

Integration of the inspections of welfare and education from September 2008

Consultation

Age group: 0–19

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1. Purpose and scope of the consultation

- 1.1 For schools with boarding provision or children's homes that offer education, Ofsted intends to introduce single inspections which cover both the education and welfare provision. This integrated approach will result in a single inspection report. It should be noted that we will continue with our practice of additional welfare inspections as necessary where inspection outcomes or other evidence indicate a need.
- 1.2 A similar process is underway for integration of the inspections of independent specialist colleges.
- 1.3 This consultation is aimed at the following providers which are inspected by Ofsted: maintained boarding schools; maintained and non-maintained special schools which offer boarding or residential provision; independent schools which offer boarding or residential provision; and children's homes that offer education. We welcome views from the children and young people, staff and parents of children and young people in these schools and also from stakeholder groups such as the Boarding Schools Association. The consultation does not concern independent schools that are members of associations that are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).
- 1.4 The responses will help inform the methods and processes that Ofsted will set up for single inspections of welfare and education. At the end of the consultation period, we plan to publish the main findings from the consultation on the Ofsted website.

2. How inspections are conducted at present

- 2.1 In the main, education and welfare inspections of the above types of provision have been undertaken separately and with different notice periods. Ofsted publishes separate reports on education, safeguarding and welfare, which can be confusing for providers. There is also duplication in the information we seek from schools, children and young people and parents and in what inspectors look at and report on during the inspection. Ofsted is, therefore, seeking to harmonise its arrangements and to make sensible improvements which will lead to more consistent judgements; better outcomes for children and young people; a reduction in the burden of administration for providers; and improvements in the impact and efficiency of inspection.

3. Advantages of a single inspection and report

- The inspection and report will take a holistic approach to the education and welfare provision of children and young people.

- It will make more sense to children and parents to have a single inspection and a single report.
- There will be less disruption for schools as they will not need to spend time on organising and taking part in different inspections.
- This will reduce bureaucracy.

Our proposals for change

1. Integrated inspections

From September 2008, Ofsted will introduce single inspections which cover both the education and welfare provision in schools with boarding provision or children's homes that offer education.

Question 1 – On a scale of 1 – 4 (where 1 is very advantageous and 4 is no benefit) how advantageous do you think the introduction of integrated welfare and education inspections in the way described above will be?

2. Notice period

In order to allow inspectors to see boarding schools and residential special schools operating normally, we are considering making the notice period for inspections the same as currently applies to maintained schools: this is usually two working days. If this is agreed, from September 2008 inspectors will not make a pre-inspection visit to these schools in the way they do now. For children's homes which provide education we intend to continue to inspect with no notice. However, we still wish to canvass the views of children and young people, parents and carers, as they provide essential information for the inspection. We would like your views, therefore, on the following questions:

Question 2 – On a scale of 1 – 4 (where 1 is very strongly and 4 is not at all) how strongly do you feel about the notice period for inspection being the same for boarding schools and residential special schools as for maintained day schools? Please explain your reasons.

3. Pre-inspection material

Ofsted is reviewing the pre-inspection information that it needs. In future we will produce one questionnaire for children and young people and one for parents and carers. This will provide us with helpful information about the school or children's home. Self-evaluation forms an important part of the inspection process for schools, and we plan to add an annex to the current Ofsted forms, which will include questions about the provision for the welfare of boarders and resident children and young people. We also plan to revise the self-evaluation form for children's homes. We will develop guidance for inspectors and schools about how to complete these forms, based on common criteria to ensure consistent judgements.

4. Obtaining the views of children and young people

We would like your views on the following questions:

Question 3 – Which of the following do you think would be the best way for Ofsted to consult boarders?

- written questionnaire in advance of the inspection
- discussion during the inspection with a sample of pupils, children and young people
- web-based consultation
- other (please give details).

5. The report

From September we intend to produce a single inspection report that will contain an evaluation of the education offered by the school or provider, and a section evaluating the quality of welfare provision for boarders and residential children and young people. The relevant National Minimum Standards and Regulations that apply to schools and to children's homes will continue to form the basis of judgements on the quality of welfare. These Standards and Regulations are currently under revision for introduction in 2009.

For schools, the report will give the main judgements about welfare. There will be an overall judgement on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of resident children and young people under Section 87 of the Children Act 1989. The report will identify those Standards which the school has been found to meet or exceed and those which it has not met.

There will be a similar arrangement for children's homes that offer education. The regular twice-yearly inspections that report on the welfare of children and which focus on key standards and improvement will continue. But when a welfare inspection coincides with an education inspection, there will be a single visit and a single report will be produced.

Question 4 – On a scale of 1 – 4 (where 1 is very strongly and 4 is not at all) how strongly do you agree that there should be a single inspection report?
Please explain your reasons.

6. Registration of new schools

A proprietor who opens a new residential school or a children's home that offers education, will receive a single visit from inspectors which will cover the registration of the whole school, including its education and welfare provision. Proprietors of existing schools and children's homes who want to offer new residential provision and proprietors of children's homes who wish to offer education will also receive a single visit by the relevant professional.

Question 5 – On a scale of 1 – 4 (where 1 is very strongly and 4 is not at all) how strongly do you agree that there should be a single visit dealing with your registration?

Please give your reasons.

7. The timetable

In April and May, Ofsted will pilot single inspections of welfare and education in maintained schools, non-maintained special schools, independent schools with boarding or residential provision and children's homes that offer education. These pilots will run in parallel with the consultation, which will close on 12 June 2008 after 12 weeks. We will publish the responses by the end of June and will take account of the views we have gathered in the consultation, as well as from the pilots. If it is decided to go ahead, we will draw up the inspection frameworks and guidance and arrange training. The inspection documents will be published on the Ofsted website by the end of August, ready for the start of the new academic year in September 2008.

8. Responses to the consultation

All responses should be completed using the online consultation form <http://85.234.135.172/stakeholder/index.php?sid=13178&lang=en> by 12 June 2008. Any general comments on the proposals may be sent by email to ind.sch@ofsted.gov.uk. We will consider requests for the consultation document to be provided in different languages or formats.