



Education Committee

Oral evidence: The Work of Ofsted, HC 400

Wednesday 16 September 2015

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Members present: Neil Carmichael MP (Chair); Lucy Allan MP; Ian Austin MP; Michelle Donelan MP; Marion Fellows MP; Suella Fernandes MP; Lucy Frazer MP; Kate Hollern MP; Ian Mearns MP; Caroline Nokes MP; Kate Osamor MP

Questions 1-110

Witnesses: **Sir Michael Wilshaw**, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Ofsted, and Matthew Coffey, Chief Operation Officer, Ofsted, gave evidence.

Q1 Neil Carmichael (Chair): This Committee is now in public session and it is a great pleasure to welcome Sir Michael Wilshaw and Matthew Coffey to our proceedings. This is going to be an exploration of the role and activities of Ofsted. We have most of our members of the Committee here, and we have some exciting questions. Thank you very much for coming and we look forward to 90 minutes or so of interesting discourse. Sir Michael, welcome.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Good morning, Chair.

Q2 Chair: It is good to see you here again, a regular person in many of our inquiries. So thank you very much and you, too, Matthew. Sir Michael, what have been the biggest challenges in the implementation of the new Common Inspection Framework?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Making sure that it is well understood by all the remits that we inspect, because the Common Inspection Framework covers most of the remits that we inspect; making sure the training goes well for all our inspectors; and making sure that the reforms we are making to inspection are carried through and become embedded so that the new inspection arrangements that we are starting this academic year go well.

Q3 Chair: Thank you. What plans do you have to monitor the operation of the new framework?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: As you know, we regionalised. We have eight regions. They are not coterminous with the RSCs, the regional schools commissioners, which is a disappointment but never mind. It is up to the regional directors to ensure that the system goes well, that the new structures are bolted on to the spine of the regions. It is important

that the regional directors and the senior HMI in those eight regions monitor what is happening very closely and feed back to the centre and to me if there are any problems.

Q4 Chair: We are going to have an inquiry on regional schools commissioners and one of the things we will be talking about is boundaries and numbers, so it is not impossible that in the foreseeable future you might see more regional commissioners. That would present an issue about your own structure.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes. We are working very closely with them at the moment and, as I say, it is a shame that our regions are not coterminous with their areas.

Q5 Chair: The new framework is supposed to have a more consistent approach. What practical steps have you been taking to make sure that consistency takes place?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: As I said before to the Committee, Chair, there is a lot of noise about consistency and has been so ever since Ofsted was founded 22 years ago. My view is that where inspectors have to make a judgment, and it is a personal judgment based obviously on evidence and secure evidence, then sometimes they will get it wrong. That is inevitable in 30,000 inspections a year. Having looked at it over three years now, my view is that the inspectorate probably make the right decisions more now than ever before. I say that because we have this regional structure that is monitoring it very carefully. The data tool that we have in those regions, which highlight those schools where we expect a particular judgment based on the evidence, and there isn't that judgment, we look into the reasons why the judgment is different.

But the people who make those accusations of inconsistency do not investigate it in much detail. Over 90% of the people who have been inspected say they are satisfied with inspections and thought it helped them to improve. We have just done a survey of 850 schools that have been inspected in the last four months, and the feedback from them has been extremely positive about the quality of the inspections that took place.

Q6 Chair: One thing many people mention to me is the difference between a small primary school and an FE college and everything in between, and how you effectively manage the scale problem there.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: In the new arrangement starting this year there will be one HMI going into a primary school for a day, if it is a good primary school, and most primary schools are good. With an FE institution it will be a longer period of time with many more inspectors, and, particularly if it is a very large institution covering quite a few campuses, then that inspection will look very different and be very different from a primary school inspection.

Chair: Thank you.

Q7 Lucy Allan: I want to ask some questions around the inspectors' selection process. As a Committee, we have all received letters from additional inspectors who have been let go—I think there were 1,200 in total that were let go—and I wonder if you could comment a little bit around that process, particularly the online screening process selection.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes. As you know, the contracts have come to the end of their life. It was a five-year contract and I made a decision, two or three years ago, that when they did come to an end that we would bring inspection in-house. It was a decision communicated to headteachers, both secondary and primary headteachers, and they knew it was coming. I made a commitment to them that more inspections would be led by Her Majesty's Inspectors and not additional inspectors. I made a commitment to them that we would have more serving leaders of good and outstanding schools in inspection teams, and because the new arrangements for inspections of good schools are starting this year we need fewer inspectors anyway; significantly fewer. For those three reasons we reduced the workforce and it was a good opportunity with the end of the contracts to assess the workforce again, to raise the bar and to pick the brightest and best of the inspection workforce to come into Ofsted.

Q8 Lucy Allan: Was that two-hour online assessment the best way to do that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It was, but it is more than an online assessment. After the first round there were face-to-face interviews with those inspectors as well. So it was a very rigorous process. That is absolutely right because Ofsted have made more demands of the system. We put pressure on the system to improve. It requires improvement judgment, which replaced the old satisfactory judgment with the demand that schools improve to 'good' within a limited period of time. It has put a lot of pressure on the system, so it is important that headteachers have confidence in the inspection process that the people who are going to walk down the front path to the door of the school are good people.

Q9 Lucy Allan: You have no concerns around the loss of people who may have been inspectors over a considerable period and that experience being lost?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Some of those people have been employed but we have made a conscious decision that we want more serving leaders on the inspection workforce, or people who have contemporaneous experience of what schools look like.

Q10 Lucy Allan: Given those 1,200 were deemed not satisfactory to continue, do you have any concerns around the judgments that were made by those inspectors while they were inspectors?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: No, I don't, and it has been an accusation, "What about the inspections that they led or were part of?" We are very sure—because we have looked back on this—that any inspection or any inspector that did not do their job properly was monitored very carefully and left the service. Our quality assurance processes of the contractors were very, very robust. But as I say, we raised the bar so it is not surprising that some people have been let go.

Q11 Ian Austin: Very quickly, I would like to ask how it could be the case that Ofsted could have employed 1,200 people who you now think were not up to it.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: As I have made clear, that is not the case. We have made a commitment there will be more inspections led by Her Majesty's Inspectors and not by additional inspectors employed by the contractors. So there will be more HMI leading inspections. We are going to have more inspectors from good and outstanding schools in

inspection teams, significantly more. Two or three years ago, there were only 10% of inspection teams that contained survey leaders. It is now over 70%. Those reasons alone, and because we are reducing the number of inspectors that we need at Ofsted, are why we have the system that we now have.

Q12 Ian Austin: I understand the factual answer and I am not criticising the decision. If anything, I want standards to be higher and inspections to be more rigorous. I am not criticising that but all the explanation around this decision is not what you are saying today. The stuff that we read on the BBC, and in the papers at the time, was that Ofsted had said, “1,200 people were not good enough. We are getting rid of them”.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I beg to differ on that. Some of them may not have been good enough but a minority would have been and they would have been under the scrutiny of the regional team, but—for the three reasons I have given you—we have changed the system.

Q13 Caroline Nokes: Sir Michael, you have mentioned raising the bar. As a Committee, we have received lots of correspondence from former inspectors who have made the point that they may not have met the bar but were then deployed training new inspectors. Do you have any concerns about that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Sorry, the last part of your question?

Q14 Caroline Nokes: They were deployed helping to train new inspectors. Do you have any concerns about that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I have no knowledge of that. I will certainly look into that when I get back. Our training processes now are extremely rigorous and robust, both centrally and in the regions. HMI have the responsibility of leading that training, not additional inspectors but I will certainly come back to you on that one.

Q15 Suella Fernandes: Can I just ask a quick question? What portion of your additional inspectors is contracted out?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: None at the moment. From this September we have brought everything for schools and FE inspection in-house.

Q16 Suella Fernandes: Right. Do you agree that that would help with the accountability?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Absolutely. I would have done it much sooner if I had had the opportunity, but now that the contract has come to the end we are doing it. It means that we can have much greater control in the workforce. We can quality assure the process much more rigorously. We can improve the quality of training and so on and so forth. I am confident that we will be able to keep an eye on inspection in much greater depth than ever before.

Q17 Suella Fernandes: Outsourcing is not on the horizon?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: No, absolutely not.

Chair: Thank you very much, Ian, you were going to talk about the complaints procedure.

Q18 Ian Mearns: Yes. Sir Michael, the new regional complaints scrutiny committees came into operation earlier this month. Exactly what powers do these committees have? For instance, could they overturn an inspection judgment?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, is the simple answer to that. They have the power to overturn a judgment and their decision will be binding upon Ofsted. Whatever that decision is, once the complaint goes to this external scrutiny committee, which will contain serving leaders of good and outstanding schools who are well respected in their local area, who do not have links with Ofsted, who are not the new Ofsted inspectors that we are training, their decision will be binding on us.

Q19 Ian Mearns: Would you consider releasing your evidence base in response to complaints, for instance?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes.

Ian Mearns: You would?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes. We are a transparent organisation and we will certainly do that.

Q20 Ian Mearns: Thank you very much. Your director, Sean Harford, said in December last year that some inspectors have been guilty of relying too heavily on published data. What have you done to tackle this problem?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Data is important and will continue to be so. We obviously look at data to form the judgments that we made but it is only 50% of what we do. Data does not take into account issues such as the quality of leadership, whether there is a decline in standards, whether the culture of the school is declining, whether there are relationship problems in the school between teachers and the head and the governing board. Data does not say much or anything about the quality of governance in the school, and so on. I could go on. Obviously data is the starting point for our inspections and, in fact, more and more of our inspections are risk-based inspection where we decide to go in either sooner or later, depending what the data is telling us.

Q21 Ian Mearns: Do you think any schools have a justification for feeling that their grading has suffered because of an inspector's over-reliance on data?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: No, I don't think so. The data tells us whether the children are making progress. The data tells us whether the outcomes are as they should be. The data tells us whether particular groups of children are doing as well as they should be. The data now is very sophisticated. The RAISEonline data is very detailed and sophisticated on schools and it acts as a starting point for the inspection but it does not tell us everything. The data might be good on an institution, might look good on the institution, but inspectors have picked up that there are safeguarding concerns, a new leader has come in and is not doing the job properly, or governors are not acting and behaving in the way that they should.

Q22 Ian Mearns: So you are confident that the data now, from Ofsted's perspective, is only a baseline from which questions will be asked?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Absolutely right, yes.

Q23 Ian Austin: I want to ask on this: have you considered producing information on the destinations of school leavers?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That is a Government ambition that destination data—and I think there are problems with collating that data at the moment—once it is collected then that data will be published in the reports on schools, which come out in January; the league tables that come out in January.

Q24 Ian Austin: At the moment we get figures for five A to Cs including English and maths and five A to Cs, but what about the other subjects? Surely it is possible to publish more information to help parents and pupils make choices.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That is all changing of course. The Progress 8 measures, which will be published, are eight subjects that will be focused on by Government in terms of league table performance. That will tell inspectors and parents how children are doing across the curriculum and not just in English, maths and the EBacc subjects. That is going to be interesting to see how schools adjust to that, and it is going to be interesting for inspectors to make a judgment on performance based on progress in those eight subjects in the league tables.

Q25 Chair: Can I just explore the destination data a little bit more, because that is talked about quite a lot? We did raise it with the Secretary of State last week and she did confirm her interest in it. But of course destination from a primary school to a secondary school is one thing but a destination from secondary school into post-16 territory is quite another. It is certainly going to be difficult to start measuring ultimate destinations. How do you see that looking?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Do you want to say something?

Matthew Coffey: We have said for a long time in our previous annual reports how important destination data is, particularly at the end of key stage 4 and key stage 5. In further education and skills—further education colleges, for example—it is important that colleges understand the impact of what they are doing on a young person's later development. We have maintained this call for several years, and the Government is absolutely responding to be able to develop measures that are going to be publicly available in order to add to the accountability framework. Many providers that are good providers track destinations themselves. A lot of further education colleges spend a lot of their resources for the very good reasons of understanding the impact of the different courses that they apply and how they can improve further, but when we reach the point where there is a consistent measure of destination across schools with sixth forms—sixth form colleges and FE—I think we will see some interesting developments.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: What is important for inspections of secondary schools is that HMI ask questions about post-16 provision, whether schools and headteachers of secondary schools are providing youngsters with all the information that they need to make good

choices and not restricting that information to get youngsters into their own sixth form. That is important and that is going to be a big emphasis this year. There is going to be a separate paragraph and judgment—there already is in fact—on post-16 provision and sixth forms within schools. We are going to be asking a lot more about careers guidance than ever before. The fact that we have only got 6% of youngsters at 16 going into apprenticeships is a disaster, and it is important that schools are fair on their youngsters and make sure that all the options are put to them.

Q26 Chair: You will be probing the effectiveness of career guidance and the processes around career guidance as well as the destinations?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: You know—because you have read our report, Chair, on careers guidance—that it is a disaster area in schools. It has not been focused on in the way that it should. It is not an add-on and it should never be seen as a bolt-on and an add-on. As an ex-secondary head, I always thought careers guidance to be absolutely critical in motivating youngsters. If they know that they work hard and that there are all sorts of options available to them, then that was all to the good.

Q27 Chair: Will you be looking at how schools and colleges interface with the world of work?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Absolutely, and that will be part of what we are focusing on in this academic year: guidance, engagement with employers and making sure that youngsters know what is out there in terms of employment opportunities.

Q28 Ian Mearns: I must admit yesterday we had Business, Innovation and Skills questions in the Commons and I raised that 6% with the relevant Minister and he got a bit ratty with me. I wasn't sure why but it was a fact.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: The Government have made it very clear that they want more apprenticeships.

Ian Mearns: Three million essentially.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Absolutely, 3 million over the next five years. It is important that schools talk about apprenticeships. How many youngsters know what an apprenticeship is, what it looks like or how to apply? Unless schools engage with employers then they are not doing their job properly and making sure that those opportunities are well described.

Q29 Ian Mearns: But that may be another job for you, because we have to make sure that those apprenticeships are of good quality or quality assured and have a good qualification that leads to employment prospects being enhanced at the end of the process.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I don't want to say too much on that at the moment, Mr Mearns, simply because our report on apprenticeships is coming out in the next few days and weeks. I would rather keep my powder dry until that report comes out.

Chair: We look forward to that because that will inform our inquiry on productivity, which is going to be starting not long after that. Caroline, would you like to discuss progress?

Q30 Caroline Nokes: Yes, I want to ask about Progress 8 and inspections for those schools that had achieved a score of plus 1. Do you have any concerns that, if they are given less frequent inspections, there would be a risk of issues regarding safeguarding or perhaps extremism being missed in those schools?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Over 60% of the schools are good and if we count the outstanding schools—although we do not inspect the outstanding schools routinely—80% of schools overall are good. We are inspecting that in a very different way at the moment, so from this September we are going to those schools approximately once every three years with one HMI in a primary and two HMI in a secondary school. So there are going to be more frequent inspections from this September. Formerly it was once every five or six years, now once every three, and we will inspect more frequently if there are any concerns when the data comes through. We are inspecting more regularly and if schools are not performing particularly well in terms of the new Progress 8 measures then obviously we will say so.

Q31 Caroline Nokes: Do you think there are any weaknesses in relying upon—as you put it—when the data comes through because presumably safeguarding concerns are quite hard to pick up from data?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That is why I responded in the way I did to the previous question. Data forms 50% of inspection judgments but the other 50% are all those other issues that I have just mentioned.

Q32 Caroline Nokes: What if a school gets a Progress 8 score of plus 1 consistently, year after year after year, would you set a limit?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We do at the moment. We say for a school that is not performing well, we will go if it requires improvement.

Q33 Caroline Nokes: No, if they are performing well. If they are consistently getting a Progress 8 score of plus 1, how many years are you prepared to let it go before you inspect?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I am not sure of the context of that question because if a school is good and performing well we will leave that school alone.

Q34 Caroline Nokes: Do you think that runs the risk of your inspectors not being aware of perhaps extremism issues in a school? If that is not showing up in the data and if the school is performing well academically, do you think there is a risk there?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I have already answered that in terms of our inspection of good schools, but you will know that there is legislation in place that prevents us from inspecting outstanding schools. You will also know that that was one of the big issues of Birmingham that—

Q35 Caroline Nokes: That is why I am asking you if you think that is a risk?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is a risk and that is why I have called for the Government to change the legislation and to allow Ofsted to inspect outstanding schools on the same basis as we inspect other schools, and particularly good schools. We will only go to an

outstanding school if the data shows that it is declining. About three-quarters of outstanding schools are not inspected on a routine basis. That gave the opportunity to the governors in Birmingham to do what they did because they knew that Ofsted would not be around to check what was happening.

Q36 Chair: In that situation what would your regional operators be doing? Would they be having a look at those schools?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: They would be but, like the regional schools commissioners, they have lots of schools and educational institutions in their area. Sometimes it is very difficult to find out what is happening in a way that a routine inspection would.

Q37 Caroline Nokes: When it comes to those schools that are not performing well under the Progress 8 measures, do you think there should be a mechanism that automatically triggers an inspection?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: There is at the moment. When the data tells us that the school is not performing, we inspect more regularly than we would normally do.

Q38 Suella Fernandes: On new secondary free schools, because there will not be external data available for them, will that then mean that they will have to go through about two or three short inspections and internal data to inform—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: These are start-up free schools you mean.

Q39 Suella Fernandes: Yes. How will they be affected?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We inspect start-up, whether they are free schools or academies, at the end of a two-year period. We have just inspected 90 free schools, almost all start-ups, and will know the outcomes of those inspections fairly soon.

Q40 Suella Fernandes: Because of the reliance on data there must have been an input of internal data.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, so we will look at internal data and we will look at all those other factors I have said inspectors look at other than data.

Matthew Coffey: If I can add to the debate and discussion about data that, even with those schools that are currently exempt if they are outstanding, Ofsted has the right to go into any school where it has concerns. Anybody can raise a formal concern or complaint about any school in the country to Ofsted and Her Majesty's Inspectors will consider that.

Back to those outstanding schools in Birmingham, indeed it was complaints that led us to go in there in the first place. Irrespective of the data, if there are concerns about safeguarding and we get to know about them, then we take them very seriously.

Q41 Suella Fernandes: Can I just follow up with two questions? Do you not think that the over-reliance on data can create perverse incentives and, in some cases, cause teachers to rig their mark books or feel pressurised by trying to meet targets rather than present data?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is not Ofsted targets. These are targets that are set by Government: baseline targets, floor targets, progress targets and so on. We look at that when we inspect. All headteachers worry about the progress that children are making. We don't want headteachers to focus on what Ofsted wants. We want headteachers to focus on what is best for children, and what is best for children is that they receive a good education, that they make as much progress as possible from starting points and that their outcomes are good. Every good headteacher worries about that. All Ofsted does is to look at that when we go in and inspect.

Q42 Suella Fernandes: But the problem is that all the union leaders, teachers, think tanks, other experts, have found that there is increased pressure on teachers, because of this target that is in their minds when they see an Ofsted inspection looming, and it puts huge pressure on them and can pervert the actual system.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I simply repeat what I said: a good head will worry about the quality of provision in their schools; whether the quality of teaching is good; and about whether all children are doing as well as they possibly should. If they just worry about that, then they have nothing to worry about in terms of Ofsted. Certainly the teachers in those schools have nothing to worry about in terms of Ofsted as well. When people say, "Ofsted is putting too much pressure on schools" my response is: as a result of what inspectors have done over the last 20 years schools are now better places than they were 20 years ago, because of the stronger and more robust accountability systems that now exist. Not just Ofsted but league tables, the publication of results and greater transparency in schools.

Q43 Suella Fernandes: I have to challenge that. On international tables in 2010 literacy and numeracy in British schools was not fairing so well in international standards.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, but look at key stage 2 results this year, key stage 1 and key stage 2 are the best ever. Primary schools are doing exceptionally well at the moment with the focus on literacy, the focus on the phonics, screening check at the age of 6 and so on. All our evidence, both the Ofsted judgments and the outcomes at key stages 1 and 2, shows us that primary schools are making good progress. In some parts of the country—London in particular—there is exceptional progress. My concern and the Committee's concerns should be whether that progress is maintained in secondary where it isn't being maintained.

Chair: Thank you very much. It is a good line of questioning there. Lucy, do you want to talk a little bit about coasting schools?

Lucy Frazer: Ofsted assesses on the basis of a number of criteria, which produces a scale of 'good' or 'outstanding'. This afternoon we are continuing to debate the coasting schools legislation and the Education and Adoption Bill. Do you see any conflict there? How are you going to bring in line your assessments to ensure that you pick up coasting schools, so that we don't have a situation where a school is classed as 'good' or 'outstanding' and yet at the same time it is coasting?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I think the Government has aligned itself with Ofsted.

Q44 Lucy Frazer: You might find that the Secretary of State is expecting Ofsted to align itself with Government. Is that going to happen?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: One of the first things I did when I joined Ofsted was to bring in the ‘requires improvement’ judgment, which addressed the issue of coasting so-called satisfactory schools. As a result of that, we have seen more schools improve to ‘good’ over the last few years than ever before, something like 68% of previously satisfactory schools have achieved ‘good’.

We will obviously work with the Department on their criteria but I am very conscious there should be no confusion in the system, in terms of what Ofsted describes as ‘coasting’ or ‘requires improvement’ and the Government’s criteria.

Q45 Lucy Frazer: Good. Can I ask you a couple of questions about quality of teaching in particular subjects? In your recent report on secondary education you—obviously, quite rightly—emphasised a link between the quality of teaching and the choices the students made; absolutely right to do that. We know in this country that we do not have sufficient young children getting engaged in STEM subjects, so particularly let us talk about science subjects. Science is not assessed at primary school level by staff, so we have seen evidence that primary schools are not putting the same emphasis on science as they perhaps should be doing in order to engage those youngsters. For example, a CPR report found that 53% out of 260 primary school teachers asked said that it was getting less priority and schools were not even giving the recommended two hours of science a week. What can Ofsted do about this to encourage our primary school children to get more engaged in science? Do you have any ideas about how you can take a key role in that and do you have any plans for the future?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We look at whether schools—both primary and secondary—are offering a broad and balanced curriculum. We will look at the quality of provision in science. I am a big supporter of what the Government is trying to do on the EBacc to ensure that youngsters take English, maths, science, modern languages and humanities all the way to 16.

If we see, when we visit both primary and secondary schools, that science is not being delivered well, because the outcomes are poor, then obviously in the inspections that we conduct we will focus on those areas of the curriculum that we perceive to be weak. One of the most important things about inspection is the conversation that HMI will have with the headteacher in the morning, at the start of the inspection process, for about an hour or an hour and a half. When inspectors see that a particular area of the curriculum has not been delivered well, we will want to know why that is the case. Is it because there are staffing difficulties? Is it because the quality of teaching is not very good? Is it because the school leadership is not giving it the focus that it should? So, I suppose, in response to your question, yes, we will be looking at science, as we will be looking at other subjects where we see there is poor quality provision.

Q46 Lucy Frazer: You are not going to do anything in particular about science over and above any other subjects?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We produce reports regularly on how particular areas of the curriculum are doing. We produced a science report a couple of years ago—no, it was less

than that, it was about 18 months ago—on science provision in both primary and secondary.

Q47 Lucy Frazer: I understand that 73% of recent primary school Ofsted reports do not mention science at all. Does that mean that only in the remaining 27% is science satisfactory or—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I can only respond by saying what I have already done. We will look at the quality of provision in the school. We are particularly looking at English and maths and literacy and numeracy levels. Where we see that a particular area of the curriculum, including science, is not being delivered, we will focus on that and particularly in secondary.

Q48 Lucy Frazer: Turning to a very different subject, which is languages, are you concerned that in the reduction of inspectors that you have you do not have sufficient specialist inspectors, particularly in languages, to carry out rigorous assessment of the schools that you are inspecting or are you happy with your language provision?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: In the course of a day inspection, you are quite right in saying we will not be able to look in depth at every area of the curriculum. Where we see a decline in standards on the basis of data, or on the basis of what that one-day inspection is saying, we will call in more numbers of inspectors. When that happens we will look in greater depth at the curriculum. But the data should tell us whether a particular area of the curriculum is doing well or not.

Q49 Lucy Frazer: Are you able to tell me what specialisms you have within Ofsted in the particular subject matters? So, how many humanity specialists you have, how many science inspectors you have and how many language inspectors you have, so that we can be satisfied that the full broad range of specialisms is being thoroughly investigated?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, we have a good spread of specialisms among the inspectorate and those specialisms will be used when we want to focus on a particular issue. For example, we have just produced a report on key stage 3 in secondary schools. It was a critical report. The title of it was “The Wasted Years”; because we felt that headteachers were not focusing on key stage 3 as much as they should and were putting too much weight in terms of provision at key stage 4 and key stage 5. When we looked at key stage 3 we had a broad range of inspectors with different specialisms looking at the provision of modern language, the provision of history, the provision of geography, which are absolutely vital in terms of getting youngsters to do well two years later in the EBacc.

Q50 Lucy Frazer: You are right. Are you able to give us any statistics on how many of each specialism that you have?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Certainly, I can furnish that to you if necessary.

Lucy Frazer: That would be extremely helpful, thank you.

Matthew Coffey: We can get those data for you, but I think it is important that we are clear about the expectations of what a Section 5 inspection does and, of course, it looks at those areas across each of the institutions that we inspect, the quality of teaching is the quality of

teaching across an institution. We don't set the expectation that we will go in and produce a report on any particular subject. We used to do that many years ago in Ofsted under what was called a Section 10 inspection where you had a huge team, clearly, because you needed the specialisms to be able to go and do that. But the world has changed and it is a very small snapshot. But, as Michael said, we would reserve our specialists for where we are doing some specialist inquiry in a particular area, and it may well be that the inspection of a school could lead us to be concerned about something that we might then later come back and explore with our specialisms. Generally, though, where that works is where we identify good practice. Therefore, we do a good practice report and we will send our specialists in to those schools where we have identified what we think might be good practice.

Q51 Ian Mearns: I am particularly interested, Sir Michael, in terms of what you were saying, particularly about science and so on, because we are going to be holding an inquiry later on into teacher training and recruitment. That is based on there is a feeling out there in the field that there is a significant undershooting in terms of recruitment of maths, physics, and design and technology trainees. I wonder if you are taking a view on that at the moment because, undoubtedly in time, that will start to reflect in school inspection reports.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: My concern—all of our concerns—should not be so much about structures. We talk too much about structure: academies, free schools and so on. The debate should move on to capacity issues. Do we have enough teachers in our system? Do we have enough good teachers in our system? Do we have enough leaders in our system? Do we have enough good leaders in our system? That is the bigger issue.

Coming back to your point about STEM subjects, you and I would be happy if there were enough modern language teachers out there and there aren't. You and I would be happy if there were enough maths teachers out there and there aren't, and you and I would be happy if there were enough science teachers out there, and there certainly aren't. We have done a bit of a survey on teacher recruitment in the north-west, the south-east and East Anglia on schools that were facing huge problems in recruitment. Schools in isolated areas, coastal areas and rural areas are experiencing huge problems. The big debate over the next few years is: how can we ensure that we have more people, good people, coming into the system and are they being distributed well to those parts of the country that are languishing and are not doing as well as other parts of the country? That is the big challenge for our country at the moment.

Q52 Chair: The connection with the supply of teachers and the way in which you inspect and probe STEM subjects—as Lucy was drawing out—what about the federal structure of a group of schools? How are you going to manage that in terms of inspecting specific subjects?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We are inspecting some multi-academy trusts that we perceive to be underperforming, as we are inspecting local authorities that we believe to be underperforming. As part of that inspection process, we will be looking at the quality of provision across the curriculum in a sample of schools that they are in control of.

We are doing that with those federations and clusters and will continue to do it. There will be an increasing role for Ofsted to monitor more partnerships in a way that we are not doing at the moment.

Q53 Suella Fernandes: Very quickly, just in terms of inspection. The guidance from Ofsted states that there is no preferred Ofsted teaching style. Do you agree that that is the case?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes.

Q54 Suella Fernandes: There are different teaching styles that we have seen. There is more progressive teaching—with child-centred, facilitating, group work, a bit more independent learning—and, on the other hand, there is more traditional teaching, of a teacher standing at the front and desks in the row, and teachers giving out information. Do you honestly think that inspectors do judge teaching method fairly and not prefer a more progressive child-centred teaching style in schools?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Inspectors admire the 1960s ideology? No. If we have any inspectors who prefer one style of teaching over another, where they see little or no impact? The important thing is impact, as far as we are concerned, the impact of teaching on progress and outcome. If you are saying to me, “Do we have an inspection workforce that prefers group work and uses the phrase “independent learning” more often than they should?” then, no, we don’t. If they did exist, they have been removed from the inspection workforce.

Q55 Suella Fernandes: Because, looking at Ofsted reports, it is clear there is a trend that favourable reports do praise independent learning and critical reports tend to criticise more traditional styles of education. There was a book recently written a few years ago by Daisy Christodoulou—“Seven Myths of Education”—and she is an expert in teaching and curriculum and an experienced teacher herself. She had 228 best practice Ofsted lessons set out. None of them were based on a traditional teaching method and were all along the lines of progressive child-centred, facilitating, more children teaching each other, progressive learning styles. The facts suggest otherwise, don’t they?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: If that was a culture that predominated in Ofsted years ago, we have changed it. We have changed it. I have made it my mission as chief inspector to change it. I want inspectors to see what impact teaching is having. If you have somebody standing out in front of the class and teaching well in a very didactic way but it is making a difference and children are learning, that is fine. If somebody is standing up in front of a class and lecturing children and they are not engaged, then that is not fine. If we are seeing group work, which is producing good outcomes—the best teacher I have ever seen in East London used to jump on her desk and teach from the desk and teach groups of children. The big issue for her was when she said, “Stop” the children stopped. She was very interventionist and because the school was a good one—the one I led—the discipline was so good that the children obeyed the teacher. The disciplinary structure supported the teacher. That is the issue. If any inspector at Ofsted favours one particular teaching style over another, they will not last long in our organisation.

Q56 Suella Fernandes: I urge you to look at the—I am sure you do, but—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I know it is a big issue and it is a political issue. That may have been the case with a few inspectors years ago but is certainly not the case now. If I found any inspector that preferred one teaching style over another, they would not last long.

Chair: To get through our questions we have to move up a gear a bit.

Q57 Kate Osamor: Hello, Sir Michael. I am Kate Osamor. This is the first time we have met each other. My question is around the regional schools commissioners and their role in being able to judge a school, whether it is coasting, and then give it opportunity maybe to improve. There have been huge rumbles outside from parental groups and the teachers union saying that there is a lack of transparency with the way that they work, and they are concerned that some schools will be forced into academies without the actual school leadership being able to improve it in time. I want to ask your views on this. Are they correct to be concerned about the way that the regional schools commissioners are working or going to be working?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I have not had time to study their job description and their remits. I know you are launching a commission of inquiry, Chair, on this one. I look forward to seeing that. I know that my regional directors at Ofsted are working very closely with the RSCs on school improvement issues. That is all I can say on that one. I believe their job is to identify underperformance, particularly underperformance in academies and academy chains, to report to the Department on that and to work with our regional directors as well.

Q58 Kate Osamor: Do you feel at the moment that the way that they engage there is no way that a school should feel that it is being hindered, it is transparent, and a parent can get involved? Because at the end of the day what I am being told by parental groups, who are pressure groups, who are supporting schools, they feel that the regional schools commissioners are not working with them and are not allowing the school to improve. It seems that it is a very pushed and forced environment and process. That is not going to work if it is something that you believe will improve school standards.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We are quite clear at Ofsted. We go in and make a judgment on a school. If a school is less than good we give them a limited period of time in which to improve. If a school is so bad that it goes into special measures, the same principle applies. We would obviously inform the regional schools commissioner of our judgments and it is up to the regional schools commissioner then to take the necessary executive action.

Q59 Kate Osamor: Presently you feel that it is co-ordinated well?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I do not know, is the simple answer.

Q60 Kate Osamor: When will you know? How will you find out?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We are not inspecting regional schools commissioners.

Q61 Kate Osamor: Do you not think you should if you are working with them?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We inspect almost everything that moves at the moment.

Q62 Kate Osamor: That is a good thing, isn't it? It is a good thing.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: If a Government wants to give us another few million quid to inspect regional schools commissioners we will gladly do that, but it is not on the horizon.

Chair: I wonder when you will be inspecting this Committee, given that answer.

Ian Mearns It requires improvement.

Chair: I don't think so. Lucy, you are going to talk about MATs.

Q63 Lucy Allan: Yes, just briefly, the Chairman touched on the inspection of multi-academy trusts, and I am particularly interested in this because I have four co-operative multi-academy trusts that were placed in special measures earlier this year in my constituency. How well do you think the new arrangements for the inspection of MATs is working?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is going very well. I made this an issue for Ofsted that most of our schools are still under local authority control—17,000 primary schools are. I was determined to inspect local authorities and if we were going to do that I was determined to inspect multi-academy trusts. We are doing that. We have inspected eight or nine of the trusts that we perceive to be poorly performing and we brought our reports. It is working well and you have seen the letter from the Secretary of State giving us authority to do it.

Q64 Lucy Allan: Some of the initial schools or MATs that were inspected raised concerns—I think, for example, Oasis Community Learning—around failing to consider the whole context in which the schools were operating. Do you think that was a fair criticism, and do you think that you would revise your approach in the light of some of the feedback that came from organisations like those?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We have heard that. We think we are fair. We are applying the same principles to the inspection of multi-academy trusts as we do to local authorities. We recognise those things that are going well and those schools that have improved but also pointing out there are other areas where they are not making much improvement, particularly pointing out that, when they take over the school, they have to demonstrate that they are improving it. It is remarkable that in the MATs that we have inspected we have identified schools that have declined since they have been taken over. That is not good enough. No school that has been taken over should decline in performance. Yes, it might take time to improve it but it should not decline.

Q65 Lucy Allan: Do you still think there needs to be a legislative framework for the inspection?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I would like that. Before time I am sure there will be a legislative framework that allows us to—

Q66 Lucy Allan: Why is that? What are the advantages you think that would confer?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Let's suppose that we decided to inspect an academy chain and the chief executive of that academy chain said, "I am sorry; I am not going to support you. I

am not going to co-operate with you". I am sure that will not happen. It hasn't happened yet, but if it did it would be nice to have a legal framework in which to counter it.

Q67 Chair: On that, obviously there is a move to have more federated governing bodies as part of MATs. That was well articulated yesterday at the launch of the report by SCL and others and the National Government Association. Lord Nash, certainly as Minister, put his support behind that. But that does raise the issue of the inspection activity within a MAT of the various different governing bodies and, therefore, its structures. How do you see that unfolding?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Our central issue, in terms of the inspection of governance, is which governing board is holding the executive, the headteacher, to account. Whether it is a local governing board or the multi-academy trust; usually what happens, when we inspect, both the chair of the local governing board and the chair of the trust turn up to hear what our findings are. But our issue is which organisation, and which element of governance in the MAT, is holding this headteacher and this leadership group to account?

Q68 Chair: But if the chair of the board, as you put it, turns up to hear what your findings are, it also might be necessary to comment on and discover how that board is operating itself.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That is not our responsibility. Our responsibility is: is the governance robust enough in this school or this college to hold this leadership group to account? Are the governance arrangements robust enough to know what is happening in this institution? That is our only concern.

Q69 Chair: I suppose the question is: as MATs are evolving, is there sufficient clarity of understanding between what a governing body is and what a board is?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I am going to refer to my time as Director of Education for the ARK Trust, the ARK academy. There was a very clear delineation between the role of the individual governing board and the chair of those individual governing boards and the work of the overarching trust. It was important that those areas of delineation were made clear. Where it is not clear you will find that that academy trust is not performing particularly well and if inspectors find, when they visit an academy, that the governors of that academy are not performing particularly well because those powers have not been made clear to them, then we would comment on it.

Chair: Thank you. We are now going to move on to early years.

Q70 Caroline Nokes: Michael, back in August you said that you hoped to make a decision soon about whether you were going to bring early years inspections in-house. Are you any closer to making that decision?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We are consulting on it at the moment. I am committed to doing as much as possible to bring them in-house, in the way that we have brought schools and applicable skills in-house. So, we are consulting on it at the moment.

Q71 Caroline Nokes: Do you think that that has added to uncertainty in the sector? You mentioned earlier about the importance of raising the bar by bringing school and college inspections in-house. Is there some way in which you regard early years as less important and, therefore, it is not so critical to raise that bar?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: No, it is as important as the other sectors that we inspect and we monitor the quality of inspection in the way that we monitor the quality of inspection before we brought inspection in-house for the other remits. Our national director for early years makes that a real priority, to make sure that quality is high and that her senior HMI and HMI in early years do monitor the regulatory workforce in the way that they have always done. In fact, we have been increasing the number of HMI appointments in early years to make sure that happens.

Q72 Caroline Nokes: Last week we were talking to the Secretary of State about the provision of early years. She described it as a vibrant sector and seemed to have a great deal of confidence that there was going to be provision out there, with the key policy of increasing hours of early years' provision to 30. You have raised concerns about that, and we have certainly heard from organisations like the National Association of Head Teachers that there could be a real crisis in the provision of the additional 15 hours a week for early years. What is your current view on that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Our inspections of early years—and we produced the annual report in June—show that the quality of provision is improving, but not improving nearly enough for children from poor backgrounds who enter schools approximately 19 months behind their peers. As a nation, we have to make sure that those youngsters who come from poor backgrounds get a good deal before they start school. That is an easy thing to say and there are lots of issues around that, but we have to make sure that more youngsters from the age of two take up their free offer than they are doing at the moment. Only 50% do.

So, how can we get two year-olds to take up their free offer? That is a big challenge. We made a suggestion in our annual report that when the health visitor—who is now under the aegis of the local authority—visits at the age of two and three, that they persuade and encourage parents to take up the free offer. It is important that parents of youngsters from poor backgrounds get good quality provision and not poor quality provision. We said that the best quality provision is school-based, nursery provision in schools. We believe that policymakers should try to do as much as is possible to extend school-based nursery provision, encourage more primary heads and infant school heads to expand their provision and to have more oversight of preschool provision in the area. We are doing our bit at Ofsted by saying that any primary head, any infant school head, that does look at this, does want to extend their role and have more oversight of preschool provision in childminder settings and in PVI settings, we will acknowledge that and we would describe them as being exceptional leaders.

It is an issue both for Ofsted and for policymakers. How do we ensure that there is good quality provision for the youngsters who need it most? Otherwise, social mobility will still be a big issue. Social mobility does not start—I keep saying this—in schools. It starts well before.

Q73 Caroline Nokes: You talked a lot about quality just then. I might go so far as to say you skirted around the capacity pressures slightly, although I completely get that you want to see more provision in schools and nursery settings in schools. Do you have any comment to make about the number of children with identified special educational needs who are not taking up the 15 hours already, largely because of a lack of provision of specialist places, and what more do you think should be done to help that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I suppose the big issue is: who would know whether a youngster has special educational needs, at the earliest possible stage? Who would know before they go to reception? We have raised this as an important issue; we have said that the best person to make that judgment would be the health visitor. Now that these people are under the responsibility of local authorities, it is up to the local authorities to recruit and, more importantly, to train health workers to make the right assessments and the right judgments about children; if they identify a preschool youngster who has special educational needs, to do something about it, to make sure that those parents take up the offer and also that they are going to good provision in that area.

Chair: Thank you very much. We are now going to look at children's services.

Q74 Michelle Donelan: Of the children's services departments that you have inspected, three-quarters have been judged as either 'inadequate' or 'require improvement'. Are you concerned that we should be worried about this?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes.

Q75 Michelle Donelan: What coherent actions are being taken to address this?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We make the judgment; it is for others to take the necessary action. Through our frameworks we have raised the bar. We have said that it is important that there is good quality provision for our most vulnerable children. It is up to local authorities and directors of children's services and chief executives to do something about that.

Q76 Michelle Donelan: In your inspector judgments, what account do you take of the financial pressures that councils are facing, though?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Like all parts of public service at the moment, they are facing financial pressures, but we have local authorities with similar demographics that are performing very differently. Why is one local authority with similar funding arrangements doing significantly better than other local authorities with the same amount of money who are doing significantly worse? It is all do with the quality of leadership in that local authority.

If you look at any of our children's services' reports and you look at the ones that have been very critical of children's services, they tend to say the same things over and over and over again: the quality of leadership is not good enough, the quality of leadership by the DCS is not good enough, the quality of leadership of middle managers is not good enough, the quality of leadership of the LSCB—the safeguarding board—is not good enough, the working partnerships between DCSs and chief executives is not good enough and so on.

The analogy is a weak headteacher in a school. A weak head does not know what is happening on the ground. A weak head does not monitor what is happening in the classroom.

A weak head does not pick up exercise books to see whether they are marked or not. It is the same, on a more macro level, in local authorities. The weak DCS does not check what is happening on the ground, does not make sure that social workers are doing their job properly and that middle managers are communicating well with them. It is a leadership issue, and if you are asking, “Are financial constraints preventing good leaders being appointed?” that is an issue for Government.

Q77 Michelle Donelan: I take on board your comments about the leadership and you are quite right, but there is a direct correlation between the amount of money that is spent and also the services provided. In essence, money is what develops the whole service, so I think you have to also account for the direct correlation and say that that is impacting upon—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Then why are some local authorities with similar amounts of money doing exceptionally well?

Michelle Donelan: Of course, there will be different factors in efficiency and—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: The factor is leadership, strong leadership.

Q78 Michelle Donelan: Is it not also about efficiency and using the money for the best purposes, as well as leadership?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is strong leadership. It is making sure that they have sight of what is happening on the front line in terms of what social workers are doing, making sure the oversight from middle managers is strong. In the worst local authorities, we do not see that happening. I have to say, some of the responsibility for that lies with chief executives in making sure that they appoint the right person, they monitor them very carefully, that the LSCBs are working well, and making sure that DCSs are not pulled away from their central task. In some of the local authorities we fail. DCSs have too much to do; they are given responsibilities outside their main function, which is children’s services.

Q79 Chair: There is a slight problem here, though, isn’t there, in comparison to schools and social work? Because with schools you have the governing body holding the head to account, whereas the accountability mechanisms are largely through councillors on a local authority and the senior leadership would certainly have to answer to them. How do you assess the accountability structure of the leadership that you correctly identify as being crucial?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: If you do look at the reports that we have written on the failing authorities or underperforming authorities, we would be very critical of the LSCB. The LSCB, the safeguarding board, has got to make sure that the multi-agency approach to children’s services is working well. The independent chair has to make sure that the police authority and the health authority are not just discussing what the DCS is saying but do actually investigate—as a good governing board in a school would—what is happening on the ground. I think it is the responsibility of Government to make clear what their role and functions are. You have called for this and I have called for this over the past few years but I think there is still a degree of fuzziness around their role.

You are quite right, councils and leaders of councils have a big part to play in making sure that the children’s services department is doing well.

Q80 Ian Mearns: You have indicated that the main role is children's services, but of course many local authorities still have an awful lot of responsibility for what happens with regards to the education service. For instance, my own local authority still has a school improvement team who are pretty effective, I would say. So, education is not out of the window as far as the local authority is concerned.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: No. But it is a diminishing responsibility, you would recognise that?

Q81 Ian Mearns: It is. But remember, in percentage terms, very little of the primary school estate has become academised. With regards to primary, there is still an awful lot of responsibility in terms of helping the primary schools administer themselves.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes. But no DCS is going to lose their job because of poor standards at schools; they will lose their job if their children's services department fails and vulnerable children are not being protected. You would think that DCSs would understand that and would make sure that the children's services department functions well.

Q82 Ian Mearns: Though I cannot imagine in 20 years a chief inspector sitting there saying, "No director of education will lose their job because standards in schools are not very good". Of course technically local authorities still have a responsibility to oversee standards in schools.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I am being a bit flippant there on school standards, but you get my drift, don't you, that with increasing academisation and increasing autonomy of schools, local authorities have less responsibility than ever? Their main focus of attention should be on the quality of provision in children's services.

Q83 Chair: This Committee would be interested in hearing more about your views about accountability of DCSs. I think that that is something we would very much like to have from you, if that is possible, because it links to another inquiry we are going to be having in the not too distant future, and your comments would help us. So, thank you.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes.

Q84 Caroline Nokes: I want to pick up on the accountability of local safeguarding children boards, and the independent nature of the chairs of those boards and how you think there can be a mechanism where local authorities—let's say the director of children's services and, indeed, the political leadership of local authorities—can be held responsible for a safeguarding children board where the chair is independent?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: These are our children, I would say. Any chief executive, any leader of council would say, "These are our children. We have to make sure that they are adequately protected and supported", and would understand the important role that LSCBs play in this one. If it is not working particularly effectively, they should intervene at the appropriate time. Again, if you read our reports you will see the number of times inspectors say, "There is a breakdown in communication between the chief executive and the director of children's services" or "relationships are not good", or "There is poor

communication between the independent chair and the chief executive and the DCS". So it is important that everyone plays their part.

Q85 Michelle Donelan: I want to ask about the profession of social care itself. There has been a lot in the media and a lot of hype around the fact that it is in a crisis. That is very concerning for the long term—over the next 10, 20 years—as staff retention, staff recruitment is very hard and the College of Social Work collapsed. What are your views on that and, in fact, where we will be in 10 or 20 years?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Again, sorry to bang on about this, but you look at good local authorities, even in areas where they are finding recruitment difficulties, the most important thing that inspectors say is that these people are receiving a lot of support. Retention is more important than recruitment in many ways. If you have social workers on the front line that feel adequately supported and are well managed, they will remain and feel confident in their roles. It is where they are not supported in the way that they should be that problems arise and then they drift away and go elsewhere.

Q86 Michelle Donelan: Recruitment is still an issue, as well. People need to take maternity leave, people will eventually retire, so I think we cannot be blind to the fact that we have a bit of a crisis and we need people to be able to recruit. Whether we can retain them for the next five or 10 years does not impact upon the long-term situation.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is the same in teaching. As an ex-headteacher, I always considered retention as important as recruitment and I would want to make sure that my workforce was content and happy and only left for the right reasons.

Q87 Marion Fellows: Good morning, Sir Michael. I have been a silent voice; I am not particularly familiar with the English education system. I do have some expertise in the Scottish one and I am learning a lot. Thank you for your full responses; that has helped me fill in some gaps in my knowledge. I want to ask you about multi-agency inspections. You are proposing to introduce a new multi-agency inspection framework, on top of what is already an existing framework for local authorities. How are you going to make sure that you do not increase the burden of inspection?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is already a burden. A four-week inspection is a burden. We have increased the length of time that we spend in a local authority. A few years ago it was approximately a week, now it is four weeks. We have increased the number of inspectors that go into a local authority and now we are suggesting that that number is increased, in some authorities where we have concerns, through multi-agency inspections. Inspectors from the police force, the health authority, will join us in the inspections. That is a good thing that we look at children's services in the round and we particularly look at the work of the different agencies in the LSCB.

We are launching this fairly soon, in six local authorities. We will have to wait and see how it goes. Ofsted will be in the lead and will take final responsibility for the management of the inspection and the outcomes, but I think it is a good move and it is one that has been welcomed by local authorities.

Q88 Michelle Donelan: Why do you think that the value will outweigh the time and the pressures of that?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Because we are not specialists; Ofsted are not specialists in the work of the police force. We are not specialists in the work of the health authority or the Probation Service, and having experts for those services joining Ofsted I think is a good thing.

Q89 Marion Fellows: Thank you, Sir Michael. The LTA have told us that you are already struggling to carry out your planned inspections of local authorities on time. How will you cope? You have already said you have brought in more people, but how will you cope with the increased workload the multi-agency inspections are going to bring?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We have coped so far. The new SIF—the single inspection framework—for children’s services has gone extremely well. It has been well received by the sector. I think our inspections are now a lot more robust than they ever were. The big issue for us, for the whole organisation, for the whole inspection system is: can we recruit? A bit like visiting social workers in schools, can we recruit good enough people to be inspectors? Obviously, that has implications for our budget.

Q90 Marion Fellows: Yes. You said that you have introduced this in six authorities and it is working?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Six, yes.

Q91 Marion Fellows: What is the plan to bring it forward?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We will have to see how it goes and work with the other inspection agencies. Do you want to say something on this?

Matthew Coffey: I think that is a good challenge about our workforce because, of course, it is a struggle, it always is, and retention is important, recruitment is important, and our budget is important.

Back to the sector, I want to follow up a plea and a discussion that I have had with that sector over the recent few months, which is to work with us because, like you have heard about schools and the use of current practitioners, serving headteachers, I want to see many more serving practitioners from the social care workforce supporting and working with us. There are many benefits in that arrangement for everybody not just us, in terms of our own workforce, but in order to see good practice and to be able to take that back, and professional and corporate development, so I think that is an important challenge back that I offer.

Q92 Marion Fellows: Sir Michael, you are on your third director of social services in four months, and that is a temporary appointment you have made. What are you going to do to address this instability?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We want to have a stable leadership and I am very pleased that the director of children’s services of an outstanding local authority has joined us as the national director on a secondment basis. I know that Eleanor will do a fantastic job. I want to ensure that we have a stable leadership to lead our increasingly influential workforce.

Q93 Marion Fellows: How do you think you are going to be able to address that instability?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is a difficult one. I know local authorities are struggling to appoint good directors of children's services; Ofsted struggle sometimes to appoint outstanding leaders as national directors.

Q94 Marion Fellows: That leads to another worry: is the loss of expertise that you currently have now—I know that you have someone in temporarily but, generally, if there isn't someone new on the horizon as yet—a cause of concern for you?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: People will come, people will go. They get promoted elsewhere, they move sideways and so on. We have to face that fact but we want to make sure that good people are appointed to national positions and that they remain with us for a period of time.

Q95 Marion Fellows: This is just really a blip?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, it is a blip, but—

Q96 Marion Fellows: Just rather unfortunate that people have moved on, and so on? It is not anything more underlying?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Sometimes there are disagreements in terms of an approach, and there are people who find working for Ofsted uncomfortable and need to move on.

Q97 Suella Fernandes: There was a criticism earlier this year by the DCLG committee of Ofsted's failure to expose child sexual exploitation in Rotherham and it said that Ofsted was still reactive as an organisation. In how many local authorities do you think child sexual exploitation could have been missed by Ofsted?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I don't know, is the short answer to that. All I would say to you is this: in terms of Rotherham, we judged Rotherham to be inadequate in 2009. Three years later we said it was adequate; perhaps we should not have done. Well, we certainly should not have done.

I think Louise Casey got it absolutely right when she said that this was a local authority that was not doing its job properly and there was a cover-up culture within it. In that cover-up culture, people obviously did not tell the truth and did not tell the truth to inspectors. The different agencies certainly did not do that so it was difficult. I am not trying to defend Ofsted unduly here. It is difficult then for inspectors when they are not told the truth—and people do cover up issues—to get to the bottom of things in a week-long inspection. Well before Rotherham I decided that we would increase the number of inspectors inspecting children's services, so that we would spend much longer in a local authority. We were not spending long enough in there to try to really get to the heart of these issues. One of the things that all HMI now do—the lead HMI inspecting children's services—before they go in, is to look at what is happening in that area and to pick up any issues that the police are concerned about.

Q98 Suella Fernandes: Taken with the Trojan Horse affair and the oversight there, do you not think that those two failings serve to undermine the robustness of Ofsted's judgments?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: No. Let me take the Birmingham issue first.

Suella Fernandes: Again, just to be clear, a criticism of Ofsted for failing to identify the radicalisation that was going on in the heart of schools.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Let us take Birmingham first. In my first year at Ofsted, I spent something like 10 days in Birmingham talking to headteachers who were being bullied and intimidated by governors in those schools in the Trojan Horse affair. We believe we came to the right decision in terms of putting these places into special measures and those people who criticise us for calling some of those institutions "outstanding" did not understand what the issues were, that those schools deserved their "outstanding" rating because the headteachers of those schools had raised performance levels from a low base to a very high base. It is those headteachers that I spoke to in my visits to Birmingham who were bullied and intimidated out of their job. We were absolutely right in failing those institutions and saying that those governors were absolutely wrong in what they did.

I have to say, I did not agree. I agree with most things that the Select Committee does, Chair, but I did not agree with your conclusions about the Trojan Horse affair.

Q99 Lucy Frazer: Obviously it is important to move forward and you have said one of the ways you are addressing this—and it is key—you have said yourself, that people do not lose their jobs about standards; they lose them out of vulnerability, and these are two significant areas of vulnerability. Other than increasing the numbers of people taking these inspections, what other measures are you taking to ensure you can get underneath cultures or organised methods of skating over these issues so you will not find them? How are you going to get underneath what is actually going on when there is a culture or a methodology of cover-up?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: It is difficult, but we want to appoint inspectors who are quizzical, curious people, who have the ability to look under the skin, look under the surface of an institution, and—

Lucy Frazer: How are you recruiting those people?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: —we have done a lot to try to, first, appoint those sorts of people, and secondly, train them to a level where they can do that. In terms of things like radicalisation—and whether it is a school in a monocultural area or not in a monocultural area, a faith school or a secular school—if those inspectors, who we want to be trained to a high level, perceive that that institution is not promoting British values and creating a culture that leaves children vulnerable to extremism and radicalisation, then I expect our inspectors to say so. They have done so in Birmingham. They have done so in Tower Hamlets and they have done so elsewhere.

Q100 Lucy Frazer: At the beginning we started off with a question, how inspectors are recruited, and we talked about the online test. Do the inspectors that you are talking about now undergo any further recruitment processes to ensure that they have these skills?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Training has been key and I am proud to say that Ofsted has done a lot. Our training of inspectors now is really, really top class but it is not just training when they are appointed. It is training all the way through their time with Ofsted. In each region, every HMI will have approximately eight or nine Ofsted inspectors, people who are not HMI but recruited from schools and elsewhere. They will train those inspectors on a regular basis on the issues that come up.

Training I think is good, but at the end of the day we stand or fall by the ability of an inspector to make the right judgment on the basis of what they see and what they feel about an institution. We will not always get it right. We are not a perfect organisation and we are populated by people who are sometimes imperfect, but where we do get it wrong we do everything that we can to put it right.

Q101 Michelle Donelan: Is that not an argument, therefore, to inspect the inspectors, so a regular assessment process?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: That is why I am here. That is why I am sitting in front of you. That is why I am responsible to Parliament. That is why we have a governing board at Ofsted and, of course, the people that we hold accountable are very good at telling us where we go wrong. We listen to what they have to say nine-tenths of the time.

Q102 Chair: Sir Michael, one thing we have heard certainly from the Who Cares Trust is that you do not necessarily engage with young people particularly well, or you could improve that. Have you any plans to do anything in that direction?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I do not know what they mean by that, Chair, though. When you say we do not engage with young people that is at the very heart of what we do. We are there to help support young people in the institutions in which they are placed.

Chair: I think it is finding out more about what they are expecting from Ofsted in the institutions that you—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: We talk. Much of our time in an inspection is talking to young people and listening to them about their experiences in school.

Q103 Chair: Have you ever thought about having young people as inspectors?

Matthew Coffey: We have explored that in the past and there are lots of challenges around it. In fact, I know that in Scotland they have a similar arrangement for their further education inspections where they have a young person as part of them. We have worked with the National Union of Students to see whether we think that that could be something that could be achieved and we continue to explore in that way. The views of young people are so important to us, not just on the inspections but sometimes in determining when those inspections might be. We have an online system called Learner View, which is available to anybody to give their views on their learning establishment. That kind of thing is important. Regional directors are engaging in their regions with headteachers, with college leaders, with learners, with parents, in order that we can continue to move forward.

Q104 Caroline Nokes: Sir Michael, you will no doubt be aware that there are still criticisms echoing around the way that inspectors engaged with young people, particularly in places like Grindon Hall and Durham Free School. Do you think that if you were to more proactively look at ways you could use young people as peer inspectors that you might establish a better relationship and rapport with the children within those institutions that you are inspecting?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I am not sure I can answer that, really. Inspection is such an important job. The judgments we make have profound effects upon the institutions that we inspect. If we turn up with a 16 year-old to inspect the services that are provided for other 16 year-olds, I am not sure how that would go down. Now, that does not mean that we do not take into account what children are saying to us in an inspection. We do that all the time, but to have a teenager walking into a school to inspect other teenagers I am not sure would give the right impression.

Q105 Caroline Nokes: Do you think that is a little patronising when certainly some police and crime commissioners think that it is perfectly okay—and, indeed, positively constructive—to have set up things like youth courts where young people act as juries, where they have juries of their peers, and sometimes they gain more respect and far better dialogue?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I see where you are coming from. I hear what you have to say on that one, but if the implication is we do not listen to young people I would refute that strongly. We listen to them all the time and we are here to champion their rights for a good deal in the institutions in which they are being educated and cared for. That might be the future for another chief inspector. That is something that another—

Q106 Caroline Nokes: But certainly not for you?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: I cannot see that happening at the moment, no.

Q107 Suella Fernandes: Half of teachers leave the profession within five years and they cite bad behaviour and pressure from Ofsted as two big reasons. Things like graded observations and the assessments do tend to impose a prescriptive element to the teaching profession. What do you think you can do in attracting people to the profession and improving morale?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Recruitment is a big issue and it has been so ever since I have been a teacher. Before I joined Ofsted, I used to talk a lot to teachers joining the profession and particularly to Teach First. What used to upset me was talking to people who were bright eyed and bushy tailed, hugely enthusiastic about coming into teaching, wanting to do well for disadvantaged youngsters, saying to me that they were put off teaching in the first few years because they were not adequately helped and supported by leaders, that the culture of the schools in which they worked was poor, that behaviour was poor. Every day was a daily struggle with poorly behaved, badly behaved pupils. They were there for a reason and they wanted to commit themselves to a period of time in those institutions in which they were working, but a lot of them said, “We will take it for a bit of time but not a lot longer”.

The thing that puts off teachers is working in an institution that is not good and that is poorly led, where behaviour particularly is poor. It is not Ofsted, in my view, and that is

often a red herring. Headteachers have to make sure they run good schools where there is a strong and positive culture, that they protect those newly qualified teachers in a way that some do not, and that those young teachers make a career in teaching. That is the thing that puts teachers off, not Ofsted, although they might say that and some of the union reps might say it.

Q108 Ian Austin: The issue I want to focus on—and I think the central issue in Britain today—is the long-term failure to educate young people properly over decades, all parties. When you think that we are not just lagging behind South Korea and Finland but Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, when you think that England is the only country where the people leaving the workforce were better educated than the people entering it, and given that, according to your website, your central goal is to achieve excellence in education and skills for learners of all ages, it is pretty difficult to say that the education system in general—Ofsted as part of that—is fulfilling that mission, isn't it?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Yes, but everything has to be seen in context and over a period of time. I have been around a long time. I have been a teacher for over 40 years, nearly 50 years, and I have been a head for 30. I can remember what life was like before Ofsted. I can remember the terribly low standards in London where I taught in the 1970s and 1980s when, as an education system, we failed generations of children and young people badly. Are things fantastic now? No, they are not. Do we have a lot more to do? Yes, of course we do. Are we still mediocre in too many places? Yes, we are. I talked about my experience in London. Look at London schools now. If London can improve within 10 years, why cannot other parts of the country do the same over the next 10 years?

Q109 Ian Austin: Look, I agree with that, but I think the central thing Ofsted should be doing is being much more evangelical. I think it is a national scandal that a third of young people don't get five A-Cs, including English and maths. That is a disaster. You can get a C, some teachers tell me—

Sir Michael Wilshaw: More than a third.

Ian Austin: Yes, exactly. You can get a C, some people tell me, with only getting 18% of the questions right in some exams. What sort of a system is that? I think Ofsted should be doing much more to develop a debate in Britain about education being the country's number one priority. In my constituency, it is not even the national average: if the bins were only emptied properly in half the houses the sky would fall in. The phone would be ringing off the hook in my office, parents would be furious, the local papers would be mounting campaigns—but no one is bothered about the fact that so many of our kids are not educated properly. I think the challenge I would set for Ofsted is: what can you do to focus parents, employers, all of us, on this national failure, this national scandal?

Sir Michael Wilshaw: How long do you have, Mr Austin?

Chair: Not long.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: One of the first things I said when I joined Ofsted is that we still have a mediocre education system in this country. That is why I changed the 'satisfactory' judgment to 'requires improvement'. That has certainly focused headteachers' minds. It has not focused enough parents' minds. It certainly has focused headteachers' minds. We

still have this huge problem of the gap between the richest areas, the most prosperous areas, and the poorest areas in the country and often poor parents just take what they are given, whereas parents from more prosperous backgrounds don't. You will find governing boards—and I know the Chair of this Committee is interested in governance—in prosperous, middle-class areas are passionate about their children doing well, but poor parents often just accept what is given to them. They need more support and challenge from good, professional governing boards. We need more teachers in our system and better teachers in our system. We need better leaders in our system than we have at the moment. I think it is an absolute mess. If we want our education system to improve quickly we need better leaders. We certainly need better teachers but we need better leaders. It is an absolute scandal that we have not done enough over the last few years to promote good leadership in our schools, an absolute scandal, and I could go on.

Chair: Yes. Sir Michael, we are going to leave it there. We have a lot of exciting inquiries that will be probing the issues that Ian has raised that, of course, all of us are very interested in as well. I want to thank you very much for coming in today and answering our questions; and you, too, Matthew. You kindly agreed to furnish us more information about the issue of former inspectors being involved in the training of new inspectors, which was the point that Lucy was probing. You have also agreed to tell us a little bit more about the numbers of subject specialists within the Ofsted inspectorate that you have, and you are also going to write to us about the accountability of DCSs as we explored. We would like, too, to have a copy of your report on apprenticeships when it is available.

Sir Michael Wilshaw: Thank you.

Matthew Coffey: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you all very much for your attendance.