

Speech: Amanda Spielman launches EIF consultation proposals

Thank you Bill, and what a pleasure it is to be here today.

When I last spoke to you, I commented on the energy and commitment of everyone I meet who works with young people, all the way from birth to adulthood. Two years in, that hasn't changed.

I still believe we have the most talented and dedicated generation in history working in our colleges, schools and the early years sector. That is reflected in our quality of education and is something we should all be proud of. And today I'm going to be talking about our [new framework](#) as well as about the college landscape, so I'll be talking quite a bit about pre-16 as well as post-16. But I'll start with your world.

Times are challenging and many of you are making difficult decisions every week. And for sixth form colleges and academies, money is probably the biggest challenge – and I told the [Public Accounts Committee](#) I was concerned about this back in October.

I said there that whereas real spending per school pupil has increased quite substantially since the early 1990s, this hasn't happened for post-16. Indeed, real-terms cuts to post-16 funding are affecting both quality and sustainability. Inspection evidence, our published reports and our insights indicate several areas where the student experience is being affected in some colleges.

For that reason, to reiterate, I am firmly of the view that the government should increase the base rate for 16 to 19 funding in the forthcoming spending review. My view hasn't changed. You can be sure that where there is clear evidence that funding is damaging standards, we will send that message plainly.

High-performing and improving further

Another challenge is constant change in your sector. Mergers and academisation are creating profound changes in the landscape. Our [latest annual report](#) highlighted that nearly a third of the original 90 sixth form colleges have academised or merged just in the past 2 years. And so the number of 16 to 19 academies has more than doubled in the past 2 years, up to nearly 50 by August 2018. That is a lot of change.

So it was gratifying to be able to report that at that point, around four-fifths of the sixth form colleges and 16 to 19 academies that we've inspected were judged good or outstanding.

This is an improvement on the previous year and has to reflect a lot of hard work, excellent teaching and dedication on your part. But beyond that, it

means more young people well prepared for further study, for the world of work and for taking their place in society.

Four sixth form colleges improved to good, and I congratulate you. What we commonly found, in these 4 colleges: managers had put in effective development for teachers; teaching and assessment had improved; achievement gaps between different groups of learners had reduced; and teachers' confidence in developing students' English and mathematics had improved.

One sixth form college went from good to outstanding last year: Joseph Chamberlain College. We found high quality teaching across a range of academic and vocational subjects, a culture of high aspiration and harmonious relationships and a senior leadership team that hadn't stood still, but had made further improvements since their previous inspection. They show how good colleges can improve even further.

But, despite these successes, we know that pressures remain. I want to reassure you that we understand your challenges, and the complex and shifting landscape. We certainly don't want to make your lives harder. Inspection should be about supporting improvement, not distracting from it.

Curriculum and framework

Which is why a commitment to being a force for improvement sits right at the heart of the [Ofsted strategy](#) I introduced in my first year as Chief Inspector. And I have been determined that this strategy should not be the kind that gets launched with a fanfare, and then moulders in a cupboard. It is a living strategy that informs and directs every aspect of our work.

Nowhere has this been clearer than in developing our new education inspection framework. And this is the [consultation I am launching today](#).

The title is the headline: it's all about the substance of education, and how that is examined at inspection. Inspection is in essence a professional dialogue between inspectors and a provider. We want to make sure that these professional dialogues are as much as possible about what matters to young people: the substance of their education. What are they being taught? How well are they being taught it? And how is it setting them up to succeed at the next stage?

Perhaps that sounds obvious. But we have collectively realised in recent years how easy it can be for practitioners and institutions, and indeed for policy makers and inspectorates, to lose sight of the substance amid the noise. Some of that noise comes from the ocean of outcome data and analysis that we can all draw on. Now, don't misunderstand me, performance data used well is a very good thing. It is absolutely right that we have transparent measures that give insight into institutional performance. And I believe current accountability measures are a considerable improvement on their precursors. And of course, most exam and test results matter greatly to the individual. Outcomes reflect their educational achievements. However, we all recognise that when we put too much weight on individual performance data as a measure of quality of education, then problems emerge.

The curriculum research studies that we have done in the past 2 years have highlighted some of the problems. They have shown how when data trumps substance, it is curriculum, teaching and learning that suffer. I won't repeat today a list of examples of how that loss of substance manifests itself. But my hypothesis that we were on the right path with this work has been greatly strengthened by the extent to which people working at every level and stage of education have confirmed the pressure they feel to put securing grades and stickers ahead of real learning, and have welcomed a renewed focus on substance.

So, a key principle of the new framework is to put inspection back into its proper place, where it complements published performance data, rather than intensifying the pressure on you to deliver higher numbers each year. It often matters 'how' results are achieved: done right, they reflect great education; done badly, they can give false assurance that young people have achieved well and are ready to progress. And no data measure can ever fully capture the quality of the education it reflects. On occasion we at Ofsted have been guilty of being too reliant on data, and I want the new framework to change that.

So what do we understand to be the real substance of education? What is its core purpose, and what is Ofsted's role? At the very heart of education sits the vast accumulated wealth of human knowledge and what we choose to impart to the next generation. I have made no secret of the fact that I think that curriculum, the 'what is taught and why', has had too small a share of inspection consideration for many years, and that this has contributed to the gradual erosion of curriculum thinking in early years, schools and post-16. This [draft framework](#) is built around a rebalanced set of judgements that restore curriculum to its proper place as one of the main considerations in good education. And in turn, I hope, to the forefront of educators' minds.

So a new quality of education judgement will look at how schools are deciding what to teach and why, how well they are doing it and whether it is leading to strong outcomes for young people. This will reward those who are ambitious and make sure that young people accumulate rich, well-connected knowledge and develop strong skills using this knowledge.

In particular, I believe this will help providers with challenging intakes, but who don't succumb to the temptation to think about performance tables ahead of young people. Such as schools that enter children for academic GCSEs, because they are right for those children, even when the school might accumulate higher point scores with other qualifications.

Because this is all about standards. Nothing is more pernicious to true standards, than a culture of curriculum narrowing and teaching to the test. If for instance you want children to read really well by the end of primary school, you do it by reading to them, teaching them new things and having them read as much as possible, not just by having them take countless reading comprehension practice tests. This framework aims to sustain improvement in true standards.

So what will inspectors be looking at? I must stress – again – that there

isn't and won't be an Ofsted curriculum. Not all curriculum is equally strong, but an excellent curriculum can be constructed in many different ways. The research we've already published illustrates that we can recognise and judge a range of approaches fairly. And our research has also shown that we can distinguish between the providers who just talk a good game about curriculum, and the ones who are genuinely implementing a curriculum well.

And of course, good curriculum is part but by no means all of a good education. We distinguish the curriculum – what is taught – and pedagogy, which is how the curriculum is taught. It is also distinct from assessment, which is about whether learners are learning or have learned the intended curriculum.

This has led us to a three-pronged approach to looking at the quality of education.

First, the framework for setting out the aims of a programme of education, including the knowledge and skills to be gained at each stage: the curriculum intent.

Secondly, the translation of that framework in practice, within an institutional context. The contribution that the teaching makes to the intended curriculum: the implementation.

And thirdly, the evaluation of the knowledge and skills that students have gained across the curriculum against expectations and the destinations they are enabled to go to next: the impact.

How will we inspect it?

What we are proposing reflects what our research has shown us, and the wider literature on educational effectiveness, from a child's early years through to adulthood. What we have learned from a quarter of a century of inspections, what we have heard from all sides about what works well in inspections and what works less well, what we have learned about staff workload, what we know about particular pressure points in each phase of education.

In particular, we've made sure that we pitch our inspection criteria at the right level. So for example, if we make the curriculum criteria too weak, a poor curriculum that leads to little learning and widening gaps would go unscrutinised. If we make them too strong or rigid, the diversity and innovation that are a healthy part of our education system could be unduly constrained. We've done a lot of work to pitch our criteria at the right level. They draw on existing evidence around curriculum quality. They don't extend beyond what we have found the evidence to justify.

And we've been putting the criteria through their paces through many pilot inspections, and will be continuing pilots throughout the spring. I'd like to thank those of you who are helping with these pilots. What we learn from them will inform the final version of the framework, alongside your responses to the consultation.

We have also been laying the groundwork with instalments of inspector training on the areas that have a higher profile in this framework, and have plenty more in the pipeline ahead of September.

And in this preparation, we have been clear with our inspectors that the new framework is not about moving the bar for good, in either direction. We have designed the new framework on the basis that a broadly similar proportion of providers should be judged good or outstanding as under the current framework. Any suggestion that this framework is likely to push far more providers below the line than above it is just wrong.

And another reassurance. No-one should think they need to develop a new curriculum from scratch, or indeed jump through any new hoops. In post-16 education you already have your study programmes. For others, the Early Years Foundation Stage or the National Curriculum provide a baseline.

Nor do we want to see nurseries, schools, colleges or other providers rushing to change their curriculum, or adopting superficial solutions just “for Ofsted”. That would go against the spirit of this framework. This is why we have taken the extra step of recognising in the [draft handbooks](#) that curriculum change takes time, and that for the first year at the very least, providers that are taking reasonable steps to improve their curriculum, but aren't necessarily there yet, will not be adversely affected.

On the other hand, we don't want innovators to see the new framework as a brake. For example, if you are trying out new models as part of Education Endowment Foundation studies, or are working on new approaches to curriculum or teaching or assessment, that will be recognised.

Of course, the application will be a little different in the different sectors we inspect, so for example:

- In early years, it will mean a focus on developing children's vocabulary through activities across the 7 areas of learning, as well as by having stories read to them. The [EYFS](#) provides the curriculum framework that leaders and practitioners build on to decide what they intend children to learn and develop. They then decide how to implement the curriculum so that children make progress in those seven areas. Finally, they evaluate the impact of the curriculum by checking what children know and can do.
- For primary age children, this will mean a focus on how well pupils are taught to read. Inspectors will look at how well the schools are teaching all children to become fluent readers, starting with phonics and building up from there. This is how children become confident readers. They would also look at how well pupils remember, understand and apply mathematical knowledge.
- For all school age children, we will look at whether they have a broad and rich curriculum. So for example, are the foundation subjects being

taught fully throughout key stage two, and is the full range of national curriculum subjects being taught across years 7 to 9, including the arts, technology and music? Are steps being taken to have most students take EBacc subjects as the core of the key stage four curriculum?

- Post-16, we'll look at how providers develop or adopt a curriculum that provides progression and stretch, and encourages maths and English for all learners. Where relevant, we'll look at work experience or industry placements, and destination and careers guidance at all levels, from elite universities through to first steps to independent living.

Personal development and behaviour

I've heard from rather too many of you that the current behaviour, personal development and welfare judgement is seen as the soft part of the current framework. We also know, from our work with parents, that it's the judgement most of interest to them.

I've also heard concerns that the perceived pre-eminence of the outcomes judgement restricts your ability to offer the things that we know help to build young people's resilience and confidence – such as cadet forces, Duke of Edinburgh awards, sports, drama or debating teams.

So rather than conflating personal development and behaviour, the new framework will separate them out. The new behaviour and attitudes judgement will look at how well behaviour is managed, to create the calm, orderly and safe environment that we know is a basic requirement for good learning.

Alongside that, a new personal development judgement will look at the opportunities providers give to build character and resilience, and to prepare children and young people to succeed as adults and active citizens in modern Britain. Importantly, this judgement will not try to assess the full impact of personal development provision: that is clearly impossible in a day or two on site.

Workload

Workload has of course, been in front of us in letters of fire as we have worked up these proposals. While we know that any kind of accountability necessarily involves some irreducible workload, we have to do what we can to make sure that inspection adds no more burden than it must.

So for example, we know that in some places, a false perception that it is "what Ofsted wants" is the rationale for an onerous cycle of 'data drops' where teachers feed frequent assessment information into a centralised database.

Take early years for example. Staff time spent teaching, talking and playing with children is far more valuable than time spent taking endless photographs for filing under 'progress'. A photograph of a child pouring water from one

container into another doesn't necessarily mean they have grasped the concept of capacity or have a sense of the words 'more' or 'less' or 'bigger' or 'smaller'. But again, I know which way the pressures of accountability can seem to push.

The great benefit of inspection is seeing first-hand what is actually happening in providers, not just data files and spreadsheets. So the proposal is that inspectors will not look at internal progress and attainment data of current children or students. Yes, of course some of it will still be useful for your own management purposes, but we don't want you doing it for us, or to be offended if we don't use it. We don't want inspection to be about an inspector and a leader craning their heads over a spreadsheet on a study table. When you tell inspectors that your internal data and information helps you to know about progress and attainment, inspectors' reaction should be: "that's great, let's go and see it in action".

In doing so, we hope that we will once and for all bust the myth that data should be created for Ofsted. At the same time, under the new leadership and management judgement, we will go further in considering whether leaders are realistic and constructive in managing workload. That doesn't mean Ofsted trying to drive a wedge between leaders and teachers – far from it! Rather, it means getting a sense on inspection as to whether leaders understand and manage the demands they place on their staff.

Don't buy the snake oil

In the same vein, I want to say, hand on heart, that you do not and should not spend a penny on consultants to prepare for the introduction of this framework. As well as publishing [the framework](#), the [draft handbooks](#) and our [research findings and our literature review of existing research on educational effectiveness](#), we have also published [videos](#) and [slides of the curriculum workshops](#) we held last autumn.

We are putting all this out now at this early stage to provide certainty, reassurance and transparency, which I hope will help you give us specific and constructive feedback.

Integrity

One other thing that I hope will flow from this new approach, is that integrity will be properly rewarded. That inspection will recognise the importance of doing the right thing by young people.

I know how easy it is to let drift happen, because of the pressures of making the numbers add up, or because someone down the road is doing it and you think that you or your students will suffer unless you do the same. That's not your fault, it's human nature. But its effect is pernicious, and we know that it is disadvantaged pupils that suffer the most when substance comes second to point scoring. That's why inspection needs to be a counterbalancing pressure that places clear value on doing the right thing.

One area where I hope we can make real progress, is in tackling the unacceptable practice of off-rolling. Last year [we identified around 300 schools where 'exceptional levels' of pupils are coming off state rolls between years 10 and 11](#). That's a time when it seems unlikely that many parents would choose to withdraw their children from school education. Instead it seems that some of these moves are the result of pressure from the school, often directed at some of the most vulnerable families, least equipped to educate their own children. While I will always defend the right of heads to exclude people, where this is justified, removing pupils from the school rolls purely to boost results can never be right. We want to tackle that practice, and the new framework does have a greater focus on spotting off-rolling.

Similar practices exist in some colleges and in other post-16 providers. We've seen some young people kept on level 2 study courses, when they could and should have been progressing. We've also seen off-rolling between year 12 and year 13 on A-level courses.

We've seen some nurseries not taking children with SEN for a variety of reasons – sometimes to do with funding. Again this is undeniably wrong.

And it's led to some apprenticeship training providers going for quantity rather than quality. Putting on numbers of apprentices, whether or not they are really learning anything.

All of these practices need to be discouraged, and inspection has a valuable role to play in doing so.

And so it is these two words that sum up my ambition for the framework and which underlie everything we have published today: substance and integrity.

The substance that has all children and young people exposed to the best that has been thought and said, achieve highly and set them up to succeed.

And the integrity that makes sure that every child and young person is treated as an individual with potential to be unlocked, and staff are treated as experts in their subjects or field – not just as data gatherers and process managers. And above all that you are rewarded for doing the right thing.

[Our consultation](#) is your opportunity to help us refine this new framework to meet these twin goals as well as we possibly can. Please do help us.

Thank you.