

# Responses to the consultation on the integration of welfare and education inspections

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**Age group:** 5–19

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## Introduction

1. In September 2008 Ofsted intends to introduce, where inspection cycles allow, single inspections that cover both education and welfare provision in schools with boarding provision or children's homes that offer education. This integrated approach will result in a single inspection report. However, we will continue carrying out additional statutory welfare inspections where inspection outcomes or other evidence indicate a need.
2. 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. We are, therefore, seeking to harmonise our arrangements and 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. The proposed inspection framework is based on the principle that inspections should:
  - reduce the inspection burden on schools
  - produce a single report covering both education and welfare issues
  - move towards a single, shorter notification period for both provisions
  - establish joint registration visits for new providers.

In keeping with Ofsted's inspection principals the new framework should also:

- support and promote improvement
- be proportionate
- focus on the needs of users
- focus on the needs of the providers
- be transparent and consistent
- be accountable
- demonstrate value for money.

## Background to the consultation

4. A formal, web-based 12-week consultation on the proposals was undertaken between March and June 2008. This was designed to elicit the views of stakeholders on the proposed framework outlined above. An email address was also provided to capture additional comments on any aspect of the proposal.
5. We received 194 responses to the web-based consultation exercise. The breakdown of responses can be found in the Annex on pages 6–7. In addition, 86 comments on individual proposals were received from the web-based consultation. These were very positive, with the proposal to reduce notice periods attracting some praise: one respondent noted that 'having experienced the short notice period I found that the normal day to day running of the school was much less disrupted', another that it was 'less stressful to have shorter notice'. The single inspection report proposal also attracted positive comments such as 'a single inspection report is long overdue', another respondent writing that the single report would be a 'much more efficient use of time and resources'.
6. Where concerns were raised they related to the detail of the single inspection report, with one person stating that the single inspection report might not 'provide the detail of the old reports'.
7. Eleven formal responses were received separately on behalf of national organisations. These represent the views of a wide range of professional organisations or joint provision providers.

This report is a summary of the evaluation of all responses to the consultation.

## Key findings

- The large majority of providers and other stakeholders support the proposed integrated welfare and education inspections.
- Nearly all the respondents supported the move towards short notice inspections with the large majority strongly in favour. Some suggested no notice would allow inspectors to see schools as they really are. However, some concerns were raised about the lack of notice potentially making the capturing of pupils' and parents' views more difficult.
- The preferred way for inspectors to consult boarders would be discussions with a sample of boarders; the use of a questionnaire in conjunction with these interviews was also suggested a number of times in the additional comments section.
- Over three quarters of responses were in favour of a single inspection report, with comments indicating a desire to ensure that the welfare and education aspects were identifiably distinct within the single report.

- There was also strong support for single registration visits to ease the administrative burden on schools, providing the joint framework was suitably thorough.

## **A summary of the responses to the consultation**

8. The formal consultation was based on a set of proposals for the joint inspection of welfare and education. This summary deals with responses to each of the areas of the framework.
9. Responses to the formal consultation indicate that at least three quarters of respondents are in agreement with all proposals, with most questions giving positive responses in excess of 80%. Details are included in the Annex on pages 6–7. Where concerns are raised, they are about aspects of the detail rather than the principles.

### **Joint inspections**

10. There is very strong support for the introduction of an integrated welfare and education inspection framework from September 2008: 93% of responses were in favour, with 83% showing a fairly strong or very strong preference for this proposal.

### **A shorter notification period**

11. In the web-based consultation, 93% of respondents supported the proposed move to make the notification period for inspection of boarding and residential special schools the same as for maintained day schools. Comments received indicated the belief that shorter notification periods allowed inspectors to gain a more accurate impression of the provision, and reduced disruption and stress ahead of inspection.
12. There are a few concerns about specific details. These mostly relate to capturing the views of children and learners adequately ahead of the inspection.

### **Consulting boarders**

13. As indicated above, the proposal to change the notice period affects the approaches that can be used by Ofsted to obtain the views of boarders. When asked how this should be handled in future, 66% of respondents to the consultation believed that a discussion with a sample of pupils, children and young people during the inspection would be the best way to consult boarders. There was also strong support for a mixed approach in the additional comments section, with discussions and questionnaires together also given support. Some respondents felt this would capture the views of as wide a range of children as possible.

## Single inspection report

14. There is strong support for a move to a single inspection report. Of the responses to the consultation, 89% were in favour of such a move, with 78% either fairly strongly or very strongly in favour of the proposal. Respondents felt that a single report would reduce duplication and bureaucracy, and would give a better picture of the overall development of the children.
15. Where there are concerns, they are more about maintaining adequate detail on both education and welfare within the single report than about the concept of a single report itself.

## Single registration visits

16. There is widespread agreement with the proposal that registration visits should be dealt with by single visits, with 86% in favour. Those who disagreed did not explicitly disagree with the principle, but, again, highlighted the need for the visit to be thorough, and for the inspection team to be appropriately experienced to identify issues in both welfare and education.

## What Ofsted intends to do next

17. Taking into account the views expressed in the consultation exercise from September 2008:
  - We will conduct single inspections covering both education and welfare provision in schools and in children's homes that provide education.
  - We will develop an inspection schedule so that all boarding schools and residential special schools will be given short notification of inspection.
  - Boarders' views will continue to be canvassed by discussion and by questionnaire. We are exploring the best ways to get pupils' and parents' views.
  - Single inspections of boarding schools and residential special schools will result in a single published inspection report which will clearly identify both the education and the social care aspects.
  - Inspections of children's homes that offer education will be integrated with an inspection of social care. Further development will take place on the publication of an integrated report.
  - We will develop procedures so that prospective schools with residential provision will receive a single registration visit.
  - We will refine our inspection instruments and provide more sharply focused guidance and training for inspectors.

## Annex: Analysis of the formal consultation

There were 194 responses to the web consultation, and in addition, 10 written responses from professional organisations.

The results of the web consultation are as follows. (Some percentages have been rounded and do not add up to 100%.)

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.

**Q1.** How advantageous do you think the introduction of integrated welfare and education inspections in the way described above will be?

	Count	Percentage
Very Strongly	91	47
Fairly Strongly	69	36
Mildly	20	10
Not at all	14	7
Total	194	

**Q2.** 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?

	Count	Percentage
Very Strongly	107	55
Fairly Strongly	51	26
Mildly	22	11
Not at all	14	7
Total	194	

**Q3.** Which of the following do you think would be the best way for Ofsted to consult boarders?

	Count	Percentage
Written questionnaire in advance of the inspection.	23	12
Discussion with a sample of pupils, children and young people during the inspection.	129	66
Web-based consultation.	12	6
Other	30	15
Total	194	



**Q4.** How strongly do you agree that there should be a single inspection report?

	Count	Percentage
Very Strongly	97	50
Fairly Strongly	54	28
Mildly	22	11
Not at all	21	11
Total	194	

**Q5.** How strongly do you agree that there should be a single visit dealing with your registration?

	Count	Percentage
Very Strongly	84	43
Fairly Strongly	50	26
Mildly	32	16
Not at all	28	14
Total	194	

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Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE  
T 08456 404040

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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