

25 November 2014

Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Secretary of State

Advice note from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Michael Wilshaw, to the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon. Nicky Morgan MP, on no-notice school inspections

In his letter dated 9 June 2014, the then Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon. Michael Gove MP, asked me to examine the feasibility of moving to routinely inspecting schools without notice.

As you are aware, I considered this request carefully and decided not to move to routinely inspecting schools without notice. However, I am committed to using my existing powers to conduct no-notice inspections more widely where there are serious concerns about:

- the breadth and balance of the curriculum
- rapidly declining standards
- safeguarding, including a decline in standards of pupils' behaviour and the ability of staff to maintain discipline
- standards of leadership or governance.¹

On this basis, 35 maintained schools and academies were selected for a no-notice inspection between 1 September and 20 October 2014 because they met one or more of the above criteria.² This advice note summarises the findings of these inspections.

¹ I set out these criteria in a letter to all state-funded schools on 1 July 2014.

² In addition, Ofsted conducted a small number of other inspections without notice during this period that were separate to this exercise, including five monitoring visits to schools in Birmingham. I reported the findings of these five visits to you on 14 October 2014; www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/advice-note-sir-michael-wilshaw-her-majestys-chief-inspector-secretary-of-state-for-education-rt-hon.

Overall effectiveness declined in the majority of schools inspected

- In 23 schools, the overall effectiveness judgement declined from the previous inspection.
- Of these, 10 declined by at least two grades.
- Only one school saw an improvement in its inspection judgement. In the remainder, there was no change.

Sixteen schools were selected for a no-notice inspection (either solely or partly) due to concerns about the curriculum

This included 11 schools chosen primarily because they were failing in their legal duty to publish their curriculum plans on their website.

- There was a decline in the overall effectiveness judgement for nine of the schools selected for concerns about the curriculum. Four were judged as requires improvement and five were judged inadequate.
- Of the total 35 schools inspected, inspectors found concerns about the curriculum in 17 schools.³ Eleven of these schools were not preparing pupils for life in Britain today. This group included:
 - schools that were not teaching respect for and understanding of the various faiths found in Britain today
 - schools that were not developing pupils' awareness and tolerance of communities different to their own.

Sixteen schools were selected for a no-notice inspection (either solely or partly) due to concerns about a fall in standards

- In each of these schools, inspectors found that wider weaknesses in teaching and learning had led to a fall in standards.
- Thirteen of these schools saw their overall effectiveness judgement decline, two remained at the same grade and one was not graded.
- Six of these schools fell from good to requires improvement. One school declined from outstanding to good as a result of inspectors' concerns about standards in the teaching of English.
- Four of the five schools that were graded inadequate were secondary schools.

Four schools were selected for a no-notice inspection (either solely or partly) due to concerns about poor behaviour

These concerns had been raised with Ofsted either through individual parental complaints or through Ofsted's Parent View website.

³ This included two Catholic schools, one Church of England school, one jointly Catholic and Church of England school, one Jewish school and the remainder of no religious character.

- In two of these schools, the behaviour and safety judgement was downgraded from good to inadequate.
- In total, 20 of the 35 inspected schools had their behaviour and safety judgement downgraded. Common issues found in these schools included:
 - small groups of pupils being off task, chatting or misbehaving in lessons
 - unruly behaviour at break times
 - staff not being vigilant and failing to intervene where necessary.

Six schools were selected for a no-notice inspection (either solely or partly) due to significant concerns about leadership or governance

- Of these, inspectors downgraded the overall effectiveness judgements of two schools to inadequate and three to requires improvement.
- Of the 35 schools inspected, leadership and management was deemed inadequate in 11 and there were minor concerns about governance in a further five. In the inadequate schools, inspectors found a number of serious weaknesses relating to governance. These included:
 - inappropriate interference in the school's day-to-day management
 - a lack of financial transparency (these concerns have been reported to the appropriate authority)
 - a breakdown in relationships between the school and the local authority or between school leaders and members of the governing body
 - insufficient awareness of the school's performance.

Recommendations based on findings from these inspections

- The Department for Education (DfE) should continue to reinforce the requirement on all schools to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and promote British values.
- The DfE should ensure that leadership and governance training programmes emphasise the importance of promoting British values, including tolerance and mutual understanding.
- The DfE should continue to remind schools of the legal requirement to publish key information, including curriculum plans, on school websites.

Ofsted will continue to check curriculum information on school websites as part of its ongoing risk assessment procedures to determine whether no-notice inspection is necessary.

I intend to meet education leaders from the different faith communities over the next few weeks in order to discuss Ofsted's inspection frameworks and guidance.

No-notice inspections

This exercise has confirmed that we have the regional intelligence and the appropriate powers to conduct inspections without notice where serious concerns have been identified.

Nevertheless, inspectors reported that there were logistical drawbacks to inspecting without notice because of difficulties in effectively engaging with school leaders, governors and parents. This view is consistent with Ofsted's previous consultations on the use of no-notice inspection and supports my decision that we should not move to routine no-notice inspections for all schools.

I hope you find this advice note helpful. I would be happy to discuss Ofsted's findings with you or your officials if that would be of use.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Wilshaw".

Sir Michael Wilshaw

Annex 1

Local authority	Phase	Institution name	Character	OE grade	Previous OE grade
Blackburn with Darwen	Sec	St Bede's Roman Catholic High School, Blackburn	VA: RC	2	2
Hackney	Sec	Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls' School	VA:Jewish	2	1
Bedfordshire	Pri	The Meads Primary School	Comm.	2	2
Wiltshire	Pri	Stanton St Quinton Primary School	Comm.	2	2
Swindon	Pri	Abbey Meads Community Primary School	Comm.	2	2
Nottinghamshire	Sec	Christ the King Catholic Voluntary Academy	Ac Conv: RC	2	2
Herts	Pri	Manor Fields Primary School	Comm.	3	1
Oxfordshire	Pri	St Edburg's Church of England (VA) School	VA: CoE	3	2
Dorset	Pri	Chickerell Primary Academy	Ac Conv.	3	2
Sunderland	Sec	Farrington Community Sports College	Ac Conv.	3	2
Halton	Sec	St Chad's Catholic and Church of England High School	VA: RC and CoE	4	2
Leeds	Sec	Cockburn School	Foundation	2	2
Suffolk	Sec	St Benedict's Catholic School	VA: RC	3	2
Bristol, City of	Pri	Hareclive Academy	Ac Conv.	3	2
Barking & Dagenham	Pri	Richard Alibon Primary School	Comm.	2	3
Birmingham	Pri	Adderley Primary School	Comm.	3	2
Essex	Pri	Willowbrook Primary School	Comm.	2	2
Nottinghamshire	Pri	Winthorpe Primary School	Comm.	2	2

Salford	Sec	Beis Yaakov High School	Ac Conv: Jewish	4	2
Staffordshire	Pri	Horninglow Primary School	Comm.	4	2
Durham	Sec	Fyndoune Community College	Comm.	4	1
Hampshire	Pri	Purbrook Junior School	Comm.	3	2
Durham	Sec	Durham Community Business College for Technology and Enterprise	Comm.	4	1
Central Bedfordshire	Pri	Lancot Lower School	Comm.	4	2
Leeds	Sec	Pudsey Grangefield School	Foundation	3	2
Lincs	Pri	St Peter at Gowts Church of England Primary School	VC: CoE	3	2
West Berkshire	Pri	Spurcroft Primary School	Comm.	3	2
Blackpool	Sec	Highfield Humanities College	Comm.	4	3
Staffordshire	Sec	Wilnecote High School	Ac conv.	4	2
Solihull	Pri	Damson Wood Infant School	Comm.	4	1
Birmingham	Pri	Highfield Junior and Infant School	Comm.	4	3
Kent	Sec	The Charles Dickens School	Foundation	4	2
Tower Hamlets	Pri	Marner Primary School	Foundation	NFD	2
Brent	Pri	Islamia Primary School	VA: Muslim	Sec 8	
Oxfordshire	Sec	King Alfred's Academy	Ac conv.	NFD	