

Inspection visits to further education and skills providers judged to require improvement

A report on the responses to the consultation

This is a report on the consultation outcome of our proposals for changes to Ofsted's inspection visits to further education and skills providers judged to require improvement. The consultation ran from 10 November to 22 December 2017.

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Introduction

1. This report summarises the responses to Ofsted's consultation: 'Inspection visits to further education and skills providers judged to require improvement'.
2. The consultation ran from 10 November to 22 December 2017.
3. We consulted on the following proposal:
 - instead of carrying out support and challenge visits that result in unpublished letters, we conduct a single monitoring visit with a published report that has progress judgements.
4. The proposal, if agreed would apply to any provider found to require improvement from the beginning of the consultation (10 November 2017).
5. We asked for the views of all interested parties as well as the public.

The consultation method

6. We promoted the consultation widely on the Ofsted website, through social media and through direct communication with further education and skills providers.
7. This is a report of our findings from the 251 responses and feedback we received through the free-text comments in the questionnaire.

Executive summary

8. Since 2013, Ofsted has carried out 'support and challenge visits' to providers judged to require improvement. Resulting letters were sent to providers, but weren't published on our website.
9. We consider the time is now right to review our approach to how we inspect providers that require improvement.
10. We believe that the proposal we have consulted on will:
 - provide a clearer sense of direction and help providers improve
 - be more transparent
 - ensure that our constrained resources are directed to where they will have the most impact.

Summary of findings

11. The majority (65%) of respondents to our consultation supported this proposal.

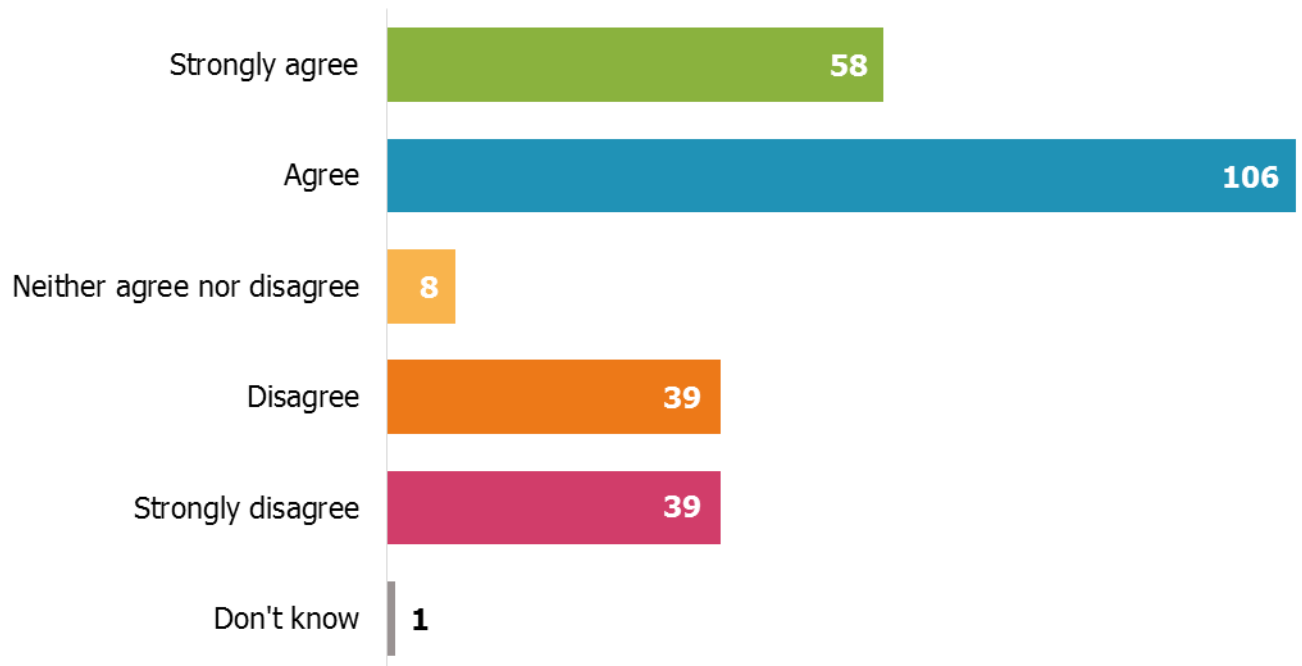
Findings in full

12. Of the 251 respondents, the large majority (174) were further education and skills providers. These providers that responded were further broken down by their most recent overall effectiveness grade at inspection as one of the following:
 - grade 1 or 2 further education and skills providers (106 respondents)
 - grade 3 or 4 further education and skills providers (57 respondents)
 - new further education and skills providers, not yet inspected (11 respondents).

13. We also received responses from:
 - 17 professional/membership body organisations
 - 16 members of the public
 - 9 employers
 - 5 students/apprentices.

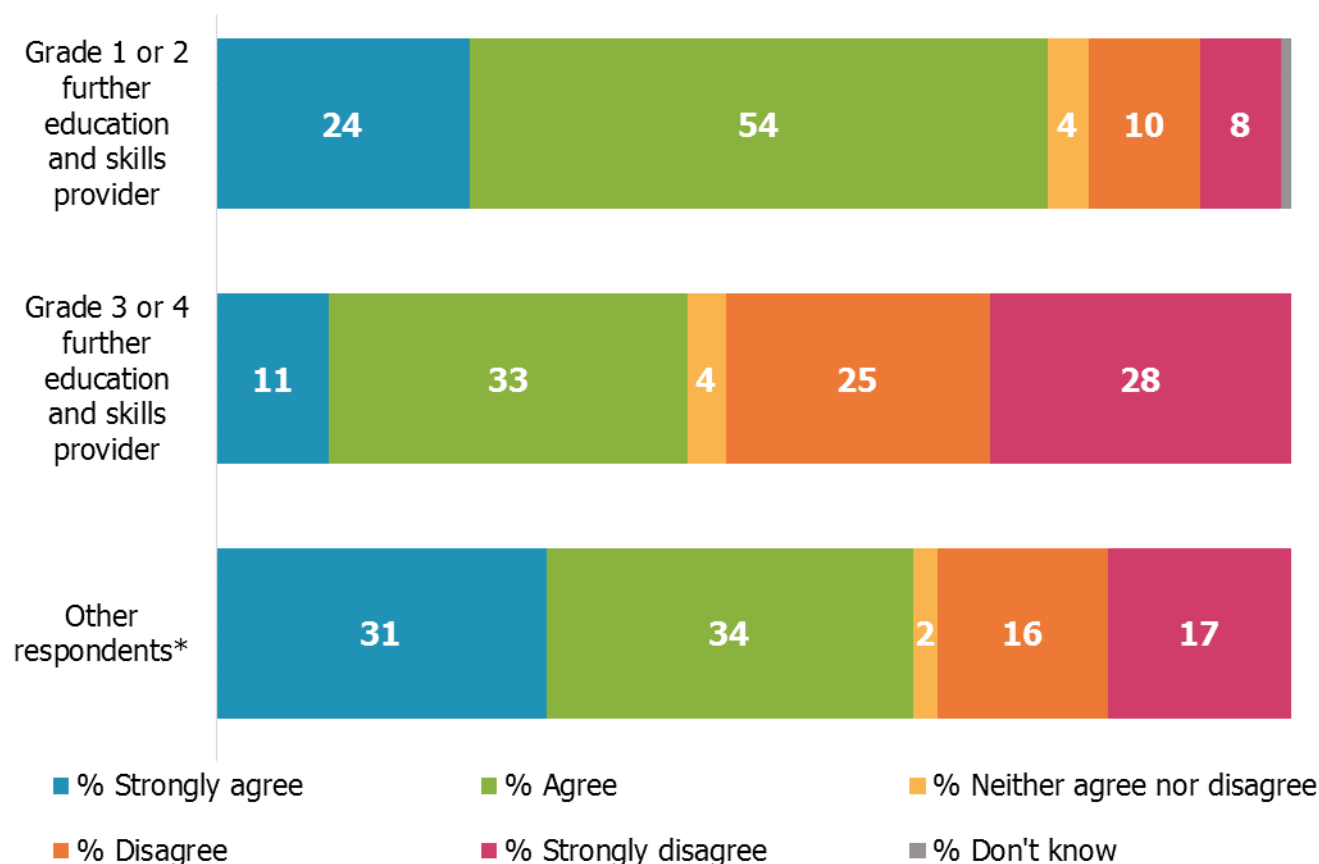
14. The majority of respondents (65%) agreed with the proposal. Of this:
 - 23% of respondents strongly agreed
 - 42% agreed
 - 3% neither agreed nor disagreed
 - 16% disagreed
 - 16% strongly disagreed
 - less than 1% didn't know.

Figure 1: Number of responses to the proposal



15. A large majority (77%) of grade 1 or 2 further education and skills providers that responded supported the proposal. Just over half (53%) of grade 3 or 4 further education and skills providers did not agree with the proposal.

Figure 2: Proportion of responses to the proposal, by respondent type



*Other respondents include: employer, student/apprentice, member of the public, new provider, professional/membership body organisation and prefer not to say or other.

16. The most common reasons respondents cited for their support were that publishing the monitoring visit report:

- would bring greater clarity and transparency
- would allow stakeholders to be better informed about the progress a provider is making
- would help drive improvement.

17. The most common reasons respondents did not agree with the proposal can be summarised as follows:

- would lead to less support from Ofsted for providers and the loss of the open dialogue present in the current 'support and challenge' process
- caused concern that one visit would not be sufficient to guide and support improvement
- a provider's focus would move to preparing for the monitoring visit, rather than on improvement itself.

18. Having considered these comments, we believe that this change will support 'requires improvement' providers to improve and be more transparent about the work being done.
19. Monitoring visit reports will be clear about what the provider has achieved since the previous inspection and what improvement they still need to make. We believe that the inclusion of progress judgements will provide a clearer sense of direction for improvement.

The way forward

20. In light of the responses to the consultation, we will be taking forward the proposal. This will apply to any provider found to require improvement since 10 November 2017 (i.e. those notified of inspection on or after 10 November).
21. We will write individually to providers directly affected. We will make necessary revisions to the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook'.
22. For providers that are judged to require improvement, we will conduct a single monitoring visit, normally around 7 to 13 months after the inspection at which the provider was judged to require improvement.
23. The re-inspection of requires improvement providers will still normally occur 12 to 24 months after the previous inspection. We will keep the re-inspection timing under review to ensure that the provider has enough time to improve on issues identified at the monitoring visit.
24. The monitoring visit will result in a published report that has progress judgements. Published monitoring visit reports will explain what the provider has achieved since the previous inspection and what improvement they still need to make. Inspectors will use the progress judgements set out in Part 1 of the Further education and skills inspection handbook.
25. Should you have a query as to how this change affects you, please email it to us at: fes@ofsted.gov.uk.



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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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