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for Education

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By e-mail

21 February 2023

Dear Chief Inspector,

### **Standard Inspections of Independent Schools**

I am writing to you about the inspection of non-association independent schools in England.

The last cycle of standard inspections for such independent schools ended on 31 December 2022, with details regarding their frequency set out in my letter of 19 August 2021.

This letter sets out arrangements for the frequency of standard inspections of such schools, for the next cycle, which started on 1 January 2023. This new cycle will end on 31 December 2025.

#### Standard inspections of non-association independent schools

I write to confirm that HMCI (Ofsted) commenced a new cycle of standard inspections of non-association independent schools from 1 January 2023. This cycle will see the standard inspection of all non-association independent schools at least once before the cycle ends on 31 December 2025.

It is our common intention that:

- a. A standard inspection of an independent school will consist of an inspection against all the independent school standards that apply to the school, and any applicable requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (“EYFS”). Furthermore, standard inspections by HMCI (Ofsted) should be carried out

under Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF) and the Non-Association Independent School Inspection Handbook.

- b. Where any non-association independent school is judged "inadequate" or "requires improvement" at a standard inspection on or after 1 January 2023 ("the first standard inspection" in this cycle) there will normally be a second standard inspection of that school within two academic years following the date of the first standard inspection in this cycle. Such second standard inspections may be part of the current cycle or the next cycle. Ofsted may prioritise such a second standard inspection of a school where, subsequent to the first standard inspection, a progress monitoring inspection either shows significant improvement at the school or on-going failings.

Ofsted will inform the Department for Education where it considers that a second standard inspection of a school is appropriate and whether it should be during the current cycle or the next one.

- c. Where any non-association independent school was judged "inadequate" or "requires improvement" at its last standard inspection and that inspection took place prior to the start of the current cycle, i.e. before January 2023 ("the last standard inspection") there will normally be a standard inspection of that school within two academic years following the date of the last standard inspection as part of the current cycle.
- d. Where inspectors identify non-compliance with any of the independent school standards or of the EYFS at any additional inspection (see 'Additional inspections' paragraph below) during the current cycle it may be appropriate for Ofsted to carry out a standard inspection of that school earlier than planned. Ofsted will inform the Department for Education where it considers that that an earlier standard inspection of a school is appropriate within the current cycle.

In order to give effect to the above, HMCI (Ofsted) and the Department intend to make all the necessary arrangements.

#### Welfare inspections of boarding and residential special schools

Welfare inspections of residential special schools should continue to be every financial year.

Welfare inspections of other Ofsted inspected boarding schools should continue to be once every three financial years for those schools judged at their last welfare inspection to be "outstanding" or "good" overall – with a financial year being from 1 April to 31 March. However, in these cases, a welfare inspection of a school should not take place later than 31 March 2025 if the school has not had a welfare inspection since 1 April 2021.

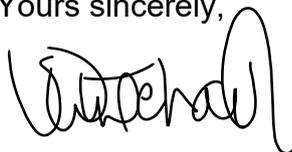
In the case of those other Ofsted inspected boarding schools judged at their last welfare inspection to be “requires improvement” or “inadequate overall”, they should instead be inspected within 24 months of that last welfare inspection.

If Ofsted receives or has information which raises concern about the safety and welfare of children at a residential special school or boarding school, it will consider bringing forward its welfare inspection.

Additional inspections

The Department will continue to commission HMCI (Ofsted) from time to time to carry out other inspections of independent schools including: material change, emergency, and progress monitoring inspections as well as standard inspections outside the current cycle. Pre-registration inspections will also continue to be carried out by HMCI (Ofsted) in relation to any applications to register an independent school. Additional inspections should be carried out in line with the Handbook for additional inspections of independent schools.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Whitehouse', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Sue Whitehouse  
Deputy Director  
Independent Education and School Safeguarding Division