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Research and analysis

Annual report on inspection work by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in 2023/24

Updated 29 November 2024

Applies to England

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Letter to the Rt Hon. Bridget Phillipson MP

The Rt Hon. Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
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Annual report on inspection work by the Independent Schools Inspectorate

in 2023/24

I have a duty in my position as His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) to prepare and send a report to you, the Secretary of State, about the inspectorates for independent schools at intervals of no more than a year. In practice, this requires me to prepare a report for you on the work of the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). In this, I must have regard to matters that you or, in this case, your predecessors may direct about the form and content of the report.

Under the directions set out by the then Secretary of State on 4 November 2019 to my predecessor, Ofsted no longer reports on the quality of ISI inspections but normally only reports on the number of inspections carried out by ISI, and on the extent of the collaborative work carried out by ISI and Ofsted. As in previous years, the Department for Education (DfE) did not commission any other monitoring activity by Ofsted in 2023/24.

Therefore, I am pleased to send this latest annual report to you.

Yours sincerely

Sir Martyn Oliver
His Majesty's Chief Inspector

Letter to Vanessa Ward, Chief Inspector

Vanessa Ward
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Independent Schools Inspectorate
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Annual report on inspection work by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in 2023/24

Please find enclosed a copy of the 2023/24 annual report for the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI), which I have today sent to the Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon. Bridget Phillipson MP. The annual report will also be published on Ofsted's website.

Thank you for the collaborative work that you and your colleagues have been involved with over the last year and for the information you provided to Ofsted regarding the number of inspections that ISI completed during 2023/24.

Yours sincerely

Sir Martyn Oliver
His Majesty's Chief Inspector

Annual report on inspection work by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in the academic year 2023/24

Introduction

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect registered independent schools belonging to the associations that make up the Independent Schools Council (ISC), including Ofsted-registered early years provision and boarding provision. Similarly, ISI is approved to inspect registered early years provision in schools that belong to one of the ISC associations.

When inspecting registered early years provision, ISI inspectors use Ofsted's education inspection framework (EIF) to determine the quality of the early years foundation stage (EYFS), as set out in the 'Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'.[\[footnote 1\]](#) This ensures uniformity of inspection for all registered early years providers and provides assurance to the Secretary of State, parents and carers that consistent judgements are made across all registered early years provision nationally. ISI remains responsible for reporting any concerns about the early years providers it inspects to Ofsted, as the regulator. Beyond this, ISI inspects the EYFS in the schools that fall within its remit, according to its own agreed frameworks.

ISI is also appointed by the Home Office to inspect private further education colleges and language schools in England and Wales.

Under section 107(1) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has a duty to prepare and send a report to the Secretary of State about the inspectorates for independent schools, at intervals of no more than a year. Under section 107(2), HMCI must have regard to matters that the Secretary of State may direct about the form and contents of the report.

Under the directions set out by the then Secretary of State to HMCI on 4 November 2019, Ofsted normally only reports on the number of inspections carried out by ISI and on the extent of the collaborative work carried out. As in previous years, the Department for Education (DfE) did not commission any other monitoring activity by Ofsted in 2023/24.

ISI's inspection activity for 2023/24

The academic year September 2023 to July 2024 marked the first year of ISI's new inspection framework for association schools.[\[footnote 2\]](#) Between 1 September 2023 and 31 July 2024, ISI carried out 516 inspections. These comprised 370 routine inspections, 77 material change inspections, 59 progress monitoring inspections and 10 additional inspections.

ISI also carried out 13 inspections of British schools overseas (BSO) and 22 educational oversight inspections of private further education colleges. The DfE has separately commissioned Ofsted to monitor the quality of ISI's inspections of BSO. This is part of a wider commission to look at the work of all the BSO inspectorates. Ofsted will publish a report on this monitoring activity in early 2025.

During the same period, the DfE commissioned ISI to complete 3 pilot inspections of providers of the international teaching qualification.

Ofsted's collaborative work with ISI in 2023/24

Over the academic year, Ofsted and ISI worked together in the following ways:

- HMCI and ISI's Chief Inspector met regularly to discuss developments in inspection for both inspectorates.
- ISI submitted a response to Ofsted's 'Big Listen' consultation. This focused on insights and learnings from the development and recent implementation of ISI's new inspection framework.
- Senior inspectors from both inspectorates liaised regularly to share insights on inspection principles and practice.
- ISI directors met fortnightly with leaders from both Ofsted and the DfE to discuss matters of interest, share relevant information and promote alignment of inspection practice regarding the inspections of association independent schools (inspected by ISI) and non-association independent schools (inspected by Ofsted).
- ISI and Ofsted colleagues in the early education remit met twice a term to consider inspections of registered early years settings that Ofsted, as the regulator, commissions ISI to carry out.
- As part of a joint training programme, ISI's early years inspectors attended Ofsted's early years conferences and shadowed Ofsted inspections in this remit, and a senior Ofsted leader in early education shadowed an ISI inspection of an early years setting. In addition, to supplement this training, Ofsted provided ISI inspectors with relevant online training resources.

1. ['Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage'](#), Department for Education, July 2023. [↩](#)

2. [‘Inspection framework’](#), Independent Schools Inspectorate. [↩](#)

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