

Rt. Hon Damian Hinds MP

Secretary of State

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Nicky Morgan, then Secretary of State, first wrote to your predecessor, Sir Michael Wilshaw, about batched inspections of schools in multi-academy trusts (MATs) in 2015, setting out her views and clarifying the process agreed between the department and Ofsted at the time. This set out that: the starting point of batched inspections must be individual academy inspection; that inspectors would meet staff from the MAT shortly after individual inspections have taken place; and that Ofsted would publish a letter summarising the findings from the individual inspections as well as additional information gained about the support provided by the MAT.

I am aware that you will now be making some operational changes to batched inspections, which you will now refer to as 'MAT summary evaluations', and that our officials have been discussing these changes. This includes scheduling school inspections that are part of a MAT summary evaluation over a period of up to two terms, rather than over a week. Once all school inspection reports have been published, you will then spend time speaking to MAT leaders and other headteachers across the MAT before sending and publishing a letter to the MAT leaders. As part of this time with the MAT, you also intend to carry out, only with the agreement of school and MAT leaders, short survey visits to schools not inspected as part of the MAT summary evaluation, to help inspectors get a rounded picture of the MAT.

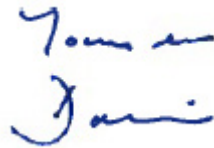
I understand that you have tested these changes with MAT leaders who suggest that the changes are welcome and will help to reduce workload burden and increase the efficiency and quality of a MAT summary evaluation. However, I ask that you continue to evaluate these changes, to ensure these aims are met. On the school survey visits in particular, I ask that you make clear that it is school and MAT leaders' choice whether

inspectors can visit schools that are not being inspected and ensure that these visits do not create undue burdens on the schools or MAT. You will also need to be clear that these are in no sense a school inspection, or something which can affect the normal schedule for school inspections, and ensure there is no suggestion that these schools have been assessed or inspected.

I think it is helpful that you are also publishing an operational guidance note which will clarify the MAT summary evaluation process for both MATs and inspectors. This will in no way replace the Ofsted inspection framework, or school inspection handbook, which remains the basis for all school inspections, including the individual inspections carried out in the batch, but is an important step in ensuring that MAT leaders are clear on what is expected of them during a MAT summary evaluation.

As above, you will now refer to this process as a MAT summary evaluation. Given the potential for confusion in this area I ask that we use this name consistently and avoid MAT summary evaluations being referred to as 'MAT inspections'. This is important in making clear that individual school inspections form the basis of MAT summary evaluations.

I am grateful to you for the work you have done on this process and look forward to working with you as my department considers how we may further improve the accountability of MATs.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Damian Hinds', written in a cursive style.

Damian Hinds
Secretary of State for Education