



House of Commons
Education Committee

Ofsted's work with schools: Ofsted response to the Committee's First Report

**Second Special Report of Session
2023–24**

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The Education Committee

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Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Education Committee, House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 2370; the Committee's email address is educom@parliament.uk.

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Second Special Report

The Education Committee published its First Report of Session 2023–24, [Ofsted's work with schools](#) (HC 117) on 29 January 2024. Ofsted's response was received on 1 March 2024 and is appended below.

Appendix: Ofsted Response

Introduction

1. We thank the Committee for its helpful and insightful report, as well as for the opportunity to give evidence to the inquiry. We start from the position that Ofsted aims always to be a force for good in this country, with the interests of children and learners as our priority. We know that not everyone will agree with all of our work. But our role as an inspectorate and regulator is a vital one.

2. We welcome that the Committee recognises the importance and value of an independent inspectorate in holding schools accountable and assessing their strengths and weaknesses. But we know that we must get the balance right between this work and reducing the pressures faced by leaders and staff. At the centre of our approach to striking this balance is our commitment to always work with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect.

3. Many of the Committee's recommendations relate directly to work we began in response to the tragic death of Ruth Perry. As Sir Martyn Oliver made clear in Ofsted's response to the coroner's inquest,¹ a tragedy such as this should never happen again, and no one should feel as Ruth did.

4. We are grateful to the Committee for its constructive challenge and recommendations. As an organisation, we are keen to hear criticism and we welcome advice about how to improve. We are determined to be a modern, world-class inspectorate and regulator that is trusted by parents, children, learners and professionals working in education and social care. We can only achieve that ambition with openness to criticism and a determination to reflect on how we can continuously improve.

5. Sir Martyn has promised transparency and openness as we work to rebuild and strengthen the confidence of professionals and the public. Our response to the Education Select Committee is an important moment to demonstrate our commitment to these principles.

6. We have done much since January 2024, but more – much more – is to come. We launched the Big Listen on Friday 8 March 2024. We want to hear from those we work with and those we work for. As Sir Martyn made clear, if your work, your children, your decisions, your education, or your care are impacted by what we do, and you think we can do better, we want to hear from you.

7. We know that we need to do more. Ensuring inspections are carried out with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect and conducting a listening exercise are

1 'Prevention of Future Deaths Report (Regulation 28): Ofsted's response', Ofsted, January 2024; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevention-of-future-deaths-report-regulation-28-ofsteds-response>

not enough. Action must, and will, follow. We fundamentally believe that those actions should not be based on the views of His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) alone. That is why we are conducting a serious exercise to gather the views of as many people as possible, where nothing is off the table. This will be done with care. Most importantly, we will always seek to serve children and learners, especially those who are the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, above all others. If the country is serving our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children well, then all children will flourish.

Part 1: Action already taken

Response to the Prevention of Future Deaths Report

8. Since we gave evidence to the Committee, we have responded in full to the coroner's Prevention of Future Deaths Report.

9. We are committed to doing good as we go, raising standards and improving lives. To do so, we must always act with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect towards those we regulate and inspect – not least because we all share a common goal: to put children and learners first.

10. In our response to the coroner's report, we made it clear that we would continue to improve our policies and processes in order to rebuild the confidence of the sector in the work that we do. Through the Big Listen (launched on Friday 8 March 2024), we stand ready to hear feedback, accept criticism and reform how we operate. We know we will be challenged by feedback – and that is right. But reflecting on the responses we receive to the Big Listen is an opportunity to build towards our goal of becoming a modern, world-class inspectorate and regulator that is trusted by parents, children, learners and professionals working in education and social care.

11. Concerning the Committee's **Recommendations 1 and 2**, we also committed, in our response to the coroner, to appoint an independent expert to lead a learning review of Ofsted's response to the death of Ruth Perry. The independent expert will consider whether Ofsted's internal policies and processes for responding to tragic incidents need to be revised. The independent expert will be appointed this month.

12. We will respond to the recommendations of this independent review as part of our response to the Big Listen (see below).

Mental health training

13. We recognise that inspection and regulation can sometimes be challenging for providers, and we welcome the Committee's focus on the mental health and well-being of those we inspect and regulate. We share a determination to reduce the pressures on those we inspect and regulate.

14. We are committed to carrying out our role with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect. We have a vital role. We must hold schools to account and report on their strengths and weakness. Primarily, we do our work on behalf of children and learners, their parents and carers. Our staff are driven by the single mission of championing the rights of children. We know that those we inspect and regulate match this determination.

We see their dedication to delivering for children and learners every day through our work. We know we must strike a balance and ensure that we don't add undue pressure to leaders and staff.

15. We have provided mental health awareness training for all lead inspectors of schools and further education and skills, in line with the Committee's **Recommendation 17**, and as we committed to doing in our response to the coroner. We have also committed to ensuring that the entire inspection and regulatory workforce will complete the training before the end of March 2024. Only those who have completed this training will be able to inspect from April 2024. This is just the beginning of our approach to integrating mental health awareness training into our inspector training. We will ensure that inspectors are taught about being aware of and responding to signs of distress. Mental health awareness training is now an integral part of how we induct and develop our inspectors.

16. To support this training, and in order to be transparent about our approach, our handbooks were rapidly updated in January 2024 to reflect how inspectors will respond should they see or become concerned that a staff member is upset or distressed during an inspection.² This update set out the processes put in place to support inspectors, including adjusting the inspection (such as the time and length of meetings and taking short breaks to help staff), informing those responsible for the person's well-being, or, in exceptional circumstances, pausing the inspection.

17. It is important to re-emphasise that the training is not a one-off event, nor is it all we are doing to support mental health first aid.

18. As mentioned above, the training will be built into our continuing professional development offer, and our workforce will always demonstrate and exemplify our values of professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect.

Changes to policy and practice

19. We are committed to making changes. Professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect are more than just a set of principles. We want to go beyond words to ensure that these principles are at the heart of our work, day in and day out. Only by doing this can we realise our ambition to be a modern, world-class inspectorate and regulator that is trusted by parents, children, learners and professionals working in education and social care.

20. We have acted quickly to re-evaluate our policies and practice to ensure that all of our work reflects this commitment. Since September 2023, and following our response to the coroner, we have made a number of changes. We have:

- published a new policy to allow inspectors, or the responsible body for a school, to request a pause to a school inspection, for example if it is necessary to provide additional support for a headteacher (in line with **Recommendation 17** and as we committed to in our response to the coroner)

2 ² 'School inspection handbook', Ofsted, January 2024; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-inspection-handbook-for-september-2023>. 'School monitoring handbook', Ofsted, January 2024; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif/school-monitoring-handbook-for-september-2023>.

- clarified in our inspection handbook, in our training for inspectors and to the sector, more precisely what we mean by 'ineffective safeguarding' (in line with **Recommendation 26**)
 - implemented a policy of rapid return to schools that have been graded inadequate solely due to ineffective safeguarding – allowing them to remedy issues and improve their inspection grade before formal intervention measures take place (in line with **Recommendation 27** and as we committed to in our response to the coroner)
 - further clarified that a school will only be judged to have ineffective safeguarding when children are not safe
 - implemented the first stage of our new complaints process, in response to strong support across all sectors following a public consultation on the proposals. We have introduced a revised, more responsive complaints process, which includes better communication between schools and senior Ofsted staff during inspection, if needed (in line with **Recommendation 20**).
21. We are also working on a number of new policies and practices. These include:
- developing further the existing [pen portraits](#) of inspectors to describe the expertise within our workforce (in line with **Recommendation 9**)
 - making changes to our website to show the full range of judgements, not just overall effectiveness grades (in line with **Recommendation 15**)
 - continuing to seek feedback on our complaints process as part of the Big Listen (in line with **Recommendation 20** and as we committed to in our response to the coroner)
 - conducting a formal internal review of where aspects of safeguarding fit within the individual judgements of the education inspection framework, subject to challenge from an expert group. As part of this, we are considering having safeguarding as a standalone judgement, decoupled from the leadership and management grade (as we committed to in our response to the coroner). This consideration will continue as part of the Big Listen, with the response to the Big Listen setting out our agreed approach to reform.

Part 2: The Big Listen

22. An important part of our response to both the coroner and the Committee (and in particular **Recommendation 1**), is our Big Listen, which we formally launched on Friday 8 March 2024. This is an opportunity for us to hear from the people we work for – parents, carers and their children – and the professionals we work with, such as teachers and social workers. We will also listen to Ofsted's 4,367 full- and part-time staff. We want as many people as possible to have their say. The Big Listen will help us to explore what further steps we can take to improve inspection and regulation in the future.

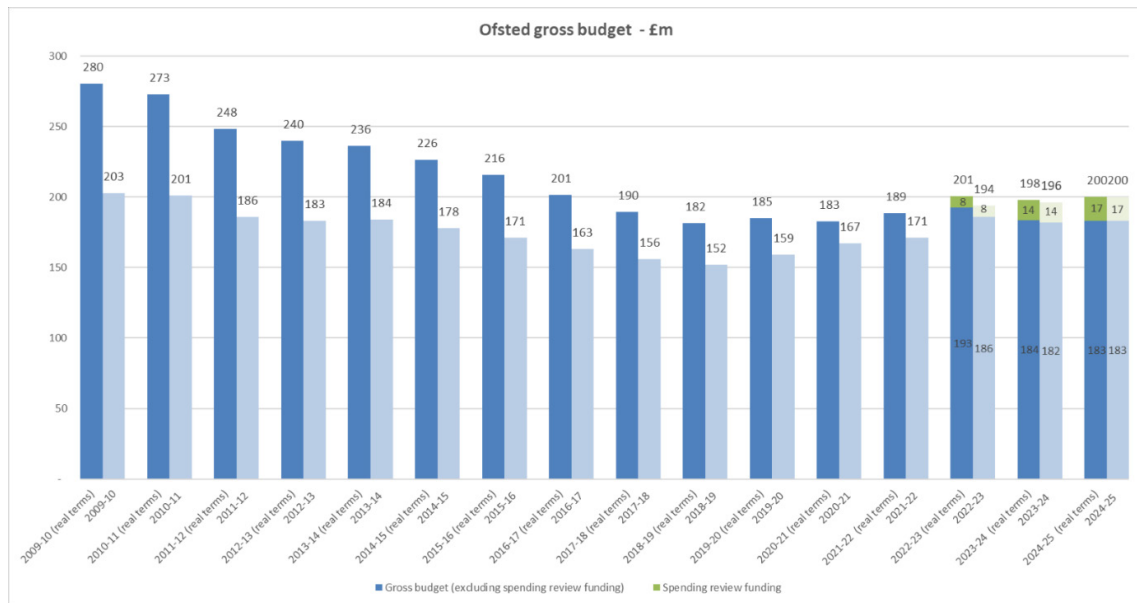
23. We are explicitly seeking views from the sector and the public on many of the matters on which the Committee has given recommendations. Nothing is off the table.

24. We want to hear the views of the whole sector and the wider public. We know we will hear a range of views, including criticism. This criticism is vital to hear, reflect on and learn from, if we are to realise our ambition to be a modern, world-class inspectorate and regulator that is trusted by parents, children, learners and professionals working in education and social care.

Frequency and length of inspections

25. One area where we expect we will hear a diversity of views is on the frequency and length of inspections. This reflects the balance we need to strike between holding schools to account and reducing pressures on leaders and staff (this relates to **Recommendation 3**). We know that the frequency and length of inspection are constrained by public funding. However, we will continue to do what we can within the resources available.

26. We have continually been asked to do more with less. As previously outlined to the Committee, **our remits have expanded significantly** since 2005,³ while **our spending has fallen considerably**. As the graph below shows,⁴ our funding is **29% lower in real terms compared with 2009/10**.⁵



27. This squeeze means we are always having to make difficult decisions in order to continue our vital work of inspection and regulation in the interests of children and learners.

28. From 2022–23, we saw a modest increase in funding. This was due, in part, to additional commitments agreed as part of the Spending Review, mainly to accelerate the inspection of schools and further education and skills providers and to register and

3 Remits added since 2005 include: registration and inspection of children’s social care services; inspection of all post-16 government-funded education; inspection of unregistered schools; inspection of the early career framework/national professional qualifications (ECF/NPQ); inspection of childminder agencies; development of the online education accreditation scheme (OEAS); MAT summary evaluations; and inspection of local area arrangements for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
 4 Figures for 2023–24 and 2024–25 on the graph are based on the Spending Review settlement; all prior years are based on the position after the Supplementary Estimate. Figures shown represent gross budget (that is, including income). All figures exclude depreciation and annually managed expenditure budgets.
 5 While this is a similar level in cash terms, it is a 29% reduction in real terms.

inspect supported accommodation providers. Our funding also increased because we were asked to carry out additional commissioned inspections on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). However, our funding for school inspection **is still only around 0.1% of the overall schools budget – 75% less than 20 years ago.**

29. Theoretically, we could trade off depth and frequency of inspection, inspecting schools in greater depth, if we were permitted to reduce the frequency of inspection (as outlined in **Recommendation 3**). However, our timeframe for inspection is set out in legislation. And we believe the current 5-year interval between inspections gives parents and carers reassurance that an inspection will take place at least once during their child's time at a school.

30. We are keen to hear from all the professionals we work with, and the parents, carers and children that we work for, in the Big Listen. The range of views we expect to hear through the Big Listen will help to inform any future changes. But if and when we make any changes, we will also consider, first and foremost, their impact on the quality of education that pupils receive. As we set out to the Committee, there is clear evidence that not inspecting schools for extended periods leads to a reduction in standards.⁶

31. We very much welcome the Committee's commitment to supporting us in asking for additional funding for more in-depth inspections (through **Recommendation 4**). We know how vital inspection is: the sooner we can diagnose weaknesses and celebrate strengths, the sooner schools can act and get the support they need. The more frequently and in-depth we can look at a school, the more reassurance we can give parents that their child is learning in an environment where they can flourish.

32. As an example, we could inspect schools in greater depth by ensuring that every inspection is led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors and that the inspection team has an additional inspector on the team. This change would provide a number of additional benefits, including allowing for more time to explore the school's unique approach or allowing for a dedicated focus on a national priority area on every inspection. Delivering this additional depth in school inspections would have a direct cost of **£8.5 million per year.**

Notice periods

33. The Big Listen will play a crucial role as we reflect on our approach to notice periods. Again, we expect to hear a diversity of views from those we inspect and those on whose behalf we inspect.

34. In recent social care work, for example, we heard representations from some professionals working in the sector who were in favour of a longer period of notice. On the other hand, many of the care leavers we spoke with argued strongly for no-notice visits. Through the Big Listen, we will carefully consider the range of views and ensure our approach strikes the right balance.

6 This is shown by the inspection outcomes of some previously outstanding schools once the exemption from inspection was lifted.

35. We have been clear that nothing is off the table in the Big Listen. We are happy to consider potential changes to our notice periods for schools, as set out in **Recommendations 5 and 6**, but we think it is important to involve the sector and parents in this discussion – which we are doing through the Big Listen.

36. As we set out in our evidence to the Committee, we notify schools of an inspection the day before it begins. This reduces the need for schools to prepare and so reduces the potential for increased workload and anxiety for school leaders and staff. Shorter notice periods also mean it is more likely that we will see schools as they operate normally, which we know is a priority for parents.

37. It is hard to see how different notice periods (**Recommendation 6**) for different types of school can be implemented fairly. We are conscious of the particular challenges faced by small primary schools, which can result in significant pressure for the leaders of these schools. While we cannot immediately see how to implement different notice periods fairly, we will consider the proposal as we undertake the Big Listen.

Engagement with parents, pupils, governors/trustees and staff

38. Maximising the engagement of parents and pupils is vital to inspection and so forms a key part of the Big Listen, in line with **Recommendation 7**. As we set out in our evidence to the Committee, we already aim to talk to as many school staff and governors/trustees as possible during an inspection. However, we will be happy to hear whether and how we can improve this, including how we report it, through the Big Listen.

39. We will also review our current risk assessment model. We currently use our risk assessment to determine which schools would most benefit from a graded, rather than ungraded, inspection.⁷ We do this so that we can focus our efforts on where we can have the greatest impact within the funding constraints in which we operate. We use risk assessment when scheduling inspections of good state-funded schools, in line with **Recommendation 8**.

Inspector expertise

40. A modern, world-class inspectorate and regulator that is trusted by parents, children, learners and professionals working in education and social care requires the highest possible calibre of practitioners from the sector to choose to join it. We are determined to be an organisation of the sector, by the sector, for children, learners and parents.

41. However, we face many of the same challenges faced by the school system in seeking to recruit and retain staff. And, as with the school system, we know the reasons for this difficulty. Because of this, we do not believe an independent assessment of the factors affecting retention of experienced HMIs, as recommended in **Recommendation 11**, is a good use of public money.

42. Salaries in many parts of the sector exceed the salaries we are currently able to afford. Between November 2021 and November 2023, excluding HMI who retired from their roles, 42% of our schools HMI left to join multi-academy trusts (MATs).

7 Our risk assessment is a desk-based review of relevant information pertaining to the school. The indicators that we analyse in our risk assessment are usually the most recent data available at that time. Our 'risk assessment methodology for good state-funded schools' is published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/risk-assessment-methodology-for-maintain-schools-and-academies>.

43. HMI salary has declined in real terms in recent years, reflecting our wider budget constraints. But we have not ignored the other factors affecting recruitment and retention. Exit surveys show that ways of working and workloads are often significant contributing factors to HMI turnover. This is further exacerbated by ever-tightening budgets, leading to larger workloads for inspectors. While there is little we can do about salary constraints, given the wider budget squeeze, we are seeking to address non-pay issues.

44. It is our ambition to match expertise to inspection wherever possible, as suggested in **Recommendation 10**. High-quality inspectors can inspect in a range of phases, but we recognise that the credibility of inspection is improved when team members have the authority of experience in the phase of the school being inspected. This is more difficult, for instance, for types of specialist provision for which there are fewer providers: employed inspectors with this type of specialist experience would need to inspect other phases and provision types in the gaps between inspections. We have a clear ambition to ensure that our workforce reflects the full range and types of provision in the sector, and we are keen to discuss this through the Big Listen.

Transparency and reports

45. We know how important our reports are to parents, government, Parliament and schools themselves. However, given the funding we receive, we decided in 2019 to focus the inspector time we have available first and foremost on crucial on-site inspection activity and professional dialogue with leaders and staff. This is a difficult trade-off, but our priority must be to focus on the standard of education and how well children are cared for.

46. An implication of this is that the written report does not always reflect the richer in-person feedback given at the end of inspection. Inspection reports have multiple audiences, each with different reasons for reading them. Our current reports are designed to be short and to be as accessible as possible to parents. We are keen to talk to parents and the sector about how we can make sure our reports work best for them (as mentioned in **Recommendation 13**).

47. A transparent inspection process is one where both the school and the inspection team can see how the evidence gathered connects clearly to the inspection outcome. Inspections must be – and be seen to be – fair. We are committed to making sure schools understand the reasoning behind our judgements and want to discuss with the sector how we can improve the way we do this (in line with **Recommendation 21**).

48. A key element of the Big Listen, as a programme of research, is to hear more about the impact of inspection (as referred to in **Recommendation 24**). We know that inspection puts pressure on the sectors we inspect, which is why we are determined to strike the right balance between carrying out our role and reducing pressures on the leaders and staff we inspect. We are determined to hear feedback on how we can better strike this balance in the coming months.

49. However, we also suspect that a significant amount of fear about Ofsted inspections is driven by organisations and individuals seeking to profit from inspection preparation, where this is entirely unnecessary. It is a source of particular frustration that some of these individuals previously worked for us.

50. Our focus will be squarely on what more Ofsted can do to reduce pressures on leaders and staff in schools. We will ensure that we always act with professionalism, courtesy, empathy and respect and we will listen and learn through the Big Listen. But, without detracting from being constantly reflective about what more we can do to reduce pressure on leaders and staff, we will also not shy away from highlighting how others exploit our role, resulting in undue worry for those who work in schools.

51. Since 2015, we have tried to tackle misconceptions about inspection through our 'myth-busting' work. We remain committed to reducing workload for teachers and leaders. We will do this by evaluating how effectively leaders address well-being and reduce workload for their staff as part of our judgement on the quality of leadership and management,⁸ and through our commitment to reducing the burdens and potential anxieties associated with the inspection process itself.⁹ We also remain a long-term partner of the DfE's workload taskforce and have worked directly with it to develop and deliver a series of webinars about reducing the burden of inspection.

52. As an inspectorate that is committed to working with the sectors we inspect, it is really important to us that schools are able to raise complaints when they have concerns. It is also important that we are transparent about this. We publish, in our annual report and accounts, the number of complaints we receive for each of the sectors we inspect. This includes how many complaints were upheld overall and what action was taken where this was the case. This work has begun in advance of **Recommendation 22**. We are committed to providing percentages of complaints per inspection remit from 2024–25 (in the 2022–23 financial year, this was around 7% for schools), and to separating information about the proportion of inspections upheld by remit.

53. We continue to receive more complaints from providers that have received the lowest grades. In over half of the complaints from providers this year, they had received an overall effectiveness grade of inadequate or requires improvement. We will also see how practicable it is to separate out figures for conduct and judgement complaints, which is often challenging, given the interrelated nature of the complaints submitted.

Schools' context

54. Sir Martyn made clear his determination to see context considered more in our work at the launch of the Big Listen. We want to make sure our judgements about schools consider the context within which they are working. But he was equally clear that this must never compromise our having the highest expectations for all children – especially the most disadvantaged.

55. Context is vital to understanding and reporting about schools, and we want to talk to the sector and to parents about how to improve this as part of the Big Listen, while never compromising on our expectations for children, in line with **Recommendation 25**.

56. We are uniquely placed to see how a child might move between education and care services, or where they might fall through gaps. We want to provide an accurate picture

⁸ Following research on teacher well-being at work in 2019, the education inspection framework was designed to put greater focus on the way school leaders manage and support their staff's workload and well-being.

⁹ Alongside our range of sector-facing webinars, we also publish a dedicated section in our inspection handbooks, 'common misconceptions about inspection'. This is to correct misconceptions that can result in unnecessary workload for schools and to highlight specific practices that we do not require.

of what it is like to be a child in the education and care systems – nationally and locally. Our job should be to describe what it is like to be a child in a provider, in a region and in this country.

57. Across all remits in which we work, including schools, we will continue to commend those who deliver a quality experience for children in difficult circumstances and unapologetically highlight where children's interests are not being met, especially when this adversely affects the most disadvantaged and the most vulnerable children.

Part 3: Other recommendations

58. We will publish all training materials unless there is a strong reason why we should not. For example, the important mental health training our inspectors received is the property of an external organisation. A great deal of our training material is already published and well used by the sector. (**Recommendation 12**).

59. Some of our training is not published because it builds on the expertise and experience of inspectors and so, as a standalone document or product, it could lead to misunderstanding out of context, and it would be counter-productive for schools to use it. In cases such as these, we run a range of sector-facing webinars, which often use many elements of the training materials, to help those outside Ofsted understand the approach inspectors take. Since these started in March 2022, we have had over 106,000 views of the live events and the publicly available recordings of these sessions.

60. In reference to **Recommendation 23**, we intend to publish the findings from our evaluation of the education inspection framework, as part of our response to the Big Listen. The Big Listen will allow us to gather further feedback from the sector and public on the framework.

Part 4: Recommendations for the DfE

61. Many of the recommendations in the Committee's report fall to the DfE, rather than Ofsted. We will engage with the DfE on inspection grades (**Recommendation 14**), on ensuring the consequences of inspection are proportionate (**Recommendation 16**), on support for schools that need to improve (particularly through our monitoring programmes) (**Recommendation 18**) and on considering new approaches to inspecting safeguarding (**Recommendation 26**). However, these are matters for the DfE, as is **Recommendation 19** on improving the transparency and accountability of the work of the regional directors.

62. We welcome **Recommendation 28**, and the Committee agreeing with our evidence that inspection of MATs is appropriate and inevitable. We also think consideration needs to be given to the wider application of this thinking to groups of education providers, such as dioceses, groups of nurseries, children's homes, independent schools, and potentially even local authorities and the work of directors of children's services. Arguably, MAT inspection could be considered just one element of 'group inspection'. Considering a wider set of group inspections might help to bring the system together, rather than risking further fracturing, with different accountability for different providers and groups.

Conclusion

63. We have already taken action in respect of a number of the Committee's recommendations (**Recommendations 2, 9, 15, 17 and 27**).

64. The majority of recommendations will be explored through our 'Big Listen' (**Recommendations 1, 3, 5 to 8, 10, 13, 20 to 22 and 24 to 25**). We look forward to hearing the sector's, and the public's, views on these important matters, and will take action immediately after the Big Listen concludes.

65. We intend to include our evaluation of the education inspection framework, as part of our response to the Big Listen, having gathered sector and public feedback during it (Recommendation 23). We also intend to publish training material and data wherever we can (Recommendation 12).

66. Nearly all of the other recommendations fall to the DfE (**Recommendations 4, 14, 16, 18 to 19, 26 and 28**), and we commit to engaging with them on all relevant matters. We note that Recommendation 19 is not a matter for Ofsted.

67. We do not intend to action **Recommendation 11**, because, as we set out above, we do not believe this is a good use of public money. We already have, and continue to build, a clear and strong understanding of the factors that affect HMI recruitment and retention.

Annex – the Committee's Recommendations

1) **Recommendation 1:** In his "Big Listen" with the sector, the new HMCI must ensure that he is listening to a wide range of views, including those of teachers, school and trust leaders, governors, parents, and pupils. In doing this, he must ensure that Ofsted is genuinely open to engage and willing to reflect on where it needs to improve.

2) **Recommendation 2:** The serious nature of a Prevention of Future Deaths report will not be lost on the new HMCI. We expect him to make every effort to address the coroner's report fully. Ofsted should review the seven areas of concern set out in the coroner's report following the inquest into the death of Ruth Perry and put in place changes to ensure that each of these have been addressed as a matter of urgency. They must monitor the impact of the changes they have already put in place and commit to making further changes if these have not been shown to have a meaningful impact. Going forward we expect HMCI to report to this Committee on a six-monthly basis on Ofsted's progress in addressing these significant concerns.

3) **Recommendation 3:** In the shorter term, the Department should work with Ofsted to enable the inspectorate to reduce the frequency of inspections to approximately five to six years for 'good' and 'outstanding' schools and three to four years for schools judged 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'. This should be supported by better use of risk assessment to identify schools in most need of inspection. Ofsted should use the additional resource released by this change to enable inspections to be carried out in more depth.

4) **Recommendation 4:** In the longer term, the Department should support Ofsted in making a strong case to the Treasury for additional funding to carry out more in-depth inspections, without compromising on frequency or the principle that all schools are

subject to periodic inspection. Funding for Ofsted should not be seen to be in competition with school funding, and any additional funding for the inspectorate must not result in less funding being made available for schools.

5) **Recommendation 5:** Ofsted should consider the case for a small increase in the notice period given to schools—we heard suggestions that around five working days would be appropriate. The notice period should remain relatively short in order to limit the pressure on leaders and avoid a situation where schools are spending a long time preparing for inspection, but should be long enough to ensure that waiting for an inspection does not cause undue difficulties in the way schools operate. Ofsted should also consider whether schools could be given a specific term in which to anticipate an inspection.

6) **Recommendation 6:** Ofsted should consider whether smaller schools could be given a longer notice period or greater flexibility around deferrals to take into account the particular operational challenges they face during inspections.

7) **Recommendation 7:** Ofsted should explore ways in which it can improve its engagement with parents, pupils, governors, and trustees before and during the inspection process, ensuring that opportunities are well-communicated and that those with additional needs are supported to engage. Our previous recommendation to extend the notice period would also help to address this. In particular, they must ensure that inspectors are fully engaging with governors and trustees during an inspection, and that governance, including the quality and regularity of engagement with parents, is sufficiently covered in the final report.

8) **Recommendation 8:** Ofsted should introduce regular surveys of parents, pupils and staff outside the inspection process and use this information as part of its risk assessment to identify schools most or least in need of inspection.

9) **Recommendation 9:** Ofsted should publish data on HMIs' and contracted Ofsted inspectors' expertise regarding phase of education and subject, and the proportion of inspections led by at least one inspector with the relevant phase expertise.

10) **Recommendation 10:** Ofsted must ensure that they are matching inspectors' expertise with the appropriate phase and subject as much as possible, and ensure that their recruitment processes are targeting particular gaps in expertise. At a minimum, they must ensure that the lead inspector always has expertise in the relevant type of school and, in larger teams, that a majority of members of the team have the relevant expertise.

11) **Recommendation 11:** We recognise the value and expertise that experienced inspectors can bring, particularly long-serving HMIs. Ofsted should commission an independent assessment of the factors affecting retention of experienced HMIs and take appropriate steps to address the issue.

12) **Recommendation 12:** Ofsted must ensure that it is publishing as much information as possible to maximise the transparency of its work. In particular, it must make more data available to key educational research organisations to allow for high-quality research to be conducted. Ofsted must also publish the training materials which are available to their inspectors, with appropriate caveats where necessary to explain what they are, and are not, intended to be used for.

13) **Recommendation 13:** As part of our recommended increase to the length and depth of inspections, we also recommend that Ofsted increase the length and depth of analysis provided in inspection reports to ensure that they are genuinely useful in providing parents and schools with the information they need. This should be developed in consultation with representatives of schools, governing bodies, and parents.

14) **Recommendation 14:** The Department and Ofsted should work together as a priority to develop an alternative to the current single-word overall judgement that better captures the complex nature of a school's performance, and ensure that these changes interact effectively with Department policies. In doing so, they should look at other jurisdictions both within and outside the UK, to assess what has worked well beyond the English context.

15) **Recommendation 15:** As a first step, Ofsted and Department for Education websites should always show the full list of judgements, not just the overall judgement, and encourage schools to do the same on their websites & published materials.

16) **Recommendation 16:** The Department should assess whether the decision to impose academy orders on schools that have received 'requires improvement' ratings on more than one occasion is proportionate. As a first step, it should ensure that Regional Directors are genuinely taking into account the views of local authorities, trusts, and other relevant bodies before taking a decision, and that this consultation process is clearly communicated to schools. The Department should publish guidance setting out the criteria by which Regional Directors come to these decisions.

17) **Recommendation 17:** The Department and Ofsted should review the support mechanisms available to school leaders during and following an inspection and ensure that these are as strong as possible to support the wellbeing of school leaders. Ofsted must publish a clear policy, and train inspectors, on their approach to dealing with distress among school leaders during an inspection, and in what cases inspections can and should be paused or deferred. We note that lessons could be learned from Ofsted's approach to deferring inspections in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, but deferrals alone are not enough to resolve this issue.

18) **Recommendation 18:** The Department must conduct a full audit of the support available to schools to help them improve, reviewing whether the amount of support is sufficient and what more is needed. In the interim, the Department should ensure that all schools and trusts are aware of the support on offer and develop a 'one-stop shop' to signpost relevant support. It must also ensure that support following a negative inspection judgement is provided as quickly as possible.

19) **Recommendation 19:** The Department must improve the transparency and accountability of the work of the Regional Directors. At a minimum, it should provide an annual report to Parliament setting out the scope, detail and impact of their work and make Regional Directors available to give evidence to the Committee.

20) **Recommendation 20:** The Department for Education and Ofsted should conduct an in-depth review of the complaints process to ensure that there is an efficient and independent process for schools to challenge the findings as well as the conduct of an

inspection. In doing so, they should explore the option of setting up an independent body with the powers to investigate inspection judgements through scrutiny of the evidence base.

21) **Recommendation 21:** Ofsted must allow schools to gain access to the evidence base used to reach a judgement when making a complaint, making redactions to ensure that confidentiality and protection of the identity of individuals is maintained where this is necessary.

22) **Recommendation 22:** In its annual report and accounts, Ofsted should publish separate complaints data for each sector in their remit, including data on the number and percentage of complaints per inspection, whether these relate to conduct or judgements, and the percentage of complaints for each that have been upheld. The annual report should also set out what improvements Ofsted has made as a result of learning from complaints.

23) **Recommendation 23:** Ofsted must publish their planned evaluation of the Education Inspection Framework as soon as possible. In this evaluation, Ofsted should review the implementation of the new framework, in particular looking at the impact it has had on primary schools, special schools and small schools, and consider ways in which it could be adapted to be more supportive of these schools. The inspectorate should clearly set out how it will take into account the context and capacity of individual schools when considering subject leadership. Ofsted should also consider whether sufficient time and emphasis is being placed on quality of teaching.

24) **Recommendation 24:** The Department and Ofsted must go further than simply 'myth-busting': they must undertake a programme of research to fully understand the causes of inspection-related workload pressure and assess what changes would be genuinely helpful in reducing this. The new HMCI should prioritise work in this area as part of his "Big Listen" with the sector.

25) **Recommendation 25:** Ofsted must ensure that inspectors are fully taking a school's size and context into account in reports and judgements, in particular the numbers of pupils from disadvantaged groups and those with SEND, and other relevant factors such as recruitment and retention challenges. It must ensure that these factors are clearly described and visible in the final report. Progress for pupils in receipt of pupil premium should be a key measure on which schools are held accountable, and this should also be clearly set out in the narrative of reports, taking into account where this group is larger or smaller than the average.

26) **Recommendation 26:** The Department should consult on the best approach to increasing the regularity of safeguarding inspections through a less intensive compliance audit. In doing so, it should look at whether this should be done by local authorities or by a separate, independent body, and make the case for the appropriate resource to be provided. In its routine inspections of schools, Ofsted should continue to inspect how well schools respond to serious safeguarding issues and how effectively children are protected in practice.

27) **Recommendation 27:** In the interim, Ofsted should review its policy on 'inadequate' judgements due to ineffective safeguarding and ensure that schools are only being judged 'inadequate' in cases where they are fundamentally failing to keep children safe. In

cases where the problems are uncomplicated and can be resolved within a short space of time, the Department should not issue an academy order until after the school has been reinspected.

28) **Recommendation 28:** The Department must authorise Ofsted to develop a framework for the inspection of MATs as a matter of urgency and set out a plan for building the appropriate expertise and capacity in this area. Ofsted will need to be appropriately resourced to develop their expertise in this respect and should continue to ensure that all individual schools are assessed on a consistent basis whether or not they are part of a MAT.