

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.

[Deal To See Restored Government In Northern Ireland Tomorrow](#)

The deal, entitled New Decade, New Approach has been tabled at talks at Stormont House for the political parties in Northern Ireland to agree. It will transform public services and restore public confidence in devolved government.

Agreement will see the full restoration of the institutions of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement including the Executive, the Assembly and the North/South Ministerial Council with the Assembly and Executive forming on Friday (10 January).

The parties have committed to measures which will end ongoing industrial action by healthcare staff immediately. This includes pay parity, a new action plan on waiting times and delivering much needed reforms on health and social care.

Reforms to the health service, education and justice will be prioritised by a new Executive, as well as important improvements in transparency and accountability, and in how civil servants, ministers and special advisers conduct themselves.

Rt Hon Julian Smith MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

I have written to the Speaker asking him to call the Assembly tomorrow to enable the restoration of the Executive.

This is a moment of truth for the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. It is a fair and balanced deal that will ensure key decisions about peoples' lives can be made.

It immediately ends the health strike, focuses on reforms to health and social care, ensures more sustainable institutions, better politics and greater transparency and a new framework on language, arts and literature.

I urge the parties to come together and to form an Executive in the best interests of NI.

Tánaiste, Simon Coveney TD, said:

The Governments are today putting a proposed agreement to all the parties. This is based on the extensive discussions and collective work undertaken by the parties since May last year, following the awful murder of Lyra McKee.

The Governments believe that it represents a fair and balanced package. There is no need, and no public patience, for more process and more discussions.

It is time for political leadership and a collective commitment to making politics work for people

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITOR

The key elements of the draft agreement are:

Transforming Public Services and Investing in the Economy

- This deal focuses on delivering what matters to citizens in Northern Ireland: better public services, a stronger economy and a fairer society.
- A new Executive will address problems in the health service, reform the education and justice systems, grow the economy, promote opportunity and tackle deprivation.

Better Politics and Sustainable Institutions

- This deal is about making sure Northern Ireland never goes three years without an Executive again.

- The deal is also about giving the public and the parties confidence in politics and in the sustainability of the institutions. This deal is not just an Executive for its own sake – it offers real reform.
- There are important improvements in how civil servants, special advisers and ministers should conduct themselves to provide more transparent and accountable government in the wake of the RHI issue. This means better use of taxpayers' money and better delivery of the services and policies that shape people's lives.
- There will be more time in the event a First or deputy First Minister resigns to appoint a replacement before an election is required. And significantly more time after an election to form an Executive. Ministers will be able to remain in post, while an Executive is formed, and Assembly committees will continue to be able to scrutinise the work of the Executive.

Language and Identity

- The deal offers a new cultural framework that will include a new Office for Identity and Cultural Expression to promote cultural diversity and inclusion across all identities and cultures alongside a Commissioner to enhance and develop the language, arts and literature associated with the Ulster Scots / Ulster British tradition in Northern Ireland.
- This will be made law through an integrated package of legislation that will establish new parts of the Northern Ireland Act.

Petition of Concern

- There will be meaningful reform of the petition of concern bringing it closer to its original role, as conceived of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and as a means of building consensus. It will not be a veto for any one party.

PDF, 595KB, 62 pages

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PM statement on Ukrainian International Airlines Flight 752

The loss of life on Ukrainian International Airlines Flight 752 is a tragedy and my thoughts are with all of those who lost loved ones.

Four British nationals were among those who were killed, and we are providing support to their families at this most terrible time.

There is now a body of information that the flight was shot down by an Iranian Surface to Air Missile. This may well have been unintentional.

We are working closely with Canada and our international partners and there now needs to be a full, transparent investigation.

It is vital that there should be an immediate and respectful repatriation of those who've lost their lives to allow their families to grieve properly.

The UK continues to call on all sides urgently to deescalate to reduce tensions in the region.

Upholding the UN Charter

Mr President, thank you, Minister, for coming here to be with us, and all the other ministers who've honored the Council with their presence today. And once again, how nice it is to have Mary Robinson with us representing the Elders. And thank you for all the work that the Elders do to uphold the Charter. We very much welcome as well, Mr President the spirit of collaboration, which the Viet Nam mission has brought to this enterprise, including on the presidential statement, which we hope the Council will adopt today.

We've heard many quotes, Mr President, from the Charter. Nobody could accuse the founding members of a lack of ambition when they drafted the Charter. But at times, the United Nations has often suffered from an almost unbridgeable gap between the power of its central vision and the actual actions it has been able to carry out. And by the United Nations, I don't just mean the UN bodies, but I mean we, the member states, as well. And yet the United Nations takes action that directly affects the lives of millions of ordinary citizens. The UN has 13 peacekeeping missions operating in regions that are home to 1.8 billion people. The World Food Programme delivers food to nearly 87 million people in 83 countries, providing 15 billion meals. In 2018, UNHCR supported 2.24 million refugees and UNWRA supported a further 5.5 million Palestinians. And the WHO vaccinates hundreds of millions of people. In 2018,

it vaccinated almost half the world's children and it has eradicated smallpox. And it is close to eradicating polio; the world is 98 percent free.

Mr President, if the UN did not exist, we would have to create it. And the Charter makes very clear the emphasis on states to cooperate, to harmonise actions to attain common ends. I hope we can remember that article of the Charter as we deal with some of these intractable issues of peace and security on the Security Council.

Mr President, I was very struck by what Kofi Annan said in his farewell address to the United Nations in 2006. He said, 'together we have pushed some big rocks up to the top of the mountain even if others have slipped from our grasp and rolled back down. But that the mountain is the best place to be even with bracing winds because of its global views'. The rules-based international system, Mr President, which the Charter embodies is the best prescription to those bracing winds and the rocks rolling back down the hill.

The United Kingdom has the honour to be a founding member of the United Nations, like some other members here today. And we share the belief in the rules-based international system and the UN's role at the apex of it. And as we leave the European Union, the United Kingdom looks forward to having the UN as an even more important stage for British foreign policy as an active and independent force. And we very much hope that as my foreign secretary has said, a force for good so that we can cooperate with other colleagues to strengthen the security and prosperity that the UN has helped create over recent decades.

In a world where change is moving at an ever increasing pace the Charter should be seen as a framework around which we can construct our responses to those challenges. And it should be an enabler, a point of reference and the constant source to which we turn in a world burdened with increasing complexity and uncertainty. Used in such a way, as we heard from the Secretary-General and others today, the Charter gives us what we need to help us head off crises, de-escalate confrontations and develop effective responses to conflict. And again, I draw colleagues attention to the things we are battling with on the Council, notably Libya, Yemen, Syria and tensions in the Gulf.

We should not, Mr President, regard the Charter as a straitjacket. We want to have options for collaboration and for action. We don't want to reduce those options artificially because if we do, we bring only decrement to the people we represent and serve.

The Secretary-General and other colleagues have highlighted peace-keeping. I want to pay tribute at this point, if I may, to Brian Urquhart, who will be 101 next month. He did more than many people to set up the UN's peacekeeping arrangements. And that is not something that appears in the Charter, nor do special political missions. Rather, they are an excellent example of member states working together within the framework of the Charter and in the context of the Security Council to address the challenges of yesterday and today.

Mr President, we believe we need to retain this forward-looking spirit as we look for ideas to tackle the challenges of tomorrow, such as the growth in new technology, to which my Prime Minister referred in his General Assembly speech, the challenges of anti-microbial resistance or the impacts of climate change. These were not foreseen by the drafters of the charter, but they remain very much on our minds.

While we face new threats that the founders of the UN did not see, the responsibility that all parts of the UN hold remains, and the Secretary-General drew attention to this as well. It's a well-worn phrase, but with great power comes great responsibility. And I think that's also something we should bear in mind. The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, but others, including the Secretary-General through Article 99 of the charter, also has a vital role to play. And I would like to echo what the Secretary-General said about Article 25 and the need to uphold the decisions of the Security Council in this context.

Mr President, a few people have mentioned reform and veto reform, so let me set out the UK's position. We are a signatory to the ACT Code of Conduct, which commits us not to vote against credible Security Council action to stop mass atrocities and crimes against humanity. But the fact that we do not all agree on the veto should not prevent us making progress in pursuing other areas of Security Council reform.

Mr President, I want to say a word about state sovereignty. Respect for equality, for state sovereignty, for the principle that countries are all equal and that stronger countries should help weaker countries – this cannot be used as an excuse for failing to address conflicts or violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It is violence and conflicts and not our attempts to help member states prevent those that threaten state sovereignty. And I would draw colleagues' attention to Article 2 of the Charter, which makes clear that nothing should upset the fundamental rights that the Charter sets out.

I'd like to close, if I may, Mr President, by referring to the current situation in the Middle East, the status featured in our debate today. My foreign secretary has recently been visiting Washington, and I would like to reprise what he said there. He said that we recognise the danger and threat that Iran poses to the Middle East. We recognise the right to self-defense. At the same time, we want to see tensions de-escalated. We want to find a diplomatic way through. And this is why the remarks we've heard recently about a diplomatic solution are so important. It means also that the government in Iran should be willing and committed to a diplomatic outcome as well. And I can pledge, Mr President, the United Kingdom stands ready to assist any diplomatic efforts.

Thank you.

Defence leaders to join forces at 2020 Space Conference

Organised by the MOD and the Air and Space Power Association, the conference will tackle the challenges presented by space as a military domain and the wider economic opportunities on offer. Speakers at the event will include government ministers, the Chief of the Air Staff and Commander UK Strategic Command, alongside senior leaders from the National Space Council and the newly formed US Space Command.

The MOD will use the conference to outline its strategy to counter threats posed to UK satellites and other space assets, and ensure they are protected. Up to 400 delegates from across defence will come together to discuss the next-generation technology, infrastructure and workforce necessary to keep pace with the rapidly evolving threats facing the UK in space.

Defence Minister James Heapey said:

From supporting military operations to predicting weather patterns, accessing information from our satellites is crucial to both our security and our prosperity. Protecting our satellites demands the development of cutting-edge equipment so we're inviting the brightest and best from industry, academia and across government to discuss the transformative technology out there today.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, said:

Defence Space 2020 will be a timely demonstration of the UK's ambition in the Space Domain: our future programmes; the opportunities as well as the challenges to our national interests in space; and a showcase for our world-class space industrial sector. Our inaugural Conference in 2018 was a huge success; the 2020 Conference will be even better.

Air Marshal (Ret'd) Greg Bagwell CB CBE, President, Air & Space Power Association, said:

As the Space Domain takes on even greater significance for defence and evolves at such a pace, it is vital that we continue to debate the critical issues in the most open and diverse forum possible.

Defence Space 2020 will provide a springboard for the next phase of conceptual thinking, discussion and development of the UK's approach to Space Power. Of particular importance is how emergent and disruptive technologies may play a part in the use of Space in

the defence and security contexts and how the UK shapes its future strategic alliances with international space partners.

The Conference promises to be a stimulating and informative exposé of MOD's Space Power direction of travel and I am delighted that the Air and Space Power Association is again delivering the event.

The announcement of the conference follows a string of recent announcements on the UK's military space programme. In October, the RAF selected a pilot to be seconded to Virgin Orbit's ground-breaking small satellite launch programme. Flt Lt Mathew Stannard, currently a Typhoon pilot, will join the fleet of expert 'test pilots' trialling Boeing 747-400 aircraft from which cutting-edge satellites will be launched.

At the RAF's Air and Space Power Conference last year the MOD outlined an ambitious space programme, committing £30m to fast-track the launch of a small satellite demonstrator. The small satellite demonstrator, also known as Programme ARTEMIS, is being delivered by a new transatlantic team of UK and US defence personnel and industry partners.

The MOD also announced the UK as the first formal partner in the US-led Operation Olympic Defender – a multinational military effort formed to strengthen deterrence against hostile actors in space, enhance resilience and preserve the safety of spaceflight.