

# Further education and skills inspection update

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## Message from the National Director, Education

Welcome to the latest edition of 'Further education and skills inspection update'.

It has been almost a year since we introduced changes to our inspection arrangements and I want to reflect on the positive developments since we launched our common inspection framework. This is now well established across early years, maintained schools and academies, independent schools and further education and skills providers. Additionally, the new short inspections of good schools and further education and skills providers have been well received. It is particularly pleasing that 94% of further education and skills providers who completed our post-inspection survey were positive about the impact of inspection on their improvement.

This final update for the 2015/16 inspection year contains information about:

- minor changes that have been made to the further education and skills inspection handbook
- providing self-assessment reports
- myth busting
- the inspection of residential accommodation
- a review of survey and report publications.

I know that it continues to be a busy and challenging time for the further education and skills sector. Area reviews, the Sainsbury review, the skills paper and the apprenticeship reforms being just some of the issues that need attention. However, I do hope that you have managed to enjoy some sort of break over the summer period or are looking forward to a break in the not too distant future.

Best wishes

**Sean Harford HMI**  
**National Director, Education**



## Minor changes to the further education and skills inspection handbook

The further education and skills handbook has been re-published with some minor changes to apply to inspections from September 2016:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook-from-september-2015)

Annex A below lists the key changes. None of them is major and none has an impact on the way in which we arrive at inspection judgements.

The amendments made to the handbook simply clarify changes that have arisen from wider government or Ofsted policy changes. For instance, the handbook provides clarification on the inspection of newly merged colleges and the inspection of sixth form colleges that decide to convert to become a 16 to 19 academy.

If you have any questions about these changes please send them to [fes@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:fes@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Providing self-assessment reports or equivalent to Ofsted in future

You will be aware that, following a government directive, the Provider Gateway closed in April 2016. In their Update 310, the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) made it clear that, in the future, Ofsted would request self-assessment reports (SARs) or their equivalents from you, just as the SFA had done in the past. There is no Ofsted requirement to produce or provide a SAR, but you will no doubt have a similar quality improvement document that you produce and update periodically. We already have all of the SARs held on the gateway as at March 2016.

In December 2016, we will write to you again and request that you send your SAR or similar document to us by the end of January 2017.

If you wish to provide us with an updated version before December 2016, you can send it to [fes@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:fes@ofsted.gov.uk)

Ofsted will continue to request any updated version at the point of inspection notification.

## Dispelling misunderstandings about inspection

Ofsted is keen to ensure that there are no misunderstandings about inspection. You will be aware that we have sought to dispel some myths that have gained currency recently. A number are listed at Annex B.

We want to continue to ensure good and open communication and to debunk these myths. If you have heard things about inspection that you are not sure about and would like clarification on, or you want to let us know about any potential myths, please contact us at [fes@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:fes@ofsted.gov.uk)

## Reminder to colleges to inform Ofsted if they have 16- or 17-year-olds in residential accommodation but have not yet been inspected

This is a notice specifically for FE colleges, sixth form colleges and 16 to 19 academies.

If you have any 16- or 17-year-old students (whether Education Funding Agency (EFA)- or SFA-funded, fee-paying, tier 4 or other) who are residents on college premises or for whom you have arranged accommodation elsewhere (such as in lodgings, a hostel or at the home of a member of staff of the college), you need to inform Ofsted.

This is because, if this is the case, this residential accommodation is likely to be subject to inspection under the FE residential accommodation inspection framework. Please refer to 'Accommodation of students under eighteen by further education colleges', national minimum standards, Department of Health, 2002 and particularly page 38:

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20071001175105/dh.gov.uk/en/Publications/Statistics/Publications/PolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4005629](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20071001175105/dh.gov.uk/en/Publications/Statistics/Publications/PolicyAndGuidance/DH_4005629)

If your residential accommodation is already subject to inspection, you don't need to tell us.

If you have any questions or are unsure if you need to inform us or not, please contact us at [fes@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:fes@ofsted.gov.uk)

## Recent publications

We published the survey report 'How well are further education and skills providers implementing the 'Prevent' duty?' in July 2016. Thank you to all involved in the survey. The findings can be seen here:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-prevent-duty-in-further-education-and-skills-providers](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-prevent-duty-in-further-education-and-skills-providers)

This includes the following recommendations that providers should:

- ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place, and implemented effectively, to protect learners from the risks posed by external speakers and events
- develop stronger and more supportive links with partners, including local authorities, to develop stringent information-sharing protocols and share intelligence
- ensure that risk assessments and associated action plans are of high quality and cover all aspects of the 'Prevent' duty
- provide staff training that is aligned to job roles and evaluate this to measure its impact across the organisation
- ensure that learners have a good understanding of British values and the risks and threats of radicalisation and extremism
- refer to the 'Prevent' duty explicitly in IT policies and procedures, closely monitor learners' use of IT facilities to identify inappropriate usage, and work with partners and external agencies for additional support, information and intelligence.

The report also recommended that Ofsted should: 'from September 2016, raise further its expectations of providers to implement all aspects of the 'Prevent' duty, and evaluate the impact this has on keeping learners safe'. Providers should therefore expect an even sharper focus on future inspections to meet this recommendation.

## Future publications

We have been undertaking evidence collection and visits for our thematic survey on 16 to 19 study programmes, which is a follow-up to our 2014 survey on the early implementation of study programmes. The 2014 survey can be found here:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-16-to-19-education-and-training-the-early-implementation-of-16-to-19-study-programmes](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transforming-16-to-19-education-and-training-the-early-implementation-of-16-to-19-study-programmes)

We intend to publish the latest survey findings in autumn 2016.

We are starting to review our inspection findings for the 2015/16 year and are working to produce our annual report. The annual report will be published in December.

## Annex A: list of main changes to the further education and skills handbook with effect from September 2016

| Changes made  | Paragraph           |
|---|---------------------|
| Paragraph added to clarify that the inspection that newly merged colleges will receive within three years of merger will be a full inspection and will apply to any kind of merger between colleges and that the college will not be graded until it has had its full inspection. | 15                  |
| Sixteen to 19 academies/free schools that are re-brokered for performance reasons and are being treated as a new 16 to 19 academy will be treated from the point of re-brokerage as a new provider for the purposes of inspection.  | 16                  |
| Any newly merged college or other provider deemed as a new provider may receive a monitoring visit or support and challenge visit to assess risk. Risk concerns arising from this or other sources could result in an earlier full inspection.                                    | 17                  |
| Sixth form colleges converting to 16 to 19 academies will be inspected in accordance with their most recent overall effectiveness grade as a sixth form college.  | Page 7, footnote 7. |
| Clarification that support and challenge visits may be carried out to newly merged providers or other providers being treated as a new provider. Ofsted will also carry out such visits to review new full-time college provision for 14- to 16-year-olds.                        | 31                  |
| Clarification that the scope of Ofsted inspection includes loans-only funded providers.   | 33                  |
| Clarification that sub-contractors may be subject to inspection themselves.   | 36                  |
| Clarification of arrangements about inspection of religious education and collective worship in Catholic sixth form colleges.   | 40                  |
| Clarification that the inspection team will, wherever possible, meet with a student representative.   | 77                  |
| Clarifications on inspector expectations around lesson plans and planning documents.  | 83                  |
| Some minor editing of apprenticeship criteria and grade descriptors to ensure that they fully fit with both apprenticeship frameworks and standards.  | 188 onwards         |
| Other minor editing, updating and clarification.  | Throughout          |

## Annex B: some inspection myths dispelled

### True or false?

Inspectors expect teachers to use a variety of teaching/training styles and activities to ensure that students maintain their interest:

- **False** – inspectors must not prescribe any particular style; different things work for different teachers/trainers; inspectors are only interested in how much progress students make.

Inspectors will want to see lesson plans:

- **False** – inspectors will judge overall how well lessons are planned, but are not interested in the specific form of that planning. Inspectors evaluate the impact of planning, not the paperwork.

Inspectors expect all aspects of equality and diversity to be promoted as explicit features in every lesson:

- **False** – inspectors want evidence that, during their time at college, students benefit from equality of opportunity and that they learn about the complex multicultural world they will live and work in.

English, mathematics and work experience are limiting grades on study programmes:

- **False** – they are not.

Inspectors will expect work and tasks in all lessons to be differentiated to meet each student's individual abilities:

- **False** – this is unrealistic. Inspectors do expect, however, that over the period of their courses, teachers make sure that every student has the opportunity to fulfil their potential, regardless of their starting points or abilities.

Inspectors expect to see information and learning technology (ILT) being used in every lesson:

- **False** – inspectors, like teachers, see the potential impact on students' learning of the use of ILT, but at the same time see no particular benefit from the use of ILT as an end in itself.

Ofsted expects all teachers to be observed and graded by their colleges, to inform self-assessment and staff training:

- **False** – it is entirely a matter for college leaders what mechanisms they use to improve the quality of teaching.