



Department
for Education

Identifying schools for support

Government consultation response

May 2019

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Foreword by the Secretary of State for Education

Last year, I made clear in my speech at the NAHT conference that school leaders needed greater clarity on how the accountability system operates and on the consequences that flow from it. As set out in our Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy, we understand that the wider context in which headteachers operate can create pressure that leads to excessive workload that distracts teachers from teaching.

I want to change this. Creating the right climate for headteachers and school leaders to establish supportive school cultures is essential, and reforming accountability is at the heart of this. Accountability is a key component of our schools system, but ensuring clarity is vital if we are to bear down on unnecessary workload and anxiety for schools. In a system where most schools are performing well I want to empower school leaders to drive our system forward with confidence.

That is why I confirmed that we would only intervene in schools that receive an Ofsted Inadequate judgement - and why I committed to consult on a single, transparent way of identifying schools eligible for improvement support, replacing the existing coasting definition and floor data standard. I have now done this, and I thank everyone that responded for their thoughtful comments and feedback. I am very pleased to see that there is widespread agreement that the proposed changes will help to increase transparency, clarity and fairness in the way that we offer support to schools.

Standards in our schools have risen since 2010, and our performance tables are more sophisticated than they have ever been, which means we no longer need the same data standards as before. We are going to remove floor and coasting standards. From September 2019 we will no longer publish them, nor use them for any purpose. Instead, we will use Ofsted Requires Improvement judgements as the sole method of identifying schools for an offer of improvement support. We believe these are important steps towards minimising sources of unnecessary anxiety and workload in the system.

I want to be very clear that the support offer is exactly that. It is about support, not intervention: as committed last year, we will only intervene in schools that have been judged as Ofsted Inadequate. This offer is a way of supporting schools with the capacity to improve to do so quickly, helping the existing leadership team find and access support that is right for their circumstances. School leaders will always retain responsibility for their schools' improvement but we will be proactive in supporting leadership teams, offering free support from high quality system leaders to Requires Improvement schools.

I recognise that it is not only schools judged Requires Improvement that may want to access support. Those schools judged as Ofsted Outstanding or Good know they have the freedom to do the best for their pupils, but we will ensure that high quality, evidence-based school improvement provision is available in the system for these leaders to choose to access for themselves.

I thank you again for taking the time to respond to this consultation. We can all be immensely proud of the thousands of schools up and down the country, and at the DfE we will continue to work to create the right environment to let them all succeed. The changes announced today are another step forward to helping us create a truly world class system.

Rt. Hon. Damian Hinds MP

Introduction

The government is committed to creating a clearer, simpler accountability system that makes it easier to identify schools eligible for support. We consulted on this online between 28 January and 25 March 2019.

We invited comments on two proposals:

- That we should remove the coasting and floor data standards
- That we should use Ofsted *Requires Improvement* judgements as the sole trigger to identify schools for improvement support

The support offer that we refer to throughout the remainder of this document is the department's school improvement offer for the academic year 2019 to 2020, shortened to '19/20 support offer' – or simply 'the support offer' throughout this document. Under this offer, local authority maintained schools and academies judged as *Requires Improvement* will receive a proactive, optional offer of support. This includes:

- nursery schools
- infant schools or first schools
- middle schools
- junior schools
- special schools
- Pupil Referral Units (PRUs)
- studio schools
- University Technical Colleges (UTCs)
- free schools
- 16-19 academies

Schools with two consecutive *Requires Improvement* judgements will be offered more intensive support.

This document provides a summary of the responses received, and sets out the Government response and next steps.

Summary of responses received and the government's response

In total, we received 267 responses to the consultation. Of these:

- 120 (44.94%) were from Headteachers
- 33 (12.36%) were from CEOs or heads of organisation
- 23 (8.61%) were from Teachers
- 15 (5.62%) were from Governors

The remaining responses came from parents, learning support practitioners, local authority officials and 'other' groups - or did not identify themselves.

A full list of the organisations that responded is attached at [Annex A](#).

Question analysis

Question 1

We asked

The Government has committed to introducing a single transparent method to identify schools eligible for improvement support, as set out in paragraph 11. Do you support the proposal to use Ofsted *Requires Improvement* judgements to identify schools eligible for these DfE offers of support?

	Total	Percent
Yes	219	82.02%
No	38	14.23%
Maybe	10	3.75%

We heard

The responses we received show very strong support for the proposal to use Ofsted *Requires Improvement* to identify schools eligible for the support offer.

Many felt that using Ofsted *Requires Improvement* judgements was sensible because Ofsted provides a more rounded, robust and nuanced judgement of school performance than any piece of data can alone. Furthermore, responses favoured Ofsted judgements as the method for identifying schools eligible for improvement because Ofsted reports already outline clear areas for improvement – reducing the need for further diagnostic work.

Respondents were also supportive of a system in which middle, infant and special schools would be eligible for support under exactly the same criteria as all other schools.

Where respondents to this question raised concerns these were principally about the fact that schools judged ‘Good’ might need support too. In particular, that a *Requires Improvement* judgement could be “too late” and that Good schools need support to stay Good. Some respondents were also concerned about the length of time between Ofsted inspections, meaning that a school might need support to improve but would need to wait for its next Ofsted inspection to be deemed eligible for support.

Government response

We welcome the clear support from respondents to the proposal to use Ofsted *Requires Improvement* to identify schools eligible for the department’s offer of school improvement

support. Many of these supportive comments echo our reasoning for proposing this change: that it would provide a transparent, straightforward method which both leaves schools in no doubt about when they will be offered support and identifies schools for this support offer based on their overall educational performance.

We recognise concerns around the length of time between Ofsted inspections meaning that schools may need to wait longer for the department's school improvement offer than if we were to use multiple triggers to identify schools for support. However, Ofsted retains the ability to inspect any school at any time. Performance data will still feed into Ofsted's risk assessment of schools and may trigger an earlier inspection, if necessary. We are therefore confident that using Ofsted Requires Improvement is, on balance, in the best interest of schools.

We also agree that Good schools need support too and we will ensure that appropriate, high-quality, evidence-based school improvement provision continues to be available for all schools when they choose to access it. And, in a school-led system, we would also expect our strongest schools to be providing support to any schools in their community that are not yet reaching the same high standards. However, for schools that aren't Good and need to improve quickly, our school improvement offer will take this further: we will proactively connect their leadership teams with help from other strong leaders in the system to understand the school's needs and access the right support to make the necessary changes.

Question 2

We asked

Do you agree we should remove coasting and floor data standards?

We heard

	Total	Percent
Yes	218	81.65%
No	25	9.36%
Maybe	18	6.74%

Responses to our proposal to remove coasting and floor data standards were overwhelmingly positive. Many respondents felt that removing the standards would help to simplify the accountability system, as coasting and floor data standards created too many “confusing” categories.

The majority of comments took a negative view of floor and coasting standards – with many feeling that they added to pressure and workload in schools, casting a “shadow of fear” and seeming “intimidating, even in Outstanding schools”. This was alongside comments that coasting and floor standards were no longer “fit for purpose”.

The few respondents that disagreed were mostly in favour of keeping either one of coasting and floor data standards – because the coasting definition helps identify schools that aren’t stretching children enough, or because floor standards are useful as a national benchmark.

Government response

We proposed removing coasting and floor standards to remove confusion for school leaders about when they are eligible for support and intervention. We recognise that having multiple ways to identify schools can lead to unnecessary anxiety about government intervention and can drive unnecessary workload.

Since the floor standard was introduced in the early 1990s, the sector has matured significantly and school standards have risen, driven by school-led improvement. We have also changed the way that we publish performance measures. We launched a new website in 2016, that is continually improved based on user feedback. Headline progress measures are now published with coloured bandings to show where a school is performing above or below average. This means that we have less need for additional threshold measures, such as coasting and floor standards.

Our expectations of schools will remain unashamedly high. Ofsted will continue to inspect school standards, and proposals for its new framework include a stronger focus on the 'quality of education' being provided. We will continue to publish performance measures on an annual basis, which Ofsted will take into account as one part of school inspection.

Question 3

We asked

Do you see any disadvantages to removing coasting and floor data standards?

We heard

	Total	Percent
Yes	74	27.72%
No	174	65.17%
Maybe	19	7.12%

Most respondents saw no disadvantages to removing coasting and floor data standards. Those that did see potential disadvantages often still recognised that removing coasting and floor data standards was still the best option.

Some of the disadvantages raised mirrored concerns we saw in response to [question 1](#) – that there is a disadvantage in not using the data standards to identify schools for support, if performance falls in schools in between Ofsted inspections. A few comments suggested that these standards can be useful for local authorities and governors as they provide a non subjective indicator of school performance.

Government response

As in our response to questions 1 and 2, we recognise that there are some potential disadvantages with removing coasting and floor standards. However, we feel strongly that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages: that it is ultimately in the best interest of schools to remove coasting and floor standards, in order to reduce complexity in the system and provide clarity for school leaders. We are very pleased that the majority of respondents agree. We will still publish performance measures annually, which include local and national comparisons. These help governors and local authorities to determine the right support for their schools – they do not need us to publish national standards to do this.

Question 4

We asked

Do you think that the changes outlined in paragraphs 9, 11, 26 and 30 will give schools greater clarity on which are eligible for improvement support?

We heard

	Total	Percent
Yes	213	79.78%
No	14	5.24%
Maybe	40	14.98%

A large majority of respondents were confident that these changes will bring greater clarity on which schools are eligible for support.

Some did raise questions about the support offer itself, in particular seeking clarity on whether the offer will be truly optional. A few other respondents commented that the support provided needs to be understanding of local circumstances, seeking more clarity on where this support will come from.

Government response

As we have set out, at the heart of the principles behind the proposed changes is the desire to provide school leaders with greater clarity, and we are very encouraged by the proportion of respondents that agree these changes will achieve this.

As set out in the consultation, schools judged as Requires Improvement by Ofsted will be eligible for an offer of support. Schools with two consecutive Requires Improvement judgements will be eligible for more intensive support. Support will be optional and we will always approach academy trusts and local authorities, not individual schools (unless the school is a single academy trust) to discuss the offer of support. Support will come from either:

- a multi-academy trust
- an accredited system leader, such as a teaching school
- a school improvement provider using evidence-based programmes

More information about the offer itself will be confirmed in the Summer term.

Next steps

Given the strong support received in responses to this consultation we will move to implement our proposals in full.

We will remove the coasting and floor data standards. From the next academic year, we will no longer publish coasting and floor data standards. They will not be used to identify schools for intervention, support, or any other purpose.

Instead, we will use Ofsted Requires Improvement judgements as the sole method for identifying schools eligible for a proactive, optional offer of support.

Schools that have been judged Requires Improvement will be made a proactive offer of support. Schools with more than one consecutive Requires Improvement judgement will be offered more intensive support.

Further information regarding the support offer will be published in the Summer term and we expect that schools will start to access support from September 2019.

Schools already receiving support based on 2018 to 2019 coasting and floor standards will continue to do so.

Annex A: List of organisations that responded to the consultation

We have not published the names of organisations who wished to keep their submissions confidential. Names are reproduced as given by respondents.

- AAIA (Association for Achievement and Improvement through Assessment)
- Achieving for Children
- ADCS
- ASCL
- Ashbrow School
- Ash Green Primary Academy
- Barnet LA
- Bedford Borough
- Bedford High school
- Bellevue Place Education Trust
- Blackpool St. Nicholas CofE primary school
- Blaise Primary School
- Boothferry Primary
- Bourne Westfield Primary Academy
- Castle Wood Academy
- Catholic Education Service
- Catshill Middle School
- Central Cooperative Learning Trust
- Charles Dickens Primary School
- Chesswood Junior School
- Cidari Education Multi Academy Trust
- Co-op Academies Trust
- CPTSA
- Deepings School
- Devonport High School For Boys
- Dorchester Middle School

- EdisonLearning
- Education Reform Society UK
- Empower Learning Academy Trust
- Exploring Choices
- Fairfield Endowed CE Junior School
- Fairlands Middle School
- Fen Drayton Primary School
- Fixby Junior and Infant School
- Forest View Primary School
- Gidea Park Primary School
- Gilmour Junior School
- Griffin Schools Trust
- Haydn Primary School
- Heatherlands Primary School
- Ibstock Junior School
- Jacobstow Primary School
- Junior School Collaboration (JUSCO)
- Kensington Primary
- KCC - The Education People
- Leading Learning Forward / St Hughs School
- LeadershipWise Ltd
- Leeds CC
- Maidenbower Junior School
- Manorfield Primary School
- Marazion School
- Matrix Academy Trust
- Mayfield Primary
- Montpelier Primary School
- NAHT
- NASUWT
- National Foundation for Educational Research

- National Governance Association
- National Leaders of Governance for East of England and NE London
- National Middle Schools Forum
- Newlaithes Infant School
- NEU
- Norfolk County Council Children's Services Education Quality Assurance and Intervention Service
- North Carr Collaborative Academy Trust
- Oakfield Academy
- Octavo Partnership Ltd
- Old Leake Primary School
- Pearl Hyde Primary School
- Peterborough City Council
- Portswood Primary Academy trust
- Potential in Everyone Academy Trust
- Priory School
- Ravenor Primary School
- Rimrose Hope CE Primary
- Romsey Abbey CE Primary School
- St Andrew's CofE Primary School
- ST. Catherine's CE Primary School
- St Mark's Primary School
- St Paul's CoE VA Primary School. Cambridge
- St. Peter's Junior School
- St Peter's Junior School Ruddington
- Sandwell Borough Council
- Selby Community Primary School
- Severndale Specialist Scademy
- Southborough Primary School
- Southern Road Primary School
- South Petherwin School

- Staffordshire University Academies Trust
- Stokes Wood Primary School
- Teach Manchester Teaching School Allinace
- @TeacherToolkit
- @TeacherToolkit Ltd.
- The City of Leicester College
- The Fairlawn and Haseltine Federation
- The MFG Academies Trust
- Trinity Academy London
- University of Surrey; Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics
- Westbourne Primary School
- West Education Ltd.
- West Lakes Multi-Academy Trust
- Wey House School
- Wycombe and Marlow Teaching School Alliance



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