Ofsted

Main findings: further education and skills inspections and outcomes, as at 29 February 2020

Ofsted's inspections and other visits to providers

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Introduction

This is the main findings report for the further education and skills inspections and outcomes as at 29 February 2020 as at 31 March 2020. Supplementary documents are also available:

- underlying data
- technical notes
- pre-release access list

Inspection

This is the latest report for the further education and skills inspections and outcomes as at 29 February 2020 as at 31 March 2020. Supplementary documents are also available:

- underlying data
- technical notes
- pre-release access list

Inspection ratings

To be assessed as:

- passionate about for the most recent inspections and outcomes as at 29 February 2020
- passionate about for inspections and monitoring visits carried out between 1 April 2019 and 29 February 2020
- worked about by the inspection and monitoring visits carried out between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2019

We carried out inspections between 1 September 2019 using the education inspection framework (EIF). We replaced the common inspection framework, which we used to inspect providers from 2019 to 2020. We also made official statistics release relating to inspections of further education and skills providers under the EIF.

Inspections of provider's EIF as at this release

All routine inspections and the publication of inspection reports were suspended on 18 March 2020. Ofsted's inspection and monitoring activity was rebalanced. However, there were 1,000 inspections and monitoring visits and the reports were not published by the cut-off date of 31 March 2020. The inspections and monitoring visits carried out in February are included in this publication.

The number of further education and skills providers has stabilised this reporting year. This marks a break in the trend over the past 2 academic years. Nevertheless, the increase in the number of providers we were inspected is expected.

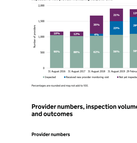
The proportion of providers not yet inspected or visited as at 29 February 2020 was 13%. This is slightly higher than the proportion as at 31 August 2017 before the further education and skills provider base rapidly expanded (see Figure 2).

Between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020, the proportion of providers inspected and judged to be good or outstanding was 67%. This is a slight increase from the 66% of providers we had inspected and judged to be good or outstanding at the same point last year. In 2019 we focused on carrying out a large volume of new provider monitoring visits. As such, the year-on-year figures are not directly comparable.

Three quarters of providers that were judged to be making sufficient progress across all themes in their new provider monitoring visit, monitoring visit, and second monitoring visit between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020, were judged good.

Of the 8 providers and young offender institutions that were previously judged good, 3 declined to improve (improvement and one declined to inadequate).

Figure 1: Further education and skills providers most recently receiving an inspection or new provider monitoring visit, over time



Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

Provider numbers, inspection volumes and outcomes

Provider numbers

The number of further education and skills providers has stabilised this reporting year.

On 29 February 2020, there were 1,884 further education and skills providers in scope of inspection. This is a decrease of 24 providers from the 1,908 on Ofsted's system on 29 February 2019 (see Figure 2). This marks a break in the trend over the past 2 academic years. The number of providers in scope increased or 31 August 2017 and 31 August 2018 by 7.8% and 2.9 respectively. Nevertheless, the number of providers in scope has stabilised this reporting year (see Figure 2).

As at 29 February 2020, 1,434 (67%) of the 1,884 open and funded further education and skills providers had been inspected and monitored under the EIF an inspection. This means 13% of the providers that we had not yet inspected or visited as at 29 February 2020. This is slightly higher than the proportion of providers, inclusive of independent providers, that we had not yet inspected or visited as at 29 February 2019, which was 12% (see Figure 2). 10% (8 of 29 Ofsted-rated independent providers) of the independent further education providers, inclusive of independent providers, that we had not yet inspected or visited as at 29 February 2020, were to 30 June 2020 or later. 12% (4 of 33 Ofsted-rated independent providers) of the independent further education providers, inclusive of independent providers, that we had not yet inspected or visited as at 29 February 2019, were to 31 December 2019 or later.

The number of independent learning providers (including sector specialist providers) to decline, as established colleges merge together to form new entities. Since 1 September 2015, 14 independent learning providers have merged to form 6 new providers. Since 1 September 2015, 4 independent learning providers have merged to form 2 general further education colleges and a sixth form college. As at 29 February 2020, 2 independent learning providers have merged to form a new sixth form college (Ofsted's ratings).

The number of the 16 academies has increased by 3 since 1 September 2019, to 2 now. 9 (56%) of the academies, inclusive of independent providers, to become 16 to 19 academies. As at 29 February 2020, there were 57 16 to 19 academies.

The number of sixth form colleges that we report on continues to decline. As at 29 February 2020, there were 50 sixth form colleges inspected or visited. As at 29 February 2019, 2 sixth form colleges merged and 2 have academised. As at 29 February 2020, there were 50 sixth form colleges recorded on Ofsted's system.

The number of independent learning providers (including sector specialist providers) to decline, as established colleges merge together to form new entities. Since 1 September 2015, 14 independent learning providers have merged to form 6 new providers. Since 1 September 2015, 4 independent learning providers have merged to form 2 general further education colleges and a sixth form college. As at 29 February 2020, 2 independent learning providers have merged to form a new sixth form college (Ofsted's ratings).

The number of the 16 academies has increased by 3 since 1 September 2019, to 2 now. 9 (56%) of the academies, inclusive of independent providers, to become 16 to 19 academies. As at 29 February 2020, there were 57 16 to 19 academies.

The number of sixth form colleges that we report on continues to decline. As at 29 February 2020, there were 50 sixth form colleges inspected or visited. As at 29 February 2019, 2 sixth form colleges merged and 2 have academised. As at 29 February 2020, there were 50 sixth form colleges recorded on Ofsted's system.

The number of independent learning providers (including sector specialist providers) has declined by 15 (-16.1%) as at 29 February 2020. Between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020, 2 independent learning providers have merged to form 1 new independent learning provider, including, training organisations, skills 21 providers, which were no longer funded and had stopped delivering.

Figure 2: Balance of inspections and monitoring visits, by reporting year

In-year new provider monitoring visit outcomes

Aimed a quarter of apprenticeship providers were making insufficient progress in one or more areas at their new provider monitoring visit.

At Ofsted of the 140 new provider monitoring visits to apprenticeship providers were to independently providing provider monitoring visits, 2 providers, 1.4% were to other 3 were to higher education institutions. Overall, 76% of providers were judged to be making sufficient progress across all themes in their new provider monitoring visit. This means 24% were judged to be making insufficient progress in one or more areas.

Table 1: Apprenticeship new provider monitoring visit outcomes, between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020

Provider type	Sufficient progress across all themes	Insufficient progress in one or more areas	Total
Independent providers	106	33	139
Higher education institutions	3	0	3
Grand total	109	33	142

Percentage of providers judged to be making sufficient progress across all themes

Provider type	Percentage
Independent providers	76%
Higher education institutions	100%
Grand total	77%

Sixty-nine providers were inspected or visited as at 29 February 2020 of the 140 providers that were to independently providing provider monitoring visits, 49 providers, 71% were judged to be making sufficient progress across all themes in their new provider monitoring visit. Of the other providers were judged to be making reasonable or significant progress across all themes.

There were also 10 safeguarding follow-up visits, after safeguarding concerns were raised at 10 providers. Nine providers were judged to be making sufficient progress across all themes and one had to be making insufficient progress in its safeguarding.

From new provider monitoring visit to first full inspection

Three quarters of providers that were judged to be making reasonable or significant progress across all themes in their new provider monitoring visit, second monitoring visit, and first full inspection between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020.

Between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020, we inspected 64 providers for the first time since we had made a new provider monitoring visit. Three quarters of providers that were judged to be making reasonable or significant progress across all themes in their new provider monitoring visit, were judged good at their first full inspection. Of the providers that were judged to be making sufficient progress across all themes in their new provider monitoring visit, were judged to be good or better at their first full inspection. Of the providers that were judged to be making reasonable or significant progress across all themes in their new provider monitoring visit, were judged to be good or better at their first full inspection.

Table 2: Overall effectiveness at first full inspection between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020, of providers that were judged to be making reasonable or significant progress

New provider monitoring visit outcomes	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Reasonable or significant progress across all themes (page 28)	0	37	19	0
Sufficient progress in all themes (page 8)	0	3	5	0
Number of inspections in Scotland	0	0	0	0

Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100. When the number of providers is small, percentages should be treated with caution.

1. The Ofsted-rated independent learning providers (including sector specialist providers) inclusive of independent providers, local authority providers, independent specialist colleges and dance and drama colleges.

The first 3 year cycle of short inspections concluded on 31 August 2018. It included providers that had been judged good at their previous inspection. Providers judged good to be outstanding at their 3 short inspections being carried out at the end of their 3 short inspections being carried out at the end of their 3 short inspections. Providers judged good to be outstanding at their 3 short inspections (including those that converted to full inspections).

Between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020, the proportion of providers judged to be outstanding at their 3 short inspections, 3 (1.4%) providers, was slightly higher than in 2018/19, which is largely due to 2 providers inspected being included within the range of inspection activity this year.

Figure 4: Further education and skills providers' full and short inspection outcomes, by reporting year

Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100. When the number of providers is small, percentages should be treated with caution.

1. The Ofsted-rated independent learning providers (including sector specialist providers) inclusive of independent providers, local authority providers, independent specialist colleges and dance and drama colleges.

Historically, around 40% of the providers that received a short inspection in a year were judged to be outstanding at their next full inspection (including those that converted to a full inspection) and just over 50% of the providers that were judged to be outstanding at their next full inspection (including those that converted to a full inspection) had to wait 3 years for their next full inspection.

Of the 166 providers inspected between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020, 3 (1.8%) were judged to be outstanding at their short inspection. Of the 3 providers were judged to be outstanding at their short inspection, 2 (66%) were inspected for the first time since they were first inspected in 2017 and 2018 and had declined to inadequate. One was the first inspection of a merged sixth form college. The other provider was inspected for the first time.

Most recent inspection outcomes

The proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection has declined by one percentage point.

On 29 February 2020, 58% of the 1,884 further education and skills providers had received a full inspection under the EIF. 56% were judged to be good or outstanding at their most recent inspection. This is a decrease of one percentage point compared to 29 February 2020.

The proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection can be affected by:

- providers whose last inspection grades were inspected, or declined, under previous frameworks
- new providers receiving their first full inspection (which are inadequate)
- Ofsted no longer reporting on providers because they have merged, ceased to be funded or have closed (inadequate)

Between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020, the group that had the highest proportion of providers judged good or outstanding was the other providers. This means that providers in scope of inspection had the most effectiveness judgement compared with other groups of providers (see Figure 5).

The proportion of providers in scope of inspection judged good or outstanding was 54%, which was lower than the overall proportion judged good or outstanding. This is a decrease of 2 percentage points from 31 August 2019. The proportion of providers in scope of inspection judged to be outstanding at their most recent inspection, or outstanding by one percentage point.

Figure 5: Overall effectiveness at further education and skills providers' most recent inspection, as at 29 February 2020

Number of providers in scope, excluding provider type groups with fewer than 10 providers. When the number of providers is small, percentages should be treated with caution.

1. The Ofsted-rated independent learning providers (including sector specialist providers) inclusive of independent providers, local authority providers, independent specialist colleges and dance and drama colleges.

Outcomes by provider group

General further education colleges

Almost half of the general further education colleges active on 31 August 2019 have been through a merger.

In 2015, the government launched its review of post-16 education and training institutions and technical education. The review's final report, published in 2016, recommended that there should be a wave of mergers and college closures.

As at August 2019, there were 208 active general further education colleges recorded on Ofsted's system. Since that time, almost half of the colleges (96) have been involved in a merger. Of the 96 colleges involved in a merger, 2 have reported to RSM as at 29 February 2020. Although the number of colleges that report on has reduced by 78%, the original college cohort continues to deliver provision and to be inspected and monitored under the EIF. Ofsted has merged colleges into one group for reporting purposes from the first time the predecessor colleges and will not have an overall effectiveness judgement until 2 years after the merger.

We had previously reported on all the general further education colleges that merged. Most of the outstanding colleges did not merge (25 out of 34). Nevertheless, 9 outstanding colleges have been involved in a merger and have maintained and through the merger process.

Figure 6: General further education college grade profile as at 29 August 2019 and 29 February 2020

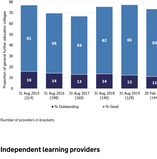
1. Includes 2 sixth form colleges and one sixth form college which converted to a general further education college. The number of providers under the Ofsted-rated grade for the first time.

Since 2015, 90 of the general further education colleges that did not merge have been inspected and monitored under the EIF. Of the 90 colleges, 2 have not received inspection outcomes under the EIF. Ofsted judgements of merger remained similar to the overall profile before the mergers, with 79% being judged good or outstanding.

As at 29 February 2020, we had inspected 23 of the 46 general further education colleges that had been through a merger. Of the 23 colleges, 19 (83%) were judged good or outstanding. Of the 19 colleges, 2 (10%) were judged to be outstanding. Only 1 (4%) was judged to be inadequate. Of the 23 colleges, 2 (9%) were judged to be outstanding, 17 (74%) were good and 4 (17%) were inadequate.

Overall, the proportion of general further education colleges that had been through a merger and judged good or outstanding has increased by 4 percentage points (79% as at 29 February 2020). This is a decrease of 4 percentage points compared with 31 August 2019. The group that had the biggest impact on the overall proportion judged good or outstanding was the colleges that had not been through a merger. The proportion of these colleges judged good or outstanding has decreased by 8 percentage points (83% as at 29 February 2020).

Figure 7: Overall effectiveness of general further education colleges at their most recent inspection, over time



Number of providers in brackets.

Independent learning providers

The proportion of independent learning providers (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding declined for the fourth year.

Between 31 August 2017 and 31 August 2019, the number of independent learning providers (including employer providers) recorded on Ofsted's systems rose by 143%, from 491 to 1,192. This was mainly as a result of the apprenticeship funding reforms introduced in April 2017. However, so far this reporting year, there has been a very small decrease of 11, to 1,181 providers as of 29 February 2020. This change was the result of 24 providers becoming publicly funded and starting to deliver education, training or apprenticeships, and 35 providers that were no longer funded and had stopped delivering.

Between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020, we inspected 74 independent learning providers and 11 employer providers. In total, there were 69 full inspections and 16 short inspections (including those that converted to full inspections).

Overall, 59% of providers were judged good, and none were judged outstanding. This is an increase of 17 percentage points compared with the proportion of providers judged good or outstanding in 2018/19. The increase can be attributed to the return of short inspections and a higher proportion of providers being judged good at their most recent inspection. In 2018/19, no providers were judged good or outstanding at their first inspection. So far this reporting year, 53% of providers were judged good at their first inspection.

Figure 8: First full inspection outcome for independent learning providers (including employer providers), by reporting year

Number of inspections in brackets.

Although the proportion of independent learning providers (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020 was higher than the previous reporting year, overall the proportion of providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection declined by 1 percentage point, from 76% as at 31 August 2019 to 74% as at 29 February 2020. The decrease was due to a combination of factors:

- a much lower proportion of newly inspected providers were judged good or outstanding than the proportion as at 31 August 2019
- a larger number of newly inspected providers that previously inspected providers which left our data
- more providers declined from good or outstanding to requires improvement or inadequate, than improved

This is the fourth year there has been a decline in the proportion of independent learning providers (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding.

Figure 9: Proportion of independent learning providers (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection, over time

Number of providers in brackets.

Other further education and skills providers

Table 3: Summary of main findings for provider groups with between 5 and 29 inspections

Provider type/group	No. of providers on 29 February 2020	No. of inspections between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020	Main findings
Community learning and skills providers	210	9 full, 16 short (all remained good)	Two providers improved from requires improvement to good. One provider declined from good to requires improvement. The overall proportion of community learning and skills providers judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection as at 29 February 2020, remained at 92%.
Sixth-form colleges	51	7 full, 2 short (both remained good)	One sixth-form college improved from requires improvement to good. The one sixth-form college inspected following a merger was judged inadequate. The overall proportion of sixth-form colleges judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection as at 29 February 2020, remained at 88%.
16 to 19 academies	57	6 full, 3 short (2 converted to full inspection)	Three academies improved from requires improvement to good and one academy declined from good to requires improvement. One academy that had not been previously inspected was inspected for the first time. The overall proportion of academies judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection as at 29 February 2020 increased by 4 percentage points to 81% and the proportion judged outstanding increased by 4 percentage points to 14%.
Independent specialist colleges	98	8 full, 2 short (both remained good)	One previously outstanding independent specialist college declined to requires improvement. Two specialist colleges were judged good including 2 that improved from requires improvement. One independent specialist college remained requires improvement. The overall proportion of independent specialist colleges judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection as at 29 February 2020, increased by 5 percentage points to 76%.

Prisons and young offender institutions

Of the 8 prisons and young offender institutions that were previously judged good, 5 declined to requires improvement and one declined to inadequate.

On 29 February 2020, there were 114 prisons and young offender institutions. All of these had been inspected.

Ofsted contributed to 20 prison and young offender institution inspections where the reports were published between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020. All of the prisons and young offender institutions had previously been inspected. Most of the prisons and young offender institutions previously judged good declined at inspection and most of those that previously required improvement remained at that grade.

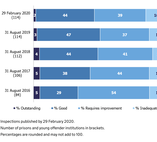
Table 4: The overall effectiveness[1] of education, skills and work in prisons and young offender institutions published between 1 September 2019 and 29 February 2020, by previous overall effectiveness grade

Previous overall effectiveness	Total number of inspections	Outstanding	Good	Requires improvement	Inadequate
Outstanding	1	0	1	0	0
Good	8	0	3	5	1
Requires improvement	10	0	1	7	2
Inadequate	1	0	0	0	1
Total	20	0	4	12	4

Number of inspections

Overall, more prisons and young offender institutions declined to be less than good than improved to good. Therefore, the 9-year inspection outcomes led to a decline in the proportion of prisons and young offender institutions judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection by 4 percentage points, to 46%. The proportion of prisons and young offender institutions judged inadequate increased to 16%, the highest it has been in the last 5 years.

Figure 10: Overall effectiveness of education, skills and work in prisons and young offender institutions at their most recent inspection, over time



Inspections published by 29 February 2020.
Number of prisons and young offender institutions in brackets.
Percentages are rounded and may not add to 100.

In 2019, we started to carry out prison monitoring visits to contribute towards Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons' independent reviews of progress. The monitoring visits judged the prison's progress against themes identified from the key concerns at the previous inspection.

Since 1 September 2019, we carried out 6 prison monitoring visits. All prisons were judged to have made insufficient progress in at least one theme and 2 prisons were judged to be making insufficient progress across all 3 themes.

Revisions to previous release

In-year statistics

Alongside these official statistics, we have published a revised provider-level dataset, which includes inspections carried out between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2019. This is due to us publishing an additional monitoring visit report and a full inspection report, and withdrawing one monitoring visit report. We do this to provide iteration of these statistics. These changes do not affect the overall messages of the main findings or the tables and charts as previously reported.

We publish revisions to data in this publication in line with our revisions policy for official statistics.

Notes

The quality report for these official statistics contains an explanation of the methodology used and the relevant inspection frameworks, along with other useful information.

Glossary

Definitions of terms are within the statistical glossary

Further information

Contact for comments or feedback

If you have any comments or feedback on this publication, you should contact Richard Jones on 03000 130 608 or
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Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following for their contribution to this statistical release: Angela Serjeant, Simon Gibson, John Hadler, Emily Green and Kylie Drury.

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1. Previously known as 'learning and skills and work activities'. ↩

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