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6 November 2018

Jane Cooper
Chief Inspector
School Inspection Service
The Clock Tower, 5 Farleigh Court
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Bristol BS48 1UR

Amanda Spielman
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Jane,

Annual report on the quality of inspection work by the School Inspection Service in 2017/18

Please find enclosed a copy of the 2017/18 annual report of the School Inspection Service, 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 School Inspection Service in 2017/18

I have pleasure in presenting my annual report on the quality of the inspection work carried out by the School Inspection Service (SIS). The report will be published on Ofsted's website.

During 2017/18, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to monitor two SIS inspections on site and to review six SIS inspection reports.

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 SIS'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 School Inspection Service in the academic year 2017/18

Introduction

The School Inspection Service (SIS) is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect selected registered independent schools that are members of:

- the Focus Learning Trust
- the Steiner Waldorf Schools Fellowship
- the Cognita Group, where its schools do not belong to an Independent Schools Council Association.

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. Under section 107(2), HMCI must have regard 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).

The School Inspection Service's inspection activity for 2017/18

SIS carried out 17 standard inspections during the academic year 2017/18.

Ofsted's monitoring of the School Inspection Service in 2017/18

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to evaluate six published inspection reports. Of these, five were reports from full inspections of each school's educational provision. The remaining report was from a progress monitoring inspection. Ofsted also evaluated two inspections on site, in line with the commission from the DfE. The monitoring activity took place on the first day of each inspection. These inspections were concerned with the schools' educational provision and compliance with the independent school standards (ISS).

Findings

- The five reports of educational quality capture the unique nature of the schools well. Each provides an insight into what it is like to be a pupil at the school, including how the school contributes to pupils' personal development.
- The reports provide comprehensive commentaries regarding the schools' arrangements for keeping pupils safe. On the sole occasion that inspectors judged a school's safeguarding arrangements to be ineffective, the report clearly outlines why this is the case.
- The reports provide detailed summaries of the quality of the provision, including the strengths and the areas that require improvement.

- The reports provide detailed accounts of whether the schools meet the ISS or not.
- The reports demonstrate that inspectors considered a range of opinions, including those of pupils, parents and staff.
- In most of the education quality reports, there is a close match between inspectors' qualitative judgements and the text contained within the report's summary.
- In two of the reports, however, inspectors' qualitative judgements are not fully supported by the commentary within the report. On one occasion, the reported evidence within the report's summary does not support the judgement of 'good' that has been given. It is therefore not clear in these cases how inspectors have arrived at their judgements.
- In almost all cases, recommendations in the reports draw directly from the weaknesses of the school's provision identified within the report's summary.
- Two of the reports, however, do not contain recommendations which directly address the main weaknesses that each report's summary identifies. In these cases, it is not clear what actions school leaders should take to bring about the necessary improvement.
- The progress monitoring report provides comprehensive justification for the inspectors' judgement that the school now meets the ISS.
- On the day that Ofsted monitored the on-site inspections, the SIS inspectors undertook a wide range of inspection activities. These provided evidence that enabled inspectors to arrive at emerging judgements about the quality of the schools' educational provision and their compliance with the ISS.

Recommendations

SIS should make sure that in all cases:

- judgements about the quality of the school's provision are fully supported by the main findings of the report
- recommendations for improvement directly address the main weaknesses of the school's provision identified within the report's summary.