

Government announces plans for universal school inspections

Ofsted will visit all schools judged to be outstanding within the next 5 academic years under Government proposals, bringing an end to the era of some schools going over a decade without inspection

The change will mean schools rated as outstanding by Ofsted will no longer be exempt from routine inspection, as is currently the case, and underlines the government's position that school inspection serves a vital purpose in improving standards and behaviour.

Under the proposals in the consultation being launched today (10 January), all outstanding schools and colleges will be brought back into a regular inspection cycle – with Ofsted visiting every 4 to 5 years. This will affect around 3,700 schools and colleges rated outstanding when the exemption is lifted in September.

Ending the exemption, which was introduced in 2012, will mean all parents have up to date information about every school and can be confident that their children's schools are continuing to deliver the best education. It will also help to maintain the rising standards that have enabled schools to help pupils get to grips with the new, more demanding curriculum at both primary and secondary level.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Parents want to know that they are making the best, most informed choices about their children's education. Making sure that all schools are regularly inspected means they will benefit from the expert insight Ofsted provides when making these decisions.

We know parents trust Ofsted – and with good reason. It serves a valuable purpose as the only organisation that gives a clear, accessible and impartial view on school and college performance.

But it's also far more than that – it's a driver of improvement. Although we continue to trust our best schools and colleges to get on with the job of educating, without Ofsted standards would go unchecked and the exemption meant there is often not an up to date picture.

Last year the Department for Education announced plans to remove the exemption that means schools judged outstanding by Ofsted are not subject to routine inspection.

The proposals in the consultation, which will be subject to parliamentary approval, will prioritise those schools that have gone the longest without

inspection. Ofsted is preparing so that it is ready to inspect from September 2020.

It means every school in the country will receive regular inspection, giving parents a clear picture of the standard of schools in their area.

The exemption was introduced in 2012 in part so that Ofsted could focus on failing and underperforming schools. Standards have risen since then, with the percentage of schools graded inadequate or require improvement dropping from 33% in 2012 to just 14% in August 2019, so now is the right time to end the exemption and restore universal inspection.