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6 November 2018

Kate Richards
Chief Inspector
Independent Schools Inspectorate
Cap House
9–12 Long Lane
London
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Amanda Spielman
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Kate,

Annual report on the quality of inspection work by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in 2017/18

Please find enclosed a copy of the 2017/18 annual report of the Independent Schools Inspectorate, which I have today sent to the Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon. Damian Hinds MP. The annual report will also be published on Ofsted's website. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your organisation's cooperation and professionalism during the year.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Spielman

Amanda Spielman
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

6 November 2018

The Rt Hon. Damian Hinds MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Dear Damian,

Annual report on the quality of inspection work by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in 2017/18

I have pleasure in presenting my annual report on the quality of the inspection work carried out by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) in 2017/18. The report will be published on Ofsted's website.

During 2017/18, the Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to review 17 ISI inspection reports. The department did not commission Ofsted to make any on-site visits to ISI inspections this year.

Owing to the limited amount and range of monitoring activity commissioned by DfE in 2017/18, Ofsted does not have sufficient evidence to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State as to the ISI's suitability for continued approval as an independent inspectorate. This is the third consecutive year that Ofsted has been unable to make a recommendation; in each year, this has been due to the limited monitoring activity commissioned by DfE.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Spielman".

Amanda Spielman
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Annual report on the quality of inspection work by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in the academic year 2017/18

Introduction

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect selected registered independent schools with membership of the associations that make up the Independent Schools Council, including their registered early years provision and boarding provision.¹

Under section 107(1) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has a duty to prepare and send a report to the Secretary of State about the inspectorates for independent schools, at intervals of no more than a year. HMCI must have regard, under section 107(2), to matters that the Secretary of State may direct about the form and contents of the report.

The Secretary of State's directions to HMCI are set out in Annex A of the 'Memorandum of understanding for Ofsted's monitoring of the independent inspectorates for independent schools in England' (internal, June 2016).

Independent Schools Inspectorate's inspection activity for 2017/18

ISI carried out 459 inspections during the academic year 2017/18.

Ofsted's monitoring of the Independent Schools Inspectorate in 2017/18

The Department for Education commissioned Ofsted to evaluate 17 published inspection reports in 2017/18.

Four of the 17 reports sampled and evaluated by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) were for regulatory compliance inspections. The remaining 13 reports were combined inspections of schools' regulatory compliance and of their educational quality.

Eight of the combined inspection reports were for boarding schools. These inspections reported on the school's compliance with the national minimum standards as well as the quality of the school's educational provision.

Findings

- All of the reports reviewed comply with ISI's inspection guidance. This includes the inspectorate's 'Commentary on the regulatory requirements',

¹ Under Section 106 of the Education and Skills Act 2008, as set out in the agreement of 13 January 2015 between the Department for Education and ISI.

which provides inspectors with detailed guidance on how to inspect a school's compliance with the independent school standards (ISS).

- The reports capture the unique nature of the schools effectively. Almost all reports provide examples of features of each school's provision and of pupils' experiences, to illustrate the school's ethos and main aims.
- The combined regulatory compliance and educational quality inspection reports provide comprehensive information on the schools' safeguarding procedures. In the schools where safeguarding arrangements were judged to be effective, the reports contain examples of how school leaders promote a good culture of safeguarding. Almost all of these reports include examples of how pupils learn how to be safe.
- All regulatory compliance reports comment succinctly on the schools' arrangements to keep pupils safe.
- On the very few occasions that inspectors found safeguarding procedures to be ineffective, each of the reports clearly explains the school's failings.
- All reports succinctly state whether the school meets the ISS. Where a school was judged to not be meeting the ISS, the report makes clear the actions that leaders must take to ensure compliance.
- The reports contain relevant detail to justify the judgements that inspectors have made, including in relation to pupils' achievement and their personal development.
- The reports demonstrate that the inspectors considered the views of parents and pupils.
- The reports of schools that have boarding provision provide an effective commentary on how the provision meets the national minimum standards.
- In most reports, inspectors provide recommendations that clearly identify what the school's leaders must do to improve the provision.
- In four of the reports, the recommendations to improve the quality of the school's educational provision lack sufficient precision. In two of these reports, the recommendations do not make clear the specific actions leaders must undertake to bring about improvement. In the two other reports, the recommendations do not focus sufficiently on resolving a weakness that inspectors have reported upon in the main body of the report. In each of these four reports, it is not clear how the recommendations will lead to an improvement in the school's provision.

Recommendations

ISI should ensure that all recommendations for improvement to schools should:

- directly link to any weaknesses within the school's provision that inspectors have identified in the report summary
- clearly identify the specific actions that leaders must take to secure improvement.