

Amanda Spielman
His Majesty's Chief Inspector
Clive House
70 Petty France
Westminster
London
SW1H 9EV

Your Ref:
My Ref: jb/re/ka
Date: 22nd March 2023

Dear Ms Spielman

As you will know, Ruth Perry took her life on 8th January 2023. She was the Headteacher of Caversham Primary School in Reading, and her death followed an Ofsted inspection of the school. We continue to keep her family and friends in our thoughts, both individually and as a town.

Since the publication of Caversham Primary's Ofsted inspection report, serious questions raised nationally about the nature of the inspection regime and its consequences for schools and their communities - children, teachers, and parents - have not been comprehensively engaged with by Ofsted.

It is clear that there exists a lack of confidence in the way in which the inspection process is conducted. Such concern is not isolated to Reading and is, evidently, felt across the country.

Schools and their broader communities have very close relationships and Ofsted needs to be conscious of its role in that dynamic, helping to strengthen further the mutual desire to see that the interests of children are always served.

We, as a society, should not require a singular tragedy to give us pause, but we certainly should not ignore the need for reflection highlighted by a tragedy. It is vital that Ofsted take the time to engage with the questions now being asked of it. These questions are not the preserve of the teaching profession, they are the questions posed within communities more broadly.

In writing to you, we do not presuppose to have the answers to the deficiencies that have been identified. It is clear, though, that the inspection process must have greater attention to supporting schools in a continuous and long-term way. There must be less focus on summary judgment and a clearer commitment to supporting continuous development. In the particular case of Caversham Primary School, the eventual report was not responsive to the tragedy that followed the inspection. On this fact alone, it is evident that far greater compassion is required in the conduct of Ofsted's processes.

It is also the case that other bodies, including local authorities and schools themselves, will be in a period of reflection. We all have a moral obligation to consider how things might and must change and what that means in terms of both our immediate and enduring response. It should be incumbent on Ofsted to also meaningfully participate in that. A pause in your inspections, or a suspension of inspection judgments, while a review is undertaken would be appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Handwritten signature of Jason Brock in blue ink.

Councillor Jason Brock
Leader
Reading Borough Council

Handwritten signature of Ruth McEwan in black ink.

Cllr Ruth McEwan
Lead Councillor for Education
& Public Health

cc: The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP, Secretary of State for Education
Matthew Purves, Regional Director Ofsted - South East