



Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Ofsted Schools and Further Education and Skills Annual Report 2013–14](#), HC 880

Wednesday 28 January 2015

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Members present: Mr Graham Stuart (Chair), Neil Carmichael, Alex Cunningham, Bill Esterson, Pat Glass, Siobhain McDonagh, Caroline Nokes, Mr David Ward, Craig Whittaker

Questions 1 – 155

Witnesses: **Sir Michael Wilshaw**, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted, **Lorna Fitzjohn**, Director, Further Education and Skills, Ofsted, and **Sean Harford**, Director, Schools, Ofsted gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Good morning, Sir Michael, Lorna and Sean. Thank you for coming to give evidence. Before my colleagues look back over the past year, may I ask Sir Michael to look forward? Ofsted is often criticised for creating an attitude of fear in schools in a sometimes over-mechanistic attempt to meet your requirements as they perceive them. Looking ahead, where would you like to see inspection in 10 years' time? In a self-improving school system, should you be working yourselves out of existence?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That is a really difficult question to start with. If we reach a position where all, or most, schools are good, and we see less regional variation than now, poor children getting a better deal, more white working-class kids doing better, and autonomy working in the way most parties want to see, then I see less need for Ofsted. If we are still around in 10 years' time, I think the way we inspect and the structures by which we inspect will be very different in that school-led improving system.

Q2 Chair: You said that would be if those things are in place. What if they are moving in that direction? I am just trying to explore what the self-improving school system

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looks like. Everybody appears to agree with it—it is one of those things that everyone nods about. What does it mean? How would we know it was working sufficiently to remove the need for Ofsted to be there in the way it is today?

I will put another question to you. Is it possible that areas could seek, through effective intervention and support in delivering the things that you have just talked about, an area-based exemption from Ofsted? That could be a challenge to the profession, saying, “Right. You think there are too many perverse consequences of this Ofsted style, with grading and over-simplification and so on.” You could put the challenge down to some areas and say, “Get to a certain level and we will exempt you on a group basis, and then you could take collective responsibility for each other.” That is what the profession asks for. Is that a future you can envisage? Would that kind of dynamic be healthy?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We are moving incrementally and inexorably towards groups of schools supporting each other, led by an outstanding head teacher of an outstanding school. That is happening more and more around the country, and I can’t see that in any way diminishing over the years. If that is to become the middle tier—there is still a desperate need for a middle tier, and I see that becoming it—the role of Ofsted would be to moderate the judgments of that outstanding school and head teacher.

Q3 Chair: That is a change in emphasis, I think, from what you have told us previously. When asked what the middle tier was, you said that it was the local authority. You are now saying that ideally, with the self-improving school system, it would be that schools not only support each other, but challenge each other so that equilibrium drives the system forward.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: What I think I did say was that now that we have the regional schools commissioners—they would have the same sort of responsibility—the local authority would have the job of ensuring that those clusters were working well and appointing the lead school and lead head teacher. Ofsted’s job would be to ensure that those individual clusters were working well and that the moderation was rigorous and demanding, not a cosy chat among fellow head teachers.

Q4 Chair: Could we be making an error? The Committee has always called for and recognised the need for a middle tier, but it could be only something like the appendix—an evolutionary thing which, if it carries on hanging around, will only ever cause problems and contribute no good. Is it possible that in a self-improving schools system, we will not need regional schools commissioners? The Conservatives and Labour are talking about expanding the role of the commissioners so they become the new supervisors alongside Ofsted and local authorities. It looks like a more cluttered landscape of endless supervision of schools and a reduction in trust of professionals to improve schools, find that challenge and support themselves.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I can’t see the situation changing to the point at which we have 100% good schools. There will always be some schools that underperform and some that

decline over a period of time. The big challenge is how we identify that decline and what we do about it.

Q5 Chair: That will always be true, but wouldn't the healthiest school system be a self-healing system in which the profession took responsibility for each other and the collaboration that you talked about—you said that you felt a spirit of optimism—would inexorably keep going?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: You have seen, Chair, that there are clusters that are working incredibly well. You brought out a report that shows that. We have identified clusters of schools that are working incredibly badly. In that sort of situation, Ofsted has a part to play to say, "You've got it wrong. The cluster isn't working, the federation isn't working, and the leadership isn't very good." If, over the 10-year period that you outlined, we get better teachers and leaders in the system who know how to handle autonomy well, we will have less of a role. It all depends on the success of the system.

Q6 Chair: You didn't answer one of the many questions I threw at you, which was about whether areas might be able to earn their way out. You could create that dynamic for those who say, "We think the system is counter-productive, so why don't we get a licence through quality, which is approved by Ofsted at the point of departure?" They could get that and be monitored, but only through data, and it would be hands-off thereafter. Wouldn't that be a healthy dynamic to show your critics, who say that we could get away from Ofsted's increasing focus on single grading and on reliability—we will come to that later—by letting the schools take responsibility?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: And I am all for that. I am not against that, but we have to reach a situation where we can trust the people who are leading the clusters to do it well. If we think they are doing it well, we can leave them alone.

Q7 Chair: Part of the point about earned autonomy was to encourage that, and allow them to develop it, knowing that they were going to be rewarded for it. If you do not put that in place, you cannot blame them for not looking at how best to collaborate over what area and so on.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, that is perfectly true but we are quite a way from that end point for the reasons that I outlined. We still have a mediocre system, and until we sort out some of the problems that I outlined at the beginning, there is a place for Ofsted.

Q8 Chair: Your critics would say that you have been around for a long time and we have a mediocre system, therefore maybe part of the problem is you—your methodologies and the behaviours that you incentivise in schools. Maybe, therefore, we need to find a way to get away from you as well as improve the system. That is what the critics might say.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I am sure they would, but I am significantly older than you, Chair—[Laughter.]

Chair: Flattery will get you everywhere.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I remember what standards were like when I first started teaching in the late '60s, and in the '70s and '80s, and children are getting a better deal now. Are we competitive with other countries that are doing exceptionally well? No, we're not, but we are a long way from the position we were in 22 years ago when Ofsted came into being. Ofsted has been a major driver of improvement in our system.

Q9 Alex Cunningham: Sir Michael, your postbag will probably have been even heavier than mine over the past couple of weeks—perhaps even in recent days—over what has happened in County Durham and Sunderland at the Durham Free School and the Grindon Hall Christian free school. I have been inundated with e-mails and letters; I have had all sorts of contact with people, even through Twitter. Some parents with children at Durham Free School have told me that it is a great school, that they are very happy with their children there, and that their children are doing fine. How do you justify the decision by your inspectors that has led the Secretary of State to withdraw funding from that school?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Have you read the reports, Mr Cunningham?

Alex Cunningham: I have.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Well, the reports speak for themselves about what is happening in both those schools. I have spoken to the HMIs who led those inspections, and they were very critical of what they saw. They saw very poor behaviour in both schools, declining standards, and a lot of bullying taking place. It must be recognised that, even when schools are declining very badly, parents always try to support the school. My academy was on the site of the worst school in England at Hackney Downs. When notices were put up to say that the school was closing down, there were demonstrations outside the school by parents who wanted it to remain open, although standards were terribly low. So I must say to you that those two schools are doing badly and parents deserve better.

Q10 Alex Cunningham: If they are as bad as Ofsted has said, that is most certainly the case. Some parents claim that there were inappropriate approaches to the inspection. A Member of Parliament said to me last night that one parent had claimed that a girl was even asked whether she was a virgin. Is that something that you would investigate?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We have investigated those allegations and they are false. We have spent a long time looking at this. The lead inspectors met the team inspectors again and again. The regional director intervened as well. We looked at the evidence base thoroughly and found no evidence to suggest that inspectors used inappropriate language and terminology to these children.

It has to be understood that if there are allegations of, for example, homophobic bullying—and there were—it is really difficult for an inspector to establish that. If you approach a group of children or a child and say, “Is there homophobic bullying in this school?”, they would not know what you were talking about. But if the inspector said, “Are children calling each other ‘gay’ or ‘lesbo’ here?”, they would understand what that means. There was very bad homophobic bullying going on in these schools.

Q11 Alex Cunningham: I don’t know what the basis for that was, but some parents are claiming that there seems to be some sort of political—small p—agenda. I am putting their points to you, which are not necessarily mine, but they think that there is a political agenda and Ofsted have it in for Christian schools.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Absolutely not. We are going into schools in Birmingham, Bradford, Luton and Tower Hamlets with children from a predominantly Asian heritage who are predominantly Muslim, and we are failing those schools. We are putting them in special measures and saying some tough things about them because they are not promoting British values and they are narrowing the curriculum. They are not doing what they should be doing to widen the horizons of those youngsters. We are going to apply exactly those principles to other schools in the country, including the schools you mentioned.

Q12 Alex Cunningham: Okay.

I want to address the issue of standards. There seems to have been quite a rapid deterioration, according to your reports. If we look at the one for Grindon Hall Christian school, in March 2014 it was “requires improvement”. There were three 2s and a 3 for leadership and management, with the latter “requiring improvement”. Within six to eight months the school was seen to be mostly “inadequate”. That is quite a rapid deterioration. How do you justify that considerable change over that relatively short time?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Poor leadership. Quite simply, poor and inadequate leadership that is not addressing the issues highlighted in the RI report.

Q13 Alex Cunningham: I want to look at the set-up and organisation of free schools. Our report being published this week calls for greater transparency in that. Would you comment on that and on what the Government need to do to ensure that when free schools are set up they have a fighting chance of being successful?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: They will be successful in the way that all schools set up from base camp can be successful. They must have a good system in place, good leadership, good teachers and a good development plan. If they do not have all those things, they will not do well.

Q14 Alex Cunningham: I have just two more questions, if I may. The Durham school parents are telling me that they have not been given a fair chance to improve. They believe they have the capacity to do that. Your inspectors will say, “Certainly not.”

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We have said that the school is declining very badly. It is in special measures, and we have said clearly that there is limited capacity for the school to improve. The decision to close it was made by the Secretary of State.

Q15 Alex Cunningham: Did that come as a shock to you?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: No, because other schools in similar positions have closed as well.

Q16 Alex Cunningham: Okay. Finally from me on this subject, many parents have lost confidence in Ofsted, for reasons of which you are well aware. Do you see a situation where perhaps we need to be inspecting the inspector? Should we have an inspection regime in place to examine the work that Ofsted does, to ensure that everything is being conducted fairly and above board, and an independent organisation or an independent inspection proves that to be the case?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I would welcome that. You would expect me to say this, but I think we do a fantastic job across the seven remits that we inspect. We make some tough decisions and we challenge the system to do better. Some people are going to be uncomfortable with that. As I said, I think that over the 22 years of our existence we have done a lot to improve state education in this country, and over the past three years, since I was appointed, the RI judgment has made a profound difference to standards in the country, but I would welcome any external review.

Q17 Chair: Is your budget allocated appropriately? Inspection regimes are required in certain areas, so you do more inspections in one area or another. Is where you spend your money allocated in the right way according to need?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I think it is. The budget is allocated in relation to the size of the different remits. You will know that our budget has been severely cut over the past five years—by £55 million including inflation.

Chair: More than five years, I think. It was being cut before that if I recall.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes. There has been steady decline in our budget over the years. We have reached the point—the Secretary of State knows this—where if it is cut any more, we will have to have a conversation about the size of our remit, the size of the organisation itself.

Q18 Bill Esterson: I was looking at the press release that your department issued about the absence of evidence of advance warning being given to Norfolk schools. You said you welcomed the report's findings, naturally, but you expressed reservations about the high degree of Ofsted-readiness. Is that a general concern that you have? What do you think might need to change in schools around this issue, so that there is a better balance in favour of teaching and learning, which you refer to?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: My view—I speak as an ex-head teacher—is that good heads do not worry about Ofsted. They do not introduce “Mocksteds” into the school. What they worry about on a day-to-day basis is, “What sort of provision are these children getting? Have I got good enough teaching in the classrooms? Is the behaviour good?” and so on. If they do worry about that and they have a clear plan and strategy to improve the quality of teaching in the school, we will give that school a good judgment. Heads who obsess about Ofsted and worry their staff are not doing the right thing.

Q19 Bill Esterson: Given what you have just said, do you have concerns about the leadership at these schools?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I have been quite clear. I think head teachers have got to use their common sense and have a sense of proportion. Everyone wants a good Ofsted judgment and every head worries about getting that good judgment, but the best way to get that is to worry about what is happening in the classroom.

Q20 Bill Esterson: According to the *Eastern Daily Press* this morning, there was quite serious evidence—although it accepts that the findings showed that there was not enough evidence to prove advance warning—including loss of e-mails, a missing server, missing senior leadership team minutes, troubling e-mails and very accurate predictions of inspection dates. Obviously you are satisfied that that is coincidence, but it seems to be an enormous coincidence.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: All these issues were investigated thoroughly by Robin Boshier, who spent weeks in Norfolk talking to the different schools' leaders and various staff, and the independent person we appointed did exactly the same. They have gone through those issues and come to the conclusions they have come to.

Q21 Bill Esterson: Will you inspect those schools as a matter of priority?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: When their turn comes up, we will inspect them, but not before then.

Q22 Bill Esterson: The Chair was talking about the financial situation, but, turning to the relationship with the Department, this time last year we heard reports about advisers and

think-tanks close to the Secretary of State advocating the abolition of Ofsted. Now we read that the relationship between Ofsted and the DFE is characterised as amber/red. How would you characterise it?

Chair: What colour?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I do not know what colour, but I think I have got a good, productive relationship with the present Secretary of State for the Department. We have met several times and engaged on various issues, and we have agreed on most things. I had a good relationship with her predecessor as well, and I want to put that on record. I was a huge admirer of Michael Gove: I have said publicly that I thought that he was a radical and transformative Secretary of State and I keep to that view. I had some issues with the people around him, but I thought he was a good Secretary of State.

Q23 Bill Esterson: So when *The Times* described you last year as “spitting blood”, that was not about him, but about his advisers?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I was spitting blood about some of the leaks and briefings that were taking place.

Q24 Bill Esterson: At the Association for Science Education conference, Sir David Bell said, “education policy is still driven by short-term firefighting, ministerial personalities and electoral politics”. Is he right?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: There is an argument to say that there needs to be long-term planning. Constant shifts in policy, in how we view the curriculum, in assessment and so on destabilise the system. I think there is an argument to say that we should set up a body which looks at this and advises the Secretary of State on a regular basis, whoever that person is from the relevant parties. At the end of the day, though, someone has to take responsibility for outcomes and for educational performance, and there is this whole thing about parliamentary accountability.

Q25 Bill Esterson: Okay, but if you agree that there is a short-termism and that political interference is a big part of it, how would such a body change that situation? What is your role in changing and challenging that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We give advice to the Secretary of State of the time on what we think is happening up and down the country. If an independent body was set up to advise on curriculum assessment and other issues, it would be up to the Secretary of State to listen to that advice, but I cannot see a situation ever developing where the Secretary of State for Education relinquishes responsibilities for what happens in education across the country.

Q26 Caroline Nokes: From parents' perspective, what they want from their Ofsted reports is to be able to have confidence that the reports are reliable and robust. Do the steps you are taking to introduce reliability testing of inspections mean that you yourself have doubts about their reliability?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: The reliability testing we are doing at the moment is to test the new inspection model that we are bringing into being in September 2015, which I will no doubt talk about later. It is a completely new model and we need to test it out. We need to make sure that the judgments are absolutely correct in this model, which is very different from section 5 inspections. That is why we are sending two inspectors in for the time being. When the model gets up and running in September, we will revert to the one inspector model where one inspector or one lead inspector makes the judgment.

Q27 Caroline Nokes: There have been criticisms, predominantly from the NUT but also from some parents' groups, about the pressures that schools, head teachers, staff and, indeed, pupils are put under during inspection processes. Like every member of this Committee, I am sure, I have had plenty of e-mails in the past 48 hours from individuals saying that children in particular are put under pressure during inspections. At what point do you think that accountability becomes excessive pressure?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: There has always been pressure in inspections; it has not changed very much. We have listened to what teachers and head teachers have had to say about inordinate pressure. That is why we brought out a document which explains how we have tried to ease that pressure: for example, we do not grade individual lessons any more; we do not demand voluminous lesson plans any more. We look at the school in the round rather than take specific issues and really condemn the school for that particular issue.

We are moving to a more flexible inspection model in September. Although we may see a weakness in a maths department or an English department, the "good" judgment will be maintained as long as we have confidence in the leadership of the institution, that the culture of the school is good and that there is a clear plan to remedy the weaknesses. I think that the new inspection model has been well received, and the measures we are taking to reduce pressure on schools have also been well received.

Q28 Caroline Nokes: How much self-evaluation does Ofsted do of its own performance? What have the results been of that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: In a sense, what people say about us is an evaluation of our performance. We also evaluate the impact we have on the school and college system. I have already said that I think what we have done over the years has made a profound difference. The new inspection framework that we have introduced, with tougher judgments, has enormously improved schools. We do not have a system any more where "satisfactory" schools go year after year in that mediocre mode. To try to answer that question about pressure: because we have put more pressure on schools to improve to "good" and because

we have said that good is only good enough and you have a limited time to get to “good”, there is inevitably a bit of a push-back. I accept that.

Q29 Caroline Nokes: I can think of several instances where Ofsted has been heavily criticised for some of its reports. How many of your reports have been removed, edited or re-published in the last year owing to errors acknowledged by Ofsted?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We think our quality assurance processes are far better now than they ever were. Do we get it wrong sometimes? Yes, we do.

Sean is our director of schools. Perhaps he will answer that with the numbers.

Sean Harford: We have changed the judgments on 26 inspections in the last year following complaints that have been investigated, which led to our changing the overall judgment, or indeed some of the sub-judgments that were not right. We followed that process. Sometimes that results in our putting inspectors back in with the provider. The 26 inspections are across all of our remits, so a number of those will be early-years inspections, but also in schools, colleges and so on. In those cases, we thought the judgment was wrong, based on the evidence gathered and the evidence that existed at the time of the 26 inspections.

Q30 Chair: On your relationship with others, can you explain why Ofsted criticised the Independent Schools Inspectorate, particularly its role in the monitoring and safeguarding of schools?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Because we do not think they do it particularly well.

Q31 Chair: On what basis?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We monitor their performance. They do not give it the priority that Ofsted gives it. That is why we criticised the ISI. We have criticised the inspectorate that inspects faith schools for the same reasons.

Q32 Chair: Sir Michael, you criticise ISI and other inspectorates, and you are re-nationalising the additional inspectorates so that they are all brought under your aegis. You could be criticised for saying that no one else is good enough unless they are in your organisation. Everyone is shut down, criticised and brought under the Ofsted aegis. Is that fair?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: No, I have admiration for them. I have met the chief inspector of the Independent Schools Inspectorate. We have had lengthy discussions. They do a good

job, but we are not particularly pleased. We are given a responsibility by Parliament and by the Secretary of State to monitor the performance of the inspections.

Q33 Chair: They say that the data on safeguarding, which you particularly criticised them for, suggest the exact opposite of what you are saying. They say that—unusually—last year a sample of 50 schools transferred from Ofsted supervision to that of the ISI, and, far from the ISI system being more lax, they found that 90% of those schools, which had previously been found to be satisfactory by Ofsted, had failings in safeguarding and their published policies were non-compliant. They suggest that it is pretty outrageous for them to be criticised when any observation of the data would suggest that the boot was on the other foot.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Well, we disagree with them. I am happy for our national lead on the inspection of the independent sector to come and talk to the Committee about this. However, we are still unhappy with those inspectors. We have made that clear. We have asked them to attend our training sessions and they have declined.

Q34 Chair: Your inspectors regularly report that the time allocation for safeguarding on a standard Ofsted section 5 inspection is minimal—in some cases, no more than 30 minutes. Is that enough?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: No, it is not enough. Sean, do you want to answer that?

Sean Harford: When you are inspecting a school, that might be the time you spend looking at something like the single central register. In addition to that, throughout the day or days of the inspection, you will be talking to young people and teachers. You will talk about the training that they get and talking to governors to find out what training they have had and how they meet their statutory obligations. I suspect that the 30-minute quote is from the time spent just doing that one exercise, which, although it is important, is a paper exercise. Safeguarding in a school is more about the atmosphere for keeping children safe and how that is implemented by the school, as opposed to policy.

Q35 Chair: So far, you have not given us any convincing evidence. The ISI would point to that tranche of 50 schools, which gave a pretty stark result, some of which led to urgent action on safeguarding issues in schools that were previously found by Ofsted to be compliant when they were not. You have just asserted that you are confident in your findings, and that they are inadequate and should come to your training sessions, which, funnily enough, they have declined. Can you convince us, with something more than assertion, that we should trust you and not them?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I will certainly write to you on that issue.

Q36 Craig Whittaker: How can a school or individual appeal against the findings of an investigation, as opposed to appealing about the way that it was conducted?

Sean Harford: In making a complaint about a school inspection? Well, we have a published complaints policy. The first step of that—

Q37 Craig Whittaker: The only problem is, nobody seems to think that it is a fair system of complaint.

Sean Harford: Well, the question was how we go about it. There is a published complaints policy whereby if somebody on the school staff wants to complain about an inspection, they can speak with the inspectors first. That is the best point at which to clear up any misunderstanding or address any issues about the inspectors' conduct or judgments. That is the first port of call. The second step, if those things cannot be resolved on site, would be for a formal, written complaint to come to us. The policy states that we would then investigate that and respond to the complaint within 30 days. Part of that investigation is a phone call with the complainant to get underneath what exactly it is about, because sometimes the written complaint may have nuance that is better explained through a one-to-one discussion. Having talked to the complainant, the investigator will go to the inspectors to get their response and look at the evidence base to see whether it backs up the claims. An investigation will then lead to an outcome.

If the complainant is still unhappy about that—this rather depends on whether the complainant has gone through the inspection service provider or directly to us if it was an HMI-led inspection—they can take it to an independent complaints adjudicator, who adjudicates on whether the complaint was handled appropriately.

Q38 Craig Whittaker: Okay, but I am not talking about how the complaint is handled. I am talking about how they complain about a decision by Ofsted. The Chair has already said, quite clearly, that it appears sometimes that Ofsted is the judge, jury and executioner; that is not exactly what he said, but those are my words. So is it working?

Sean Harford: As I said earlier, 26 inspection grades were changed as a result of complaints last year.

Q39 Craig Whittaker: Is that a good result? How many complaints did you get in total?

Sean Harford: Well, it is 0.06% of all inspections, but we carry out thousands of inspections.

Q40 Craig Whittaker: No, that is how many you overturned. How many complaints do you get?

Sean Harford: Oh. Do you mind if I just look that up? I have it here—last year, we had 412 complaints about school inspections. That is a combination of primary and secondary. The bulk of the complaints we have come from our early-years work, which includes children’s centre inspections; last year that was 1,069 in total. Across all our remits, we had 1,500 or so complaints. The point is that we had 412 complaints about school inspections last year.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Out of 10,000 inspections.

Q41 Craig Whittaker: Okay, so do you think that is a good result in overturning complaints? Are you saying that you are very good at what you do and the head teachers are wrong, or that it is a fair process?

Sean Harford: I am saying that it is absolutely a fair process. Whether that rate is good or not is down to how satisfied the complainants or, indeed, the independent complaints adjudicators were about how we handled them.

Q42 Craig Whittaker: So why do so many teachers in particular think that it is an unfair process?

Sean Harford: Well, I think you need to ask the teachers how many of them have been through the process to be able judge whether it is fair. If people have gone through the process, still feel it is unfair and have gone to the complaints adjudicator, we need to take that opinion on board. How many of those saying that it is unfair have actually done that?

Q43 Craig Whittaker: Are you satisfied, then, that the process that you have in place is fine, or are you taking action to see what more you can do to appease dissatisfied customers?

Sean Harford: We keep all of our processes under constant review. We would never be complacent about a process. We think that the process is fair, but clearly we get feedback from people about it to see what they think we could do to improve. For example, the point I made earlier about the call to the complainant at the outset of the complaint was something we introduced a while ago, because people said that it would be good to have that opportunity. That is an example of how we have improved process.

Q44 Craig Whittaker: Okay. Do you think that one of the problems might be that you only have one current practitioner per team—in other words, those who are currently

head teachers or teachers? Do you think that has a bearing on why teachers in particular feel that the process is not fair?

Sean Harford: I am not sure what bearing that has on the complaints process, but I absolutely agree that the more serving practitioners we have on inspection, the better we feel the process would be. Currently, about 60% of school inspections have a serving practitioner on the team. Through the process in preparation for September, we are hoping that that proportion will be much higher. In the process that we have gone through, we are currently looking at around 70% of the people coming through the process to become an Ofsted inspector but not an HMI. The more that we can increase that, it is absolutely right to do so, and I think it will improve the inspection process still further. I also think that that will gain currency in the sector.

Q45 Craig Whittaker: Do you have a goal of how many current practitioners you want?

Sean Harford: I think Michael had a goal a while ago, didn't you?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: All our inspections should have at least one serving practitioner. I hope that by the time I leave office that is the case. As you know, we are moving to bring all inspection in-house, away from the contractors, from September 2015. We have done a trawl of the applications from the existing inspectors. I am pleased to say that Robin Bosher, who is leading on this, tells me that of the ones who have made it through to the latest round, 72% are serving practitioners or have just left leadership positions in schools. That is a massive increase, by the way, from three or four years ago.

Q46 Alex Cunningham: It is good to hear that practitioners will be involved, but of course at board level you have just lost the two remaining people who were professional practitioners. I just wondered if there is yet any prospect of seeing the two directors of the board appointed.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Who are you talking about?

Alex Cunningham: Sorry, there were the two Ofsted board members. They had front-line education pedigrees—Geoff Whitty and Alan Steer—but to my knowledge they have not yet been replaced. Will they be replaced, and will we see people with their level of experience?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I hope so. That is an issue that I have left entirely to the chair of the board, who obviously liaises with the Department for Education.

Q47 Alex Cunningham: So are the recommendations to the Secretary of State in place?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: The chair of the board will make them, not me.

Alex Cunningham: So you don't know whether he has made recommendations.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I don't know. I have left that entirely to him.

Q48 Caroline Nokes: Going back to the question about serving practitioners, would you agree that there is a real benefit in having them, certainly when questioning children? Serving practitioners who are working in the sector have a better understanding of the appropriateness of questions for children.

Do you think there is any merit in trying to tailor inspectors? So in a primary setting you might have practitioners who are used to teaching in a primary setting, and ditto for secondary.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: The issue you raise is a very important one, and it comes down to training. That is one of the things that I am really pleased with. We have done a lot more in training over the past few years. We have brought professional development training in-house. All the lead inspectors are trained by Ofsted now, not by the contractors, because I saw problems there.

You are absolutely right that we need people who are conversant with the particular sector or phase that they are inspecting to lead inspections and to be on the teams. That is what we have tried to do.

Q49 Neil Carmichael: I want to ask about efficiency in terms of the waiving of disqualifications for primary schoolteachers who are associated with somebody who has been convicted of a sexual offence. According to *The Guardian*, there is quite a long queue of people seeking such waivers. Is there any explanation for that?

Sean Harford: This is clearly something that the DFE brought to schools' attention. Previously, the regulations had not been something that schools should consider, so there has been an increase in applications for waivers. We have set up a process which is similar to that which we employ within our purely early-years work, which is about assessment through a central team. If the concerns are of a certain level, they will be passed to our regional teams, because then a visit from an inspector is probably necessary. We have agreed this process and now we need to start moving into the applications, which currently sit at around 300. We are working our way through those as quickly as we can to ensure that there is minimal disruption, but we recognise that this puts pressure on schools.

Q50 Neil Carmichael: So it is more a decision from the Department for Education than an issue of your own resources?

Sean Harford: Well, the decision to identify this as an issue was a departmental one. Clearly, we are not the regulator in schools, so that is something that we need to follow up, since we have the inspectorial responsibility in that area. We are now sorting this out across the country.

Neil Carmichael: Can I follow up on Caroline's question about the training of inspectors?

Q51 Chair: Before you do that, let me pursue the previous point. How long will this take you? People have been suspended from work. There was a change in regulations, little-known. The Department suddenly decided to publicise it. There are hundreds of staff who have personally done absolutely nothing wrong but have a partner who has been guilty of a violent or sexual crime some time in the past—it could have been a long time ago—and they are all off work. How long will it take you to get through this and decide whether they get a waiver or not?

Sean Harford: They are not all off work. It is for the school to decide how they can mitigate that. There are things that a school can put in place. It is only for staff who have a connection with early-years pupils that the school may be in a position to make that kind of decision.

Q52 Chair: I thought it was primary schools as well, not just early years.

Sean Harford: Yes, but the key is that it is a staff member who is doing work in connection with children of the early years foundation stage age—so up to five—and some later years children, up to eight, who attend things such as clubs after school. It is actually only those teachers who work in connection with children of up to that age, not all staff, because some may not be doing work in connection with pupils of that age. So it is not all primary staff across the board. I cannot answer the question of how long it will take, but I can say that the safeguarding and protection of these children is of utmost importance to us, so what we need to do is act in a proportionate way, as I have described, but make sure that it is done properly, so that the children, who are our main concern, are safeguarded.

Q53 Chair: Forgetting your inspection evidence, have you any evidence that a primary school teacher for the foundation year who is married to someone who was convicted of armed robbery 25 years ago is in any way a threat to those children?

Sean Harford: That is not really a decision for us.

Q54 Chair: That is why I specifically did not ask about the decision. I am asking you, the inspectorate, whose job is to ensure proper safeguarding, have you found any evidence? Did you put in any input? After all, if I were the Secretary of State and I were going to put in

such a regulation, I might think to ask my inspectorate to inform that decision, which is not yours but theirs. Did you have any evidence that there was a problem with a primary school teacher who was, say, married to someone who might have been guilty of assault when he was 19, a fight in the street, or might have been an armed robber? What threat on earth does that pose to children in a school to justify hundreds of staff potentially being suspended?

Sean Harford: We have no direct evidence in the situations you have just outlined.

Q55 Chair: Were you asked to input into that decision before the regulation was made?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I have no knowledge of that, no.

Sean Harford: The regulations were put in place some years ago. It was a review of those regulations to see how they related to schools that raised the recent issue.

Q56 Chair: When were those regulations put in place?

Sean Harford: I cannot say off the top of my head, but the review of those the DFE went out with their identification of this issue some time in the summer last year.

Q57 Neil Carmichael: Why would a review provoke such a logjam? What was the essence of the review that provoked that?

Sean Harford: It was something that schools just were not paying attention to and doing; therefore, when the DFE raised this issue and publicised that, obviously schools did some due diligence and decided they needed to respond appropriately.

Q58 Neil Carmichael: So effectively it is partly a wake-up call for some schools.

Sean Harford: In essence, yes, because those regulations always did apply to them.

Q59 Neil Carmichael: Okay, thank you. Going back to Caroline's point about training of inspectors, we have all had e-mails from a large number of constituents about probing questions for young children. To what extent does Ofsted monitor that issue as it arises in inspection reports?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We do it all the time. As I said, the quality assurance systems that we have now are a lot more refined and rigorous than they were and we have improved the training, but as I alluded to a moment ago, when you are trying to tackle some issues it is really difficult to get it absolutely right. Inspectors try to be as sensitive to the issues as they

possibly can, but as I have just outlined, to try to get under the issue of homophobic bullying is really tough without asking some pretty direct questions, but done in an appropriate way.

Q60 Craig Whittaker: Can I challenge you on this a little further? We have had dozens of e-mails from people quite alarmed about the level of probing. One I picked out of my inbox earlier says that their 11-year-old daughter was asked if she knew what it was to be gay, if she had any gay friends or knew any lesbians and if her family had any gay friends. Is it right that someone who does not know that child has the right to ask such probing questions? You can imagine the embarrassment.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I cannot imagine an inspector asking those sorts of questions.

Q61 Craig Whittaker: Trust me, dozens of complaints are coming in to MPs from around the country about these types of questions being asked in schools.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Well, they may have read all that stuff in the Daily Whatever—Express or Mail—but I have to say that if any inspector behaved inappropriately and asked those sorts of questions, they would be dealt with very severely by Ofsted.

Q62 Craig Whittaker: So parents can have your absolute assurance that young children, particularly primary school and early high school, will not be asked such questions?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: There is a code of professional conduct and we have done a lot to update it and to train inspectors on how they should behave, particularly to very young children, but as I said, it is a really difficult thing. We get criticised for not investigating complaints that are made on bullying.

Q63 Craig Whittaker: Okay. So how do parents complain? If a child comes home, quite distressed like some of the children—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We will absolutely investigate it. I assure you that the sort of allegations that have been made in the north-eastern schools have been investigated very thoroughly, and we found no substance to them.

Q64 Craig Whittaker: So we go through the complaints process.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, absolutely.

Chair: We will move on to Birmingham and extremism.

Q65 Craig Whittaker: Sir Michael, Michael Gove reported to the House in June last year that you had advised him that you would consider lessons to be learned for Ofsted from what happened in Birmingham. What lessons have you learned and what have you done to change things?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I think the lessons to be learned—in a sense this is relevant to some of the other questions that have been asked—is that schools can change very quickly; they can decline very quickly, and there needs to be careful monitoring by both the local authority and the Department through the regional commissioners on what is happening in these schools.

When we went into some of those schools and gave them an “outstanding” rating, they deserved it for attainment, they deserved it for progress and they deserved it for behaviour. The first inspectors probably didn’t pick it up because the head teachers were already in place—they were moved on by these very aggressive governors after the “outstanding” judgment was given. The head teachers who had improved those schools deserved that “outstanding” judgment, but schools change very quickly. That is why this issue of the middle tier is so important. I keep banging on about it: inspectors go into schools once every five years, but things can change very radically.

With something as serious as Trojan Horse, there needs to be a careful eye kept on what is happening in these schools. That is a big lesson for the system generally. A lesson for Ofsted is that we need expertise. We have built up our expertise in this area: we have appointed people with expertise in radicalisation and extremism who liaise very well with the Department and the police. I think that our intelligence about what is happening on the ground is a lot better now than it was.

Q66 Craig Whittaker: If a school gets an “outstanding” judgment, Ofsted does not go in for, in some cases, several years—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It could be longer, because unless the data show us that there has been decline, we will not go into that school.

Q67 Craig Whittaker: So where does the third tier bit come from? My experience, particularly with academies, is that the local authority is not listened to by the DFE, for example, so how do we put those safeguards in place when, as you have just said, schools can deteriorate very quickly?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: As far as Ofsted is concerned, we have developed a regional structure that is working well, and we are gathering intelligence in a much more rigorous way than ever. I am quite clear that people need to work together on this. A local authority has responsibility for ensuring that all its children are safe and receiving good educational provision; that means that it has to have oversight over what is happening in academies. That might change—the politicians might in future decide that they have no part to play—but at

the moment the statute is there. I have said quite publicly that they have a responsibility to contact the Department if they have concerns about academies.

Q68 Craig Whittaker: What evidence is there that Ofsted's intervention in Birmingham has benefited the children, the communities and the local schools?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: They have benefited in some sense, because they are not the subject of the sort of policies that would be pursued by these governors with a very particular view of how schools should be run. They are free of that. But those schools have been through an enormous amount of turmoil. The five special-measures schools in Birmingham are still in special measures—three have made progress, two have not. There are big problems around leadership and staffing and difficulties in recruiting good people.

These children are lovely. I have been to Birmingham several times, and I am enormously impressed by both the children and the parents—I have attended public meetings with the parents, who want those schools to do well. They have been badly let down by the governors and by the fact that we cannot get enough good leaders and teachers in those schools.

My strong recommendation to the Department is that additional funding should be found so that we can recruit good people to those schools very quickly, because unless that happens and we see improvement across the board, people who have gone to ground but who want to exploit the situation will do so.

Q69 Caroline Nokes: I want to discuss British values and how you go about inspecting whether they have been put at the heart of a school. Are you satisfied that the strategy for inspecting that has been right and has been adequately passed to all inspectors?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, I think so. Someone said to me the other day, "Do you feel that you've been saddled with this issue at Ofsted?" I responded by saying, "No, I think it's one of the most important things that we're doing at the moment." I say that because schools are on the front line in helping our society to become a cohesive one. That applies particularly to schools in monocultural areas. They are on the front line. All schools, whether secular schools or faith schools, have a big responsibility to ensure that they teach British values, advise youngsters on what is happening in our society and give them access to knowledge about different faiths, communities and cultures. That is absolutely essential.

I was head of a Catholic school in inner London for 18 years. We were in a part of the world with a large Asian community, a large Muslim community. Of course, we taught the central tenets of the Catholic faith, promoted the liturgy and all the rest of it, but I made sure that a percentage of time was given over to talking about the other communities and their other faiths. That is absolutely essential in all schools.

Q70 Caroline Nokes: You have identified the issues with single-faith schools. Are you satisfied that the inspectors have got the message and, in those schools in particular, are ensuring that that happens—that your example from 20 years ago is not a one-off but the norm?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Absolutely. We are very clear in our guidance, and that is why it has been difficult in some of the faith schools that we have been to, where that has not been met with universal enthusiasm—let me put it like that—but we are determined to keep to the course we have set.

Q71 Caroline Nokes: Previously, you have said that there should be a separate graded judgment on the inclusion of this as part of the curriculum. Are you still of that view?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We did go out and consult on a separate grade for the curriculum, and not just on British values; it would include a comment on SMSC—spiritual, moral, social and cultural—aspects of the curriculum. We are going to say a lot more about the curriculum. We are doing so already and will continue to do so. It is going to form part of the leadership and management judgment. At some stage in the future, we might introduce a fifth grade.

Q72 Caroline Nokes: Back in June and again in October, you provided a great long list of recommendations to, first, Michael Gove and then his successor, Nicky Morgan, about changes that you wanted to see. I don't expect you to give a progress report—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Changes in relation to?

Caroline Nokes: In relation to, for example, training of governors, ensuring that they—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: On the Birmingham issue.

Caroline Nokes: Yes. I just wondered whether it would be possible for you to provide us, not necessarily now but possibly in writing, with a progress report on how you feel the implementation of those recommendations is—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I will certainly write to you on that. It is best to describe it as very limited progress.

Chair: So it's the 9 June and 14 October advice notes, and anything that has resulted.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Very limited progress. My view is that we should do a lot more on governance. We should make training of governors mandatory.

Q73 Caroline Nokes: Is not one of the big challenges, though, when it comes to governors—I entirely agree with you that training should be mandatory—that attracting good-quality people to the role is incredibly difficult? It is very easy to glibly say, “We need better governors.” In practice, it is very hard to find them.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: All you need is one governor who is good or a couple who are good, who can become the lead trainers. That is the reality of the situation. All our reports point to this. On a governing board where you have a core group of proactive people who are really committed to governance issues and committed to the school, they can take on the role of trainers for the other people in the school. They don’t have to go on lots of courses, but part of each governors meeting, I think, should be devoted to training.

Q74 Pat Glass: Apologies for being a bit late. I wanted to be here from the beginning, but I had to deal with an urgent constituency issue.

Following on from Craig’s questions about the issues in Birmingham, can I ask you about criticisms of Ofsted’s inspection of children’s services? In 2010 and 2012, you provided “adequate” ratings for safeguarding and looked-after services in Rotherham, and praise for their work in tackling child sexual exploitation, but then they were judged to be inadequate after the Jay report. Sean and I have had a frank sharing of views recently on the adequacy and appropriateness of the inspection framework. What changes are you making in the light of the criticisms?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Can I just say that we will be producing our social care annual report in six weeks’ time, where we will go into much greater detail on this one?

I will answer the question. We apologise—I want to say that very openly—for not getting it right on CSE in Rotherham. We found the authority to be both inadequate and then requiring improvement, but we didn’t pick up what was happening and we should have. That is why we have toughened up our inspection. Inspectors spend four weeks in a local authority now, not just a few days. The people on the inspection team will be trained on CSE issues. We are developing a specialist team at Ofsted who will go in in support of the inspection team when they get the slightest whiff of CSE taking place. We hope we will get to the bottom of CSE when it occurs. Lots of people failed those children. We were one of them, and we need to put it right.

Q75 Pat Glass: The Local Government Association has been particularly critical of the way in which the various different inspection regimes inspect children’s services—local authorities, the police and health. What have you learned so far from your pilot scheme’s integrated inspections? Of course, we have had integrated inspections before, haven’t we?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We are moving towards multi-agency inspection, but—and I feel very strongly on this—there are people within each local authority sitting on the safeguarding board who have a responsibility to hold the DCS’s and the chief executive’s feet to the fire on all the issues that you and I are worried about. All our senior people in social

care say this: when we inspect the safeguarding boards, there is massive confusion about their role and responsibilities, about what the police should be doing, and about how they are holding the police service in a particular authority to account for what they are doing to support that local authority.

I have said this before and I'll say it again: there need to be much clearer guidelines issued by the Department to safeguarding boards on what their role and responsibilities should be. It is a bit like the middle tier question. We go in and inspect once every three years, but they should be monitoring what is happening on a regular basis, and monitoring what each individual agency is doing to support and intervene.

Q76 Pat Glass: Looking at your pilots and what is coming out of them, are you looking at the framework, at what we think as a Committee is a lack of Government focus on these areas and at how closely the inspection regimes are coming together? Is it a combination of all of those things?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is taking time. We already have the largest number of inspectors Ofsted has ever had in local authorities for the SIF inspection. There will be even more when the police, the health authority, the probation service and others join our inspectors in a local authority inspection. We are leading on it and have to make sure that the framework is tight, that it is well led and that there is good training for our inspectors and good co-ordinated training for the other inspectors as well. But April is not too far away.

Q77 Pat Glass: But you are optimistic?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes. I think it has to happen, especially in the light of Rotherham and other cases.

Q78 Bill Esterson: The Children and Families Act has a requirement for signposting for local authorities about SEN services. You are now inspecting the effectiveness of local authorities in assisting children with SEN and disabilities. First, do you have the expertise to do that? Secondly, what will that look like in practice—will you be inspecting only the signposting or will you be inspecting the quality of service?

Sean Harford: As colleagues will know, the Minister announced that we are working on a framework for the inspection of responsibilities in SEN for local authorities. Charlie Henry, who is our national lead for special educational needs, is working on that. Part of the role he will have is to make sure that we have the appropriate personnel—inspectors—to be able to do the job that this framework leads to. It is likely to be a couple of inspectors taking a week, or something like that, looking at the processes and procedures of the local authority and at their impact, and we will be going through the local authorities over time.

To go back to Michael's point, training will be crucial. We probably need, over time, to get more special educational needs experts into being HMIs, and we recognise that. There

is a lot we can still do on training for existing HMIs, but we will look at all of that. When the framework goes live, those people will be in place and with an appropriate methodology for carrying out that intervention work.

Q79 Bill Esterson: Yes. The question I asked was whether you will inspect the quality of the delivery or just the signposting.

Sean Harford: It will be heavily looking at the self-evaluation of where the authority thinks it is in the delivery, and looking at the signposting. Then we will need to ask what evidence there is for the impact of that delivery. There will not be sufficient resource to go around and look heavily at delivery and to make judgments on it. But, clearly, if there are concerns, we will need to follow those up. This will be a proportionate way of doing things.

Q80 Bill Esterson: We have evidence of concerns about the lack of educational support that children with SEN have if they are not able to attend school. What plans do you have to inspect local authority arrangements for children who are missing education? It is not just SEN, is it? There is also home schooling more widely.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is part of the new framework we have for the inspection of children's services that we look very carefully at the database for missing children. As I said before, one of my concerns is that there needs to be one list—not two or three lists—held by the local authority, of children who have gone missing. Inspectors report to me that they spend an inordinate amount of time looking at the police database and then the local authority database to check that there is alignment on the names of the children and whether there have been return-to-home interviews. That is a big issue.

Chair: Sir Michael, the question is slightly different; it is about children who, through their SEN or for other reasons, are unable to get support.

Q81 Bill Esterson: Yes. It was about SEN. The wider question about home schooling is important too, but I was particularly asking about the SEN.

Sean Harford: As part of the process that Michael described under the single inspection framework, along with everything he said about looking for children who are missing, the education expert on the team will also look at the wider brief. Obviously, those children come under the auspices of the virtual head teachers, but there are also those whom the authority has identified for home education. But, of course, we do not go and inspect that home education; we are looking more at how the authority monitors that and the quality of it, and what their processes are for doing that.

When I was regional director for this in the east of England, I was asked about going and doing an inspection in a specific case. There isn't an appetite at the moment for doing that, because it would literally mean going into people's homes to do it. But through the

single inspection framework, we look at how the authority itself monitors provision for those young people.

Q82 Bill Esterson: Yes. The question was really about the local authorities' arrangements, rather than inspecting people's homes.

Sean Harford: Yes, but—

Bill Esterson: The answer I think you gave was that you are working towards this, rather than being there already.

Sean Harford: It is part of the consideration within the current framework.

Bill Esterson: Thank you. Moving on to children's centres—

Q83 Chair: Sorry, Bill, I don't know whether you're satisfied, but there are children who can't attend school full time, through disability, SEN or whatever. You found in a report in November 2013 that 10,000 children in similar circumstances were missing an education. I am not sure we have heard a proper answer yet as to what you are doing about those children in that hybrid state—they are not home-educated or missing—who are struggling to attend school full-time. What is being done to ensure that local authorities are properly providing for them?

Sean Harford: We look at the way local authorities monitor the provision for those children. As I said, we do not go into the specific delivery of that education. We look at whether they know where they are being educated and what the quality is, but we do not do the next bit, which would be to see the delivery of that clearly.

Q84 Chair: One of your key recommendations in that report was that you should inspect local authority arrangements. Has that changed since your report? Is that now happening in a way that it was not before?

Sean Harford: Yes, it is now part of the single inspection framework for consideration to be given to how local authorities monitor that delivery.

Chair: If you have anything further to add, please write to us.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: On that and on missing children.

Sean Harford: Yes.

Q85 Pat Glass: If these children are not home-educated and they are not missing from education altogether, then they are on the roll of a school.

Sean Harford: Yes, they would be.

Pat Glass: So the primary responsibility for their education rests with the school. Presumably, you are inspecting the local authorities' arrangements to hold the school's feet to the fire over this.

Sean Harford: Yes, absolutely. Of course, those may be looked-after children, in which case they come under the auspices of a virtual head teacher. If they are within a school and on a roll, in that case we would look to see how the school was meeting its obligations to those young people.

Q86 Pat Glass: Right, so you hold the local authority to account. Do you have the same kind of policies on holding schools to account over this when you inspect schools?

Sean Harford: If they are on the roll of the school—

Pat Glass: Which we have established they are.

Sean Harford: —we would ask the school what they are doing for those children. Clearly we would not then go to where the eventual delivery is, because that would not be possible.

Chair: Please write.

Sean Harford: We will.

Q87 Bill Esterson: We should return to that, Chair.

Moving on to children's centres, there is a big concern about the fall in the inspection grading. Evidence was given to us citing declining budgets, among other things, as being responsible. That leads to difficulties including the inability of clusters of children's centres to complete some of the forms that you need for your data requirements. Do you think it is just the budgets? Do you think there are other reasons to explain the decline in grades?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I should add that we are producing our early years annual report in the next two or three months, and we will focus on children's centres there as well as all the other issues relating to early years.

Q88 Chair: We are asking you about that—both on children's services and on that point—because the current Committee will soon be gone. It will fall to others, but we are not ones to give up the chance while we have it. That is why we are on your case.

Lorna Fitzjohn: I can say that as a regional director I pick up the inspection reports for children's centres. Sadly, I see too many of them that are poor. Yes, some of the issues

that you have talked about are echoed in them. I think the cluster arrangements, which are relatively new for some of these children's centres, pose quite a challenge to some of the leaders and managers in the centres in managing that kind of process. Underlying most of those reports is the fact that those centres are not hitting the target groups that they were set up to help. That is the underlying issue that I read through many of them. The complexities that are now in the sector are not making that any easier.

Q89 Bill Esterson: Does your framework need to change to recognise the realities that they face, including the challenges that you have just outlined?

Lorna Fitzjohn: I think we are in a position where children's centres have changed quite radically around our framework over the past few years. I know that we are looking at it at the moment, and I am sure that there will be changes to how we inspect them that will reflect the sector we now see out there. But we are coming towards the end of a cycle of children's centres, and it makes sense to finish that so that we have a clear view of the sector out there.

Q90 Bill Esterson: If you can give us an advance view of your report, do you have recommendations on how children's centres might better address issues collectively, particularly in terms of reaching their target audience?

Lorna Fitzjohn: As always with leaders and managers, there is staff training, which is particularly important for those who step up to more responsible roles than they had before. That would be a clear recommendation. Working closely with the local authority, which will have much of the information they need, would also be important.

Q91 Alex Cunningham: Lorna, what do you have to say about the claim from the University and College Union that there are "serious flaws" in how Ofsted inspects colleges under the current inspection regime and that you appear to "lack any empathy or understanding of FE and its mission or how to inspect it"?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: But you just said nice things about me for the first time in ages. Lorna, you were going to answer that.

Chair: A more nuanced view from Lorna for this one.

Lorna Fitzjohn: I meet with UCU quite regularly. I do not think that they put those criticisms quite so strongly to me face to face as they perhaps have to you. But no, I would not agree with them, although they have a viewpoint that we would want to listen to. I am sure that our inspection of the wide range of FE providers is robust. We have a very clear framework, which is in the public domain.

In terms of satisfaction rates for our inspections, around 95% of people see that they make a difference to how they improve. We have seen a clear impact, particularly on

teaching and learning. Over the last two years, we have said clearly that that has not been good enough within the sector. We are now seeing that that has improved, so I do think that we are having an impact for the young people in these various types of provision.

Q92 Alex Cunningham: The LGA describes FE as a competitive market of incoherent provision. How does that affect your ability to inspect? You say all these positive things; things are improving, but if it is a competitive market of incoherent provision, how on earth can you do that job effectively?

Lorna Fitzjohn: I think we do that for individual establishments very well. Each one of those establishments needs to work in the community they are in. However, looking at our annual report this time, as you will have done, we see a need for a clear national strategy for FE. I agree with you that there is lots of competition and a lack of collaboration in the sector. We also say clearly in our report that there needs to be a better structure at local levels to make sure that there is a range of provision to meet the needs of employers and young people. A better arrangement for those organisations to collaborate would improve the sector.

Q93 Alex Cunningham: In a world where colleges are totally independent of local authorities, what is the role of local authorities in ensuring that we have coherent provision across an area?

Lorna Fitzjohn: As a regional director, I meet with all the local authorities in my area. We talk at some or most of those meetings about their 16 to 19 provision. They absolutely recognise that they have some responsibility for that. However, I do not think that enough is being done to make sure that someone takes an area view of what is there, in both the FE sector and the schools, so as to improve that. They have some responsibility to do that. In terms of their responsibility for particular groups of individuals, particularly now with the raising of the participation age, that is more for the 16 to 18-year-olds. But they also have responsibility for those with learning difficulties and disabilities, who we have already talked about.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We need to track those youngsters who drop out—the huge number that drop out in the first year, and particularly those youngsters from poor backgrounds or with learning needs. The local authority has to take its responsibilities much more seriously.

Q94 Alex Cunningham: But of course, local authorities do not actually have any real power in this. They can advise, but they do not have any power.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, and I also think that we should do a lot more to say to colleges and to FE providers that we will be much more critical of them if they do not track these youngsters and see what is happening to them in terms of destinations.

Q95 Alex Cunningham: That is very positive. I have a couple of questions about careers guidance. Your inspections have shown that one in five schools is good or better at providing quality guidance, which means that four in five are not. What is the answer to that? Is the Government's new careers and enterprise company going to just solve that problem?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We will have to wait and see. I met the chief executive the other day; she is an impressive person and I am sure she will do a good job. Careers guidance is pretty lousy. I feel very strongly about this issue and I know that members of the Committee feel as strongly. I always made it a priority when I was a head teacher because I did not see it as a bolt-on issue. It is absolutely fundamental to motivating children to do well in school but that part of the curriculum is languishing, and it is not receiving the priority that it deserves. Youngsters who are able and are going to get their GCSEs and go off to do A-levels need good careers advice, but the ones who are really struggling and doing badly because of the poor provision are those who need to know about vocational education, apprenticeships and the next steps. As far as Ofsted is concerned, we are going to shine a light on the issue much more regularly than we have done. I have asked Sean to come with a bank of statements from HMIs on the sort of things that the inspectors are saying at the moment, which will cause schools to think and consider provision when we go into them.

Sean Harford: We accept that, until recently, this has not had a high enough profile. Now inspectors are shining a light on it more. We are getting more critical comment through. For example, people bring up the fact that the careers information and guidance programme is not offering year 8 to year 11 students the full knowledge and support that they need to make informed choices about their futures, despite that now being the statutory obligation. Clearly, that is what is needed. I have a whole raft of other comments which I will not read out, but the fact that we are focusing on this will, indeed, focus attention on the issue in schools.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: And it will affect the sub-judgment—I think I mentioned it the previous time I appeared before you—that we are introducing. We have introduced a sub-judgment on the sixth form if the school has one. That judgment will be influenced by the quality of careers provision and guidance that children receive.

Q96 Alex Cunningham: I welcome that very much. Sir Michael, you have always been a champion of professional teachers; there are also professional people who, in the past, have been responsible for delivering careers advice and guidance. That is largely no longer the case in our schools that have the responsibility. Can you offer a view on that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Some of the best provision that we see shows that you have to appoint somebody who is part of the senior team in the school—spend money on it—to take responsibility for careers and guidance and to ensure that it is done well. That is certainly a practice I followed when I was a head. That person then has the responsibility of bringing various people in—not just one or two people, but a range—to support youngsters in one-to-one interviews, careers guidance, knowing how to access apprenticeships and so on. That is vital. That person should be the lead in co-ordinating all the careers activities in a school. When head teachers do not give it a priority, we see problems.

Q97 Alex Cunningham: You see a need for professional people in schools.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, and as I said that lead co-ordinator—that senior person—can bring those professionals in.

Q98 Alex Cunningham: You will not be surprised to know, Lorna, that we have had a briefing note from the Association of Colleges prior to your appearance this morning. The brief says, “Many of these young people dislike maths and English, and arrive at the college feeling de-motivated sometimes because of the way they have been taught these subjects in school and because the current GCSE seems distant from the real world outside the classroom. It is not in these students’ best interests, especially those furthest away from achieving a current GCSE grade C in maths and English, to be asked to take the GCSEs again and again.” What is the answer?

Lorna Fitzjohn: I agree that there are many young people—about 600,000 last year—coming into the FE sector who have not achieved GCSE English and maths. It is very important to engage them. Historically, that has been through functional skills, but, unfortunately, employers do not always recognise those and, following the Alison Wolf inquiry, the GCSE has been seen to be the most desirable qualification.

There are many young people who are quite far away from entering GCSE. There are many who have a grade D at GCSE who would stand a sporting chance of getting C and above. What is key to that is a very good assessment of where they are when they arrive and we have seen most success—there are some really good examples of this—where it is contextualised within whatever the vocational or main qualification it is that they are doing. You will then see young people appreciating the need to be able, perhaps, to perform particular measuring activities and such within construction programmes because they can see the relevance of that. We are working with the Education and Training Foundation and the DFE at the moment to look at a more functional approach to GCSE maths, which may be one of the solutions.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: If a youngster has got a D grade but has another two years to get a C, that should be perfectly possible.

Q99 Alex Cunningham: Yes, but vast numbers of young people will never pass the GCSE exam—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That is a pretty pessimistic view.

Q100 Alex Cunningham: It is, but it is true. Large numbers of young people will never get that and that is grinding them down in college and setting them back in the rest of their education.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It has a bearing on the last question, which is careers. If, in order to get an apprenticeship, an employer says, “You’ve got to get a C grade, and, by the way, I’m going to help you do this myself if necessary” and they are given all that support, with the employers intervening and good careers guidance, they can see a pathway in front of them that will lead to success in employment, so they will have more motivation to get a C grade.

Q101 Alex Cunningham: How much concentration will your inspectors put on that when they go into colleges to ensure that they are not just doing the same old thing of trying to get the C grade?

Lorna Fitzjohn: We look at English and maths closely. It is one of our priorities, so you would expect that to be the case. We are seeing changes: I visited a college the other day that last year had 300 studying English and maths GCSEs, but that figure is 2,000 this year, now that it is a contractual requirement to do so.

I think that all of us can see the challenges they face. However, we are seeing people struggling to recruit the right staff to teach English and maths and we are seeing poor teaching in English and maths by people who are perhaps not qualified enough to do so. The colleges have improved teaching and learning in general over the past few years. What I can only hope is that now they can improve the teaching in English and maths to enable these young people to achieve.

Alex Cunningham: So even if the pessimist is wrong about young people’s chances of doing it, the system is not really ready to deliver what is required.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: If we can get the schools right. I said that our system is still mediocre and you have seen from the report that there is a problem in some of our secondary schools. If we can get our schools system right and get the great majority of our youngsters to at least a D grade in English, there is a better chance of their succeeding from 16 to 19.

Lorna Fitzjohn: From the figures that we reported on this morning, there has been a decline in grades in FE colleges since September and I think we can look at performance in English and maths being one of the reasons. I am perhaps more optimistic than you that this will improve over time, but it has got to improve quickly.

Q102 Alex Cunningham: I accept the point that, if we get it right in schools, colleges will not have to worry about it—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Well, they will have to worry about it because inevitably there will be some youngsters who will just fall below the benchmark. But schools have got to get better—

Q103 Alex Cunningham: The ones who worry me are those who are well away even from the D grade. What additional incentives are needed for employers and LEPs to get more involved with FE colleges to improve the value of vocational education?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That is such an important question, because apprenticeships will not work unless employers get heavily involved and some of the classroom-based courses that these FE institutions are running do not go well because employers are disengaged.

When we go to a really successful college or FE institution—we were talking about this yesterday—they have really strong links with local employers, the local chambers of commerce, the LEPs and so on, and they go out of their way to support those youngsters who are demotivated and lacking in confidence. The worst colleges say, if you want to do this apprenticeship, you've got to go and find an employer. Well, a youngster without that level of confidence is not going to do that. The best colleges have that pastoral responsibility, ensuring that there are strong links with local employers. We are going to be a lot more critical. We have said some nice things about the FE sector this year compared with previous years. We will be a lot more critical of the FE sector, and colleges in particular, if they are not doing that.

Q104 Alex Cunningham: We don't disagree with you on that. The question is, what additional incentives are needed to improve that engagement?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Well, they'll fail their inspection if they don't do it.

Q105 Alex Cunningham: That's a negative incentive. What about positive incentives?

Lorna Fitzjohn: Perhaps I can answer. We see large employers, and even medium-sized employers engaging and colleges have had some success in that. What there has not been success in engaging with is the small employers. There needs to be a structure for them, and perhaps some kind of brokerage or arrangement to help them to engage with employers. If you are a one-person employer, perhaps a plumber, and you would like to take on an apprentice, it is very hard to find and get into the system. It is possible to be daunted by the red tape and paperwork within that.

Q106 Chair: Does anyone do it particularly well? My own analogy is that schools or colleges have a three-pin plug, employers have a nine-pin plug and what we desperately need in the middle is an adaptor. So you sit there bashing those two, ignoring the fact that someone has to provide that brokerage, or that adaptor. If someone does it well and makes it easy to do it, then we'll be able to get somewhere. Is anyone doing it well?

Lorna Fitzjohn: There have been some examples of good training associations within engineering. Where groups of smaller employers have got together and bought training as a

group, that has worked well. LEPs that have engaged much more with the FE and apprenticeship system have got something to offer. Chambers of commerce, the CBI and other organisations could do it and step into the space. Employers, perhaps, respond particularly well to specific trade associations that understand the business that they are in.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Maybe we should start inspecting the LEPs, Chair, and the local chambers of commerce.

Q107 Chair: Let me take you back to careers advice and guidance, because, as you say, we view very seriously the need to improve it. The quality in careers standard was developed with Government support to provide a kitemark for it. Alex and I were at a round table a couple of days ago talking about careers advice. It was cast around the room, quite unscientifically, if you had to name one thing you could do to address what we view as the central problem, which is the lack of incentive for schools to take it seriously, what would it be? They said, oblige them to work towards, and eventually gain and hold, the quality in careers standard. Do you have any reflections on that? Do schools that are working towards or have the quality in careers standard generally do a better job than the 80% of schools that are failing at the moment?

Sean Harford: I am not sure that we have the evidence to say that at the moment, but it is certainly something that we could look at, in our focus on careers.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I think that Government have a part to play. If the Government believe, and the Department believes, that this is a real issue, they might want to consider ring-fencing part of the budget for careers and give very clear guidance to schools on how that money should be used.

Q108 Chair: I think that that is unlikely.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I think that it is unlikely, but it might be something they need to think about.

Q109 Chair: When we have had the Secretary of State here we have said that you see it as important and you will try to do your bit, but actually, given the nature and frequency of your inspections, you cannot fundamentally change the incentives for schools and colleges to take this more seriously, and therefore, something else is needed. Do you concur, just to get that on the record?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, I agree. However, at the end of the day it is the quality of leadership and the priorities they give to careers education that is going to play the biggest role. If they know that Ofsted is going to look at it much more closely and that their sub-grade will change unless they treat it seriously, that will have an impact.

Q110 Chair: That is welcome. I suppose the fear is that the Government narrative is, “Well, we trust schools; they have got a statutory duty and Ofsted are now looking at it more end-of-problem on the incentives at the school end,” and we are saying “We don’t think that is the end of the problem.” Despite your efforts, you are not going to lose your job because you do lousy careers advice and guidance, as long as you do other things. As long as schools know that, there will be a tendency to focus on things that do—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I know what the next question will be: will you fail schools for poor careers provision?

Q111 Chair: No, it is not, because personally—I don’t know about the rest of the Committee—I don’t think you should. I don’t think it is possible, given the amount of time and resource you have got, and your focus on the fundamentals in the school, for the answer for careers to be Ofsted. We need to find something else, which is why the quality in careers standard I wanted to put to you could be a way of incentivising—it is not going to be perfect. It could significantly alter, if it was a requirement on schools to work towards it; and the Government, after all, has helped develop it.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes.

Lorna Fitzjohn: I think improving destination data, which is happening at the moment, will also give us far more evidence and information generally across the country about these young people—whether they are getting to the place they should be getting to.

Q112 Chair: The Government have two answers to our criticisms, which are: Ofsted doing more, and destinations data. In both cases we say both your attitude is welcome and destinations data are welcome. We are just not convinced that even those two together are going to be enough to change the incentives enough to get the 80% who are doing it badly at the moment to improve. Would you agree with that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes.

Chair: Super. Thank you.

Q113 Pat Glass: I remember a previous Chief Inspector being highly critical of leadership in primary schools, but we seem to have come full circle; so are secondary schools really so much worse than primary schools, or is it just their turn?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I do not know if it is their turn or not, but you have seen the figures; leadership is weaker in secondary schools this year, and primary schools are forging ahead. Leadership is good; the quality of teaching is good—significant improvements on last year. We have said quite clearly in this report that it is worrying; so we have got youngsters going into primary schools, doing well at key stage 1 and key stage 2; the most able

youngsters at key stage 2 are doing especially well—level 5, level 6, and then transferring to some secondary schools and doing badly.

We have got to get this right, for all the reasons we have just been discussing. We have articulated in the report all the things that secondary schools have got to do, and, particularly, leaders have got to do. We have got to make sure—the most important thing, as far as I am concerned, they have got to do is to make sure the culture is right. I am a great believer in that. We do not talk enough about culture, behaviour.

Pat Glass: I agree.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We talk about assessment, but if the culture is right in a school and it is a calm and orderly place—the head is marching round the corridors making sure children are behaving themselves and doing well, and that it is an aspirational culture—all those other things slot into place.

You will see that one of the reasons we have said secondary schools are doing badly is low-level disruption—behaviour issues. We brought out a report a few months ago called “Below the radar”, where we were saying that in some secondary schools an hour of teaching and learning is lost a day—38 days a year are lost through low-level disruption. We need leaders of our secondary schools who are going to be authoritative figures—who are disciplinarians. That is not a harsh thing to say. I am always concerned when I see staff on the television, or head teachers, who seem to walk around the corridors or walk into classrooms, and the kids don’t pay a blind bit of notice. They should be a forceful presence. Sorry to wax lyrical about that, but I feel strongly about it.

Pat Glass: If we can focus on secondary schools for a little while, we are now told, from your figures, that 70,000 children, more than in 2012, are in inadequate schools—most of those in secondary. Yet you are also saying that the number of good and outstanding schools is improving. Given that outstanding schools are inspected so infrequently, so they are still on the record as outstanding, even though in reality some of those schools will be falling below the standard, is the headline figure of the number of good and outstanding schools an accurate reflection? Are we over-claiming, here?

Sean Harford: I think that is why the new arrangements from September are so important. What we will be doing is, yes, they will be less cliff-edge for schools, but we will be going into schools approximately every three years. Currently it is about every three years and seven months. Some of those schools over the last few years, if they have converted to be an academy, have had an extra four or five terms in addition to the previous potentially five years when they were not inspected.

So you’re right—they have stayed on the books. This is a way of us getting into the schools to spot decline earlier, which is the real problem.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Eight hundred schools decline each year, from “good” to “requires improvement”, don’t they?

Sean Harford: Yes. The question is this: is it over-inflated at the moment? We don't think so, although there will be those on the margins that have not been inspected for some time, which could be flakier. However, we think this is the way to do it.

One of the reasons we have more “inadequate” schools now, of course, is that the “requires improvement” grade that the Chief Inspector introduced has enabled us to go into those schools to monitor them, and again we spot decline earlier. Previously, a grade 3 school would have gone three years before we were back in there. We are back in, and if things are not improving they will be fully inspected and they will go into special measures. That is one of the reasons why that 70,000 figure has come about. It is a good thing that that issue is being identified, so that we can do something about it.

Q114 Pat Glass: Ofsted has recently highlighted some concerns around transition and the years 6-7 issue. It is a difficult time for children. I seem to recall that there was a lot of improved practice in introducing both primary practitioners and practice into secondary school to try to deal with this issue of the loss of children over that six-week period, and almost the reteaching in year 7. Do you have any plans to extend your study of sustained gains in literacy and numeracy to look at the transition more generally?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I am really glad you asked that question, because you have probably seen from the report that we are doing a further investigation into this, which will also look at the curriculum at key stage 3. That report will come out in May-June time, to show what is happening. A bit like culture and behaviour, it is absolutely critical that transition is good, that liaison between secondary schools and primary schools is good, and that secondary schools check that the requisite progress is being made, particularly in year 7. The strong secondary schools that I have seen, both in this job and previously, always focus very intensely on year 7, because they know there can be a dip in performance in that year group. So we are bringing out this report and it will be interesting to see what it says about key stage 3 transition and the curriculum—where some schools are using their freedoms well, and others aren't.

Q115 Pat Glass: I know that there has always been a focus on the transition of some individual pupils who are felt to be most vulnerable. Are secondary schools taking more seriously the general transition from primary to secondary, do you think?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Our inspectors say not in some schools—they are not taking it seriously.

Q116 Pat Glass: The practice of bringing in primary practitioners and primary practice has not been extended?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Good heads do that. They think very carefully about transition, and ensure that children aren't moving about very frequently in year 7, for example, at key

stage 3. They stay in the same classroom and staff move to them, which is the sort of experience they have had in primary school. So, transition is a big, big issue. If the Government wanted to introduce a year 7 national test at the end of year 7—I don't think the Government will do that—I would welcome it.

Pat Glass: I am not sure that is the answer, but anyway, thanks.

Q117 Bill Esterson: It has been suggested to me that the issue about transition is largely explained by overstatement by primary schools of where pupils are, rather than anything else. Do you think there is evidence that backs that up?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That might be the case, and Sean, you might want to weigh in here as well. But I also think—

Q118 Chair: Sean disagrees. We always like a panel that disagrees, especially when they all work for the same organisation. Sean—go for it.

Sean Harford: I think that there are more issues in other areas of the assessment system, for example at key stage 1, where that may well be the case, but I think at key stage 2 the tests are pretty rigorous. Obviously, some rogue schools have manipulated that and that has been well documented, but most of the outcomes in key stage 2 are solidly evidenced, and I think this is something that weak head teachers pick up on to try to mitigate the thing that Michael just said, which is about that movement—

Q119 Bill Esterson: So it is the secondary heads who are at fault, not the primary heads?

Sean Harford: I think some of them use that as an excuse, frankly.

Q120 Chair: The key resource in any school is the teacher. Do you have evidence around the way in which teachers are deployed? The head will have a grading—a hierarchy—of teacher quality in their school, without even having to think about it, and they will deploy that to pursue certain ends. That could be one of the reasons for the transition—such is the focus on the GCSE that when people come in in year 7 they do not get exposed to the best of the teaching resources in the school, so it is not equitable. That might be counter-productive in four years' time, but when you are worried about this year's and next year's GCSEs, perhaps you will act in that way. Do you have any evidence on that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We do comment on that. For example, if the school is adopting a setting arrangement and the lower sets are taught by teachers whom we have judged not to be particularly good, we would say that in the report.

Q121 Chair: We are always interested in incentives for behaviours within the system. This is the key resource. Deployment is the key factor in outcomes for children. Have you done any work on looking at that overall to inform those who help to create frameworks, such as us, and to encourage more equitable behaviour by schools, because they will do what they think is in their best interests?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We will comment on staffing issues across the school and how well staff are deployed to promote achievement and progress. I also think there is a need for us to do more good practice surveys on how well staff are deployed across the school.

Sean Harford: There were some good reasons to take away key stage 3 tests. But equally—

Chair: More disagreement!

Sean Harford: But that must in certain circumstances play into the deployment of staff if the main focus becomes key stage 4, the end of key stage 4. It has got to impact on where you put people. I know that in individual schools we will have seen this and we will have commented on it, as Michael said. I do not think we have a wide-scale study on that.

Q122 Chair: Is that something you could look at? Most of us have been here for five years. Teacher quality is the critical thing. Having worked as hard as you can on that, the deployment of the good and the bad is next on your list, yet we do not really have an idea, based on hard evidence, as to how teachers are deployed.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We need good practice in terms of the transition issues, but also in the sixth form, at the other end of the age range, for example, in a comprehensive school. One of the problems in an 11 to 18 comprehensive school is that you could have staff who are teaching year 7 one lesson, then moving across to teach a high-performing A-level group, and then in the next lesson looking at an SEN group. When I was a head, I ensured that we had dedicated staff in the sixth form who taught, the majority of their time, post-16 studies.

Q123 Chair: Could we put in a request—no more than that—for you to look at that and see whether there is some evidence? It could be useful.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is a good suggestion.

Sean Harford: And I think there is the ability to do that through the key stage 3 survey, because it is a curriculum issue.

Q124 Pat Glass: Can I make a comment on that? Even when we had key stage 3 tests, we still had the arguments with head teachers. Good head teachers recognised that they had to have good teachers in key stage 3, but I remember having those huge arguments with

head teachers about getting some of their best teachers out of key stage 4 and into key stage 3, even when we had key stage 3 tests, so I am not sure that they are a factor.

Sean Harford: As I say, in those days, the overriding measurement of progress was still between key stage 2 and the end of key stage 4. I accept that, but I think that those schools that wanted to be able to demonstrate that they were giving good quality throughout would have found that more of an incentive.

Q125 Chair: Do you have any evidence? Historically, England was unusual in having such a severe dip—I think that is true, from the international evidence—in the transition from primary to secondary. Then key stage 3 SATs were abolished, slightly reducing the incentive. Is there any evidence that our dip has worsened since the abolition of key stage 3 tests?

Sean Harford: I don't know of any that could show that.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That is why we need to introduce national measures at key stage 3.

Q126 Chair: Sean, your director of schools, looks less convinced.

Sean Harford: No—that's naughty!

Q127 Caroline Nokes: I don't know whether part of the answer might be the correct deployment of staff, but despite all the effort that has gone into narrowing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, it remains stubbornly wide, particularly at secondary. There has been some progress at primary, but not at secondary—why is that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I think that the improvements we have seen in primary will feed through into secondary—I hope so. I think it is what we have just been discussing: key stage 3. If you get it wrong at key stage 3—if youngsters are in receipt of the pupil premium, doing well in primary school and then going into key stage 3 and decline—that is a big issue. It is also about the priority that schools give to closing the gap, their strategy and how we hold them to account for it. We, Ofsted, need to be tougher on those schools that are not using their pupil premium funding well. In some institutions it is a huge amount of money, and if they are not using it well and there is no clear and coherent plan, we probably need to be tougher on them.

Sean Harford: I want to say something about school practice. We do not want to drive the sort of practice I have heard about, in which, for example, primary schools are putting their pupil premium children together on a table, so they have a “pupil premium group”. That is not going to drive those children to achieve better, frankly. There have been similar things in secondary. There are some perverse incentives, but the important thing is the point Michael made about having a plan for that group of children across the whole school—how can you mitigate some of the circumstances in which they might find themselves

because of their disadvantage? That is the important thing. However, expecting teachers to put them on a table so that they can identify them, just in case we turn up, for example, is wrong.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Why is London doing so well with its poor children? The gap is very narrow in London. Why are London schools—both primary and secondary—doing well?

Q128 Caroline Nokes: And why aren't you, as head of Ofsted, making sure that other schools across the country are following London's example?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We comment on the use of the pupil premium in all our reports and we are critical of schools and local authorities that do not use the money well. If you are suggesting that we should be tougher on those institutions—

Q129 Caroline Nokes: You were the one who said, "We need to do more."

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes. If you are suggesting that we need to be tougher, that is probably the case, but we have to consider whether that means putting schools into "requires improvement" and special measures for that one issue when they may be dealing well with other issues.

Q130 Siobhain McDonagh: Looking at kids on free school meals, when we did our report into white working class underachievement, we found that there is very little research into and knowledge of what closes that gap. Is there any way that Ofsted can spread good practice or encourage more research? Far be it from me to say that London isn't absolutely brilliant, but there may be something in the vast array of different people from different parts of the world that leads to some of those kids' improvement.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We produce good-practice surveys on the use of the pupil premium, and they all say that it is a leadership issue, and that it is about the strategy employed by the head teacher; governors making sure that they take responsibility for it; tracking each individual child; ensuring that those youngsters with low literacy and numeracy skills go into extension classes; and ensuring that some of that pupil premium money is used to incentivise staff—in other words, if you have a good maths teacher and a good English teacher teaching particular groups, you give them more money to teach those groups. This stuff is not rocket science. You can read our reports on the use of the pupil premium; head teachers can read them and should employ the good practice that we have identified.

Chair: It is worth mentioning that the Education Endowment Foundation is also doing research, but it takes a long time for it to come through.

Q131 Caroline Nokes: On behaviour, you mentioned low-level disruption and the effect it can have on a school and its results, and also the benefits of having authoritarian—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Authoritative.

Caroline Nokes: Okay, authoritative head teachers stalking the corridors and instilling good behaviour in their children. Is there any evidence that Ofsted inspections themselves are helping to instil better behaviour and encouraging schools to adopt better practices?

Sean Harford: We carry out unannounced behaviour visits, and we have a way of identifying, through various different measures, the potential in those schools where behaviour might currently be going under the radar. An HMI will visit those schools for a day. I know that in the past year some of those have resulted in follow-up inspections very quickly afterwards, and some of those schools have been put into special measures. I also know that, in the follow-up monitoring through special measures, we see behaviour improve. So the direct answer to your question is, yes, it does.

Q132 Caroline Nokes: Finally, we have talked about closing the gap for the most disadvantaged children and about deployment of staff, but what about the most gifted, most able students? What are your views on what should be done to help and push them? Do we need a new gifted and talented programme?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is one of the reasons why we say that secondary schools are not doing as well as they should be. We produced a report about 18 months ago which went into great detail as to why this is happening. Again, it is an issue of not tracking these children, not putting the right staff in front of them, not providing extension work for them and not setting high enough targets for them. We are producing another report in May, which will make for interesting reading, to see whether the recommendations we made in the first report are being carried through. I know it is boring to hear this, but it is a leadership issue. We must have leaders who value their most able youngsters, make sure that the right policies are in place, track their performance and are ambitious for them. Our first report was quite shocking. Remind me of the statistics of those youngsters who got level 5.

Sean Harford: Those who got level 5 and went on to get A* were something like a quarter. We could get the figure, but it was much lower than you would expect.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Less than a quarter of youngsters who got the top grade at the end of primary school got a B grade in English and maths five years later.

Q133 Chair: Lorna, do you have any reflections on getting the best out of our most able, under your remit?

Lorna Fitzjohn: Yes. There are issues around attracting the most able into apprenticeships and vocational education. I think that that is to do with the attitudes that we have as a society towards that kind of programme. There is much work to be done to encourage people to see apprenticeships and vocational education as being for the most able.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: In Ofsted, we are now focusing on the most able more than ever before. There is a paragraph written in every report on how well the most able are doing.

Sean Harford: I will just add that in the report that Sir Michael referenced that we are publishing later this year, I have looked at the field work—I only mention this because it was something that another Member brought up—and some head teachers are using the inflated levels that are coming through as an excuse and saying, “That child isn’t really a more able child.” That is the kind of thing that we’ve got to stop, because it is that excuse culture that holds those children back.

Q134 Bill Esterson: Your report about leadership and management highlights the particular challenge of middle management, as has been said already. Do you think that, with the way the school system is, school management is now too complicated for the traditional senior and middle managers?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: The simple answer to that is, no, I don’t think it is too complicated. The middle managers in a secondary school are your key people. It is the engine room. The head teacher and the governors set the policy, the senior team create the framework, and it is the middle managers who make sure the policy is put into practice, so it is really important that schools appoint good people who understand the parameters in which they are operating. It is not just about ordering textbooks and worrying about the budget in maths or English, it is about monitoring the quality of teaching and making sure that there is good professional development.

I, as a head, ensured that every heads of department meeting started with good practice. So the head of department would say, “I saw a brilliant English lesson last week; will you, John Smith, talk about what you did?” They have to lead on professional development. But it is set by the senior team. They have got to make sure the parameters in which middle managers operate are clear.

Q135 Bill Esterson: As far as you are concerned, the head teacher, the leader in schools, should be somebody with a teaching background, not somebody who is bringing outside skills.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes. We have said quite clearly that the best heads are the ones who lead on teaching, and if they lead on teaching they would expect their middle managers to do the same.

Q136 Bill Esterson: You have said previously that governors should be paid, and that does not seem to have got much support. Is there another way of improving governance?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Of improving governance?

Bill Esterson: Improving the quality of governors.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We need to try to attract the best people in to governance, particularly in those schools and those areas where standards are not good enough. I think we have got to make sure that we give attention to that core group. I mentioned a moment ago that all good governing boards have a small number of really active people who can disseminate good practice to others and cascade training to other individuals. We comment on governance—there is a separate paragraph now on governance, so we are quite clear about what we think of governors.

Q137 Pat Glass: Your report raised concerns about some academies, and they seemed to centre on inadequate multi-agency trusts—

Chair: Multi-academy trusts.

Pat Glass: MATs, anyway, and coasting converters. We got evidence in our recent inquiry that something like 47% of converter academies are now stand-alone, isolated individual academies, which worries us. What recommendations are you making around this, and which do you see as the most worrying?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I am a great fan of autonomy; I am a great fan of giving head teachers resource and power to do what is necessary to raise attainment. That is great if you have got somebody who knows how to use those freedoms; it is not great if you have got somebody who doesn't. In that instance, it is best to be part of a partnership, so that others can monitor what is happening and help and support and challenge that individual to do better. I am worried that independence can lead to isolation, and that is the central point of this.

Q138 Chair: In our report, we recommended—I think it is on one specific Ofsted recommendation—that you should not be allowed to be “outstanding” in future if you are not collaborating.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I know we have touched on this before, Chair. My view on this one is that there are some schools which have got to “outstanding”, the head teacher has struggled to get it there, but it hasn't got the capacity to support other schools. It would be unfair not to give it that “outstanding” rating if it deserved it. We are looking at other things—I am in conversation with Minister Laws on this one—at what else we could do, what other incentives we could put in place. We were even talking about a Chief Inspector's award for schools that are prepared to go beyond the school gates and help other schools.

Q139 Pat Glass: Can we get your latest position on the war of words over inspecting multi-academy trusts? We asked you; you said that you didn't have the powers. The Secretary of State said you did. She sent you a letter. She sent you another letter, with lots of nice warm words in it, which we can't seem—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Well, I am happy with those nice warm words, and we are going to inspect.

Q140 Chair: So we should declare victory—between us. Seeing that both you and we have said for a long time—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Obviously, I would like a legislative framework. That is how we operate, so that if there are any issues, it has got legal backing.

Q141 Pat Glass: So do you believe now that you have the same powers in relation to local authorities as you do—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes.

Pat Glass: Right. Good.

Q142 Chair: So you are not allowed to grade them, so it is not quite fair to say they are the same.

Sean Harford: It is worth while saying that both the local authority school improvement framework and the approach we are going to take to inspecting MATs will come out of the same strengths and weaknesses. There will not be an effective/ineffective judgment. So they will be on a par now.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I agree with that, actually.

Q143 Bill Esterson: In our report, we found that standards in local authority schools have improved at the same time as all these academies have been created. Do you think that there is a link between the two?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I think so. I think the coming of academies has injected greater competition. The sort of complacency we saw years ago when local authorities ruled the educational world has largely gone now, and I think a lot of local authorities are doing better simply because there is more competition in the providers coming into the market.

Q144 Bill Esterson: You think they feel threatened?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I don't think they feel threatened. The reality is that different providers are coming in, offering better provision and better services, and that has raised their game.

Q145 Chair: We highlighted that fact that there is a dual system—what I think we called the insurgent academies model and the maintained model—and neither can be complacent because they will be threatened, in the academies' case by other academies, and so on. Both main political parties, Labour and Conservative, seem to suggest that these commissioners will be expanded to cover all schools. Would that be a mistake? Do you think this dual system, where there is an academies model and a maintained schools model and they are in a certain tension, could be useful? We came to no conclusion; we just said that it should be looked at carefully, rather than it just looking neat to have commissioners expanded in number and covering every school.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: What we don't want is an increasingly complex educational map. It is already complex, and we want to simplify it. Inevitably, as I said at the very start, we are going to move to a much more autonomous schools system in both primary and secondary, and it is about making sure that system works. Commissioners will have a role in that, but strong head teachers running clusters of schools will have a role.

Q146 Bill Esterson: So you think that commissioners or directors of school standards, whichever one we end up with, should have responsibility for maintained schools and academies?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That is a policy issue, but I think there should be clarity and coherence. If it is too complicated, it will not work.

Q147 Bill Esterson: We talked about this before as well. Are you clear whether local authorities are responsible for intervention in academies?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I will just repeat what I said last time, which is that they have a duty, a statutory duty, to ensure that all their children have good provision. If they see problems in an academy, they are duty-bound to inform the relevant authorities—the Department or the regional commissioner.

Q148 Bill Esterson: But is it fair for local authorities to be judged on that role, given that the instruction from the DFE is that academies are answerable only to the Secretary of State?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We won't judge them on that. We will say, "These are the schools you're responsible for. If you've got an academy that's underperforming, what have you done about it? Have you written letters? Have you contacted Ofsted about it?"

Q149 Craig Whittaker: Could I ask about the relationship between regional commissioners and your regional offices? How is that working?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Well, we have a regional director here, from the west midlands.

Craig Whittaker: Okay, how does the relationship work?

Lorna Fitzjohn: We meet regularly—obviously, it started in September—and we are sharing information both ways—

Craig Whittaker: I meet my ex-wife regularly. That is not to say that we have a good relationship.

Lorna Fitzjohn: We have a good relationship—my relationship with the regional commissioner is better than that. Sharing information and flagging up issues has created opportunities. We have gone in and inspected where there are concerns, and the regional commissioners have gone in and helped. A good example would be some of the schools in Birmingham, where there is work going on to re-broker the sponsors in some of those schools, which does need to happen very quickly. So yes, it is working.

Q150 Craig Whittaker: So co-ordination is working well—you are working well together. Is that happening right across the UK?

Lorna Fitzjohn: I understand from my colleague regional directors that that is the case.

Sean Harford: I was east of England director until very recently and it is a similar position there. I used to meet with Tim Coulson. We would discuss specific places we had concerns about; we let all the academies in the region know that we were doing that and that it would be on the agenda. We had a really good and productive working relationship. From the two regions, that's a quarter of the total.

Q151 Pat Glass: We have been particularly concerned about reports from higher education that some of our best universities are considering closing their initial teacher training. Does your inspection evidence bear out any concerns that the move toward school-centred provision—the change in the balance—is having a negative impact on higher education ITT?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: As long as the same rules on training places apply I am content, but if HE are going to be penalised for not filling their places, School Direct must also be penalised. If they have vacancies and have not filled them, they should be penalised in the same way as HE.

On the general issue of teacher recruitment, you have seen what we have said in our report. We are worried about it, not only because of the statistics but because of what our regional directors are saying on the ground—that head teachers are really struggling to fill posts, particularly in subjects like maths, physics, science and English, and struggling to appoint to middle management positions, with an increasing school population over the next few years. It is a real worry.

I am all for school-based training—I think it can work—but there have to be safeguards in place to ensure that it is done well and that we do not create a polarised system. School Direct is usually for good and outstanding schools—they are usually outstanding ones, aren't they?

Chair: They have to be outstanding, which is an issue in itself.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is, but if they are part of a SCITT, they must ensure that there are good teachers going to schools that really need them, and that the best ones are not monopolised.

Q152 Pat Glass: On that very subject, have you had any response from the National College on your call for more incentives to have the best teachers placed in the most demanding schools?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: No.

Q153 Pat Glass: That is really disappointing, isn't it? I think we have got the head of the National College coming here very soon, so we will put that to him.

What are the reasons behind inspecting early-years teacher training separately from schoolteachers?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Sorry, I didn't pick up that last bit.

Pat Glass: I understand that the arrangements now are that there will be separate inspections for early-years teacher training as opposed to schoolteacher training.

Sean Harford: Up to now, there was not any specific early-years ITT inspection. We will now be doing that, I think from this September—I was the ITT director before. I am sorry, I misunderstood the question about the separation.

Q154 Pat Glass: The concern that has been raised with us is that this is further evidence of a change in the parity of status, if initial teacher training for early-years provision is separated out from teacher training for all other teachers.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Both in HE and in school-based training.

Pat Glass: Yes.

Sean Harford: Well, it is not evidence of that.

Pat Glass: Which is why I asked what the reasons were.

Sean Harford: I am pretty sure, and I can go and check on this, that if the provider—an HE provider or a SCITT—provides across the board, we will do it at the same time. I can get back to the Committee on that.

Q155 Chair: Should we have confidence in the fact that at the end of this Parliament, there are more good and outstanding schools than ever before, and that more children are getting a better education now than they were in 2010?

Pat Glass: But we've got 70,000 children more on benefit, and—

Chair: We'll take the evidence from the witnesses, Pat.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes. For all the reasons that I have gone through, Chair, I think so. My big concern is that there is still too much of a postcode lottery. Some parts of the country have shown that, even with poor children, they can do very well. We have to replicate that good practice in other parts of the world, and you can rest assured that Ofsted will shine a light on those particular parts of the world.

Chair: We are moving to the end of this Parliament, so that is good news, although I know there will be people who contest it. Thank you for the role you have played in helping to support our schools. We look forward to hearing from you on the issues that you said you write to us about.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, and thank you for treating us so graciously.