory framework and develop new regulatory mechanisms to support implementation of government policy initiatives.
- Recruit and develop staff to undertake the full range of regulatory functions to the highest standards.
- Develop capacity and the evidence base to provide accurate advice to the Secretary of State on the quality of childcare and nursery education and the effectiveness of regulatory systems.

Key activities

- assess the suitability of, and where appropriate register, all new applicants to provide childcare and educational services
- complete transitional inspections of all existing registered childminders and day-care providers by April 2003
- complete inspections of all registered providers thereafter annually
- investigate all complaints and concerns promptly and carry out compliance and enforcement action as necessary to protect the safety and wellbeing of children
- establish and implement a full programme of combined inspections of childcare and nursery education by April 2003
- introduce quality judgements within a new framework for inspection of childcare from April 2003

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- establish and evaluate the effectiveness of legal and regulatory frameworks for the regulation of existing forms of childcare including the full range of powers Ofsted needs to carry out the Early Years functions
 - develop and implement regulatory mechanisms to support the implementation of new government policy initiatives
 - ensure that sufficient inspectors are available, trained and competent in relevant models and methods of inspection to meet existing and new regulatory demands (ongoing as new initiatives come on board)
 - establish the integrity of the new national database as a reliable source of evidence about the range, nature, quality and distribution of childcare and early education services throughout England
 - establish effective performance monitoring and mechanisms for extracting information about regulatory functions to satisfy reporting requirements
 - publish a report on the quality and standards of day care, childminding and nursery education in summer 2005.

Capacity to respond to changing priorities

- Ofsted will maintain and enhance its capacity to provide high-quality advice in response to developing circumstances and commissions from the Secretary of State.
- Ofsted will ensure that its staff have the skills required, and will build organisational capacity and promote the use of information technology to make its operations more effective and efficient.
- Ofsted will ensure that it has corporate services of sufficient high quality and responsiveness to support delivery of established and changing priorities.

Key activities

- establish a change programme to sustain Ofsted as a high-performing organisation
- enhance Ofsted's risk management strategy and ensure consistent and effective use of project management
- ensure that all Ofsted's dealings with the public will be capable of being carried out electronically by March 2005

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- enhance Ofsted's procurement and contract management strategies to optimise value for public money, including the development of a procurement system delivered by the intranet
 - continue assessing the service needs of all of Ofsted's helpline users in the spirit of the Treasury's guidance on 'consumer tests'
 - set up staff development programmes at junior, middle and senior levels to support increased management capability
 - undertake a fundamental review of all recruitment procedures to ensure that Ofsted can respond quickly and effectively to change.

Working with partners

- Ofsted will work closely with schools, local authorities, governors, parents, professional educational associations and other bodies with an interest in education and inspection, while retaining an independent and rigorous position.
- Ofsted will retain close links with our counterparts in Wales (Estyn), Scotland and Northern Ireland and our partners in government – DfES, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA).
- Ofsted will develop strategic partnerships with the private sector, by best procurement practice, to support the delivery of its corporate aims.
- Ofsted will inform Parliament, policymakers and the public about the education system and its effectiveness, disseminate good practice and provide evidence that contributes to the wider educational debate.

Key activities

- collaborate with other inspectorates and government departments towards common ends, and in particular with the ALI on the inspection of further education and the Audit Commission on the inspection of local education authorities
- seek to involve stakeholders at all levels in achieving Ofsted's aims
- continue to assess the potential for doing e-business with key stakeholders by means of the Ofsted web site
- work in collaboration and consultation with inspection providers, equipment suppliers and service providers to develop partnerships which maximise value for money

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- publish HMCI's annual report and a wide range of evidence-based papers making more effective use of Ofsted's database
 - respond to developing circumstances and commissions from the Secretary of State
 - build on inspection evidence and Ofsted's database to find new and innovative ways of disseminating inspection findings and good practice.

Resources

Ofsted is committed to the principles of Better Quality Services and seeks to ensure that functions are provided by the best supplier. By 2004, 100 per cent of our services and activities will have been reviewed. The focus is on the efficient and cost-effective delivery of objectives and services, and is part of the planning system for new areas of work, including post-16 education and the regulation of Early Years care and education. Besides contracting out school inspections, we contract out a range of support services in pursuit of cost-effectiveness. Through the application of specialist procurement skills, Ofsted adds value by reducing risk and cost.

Apart from a small amount of income, largely from fees and the sale of publications, Ofsted is funded totally by Parliament. We recognise the responsibility that this brings for good stewardship and value for money. We are, therefore, keeping corporate governance under review to ensure continual compliance with best practice.

In the financial year 2003–04 we expect our net expenditure to be £207 million. The funding for future years will depend on discussions with the DfES about our future workload.