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8 July 2021

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

Amanda Spielman
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Robert

I hope you found our recent evidence session helpful.

At the session you said that weaknesses in careers guidance were reported in two in five providers rated good or outstanding, and you asked how a school can be rated outstanding if its careers advice is not good enough.

I believe you may have been referring to our letter of 1 December 2020 which stated that an internal analysis of a sample of reports found that two in five **post-16** providers graded good or outstanding had weaknesses in careers education, information advice and guidance (CEIAG). We have reviewed the sample and can confirm that there were no negative comments about CEIAG in the reports for any provider in this sample who had been judged as outstanding.

To be judged outstanding, a school must demonstrate that it meets all the requirements of the good criteria securely and consistently, in addition to some further requirements in the key judgement areas. Since the introduction of the EIF in 2019, the good criteria have included:

“Secondary schools prepare pupils for future success in education, employment or training. They use the Gatsby Benchmarks, a framework that defines the best careers provision in schools and colleges, to develop and improve their careers provision and enable a range of education and training providers to speak to pupils in Years 8 to 13. All pupils receive unbiased information about potential next steps and high-quality careers guidance; The school provides good quality, meaningful opportunities for pupils to encounter the world of work.”

A secondary school must meet this requirement to be judged outstanding. We recently reviewed a sample of 288 section 5 secondary school inspections made under the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) between September 2019 and March 2020. Around three quarters of the reports included comments about CEIAG. There were 10 outstanding schools in this sample, all of which had a positive comment and none of which had any negative comment.

The answer to your question at the top of this letter is therefore that the framework precludes a school's being judged outstanding if its careers advice is not good enough, and it appears that the framework expectations are translating into inspector practice. I hope this reassures you.

While handbook wording quoted above already encompasses the Baker Clause expectation, it has been updated for September 2021 to include a specific reference.

More generally, careers education continues to be an important part of Ofsted's 'personal development' grade, considered in all full (section 5) inspections. We have recently updated the inspection handbook to stress the importance of careers education, including requiring inspectors to report if a school does not meet the Baker Clause requirement. However, under the current 'light touch' regime for school inspection, only about 20% of inspections are section 5 or 'full' inspections, with enough inspector time to discuss issues such as careers education with teachers and pupils.

During the session, you mentioned two other matters of concern. The first was a claim by a third party that there are schools with known safeguarding concerns that have not been inspected for around 12 years, and the second was a claim that there are inspectors advising schools on how to prepare for inspection, which would of course be a breach of their contractual or employment terms. I would be very grateful if you could send me specifics, so that we can investigate.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amanda Spielman".

Amanda Spielman
Chief Inspector, Ofsted