Introduction and background

This annual report presents Ofsted’s findings for early years childcare, schools, further education and skills and social care in the academic year 2018-19. In the interests of brevity, the section on social care is not included in this summary.

Key points

Early years

- Inspection outcomes for early years remain strong. In the 2018-19 academic year, Ofsted carried out full inspections of 15,000 providers on the early years register (EYR). Eighty-six per cent of these providers were good or outstanding in their overall effectiveness.
- Sixty-three per cent of nursery schools were judged outstanding and 34 per cent were judged as good. Twenty-three per cent of nurseries and pre-schools were judged outstanding and 73 per cent were judged good.
- The quality of early years provision varies only slightly with local area deprivation. On 31 August 2019, the proportion of all early year’s providers on the EYR judged good or outstanding was highest for those in the least deprived areas (97%) and lowest in the most deprived areas (92%). Since 2015 this gap has narrowed for all provider types.
- A significant number of children attend early years classes in primary schools or state-funded nursery schools. There are around 10,700 state-funded schools with an early years provision at their most recent inspection. Of these, 89% were judged to be good or outstanding in their early years provision.

Schools

- In the 2018-19 academic year, Ofsted carried out 5,560 full or short inspections of state-funded schools. This includes 2,580 full inspections and 2,460 short inspections that did not convert to a full inspection. Schools were judged good or outstanding in 80 per cent of full and short inspections in 2018-19 – a similar figure to last year.
- Eighty-six per cent of all schools were judged good (66%) or outstanding (20%) at their most recent graded inspection. This has increased from 82 per cent since the introduction of the common inspection framework in 2015 but is unchanged from August 2018.
- More primary schools are good or outstanding than secondary schools: 87 per cent compared with 76 per cent.
- There is a clear relationship between median Progress 8 scores and inspection grades. For instance, the median Progress 8 scores for outstanding schools is +0.5, compared with -0.8 for inadequate schools. However, there is significant overlap in the scores across the 4 grades, and schools with the same overall grade may have a range of different Progress 8 scores. The overall pattern has been similar for the last few years.
- In 2012, the government made outstanding schools exempt from routine inspection. As a consequence of the exemption, there are now over 1,000 schools which have not had an inspection in the last 10 years. This figure includes a number of schools which have converted to academy status and which inherited the outstanding grade.
- Exempt schools can still be inspected if: a risk assessment suggests that their performance has declined; there are concerns arising from a complaint; or if the school has undergone significant change.
- In December 2018, the DfE asked Ofsted to increase the proportion of exempt schools which it inspected to 10 per cent. Consequently, 390 of the 3,810 schools that were exempt at the start of the year were inspected, compared with 150 in 2017-18. Only 16 per cent of those inspected this year remained outstanding. Over half (56%) declined to good, 23 per cent to requires improvement and 5 per cent to inadequate. The government has recently announced its intention to remove the exempt status.
- Ofsted reviewed 20 inspection reports for primary schools that declined from outstanding to requires improvement in 2018-19. A number of common weaknesses were found including a lack of effective planning skills on the part of leaders, lack of subject knowledge amongst curriculum and subject leaders and ineffective assessment.

Academies and MATs

- Forty per cent of schools are now academies or free schools. The proportion is higher for secondary schools (76%) than primary schools (34%). More than half of all pupils in state-funded schools (4.2 million) are now educated in academies and free schools.
- Since the launch of the summary evaluation process last year, Ofsted has carried out 7 summary evaluations of MATs. Nearly all have shown that the MATs understand their academies well and recognise the strengths and weaknesses of each. Inspectors have also seen MATs showing a strong commitment to sustainable improvement.
- Some MATs which were visited were insufficiently clear about what functions sit at what level in the trust. There
were cases in which lines of delegation and of accountability were unclear or confused. MATs need to ensure that it is always clear, both at trust management level and in the individual academies who is responsible for what, and who is accountable to whom.

- Generally, school leaders feel well integrated into their MAT and most speak of strong communications. There were, however, some MATs in which school leaders felt less consulted about the strategies that their MAT develops. There were examples of inconsistent involvement within the same MAT, with some school leaders feeling less involved than their colleagues.

**Stuck schools**

- A ‘stuck’ school is a school that has not been judged as good since 1 September 2006 and which has had at least 4 full inspections since then.
- At the end of August 2019, there were 415 stuck schools, compared with 485 at the end of August 2018. Since 1 September 2018, Ofsted has inspected nearly 190 of the original 485 schools and over half of these have managed to improve to good or outstanding. However, at the end of August 2019, there were still an estimated 210,000 pupils being educated in stuck schools. Secondary schools are much more likely to be stuck than primary schools. Eighty-six per cent of stuck schools are currently academies, reflecting the government’s policy of academisation as a means of supporting struggling schools.

**Off-rolling**

- Ofsted identified around 340 schools which had exceptional levels of pupil movement between Year 10 and Year 11 – an average of 13 pupils each. The number of schools with high levels of pupil movement is increasing.
- In the period January 2017 to January 2018, over half of the pupils who left their school in Year 10 went to an unknown destination.
- Between September 2018 and June 2019 Ofsted inspected around 100 schools with high levels of pupil movement and scrutinised the reasons why pupils had left. These included: weaknesses in SEND provision; removal to alternative provision; and coercion by leaders to leave, sometimes nominally, to home education. In some cases, where the school had instigated procedures to prosecute parents for the child’s poor attendance, the parents had decided to home educate rather than work with the school.
- There are a number of legitimate reasons why a pupil might move from their school and Ofsted recognises this. However, 5 per cent of inspection reports from this period directly refer to ‘off-rolling’. In these cases, inspectors reached the conclusion that some pupils left to primarily serve the schools’ best interests, not the pupils’.

**Initial Teacher Education**

- Inspection outcomes for initial teacher education (ITE) remain very positive, with 100 per cent of age phase partnerships now judged good or outstanding.
- When looking at this by type of partnership, school-based ITE providers have the highest proportion of outstanding inspection outcomes. Teach First has a particularly high proportion of outstanding judgements, with 9 of its 11 Teach First age phase partnerships judged to be outstanding.
- Twenty-eight per cent of university-based partnerships were judged to be outstanding.
- A new ITE inspection framework will be launched in summer 2020, after a public consultation. The focus of the new framework will be the content and quality of the ITE curriculum, which will be aligned to the focus of the Education Inspection Framework (EIF).

**Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

- In January 2019, there were over 1.3 million school-age pupils with SEND. This represents 15 per cent of all pupils on roll in schools. Of these, just over one million pupils were receiving SEN support and 270,000 pupils had an Education Health Care (EHC) plan. Both groups have increased in number year on year since 2016. The number of children and young people with an EHC plan has increased by 47 per cent in the last 4 years, rising from 240,000 in January 2015 to 354,000 in January 2019.
- Although the vast majority of children are placed in the school named in their EHC plan, there were still 3,500 who were still waiting for the provision due to them in January 2019.
- Of the 470 independent special schools inspected to date, 83 per cent were judged good or outstanding at their most recent inspection on 31 August 2019. This is an increase of 5 percentage points since last year but is still lower than the proportion of state-funded special schools judged good or outstanding (92%).
- As well as inspecting special schools, Ofsted inspects the effectiveness of area leaders and health commissioners in fulfilling their responsibilities to children and young people with SEND. Where significant weaknesses are found in an area inspection, areas are required to submit a written statement of action (WSoA). By the end of August 2019, 100 out of 151 areas had been inspected; 50 had been asked to submit a WSoA. Weaknesses identified by inspectors in these areas included: ineffective arrangements for EHC assessment and planning; a local offer which is difficult to navigate; and instances where the health component of the EHC plan is weak.

**Further education and skills**

- On 31 August 2019, there were just over 1,900 open and funded FES providers. This is an increase of 13 per cent compared with the same point in 2018 and 63 per cent compared with 2017. This increase is largely due to the introduction of apprenticeships since last year and funding reforms in April 2017 which have led to a 143 per cent increase in the number of independent learning providers (ILPs), including employers.
- During 2018-19, Ofsted inspected almost 240 providers, made monitoring visits to almost 400 new providers and made other monitoring visits to over 100 providers.
- In the 236 full and short inspections in 2018-19, 4 per cent of providers were judged outstanding, 51 per cent good, 33 per cent requires improvement and 13 per cent inadequate.
- There were 334 new provider monitoring visits to newly and directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision. Over one fifth of providers were making insufficient progress in at least one area.
- Across the three largest provider types, there is a contrasting picture in terms of the latest overall effectiveness inspection judgements. Community learning and skills providers and general FE colleges saw another increase in the proportion judged good or outstanding. However, the proportion of ILPs (including employer providers) judged good or outstanding has continued to decline.