

## Written evidence submitted by the Independent Schools Inspectorate

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is a government-approved independent inspectorate for independent schools, quality-assured on behalf of the Department for Education. Our remit extends to some 1350 independent schools which are full members of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council. ISI is also approved by the Home Office to provide 'educational oversight' for private further education colleges (PFE colleges) in England, which are or apply to become a Tier 4 sponsor and an approved independent inspectorate of British Schools Overseas (BSO).

We wish to respond to one aspect of the questions concerning the quality of support available to children who are being home-educated and the adequacy of the current regulatory framework.

The provision of online education is a rapidly growing area during the pandemic. This may be of relevance to home education and a potential source of support. A wide variety of providers is emerging in this area, including recent start-ups.

We wish to flag to the Committee that the provision of online education by providers which are not schools falls outside the current regulatory framework. This may be confusing to parents and local authorities as the providers sometimes use the nomenclature of 'schools' although they have no connection to a registered school and are not therefore either regulated or inspected as such.

This is an area which urgently needs regulation and oversight by an inspectorate, in our view, to ensure children are suitably safeguarded and receiving an adequate quality of education. ISI engaged with the Department for Education over the recent proposal to initiate an accreditation scheme for Online Education Providers and made recommendations to Ministers as to how to proceed. These included creating a formal process of registration for online education providers in order to better understand the providers and the scope of their provision. We propose a focus on settings which are currently unregulated, who operate exclusively online and are the sole or main providers of education for individual children. This information would inform the creation of some form of regulation and oversight of such settings in future.

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