

## Inspecting Again – Ofsted’s Future Direction of Travel

Rt Hon. David Laws (Education Policy Institute) interviews Amanda Spielman, HMCI Education

- How will inspectors take into consideration the consequences caused by the school closure?
- New steps for the Ofsted framework

*What do you think the main impact of C-19 lockdown has been?*

Schools are important for

- education
- physical health
- keeping an eye on difficult personal circumstances

Without supportive school structures, lockdown has not just put lives on hold, many have gone backwards.

*Do you expect attendance to recover for January?*

Half of schools from the recent interim visits are reporting ‘substantially more’ children being taken off roll to be home educated due to C-19 fears. Ofsted has proposed more oversight of EHE. Need registration as to who they are, where they are, and who is the primary adult responsible for their education.

*There are risks of not having regular school inspections. How will you persuade school leaders these are fair, given schools will be suffering post-C-19 for some time?*

Have to trade off with worry of suspension of normal business being too prolonged. Has to be at right time and right way. Considering how to do this currently for the new year. Safely, sensibly, intelligently, proportionately, constructively. Dialogue which supports schools. Contexts in which schools are working vary very differently across the country, and that really matters. Data from interim visits about factors beyond schools’ control which contribute to their provision is a complicated picture. Ofsted are putting a lot of time and effort into thinking about that. Not going to be retrospectively judging schools on their provision in the summer. Not going to be attempting to get back to inspection timetable that was in place before March – clearly not feasible, and would put unreasonable pressure on the system.

Outstanding exemption has now been removed.

SoS decision need on when to resume inspections – Ofsted waiting.

Data shows widening gaps. Depends principally on

- parental support at early years / primary level
- teenagers’ motivation and engagement
- school’s remote provision

HTs are reporting lower rates of progress in LPA across the board, regardless of DA status. Don’t get too hung up on particular characteristics of groups.

## **Inspecting Again – Ofsted’s Future Direction of Travel**

**Rt Hon. David Laws (Education Policy Institute) interviews Amanda Spielman, HMCI Education**

*But national progress in closing gaps had ground to halt before C-19. Why do you think this is?*

Starting hypothesis must be that good education with lots of substance is the best way to scaffold progress for children, especially DA, and help them to get to where they should be. Despite last 10-15 years increase in focus on measuring the gaps, have not really identified WHY gaps have arisen. Better work on talking to schools about how they create well-sequenced, coherent curricula and how that translates to knowing how every child is doing, and what they are putting in place for those children who need more help, now creates better conversations about HOW to tackle it.

*Our best school leaders are not necessarily getting into our toughest schools. Should challenges experienced by heavily disadvantaged schools be recognised in judgements?*

L&M judgement is core to this issue of context. Often, we see L&M judgements higher than overall effectiveness, which recognises that it’s a tougher job at those schools. But, still have to look from child’s POV. Cannot excuse that because you live in deprived region, it’s more acceptable to get lower standard of education.

*So if students are DA, will their school always struggle to get same overall outstanding judgements as schools in leafy areas?*

Staff recruitment – will always struggle in deprived areas such as coastal towns. Must look at L&M vs overall effectiveness. L&M may be working well, but Ofsted can only report that school is working to best of ability in their circumstances. Vast majority of schools get good or better judgements. These now no longer hooked on VA scores. Progress through curriculum matters, not VA scores. Shifting concept of ‘progress’.

*It has been emphasised that a highly-accountable system can bend quality of education out of shape i.e. exam factories. Is this happening currently?*

Most schools hold on to good principles. Some are not, and children are being short-changed in strength and breadth of curriculum. Or being steered into curriculum choices not best for those children. If you’re doing the best thing for children, giving them the education they should expect, you shouldn’t be scared of inspection.

*Should Ofsted reduce level of accountability?*

Normally inspection only comes along every 4 years. Want to diffuse and reduce language which causes anxiety. Moved on from desire to measure with quantitative measurement, performance tables etc. Long run, need wider, more balanced set of incentives to contribute to overall education.

*Given pressures on Ofsted’s resources, would they consider doing remote, data-driven inspections?*

Ofsted wants the principle of inspections to be human conversation between team and school leaders. Without that, don’t build respect and don’t build value of the inspection. Should be conversation about how to develop and improve ideas and execution. Got to have strong human connection. Issues with remote learning have

## **Inspecting Again – Ofsted’s Future Direction of Travel**

**Rt Hon. David Laws (Education Policy Institute) interviews Amanda Spielman, HMCI Education**

reminded us that schools have evolved to create not only learning, but a good environment in which to learn. There is a barrier to communicating solely via remote channels, and this is replicated in inspections. We must have a clear concept of what schools need to benefit from inspections, as well as the government and public.

*Ofsted grades establishments using 1-4. What rating would you give Ofsted?*

Ofsted is concentrating on iterative reviews of frameworks, and on building those with the best available evidence. Look at their impact, gather feedback, and train inspectors. Must ensure inspectors are well prepared and trained. Spend a lot of time on feedback. How can we be better? How can we improve?

*But Ofsted has had big budget cuts, yet inspects thousands of institutions, not just schools. Is Ofsted good enough at this?*

Never be hubristic, but determined to stay on path of self improvement.

*What has frustrated you most about being HMCI?*

C-19 and Brexit (distraction and focus of government). Keeping motivated and involved. Particularly tough in schools sector. Very appreciative of job they are doing in special circumstances. Most rewarding aspects – feedback which comes back from the grassroots. People who are brave enough to talk to AS really helps her, and encourages her to keep moving forward with improvements.