

Report on Ofsted's consultation about the new draft framework for inspecting residential provision in boarding and residential special schools

An evaluation report on Ofsted's consultation about the new framework for inspecting residential provision in maintained, non-maintained and independent boarding and residential special schools, which is due to come into force in January 2012.

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Introduction and summary

Ofsted inspects residential provision in 82 boarding schools and 199 residential special schools.¹ This report focuses on the outcomes of the consultation on a proposed new framework for inspecting residential provision in boarding and residential special schools. It includes responses from adults and young people, parents and staff.

The changes to the inspection framework for boarding and residential provision were made as a result of Ofsted's evaluation of the current arrangements and the introduction of new national minimum standards (NMS) for residential schools, so as to further improve the quality of our inspection of residential provision.

The consultation provided schools, staff, governors and proprietors of boarding and residential special schools with an opportunity to comment on the proposed new arrangements for the inspection of their schools. An adapted version of the consultation invited the views of boarders and residential pupils.

This report sets out the views of parents, children and schools on the proposed arrangements for the inspection of residential provision in schools. In presenting the responses to our consultation, we also set out the agreed ways forward.

The outcomes of the consultation

The consultation received positive responses overall. As a result, we intend to introduce the following key changes to the framework for inspecting residential (boarding) provision, which will be trialled in the 2011 autumn term pilots:

- to establish a single framework covering both maintained and independent boarding and residential special schools
- to introduce a summary judgement about the overall effectiveness of the boarding provision
- to make the following four key judgements:
 - outcomes for boarders (residential pupils)
 - quality of boarding (residential) provision and care
 - boarders' (residential pupils') safety
 - leadership and management of the boarding (residential) provision
- to introduce a post-inspection letter for boarders/residential pupils

¹ Data at 31 July 2011 (50 independent boarding schools; 32 maintained boarding schools; 48 non-maintained residential special schools; 117 maintained residential special schools; and 34 independent residential special schools).

- to introduce a point in time survey that will enable us to gather pre-inspection information
- to trial no-notice inspections during the autumn term pilots
- to publish the reports of monitoring inspections of residential provision from September 2011.

Consultation about the framework

Ofsted consulted widely on its proposals for the new framework. This included: online surveys with focus groups; discussions with headteachers, boarding staff and children; and discussions with a reference group of social care regulatory inspectors. Ofsted encouraged participation via associations such as the Boarding Schools' Association and the National Association of Special Schools.

Aspects of the framework and evaluation criteria have been trialled and further developed in inspections during the summer term. The responses to the consultation have guided the preparation of the new framework, evaluation schedule, questionnaires and guidance documents.

Ofsted inspectors' consultative forum

Throughout the period of consultation, social care inspectors met regularly to review and comment on the draft framework, guidance and instruments. Inspectors endorsed a single framework covering boarding and residential schools.

Alongside the consultation we encouraged respondents to share their views and to contribute to the development of the inspection framework. This included headteachers and boarding house staff who we met, for example at the State Boarding School Association's annual conference. Also in the course of their work, inspectors talked to schools about the consultation and encouraged them to respond to it.

The online consultation

Ofsted consulted about our proposals for the new inspection framework through an online consultation document and response form. The adult survey was open to the public from 25 March to 1 June 2011 and the survey for young people opened a few days later but also ended on 1 June 2011.

The consultation asked participants to indicate the extent to which they agreed with Ofsted's proposals, as well as offering free-text boxes for respondents to record their views in more detail. There were 74 responses to the adult online questionnaire and 37 responses from young people. In responding to the online consultation, a number of organisations and groups made additional written submissions.

Key themes from the consultation – what respondents told us

Q 1. To what extent do you agree with our proposal to inspect boarding and residential special schools in the same way and make the same key judgements about them?

Why we asked this question

We were aware that parents and staff wanted boarding and residential special schools to be treated in a similar way and we wanted to seek more specific views on our proposal.

What respondents said

Fifty of the 74 adult respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with our proposal to inspect boarding and residential special schools in the same way and make the same key judgements. Ten respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed and 14 responses were uncertain. Comments in support of this proposal included the following:

‘This will enable more meaningful comparisons’

‘Essentially, they are fulfilling the same task so the same criteria for inspection ensures continuity and consistency’

‘...result in a more consistent grading of provision across the different sectors’.

Respondents against the proposal pointed to the differences between the pupils in the two types of schools and another suggested that residential schools should be compared alongside children’s homes, not boarding schools.

There was no directly comparable question in the young people’s survey but the consultation did ask young people how important it was that inspectors ask for views on how well the school was looking after its boarders. Twenty respondents – just over half – thought that this was most important. Reasons given for a response included:

‘it’s nice to be asked because it shows people care about your welfare’

‘to see if everything is OK’

‘because we get to tell them what we think of our school’

‘we can have a say in it’.

What we propose to do

The consultation showed a lot of support for greater alignment between the inspection of boarding and residential special schools. Ofsted intends to have a single inspection framework covering both maintained and independent boarding and residential special schools. We will make the same judgements in all inspections. This will provide consistency and allow Ofsted to build up accurate comparative data on residential provision for analysis and reporting.

Q 2. To what extent do you agree with our proposal to make a summary judgement about the overall effectiveness of the boarding provision?

Why we asked this question

Most of Ofsted's inspection frameworks make an overall summative judgement about the effectiveness of the school. This proposal provides an overall summary of the strength of the school.

What respondents said

There was good support for this proposal. Forty-nine out of 63 adult responses were positive; nine disagreed or strongly disagreed; five neither agreed nor disagreed; and eleven were blank. Of those in support of the proposal, they indicated that:

'Parents, carers and pupils will find the whole report easier to read and follow'

'it provides a holistic view and judgement of the different strengths of provision and services'

'it gives potential stakeholders a snapshot glance of the quality of provision for boarders'.

Of those who strongly disagreed with the proposal, one noted that:

'To reduce the details of a boarding operation to one conclusion potentially neglects the variety which is to be found in such schools, which are equally good but very different'.

Another said:

'this is too simplistic for a complex issue'.

The young people were asked if the inspector should always report on how good the boarding is overall at the school. There was an overwhelmingly positive response from 27 young people to this question, with eight not sure, one negative and one incomplete response.

What we will do

The strong endorsement from the consultation supports inspectors making a summary judgement about the overall effectiveness of the boarding (residential provision) taking account of the other four key inspection judgements.

Ofsted intends to develop an evaluation schedule for the inspection of boarding and residential provision in schools, which will contain clear information about the evidence that inspectors will consider and the grade descriptors they will use to reach consistent and accurate judgements. The grade descriptors in the evaluation schedule will be designed to help inspectors determine those that best fit.

In developing the grade descriptors, we have sought advice from headteachers in schools providing for residential pupils with autism, severe learning difficulties, and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, as well as those in mainstream boarding schools. We have tested the grade descriptors in pilot inspections over the summer term 2011. Inspectors and headteachers who trialled them felt that they worked well.

Q 3. To what extent do you agree with our proposal to make the following four key judgements in residential inspections:

- outcomes for boarders
- the quality of boarding provision and care
- safeguarding boarders
- the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the residential provision?

Why we asked this question

We wanted to find out if we had the right summary judgements to capture the key aspects of a boarding (residential) school.

What respondents said

More than three quarters of the adult respondents agreed with this proposal with only three disagreeing or strongly disagreeing and four neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Of those strongly in favour, typical remarks included:

'are in line with school inspections '

'are the most important aspects of care'

'seem most reasonable'

'pleased to see focus on outcomes'.

Of those disagreeing with the proposal, none had a fundamental disagreement. One asked:

'why differ from the children's homes approach?'

Another noted that

'care would be needed to maintain the integrity of the NMS²'.

The young people's survey asked respondents if the four judgements were right for inspectors to evaluate and considered whether there was anything else that inspectors should check on.

Of those who responded, 27 said they agreed and eight were not sure. Comments were varied and included:

'we matter'

'so I am safe'

'it is important'

'the quality feels very important to inspect'.

What we will do

With the endorsement of respondents, Ofsted will make the following four key judgements:

- outcomes for boarders (residential pupils)
- quality of the boarding (residential) provision and care
- boarders' (residential pupils') safety
- leadership and management of the boarding (residential) provision.

The same judgements will be made whether residential provision is being inspected or whether it is part of the school inspection. This will provide consistency and allow Ofsted to build up accurate comparative data on residential provision for analysis and reporting. The grade descriptors will guide inspectors toward clear and consistent judgments. The four key judgments will cover the most important aspects of residential provision in schools, by assessing the quality of provision and care and the impact they have on boarders' health, safety, well-being, personal development and enjoyment of their residential experience in school.

² 'NMS' refers to the national minimum standards.

Q 4. To what extent do you agree with the way we have grouped the proposed national minimum standards under the four key judgement areas?

Why we asked this question

We needed to know, given the four proposed summary judgements, if the draft national minimum standards (NMS) for both boarding and residential special schools were appropriately grouped under each of the headings.

What respondents said

Forty-nine respondents agreed with the proposal. Several noted that the NMS were still in draft but generally the comments were positive and included:

'the grouping seem rational'

'they appear to have ECM and improved outcomes at heart'

'absolutely agree with the group NMS as they capture the true essence of boarding'

'common sense'

'pragmatic'.

Those not in favour referred to the need to be more like the children's home framework. One asked for more consideration on the how the NMS would be grouped and one pointed to a possible omission in that students with disabilities and their relationships with others might not be picked up during inspection.

In the young people's survey, respondents were asked whether inspectors should report on whether the school meets all the rules in the NMS for how boarders should be looked after. Twenty-three respondents were positive, two were not, nine were not sure and two were left blank. There were several thoughtful responses from older pupils, including:

'it is important for the school to be aware if they are failing and also for prospective pupils and families of the school to be made aware of the standards of the school'

'because being truthful is good and the school knows how to improve'

'keep the school as a good place with a good name'.

What we will do

The final version of the NMS for boarding and residential special schools was published after the consultation had closed. We are confident that all the standards are covered by the evaluation schedule. As schools are regulated by the Department

for Education (DfE), the view of the regulator is extremely important to us. The DfE is keen to have information about a school's compliance with all the NMS.

Q 5. To what extent do you agree that we should produce a letter for boarders/residential pupils after the inspection?

Why we asked this question

The inspection reports for maintained schools include a letter for pupils written by the lead inspector. Pupils in a maintained residential special school receive a report and a letter whilst those in independent residential special schools and boarding schools do not. The proposal would ensure a common approach for all pupils in residential special schools.

In parallel, we held a short online consultation about the independent education framework and we included a question about the introduction of a pupils' letter in the independent education inspection report. Support for this proposal would enable inspection reports for all pupils in maintained, independent and residential special schools to include a pupil letter.

What respondents said

Forty-eight adults agreed with this proposal with only three disagreeing and a further 16 neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Of those in favour, typical comments were about the right of students to have feedback because they are part of the school, for example:

'they deserve to receive a letter'

'it would be appreciated'

'it's only fair that they receive one'.

However, a small number of respondents said that the format and the language of the letter would need to be appropriate for the pupils.

Those against the proposal noted that as some students cannot read, 'it would be a pointless exercise' while another noted that:

'both day and residential pupils contribute to the life of the community [and] a letter to just one group is not beneficial'.

The young people's survey included a similar question and almost half agreed with the proposal. The positive comments included:

'students can see the result of the inspection and can understand what is good and what is going to be improved'

'because it would be good to know if we got a good report'.

What we will do

Ofsted intends introducing a letter for boarders/residential pupils from 1 September 2011 for all maintained and independent boarding and special schools. We will also introduce a letter for pupils after all independent school inspections. We consider that a post-inspection letter for boarders that comments on their views and concerns will improve the communication and reporting process.

Where the inspection of boarding is integrated into the school inspection, one letter will be sent to all pupils, but it will also include references to the residential provision. In both cases, the letter will appear as the final page in the inspection report.

Q 6. To what extent do you agree that for parents and carers of pupils in boarding and in residential special schools, five days' notice of inspection is an appropriate length of time?

Why we asked this question

Current practice for an integrated inspection of education and boarding provides up to two days' notice, but there is five days' notice for the inspection of boarding. We wanted to know whether five days was too long or just right. Providing some notice period enables the school to provide a parents'/carers' questionnaire.

What respondents said

Thirty-one adult respondents agreed with this proposal while 14 neither agreed nor disagreed, 21 disagreed and eight respondents made no response. The positive comments included:

'a balance is required and this seems to be fair'

The negative comments included questioning of any notice period at all, for example:

'why is any notice necessary?'

'looks to be too long'.

Some wanted to give much more notice:

'you just cannot expect people to respond that fast'

'unrealistic if school is to send out and receive questionnaires'.

Some respondents suggested that a survey could be carried out – either quarterly or annually along the lines of that recently implemented in children's homes. In the young people's survey, 16 respondents answered 'yes' to this question; 11 answered 'no'; nine were 'not sure'; and one response was left blank.

What we will do

Despite some respondents questioning why any notice period was given to schools, most respondents felt that the five days' notice of inspection recognised the difficulties for residential and boarding schools in sending and receiving back a completed questionnaire.

As the approach taken in children's homes of an annual online survey is working well, we have decided to trial it during the autumn term in the residential and boarding schools that Ofsted plans to inspect.

This survey will be sent out to schools in October for return within a given period and the results will be collated and sent anonymously to the school and lead inspector. We propose that where the survey and inspection are some time apart, the school will be asked to tell inspectors what they have done to address any issues raised in the survey.

This approach, therefore, will enable Ofsted to trial no-notice inspections during the autumn term. If the inspection of residential provision is carried out as part of an integrated inspection, the usual two days' notice will be given.

Q 7. Do you have any suggestions for how we can better capture the views of parents and carers without compromising the amount of notice we give to schools of their residential inspection or the confidentiality of respondents?

Why we asked this question

We are aware that the amount of information we gain from pre-inspection questionnaires varies widely and we wanted to know if respondents had suggestions about how we could improve this.

What respondents said

Fifty-one respondents made suggestions. Eight mentioned some sort of survey – point in time, annual, online or telephone – and nine included 'online' in their response. One suggested that the school should be expected to include an element of regular feedback from parents, noting that:

'good schools already have better processes than the central system'.

In the young people's survey, there were two questions covering similar ground. In response to one question, 14 mentioned 'online', six referred to a questionnaire, nine wanted a piece of paper and eight made no comment. The specific comments offered were usually short and from older pupils, including:

'questionnaire online'

'on computer because you don't have to worry about what your writing looks like'

'talk to us'.

What we will do

Ofsted intends to trial no-notice inspections in the autumn term, complemented by the trial of a point in time survey for schools. We will continue to work on further online and electronic solutions to the issue of obtaining the views of parents and carers, while giving no-notice of residential standalone inspection.

Q 8. To what extent do you agree that Ofsted should publish a report after a visit to monitor the progress of a residential setting?

Why we asked this question

Ofsted currently publishes the reports of follow-up inspections that monitor the progress of an independent school. Ofsted does not, however, publish the report of a monitoring inspection of a school where serious weaknesses have been found in its residential provision. We thought this was unfair to schools that had improved, and very unhelpful for parents and placing authorities, especially where weaknesses persist. We propose to publish the reports for all follow-up inspections and sought views on this.

What respondents said

This proposal generated the highest positive response from the adults with 66 agreeing that a monitoring report should be published. Six responses were blank, one disagreed and one neither agreed nor disagreed. Comments made reference to:

'greater transparency'

'that up to date information should be available'

'it will help parents see how a school has improved'

'it is good practice'.

The young people's survey asked 'If we need to visit the school again to check on how it is improving, do you think we should publish a report of this visit?' There was a very positive response to this question with 28 agreeing; four did not think so, three were not sure and two responses were blank. Comments included:

'yes to see if it has improved from another date'

'it will show if the school has progressed'

'its good to get feedback every time you come so the school can continually improve'.

What we will do

We will publish the reports of monitoring inspections of residential provision from September 2011. This was strongly supported by the consultation responses and is now proposed as part of the new framework. We will not publish retrospectively.

Q 9. Are there any other comments that you would like to make about our proposals for change?

What respondents said

Forty-eight respondents added a comment, many of which were positive and supportive of the proposed changes. Some noted that guidance and training were crucial, as well as the recognition and understanding by inspectors of the difference between mainstream boarding and residential special schools. The State Boarding School Association welcomed the assurance from Ofsted that teams inspecting boarding will include inspectors with practical, current boarding experience.

Others commented, usually favourably, on the revised NMS, which were now 'slimmed down' and seemed to be 'shaping up' well. That residential special school and boarding school inspections were being brought together was also commented on favourably with one respondent noting that:

'as there is no real difference between a residential special school and a boarding school it is very useful to have the same framework'.

The best way to gather the views of parents and carers was raised by several respondents. One suggested the need for a more efficient mechanism for seeking views that would move away from paper to electronic methods.

The young people were asked how Ofsted should inspect boarding and residential special schools. Only ten respondents added comments, of which six were 'no'. Three suggested that pupils should be asked more for their views and one suggested that there should be no notice for an inspection. Other comments included:

'talk to the residents at the school and come up to the units on the school for two hours and then they can inspect if we are being cared for'

'do what you feel is right'

'ask the pupils more on what THEY think about the residential side of the school'

'we want them [inspectors] to be kind and say hello'.

Additional information and findings

Parental and school staff consultation, 2010

Ofsted commissioned BMRB to carry out a survey of staff and parents of pupils who attended boarding and residential special schools. Findings confirmed that parental involvement in inspection was considered important. It was felt that two days' notice of inspection gave just enough warning for parental and pupil surveys to be carried out in mainstream schools, but not in special schools where special arrangements might be needed.

The option of an annual parental survey was widely supported by parents. If the survey output was shared with the school, this was seen as a way to reduce the administrative burden on the school.

Children's Rights Director: BeHeard text panel

Over the last 12 months, two relevant questions have been asked of children through the mobile phone texting panel. Of the 57 responses to a question about the length of notice for inspection, over half said that there should be no-notice inspections. Of the 25 responses to a question on whether they wanted to know what the inspectors found during inspection, all responded positively with 12 saying they would like a letter or to hear about the outcome by email or face to face from the inspector.

Ofsted Parents' Panel

An online panel, managed by TNS-BMRB on behalf of Ofsted was used but the number of parents on the panel who were eligible³ to answer the questionnaire was very low (about 20 eligible). Parents were sent the link to the online survey and invited to complete it.

Trial inspections

Ofsted tested the consultation proposals and some of the inspection documents through eight consultative pilot inspections in a variety of maintained and independent boarding and residential special schools. These took place during the summer term 2011.

All the schools involved in the trial activities expressed very positive views about the new framework. They supported strongly the proposal that the views of residential pupils and their parents and carers should be central to the inspection. They all agreed that conducting a point in time survey was the best way of ensuring that inspectors were fully aware of what parents and pupils thought and they felt they

³ To be eligible they should have a child who is a residential pupil in a boarding or a residential special school.

could use this information to guide inspection activity. They welcomed warmly the proposed feedback from the consultation.

They noted that if there was to be a shorter or no notification of inspection, there would need to be clearer information about the focus of interviews to help them plan. In response, Ofsted has refined the guidance for conducting inspections to include reference to an indicative timetable for schools that links interview topics to the relevant NMS.

Headteachers particularly liked the emphasis on outcomes in the draft evaluation schedule. They welcomed the transparency that this document brings to the inspection process, and felt that the grade descriptors were fair and sufficiently broad to embrace the full range of schools with residential provision. This was particularly valued by schools catering for children with severe learning difficulties.

Inspectors also found that the draft evaluation schedule worked well: they considered that the new framework covered the NMS comprehensively and that the grade descriptors would lead to accurate and more consistent judgements.

National seminars

In June 2011, Ofsted held six national seminars in Manchester, Birmingham and London for schools with residential provision to explain the changes. Those attending gave a ringing endorsement to the proposals. Of the 94 feedback forms completed, 87 thought the proposals for inspecting boarding and residential special schools were good or excellent. The seminars were held after the consultation closed and Ofsted was able to include some comments and suggestions in the draft framework and judgements. This was recognised by one headteacher attending the seminar who said that:

'I never thought that consultation could be so effective'

Details of the comments are in Annex B.

Annex A. Analysis of the online consultation responders

Adults

Table 1 below shows the number of responses received from each of the respondent groups. Because the number of respondents to the survey is below 100, percentages have not been used to analyse responses.

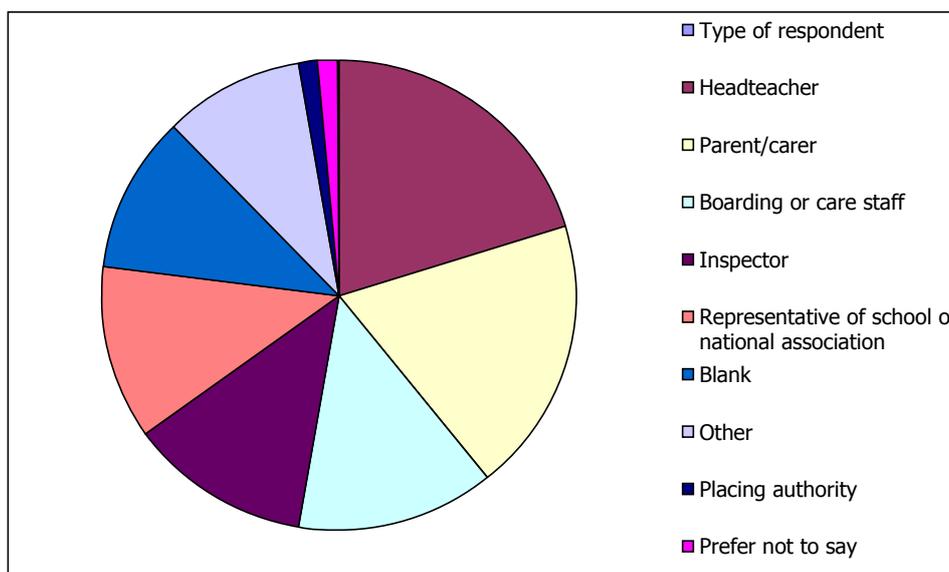
Not every respondent answered all the questions in the online consultation. There were six blank responses for every question: these have been discounted. Seven young people also responded to the adult consultation and their responses too have been discounted. Because the questions in the young people's survey were cast rather differently, it is not possible to count their responses in the analysis of that consultation. However we have taken account of the views they expressed in our development of the framework.

Table 1. Online respondents by numbers

Type of respondent	
Headteacher	15
Parent/carer	14
Boarding or care staff	10
Inspector	9
Representative of school or national association	9
Blank	8
Other	7
Placing authority	1
Prefer not to say	1
Pupil/student	7*

* Because these were under 18 years of age, their responses have been discounted.

Chart 1. Online response by respondent type



Summary of data about respondents to the adult survey⁴

	Agree	Disagree	Neither															
I found the consultation information clear and easy to understand.	50	1	10															
I found the consultation easy to find on the Ofsted website.	48	6	5															
I had enough information about the consultation topic.	50	6	5															
I would take part in a future Ofsted consultation.	51	2	5															
How did you hear about this consultation?	Ofsted website: 24 Ofsted News: 10 Ofsted conference: 0 Another organisation: 8 Other: 15																	
Specified other ways:	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Letter</td> <td>Email prompt</td> <td>BSA</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Natspec</td> <td>Forum event</td> <td>Seminar</td> </tr> <tr> <td>School</td> <td>From my headteacher</td> <td>Jane Cooper nudged the Association</td> </tr> <tr> <td>School</td> <td>Colleague</td> <td>ISP</td> </tr> <tr> <td>As an inspector</td> <td>Local authority</td> <td>NASS</td> </tr> </table>			Letter	Email prompt	BSA	Natspec	Forum event	Seminar	School	From my headteacher	Jane Cooper nudged the Association	School	Colleague	ISP	As an inspector	Local authority	NASS
Letter	Email prompt	BSA																
Natspec	Forum event	Seminar																
School	From my headteacher	Jane Cooper nudged the Association																
School	Colleague	ISP																
As an inspector	Local authority	NASS																

⁴ Similar data is not captured in the young people's survey.

Background of the respondents:

Ethnic origin	Sexual orientation:	Religion/belief	Religious belief (other)	Disability
White: 50 Black: 1 Mixed: 1 Blank: 21	Heterosexual: 42 Bisexual: 1 Lesbian: 2 Blank: 28	Christian: 27 None: 11 Other: 3 Jewish: 2 Buddhist: 1 Blank: 29	Methodist: 1 Pagan: 1 Spiritual but not religious: 1 Blank: 70	No: 46 N/A: 24 Yes: 3

Young people

On 30 March 2011, Ofsted launched a consultation to seek the views of young people on proposals to introduce a framework for the inspection of boarding and of residential special schools. The consultation started a few days after the adult consultation but ended at the same time on 1 June 2011 and lasted nearly nine weeks. The consultation questions, based on the adult consultation, were drawn up with help of the Children's Rights' Director and his team to reflect the specific needs of young people. We are grateful for his assistance.

Table 1 below shows the number of responses received by age and whether from a boarding or a residential special school. Because the number of respondents to the survey is below 100, percentages have not been used to analyse responses.

Not every respondent answered all the questions in the online consultation.

Table 2. Online respondents by age and type of school

Age of respondent	
7–11	1
11–14	5
14–16	10
16 and over	21
Type of school	
Boarding school	8
Residential special school	29

Annex B. Analysis of the boarding and residential schools framework seminars

How would you rate the quality of the:	No response	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Total
joining instructions	3	1	4	52	34	94
venue/seminar room and facilities	2	0	3	49	40	94
content and relevance of the presentation	0	0	4	59	31	94
quality of the PowerPoint presentation	0	0	10	50	34	94
quality of the speakers (knowledge/presentational style)	0	0	8	44	42	94
proposals for inspecting boarding and residential special schools in the future.	0	1	6	68	19	94
Total:	5	2	35	322	200	564

Key data

The analysis of the this data suggests that overall there were very positive ratings with 57% marking 'good' and 35% 'excellent' in all categories respectively. The most popular in this category was 'Content and relevance of the presentation' where 90 out of the 94 responses received ticked 'good' or 'excellent'. It is worth mentioning that only 6% of attendees scored 'poor' or 'satisfactory' in all categories, with 'Quality of the PowerPoint presentation' being the most unpopular.

Summary of written comments

The written comments asked questions on the positive and negative aspects of the seminars with a section for making general comments. The positive comments highlighted the fact that many attendees were pleased with the seminars in general with some saying it was very informative and a 'step in the right direction'. Many attendees mentioned that the seminars gave them a chance to learn more first hand about the reasons for changes to the framework. Many also found the open dialogue very helpful with the ability to ask questions when necessary, whilst others said they benefited from being able to preview the evaluation schedule and the point in time survey.

The less positive aspects mentioned the fact that they (the attendees) were unable to retain the handouts and in particular the grade descriptors document. Many stated that the NMS document should have been available although some did appreciate that this was not possible. There were also a few general comments stating that the seminars should be held more regionally or that the location was difficult to arrive at.

Overall, numerous attendees said they found the seminars very useful and thanked the organisers.