



**Rt Hon Nick Gibb MP**  
Minister of State for School Standards

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Amanda Spielman  
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Dear Amanda,

## **OUTSTANDING EXEMPTION**

I am writing to you to set out the Department's position regarding the exemption from routine inspection, which applies to schools and colleges judged by Ofsted to be outstanding.

When the Government introduced the exemption policy in 2012 it was a reflection of our commitment to ensure that inspection arrangements are proportionate and give our highest performing schools and colleges more autonomy so they can get on with what matters most – providing an excellent education. This remains an important commitment. As the Secretary of State set out in his speech earlier this year at the NAHT conference, we trust schools and colleges to get on with improving the education of their pupils without intervention.

It has also always been the case that schools and colleges judged by Ofsted to be providing outstanding education are not exempt from accountability. We publish sophisticated performance data for all schools and colleges every year, providing transparency about performance for parents. In addition, Ofsted has had the ability to determine, through its risk assessment process, which exempt schools and colleges have warranted re-inspection, and the power to inspect exempt providers for the purpose of survey visits.

I have listened to concerns raised by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, which I know you share, about the impact of our exemption policy. As time goes on, it is right that we take stock of the policy and ensure that Ofsted is able to provide appropriate assurances about these providers.

It is for this reason that I am asking that Ofsted reviews its current risk assessment arrangements and increases its inspection of exempt outstanding schools and colleges over the coming year to 10%. This is a recognition that the current arrangements are identifying too few schools and colleges to give parents the assurances they need. This is also in line with the expectation agreed in Parliament when the exemption was introduced.

This 10% will include schools and colleges where Ofsted's risk assessment indicates there may be concerns. Ofsted can of course also choose to visit a selection of schools and colleges where best practice is likely to be found to support its survey and research programme, as set out in your strategic plan.

As Chief Inspector, you will of course retain the power to inspect any school or college, exempt or otherwise, if you have concerns about the quality of provision or safety of pupils.

I look forward to continuing our constructive discussions on this important topic, and reviewing the impact of the changes to your risk assessment process.

With best wishes,

*In much*  
*Nick*