



House of Commons
Education Committee

**Appointment of
Her Majesty's Chief
Inspector of Education,
Children's Services and
Skills: Government
Response to the
Committee's Second
Report of Session
2016–17**

**First Special Report of
Session 2016–17**

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The Education Committee

The Education Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Department for Education and its associated public bodies.

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The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/education-committee and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Richard Ward (Clerk), Kevin Maddison (Second Clerk), Anna Connell-Smith (Committee Specialist), Nancy Wilkinson (Committee Specialist), Jack Dent (Inquiry Manager), Jonathan Arkless (Senior Committee Assistant), Simon Armitage (Committee Assistant), Gary Calder (Senior Media Officer), and Alex Gore (Media Officer).

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First Special Report

The Committee reported its opinion to the House of the suitability of Amanda Spielman to succeed Sir Michael Wilshaw as [Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills](#) in its Second Report of Session 2016–17 on 7 July 2016.

The then Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP, responded to the Committee's Report in a letter sent to us on the same day. That letter is appended to this Special Report, along with a reply from the Chair of the Committee and a final letter from the new Secretary of State, Rt Hon Justine Greening MP, on 24 August 2016.

Appendix: Correspondence following the publication of the Committee's report

Letter from the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP, to the Chair of the Committee on 7 July 2016

Thank you for the Committee's report on your hearing with Amanda Spielman, my preferred candidate for HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI). I am grateful for the consideration the Committee has put into the matter.

I have considered your report carefully, alongside the transcript of the pre-appointment hearing that you held with Amanda Spielman last week. I have also considered the evidence available throughout this rigorous recruitment process, all overseen by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. This evidence includes feedback from Amanda's written application, formal interview, psychological assessments and a media test.

This has been an open and transparent process, where the best candidate has been selected on merit. A senior, independently-chaired panel assessed Amanda as eminently appointable against all the requirements of the role, and my judgement is that she was the best candidate from a strong field. I have therefore decided to proceed in recommending Amanda's appointment as the next HMCI.

I was surprised and disappointed by the Committee's report. Having read the Committee's concerns in the report itself, and the transcript of the hearing, it is clear that Committee members' views on desirable qualities and skills were different in very significant areas from the advertised person specification (which the Committee had received before the role was advertised, and had not offered any comments). In places, Committee members appeared to misunderstand the reality of HMCI's role as defined in legislation.

- Firstly, Committee members appeared to question the extent to which the role of HMCI is that of a Chief Executive. As the role description makes clear, the core of the role is 'driving Ofsted to be an ever more focused and effective inspectorate—one where the quality and credibility of inspection continues to improve while value for money increases'. HMCI is personally responsible to Parliament for the organisation, staffing and management of Ofsted, and, as Accounting Officer, for ensuring the efficient and effective use of Ofsted's resources. This is crucial to the role: the new Chief Inspector will lead an organisation with a workforce of 3,000, including around 2,000 inspectors, and a budget of £148 million for 2016–17.

HMCI will need to continue to drive the quality, reliability, consistency and credibility of Ofsted inspections in all of the sectors it inspects. Amanda's leadership and management skills have been illustrated in her previous roles, especially in her role as Chair of Ofqual, where she oversaw an ambitious reform agenda. These skills were also tested throughout this process. The panel commented positively on her leadership abilities, which were also evidenced by the psychological assessment. David Hoare, Chair of Ofsted Board has written to me to emphasise the importance of Amanda's experience in running complex organisations and her strategic skills.

In the hearing last week, Amanda also commented that ‘raising standards is my absolute driving mission’. Given this, I have every confidence in her vision for Ofsted as an organisation that will continue to be committed to ‘raising standards, improving lives’, and her ability to lead it to deliver this.

- Secondly, the Committee’s queries about Amanda’s expertise in each of Ofsted’s areas of responsibility, reflects a misconception of the role. It is not a requirement of the role to have prior understanding of all the sectors that Ofsted inspects: HMCI leads an extensive team of inspectors, all of whom have professional experience of the sectors they inspect. As with previous office-holders, I expect Amanda to lead Ofsted’s regulatory and inspection work, and in doing so, to draw on experts and practitioners from each of the sectors that Ofsted inspects—those employed within Ofsted, and also valuable perspectives from the front-line.
- Thirdly, the Committee’s report is factually wrong in suggesting that Ofsted is accountable for failures in child protection. Amanda was completely right to say that this responsibility rests with ‘those who are actually directly responsible for the children day to day in social care’, while also recognising the enormous responsibility of inspecting child protection and other children’s services. This is an important error in the report. The new Chief Inspector must have this clear-thinking precision, and must promote it throughout the organisation, if we are serious about a fair, credible and high-quality inspection system.

Finally, I am concerned that the Committee appears to have been looking for a narrow and stereotypical representation of leadership, vision and motivation. In recruiting the next HMCI, I am not seeking what one Committee member described as a ‘crusader’ during the hearing. As Amanda herself said in response, the problem with crusading is that ‘you can often lose track of the objectivity, honesty and integrity that are needed to do this well’.

That is what I am looking for in the next Chief Inspector: someone with a relentless determination to raise standards, but also a rigorous and clear-sighted leader for Ofsted, who will lead the organisation and its inspectors to form reliable, credible and well-evidenced judgements about the quality of education and care young people receive.

I am therefore disappointed that the Committee underestimated Amanda’s vision, focus and leadership style. Her objectivity and openness are important strengths and I believe that it must be right that, as we have taken significant strides towards making teaching an evidence-based profession, that we should look for a Chief Inspector committed and able to come to objective conclusions based on what data and analysis actually show.

I am sure that Amanda will generate fewer headlines than her predecessor, but I also know that she will not shy away from challenging Government, nor offering frank assessments of the performance of our educational institutions. I have absolutely no doubt that under her watch Ofsted will play a central—and highly effective—role in supporting and driving improvement in childcare, schools, children’s services and adult learning.

I will write to you separately about what I believe to be a mishandling of the publication of your report under embargo.

Letter from the Chair of the Committee to the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Justine Greening MP on 28 July 2016

Your predecessor as Secretary of State wrote to us on 7 July. There are two points in that letter that I should like to correct.

First, that we had received the advertised person specification before the role was advertised and had declined an opportunity to comment on it. In fact, the Minister for Schools wrote to us on the same day that the job was advertised, 22 February: we were not invited to comment on the person specification, nor given time to do so. This stands in contrast to the post of Ofqual Chief Regulator, when, although receiving a copy of the specification for comment within a working week, our comments were incorporated into the final specification. I think it would be helpful if we could agree that in future the Committee will be given the opportunity to comment on the person specification in good time.

Second, that we made a factual error in suggesting that Ofsted is accountable for failures in child protection. Our report states explicitly that “we agree that those delivering children’s services should be held responsible when they fail”. I am sure you would agree that Ofsted should accept responsibility when it fails to spot systemic service failure: Sir Michael Wilshaw rightly apologised after Ofsted did not pick up on child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.

You will have seen that our Report also includes a recommendation about the future of Ofsted. Your predecessor promised to consider these issues ‘in due course’, and we hope that you will give our recommendations serious thought before your first public meeting with the Committee.

We will publish this letter and your predecessor’s letter of 7 July as a Special Report in the autumn, to ensure that the public record is complete.

Letter from the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Justine Greening MP, to the Chair of the Committee on 24 August 2016

Thank you for your letter of 28 July. I know that you and the Education Select Committee spent a great deal of time in considering the appointment of the next Chief Inspector, and I am grateful for your engagement with the process which my predecessor oversaw.

I have asked my officials to pick up with the Committee Clerk on the particular points of process you raise. As I work through policy issues across my new remit I will consider the wider points you made in the Committee's report.

Thank you again for your engagement, and I look forward to working with you and the Committee on a range of important education and children's social care issues.