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Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief
Inspector

16 November 2015

Mrs Jane Cooper
Chief Inspector
The School Inspection Service
Pembroke Road
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Bristol
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Dear Chief Inspector

Annual report on the quality of the inspections and reports by the School Inspection Service in the academic year 2014/15

Please find enclosed a copy of the 2014/15 annual report of the School Inspection Service, which I have sent to the Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP, today. The annual report will also be published on Ofsted's website.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, your predecessor, Simon Bennett, and your inspectors for their courtesy, cooperation and professionalism during the year. This has been very helpful in enabling Her Majesty's Inspectors to efficiently monitor the work of the School Inspection Service. I would also be grateful if you could extend my thanks to the schools that we visited.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Wilshaw'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping 'W'.

Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

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16 November 2015

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

The Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Dear Secretary of State

**Annual report on the quality of the inspection work carried out by the
School Inspection Service in the academic year 2014/15**

I have pleasure in presenting my annual report on the quality of the inspection work carried out by the Schools Inspection Service in 2014/15. The report will be published on Ofsted's website.

Based on the report's findings, it is Ofsted's view that the School Inspection Service should continue to be approved as an independent inspectorate.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Wilshaw". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Annual report on the quality of the inspection work carried out by the School Inspection Service in the academic year 2014/15

Introduction

The School Inspection Service (SIS) is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect selected registered independent schools that are members of:

- the Focus Learning Trust
- the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship
- the Cognita Group, where such schools do not belong to an Independent Schools Council Association.¹

Under section 107(1) of the Education and Skills Act 2008,² Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has a duty to prepare and send a report to the Secretary of State about the inspectorates for independent schools, at intervals of no more than a year. Under section 107(2),³ HMCI must have regard to matters that the Secretary of State may direct about the form and contents of the report.

The Secretary of State's directions to HMCI are set out in Annex A of the 'Memorandum of understanding (MoU) for Ofsted's monitoring of the independent inspectorates for independent schools in England' (February 2015). Ofsted's monitoring of SIS's work since March 2015 was carried out in line with this memorandum of understanding. Prior to the 'MoU', the 'Protocol between Ofsted and the approved independent inspectorates' (March 2014) was in place.

The School Inspection Service's inspection activity for 2014/15

SIS carried out 33 inspections during the academic year 2014/15.

Ofsted's monitoring of the School Inspection Service in 2014/15

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) monitored three inspections on site and reviewed six published inspection reports.

Findings

1. In their monitoring of inspections during 2014/15, HMI found that SIS inspectors routinely checked and reported on pupils' understanding and safe use of the internet and social media. This is an improvement on the position last year. Pupils' views were particularly prominent in three reports and gave

¹ Under Section 106 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, as set out in the agreement of 13 January 2015 between the Department for Education and SIS.

² Section 107(1) of the Education and Skills Act 2008;
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/section/107

³ Section 107(2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008;
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/section/107

readers a clear understanding of how safe pupils felt, why they felt safe and how their personal skills developed as a result of schools' provision.

2. In two of the reports reviewed, pupils' views were used particularly well to explain their understanding and appreciation of British values.⁴
3. Reporting inspectors prepared and deployed their teams well, providing them with good information before the inspection. Inspectors were clear about their roles and responsibilities. Inspectors had up-to-date knowledge of the independent school standards and the inspectorate's framework and guidance.^{5,6} Inspectors checked the independent school standards systematically and reporting inspectors were quick to pick up and pursue any potential weakness in schools' work.
4. Reporting inspectors led team meetings to good effect, making sure that judgements were firmly grounded in evidence. Evidence forms were evaluative and in sufficient detail to exemplify emerging issues and points for further improvement. Reporting inspectors met frequently with school leaders throughout inspections and leaders felt well informed about inspectors' judgements.
5. In most cases, details in the reports substantiated inspectors' judgements that schools met the independent school standards. For example, reports included useful examples of how teaching and the curriculum improved pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding. However, in two reports, the explanations about how proprietors met the independent school standards relating to suitable careers guidance, risk assessments and the assessment of pupils' work were not convincing.

⁴ Paragraph 5(a) of the independent school standards requires the proprietor of an independent school to actively promote 'the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs'.

⁵ The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014;
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/contents/made.

⁶ *Handbook for inspection: section 2(b) Guidance to professional inspectors for their conduct of section 162(a) inspections*, 01 January 2013; *section 3(b) The framework for the inspection of schools affiliated to the Focus Learning Trust, of schools as members of the Steiner Waldorf Fellowship, and of those schools belonging to the Cognita Group which are not members of the independent Schools Council and its constituent associations including registered settings, which are part of the above schools groups*, 01 January 2014; *section 3(d): Parents' and carers' views of the school*, 01 January 2013; *section 4(a) Guidance on current regulations*, 01 May 2014; *section 6 appendix b Guidance on gathering evidence for Every Child Matters outcomes s162a inspections*, 01 January 2013; *appendix 1 Guidance for observation of lessons and inspection judgement criteria*, 01 January 2013;
www.schoolinspectionservice.co.uk/new/framework.html.

6. With the exception of judging the quality of lessons, prior to the autumn term 2014, the inspectorate provided no grade descriptors for the judgements made by inspectors. During the academic year 2014/15, the inspectorate piloted and published grade descriptors for the provision of pupils' welfare, health and safety, the quality of the curriculum and the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are no grade descriptors for the quality of leadership and management, teaching and assessment, the Early Years Foundation Stage or the overall quality of education.
7. At the time of Ofsted's monitoring, not all guidance for inspectors on the inspectorate's website reflected the changes to the government's legislative arrangements for inspecting independent schools and the independent school standards. Lay inspectors did not always report their findings clearly. In one report, the section written by the lay inspector contradicted the judgements in other sections of the report. In one inspection, the lay inspector did not present judgements clearly during the formal feedback to the school's staff.

Recommendations

Ofsted recommends that:

- the School Inspection Service should continue to be approved as an independent inspectorate
- the School Inspection Service publishes grade descriptors for all areas of the schools' work where grades are given in inspections and reports, and that all guidance for inspectors is up to date
- lay inspectors make clear and consistent contributions to inspections and reports.