

7 May 2020

Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Chair, Education Select Committee
House of Commons
Westminster
SW1A 0AA

Amanda Spielman
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Robert

Further to the committee's request, I am writing to share information about Ofsted's work during the current lockdown period. You asked me to provide the committee with a breakdown setting out where Ofsted's staff are currently deployed.

You also asked me to set out the actions we are taking to support vulnerable children who are not getting an education or do not have access to online learning. We will respond to the committee's consultation on the impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services and include the information you have asked for in our submission.

In the meantime, I am pleased to provide you with a breakdown on the deployment of Ofsted staff during this difficult period. As of 1 May 2020, we had 362 agreed staff deployments. This figure includes staff who may not yet have started in their new role.

In addition to the 362 above, over 300 staff are supporting other government departments and authorities in their response to COVID-19, whilst remaining formally within Ofsted.

Local authorities

As of 1 May 2020, Ofsted has actively deployed staff to, or has agreed deployments with, 105 local authorities. This translates to around 240 agreed deployments, around 60 of whom are already working with the relevant LA. The remaining group are subject to final details and start dates being agreed.

Staff will be helping to support vulnerable children, develop safeguarding processes and communicate with school leaders. A number of staff are working in children's homes, while more have volunteered to be emergency foster carers. Around 30 screened staff will act as foster carers and around a further 80 are able to offer lighter touch support to children in care.

We are also supporting the London Gold group, which is working across all the London local authorities to recruit staff into care settings. One senior HMI is advising the group, while a further 16 colleagues are supporting the recruitment checks this group is undertaking. As of this week, we have contributed to over 600 staff being recruited and deployed across social care settings.

Schools and multi-academy trusts

Ten Schools HMIs are supporting StarLine, a home learning parent helpline led by a partnership of education and parenting organisations. A further 10 Schools HMIs and one Early Years inspector are being seconded to support schools. Most of these are new starters to Ofsted who have been seconded straight back to their previous employers.

Supporting other government departments

Ofsted is supporting the Department for Work and Pensions with its increased workload on Universal Credit. Around 40 colleagues are supporting remote training for Universal Credit and over 200 staff will be working as Universal Credit Case Managers.

Ofsted is supporting the Department for Health and Social Care with around 25 deployments, and over 70 additional staff who are supporting with virus testing and helping the department to deal with email enquiries. We are also looking at how we can increase this number, to provide a similar package of support to that offered to DWP to support the department's other COVID-19 response work.

We are also supporting the Department for Education with around 20 deployments across social care, early years and further education and skills.

In addition, we are exploring the potential for our staff to support the nation's response in other departments, including Ministry of Justice and Cafcass.

Our own response to COVID-19 and maintaining our essential business

Whilst responding to support the above organisations in their response to COVID-19, we have also moved swiftly to respond to the pandemic in our own work. Across the organisation, we have colleagues working directly on our response, including supporting the REACT programme, providing emergency policy development and advice, developing our COVID-19 communications and staff support, carrying out emergency planning, and driving forward all activity required to deploy our staff to other internal and external priority work.

Alongside this, we have made sure that the Ofsted work that continues is effectively maintained, such as our regulatory work and business critical services, including finance, legal, people and technological support.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Spielman". The script is cursive and fluid.

Amanda Spielman
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector