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Open consultation

Consultation proposals for the framework to inspect the quality of teacher education from September 2020

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This consultation seeks your views on our proposals for changes to the initial teacher education (ITE) framework from September 2020. The proposed framework applies to all phases of ITE, including early years, primary, secondary and further education. Your feedback will help us refine and improve our proposed approach. We will consider all responses carefully before finalising and publishing the framework in summer 2020. The closing date for this consultation is 3 April 2020.

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Foreword

Dear reader

I am pleased to introduce our consultation on the draft initial teacher education (ITE) inspection framework. It is the culmination of a year of engagement with the sector, representative bodies and the most comprehensive piloting of any ITE framework in Ofsted's history.

The education inspection framework (EIF) has been in place now for just over a term. It puts the substance of education, the curriculum, back into inspection. This is a significant shift away from simply looking at test and exam outcomes.

In ITE, our inspection data shows that partnerships are very successful in the outcomes data they are measured against, such as completion rates of trainees, employment rates and the grading of trainees against relevant professional standards. However, under the current framework our inspectors spend little of their inspection time looking at the substance of the ITE curriculum.

Our intentions in designing the new framework reflect the shift in focus of our inspections from outcomes to the substance of education. We want ITE inspections to focus on trainee teachers' education and the components that make up an ITE curriculum. The Department for Education (DfE) has already published its initial teacher training (ITT) core content framework, and its early career framework, both of which have significant implications for the inspection of ITE. These and the new EIF provide the ideal context for refreshing our approach to inspecting ITE partnerships.

The ITT core content framework sets out the minimum entitlement for primary and secondary trainee teachers in England. For the first time, there is a mandatory requirement that ITE partnerships embed particular content in their ITE curriculum. However, the DfE has made it clear that the core content framework does not set out the full ITE curriculum for trainee teachers. It recognises that there is great complexity to the process for becoming a teacher. Therefore, it remains for individual partnerships to design and sequence curriculums appropriate for the subject, phase and age range that the trainees will be teaching. Part of Ofsted's role will be to evaluate whether ITE partnerships are appropriately embedding the requirements of the core content framework. Equally important is that inspectors will be evaluating whether the content (curriculum) is sequenced and developed in a way that prepares trainees well for the DfE's early career framework.

It is worth emphasising and reassuring everyone that there will not be an Ofsted curriculum that ITE partnerships adopt. Our research tells us that there is variety in the models that are currently in place that work effectively, across different routes and courses. This is why we are publishing the draft framework and handbook

alongside the consultation.

We also know that mentoring is vital in high-quality teacher education. For this reason, our inspectors will want to see that the approaches to mentoring align with the partnership's ITE curriculum. This is key in ensuring that the substance of a trainee's education is embedded in their practical learning through their placements in nurseries, schools and colleges.

Throughout the autumn term 2019, we have been testing and refining elements of the new proposed ITE framework through pilot inspections. The early results show that ITE partnerships value a renewed focus on the ITE curriculum, and welcome the rebalancing away from grading trainees and outcomes data.

We will continue to pilot the new proposed framework this term, using your consultation feedback to test potential improvements to the framework handbook and criteria.

Fundamentally, we aim to put the interests of children and young people first. We hope you will agree that this framework can be a real step in that direction.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Spielman Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

About Ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people and in education and skills for learners of all ages.

About this consultation

This consultation seeks your views on our proposals for changes to the initial teacher education inspection (ITE) framework from September 2020. Your feedback will help us refine and improve our proposed approach.

We will consider all responses carefully before finalising and publishing the framework in summer 2020.

This document sets out our proposals for:

- introducing two key judgement areas only; the new 'quality of education and training' judgement will replace the current 'outcomes for trainees' and 'quality of training across the partnership' judgements
- applying a new methodology for gathering evidence during an inspection

- a one-stage model of inspection
- introducing a short and longer telephone call with ITE partnership representatives
- spring and summer term inspections only

Ofsted places equal importance on all education remits, and will make sure that the new ITE inspection framework works well for all phases that come within its scope. For these reasons, we are seeking your views not only on the overall changes to the framework but, crucially, on how these changes will work in practice for the inspection of the early years, primary, secondary and further education phases.

In September 2017, we published our corporate strategy for the following five years. At the heart of this strategy is our intention for Ofsted to be a force for improvement, by being intelligent, responsible and focused in everything we do. We have applied these principles in developing our proposals for the new ITE framework, in the same way that we approached developing the EIF. The new ITE framework is informed both by the experience that Ofsted has gained over the last 26 years and by the evidence that has emerged from research into educational effectiveness. A research commentary and the final research findings, published prior to this consultation, show where the proposed inspection arrangements draw on research carried out by Ofsted and where they draw from the existing research literature.

We have sought to ensure that the framework focuses on the things that matter most. We want to remove aspects of inspection that do not genuinely assess the quality of trainee teachers' education and training, so that ITE partnerships' and inspectors' time is focused on the things that have the greatest impact on trainees' education and, ultimately, children's/pupils'/learners' education in early years settings, schools and further education providers across England.

The DfE ITT core content framework, as mandatory guidance which sets out the minimum entitlement for all trainees undertaking primary and secondary ITE, is a key consideration of all future ITE inspections with regard to the primary and secondary phases.

A significant amount of work has been carried out to inform and shape our approaches to developing the new ITE inspection framework, which will come into effect from September 2020. We have thoroughly tested our thinking, through engagement with our stakeholders and a series of pilot inspections, before arriving at the current proposals.

Engagement events were held to ensure that we gathered feedback and discussed the development of the framework with those that may be impacted by the new ITE inspection framework. The feedback we have received has been instrumental in helping us to shape the framework and handbook for inspection. We will be engaging further with stakeholders during the course of the consultation.

Throughout the autumn term 2019, we carried out a range of pilot inspections to test various aspects of our proposals, such as:

- the inspection criteria
- the methodology for gathering evidence against the criteria
- the extent to which the new inspection practice, under a one-stage model, sufficiently captures the factors that matter the most and those that are most directly linked to improving trainee teachers' education and training experience

Pilot inspections will continue throughout the spring term 2020, as we continue to refine the new inspection arrangements.

Draft documents

To ensure transparency and provide sufficient detail to enable respondents to reach informed opinions, alongside this consultation we have published the following materials:

- the draft ITE inspection framework and handbook, 2020
- the draft equalities, diversity and inclusion statement

It is important to explain that the ITE framework and handbook document that is published alongside this consultation is currently in draft form; it is not the finished article. At this stage of the framework development, it is intended to give helpful context to practitioners, learners, mentors, trainees, newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and other interested parties responding to this consultation. We will use the results of this consultation and further pilot inspections to shape up the final versions, which we will publish during the summer term 2020. However, we hope that seeing the handbook in draft form will provide a helpful steer for ITE partnerships as they look towards the commencement of the new framework from September 2020.

Purpose and background to the consultation

The education landscape has evolved significantly since the current ITE framework was developed. In the context of the new EIF and the launch of the new DfE initial teacher training core content framework, the time is right to re-evaluate and consider the quality measures that form part of the accountability system during an ITE inspection. We know that the outcome measures that have driven the current framework are no longer a solid measure of quality given the changes presented with the new EIF and its impact on the sector. We understand that it is important for our inspection frameworks to align in their focus on

curriculum. Within the ITE remit, however, there is a two-fold significance when we talk about curriculum; under the new framework, inspectors will be considering the curriculum provided to trainees, as well as the preparation of the trainees to teach the curriculum according to national expectations for the age and stage of children/pupils/learners.

It is important to clarify that we will continue to make an overall effectiveness judgement about a partnership on the current four-point grading scale and retain only two key judgements that are common across all the areas that form part of the ITE inspection framework – quality of education and training, and leadership and management. Users understand and value the clarity that the grading system provides. Similarly, we will continue to allow flexibility in how we apply these criteria across the different phases; the differences are explained in the handbook.

Inspecting the quality of the ITE curriculum

The ITE curriculum occupies a far more central role within the new framework. A priority in developing the new framework has been to move away from an outcomes-focused inspection approach. Instead, we want to ensure that the new framework for ITE inspections focuses inspectors' time on the curriculum designed for trainee teachers, as well as other preparations that ensure trainees are educated to a high professional standard for a career in teaching. More importantly, the framework has been designed to allow inspectors to better evaluate whether the ITE curriculum ensures that trainees are prepared for the reality of the classroom, through sustainable workload and support for mental health.

The core purpose of teacher training, across all phases of education, is to ensure that trainee teachers are prepared to a high professional standard for a career in teaching. By focusing on the ITE curriculum, as the substance of what is taught and the specific plan of what trainees need to know and should be able to do, we will be better able to reflect this in our reports on the quality of ITE partnerships.

The Ofsted research report 'Building great teachers?', published in January 2020, revealed a varied spread of effectiveness in delivering a quality ITE curriculum for trainees across different partnerships. This outcome is a direct contrast to the current status of ITE partnerships, all of which are judged to be either good or outstanding. The research programme has been useful in informing the policy development of the new framework. In particular, the research report evidences that the focus on outcome measures (as per the current ITE framework) may be covering up weaknesses across partnerships and in other cases masking strengths, and this can be addressed if we shift our focus onto the quality of the ITE curriculum.

Coherent blend of centre- and school-based training

In drafting the new framework and handbook, we have emphasised the need for inspectors to ensure that discussions between inspectors and senior leaders at the partnerships do not simply focus on the centre-based intentions for delivering a quality ITE curriculum for trainees. Inspectors will be expanding their focus on the ITE curriculum and how the ITE curriculum is implemented. In particular, inspectors will need to establish the way training at the centre and collaboration with the partnership schools support trainees' learning.

The Ofsted ITE research report and the feedback from pilot inspections emphasise that considering the coherent blend of centre- and school-based training is an essential factor in the inspection process. This factor encapsulates a number of indicators of a quality ITE curriculum, including:

- whether the implementation of the curriculum is supported by a strong relationship and good communication between the centre and placement provider
- whether the trainees are receiving quality training from mentors at their placement setting
- whether the ITE partnership is able to implement strong curriculum planning that is well balanced and meets the needs of trainees by addressing gaps in knowledge

New DfE core content framework and early career framework

The new DfE initial teacher training core content framework (ITT CCF) will be an important consideration during inspections of ITE partnerships. It is helpful to clarify that the DfE's expectation is that the ITT CCF sets out the minimum entitlement of all primary and secondary trainee teachers and that this is a mandatory requirement. However, it is for the ITE partnership to define, shape and deliver their individual ITE curriculum programme in a way that is appropriate for the subject, phase and age range that the trainees will be teaching. The ITT CCF aligns closely with the early career framework designed to support NQTs.

In terms of how Ofsted inspectors will consider this as part of the inspection process, we have set out guidance in the draft handbook that we hope clarifies the fact that Ofsted has no preferred model for the implementation of the ITE curriculum and the application of the ITT CCF. The crucial element of focus for inspectors will be to establish whether the ITE partnership ensures that all their trainee teachers are receiving the minimum entitlement. We will judge fairly those taking radically different approaches to delivering an ITE curriculum programme.

Proposal 1: introduction of two key judgement areas only

We propose to introduce two key judgement areas only: the quality of education and training, and leadership and management. We propose to consolidate our inspection of the quality of the ITE training programme and ITE curriculum within a single key judgement: the 'quality of education and training' (QoET). This will replace the current 'outcomes for trainees' and 'quality of training across the partnership' judgements. However, it is important to emphasise that this does not mean that inspectors will incorporate the same inspection practice in terms of looking at outcomes data. As is the case with the EIF, the ITE curriculum and what is taught to trainees will occupy a far more central place in our inspections of ITE partnerships. When reaching a quality of education and training judgement, inspectors will continue to consider the outcomes that trainees achieve, but this will no longer be a central focus in making a judgement.

The new QoET judgement is built around our working definition of the ITE curriculum and will focus on the partnership's intent and the quality of the ITE curriculum offer for trainees. Under this new judgement, inspectors will continue to look at the teaching and training of trainees, assessment, attainment, experience in placements and progress, as currently happens in ITE inspections. However, the key difference is that these considerations will be viewed in the context of the partnership's offer on the ITE curriculum and will contribute to a single judgement of the 'quality of education and training'. For primary and secondary phases, inspectors will also take into account the mandatory DfE ITT core content framework. This holistic approach will allow inspectors to better focus on the elements of teacher training that matter the most.

The revised leadership and management judgement places a greater emphasis on how well leaders translate their ambitions into consistently high-quality education for trainees. The new criteria places a greater focus on the governance arrangements of initial teacher education, the need to ensure high-quality mentoring to support the delivery of the ITE programme and leaders' work to minimise bureaucratic workload demands. This judgement avoids duplicating areas examined within the quality of education and training judgement. Evidence about each judgement area will be considered separately.

Proposal 2: a new methodology for gathering inspection evidence

We propose to apply a new methodology of gathering evidence during an inspection of an ITE partnership. The new focused review method of gathering evidence is relatively in line with the 'deep-dive' methodology applied in the EIF. This is an approach with which many early years settings, schools and further

education colleges will now be familiar. However, the focused review approach is tailored to the ITE context in terms of the logistical arrangements required to ensure that inspectors are able to gather sufficient evidence that will help to establish the quality of the ITE curriculum.

We have undertaken a range of pilot inspections to test various aspects of our proposals, but in particular the methodology for gathering evidence about the ITE curriculum. The aim was to ensure that inspectors have a clear understanding about the organisation and variety of structure of the ITE training programme across different partnerships, and that this would not distract from the review of individual subject areas.

We propose to visit trainees teaching as we have in the past. However, in the past, such visits usually focused on trainees' delivery of teaching. In this new inspection framework, we will use the visits to see how trainees are implementing the centrally taught ITE programme. Observation of mentor feedback and discussions with mentors will allow inspectors to check how well the centrally taught programme is known and embedded by mentors. Inspectors will continue, as in the past, to meet trainees to discuss their training experiences. However, there will be a greater focus on how centre-delivered and school-based training have blended to create a coherent experience for trainees.

Proposal 3: the one-stage model of inspection

Under the current ITE framework, inspectors visit partnerships twice. Currently, the focus of the first stage of inspection, in the summer term, is to visit trainees during their final term of the teacher training programme. The focus of the second stage, in the autumn term, is to ensure that inspectors are able to speak to trainees who have completed their training and begun their first year of teaching as an NQT. A judgement is only reached at the end of the second stage. Under the new framework, we propose to inspect partnerships through a single visit inspection, at any point in the spring and summer terms.

We propose to carry out ITE inspections under a new one-stage model of inspection, with the intention of creating a flexible inspection model for both ITE partnerships and Ofsted. This means four days of on-site inspection within a single week, including time for inspectors to visit partnership settings, schools and/or colleges.

The aim of the current two-stage model of inspection is to ensure that NQTs have been prepared well by their training provider and to evaluate whether NQTs do indeed meet the relevant standards when working in a setting, school or college. In practice, it is difficult to attribute strengths or weaknesses to an ITE partnership in this way. We understand that other factors have an impact on how well trainees settle into their first substantive post, for example the quality of induction and

support provided by their new employer.

However, meetings and discussions with NQTs provide useful evidence about the quality of the education and training, considering that they have recently completed their teacher training. Therefore, inspectors will continue to meet and discuss the training experience of NQTs during an inspection where possible, but this will not dictate the structure and model of inspection. Instead, we have tailored our inspection model to reflect the need for inspectors to be able to assess the substance and quality of the ITE curriculum.

Proposal 4: short and long telephone calls prior to inspection

We propose a new approach to how our inspectors prepare for and begin inspections. This is based on the need to ensure that sufficient planning is in place that will enable inspectors to carry out inspections of ITE partnerships with minimal disruptions to the training programme and the providers of the partnership.

The new proposed methodology for gathering evidence during ITE inspections means that the notification call to the ITE partnership requires more detailed planning conversations to take place between the inspector and the ITE partnership representatives. This means notifying the ITE partnership about the inspection three working days before the inspection week. The aim of introducing a more flexible approach to the planning process is to benefit both ITE partnerships and Ofsted inspectors by ensuring that there is plenty of opportunity to amend and update what may at times be a complex inspection schedule, due to the nature and size of ITE partnerships. The introduction of variety in the telephone conversations will allow the partnership representative to set out the partnership's context, challenges and progress since the last inspection. At the same time, there will be opportunity to focus the conversation on the practical and logistical considerations of inspecting the ITE partnership.

The feedback we have received from pilot inspections carried out during the autumn term of 2019 reveals that the introduction of more detailed telephone conversations between the lead inspector and the ITE partnership representative is welcome and useful in order to ensure that inspection on-site days are focused on an in-depth evidence-gathering approach.

Proposal 5: spring and summer term inspections only

The Ofsted ITE research report and the feedback we have received during the pilot inspections, from both ITE partnerships and inspectors, have been consistent in highlighting that ITE inspections are difficult to carry out, in terms of gathering sufficient evidence, during the autumn term. The main reason for this is that the ITE programme curriculum is usually in the early stages of implementation in the autumn term, among a cohort of newly enrolled trainees. For this reason, it is particularly difficult for inspectors to draw on evidence that is necessary to form a valid inspection judgment.

As a result, we propose that inspections of ITE partnerships, under a new framework and cycle of inspections, will begin in the spring term 2021 and will only take place across the spring and summer terms of an academic year.

The consultation process

We welcome your responses to this consultation paper. The consultation opens on 27 January 2020 and closes on 3 April 2020.

The information you provide us with will inform our consideration of changes to the proposed ITE inspection framework from September 2020.

We will consider all responses carefully before finalising and publishing the framework in summer 2020. We will publish a response to the consultation at the same time as publishing the final version of the new ITE framework and handbook in summer 2020.

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