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To: All Schools

FAO: All Headteachers, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Governors

email: ian.harrison@barnet.gov.uk
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Dear All,

Ofsted inspection judgements – ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’

As you are aware, Ofsted Inspections re-started in April 2021 following a period of no inspections. Schools that were previously judged as ‘outstanding’ are no longer exempt from inspections and so can expect to have an inspection over the next three years and then every five years after that.

The Ofsted Framework, and the way inspections are carried out, have been reviewed and updated several times over the last 15 years, with a significant update in 2019 from the Common Inspection Framework to the Education Inspection Framework.

Each review of the Ofsted Framework has raised the standard expected from schools to achieve ‘good’ or better against the framework. For instance, to be a ‘good’ school against the current Ofsted Educational Inspection Framework is a more significant achievement than perhaps historically may have been the case. This is due to the increased demands of the framework.

The evaluation criteria for an ‘outstanding’ school has also changed considerably over the years. It would not be accurate or fair to compare a school judged to be ‘outstanding’ using one previous framework against an ‘outstanding’ school judged against another framework. You are simply not comparing like with like.

The bar has been raised again in the new Education Inspection framework, last updated in September 2019. ‘Outstanding’ is now an exacting judgement. All of the criteria for being assessed as ‘good’ have to be fully met and the practice in the school has to be exceptional: i.e. beyond what an inspector would normally expect to see. This is intentionally difficult to achieve and Ofsted are expecting only a small number of schools across England and Wales to achieve this judgement.

In summary, this means that a school that was judged ‘outstanding’ under a previous framework, which is inspected and judged ‘good’ under the current framework, has not necessarily declined in quality and standards. Indeed, many aspects of the school could and will have improved. Furthermore a school judged ‘good’ under a previous framework who achieves ‘good’ again under the current framework may have actually improved considerably.

Whilst we know that many schools will strive to be 'outstanding', all school leaders continue to focus on providing the very best education for pupils in their school. School communities should be proud of achieving 'good' under the new Education Inspection Framework and this should be celebrated.

I hope this helps to clarify the changing nature of the Ofsted judgements and that you will feel confident in celebrating 'good' judgements and making clear to your school communities that moving from 'outstanding' to 'good' does not necessarily mean that your school is any less effective than at the last inspection.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'I. Harrison', with a horizontal line underneath.

Ian Harrison
Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning
Barnet Education and Learning Services