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16 November 2015

Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief
Inspector

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

Dear Secretary of State

**Annual report on the quality of the inspection work carried out by the
Bridge Schools Inspectorate in the academic year 2014/15**

I have pleasure in presenting my annual report on the quality of the inspection work carried out by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate in 2014/15. The report will be published on Ofsted's website.

The Bridge Schools Inspectorate closed on 30 September 2015. Therefore, this annual report does not include Ofsted's view as to whether the inspectorate should continue to be approved as an independent inspectorate.

Yours sincerely



Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Annual report on the quality of the inspection work carried out by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate in the academic year 2014/15

Introduction

The Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect selected registered independent schools that are members of the Association of Muslim Schools UK or the Christian Schools Trust.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 of independent schools, at intervals of no more than a year.² 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.³

The Secretary of State's directions to HMCI are set out in Annex A of the 'Memorandum of understanding (MoU) for Ofsted's monitoring of the independent inspectorates for independent schools in England' (February 2015). Ofsted's monitoring of BSI's work since March 2015 was carried out in line with this MoU. Prior to the MoU, the 'Protocol between Ofsted and the approved independent inspectorates' (March 2014) was in place.

The BSI's inspection activity for 2014/15

BSI carried out 23 inspections during the academic year 2014/15.

Ofsted's monitoring of the BSI in 2014/15

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) monitored three on-site inspections and reviewed five published inspection reports. Following the inspectorate's decision not to renew its approval from the DfE as an independent inspectorate, Ofsted agreed to the DfE's request to stop monitoring the inspectorate's work.

Findings

1. During inspections, inspectors gathered a range of evidence to come to a judgement on the quality of schools' arrangements for safeguarding pupils and explored emerging concerns thoroughly. This is an improvement on inspections and reports monitored last year. The effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard children was reported particularly clearly in two of the reports reviewed by HMI. Three reports explained clearly how the implementation of e-

¹ 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 BSI; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/section/106

² Section 107(1) of the Education and Skills Act 2008; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/section/107

³ Section 107(2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/25/section/107

safety policies helped pupils to behave responsibly when using the internet and social media.

2. For the second consecutive year, the quality of the inspectorate's sampled work is less strong than in previous years. Too many reports did not follow the inspectorate's framework and guidance.⁴ It was not always sufficiently clear how proprietors met the independent school standards.⁵ Weaknesses in schools' work were often explained clearly and inspectors recorded proprietors' compliance with the independent school standards methodically. However, these weaknesses were not matched with unmet standards. Written evidence gathered during inspections and reports often described the provision but not the effect on pupils' learning and development. On too many occasions, the text in reports and the grades on evidence forms did not match sufficiently well with the inspectorate's descriptors for the grades awarded. The text was sometimes contradictory between different sections of the report.
3. During three on-site inspections monitored by HMI, BSI inspectors checked pupils' understanding of British values and different faiths appropriately.⁶ This included a suitable range of evidence from pupils' experiences of the secular and faith provision. Schools' work to combat possible radicalisation and extremism was explored.
4. BSI inspectors did not use a suitable range of evidence to substantiate leaders' assertions in all of the inspections monitored on site. This remains a weakness that Ofsted reported last year.
5. Inspectors kept headteachers and proprietors well informed throughout the inspections. Formal feedback at the end of the inspection was clear and, when challenged by school staff, inspectors responded robustly with examples of the practice observed.
6. The inspectorate provides no grade criteria to guide inspectors in making the judgements for the overall quality of education, pupils' behaviour or leadership and management. The grade descriptors for other aspects of schools' work are published on the website but are hard to find.
7. During inspections, inspectors graded each aspect of a school's work and the inspectorate passed these grades to the Department for Education as part of the record of evidence from the inspection. But the grades were not used consistently or transparently in the published inspection reports. Not all of the

⁴ Framework for inspections, December 2014 and January 2015; Guidance for completing notebook A, December 2014; Guidance for completing notebook B, September 2014; Inspection notebook A, October 2014 January 2015 and April 2015; Inspection notebook B, September 2014; www.bridgeschoolsinspectorate.co.uk/inspection_documents.

³The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014; www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/3283/contents/made.

⁶ Paragraph 5(a) of the independent school standards requires the proprietor of an independent school to actively promote 'the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs'.

reports included the judgement grades given to the schools' leaders during the inspections. Different reports provided a different range of grades. As a result, the reports did not provide a clear picture of the quality of each school's work.

8. The inspectorate has too limited a group of inspectors from which to draw to conduct inspections. The chief inspector led 11 of the 23 inspections during this academic year. For five of the eight inspections or reports monitored by HMI, the lead inspector or team inspectors had previously inspected or worked at the schools they inspected.

Recommendation

The BSI closed on 30 September 2015. Therefore, this annual report does not include Ofsted's view on whether the inspectorate should continue to be approved as an independent inspectorate.