

Further education and skills inspection update

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Message from the National Director, Education

Welcome to the latest edition of 'Further education and skills inspection update'.

This edition includes articles on:

- the future of self-assessment report submission
- inspection during the area review process
- activities during National Apprenticeship Week 2016
- clarifying what constitutes a factual accuracy check (FAC) on inspection reports
- decommissioning arrangements for the data dashboard
- information about current and planned survey activity, including the usual round-up of recent publications.

As you will know, it continues to be a busy time in the further education sector with area reviews, apprenticeship reforms and the Lord Sainsbury review of technical education, to name but a few of the changes that are likely to have an impact on the post-16 education and training landscape. You can rest assured that Ofsted is fully aware of these developments and my colleague Paul Joyce HMI, Deputy Director for Further Education and Skills, and his team are working very closely with relevant departments and officials.

I fully appreciate the valuable contribution that the further education and skills sector makes to the education and training of young people and adult learners. I recognise the challenges faced by the sector and the difficulties that need to be overcome to ensure that all learners progress and achieve their full potential.

Thank you for your continuing effort in ensuring that the inspection arrangements introduced in September 2015 remain constructive, fit for purpose and valued by



providers. I have been very encouraged by the extremely positive feedback we have received from HMI, Ofsted Inspectors and providers.

Best wishes

Sean Harford
National Director, Education.

Self-assessment reports

You may be aware that the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) has requested that self-assessment reports no longer be uploaded to the [Provider Gateway](#), in preparation for this site being decommissioned later this year.

In future, Ofsted intends to request this information directly from providers each year, in a similar way to that which the SFA has used in the past. As before, submission of self-assessment reports by providers is not mandatory. We will continue to ask for any update to a provider's self-assessment report at the point of notification of inspection.

We will contact all further education and skills providers later this year setting out guidance and timelines of how and when to submit self-assessment reports to us.

Inspection, mergers and area reviews

Throughout the period of the area reviews, Ofsted will continue to inspect all colleges and providers in accordance with the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook'. Frequencies and types of inspections are set out on pages 6 to 10 of the handbook. Published inspection reports may contribute to the evidence base for area reviews. Ofsted may inspect colleges before, during, or after they have been involved in area reviews. The only exception to this is that Ofsted has undertaken to avoid inspecting colleges involved in an area review during the period between Steering Groups 4 and 5 of the relevant area review, wherever practicable, so that inspection will not normally occur at this decision-making stage. At all other times, inspection will take place in accordance with the frequencies set out in the handbook.

Ofsted is not involved in any decision-making with respect to the outcomes of area reviews and is not a part of the regional area review steering groups (although Ofsted is represented on the national area-based review advisory group, chaired by BIS). Ofsted has provided inspection outcome data on relevant post-16 providers to the Joint Area Review Delivery Unit for the area review steering groups to use.

The handbook states at paragraph 14 that 'a newly merged college will normally be inspected as a new provider within three years of the merger'. This will normally be a full inspection, usually scheduled by the end of the third year from the time of the official merger. For inspection purposes, regardless of the type of merger, all merged colleges will be viewed as 'new' colleges. Ofsted will continue to risk-assess colleges

that are newly merged, as for all providers. Risk concerns could give rise to an earlier full inspection. Risk assessment might also give rise to a monitoring visit or support and challenge visit, which may help to inform risk assessment.

Recently published DfE guidance on area reviews refers to the fact that Ofsted is in discussion with DfE and BIS on whether to inspect colleges at both the campus and the corporation level. These discussions are continuing.

National Apprenticeship Week 2016

National Apprenticeship Week 2016 saw a range of activities taking place across the country.

HMCI gave a speech during the FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference at the International Chamber of Commerce in Birmingham. The speech covered the need to increase the number of young people becoming apprentices, schools' role in this and the need to ensure that apprenticeships were of high quality.

HMCI ended by stating: "Let's set our ambitions higher than simply levelling the playing field. Imagine a world where the apprenticeship was the gold standard first choice for schools, parents and young people alike. Now is the time to seize the opportunities presented by the government's programme and ensure apprenticeships reach the highest standards the country, employers and the apprentices themselves deserve."

The full speech can be found [here](#).

Amendments to the factual accuracy check (FAC) process

As many of you are aware, providers are given the opportunity to conduct a 'factual accuracy check' (FAC) of their inspection reports before publication. We have been reviewing how well the FAC process has been working and would like to clarify the purpose of FAC. In summary, the FAC process:

- gives the provider a chance to check facts in the inspection report and provide corrections to any factual errors
- may include checking any factual information, such as the spelling of names, dates, roles and key terms used by the provider
- does not include challenging the judgements in the inspection report, or raising concerns about conduct, which should be done through the official, published complaints process.

This definition will be explained to the provider in a letter when the inspection report is sent to them for FAC.

Implications for inspectors

The lead inspector will respond to the FAC through the inspection portal. The lead inspector should only provide a response to matters of factual accuracy. They should not engage in a dialogue with the provider about matters of inspection judgement or issues that may constitute a formal complaint.

Ofsted Data Dashboards: decommissioning

Ofsted Data Dashboards, published on the Ofsted.gov website, will not be updated with 2015 data. However, the current dashboards will be available until 30 September 2016, after which the dashboard website will close down. Further information can be found [here](#).

Recent publications

High-needs learners are not always receiving the support they need to reach their potential

Our report, [Moving Forward?](#) explores the early implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014 and the impact it has had on the lives and prospects of learners with high needs.

The report finds that, in the local authorities and further education (FE) providers surveyed, the implementation of the Act has not been fully effective. As a result, the support that high-needs learners received, seen at the time of the fieldwork, varied considerably. The report highlights a number of concerns about arrangements. These include:

- nearly half of the providers visited not having adequate strategies, experience or expertise to support their learners with learning difficulties or disabilities
- generally weak specialist, impartial careers guidance, with 16 of the 20 local authority websites reviewed failing to provide sufficiently detailed information
- too many learners on programmes that do not help them progress to further learning, employment or independent/supported living
- slow progress by high-needs learners in English and mathematics
- poor recording of learners' progress, meaning many are not achieving their full potential.

The report makes a number of recommendations to the government, local authorities and FE providers to help improve the standard of support for high-needs learners. These include:

- the government producing a national set of data on learners' destinations to allow for the impact of provision and the Children and Families Act to be measured
- local authorities putting in place arrangements to enable education, health and care providers to work effectively together to provide support for learners
- providers ensuring that staff have the relevant expertise and specialisms to support learners with high needs.

Increasing provision in English and mathematics through planning

[This good practice example](#) shows how some providers have increased provision in English and mathematics to meet the rising demand. It describes how four general further education colleges tackled this issue through thorough strategic planning. The colleges adopted very different, but successful, approaches to build their staff capacity and create a culture, where all staff are motivated to support their students and all students are keen to develop their skills in English and mathematics.

Other good practice examples recently published

[Ministry of Defence \(RAF\) – Creating a culture to sustain high apprenticeship performance](#)

[East London Advanced Technology Training – Employer engagement to benefit learners and businesses](#)

New surveys

We have completed our thematic survey on the early implementation of the Prevent Duty and will publish this shortly. Thank you to all those involved in this survey.

We have commenced our thematic survey on '16 to 19 study programmes', which is a follow-up to our 2014 survey on the early implementation of study programmes. The 2014 survey can be found [here](#). Evidence collection and visits are taking place during the summer term 2016.