



## Education Committee

### Oral evidence: [The work of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills \(Ofsted\)](#), HC 356

Tuesday 23 June 2026

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Members present: Helen Hayes (Chair); Jodie Gosling; Darren Paffey; Mark Sewards; and Peter Swallow.

Questions 1 to 59

#### Witnesses

**I:** Sir Martyn Oliver, His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted; Lee Owston, National Director, Education, Ofsted; Yvette Stanley, National Director Regulation and Social Care, Ofsted.

#### Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Sir Martyn Oliver, Lee Owston and Yvette Stanley.

Q1 **Chair:** Welcome to this morning's oral evidence session of the Education Committee. This morning's session is an accountability hearing with His Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted, Sir Martyn Oliver, and senior colleagues from Ofsted who are with the Chief Inspector. Can I start by welcoming a new member to our committee, Jodie Gosling? We are delighted to have you join the Education Committee. I invite members to make any declarations that you would like to in respect of the hearing today. Peter Swallow?

**Peter Swallow:** I am chair of the all-party parliamentary group for schools, learning and assessment, of which NEU is the Secretary.

Q2 **Chair:** Any other declarations? No? Good. I invite Sir Martyn to make any opening statements he would like to, and perhaps his colleagues to introduce themselves as well.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** It has been a busy week already at Ofsted, even though it is only Tuesday, because we have had two significant stories running in the media just this week that show the balance of what we have to strike as an organisation.



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First, we have seen significant investment in our early years and regulatory work, so we can do more to deliver thousands more announced visits a year to safeguard children. Secondly, we have heard concerns about the wellbeing of some headteachers and leaders. I am sure that we will touch on this today, but it is a great example of that juxtaposition, that balance, that we have to strike in Ofsted: always putting children's safety and education and care as our top priority, but doing so as collaboratively with education and care professionals as we can.

I am looking forward to taking your questions, thank you. I am joined by my two national directors who lead on the policy that sets all the framework.

**Yvette Stanley:** I am His Majesty's Inspector and the national director for early years regulation and social care.

**Lee Owston:** Good morning. I am one of His Majesty's Inspectors and the national director for all education remits.

Q3 **Chair:** Thank you very much for being with us this morning. I am going to start with questions that seek to update the Committee on development since our last accountability hearing.

Sir Martyn, you told us in October last year that Ofsted had completed 68 out of the 132 actions that followed from our predecessor Committee's report, Ofsted's work with schools, the Big Listen process, the coroner's report into the death of headteacher Ruth Perry, and the independent inquiry by Dame Christine. Can you tell the Committee what the main actions are that are still outstanding from those processes?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Since the last Committee hearing, we have published an update that says it is now 98 out of 132: tomorrow there is a board meeting of Ofsted where I will be presenting that we have now completed 108 out of the 132 actions.

All the remaining ones are linked to the work in children's social care and that is a consultation that we are about to launch imminently into the refresh of what we call the inspection of local authority children's services; that is ILACS and SCIF, the social care common inspection framework. Once we complete the ILACS and the SCIF renewal, then we should complete all 132 actions.

Q4 **Chair:** It is now over two and a half years since the prevention of future deaths report into the death of Ruth Perry. What is your plan and timescale for resolving those final actions? When do you expect to be able to say, "We have done everything required of us in relation to that tragedy and we are confident that all steps have been taken that were demanded of us by way of response"?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I am confident that all steps have been taken in education, as far as we could in the initial phase, because it was a tragic



event. One of the really big parts of the preventing future deaths report was that there should be a learning review, and I have built really strong learning reviews right across the entire system. In fact, Yvette is my lead of all learning reviews and safeguarding reviews across the whole of Ofsted, whether it happens in a children's home, a nursery, or an education setting, everywhere.

One of the things that I committed to as part of the 132 actions was to carry out a very significant independent piece of research. We commissioned the IFF to contact all the people who we have inspected, to gather all their feedback, and to present it to us; that is a major piece of work that is ongoing. In all honesty, we will never complete this piece of work because we will constantly look to iterate, collaborate, and listen to the sectors as we go through these areas.

In terms of the work to refresh ILACS and SCIF, when we launched the consultation—I will be careful not to break the consultation that I am about to start—it is our intention that we will complete that work and begin a new framework for ILACS in April 2027. SCIF—the social care common inspection framework, the one that we use for children's homes and so on—will also get a major update in April 2027 and then the following year it will have a renewal.

In the meantime, we will also undertake trust inspections; that was not a part of the preventing future deaths work or the actions that we took. Then, on the back of the really significant reform that the Secretary of State is taking urgently and quite rightly into SEND, we will revisit our area SEND framework. It is going to be a busy term of office for this Chief Inspector. Every single framework will be renewed by the end of it.

**Chair:** We will come to questions about the impact of that change a little later. I will go to Jodie now for the next question.

**Q5 Jodie Gosling:** The wellbeing impacts assessment that you commissioned into the new inspection framework found that it does not reduce the pressure on leaders to achieve a desirable outcome. We obviously understand that all leaders want the best outcomes for their schools, but what steps have you taken to ensure that the framework does not place an intolerable burden on them?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I commissioned that piece of work; it was a really important part of our design process, and I am very grateful to Sinéad McBrearty for leading that. Sinéad has actually gone on to chair a group with the National Association of Head Teachers, which Lee now attends, and we carry on working as we look through, learn, and iterate from the feedback we hear from headteachers about that piece of work. Sinéad also recognised that when you introduce any new framework—any new way of inspecting—that places additional pressure because it is new in the system; as I recall, that was a big part of her response in that chapter.



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We are doing all that we can to socialise this, to try to explain it. We have lots of feedback where we listen to concerns, and we are very careful to get things right. I have also had a lot of feedback from people who say, "It's not as bad as I feared." That is an interesting word that they use, "I feared": there has been such a hype around Ofsted inspections, quite rightly and understandably, for the last two and a half, three years, that people have built up a heightened sense of pressure.

But it is really interesting that we are hearing reports that inspections feel more collaborative: they feel more done with, not done to. That is a really interesting balance because the hard part about this framework was to try to redress the balance. I have talked previously around how 98% of early years settings were good and outstanding, and 91% of schools were good and outstanding: this new framework is a different way of measuring schools; there is no overall effectiveness grade.

Finally, all the teacher standards, the headteacher standards, the things that schools are expected to do, early years are expected to do, colleges are expected to do, that is the framework. We are simply inspecting against the standards that the Government set, and we are saying to schools, "Are you meeting, exceeding, or falling short of those standards?" I would be happy to talk about that some more later, if that is relevant.

**Q6 Jodie Gosling:** How are you assessing the impact of the new framework on school leaders?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** That is part of the independent research from IFF, a respected polling organisation, that is working through the impact of the framework on assessment. But far more importantly than that, the very fundamental design of an inspection now is inherently different—we are just talking about scores for the moment, but I can go on to other remits—because we have built the wellbeing and care of leaders into the very heart of it.

First, we have a Teams call on the Monday before inspections are announced. That may seem like a small change, but it is a big part of the new framework: there is no longer that wait throughout the entire week because all notifications for routine inspections happen on a Monday via that Teams call. Headteachers say that one small thing alone breaks that fourth wall, if you like, it breaks that barrier, it becomes more collaborative.

We then have the way the inspection itself is designed: it is about learning the context, going on learning walks, and inviting leaders to come with us. We also have a nominee; someone within the setting who can be a part of the inspection team as that additional person. That, again, was one of the preventing future deaths points and this is an extension of that point that we try to work on.



We also share the feedback of what we are finding as we go; there is no big reveal at the end of day two with, "Here is the grade." It is a collaborative process so we can understand concerns and work through them with leaders all the way. We have provider contact helpline, we have inspectors trained for mental health; I could go on, but I have promised to keep my answers as short as I can.

**Q7 Jodie Gosling:** The wellbeing impact assessment recommended that you monitor and quickly respond to unintended consequences arising from the new framework. What consequences have you found and what has been done in response?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Consequences are understandable; this is a brand new framework. But as the Office for National Statistics has said, every time a new framework comes in, there should never be a comparison from one framework to the other. When we take 91% of schools being good and outstanding, 98% of early years settings being good and outstanding, that is an awful lot of people who think that their setting was, frankly, no areas of improvement.

This is a different way of working. It measures against a high standard of doing exactly what you are funded to do as an early years' leader or a headteacher in a school, so some people are finding it challenging. This is especially true for legacy outstanding schools, for example, as they expect to be exceptional across the board. While some schools still achieve exceptional across the board, others might receive a mix of grades, such as strong, expected, and exceptional.

We are doing a lot of work to explain the new framework: we are working with employers, if they are working with a training provider, and we are working with parents so that headteachers can make sure it is being socialised. As we inspect every four years, some schools may not get their first inspection under the new framework for three and a half years, so this is a long process.

Like yourselves, every day I receive media reports and at the bottom of those I get a roundup of a selection of local newspapers across the country, and I have to say I am really pleased with the way local medias are reporting about the expected grades, the strong grades: they are getting it right. The nuance and the complexity that the predecessor Committee asked me to deliver, the media are reporting that right. But it is going to be an ongoing, long piece of work.

**Q8 Peter Swallow:** Sir Martyn, you will be aware that Caversham Primary School is not too far from my constituency, and the very sad death of Ruth Perry was felt very deeply in my community, as it was across the country. Do you have confidence that the manner and circumstances of the inspection of Caversham Primary School will not happen again on your watch?



**Sir Martyn Oliver:** It is hard to say that I should be confident. It is absolutely my aspiration, and I am doing everything that I can. But putting the needs of children first involves the complexity of maintaining high standards for the country's children—including those in care—and sadly, we see bad things happening. Every day I am dealing with a welfare requirement notice in an early years' setting, or an emergency inspection in a school because of some poor concern or whistleblowing that has come our way. There are always things happening, but it is absolutely inherently built into our design.

One of the most significant things that we did very quickly was an immediate action of an impending inspection and training all the inspectors. If you remember the kind of talk about school A and school B: school A is wholly inadequate across the board, using the old phrase, and then school B is good but gets a safeguarding area for failing. Lee and I very quickly determined that they are treated the same.

Let us be clear: a safeguarding failure is serious. Now if we see the new terminology, "Expected standard, good, previously expected, strong, exceptional" and we see that safeguarding was not met but we believe that the leaders have the capacity to fix those safeguarding issues, we pause the inspection. We make sure that the local authorities and the Department for Education are aware of the safeguarding concern. We tell the school that it must inform its parents that there is a safeguarding concern within 30 days, and we watch and we help and we monitor it to put that thing right.

Now that pause would have made a big difference in the case of Caversham because this was an inherently good school that failed in safeguarding. Obviously, I am hypothesising but now, because of its leadership being good, we would have said, "You have 30 days to put these things right." Noting the work the local authority then did with that independent report, I think that that school could have put things right: the inspection would have been completed at the end of the 30 days and it would have been, "This is a good school."

Q9 **Peter Swallow:** You mention there in your answer training staff. Did the lead inspector of Caversham Primary School inspect any further schools? Does he still inspect schools and, if so, what training has he had since?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I am always reluctant to talk about individuals, but I can tell you that that lead inspector did not inspect any further schools and is no longer employed by Ofsted. But I wish no one to read anything further into that.

Q10 **Peter Swallow:** I totally understand. We have heard from Professor Julia Waters, Ruth Perry's sister, that at least 10 headteachers have reported to her feeling suicidal following inspections from Ofsted conducted under the new framework. You paused inspections in 2024 while training on mental health was delivered to inspectors. What assessment have you made of the impact of that training and what plans do you have to



regularly update it?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** That mental health training was not a one-off event: all current inspectors were trained in it and all new inspectors receive the training. In fact we have a number of senior inspectors who have now gone on further to do higher levels of training so that they can become a trainer and offer further guidance and support, especially if they are on the provider contact helpline.

If we come across any incident of any distress whatsoever, we can pause an inspection and work with the employer. That is a really important message that we have been working on socialising and making sure governing bodies are very clear on: that the employer has a right and a responsibility for their employee.

If we have any concerns about any inspection, the senior HMI—His Majesty’s Inspector who looks after the HMIs—will do an immediate informal learning review session with that inspector. Only HMIs lead inspections now; that is yet another change that I have made in Ofsted since I have been here.

It is a constant iterative cycle and we do everything we can; we do not want to hear of any headteacher feeling the way that Ruth felt. But equally, we have to strike a balance because sometimes we have to give difficult messages. That is a hard balance and I am always open to learning and listening to do even better still.

Q11 **Peter Swallow:** You mentioned some changes around allowing school leaders to identify when they have concerns about an inspection but also introducing support for inspectors to report concerns around wellbeing. I have to say, speaking to school leaders in my constituency, they totally recognise—as you have said—that there is much more involvement from day one for school leaders in the inspection framework. Some think that is fantastic and really welcome; others flag that it makes it even more demanding, on senior leadership in particular, as part of the process.

In terms of Ofsted inspectors taking that role of monitoring and reporting wellbeing concerns, how is that working in practice? Are you seeing your inspectors flagging concerns? Or is it the case that, understandably, when they are very focused on the job of inspecting schools, you are not actually seeing them also take that time to make sure that they are being attentive and alert to the wellbeing of the staff who they are working with?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** That is a great question and Lee might have a perspective on this, but I would say we have designed inspections to be a very different process. I will give you an example: no longer are we fixated on inspectors sitting in front of a laptop trying to capture every single word. That, inadvertently, can mean sometimes they might put their hand up to slow the person down so they can capture the wonderful things that have just been said, but you can see how frustrating that might be for the person receiving that sort of inspector behind a laptop



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who is also trying to haltingly stop them to capture evidence. That does not happen any longer. The inspectors are out there having conversations and we have built reflective time back in where they record their evidence.

We are actually looking at a piece of work that will make that evidence collecting even easier for inspectors going forward, allowing for better human interaction, done with process, and I would be happy to write to the Committee when we have more to say on that matter.

**Q12 Peter Swallow:** I am grateful for you committing to writing to the Committee with more information on this: just to be really direct and clear, do you have any data or evidence to share with us in terms of when inspectors are raising welfare issues?

**Lee Owston:** There are certainly instances where inspectors themselves have made a decision to pause an inspection. Now that can be a tricky scenario because often the headteacher might be saying to you, "No I just want this to continue." But the lead inspector would then have conversations with the chair of governors or the chair of trustees or the responsible body, and they make the best decision in terms of the welfare of, not only the headteacher, but if there are other members of staff in the school. There are instances where that has happened, where the lead inspector has made that decision.

As Martyn mentioned earlier, we have also introduced a nominee: an individual within any institution that can support inspectors in terms of the work they have to do across the time of the inspection. That is also a good conversation with the nominee to periodically say, "Are the headteacher and members of staff presenting as they would on any other normal day?" Sometimes, as strangers to an institution, it can be difficult to pick up on the signs and symptoms because we have not seen those individuals operate in other situations; so as the inspection is progressing, using the nominee to constantly get feedback about how staff are feeling, how the headteacher is feeling, and then making decisions in everybody's best interests.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Those pauses do not always come because of the inspection; sometimes they come because of the evidence that we have found and we are presenting back to the school, which can sometimes be quite challenging.

**Q13 Chair:** We are obviously concerned to hear from Julia Waters that 10 headteachers have been in touch with her who are in severe distress as a consequence of inspection under the new framework.

Sir Martyn, you mentioned in your opening remarks that headteachers report that they fear Ofsted and that sometimes the new inspection is not as bad as they had feared. Do you think that fear that headteachers still have, about a process that they have not yet encountered in its new manifestation, might be a reason why we are still finding that



headteachers are experiencing such severe distress—to the point of expressing suicidal ideation—and not disclosing that to your inspectors or to your team in their schools and that these issues are still not being picked up? Do you have concerns about that still happening?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I am very concerned about that. If I could go back, one of my biggest regrets was trying to land this with five new words. This is the first time since 1992 that Ofsted has found new terminology to describe the school; the first time we have not used a single word as an overall judgment. Let us be clear, there were many regulators and inspectors that built their models on the back of Ofsted's model, so this was a significant moment in our long history that we and the Government bravely took to produce a report card with that nuance and complexity.

Having those new words was really a moment to try to say, "Let's be more normalised about inspection: what is wrong with needing help?" What I mean by that is, in the old system, the old framework, and with the inspector in education—not in early years and children's social care where there are a regulator and inspector—if you were in special measures, if you got "inadequate" in special measures, that meant leadership had failed; it was a termination warning. If you were "inadequate" and you got "requires significant improvement", that was a termination warning. If you had two "requires improvement"s in a row, that was a termination warning. Look at the language: termination warning, termination warning, termination warning, unless you are "good" or "outstanding".

Thanks to the work of the Secretary of State, who did the consultation at the same time as Ofsted, now if a school gets urgent improvement and it gets into special measures because it is an unacceptable standard of education and we do not have the confidence that leaders can fix it, that is still a termination warning. But if a school now requires significant improvement, which is the proper term in law, then there is a RISE team—a regional school improvement team—and there is mandatory help. If the school gets needs attention, that is not a fail; it is just saying, "This area is not yet meeting the expected standard." Universal help is available to them.

The terminology has changed and we need to normalise that it is fine to say, "I'm running a school where I'm meeting the expected standard, but that bit's not there yet and that bit I'm really good at." That is the point of the report card: to capture that complexity.

That has not been caught and some of that has been—I do not know if I would use the phrase "whipped up", but it has certainly become very sensitive in the overall effectiveness; the pressure of an inspection. Memories of headteachers are long in this regard, and it is going to take an awful lot of work still to try to get that message across.

Q14 **Chair:** Do you think that there is more to do on suicide prevention, to make sure that those very concerning reports that we are hearing do not



result in a further tragedy?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Of course. As I indicated earlier, it is never going to end. We are going to be constantly focused and constantly learning. But not all circumstances are the same. Sometimes it is because we have told them a very challenging message. Sometimes it is because they have a very clear idea about how their school should be graded and we do not agree. Sometimes it is because of the heightened sense of emotion that there is around an inspection in the first place.

It is a complex setting and we try to tread very carefully throughout it, putting the standards of children and parents first, but not at the expense of professionals because they are the people who deliver for children every day.

Q15 **Jodie Gosling:** The requirement around achievement, attendance and behaviour being broadly in line with the national average was criticised as, "An impossible demand" by the General Secretary of the NAHT. Is asking all schools and colleges to meet a national average, by the very definition of the word "average", statistically impossible?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I am afraid that they have been wrong, and we have produced multiple pieces of evidence and blogs. In fact, Lee just produced one, and I am sure he can talk to this in a few moments. It starts off by saying, "Typically" and "Broadly". Let us take achievement for example: this framework is the same framework that we use to walk into a special school where no one enters an external examination, and yet we could grade that school because it is about achievement. This should be really clear.

As members who have worked in schools will know, you have attainment, which is the raw grade; progress is the distance you have travelled; attainment plus progress is achievement: this is an achievement grade. If it is a secondary school without a sixth form, there is only one set of external exams, if it has a sixth form, there are two. If it is a primary, you have year 6. There are 13 year groups and three sets of external examination.

In any case, in any school setting, our inspectors look at the progress: the achievement of year 7s, year 8s, year 2s, year 5s, and they are measuring all of that. We certainly have schools that have lower than national averages that meet the expected standard, and a strong standard. It is not a defining grade that the national average equals less than expected. Lee, do you want to add to that?

**Lee Owston:** You have covered most elements there. The important thing to say is it is not an attainment grade; it is an achievement grade. Within that, first and foremost, we look at progress from starting points and that works whether it is a special school, a secondary school or a primary school.



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The sentence in the toolkit—so what we evaluate against—that I often draw headteachers’ attention to is, “On the whole, pupils achieve well” and then there is a full stop. As Martyn said, inspectors have been trained to look across all year groups, not just those where they sit examinations or tests, and ask, “Do pupils achieve well?” If the answer is yes, yet their performance outcomes in year 6 or in year 11 or in year 13 are not where they need to be in terms of national, then of course that is where inspectors send people to investigate, to evaluate and to get underneath why that is the case.

Indeed, we have report cards where pupils achieve well across the school because their progress from starting points is what it should be. They are not quite at national averages, but we have still been able to say that they are expected strong. We have had exceptional grades for achievement in some of the most challenging schools.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** A really important part of this, and one I was clear about when I came to my pre-appointment hearing, is inclusion. The performance of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children should be one of the major priorities for this country.

I am really pleased that the Secretary of State also thinks exactly that: it is simply not good enough for children—whether it is white working class boys, girls, anybody in socioeconomic areas, left behind areas, challenging areas, however you want to describe it—that we have a system where they do not perform and achieve as well as they could for their life expectations.

Alan Milburn’s recent report highlighted the damage it can have if you do not go on to get those necessary life-changing qualifications. As I explained before, inclusion is a standalone grade, and that is about how well inclusion is being led in the school, but within every area it is also a golden thread. So in the case of achievement, you have the leadership of achievement: achievement, and inclusive achievement. I have to say that in some schools—many of the schools that are getting less than the expected standard—it is their inclusive achievement that is tripping them up.

Children who have free school meals, SEND, are not making the progress, the achievement that they should, and not relative to just straight national averages. For example, we look at the disadvantaged outcomes of children in the school and we compare it to national disadvantaged—not non-disadvantaged, but national disadvantaged. Of course, the more disadvantaged children you have in your school, the more we take that into account against that national comparison. Inspectors are really skilful at doing this.

Q16 **Jodie Gosling:** Schools with pupils who have an above-average share of free school meals often have lower achievement grades than other schools. How does the inspection recognise the value added by schools that work with less advantaged pupils?



**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Having spent 30 years working in the most challenging schools—the worst attaining, the worst progressed schools, in special measures, taking on school after school after school in my years of headship and leadership—I was not about to design a framework that penalised those schools from trying to do right by children. But neither was I not going to say that they should have high standards and high aspirations for those children.

Let me start off by saying that in every category, if you have children who are well above the free school meal band, more than half of schools are getting the expected strong and exceptional grade. Some people would have you believe that not to be the case, but that is the case.

At the moment, the amount of data from published reports that we were able to put out there is obviously only in the hundreds and just tipping into the thousands; many thousands in early years as there is an awful lot more of them. But of course, Lee and I are able to see today's data, and I can tell you that there are schools in very challenging, very left-behind socioeconomic areas, that are getting exceptional, strong, and expected. I want the country to look to them and I want everybody to get that, so we close this disadvantage gap, which has grown for far too long.

But, certainly, my message to heads is, "Go and support the children in your community. Do not turn away any child who your school could reasonably meet, and Ofsted will not penalise you for working with the children who need you the most."

Q17 **Jodie Gosling:** Three in 10 schools inspected under the new framework had grades for achievement below expected standard. What steps are being taken to support those to improve their offer?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I will give myself a break in a moment and ask Lee to talk about monitoring, which is a major part of reducing the stress of a school. Again, if you get below the expected standard, it is not a fail; it is an area where help is needed. All inspections are now Section 5 inspections, full inspections. There are no more Section 8, short inspections; there is now monitoring. Lee, do you want to explain monitoring?

**Lee Owston:** Absolutely. We have committed to monitoring all settings that get a grade below the expected standard. That starts with a telephone conversation between a local HMI, a local inspector, and the leadership of that institution to establish relationships; to understand context in terms of, "I will be the person that comes to your school and monitors you in terms of celebrating the improvements that you have made and hopefully then change those grades so that they are expected," or whatever the outcome might be. That is an important change because previously we would monitor schools, but they would have to wait four years for their next full inspection before they could change the grades of their report. No school wants to sit on a grade that they feel no longer represents the quality of the work that they do.



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With monitoring, we have said that we will come out for one day and we will look at just the areas that needed attention or urgent improvement. If at that point we see improvement that meets the expected standard or above, we will change those sections of the report card, so that nothing is on our website or in the public domain that does not accurately represent where you are now as a particular school.

As Martyn mentioned earlier, there is also universal support through the Department for Education. That is targeted support in terms of varying levels of need and, of course, they will be getting that support alongside their own mechanisms. If we have said “needs attention”, that is not a fail: we have said that the people in this school are the right people to take it forward, they have just not managed to get to where they need to yet.

Of course, we hope to go on these monitoring inspections, see all the improvements that have been made and change grades appropriately. That can happen at any point from three months after the report card is published, all the way up to around two and a half years. If we have a telephone conversation and you say, “Come in next term, Lee, we have done X, Y and Z, I would be really pleased to show you the improvements we have made because we feel we are now expected,” we will arrange for that to happen within a timeframe suitable for both leaders and the logistics of sending inspectors at the right time.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** That goes to another point that Peter raised about what we have learned from Caversham. This was not a part of the preventing future deaths report, but it is something that Julia Waters talked to me about and I got an idea from that conversation; about heads feeling trapped in the grade, there is no way out. Monitoring was about saying, there is: if you have met less than the expected standard, monitoring can turn it. You do not have to wait for the full two and a half years or more for a full inspection to happen all over again. It is about that speed of response that Lee and I designed monitoring for.

Q18 **Jodie Gosling:** Analysis by the NAHT highlighted that schools with a higher share of SEND often receive lower Ofsted grades for attendance and behaviour. Your recent analysis on the achievement, attainment data and schools in challenging circumstances, did not use data on SEND. How does the grading of schools with more SEND pupils compare with other schools in this framework?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** As I said, we are able to use this framework. It was designed to work for a special school, to a school where they have a tremendous number of children with an education healthcare plan, or where they have given children a K code, a school action code themselves. It works across all settings.

Let us be clear: there are schools that have very high SEND cohorts who are achieving exceptional and strong grades; but just because you take more children who have a SEND or an education healthcare plan, it is not



inclusive if you then cannot meet their needs. Having more is not inclusion; having more and meeting their needs is inclusion. I want to encourage heads to have all the children who live in their community as a part of their school and to meet their needs, and I will make sure that the report card holds that to account. That is the point behind it.

You can say that your inclusion is strong, you have identified all their needs, but they are not achieving as well as they ought to, given their own individual unique starting points. Or that your personal development and wellbeing for these children is exceptional, but their attendance and their behaviour is not where this country would expect them to be. That is the point of the nuance that comes from it. I share the same ambition, but I have a higher ambition for standards for these children.

**Q19 Jodie Gosling:** The Department for Education and Ofsted have announced a similar schools model for attainment that would compare schools with 50 similar mainstream schools. How will your inspections use this model in conjunction with other data?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** As part of every inspection, we have something called an IDSR: an internal data summary report. On there, there is a tremendous amount of data. For example, there is all the data available in the public performance tables that anyone can go on and see from gov.uk. There is an awful lot more data. This data is all owned by the Department for Education. We have an agreement with it to use that data and to use it as part of accountability.

Long ago, we asked the DfE to develop a similar schools model. Those of you who have been teachers will remember secondary schools had a similar 50; primaries used to have a similar 125. Ofsted has worked hard with the DfE to design this new similar 50 data, which is just yet one more piece of information that helps our inspectors to tease out the context in which a school might be working, and that is a really important part.

It is an important piece of new data, but it is just one more piece of the data. We already include at the bottom of the report card some key data that we use. The number of children who have SEND, free school meals, and so on, that is all there for parents to see, to save them having to go to the performance tables. We tease that all out. Our inspectors will be trained in this.

**Lee Owston:** It is going to come out in September, so we have not used that similar schools information to date, but it will be from September.

**Q20 Darren Paffey:** Sir Martyn, you had concerns about merging behaviour and attendance in the framework. You said it bothered you tremendously. We then had the consultation, and that has now changed. What impacts have you seen so far of bringing together behaviour and attendance into a single section of the inspection?



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**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We structured it that way because of the conversations we had about the number of areas. For example, previously we had the same number of areas but curriculum and teaching were separate, attendance and behaviour were separate, and we combined both those to reduce the numbers down. The grades for attendance and behaviour are more positive than people are portraying. Over half of schools inspected have been graded at the expected standard, and almost a third of schools on top of that have met the strong standard. That is 80% or more; much higher than people would lead us to believe.

What we have done is to make sure that when we report on attendance and behaviour, we very clearly have a narrative that is, "this is attendance", and then we have a narrative, "this is behaviour". There is a tension; I am monitoring whether it is a healthy tension between having the two. We know if you do not attend you are likely to become more dysregulated, disfluent in your socialisation, which leads to poor behaviour. We know if you do not attend, it has an impact on your achievement. It is utterly crucial.

However, I do not want to penalise schools by saying that their attendance is high and their behaviour is poor, and therefore they are limited by that grade. I make sure that the report card can narratively explain it and when we do the monitoring, we write the action as a next step, which is against just attendance in that case, and we are focused solely on that.

Again, we are not saying that every school should be at an above national average because that is a nonsense if 49% are below all the time. As Jodie was just saying, it is about the context that those schools are working in and whether they are making progress.

I once ran an alternative division, and I was very worried when the Ofsted inspector came in. I had a child on very low attendance, something like 20%, one day a week, and the lead inspector was clever enough to say to me, "What was their attendance in the mainstream before?" I said, "Nought, they did not come in." She said, "They are 20% better then." That is what our inspectors are trained to do. They are trained to have those conversations, and Lee makes sure that is carried out as we go through consistency and moderation and quality assurance of our work.

Q21 **Darren Paffey:** You mentioned a few examples there: a third of schools are coming in at the strong category on those. Are you able to say what proportion of schools—ballpark figure or otherwise—might have good behaviour but poor attendance records? Equally, how many might have poor behaviour but good attendance? Are you monitoring that?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** That is an interesting question. I would have to go away and think about that, if I may, because I am not sure that we have written the evidence base in such a way that we could tease that out.



Though, thinking off the top of my head, we might be able to diagnose the next steps. For example, if there is a next step on attendance but not behaviour, it indicates it was attendance. We could look into that piece of work for you; I have not thought to do that before.

**Q22** **Darren Paffey:** We would be grateful to receive that as written evidence, thank you. Moving on to think about parental engagement with the inspection process and their understanding of what the changes are. How are you assessing that parents and the wider public understand the new inspection framework and the grading judgments that you now publish?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** It was actually parents who designed the look and the way that it appears on a mobile phone as to a desktop. We had focus groups of parents come and do that work. Some of the team behind me spent an awful lot of effort trying to get parents to have that big say because we were frankly quite worried about coming away from that overall effectiveness grade. We have done quite a lot.

We have now produced a QR code, so we say to people, "You can put a banner up outside your nursery or your school if you wish—I was at one not long ago that have actually done this—and you can use any line from the report, you can highlight any grade." The only thing you have to do is make sure that parents can see the whole report because, obviously, somebody might highlight their one exceptional grade, but perhaps not highlight their needs attention area, so the QR code takes parents directly to that report.

As I said, I am utterly delighted with the way that the *Sheffield Star*, the *Liverpool Echo* and all these papers around the country are reporting the grades every day. That gives me a lot of faith. It is not going to be a one-off job though. We have produced YouTube videos. We even have an animation. We are doing lots to try to get it across to parents about what this means. We are doing it for governing bodies, employers, because again, we had a representation from the ITP about independent training providers; that employers would not understand which apprenticeship provider to go to with a report card. I did a YouTube video for them all on that.

We are doing everything that we can to get over this brand new way of working. But as I said, 30-plus years of Ofsted probably being one of the leading ways of reporting and using the Ofsted outstanding, good, is part of this country's psyche. Trying to change that is not an overnight job.

**Q23** **Darren Paffey:** I appreciate that. We are certainly in the business of things that do not change overnight, so I do understand that. I appreciate what you have said about the different efforts that are being made. Our predecessor Committee said that there needed to be improved engagement during inspections, as long as—and we will all know this reality—it did not give undue weight to vocal parents, or even pupils. In your view, does the new framework strike that delicate balance?



**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Well, we have gone from talking to tens of children to hundreds of children. We do not turn away any parent—we never have from any conversation—but now we actively seek their views. Again, we are looking reasonably at how we can use technology to synthesise and collate those views in a really respectful manner. But it is really important that inspectors read everything that a parent has to say because sometimes buried within there is a concern. That is an important part of the job that we go through.

We have some thoughts about how we can do further surveys, is it a national event to do surveys? But I have changed so much in Ofsted and I still have so much to change, that right now I am desperate to just let things become a steady state of business as usual, otherwise I might be accused of being reckless and I do not want that to happen. But parents are a huge part of inspection.

**Lee Owston:** Because we walk the school—or the setting or the college—with leaders at the very start of inspection, one of the main activities is to stand on the gate with the headteacher. That way we can see how they interact with their parental community. We can talk to parents; we wear our lanyards so they know that we are there in the school and they can see us, so we also take consideration of whatever parents want to tell us live during the two days of inspection.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We are about to launch this consultation event. In the work that Yvette will launch in the next fortnight about ILACs and SCIF, parents and the children in care are actually going to be an even more central part of what we hear.

**Yvette Stanley:** Absolutely. We bring care experienced children into the design of our social care frameworks. We did it extensively with supported accommodation. I am going back to Martyn's point about balancing different demands and pressures on us. Young people wanted no notice inspections of their children's home: their children's home want notice to be ready for us to arrive.

We have to find, in all things, the sweet spot: enough notice so that we get what we need from the inspection without too much notice so that things can change. We are also doing all the same things in terms of our consultation; we have a team who are really keen on animations and Martyn and I doing YouTube, so I am stepping up to that.

Q24 **Mark Swards:** Good to see you, Sir Martyn. When you and Dame Christine were last here, we were told that there will be options for greater independence in the complaints process by February or March of this year. What progress has been made and when will the details of this new approach be published?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I know it is hard to believe, Mark, but I have a board meeting tomorrow where we have a paper going to the board, which is to look at an enhanced view of the independence of the complaints process.



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I want to be as respectful as I can to my board to let it actually read the paper and make that decision, so it is one of the areas that I would be very happy to write to you and the Chair about following that conversation with the board.

But we have made a lot of progress on this. I am not going to say it is easy. We have looked across all regulators and inspectorates and as far as we can see, no one goes as far as we already do. We have changed all the things that we do to deal with a complaint already. I talked about this last time, so I will not go over it unless you want me to.

**Mark Swards:** We have that, yes.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** But this new process is about having an independent panel to consider our work. In law, only the Chief Inspector can change the grade, so it is about working through the legal part of it. We also have to deal with the fact that once a report is published it becomes *functus*, it becomes legal. You cannot change the grade without re-inspecting all over again.

There are some really serious complexities and costs that we are trying to work through here. It is certainly not easy. As I said, we already go further than all my fellow inspectorates, but this one will take us much further and we are determined to do it. Dame Christine is really focused on this and it is a big part of my board meeting tomorrow.

Q25 **Mark Swards:** Is there anything more you can tell us ahead of that board meeting, or is it a case of you are going to write to us in the immediate aftermath?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I need to be respectful to my board and let it read the paper and quiz me and challenge me on what we are proposing. But I think it goes as far as we possibly can to try to meet that level of challenge that you raised.

Q26 **Mark Swards:** I will ask this follow-up anyway, just in case you can give me any more detail—obviously, cautious about what you have already told me. What, if any, are the problems with Dame Christine Gilbert's recommendation of extending the remit of the Independent Complaints Adjudication Service for Ofsted, by giving it the power to reopen inspection judgments?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** That is getting really close to what is being presented tomorrow. Except it cannot. I am not a lawyer and I do not want to talk in legalese on this, but it is really quite clear in the Education Act, "The Chief Inspector shall." That is why all reports flow through the law, flow through one person: the one person is the office and it is a bit strange, but we are obviously going as far as we can within the law. We do not want an independent process where we can turn around and say we are just going to ignore them.



But there are some good precedents out there: the way a school works now, for example, with an independent review panel over a permanent exclusion. If it is maladministration, it is unreasonable. There are clear points where you can say, "Well that's not a reasonable judgment, you've clearly got that one wrong", and they can make recommendations. That is what we are looking at now; how that independence can have weight while still staying inside the law.

**Q27 Mark Swards:** Understood; I will not push it any further—we will wait for you to write to the Committee.

I turn to the new provider contact helpline. How many people have called that since it was introduced?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** That is a good question. I do not think I am going to be able to find the answer to hand without taking too long. We get a lot of people calling in over all sorts; it is not necessarily a complaint though.

The provider contact helpline is not just about a complaint. It could be about, "Have I got this right?" Complaints are very different. In fact as I mentioned last time, the way we go about dealing with complaints is to try to deal with as much of it as we can informally through the actual process itself and then post-inspection, before we publish the report, all the steps that we take to get there. It is quite a complex set of data, which is why I have not got one single number for you. I normally have.

**Q28 Mark Swards:** No, that is fine. If you find the number, please write to us with that as well. Do you have any information on what reassurance might be given to headteachers, ahead of or at the start of an inspection, regarding their ability to contact that helpline?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** This is where the team might get annoyed. It is something like six, seven, eight out of 10, where we deal with concerns and we deal with them positively there and then. It is a big number as we are working through.

This goes to the inherent design of the framework to make sure we are getting it right, to be fair, be collaborative, have we understood? We understand that for some headteachers, sometimes they find it difficult to get that across to the inspector for whatever reason. Sometimes it is the intensity of the day. Sometimes the relationship breaks down, in which case we have different senior inspectors, or inspectors from different regions who will come and inspect.

If there is a complaint and we think that there is something in it, we send a different team in from a totally different region to be another level of independence within Ofsted that says, "Are you sure you got that right?" As I said, we do an awful lot now to try to get this right for heads. We want our inspections to be right first time.

**Mark Swards:** Understood. If you could write to us on those two questions, I would really appreciate it. Thank you so much. Thank you,



Chair.

- Q29 **Peter Swallow:** Sir Martyn, we have already talked a little about supporting young people with SEND and how the new framework is working on that. Is there anything you wanted to add that you have not yet touched on in terms of the challenges Ofsted has encountered since the implementation of the new inclusion criteria?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I just want to start by saying I am really delighted by the fact that Ofsted has been saying for so long that its area SEND inspections—the way that special educational needs is being led and managed by health, education and care across the local authority—are simply not good enough. I want to pay tribute to this Government and the Secretary of State for saying we are going to do something about it because it is difficult and a really contentious area. This is a brave piece of work and Ofsted is really supportive of the bravery of taking a look at the SEND system.

On inclusion, we are dealing with the falsehood that if you have more SEND children, it lowers your attainment and therefore you cannot do well in your achievement grade. That is not the point. I would simply say to leaders, “Know your children—know them really very well—know the progress that you expect those children to make if it is not measurable by national examinations, and present that evidence to inspectors.”

I do not think that is unreasonable. If you do not know your children and you do not know the progress that you expect of them in that lesson, that topic, that year, or the five or seven years they are in your setting, I am not going to be very happy and shall happily tell my inspectors to give them a lower grade.

- Q30 **Peter Swallow:** During our SEND inquiry, we received lots of evidence supporting an inclusion clause and it is great to see it as part of the new framework. There is also concern that schools would be judged for factors beyond their control such as struggling to access external specialists. You touched on the interplay between schools but also health and others that have occasionally been accused of not being on the pitch.

How does your new approach take account of those wider contexts? For example how does it take into account schools where there are young people in their settings and they are trying very hard to do the best to support that child but the setting is just not appropriate and the support needed to meet that child’s needs is not there—not through lack of trying from the school but because of wider system failures?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Again, that is pointing to the reforms being talked about by the Secretary of State on the inclusion basis. The vast majority of schools should be able to meet the needs of the vast majority of their local community. Of course, for those who need that specialist help there are then the special schools that we also inspect and that generally do very well in their Ofsted inspections.



**Lee Owston:** I said this at a previous session, but inspectors will always credit leaders where they are doing their very best in the circumstances they find themselves in for all their children, whether or not that is the scenario you just described around SEND. That is why we try to credit everything that leaders are doing to identify, assess and meet the needs of the children in their community or school. If there are systemic issues we have our area SEND inspection framework, which as Martyn said looks at education, health and care at a wider, local area level.

We are also doing work to ensure that all those inspections can speak to each other. We are doing that so that we can share information and identify where the gaps in the system as a whole might be to better target where government reforms may be going or indeed how we want to adjust our frameworks. That might be the education inspection framework or our other frameworks such as the area SEND.

Q31 **Peter Swallow:** Just to really clarify that, when you are coming into a school in Bracknell Forest—or wherever it happens to be—are inspectors expected to know what the most recent area SEND inspection has said and see what the school is able to offer and is delivering through that lens?

**Lee Owston:** Absolutely. The requirement of a lead inspector is to know the area SEND report so they know what the strengths and weaknesses in a particular local area might be but also the social care ILACS report in terms of that system. Through inspections, we also have something that we call case sampling. This is a new methodology that we have brought in with this framework that looks through the eyes of vulnerable children to experience their school day as they would.

Something we do is always choose one child who has SEND or an education, health and care plan. We look at those plans, discuss them with leaders and actually look to see what they are like in their lessons. We look at what kind of curriculum they are receiving and what they are like at lunchtimes and in corridors to try to see these things through their eyes. If there is something that we then want to pick up and evaluate further we widen that across the rest of the SEND group of children who may be in school or any other group.

Martyn was right: SEND is important but if there is one message I want to give about inclusion it is that there are so many other groups of children who also need to be included—for example, disadvantaged and free school meals, children known to social care, looked after children, children in need. There is also what I call the contextualised group, which may be very specific to your school and community. It might be young carers, white working-class boys or something to do with English as an additional language. It is a broad group.

**Peter Swallow:** Also children of Armed Forces families. I am from a community that has a significant number of those.



**Sir Martyn Oliver:** May I just quickly follow up on three really important points from what you just said there, Peter? Ofsted explores an area that is the link to the map at the bottom of every new report card where all the information is. It is a brand new tool that we have developed and is becoming more sophisticated. It has the health, education and all the reports in an area so parents can see—compare and contrast—against them all.

A big part of Ofsted's work is also about reporting. That is why we have to get the balance right about taking into account the context but also holding to account where things are not good enough. If we report to Parliament and say, "In this particular area of the country, leaders are doing everything expected of them and managing their school really well but attendance and behaviour is not good enough," or, "achievement is not good enough," there is that moment beyond the school gate that says, "Well, what are the Government going to do about it?"

This is clearly an issue where you have good leaders doing right but the context is overwhelmingly leading to these children not making the progress that should be expected of them. As I was saying from the area SEND inspection, we found so many areas that were making systemic weaknesses that everyone then describes it as a broken system and change happens. Ofsted does no one any favours by overinflating the picture. We need to honestly call it out and report it to you in my annual report, which is one of my duties to Parliament.

Lastly those inspectors have enduring relationships now because they are HMIs. They know the area in which they are working because they work in the same area and are visiting the same schools year in year out. The same three, four or five inspectors will be going round all the area and they build up a really good, rich knowledge. They talk to the local authority and director of children's services, find out about the fair access panel, take all that contextual information and build it in. That is why they are a skilful group of humans.

Q32 **Peter Swallow:** A slight tangent but very brief answer if you may because I do not want to take up too much time. On those area SEND inspections, transparently my local area has not done too well recently and requires improvement so should be inspected again within 12 months. I understand that there have been a lot of delays in terms of those reinspections. Is that something that you are speeding up?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We are determined to get through all 153 local authorities before the boundaries are redrawn, the new areas are all brought in and we all start again. By that point we would like to respond very clearly to the final position from the Government on SEND reform. Here is a future hint: I would expect to see a report card that very clearly talks about education, health and care and separates out the performance of the three.



Something that the three of us see far too often is that education may be performing at one level but health is at a different level and care at a different level again. It all gets lumped together and is not the level of sophistication that will help us make the difference going forward. We are looking forward to doing those reforms but we obviously will want to go on the back of what the Government do.

**Q33 Peter Swallow:** Local authority colleagues would also highlight that often it is levied against the local authority and not the health system. I am getting way beyond the question I wanted to ask, which was actually to go back to the answer around inspecting EHCPs.

The Government have said that Ofsted will have a role in assessing the use and quality of individual support plans as part of these reforms. Can you explain how you will do this, including the resources you will need to devote to this? I am sure you will be aware that parent carers have raised this as one area of concern in the overall changes proposed in terms of making sure there is the correct accountability for those ISPs.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** A big part of Ofsted's work is not actually the two days every four years that we are on site in the setting. What we write in the framework changes behaviour, which we all know and is why we have to be so careful and responsible. Anecdotally, I know from heads around the country that we expect you to meet your code of practice, which is to have a SENCO—a special educational needs co-ordinator—or somebody who is training to that level, which has led to people going and being trained. We are happy to see the system move. What does it mean? It means that those experts know the children, their plans and the impact of their plans. It is really no more difficult than that.

This goes to the complexity: I saw a report on workload from a group that has been reasonably critical of Ofsted saying that we have driven workload. When I looked at the report, it said that schools are having to produce matrices and plans for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children. In the nicest sense I do not wish to drive workload. The job of an educator is to know their children well and make sure that they are meeting their needs.

**Lee Owston:** I probably answered that question earlier when I was talking about case sampling, where we select children in a school that may be SEND and say, "Actually, we'd like to know more about these children." We can talk about their plans and see whether they are enacted in practice across the two days of inspection.

That model currently works for EHCPs. We would then just adjust that as all the other SEND reforms come online. There is probably a decade's worth of reforms when you think about how staged the plan may be. We stand ready to adjust our toolkits where necessary to keep up with those reforms as they are brought in incrementally.

**Q34 Chair:** I turn now to the very serious matters around safeguarding in the



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early years. We have seen not one, not two, but a series of really horrific events happening in early years settings, some in which children have lost their lives and some in which children have experienced the most horrendous abuse.

As you will be aware, Sir Martyn, the Committee is undertaking a separate inquiry on the early years where we have a particular focus on safeguarding and we will be making recommendations to the Government in that context.

I found it very distressing yesterday to read reports from a whistleblower at the King Street Nursery in Bristol. Over a long period of time Nathan Bennett perpetrated horrific abuse against little children in his care. That abuse could have been stopped much sooner than it was if the concerns that she had consistently raised with the managers of that nursery had been taken seriously.

First, I want to ask about whistleblowers. What is Ofsted's role when whistleblowers raise concerns about safeguarding in early years settings? What changes are needed to ensure that concerns—such as the one we all read about in the news yesterday—are not left to drift and ignored but are picked up as soon as possible and lead to timely intervention where children may be at risk?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** First, our thoughts are really with Katie and John Meehan, Genevieve Meehan's parents; on the Kimberley Cookson case where poor Noah Sibanda was murdered; and on the horrific abuse perpetrated by Nathan Bennett and Vincent Chan. These are simply dreadful cases. I am pleased that I have been able to meet some of the families and go through the tragedies with them, some of which are very longstanding as you say.

We have made a significant number of changes in Ofsted, which I will be really pleased to talk about to make sure that your Committee's work can point to the current position. I will keep this as short as I can; feel free to stop me but there is a lot that has happened here.

First to directly answer your question about whistleblowing, we raised this directly with Minister Bailey and the Secretary of State. I am delighted to say that Minister Bailey has said that Ofsted will now become a designated whistleblowing organisation. Previously it was only the NSPCC and the Children's Commissioner for England that would give the protected status to a whistleblower, which was not as good as it should have been. We are the regulator and people should be able to whistleblow to us. We have really championed this piece of work and Minister Bailey and the Secretary of State granted that in a speech that Minister Bailey and I gave just a couple of weeks ago in Liverpool.

As you will have seen yesterday, the Secretary of State and Minister Bailey have also given Ofsted more than £8 million per year extra to carry out 3,000 additional unannounced visits, provide additional inspectors for large nursery settings, strengthen how we approve new



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providers—how we actually go about registering them in the first place—and invest in our digital system that records all the notifications.

I was also really very clear in that speech that I gave after Minister Bailey in Liverpool that Yvette and I—Yvette works on the regulatory side; Lee’s role is the educational side in early years—are very concerned about the people who notify. We are extremely concerned about the settings that never notify and are legally required to do so. We are using this additional funding to clamp down on all that.

Before we get too deep into it, can I just remind everyone that the new report card has made a very significant change here? Previously we inspected education against one framework from early years all the way through to further education and even initial teacher education. Now there is a very specific framework for early years.

I was determined to build the “Best start in life” review that Lee wrote alongside Yvette’s role as the regulator to say the Early Years Foundation Stage—the Government’s regulatory standard that early years’ settings must work at—is built into the framework. All inspections are now a regulatory event and all regulatory events affect an inspection. That is really a powerful and important point and I would be happy to talk about this all day if you bring me back as part of your early years committee.

**Q35 Chair:** You mentioned another horrific case, that of Vincent Chan. We have met with parents of children at the Bright Horizons Nursery on Finchley Road and they clearly did not have any confidence at all in any reporting mechanisms available to them. They said, “We don’t have confidence in Ofsted. We didn’t have confidence in the LADO. We didn’t really know about the LADO or that that was a route that we could take but when we contacted it, it didn’t really work very well.”

They have had an idea and are proposing a completely independent reporting system not run by any existing regulatory bodies, which they are calling a flare system. The system would register concerns reported by staff or parents at a nursery and different levels of either frequency, or as you say possibly infrequency of reports, and the severity of the reports would trigger different levels of intervention. They have lost faith in the current system and have an alternative proposal that they think would give more confidence to parents and carers around settings that care for the most vulnerable children who often cannot articulate what they are experiencing themselves. How would you respond to that proposal?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I met with a group of those parents myself just a few weeks ago. In fact I am taking them to our Manchester office in a couple of weeks to show them the system that is going to be further invested in as part of the announcement yesterday with the £8 million package. It is really difficult and we understand why people historically have that position.



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Previously where there was a welfare requirements notice, WRN—a phrase that we use in Ofsted—or a regulatory concern, it appeared on our find an inspection report but it would be separate. You had the inspection report and then the regulatory concerns, and those were two different events until the inspection happened again. I have shown the parents that our new way of reporting is that the regulatory notice now appears within the report card; it is built within it to get that message across.

I absolutely understand the parents' position. As I said I am taking them to Manchester to look at our system. We had a really fantastic conversation with them down here in London and committed to doing this further work together. Yvette can talk to this better than me but there are too many times when systems have been created where they create individual systems and things fall between the gaps. What I would like is to have a system where the regulator receives the notification about the concern, acts immediately, reports and makes it very clear to parents.

**Yvette Stanley:** Absolutely. As the regulator if we can see the whole spectrum of concerns we can respond in a risk-based way. We can make calls to the LADO and the manager, go and visit—a visit can be very quick, even the next day—issue a welfare requirements notice, set actions, suspend, cancel and we get on that escalation.

The sadness that I have when I look at those cases is that information was held here, there and everywhere. We have never had a report from whistleblowing in early years because they do not come to us. As Martyn says, we are really worried that it is probably a third to a half of nurseries that make notifications at all. Yet when we see this information sharing it needs a robust system to support it with no cracks. We are absolutely committed to being really transparent with parents.

That is what the new framework was designed to do, having the regulations as its spine. The new report cards placed very clearly do not just look at the report; they look at what is happening since. We might have visited two or three times and set actions. There is an educative process and these parents have been really generous with their time with us in thinking about how we can help parents understand.

The Government issued a consultation yesterday on a whole range of child protection things. There needs to be much stronger guidance for the LADO about the expectations involving us. In "Working Together to Safeguard Children" from 2010 there was an annex that set out how important it was to contact the regulator—whether that is a children's home, a childminder or a nursery—when there is a concern in a regulated setting. For ease of making "Working Together to Safeguard Children" a slimmer document in a bonfire of bureaucracy, we lost some essential safeguards.

We have been working really hard with the police for two or three years to have individual protocols with every police force for them to share that information. If a childminder's husband has a gun and a mental health



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issue, the police should be contacting us. If the local authority LADO has been advised about a serious case in a nursery, they should be inviting us to their strategy meeting. That happens but it does not happen consistently and well because we fragmented the regulatory system without joining the dots.

We are hopeful that the next version of “Working Together to Safeguard Children” will have us back in our rightful place as a regulator. We really welcome the whistleblowing issue because it provides me with a huge amount of insights into social care that I do not have in early years. We want to reflect and learn from the report cards to make sure that they are really useful for parents.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We are working really well with Minister McAllister and the Secretary of State. I expect us to appear back in “Working Together to Safeguard Children.” It is a crucial document. Alongside “Keeping Children Safe in Education,” it is the spine of safeguarding work. If you could support us in getting us back into that as well, we would be very grateful.

Q36 **Chair:** That is really helpful information for the Committee. I just want to ask about two aspects of improving safeguarding practices in nurseries. In the end, although Nathan Bennett could potentially have been stopped much sooner, the thing that stopped him was CCTV in the nursery. By contrast the parents of children abused by Vincent Chan highlighted the absence of CCTV in many rooms in that setting, which allowed his abuse to go undetected for far too long.

In the end, as we know Vincent Chan was caught by accident after a concern was reported that was serious but much less serious than the abuse he was actually perpetrating. Do you believe that the Government should be mandating the use of CCTV in nursery settings as an additional safeguarding protection?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We are part of the Department for Education’s expert panel on CCTV. My early years lead—who works for both Lee and Jayne—came to give evidence to your Committee not long ago about the use of CCTV and digital devices. We know that not all nurseries have that guidance and that some use it but others do not. They do not have any guidance beyond what the ICO—Information Commission’s Office—asks of them.

We do not routinely look at CCTV but we do where it is available and where we think there have been cases. We have looked at CCTV and uncovered really horrific cases that do not make the national press because we are proactively catching people doing bad things, we inform authorities and action is taken. We equally know that there are settings that have a desire not to use CCTV. It is a really difficult area. I would simply say that inspections are not investigations. We are not investigators. In illegal schools and the children’s homes, we do more



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investigatory inspections but these are half a day or one or two days every four years.

Another big thing I should have said is that as you know, thanks to the Secretary of State, Ofsted has moved from six years to four years, and from 30 months from the first registration to 18 months.

Again, that is more work that we are doing to strengthen it. They are the experts who are specifically looking at this area. Ofsted stands ready to help, but of course it has to be within a half day or one day on site and an ability to look at potentially four years' worth of CCTV in that period of time; that is the difficulty.

**Q37 Chair:** The question is not so much whether Ofsted would want to review large amounts of CCTV coverage as whether you think that mandating the use of CCTV in settings would act as a deterrent and assist if somebody was doing things that they should not be doing in stopping that sooner and bringing people to justice.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We are going to say the same thing here. We know that in some cases CCTV was in operation and bad things still happened. Having a good, open, transparent and curious culture of leadership is what matters.

**Yvette Stanley:** We have talked about early years being registered and regulated. Every nursery has a manager and someone who is a nominated individual who is meant to quality assure. It is very sad to me that in these places where they had CCTV—indeed where parents had complaints—they had not explored the CCTV to validate their concern. If we have a notification about an individual who may have done something untoward—maybe not—we will be contacting the nominated individual and the manager. Both we and the LADO will be expecting them to do that.

A safeguarding system needs that open culture but it needs everybody to exercise the same vigilance. We also get people sending doctored CCTV to us. There has to be clear guidance about how much, its uses, who looks at it and how frequently; all those expectations need to be set and we need to be confident that it cannot be doctored along the way.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I visited a group of nurseries—I think it was Childbase—in Milton Keynes and the culture that they were creating regarding openness and transparency and parents being able to see things on apps is clearly the thing that matters. Neil Leitch from the Early Years Alliance speaks really well about this; if he has not given evidence I would urge you to talk to him on this matter. It is about that curiosity, leadership and transparency.

If a whistleblowing concern is made then we need to know. If you have a notification we need to know. We need to take reasonable, responsible regulatory action there, not to over-regulate because that would cause



people to not notify us, but neither to under-regulate and take serious action when it is required.

**Q38 Chair:** The final issue that I want to ask about is that in the extremely distressing, horrific cases of baby Genevieve and baby Noah, safe sleep practices were the issue. It was extraordinary to hear about the circumstances in which those little children were put down for a sleep in their nursery settings. Do you think enough is being done on guidance around safe sleep and is there more that you would like to see coming from the Government in that regard?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** It is now and I was delighted. In the conversations that the three of us had as we were building the early years toolkit, I remember being really quite insistent. I was actually focused and fixated on safe eating at one point because I was really worried about the number of notifications we were receiving.

I understand how difficult it is if you have a child who is gluten intolerant and people are bringing food in from home and are sitting at the table and swapping food. Food allergies and food safety are incredibly important. I was like, "Get safe eating in there, Lee." Of course it increasingly became safe sleeping.

On the back of my conversations with Katie and John and the meeting that I had with Minister Bailey, I committed to going further and said that at every inspection where eating and sleeping take place we will observe it and report on it. I made that commitment to Katie and John just a few weeks ago and Minister Bailey talked about that again at her speech in Liverpool.

**Yvette Stanley:** There have been really helpful updates to the EYFS informed by our work, notifications and very sadly working with some families. We have also worked with The Lullaby Trust. On all these issues, the training of our own inspectors is really important; it is absolutely key that they are on point with the best thinking and practice.

When Lee was doing his framework training for all the remits, we had an extra two days of regulatory training for our EY regulatory inspectors covering exactly these sorts of issues. Every year we do a safeguarding audit looking across all our work, inspection and regulation. We present that back to the DfE so it can inform the next iteration of the EYFS.

**Q39 Mark Swards:** Sticking with early years and turning to accountability—specifically for chain providers—this Committee heard evidence that there is insufficient accountability for chain providers. When issues have been identified there are no actual ramifications for leadership, staff or owners of group settings and it all lands on the individual setting managers when things have been identified. What challenges have you identified in developing a robust oversight model for multi-site early years providers?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Ofsted would be delighted to receive group inspection powers as we are regarding multi-academy trusts in the early years



setting. It depends on how a group organises itself, but for example if a very large group had one nominated individual, then if Ofsted issues a welfare requirements notice with failings or concerns about that nominated individual, we would have to issue it to the group via every single nursery within that setting because we do not have the authority to issue it to just the group alone. That would certainly make our regulatory work quicker, faster to respond, and we could tease those connections between one setting and another.

We would welcome that power but we are able to work around that and make sure that we carry these welfare requirements notices in a way that puts children first now. You will see examples of that shortly.

**Q40 Mark Swards:** Is it quite difficult to work around that?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Yes.

**Yvette Stanley:** Technically, in a legal sense there are individuals and it depends on the breadth of their role, as Martyn said. If you had a chain of 50 and they had five nominated individuals, we could take action against the nominated individuals. We might not even know the ultimate proprietors; as with children's homes, they can be owned somewhere else.

There are chains and there are chains. The challenge is what decisions are taken at what level. For some it is just the branding and actually there is little oversight; for others it is a very strong pedagogical approach. We work really closely with the sector and the umbrella organisations. In both social care and early years, the regulations were written 20 to 30 years ago for a landscape that we do not have today.

**Q41 Mark Swards:** In our early years inquiry, this Committee heard evidence that Ofsted also wanted these accountability measures to enable you to effectively regulate beyond these individual settings, as you have advocated for this morning. We also heard that Ofsted was committed to working with DfE to develop an effective approach for oversight of group provision. What progress has been made in collaboration with the DfE towards this, if any?

**Yvette Stanley:** We are working very closely and have seconded an expert from our end to work alongside DfE colleagues. The amount of work that is going on in early years is phenomenal. Events have really galvanised us all so it has not gone at the pace I would like but we have been grateful for the other incremental changes that Martyn outlined today and we will continue to pursue this robustly.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I have an early years programme board set up looking at everything end to end; from the day a notification of a concern comes in right through to how we report on it. I shall leave no stone unturned to try to stop cases such as the four that the Chair highlighted, which are just dreadful.



Q42 **Mark Swards:** Just on early years, how does Ofsted respond when safeguarding concerns are raised by parents or others that contradict inspection findings?

**Yvette Stanley:** From a regulatory point of view, we triage every piece of information that comes in albeit we have talked about there being some known gaps at this point in time. We look and see how we can follow that up. We look at whether we have an inspection planned in the next month, and if it is not urgent we might take it through there.

We might need to make phone calls; we might talk to the nominated individual or the manager. If it is something pertaining to the conduct of staff, we will talk to the LADO. There is an escalation. Martyn talked about a half-day regulatory visit, looking at a narrow piece. Obviously we cannot do that for every parental concern so it is on a triage basis. It is a bit like a mash, where people check out what is known and what the intelligence is and then proportionately respond.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We can do 3,000 more a year thanks to yesterday's announcement from the Government to give me that funding.

**Yvette Stanley:** Going back to where we started with the prevention of further deaths, managers would want more notice. In early years we are really conscious that these are the youngest children; they are non-verbal. Not all nurseries—certainly not all childminders—have the umbrella infrastructure of surveillance around them, so the more unannounced visits that we can do, the better.

Q43 **Mark Swards:** It sounds like there is a lot of pressure on this triaging system because if that goes wrong, things can get missed. How confident are you that you have enough resources to support that process?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We were not. My predecessor spoke very well for an awful long time about the lack of investment in those systems. I was over the moon to receive some funding for that following the spending review, and yesterday they went further to give me all the money that we asked for to make those changes. That is part of taking those Bright Horizons parents up to Manchester to show them what we do and what we are planning to change. I want to be really thoughtful on this and listen to what they have to say when I take them through how it works.

**Yvette Stanley:** We have gone through a procurement exercise with all the hoops and leg exercises that one has to do and we have commissioned a new product that we are building at the minute.

We started with unregistered children's homes because it is a new thing we are doing and we can build that more easily. Applications, registrations and notifications are the next step in the build. As Martyn says, we asked for a lot of money and got some money spread out. We have a bit more money now and can really motor with that.

Q44 **Darren Paffey:** Turning now to children's social care, Sir Martyn, last



time you were before the Committee you were very critical of unregistered children's homes. Has the new inspection framework that was introduced in April this year had an impact yet and are you satisfied with that impact?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** No. This is Yvette's framework that she runs for me. We made an update and we report everywhere we see unregistered children's homes being used.

I would like to put this in context if you do not mind because you will find some numbers pretty shocking. The number of children's homes has increased by 63% from 2019 to 2025 but the number of children in residential care increased by just 10% in that time. In March 2025, there were 4,009 children's homes active in England and a very small number that were suspended by us on our books, offering 15,700 places to children.

As of June 2026, that 4,009 will be 4,900. That is a 22% increase in just the last 14 months over that 63% increase in the years that I went back to 2019. It is just growing. As of 5 June, there will be 924 registration applications on our system. Some 86% will not be classed as a priority; only 14% are coming through as a priority.

How does this answer your question? We are going to go out to consultation so we need to hear what people have to say about this, but something that we will propose is to be quite tough on the use of unregistered children's homes in the inspection framework. Obviously, I need to make sure that there is then a route to register the homes that are desperately needed if they can meet the needs of the children—often they are quite complex needs—so we can remove the scourge of unregistered, unlawful children's homes once and for all.

There are too many homes that are not in the right places and not serving the needs of all the children. This is a market that I would now describe as being broken. To be clear some are local authority-owned and some are privately-owned and they are brilliant. There is also clearly a motivation for profiteering because those numbers must only lead you to that conclusion.

We are determined to get this right but the framework that Yvette is working on has far more chance—with the ambitions of Minister McAllister—for early help and family help to reduce the number of children coming in and make sure that the children who are there get the right placements that are loving and lasting and that care is put forward. It is a very sophisticated piece of work. I am sorry I have probably stolen all your thunder, Yvette.

**Yvette Stanley:** I am pleased you remembered all the numbers though.

Q45 **Darren Paffey:** We have had separate discussions in the APPG for care-experienced young people around unregistered children's homes.



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Obviously, something that comes up is the amount of time it takes to register them. Is there anything you would say about what is happening or what needs to happen to ensure we can get to a place where there is demand—I totally appreciate some that are opening are simply not needed—but we can quickly get those that are needed in place and therefore remove this surplus market?

**Yvette Stanley:** Absolutely. We have been overwhelmed with applications for homes for the wrong children in the wrong places; as Martyn said, we set out some prioritisation processes in September last year. Less than 10% of the applications that are coming in meet those priorities.

The Government have given capital to the local authority to open something for some very specific children, for example children on deprivation of liberty orders or when we have had increases of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. The prioritisation is exactly around the urgent needs of children. If a local authority had put a child in a children's home that was unregistered because the child had DoLS and it was a specialist provision, it would trigger our prioritisation.

For the priority children's homes, it is taking us between two and four months. It will be two months if you come with all your paperwork, planning and all that; it will be longer if your registered manager has something on their DBS. We have done some even quicker than two months when they have all the documentation together, but it is around about that sort of period.

In terms of unregistered, when we were set up a couple of years ago to try to tackle this issue, there were 200 to 300 children. We are now talking north of 1,200 children. As Martyn says, there are 5,000 empty places in the children's homes that we have. I do not want you to think I do not understand matching. Obviously getting the right child and the right mix in the home is important but there is something strategic about utilising the 4,900 homes that we have.

There is also something in the ambitions of the social care reform that—as Martyn says—we are keeping many more children safely with their family, utilising kinship, maximising foster care and rehabilitation when you can. Children's homes are not a last resort; they are an important resource for those children needing intensive therapeutic intervention. We need more homes that are actually offering it and not the broad range of generic needs that some are offering today.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We also need those services before some children find themselves in need of being placed in residential care. It is a really complex piece of work but the work with Josh McAllister and the framework that we are going to consult on is totally aimed at that same point: loving, lasting relationships, early help, family help, the right help when you need it at the right level. Everyone can register, and once you register we have to consider that registration. We cannot say you are not



wanted or needed. I am looking at how I can be really brave in that space.

Q46 **Darren Paffey:** I have one more question on wider child safeguarding practice before we move on. Following the convictions in the Preston Davey case, what action is Ofsted going to take to help ensure that safeguarding failures such as that cannot happen again?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Obviously in terms of the local authority and the children's services inspection, this was a member of staff who was a teacher working in a setting somewhere. Bad people can do bad things despite the best intentions. I am interested in what happens as part of the local government reform. The use of regionalisation is a very live topic.

Tomorrow afternoon I have a meeting with Minister McAllister and regionalisation is on the agenda because we do not have the authority to look at regional adoption agencies at the moment. All these are areas that we are trying to tease through and work out what is best. I noticed that Minister McAllister rightly asked for a review into the dreadful case of Preston.

**Yvette Stanley:** There are different roles for different players in the great safeguarding environment. When Preston was killed we and the DfE's national safeguarding panel would have received a notification so we were alerted to that happening. The details at that point are relatively scant because they are an immediate notification.

The local safeguarding partnership then has to do a rapid review, which goes to the national panel. All rapid reviews and subsequent learning reviews do not automatically come to Ofsted. There was a decision several years ago to split them out. The argument at the time was that we might use them for inspection.

I would hope that we are an adult enough organisation to think that we should all be sharing this information because it needs to inform our risk assessment and inspection but it also needs to inform our learning. That is a gap I would like filled but the local authority and their partners did a rapid review. As Martyn said, there are various players in there in terms of health, the local authority and the regional adoption agency.

The local authority paused that review for the trial, which is not uncommon. They generally have to reflect after the trial and if there is a coroner's inquest, they will reflect again. Again, that will go to the national panel. I meet with the national panel every month and discuss with them what is coming out of my inspections. They share learning from these cases with me and we provide expert advice. We try to join up as much as we can.

In terms of our inspection of Oldham, we inspected them in 2019. At that point they were requires improvement but at a very weak level. They had



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not previously had a DCS; they had had DCS and a DAS together. At the time we said that they really did not know the quality of their practice and children, as Martyn said. They have been on an improvement journey.

We have done a couple of focus visits; one was post-covid and was just checking out return, the other was on children in need. Our focus visits do not look at everything. They had a much better inspection in 2025. Again, we would not have looked at or seen any of the Preston case on that inspection because it was for the six months prior to our inspection in May 2025.

We have our regional meeting with DCS this week. We have an enduring relationship and will be constantly talking about how they are embedding the learning. Even when we inspected in 2025, there was some learning that they were embedding. I do not know what learning the health or the regional adoption agency has taken to date.

Our JTAI—joint targeted area inspections—is one place where the three inspectorates, health, police and social care, come together and I would say they are enormously powerful. When I am looking at social care, I see what social care knew and the decisions that it took. The police inspectorate sees the police's decisions, and health likewise. As Lee says, the case tracking and the audits are where we do learning in real time through our inspection about what they did not tell each other and how they may have misinterpreted the information that was shared.

I am keen that we continue with our suite of joint targeted area inspections. We only do eight a year and we think the next one should probably be something around adolescence, particularly in the light of the grooming gangs work that Baroness Longfield is doing. Sorry, that is a bit of a lengthy answer, but I was trying to get all the pieces of the pie.

**Q47** **Darren Paffey:** It is helpful to get a sense of what is changing. There have been government changes in terms of your role around inspecting FE and skills; obviously Skills England, apprenticeships, adult further education and training have gone from DfE into the Department for Work and Pensions. What has had to change around your inspections on that if anything?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We have a good relationship with Baroness Jacqui Smith. We still work with them and it has made no discernible difference to our inspection of further education and skills. We just work with the machinery of government well. In fact, Lee was skilful enough to appoint an excellent deputy director who had experience of working across different Departments and is holding it together really well.

**Q48** **Darren Paffey:** So there has been very little change?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** Correct.

**Q49** **Darren Paffey:** I realise we are running out of time, but I just have a



couple of quick questions on the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 as it now is. That gives you additional powers across a range of areas including inspecting academy trusts. Can you outline the steps being taken to act on those new powers?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** As you will be aware, the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 sets out the primary legislation about the areas that we must look at. Right now, the Department for Education is actively consulting with groups and thinking about the areas of secondary legislation that it wants to pass. Once it has done that, it will then be for Ofsted to design the framework.

Just to really quickly help you, on the primary legislation it states in law that we will look at the quality of education, the governance and executive leadership, promoting wellbeing, securing improvement of academies, and the management of resources. Under those five broad areas, secondary legislation is being considered by the Secretary of State and the team. At that point, it will be for Ofsted to then design a framework that responds to that legal request to inspect.

Q50 **Darren Paffey:** This might be a quick answer, but are you confident that you have the requisite resources to execute the new powers that you have received?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** As a part of the spending review, the Treasury awarded us a sum of money to recruit, train, deploy and develop inspectors and this framework. We are designing the framework to match the level of resource that we have been given to do this work.

Q51 **Darren Paffey:** Are you confident about that?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I am confident that I will design a framework that will match the level of resources I have been given. Whether I can tell you if that is enough to do the job is a hypothetical question at the moment. As the accounting officer, I am not coming in front of your fellow Committee for accounts having blown the money so I will design something that uses every penny but not a penny more.

Q52 **Darren Paffey:** Ofsted expressed concern that the Bill did not go as far as it had perhaps hoped in relation to children's social care and unregistered schools. Do those concerns remain?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** We have concerns but they are untested. We have more money and more people than ever on our illegal schools team. In the unlawful children's homes team we have gone from a team of five to 35 people. Through me, Lee and Yvette have placed that underneath a national director for delivery who oversees that work directly.

We are really excited to look at the new fining powers and powers to prosecute. We have ex-police officers as inspectors. This is where I was saying to the Chair that we have turned more into investigators. They wear body-worn cameras and we are going to use the Police and Criminal



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Evidence Act 1984. Some of this is not new to our police investigative inspectors but it is new to Ofsted so we are going to work our way carefully through it to get warrants and deal with it.

My slight concern remains that it is going to slow us down, but to quote the new Cabinet Minister, "Make it better, make it count and make it happen." I am a believer in doing it well, not just doing it and actually having no impact. It is all well and good doing thousands of investigations; I want to see these people shut down and prosecuted. I might have to do fewer investigations but with greater success.

**Q53** **Darren Paffey:** I would like to hear your response to Sir Michael Wilshaw, the former HMCI, and Victor Shafiee, the former head of Ofsted's illegal schools team, that—in their view—illegal schools have been deprioritised and given less funding during your time as Chief Inspector. How would you respond to what they are suggesting there?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** If I have deprioritised it by giving them more money, a bigger team, and new legal powers to act for the first time since 1992, then that is deprioritisation that I do not recognise.

**Q54** **Peter Swallow:** Earlier this month the Government set out a new enrichment framework but also announced that Ofsted would not begin inspecting schools against that framework from this September. Could I ask when you imagine that you will begin inspecting schools against the framework and how you envisage that process working?

**Lee Owston:** First, the enrichment framework is an excellent tool for school and college leaders in terms of all the additional provision that makes up the best start in life. The framework—the toolkit—already includes references to enrichment activities and extracurricular activities, whether those are accessible by our most vulnerable children and learners or leaders are doing the analysis to understand what the take-up might be and how it is influencing or supporting their wider curriculum.

The toolkit already covers a lot of the ground that the enrichment framework presents, however it is a better tool for leaders in terms of their own provision to get underneath it. We also look at spiritual, moral, social and cultural education already in our toolkit. Under cultural education we look at the musical, artistic and sporting opportunities that are provided. We have this update ready for September referencing the enrichment framework as a source of information, but we will not necessarily be inspecting against it because they are already part and parcel of what we have in our toolkit. The things that the enrichment framework will be asking are already part and parcel of how we look at personal development and wellbeing.

**Q55** **Peter Swallow:** Do you see that changing? In the future will you be inspecting against it?

**Lee Owston:** The framework is almost as big as the toolkit itself in terms of its scope as a support to leaders, just as our toolkit is a support to



leaders. We already inspect against the enrichment framework. Perhaps it is not the same language so we can look to see whether we adjust the language so it is similar, but the exact same things are already in our toolkit under enrichment.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** It brings us full circle. I do not believe any chief inspector should sit here and design a framework based upon something that they think is useful in the system. I have made it really clear that I expect all our frameworks to inspect against the professional standards that exist across all our remits that are laid down by the regulator, the Department for Education. This is a new professional standard.

Going back to workload and wellbeing of headteachers, Ofsted cannot just keep throwing more and more into the framework. Otherwise you will quite rightly ask me next time what I am doing to manage the wellbeing of headteachers as I try to navigate that tightrope between reasonably holding them to account on behalf of children and parents but also respecting that it is through those committed, fantastic professionals that any work gets done in the first place. It is a balancing act that we have to work through.

Q56 **Peter Swallow:** I really appreciate that answer but if I were a school leader listening to the response to my question, I would find myself scratching my head and failing to understand whether I am going to be inspected against the enrichment framework or not from September.

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** It is very clear: in September we do not expect people to have met the framework from a zero standing point, "Here comes a new set of guidance; you're going to do it perfectly." If a school out there is offering no enrichment whatsoever then that is clearly going to be part of a concern against the already existing standards that we had written, which just further strengthens. It is a question of a continuum.

Is this a school that has enrichment, is focused on it and has plans to deliver it or is it a school that says, "I offer no enrichment whatsoever," and we do nothing beyond the mandated curriculum in the day? That is an inspection activity that the inspectors will judge as they go through those conversations.

Why? What is the reasoning behind that? As you know, I used to run a very large number of schools; one had around 40 or 50 buses because children came from tens of miles away. Enrichment was much harder there than it was where I was the head of 2,200 children. I was busier at the end of the day than I was during the day because of enrichment. In that school children have to go home and there is no alternative to get them home. You have to do it differently, respect the head teachers and say to them, "How are you going to meet this need?" And our inspectors will listen to that.

Q57 **Peter Swallow:** On that point do you think that schools have sufficient



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funding and time in the day to meet the enrichment benchmarks you are setting?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** I have been doing this for 32 years. I am not going to ask how long Yvette has been doing it. At no point in my life have I ever thought I have sufficient funding, resources or time.

Q58 **Chair:** I just have one final topic. The Government have announced the first review of school food standards in a long time. The Health Minister told the Health and Social Care Committee earlier this month that Ofsted would be monitoring new school food standards. Can I just ask where you are with that and what discussions you have had with both Departments about the review and the role that Ofsted will play in monitoring compliance?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** There has been some slight misunderstanding here. We will look at safer eating practices and allergies. We are not a compliance authority that is going to start checking sell-by dates on the side of an EpiPen and things like that but we are going to look at policies, leadership and how well things are being managed.

Again if there were concerns, complaints or notifications from parents regarding eating or near misses regarding children with food intolerances then that becomes a part of our toolkit whether it is a leadership issue, an inclusion issue or a personal development and wellbeing issue. We are working through it from that point of view.

Q59 **Chair:** There will be some new requirements. Specifically around allergies there are now requirements that did not exist before for schools to have medication on site. With the review of standards for school food, we would all understand that healthy eating for children is actually an important part of their education and wellbeing.

The Government have just made an announcement that school food is going to be reviewed. Do you envisage a role in regard to either of those, which will become genuinely new requirements for schools to meet?

**Sir Martyn Oliver:** There is more than Ofsted at play here. As I said the policies, practices and general leadership and management are firmly within Ofsted's sight, but there are others—for example the Food Standards Agency—at play here and we need to pick up those conversations with them.

**Chair:** Those are all our questions for today. There are a couple of items that came up during questioning where we have requested further information. If there is anything else that you reflect on after the session that you would like to make the Committee aware of, please include that in your follow-up letter. Thank you very much for being here on such a warm day to answer our questions. That brings our accountability session to a close.