

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) Strategic Plan

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Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer communication

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Introduction

Ofsted has achieved a great deal over the last few years. Introducing the 'requires improvement' grade across all our inspection remits clearly signalled that only a good standard of care and education is good enough. Our regional structure means that we now have a much sharper focus on standards at a local level within and across education and care. We have also brought the inspection of schools and further education providers back in-house and this is enabling us to have much greater control over the selection, training and quality of our inspection workforce. However, there is still much to be done.

The diagram below sets our new strategic priorities for the coming period. As you will see, our aim continues to be to 'raise standards and improve lives' but to achieve our aim, we have developed, through consultation with our staff, three new overarching strategic priorities:

1. **Improved quality, efficiency and effectiveness.** It is critical that we deliver high-quality and consistent inspection and regulation. Under this priority, we set out the change programmes that will help us ensure that is the case. We need to:
 - build on the changes introduced in September 2015 to the way we inspect education
 - review how we inspect early years and social care and who carries out those inspections
 - transform our administrative, professional and technical support.
2. **Improved focus.** Under this priority, we set out the areas for focus as we develop how we inspect, our programmes of thematic surveys and how we will prioritise our spend. These areas are informed by the issues identified in our most recent annual reports on social care, early years and education and skills.
3. **Improved engagement.** We want to ensure that Ofsted is credible, valued and trusted by all stakeholders. Under this priority, we set out how we intend to work with parents, learners and employers, policy makers and influencers, and those we inspect. We want to make sure we understand their views and that we work in a way that builds confidence in the inspection system, reduces burdens and does not stifle innovation.

Our strategic priorities run from May 2016. At the start of 2017, there will be a new HMCI. At that point, the Board will formally review the priorities to ensure that they reflect priorities for the years ahead.

As you will see, our ambition for Ofsted is great. It will be challenging for ourselves and for those we inspect and regulate. Above all, Ofsted will continue to focus on improving lives of children and learners, and in particular the disadvantaged and vulnerable.

David Hoare, Chair of Ofsted

Our role

Inspection

Ofsted inspects:

- maintained schools and academies
- some independent schools
- early years and childcare
- children's homes
- residential family centres
- adoption and fostering services and agencies
- Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service)
- children's services in local authorities
- welfare for children living away from home
- services for children with special educational needs or disability in local authority areas
- initial teacher education
- general further education, sixth forms and other colleges
- work-based learning and skills training
- adult and community learning
- National Careers Services
- education and training in prisons and other secure establishments.

Regulation

We regulate a range of early years and children's social care services by checking that people, premises and the services provided are suitable to care for children and young people. We issue licences to childcare and children's social care providers that meet the required standards. If we find that providers are not meeting the required standards, we use our enforcement powers to ensure that they make the necessary improvements. If they are unable to meet the required standards, we act in the interests of the children and young people in their care and suspend or cancel their licence to operate.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is the Accounting Officer for Ofsted, and is answerable to Parliament for ensuring that all our resources are used properly and provide value for money. HMCI carries overall responsibility for Ofsted's inspection and regulation services. He reports annually on the quality of education, children's

services and skills in England. HMCI delegates some powers to Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and Ofsted inspectors (OIs).

Our regions

Ofsted has eight regions across England. Each region is overseen by a Regional Director who is responsible for managing and delivering the full programme of inspections and regulatory work across education and care.

In September 2015, we brought the management and oversight of all school and further education and skills inspection in-house and increased our regional workforce by contracting directly with OIs. From 1 April 2017, Ofsted will also bring all early years inspection and regulation under its direct management.

Resources

We will continue to take action to achieve better value for money. We have already committed through the spending review to reductions in our core funding of £31.5m from £155m in 2016 to £123.5m by 2019–20. When considering where savings will be made, we will take into account our priorities and values, set out in the table below.

Ofsted 2016–17 Raising standards and improving lives

Aims

Raising standards

Ofsted aims to promote through inspection and regulation the improvement of care and education services to at least a good standard, with a particular focus on outcomes for the disadvantaged and vulnerable.

Improving lives

Ofsted will support the development of a highly educated, productive and safer society, where children and young people can fulfil their potential and succeed wherever they live and whatever their background, ability or needs.

Priorities

Improved quality, efficiency and effectiveness

ensuring inspection and regulation provide value for money

Improved focus

so we target inspection and regulation where we can add the most value

Improved engagement

working with those we inspect, and those using their services, to ensure we are credible, valued and trusted and do not introduce unforeseen burdens

Actions

Embed the new education inspection arrangements. We will ensure that short inspections of good schools and FE providers are consistent, efficient and effective and use increasing proportions of good and outstanding serving practitioners in inspection teams. We will continue to focus on outcomes, not methods and will consult on removing the teaching, learning and assessment judgement from the common inspection framework.

Review early years inspection and introduce new contractual arrangements with early years inspectors, with a focus on improving quality and flexibility.

Review social care inspection. We will consider more proportionate inspection arrangements on completion of the current single inspection framework inspection cycle. We will work with the sector to involve more serving leaders on inspections.

Transform administrative, professional and technical support for inspection and inspectors. We will ensure that we make the most of our data and intelligence and provide high-quality, cost-effective support to inspectors in the field.

Develop and implement our workforce strategy to ensure that we attract, retain and develop a highly talented, experienced and diverse contracted and employed workforce who are motivated and able to do their best for the children and learners we serve.

Focus inspection on services that are less than good or whose performance has slipped. We will prioritise inspections of providers that are not good or whose performance has slipped. We will carry out thematic surveys on the key issues leading to underperformance.

Focus on the performance of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in all our inspections and ensure that it informs our inspection judgements. We will also produce thematic surveys, including a focus on the issues relating to the most disadvantaged in the early years.

Identify and promote exceptional leadership in each of our inspection remits. We will identify and celebrate those who help others in challenging circumstances to improve to recognise their work. We will report on issues relating to leadership, including succession in secondary schools and the suitability of governance arrangements. We will ensure that inspection is not a barrier to encouraging the best leaders to work in the most challenging circumstances.

Ensure that inspection looks at safeguarding issues, including preventing radicalisation. We will review all our inspection arrangements and regions to ensure that safeguarding is considered effectively. We will carry out surveys relating to safeguarding, including looking at how FE colleges are implementing the 'Prevent' duty. We will work with the government on the inspection of unregistered schools and new arrangements for the inspection of supplementary schools.

Promote the improvement of technical, vocational and further education. We will look at the way vocational education is promoted as part of our education inspections. We will give a greater focus to the quality of careers advice and guidance, and the way schools and FE providers engage with local employers. We will produce thematic reports on key issues such as the quality of the 16 to 19 study programmes. We will continue to monitor and report on the quality of apprenticeships.

Work with parents and carers, learners and employers to ensure that their views inform inspections and that they use and value our inspection reports. We will develop our parents panel to consult with on how we work and to understand their views of the quality of services. We will review our Parent View and Learner View systems to gain more insight into users' views of individual schools and FE providers. We will carry out regular surveys of parents to inform improvements to how we work.

Work with policy makers and influencers to ensure that they understand our work and are able to promote it and our findings. We will refresh our stakeholder and communications strategy and carry out regular surveys to ensure that our work is having the desired impact.

Work with those we inspect to ensure that they find our inspection and regulatory work fair and credible and that it helps them to improve. We will limit the changes we introduce to our inspection arrangements in order to increase stability. We will consult before making any changes to ensure that the changes are proportionate and do not introduce unforeseen burdens. We will work closely with representative bodies to understand their views of inspection and will be transparent in how we work. We will publicise and update 'myth-busting' documents to clarify our approach at inspection. We will act in accordance with better regulation requirements and will report on our impact on business. We will make sure inspectors take account of the context within which those we inspect are working.

Metrics

We will set targets, by remit where appropriate, in relation to:

- % inspections that meet quality standards
- % positive post-inspection responses from providers
- % of upheld complaints
- % practitioners on inspection
- % engagement score in civil service staff survey
- % inspector utilisation
- % positive Ofsted Inspector perception
- retention rates for high performers/
- Equalities and inclusion

We will set out the actions we will take to focus on these areas, with clear timescales, in our corporate, regional and remit plans. These will include:

- evaluating inspection frameworks, handbooks and reporting
- publishing surveys and thematic reports on areas of focus
- highlighting findings in annual reports and other communications.

We will monitor how we are perceived by:

- parents
- students and other learners
- employers
- policy-makers and influencers
- those we inspect.

We will do this through a mixture of surveys, stakeholder questionnaires and sentiment analysis and will set targets as appropriate.

We will:

- Deliver statutory programme of inspections.
- Register and regulate providers, taking enforcement action where necessary.
- Support inspections and inspectors through efficient administrative, professional and technical services.

Putting children and learners first

Behaving with integrity

Achieving excellence

Valuing people's differences

Core business Values

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. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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