

## NASUWT response to ‘The Future of Inspection: A Consultation Paper’

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation paper on the future of inspection. The Association represents the interests of over 223,500 teachers. The future of inspection is of key interest to our members and this response addresses their views and concerns.
2. NASUWT welcomes, in principle, the proposals set out in the consultation paper to reduce the burdens of inspection by:
  - not subjecting teachers to repeated classroom observation
  - introducing shorter notice and shorter length inspections
  - involving HMIs in school inspections
  - trying to achieve a ‘joined up’ inspection regime

Critically, the effectiveness of these proposals will depend on the detail, which has yet to be developed. In order to ensure that the changes to the inspection system gain the confidence of teachers and the public, OFSTED must consult fully with NASUWT on the development of the detailed provisions.

3. NASUWT has a fundamental concern that the rationale for, and purpose of school inspection remains unclear. It is vital that both the rationale and purpose of inspection are clarified before the new inspection framework is established. The Association would want the new inspection regime to:
  - place a minimal burden on schools;
  - not require schools to do any preparation for an inspection;
  - make use of the wealth of data that is already available. Schools should not be required to prepare or collate any data for the purposes of inspection.
  - take full account of the requirements and implications of the *National Agreement: Raising Standards and Tackling Workload*;
  - be focused and brief. Inspection should focus on the school’s management arrangements and processes, and the outcomes for pupils and staff in terms of efficiency, equity and effectiveness.
  - shift from being a punitive regime to one that is supportive and focuses on helping schools to improve;
  - provide fair judgements in which the profession and the public can have confidence;
  - operate in unity with the other systems of inspection, performance management, advice and support, including those carried out by HMIs and LEAs. To achieve this, the revision of the inspection regime must form part of a wider review and evaluation of the inspection, monitoring and support arrangements for schools.
  - not duplicate other systems of monitoring, performance management and support.
4. NASUWT welcomes the intention to trial changes to the future of inspection including School Self-Evaluation. The Association notes that these trials are already underway. It is essential that the trials are subject to rigorous evaluation. It is also vital that there is congruence between the new inspection

regime and the 'New Relationships with Schools' agenda. 'The New Relationship with Schools' Working Party should play a key role in the evaluation of the trials.

5. There is a lack of public and professional confidence in the current inspection regime which has been criticised as being:
  - overly dependent on the use of unreliable and subjective perceptions gathered from classroom observation;
  - unduly stressful for both school staff and pupils;
  - punitive, demoralising and demotivating;
  - inconsistent, with wide variations between inspection teams.

The current regime fails to ensure that inspection teams have recent and relevant teaching experience or that they have a successful record in the subjects and phases that they are inspecting. Further, inspection teams are not representative of the school population. The new inspection regime must address these weaknesses and shortcomings.

6. The impact of inspection on teacher workload is a major concern. NASUWT has undertaken numerous surveys on teacher workload. These surveys show that the OFSTED inspection process is one of the greatest sources of additional workload both for classroom teachers and for headteachers. Stress and the workload created by preparing for inspection have a major impact on the professional and personal lives of teachers.
7. It is vital that the new inspection regime takes full account of the National Agreement and addresses the requirements to reduce teacher workload and minimise bureaucracy.

### ***The National Agreement: Raising Standards and Tackling Workload***

8. The new inspection framework must support the process of workforce remodelling. The fundamental principle behind the National Agreement is that enabling teachers to concentrate on teaching will help to raise standards in schools. The new inspection framework must recognise the requirements of the National Agreement, the contractual changes that have taken place, and the important demarcation between the role of teachers and the roles of support staff in schools.
9. OFSTED should ensure that the workforce remodelling agenda and the new contractual duties for schools are firmly embedded in the inspection process. The new inspection framework should require inspectors to make judgements about the extent to which a school is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities and implementing the Agreement. OFSTED also has a key role to play in monitoring implementation of the Agreement.
10. It is essential that all inspectors understand the National Agreement and its implications for inspection. OFSTED should provide mandatory training and guidance for all inspectors on the Agreement and OFSTED's role in inspecting the Agreement. It is important that schools have the confidence to use support

staff in the roles provided for in the Agreement. This will only happen if they believe that inspectors understand the Agreement and that they will concentrate only on judging the effectiveness of schools' management arrangements for implementing the Agreement.

## **School Self-Evaluation**

11. NASUWT is deeply concerned about the role and use of self-evaluation within the inspection process. The Association is not convinced that self-evaluation is an accurate or effective tool for judging organisational effectiveness. The self-evaluation model developed by the FEFC and used in the further education sector provides an example of how self-evaluation can impose enormous burdens on institutions, whilst failing catastrophically to establish whether or not an organisation is effective. It is vital that the benefits of self-evaluation are made explicit before a model is developed and that the model that is developed is an agreed national one which is accurate, reliable and robust.
12. If self-evaluation is not developed as a consistent and agreed national model, then NASUWT is concerned that it will add to the bureaucratic burden on schools and increase teacher workload. Schools already manage a whole host of internal systems for planning, target setting, benchmarking, and the review of individual and school performance. The school self-evaluation framework must not add to this load. The framework must not be a bureaucratic form filling exercise. It needs to be brief and focused. It must complement, not duplicate, and draw on the information that is already available through the school's other information, planning, review and performance management systems. Self-evaluation should focus on the effectiveness of the school's management arrangements and processes.
13. The proposals state that 'much of the bureaucracy associated with inspection arises, not from OFSTED's demands but from teachers feeling that they must undertake extensive preparation over the months and weeks leading up to inspection'. This suggests that teachers are responsible for the inspection workload. NASUWT challenges this assertion. Many schools are forced to undertake detailed preparation for inspection because of inconsistencies in the expectations and judgements of different inspection teams. Faced by these uncertainties, heads and governors often require teachers to undertake detailed preparation in the months leading up to an inspection. It is essential that School Self-Evaluation does not exacerbate this problem.
14. OFSTED must ensure that school self evaluation does not increase the burdens on schools. OFSTED should set out precisely what schools need to do. It should then monitor schools and inspection teams to ensure that the requirements are being followed consistently, and it should report on the impact of school self-evaluation in relation to workload and educational standards.
15. Moreover, schools must not be penalised for undertaking honest self-evaluations which identify their strengths along with areas for improvement. NASUWT is aware of instances where schools have provided inspectors with honest evaluations of their strengths along with clear plans of action for

addressing areas for improvement. Some inspectors have used the school's evaluation as a short cut to making critical inspection judgements about the school. If inspectors continue to adopt this approach then schools will not provide honest evaluations and the purpose of self-evaluation will be seriously undermined. Self-evaluation will simply become a meaningless and bureaucratic exercise. Again, this highlights the need for OFSTED to clarify the purpose and rationale for the new inspection regime and to establish how school self-evaluation will contribute to that process.

16. NASUWT is concerned that there are hidden costs associated with self-evaluation and feedback indicates that it may not deliver robust public accountability. Any school self-evaluation framework that forms part of the new inspection regime must be thoroughly assessed and its impact and effectiveness evaluated. In order to ensure consistency, the Association believes that there should be a common self-evaluation tool which is used as part of the inspection process. This should be developed by building on the social partnership between Government, the majority of teaching and support staff unions and employers that was established as a result of National Agreement. NASUWT would, therefore expect to play a key role in the development of the self-evaluation framework for schools.

17. It will also be essential for funding to be made available to enable schools to gain the necessary skills and expertise to self-evaluate appropriately and effectively.

### **Shorter and more frequent inspections**

18. NASUWT welcomes the proposal that inspections will be shorter so long as this means that schools will not be forced to operate in a state of perpetual preparation. OFSTED must demonstrate how it will ensure that schools are not required to do more work in preparation for an inspection. Further, preparation tasks should not be delegated to schools simply because inspectors will have less time in school. Shorter inspection must mean that inspections are more clearly focused.

19. NASUWT opposes the plan to introduce more frequent inspections. If school inspection is integrated with wider systems of performance management, monitoring and support, then more frequent inspections are unnecessary.

20. The Association believes that the trigger for an inspection should be that schools are identified by key national data as being at risk of failing. The majority of schools will not fall into this category. Also OFSTED provides only one dimension of the package. More frequent inspections should be unnecessary because a programme of monitoring and support is provided by other partners such as the LEA.

21. The suggestion that shorter and more frequent inspections will lead to more rapid improvements in schools could be dangerous. Whilst some improvements can be achieved through 'quick fixes', others will take time. If the inspection framework does not explicitly recognise and give credit to medium and long

term improvements then there is a very real danger that schools will be forced to concentrate on short term goals. Schools must be allowed to define and work towards a blend of short, medium and long term improvements, and inspectors must acknowledge and give credit to this work.

22. Short notice inspections should help OFSTED to inspect what actually happens in schools. However, OFSTED needs to recognise that this could result in schools appearing to do less well. It is essential that the new inspection framework takes account of this point and that the expectations of schools are realistic and achievable.

### **Schools in special measures or with serious weaknesses**

23. It is deeply disappointing that the current consultation on the future of inspection does not address the issues relating to inspection grading and the identification of 'failing' schools. This gross omission must be the subject of further consultation before decisions are made about the future of inspection.
24. NASUWT is concerned that there has been a sharp rise in the number of schools being judged as having serious weaknesses or being put into special measures. The Association has particular concerns about the regressive nature of the existing framework. It is essential that the new inspection regime moves away from this punitive approach to one which is much more supportive of schools.
25. The relationship between OFSTED inspection and other forms of inspection, monitoring and support is critical here. NASUWT is concerned about the nature of 'support' that some LEAs have provided for schools that have been designated as having serious weaknesses. There is evidence that the quality of LEA intervention is varied and that some LEAs have been overbearing in their approach. This has resulted in a massive increase in workload and has not benefited the schools concerned. The review of the OFSTED inspection regime should be accompanied by a thorough evaluation of the other forms of monitoring and support for schools. It is essential that the end result is a robust, unified framework of support to schools.

### **Classroom observation**

26. NASUWT welcomes the proposal that teachers will not be subjected to repeated lesson observation, but believes that this does not go far enough. The regulations on Performance Management require classroom observation to form part of the Performance Management process. OFSTED inspections should not duplicate this work. Classroom observation should not form any part of the inspection process. Further, inspection judgements based on classroom observation are subjective, unreliable and inconsistent.
27. OFSTED has stated that it is interested in outcomes rather than processes. The new slimmed down inspection regime should focus wholly on the effectiveness of a school's management arrangements in raising standards and producing

positive outcomes for pupils and staff. Classroom observation has no useful contribution to make within this new regime.

### **Accountability for inspection**

28. The consultation makes no reference to OFSTED's accountability for its inspection work. Under the current arrangements, there are inconsistencies in the judgements made by different inspection teams. Also inspection judgments are based on subjective classroom observation. The new regime needs to address these issues of quality and consistency. Further, it is essential that both schools and teachers are able to seek full and proper redress against poor inspectors.
29. The current arrangements for dealing with complaints, which require complaints to be made to OFSTED, are totally inadequate. They are neither fair nor objective. An independent ombudsman should be established to deal with all complaints. Further, OFSTED should report annually on the extent to which its work adds value to the existing arrangements of accountability, performance management and raising standards in schools.

### **The use of data**

30. Inspection teams could make much more effective use of data. There is a wealth of statistical and other data that is available. Effective use of data should enable OFSTED to identify those schools that appear to be at risk of failing and so target inspections towards supporting those schools that need the most help.
31. OFSTED should make use of existing data rather than require schools to provide specific data for the inspection. Schools should not be required to prepare the data for OFSTED. Rather OFSTED inspectors should be responsible for collating and analysing the data as part of the school inspection.

### **'Joined up' and multi-disciplinary inspections**

32. In principle NASUWT welcomes the move towards a 'joined up' inspection regime since this recognises the relationship between, and inter-dependency of agencies in providing effective services and provision. The Association would, however, be opposed to OFSTED inspecting the contribution of teaching and support staff to non-educational programmes. This would contravene the principles and actions set out in the National Agreement.
33. NASUWT recognises that schools have a key role to play in contributing to cross sector issues, for example, promoting good race relations. Since the amended Race Relations Act places a statutory race equality duty on schools, OFSTED should use inspection to examine the impact that schools are having on the promotion of good race relations.

## **Links between HMIs and independent inspectors**

34. Privatised sub-contractors deliver a poor quality and inconsistent inspection service. OFSTED should replace the current system of contracting inspectors through private companies with a permanent group of professional, qualified and trained inspectors who have recent and relevant experience of teaching.
35. NASUWT welcomes the proposals that HMIs will be more actively involved in the inspection process and that in many instances HMIs will lead inspections. This will go some way towards addressing our concerns about consistency and the quality of inspections. NASUWT believes that HMIs should be involved in every school inspection but is concerned that the current number of HMIs is inadequate to meet the challenge ahead. OFSTED must also ensure that all HMIs are subject to appropriate levels of training, monitoring and accountability.

## **Seeking the views of parents and pupils**

36. NASUWT believes that inspection should focus on verifying the quality of schools processes for obtaining and using feedback from parents and pupils. OFSTED should not seek the views of parents or pupils as part of the inspection process.

## **Lay inspectors**

37. The consultation document has highlighted potential difficulties in seeking to ensure the presence of lay inspectors within a slimmed down inspection system. NASUWT strongly recommends that lay inspectors are not used in future inspections. NASUWT also recommends that OFSTED take active steps to develop a more diverse inspection workforce and to ensure that all inspectors have the necessary knowledge, skills and commitment to inspect schools effectively.

## **Equality and diversity**

38. The socio-economic background of pupils, the range of learning abilities, and parental involvement and support all have a major impact on school performance. NASUWT has argued consistently that the current model of inspection fails to recognise the different challenges that schools face. It is essential that the new inspection regime takes full account of the different challenges that schools face. It is vital, for example, that OFSTED uses a broad and representative range of data when forming judgements about a school's effectiveness in raising standards.
39. OFSTED has a critical role to play in fulfilling its responsibilities under the amended Race Relations Act. It needs to address its general duty to tackle racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations by ensuring that these areas are appropriately addressed in

inspection. For example, it should ensure that both schools and LEAs fulfil their responsibilities under the duty.

40. OFSTED also needs to demonstrate that it is taking appropriate steps to address racial equality issues systematically and strategically across all of its functions. OFSTED should openly consult teachers and others about the ongoing development of its Race Equality Scheme and the implementation of the related action plan. These views should influence planning and decision making.
41. OFSTED should use the principles of the 'race equality duty' and the framework provided by the Race Equality Scheme to ensure that other areas of equality (including gender, disability, homophobia, religious intolerance) are addressed appropriately and effectively both within inspection and strategically across the organisation.
42. Inspectors need to be trained so that they are both aware of equality issues within schools, and understand how to address equality within the inspection process. Inspectors should for example understand how to judge whether schools are fulfilling their statutory responsibilities in relation to equalities legislation including the amended Race Relations Act and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, through their management arrangements and processes. OFSTED's programme of training and guidance on educational inclusion provides a positive starting point. However, feedback indicates that the training only 'scratches the surface' of what are substantial and complex issues, and there are serious concerns about the level of awareness of equality issues amongst inspectors.
43. OFSTED needs to improve the diversity of the teams that inspect in schools. Lay inspectors have often been used to provide diversity within an inspection team or to address issues that other members of the inspection team don't consider to be important, for example equal opportunities. This practice is totally unacceptable and needs to be addressed. If OFSTED recruits a team of highly trained and qualified inspection specialists, this would provide one opportunity to recruit a more diverse inspection workforce.

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