



Lord Nash
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

 November 2013



Thank you for your letter of 25 October about my response to your question following the Government statement on the Al-Madinah Free School on Thursday 17 October. I hope that the following explanation is useful.

As you acknowledge in your letter, three quarters of the first batch of free schools were rated good or outstanding. Of the first batch of 24 free schools which opened in 2011:

- 4 were rated outstanding.
- 14 were rated good.
- 5 were rated requires improvement.
- 1 was rated inadequate.

However, the figures you then cite for all schools do not provide a valid comparison. The 24 free schools were all inspected under Ofsted's tougher new inspection framework, introduced from September 2012, whereas most of the schools in the sample you refer to were inspected under the previous framework. It is not valid to compare the Ofsted ratings of schools inspected under different frameworks, as you have done in your letter.

Between September 2012 and June 2013, 7,226 schools were inspected under Ofsted's new inspection framework:

- 724 (10%) were rated outstanding.
- 3,921 (54%) were rated good.
- 2,162 (30%) were rated requires improvement.
- 419 (6%) were rated inadequate.

These are the figures I referred to in my response to your question. Some people have pointed out that schools which are performing poorly are inspected more frequently by Ofsted, but it is also important to remember that the 24 free schools had only been open for around 18 months when they were inspected. As new

schools, the free schools faced greater challenges than most of the other schools inspected over the same period.

It is worth considering the performance of the new local authority schools which opened around the same time as the free schools and also received their first inspection under the new framework. 16 local authority schools fall into this category. Of these:

- 1 was rated outstanding.
- 7 were rated good.
- 8 were rated requires improvement.

So half the local authority schools which had their first inspection under the new framework were rated good or outstanding, compared to three quarters of the first batch of free schools.

Clearly we are only talking about a small number of schools and it is still early days for both the new local authority schools and the free schools. We will know more when the next 56 free schools are inspected during this academic year. However, the figures so far do suggest that the first free schools are performing well compared to local authority schools which opened around the same time and were inspected under the same framework.

I hope you find this information helpful. As you released your letter to the media, I am also making this reply public.



LORD NASH