



Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State

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Neil Carmichael MP
Chair of the Education Committee
House of Commons
London
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7 July 2016

Dear Neil,

Thank you for the Committee's report on your hearing with Amanda Spielman, my preferred candidate for HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI). I am grateful for the consideration the Committee has put into the matter.

I have considered your report carefully, alongside the transcript of the pre-appointment hearing that you held with Amanda Spielman last week. I have also considered the evidence available throughout this rigorous recruitment process, all overseen by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments. This evidence includes feedback from Amanda's written application, formal interview, psychological assessments and a media test.

This has been an open and transparent process, where the best candidate has been selected on merit. A senior, independently-chaired panel assessed Amanda as eminently appointable against all the requirements of the role, and my judgement is that she was the best candidate from a strong field. I have therefore decided to proceed in recommending Amanda's appointment as the next HMCI.

I was surprised and disappointed by the Committee's report. Having read the Committee's concerns in the report itself, and the transcript of the hearing, it is clear that Committee members' views on desirable qualities and skills were different in very significant areas from the advertised person specification (which the Committee had received before the role was advertised, and had not offered any comments). In places, Committee members appeared to misunderstand the reality of HMCI's role as defined in legislation.

- Firstly, Committee members appeared to question the extent to which **the role of HMCI is that of a Chief Executive**. As the role description makes clear, the core of the role is 'driving Ofsted to be an ever more focused and effective inspectorate – one where the quality and credibility of inspection continues to improve while value for money

increases'. HMCI is personally responsible to Parliament for the organisation, staffing and management of Ofsted, and, as Accounting Officer, for ensuring the efficient and effective use of Ofsted's resources. This is crucial to the role: the new Chief Inspector will lead an organisation with a workforce of 3,000, including around 2,000 inspectors, and a budget of £148 million for 2016-17.

HMCI will need to continue to drive the quality, reliability, consistency and credibility of Ofsted inspections in all of the sectors it inspects. Amanda's leadership and management skills have been illustrated in her previous roles, especially in her role as Chair of Ofqual, where she oversaw an ambitious reform agenda. These skills were also tested throughout this process. The panel commented positively on her leadership abilities, which were also evidenced by the psychological assessment. David Hoare, Chair of Ofsted Board has written to me to emphasise the importance of Amanda's experience in running complex organisations and her strategic skills.

In the hearing last week, Amanda also commented that 'raising standards is my absolute driving mission'. Given this, I have every confidence in her vision for Ofsted as an organisation that will continue to be committed to 'raising standards, improving lives', and her ability to lead it to deliver this.

- Secondly, the Committee's queries about Amanda's expertise in each of Ofsted's areas of responsibility, reflects a **misconception of the role**. It is not a requirement of the role to have prior understanding of all the sectors that Ofsted inspects: HMCI leads an extensive team of inspectors, all of whom have professional experience of the sectors they inspect. As with previous office-holders, I expect Amanda to lead Ofsted's regulatory and inspection work, and in doing so, to draw on experts and practitioners from each of the sectors that Ofsted inspects – those employed within Ofsted, and also valuable perspectives from the front-line.
- Thirdly, **the Committee's report is factually wrong** in suggesting that Ofsted is accountable for failures in child protection. Amanda was completely right to say that this responsibility rests with 'those who are actually directly responsible for the children day to day in social care', while also recognising the enormous responsibility of inspecting child protection and other children's services. This is an important error in the report. The new Chief Inspector must have this clear-thinking precision, and must promote it throughout the organisation, if we are serious about a fair, credible and high-quality inspection system.

Finally, I am concerned that the Committee appears to have been looking for a narrow and stereotypical representation of leadership, vision and motivation. In recruiting the next HMCI, I am not seeking what one Committee member described as a 'crusader' during the hearing. As Amanda herself said in response, the problem with crusading is that 'you can often lose track of the

objectivity, honesty and integrity that are needed to do this well'.

That is what I am looking for in the next Chief Inspector: someone with a relentless determination to raise standards, but also a rigorous and clear-sighted leader for Ofsted, who will lead the organisation and its inspectors to form reliable, credible and well-evidenced judgements about the quality of education and care young people receive.

I am therefore disappointed that the Committee underestimated Amanda's vision, focus and leadership style. Her objectivity and openness are important strengths and I believe that it must be right that, as we have taken significant strides towards making teaching an evidence-based profession, that we should look for a Chief Inspector committed and able to come to objective conclusions based on what data and analysis actually show.

I am sure that Amanda will generate fewer headlines than her predecessor, but I also know that she will not shy away from challenging Government, nor offering frank assessments of the performance of our educational institutions. I have absolutely no doubt that under her watch Ofsted will play a central – and highly effective – role in supporting and driving improvement in childcare, schools, children's services and adult learning.

I will write to you separately about what I believe to be a mishandling of the publication of your report under embargo.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicky Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

RT HON NICKY MORGAN MP