



Education Update

January 2022

Ofsted annual report 2020/21

At the beginning of each new calendar year, we prepare a summary of the main points raised in the annual report of HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, Ms Amanda Spielman.

As ever, Ofsted's brief is a wide one, extending beyond the education of children and young people into further education and teacher training, as well as responsibility for many aspects of children's services.

The report is followed by an extensive bibliography of Ofsted's publications over the year, as well as an annex containing data tables for figures.

The report for the 2020/21 academic year was published on 7 December 2021. Its contents are underpinned by inspections of and visits to education settings, as well as drawing on findings from Ofsted's research, evaluation, data and analysis throughout the year.

Because of the wide reaching impact of COVID-19, the report lacks some of the data insights it usually provides. Routine inspections of all settings were substantially reduced in number because of school closures. However, the report does provide a snapshot of Ofsted's findings in relation to how the pandemic has affected the education sector and how it is now reacting.

We concentrate in this summary on those aspects of Ofsted's work concerned with early years, primary and secondary education. In her

commentary on the report, Ms Spielman concludes with the following telling sentences:

'Every generation gets one chance to enjoy its childhood and fulfil its potential. We must do all we can to make sure this generation is not denied its opportunity'.

Early years

There were fewer inspections in 2020/21 of early years and childcare settings because routine inspection was suspended for much of the year. But Ofsted's regulatory and enforcement activity continued throughout the year. Inspections resumed in May 2021, when overdue or newly registered settings were given priority.

- 97% of all early years providers were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection before the pandemic. As of 31 August 2021, this proportion has remained relatively unchanged, with 22% of nurseries and preschools graded as outstanding.
- Most children had proved to be very resilient and adaptable under strange circumstances. But for about half of children, there was some falling behind in the personal, social and emotional development and some returned from lockdown with reduced confidence in outdoor play.
- The behaviour of some children had deteriorated during the first lockdown in 2020 but when children returned in the autumn term 2020, good habits were

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restored relatively easily. The same pattern was true again when schools reopened in March 2021.

Schools

In autumn 2020, Ofsted carried out nearly 1,300 interim visits to schools to discuss their experiences since the first national lockdown and their plans to manage their schools through the pandemic. Although routine inspections were suspended, Ofsted carried out emergency visits when serious concerns were raised.

From January 2021, there was a gradual return to inspections, with additional online monitoring inspections of schools judged requiring improvement or inadequate. Full graded inspections were resumed in the summer term 2021.

State funded schools

- Of the nearly 22,000 state-funded schools, 86% had been judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection. This figure did not change during 2020/21.
- For nearly all children, face-to-face attendance at school was affected by the pandemic. For most of the spring term 2021, schools were closed to all but vulnerable children and the children of key workers. In addition to lockdown, periods of self-isolation also limited many children's progress. The highest percentage of COVID-related absences when schools were open was in the Northwest at 8.8% and the lowest was in the South West of the country at 4.4%.
- Remote education was a significant part of schooling. Most studies showed that children did not learn as much when learning remotely – this was particularly true for primary age children.

- Many children found that remaining motivated while learning remotely was a struggle.
- For schools, assessment and feedback to pupils was especially difficult when they were studying at home.
- Most primary schools gave extra time to the teaching of mathematics and reading during autumn 2020 to try to compensate for lack of progress in the summer. But this progress was negated by closures in spring 2021, and remedial work has had to be resumed since March 2021.
- Teaching reading and phonics remotely at primary level was particularly challenging.
- In secondary schools, particular concern was expressed about the experiences for year 7 students in their first year in secondary education and for year 11 students preparing for GCSE.
- Students in secondary school were generally able to study most subjects remotely. But there were inevitable restrictions on what could be achieved in some subjects, particularly music and PE.
- Pupils' physical health tended to suffer during lockdown, but on return to school from March 2021 this was largely addressed.
- Mental health issues are, however, a continuing cause of concern. Mental health disorders in pupils have probably increased by about 50% since 2017 and students in years 11–13 have in particular shown signs of stress and anxiety linked to the uncertainty about public examinations.
- There is an increase in the proportion of pupils who moved

out of the state-funded sector to 'other destinations', including moving to independent schools, unregistered schools and home education. These pupils cannot be tracked through the data Ofsted holds. This increase of pupils moving to unknown destinations is greater for primary age pupils than for secondary students. Ofsted sees this as a cause for real concern.

- Pupils with SEND have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The fear of many parents was that children had regressed in their learning and communication as a result of being out of school. This had been caused in part by missed or narrowed education, but also because essential services and therapies were often reduced or discontinued.
- When schools reopened, the parents of many children with SEND were reluctant to let them return because of anxiety about health issues.
- Summer term inspections showed that having well developed curriculum thinking served schools well during the return to school after lockdowns. Weaker schools struggled to make changes to their curriculum effectively. Teachers in these schools did not pick up on pupils' lack of understanding and what knowledge pupils needed to learn. Teachers did not always have the subject knowledge required to maximise pupil learning post-lockdown.
- Managing through the pandemic was particularly challenging for special schools, which were expected to stay open for their pupils (apart from shielded children who had to stay at home). Nevertheless 90% of state-funded and non-maintained special schools were judged in August 2021 to be

good or outstanding. 84% of independent special schools were also awarded good or outstanding status.

- Alternative provision (AP) leaders were very concerned about the impact of the pandemic on their students. Too many older students had become involved in criminal exploitation, including gang violence and sexual exploitation.
- Concern was expressed by Ofsted about the increased number (78% in the past 10 years) of placements of pupils in independent AP provision, including independent special schools, paid for by local authorities at an average annual cost of £40,000.
- Far too few of these pupils were ever reintegrated back into mainstream education.
- Only 60% of children from AP went to a sustained destination aged 16.
- More than half of the children in AP have social, emotional and mental health issues as a primary need.
- Many of the most challenged pupils end up in unregistered AP, over which Ofsted has no jurisdiction and which it feels is 'a big gap in our oversight and one that should be filled'.

Independent schools

The routine inspection of independent schools was paused for four terms during the pandemic. However, 350 additional inspections of independent schools at the request of the DfE were carried out, as well as 52 emergency inspections. In both scenarios, around 50% of these schools were found not to be meeting standards. There is still, says the report, too much persistent poor performance in the independent sector.

In the summer term 2021, Ofsted reverted to 95 standard inspections.

- As at August 2021, 14% of schools inspected did not meet all the independent schools standards.
- Independent faith schools have relatively poor inspection outcomes, with 34% less than good, including 17% inadequate. Resourcing was poor particularly in small faith schools.
- The main criticism of some faith schools is that they limit their curriculum in areas that are seen to conflict directly with their religion. This can affect the teaching of science, the content of humanities teaching and in particular relationships, sex and health education.
- British values are not taught or can be under-emphasised, particularly around toleration of other beliefs and faiths.

Unregistered schools

In 2020/21, Ofsted carried out just over 100 inspections of unregistered schools. Some of which (illegally) remained open during lockdown periods. Ofsted has issued 24 warning notices to unregistered schools and have initiated legal proceedings through the Crown Prosecution Services in three cases.

Ofsted warned that although it had made significant progress in tackling unregistered schools, there is no room for complacency or inaction. The report welcomes commitments made by the government to strengthen legislation in this area, but comments that those commitments have been slow to arrive.

Careers education

A short section of the report comments on careers education, information, advice and guidance. Positive progress has been made, especially in those settings with a

specifically employed careers adviser or co-ordinator.

Ofsted notes that finding work experience placements has been a continuing challenge for providers, although many have found successful innovative ways through the medium of remote access placements.

Area SEND

The report found that not all local areas had risen fully to the SEND challenge across education, health and care.

Ofsted carried out six interim visits to local areas in autumn 2020 and four more during spring 2021. In summer 2021, there were eight full inspections and eight revisits, during which the families of children with SEND were also interviewed.

Ofsted found that many families were exhausted, even despairing, particularly when they were persistently unable to access essential services for their children.

- The report categorically states that 'parents cannot be the driving force in ensuring that agencies work together, as they too often are'.
- Of the eight joint council areas inspected for their SEND provision in summer 2021, seven required a written statement of action, an indication of serious weaknesses. As mentioned above, Ofsted has to date carried out eight revisits of councils, and found that some councils are still not addressing all the weaknesses identified.
- Ofsted hopes that the government's long awaited SEND review would result in increased clarity in the purpose of current provision and that significant change would follow.
- There is a need for early and accurate identification of SEND and Ofsted hopes that

embedded evidence-based provision will enable all children and young people to make the best possible progress. It is vital that all those with SEND receive a high quality education, an ambitious curriculum and enough time to learn the essential knowledge and skills they need.

Teacher education

The purpose of initial teacher education (ITE), according to the report, is to make sure that trainee teachers, in all sectors, are prepared to a high professional standard. Their ITE experience must equip them with the knowledge and skills to teach all pupils and learners well.

There are around 250 providers and partnerships that train teachers through school centred, FE and HE college providers.

- Ofsted piloted a new initial teacher education inspection framework in schools from the autumn term 2020. Inspections were suspended during the spring term 2021. Instead, Ofsted looked at the impact of COVID-19 on ITE including the quality of ITE curriculums – 75 remote research visits were carried out. Full inspections started again in the summer of 2021 which meant that over the year 36 age-phase partnerships were visited.
- In 2021, one age phase partnership was judged outstanding, 16 good, 12 requires improvement and 7 inadequate. The report concedes that this is a small sample which may not be representative of the sector as a whole.
- Inspectors found that during the pandemic, trainees have had less time to apply what they have learned to classroom situations.

- They are particularly behind in their experience of managing behaviour. Also many in the primary sector have had limited experience of teaching early reading, including systematic synthetic phonics.
- These trainees are likely to need additional support in their first year as early career teachers and possibly longer to make up for this shortfall.
- Ofsted found that too few providers and partnerships have a sufficiently ambitious ITE curriculum for their trainees. Most have not yet fully incorporated into their plans the DfE's statutory minimum curriculum entitlement for trainees, as set out in the core content framework.
- Too little subject specific content is taught during centre-based training, leaving too much to be taught by placements in schools.
- Mentors tended to rely too heavily on trainees to let them know what they had already learned and what they needed to work on, rather than making sure that trainees were getting the essential building blocks.

Early career framework and NPQs

Ofsted supports the government's ambition to improve training and development opportunities of qualified teachers. The roll-out of the early career framework (ECF) and a suite of reformed national professional qualifications (NPQs) in September 2021 is applauded.

As part of this, the DfE has confirmed that the DfE-funded lead providers, delivering the ECF and NPQs, will in future be inspected by Ofsted.

Ofsted feels that this will give them a better oversight of training for early career teachers and established teachers. They are in the process of developing a new

inspection framework and handbook for this work, in order to assess how DfE-funded providers give their new staff and existing staff high quality training and professional development. Ofsted intends to begin inspecting ECF and NPQ provision from summer 2022.

Ofsted will also be carrying out an independent review of teacher development as part of their evaluation of education recovery. The results of this work will be published in early 2023 and early 2024.

Who to contact

CEFM provides a full range of services to schools. Information on our support services can be found at www.cefm.co.uk. We also provide information to subscribing schools via CEFMi, our Online Guidance and Information Centre, which can also be found at www.cefm.co.uk.

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