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Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Colleague

As Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, my aim is simple: I want the best possible education for all pupils in England. Since I came to Ofsted, I have been determined to reform inspection so that it is higher quality, is more consistent and has ever greater impact on improving education.

To this end, I have made radical changes to the way Ofsted inspects. I have established that only good is good enough through the introduction of the 'requires improvement' grade. Inspectors do not tell teachers and practitioners how to teach. They do not have a preferred teaching method but, in dialogue with the leader or manager, assess the overall quality of teaching in the setting. Inspection reports are now much clearer and more readable for parents and carers. From September, my reforms will go even further.

Over recent years, we have seen major improvements in our education system. There are more children in good or outstanding provision now than ever before and standards are rising. We have a generation of inspiring leaders and it is their leadership and the hard work of staff that have brought about this change. Make no mistake, however: there is still a long way to go. We are some way behind our top international competitors. Regional variation in performance is still wide and the underachievement of youngsters from disadvantaged homes remains substantial and unacceptable.

If further improvement is to come, it is leaders and their senior teams and staff who will lead this transformation. When it comes to making a difference to the lives of children and young people across the country, you are the most influential people in England.

In this letter, you will read about the next phase of significant new reforms that Ofsted will introduce in September 2015. These changes are designed to recognise and encourage great leadership. Together with your leadership, these reforms will help to ensure that children receive the education they deserve.

A common inspection framework

From September, I will be introducing the new common inspection framework. This builds closely on the changes made in early years inspection over the past few years. When we consulted on the new framework last year, around 80% of the early years sector, including parents who responded, supported this approach.

The common inspection framework emphasises the impact of leaders' work in developing and sustaining an ambitious culture and vision in their setting. Inspectors will also look at leaders' work to provide a broad and balanced curriculum and they will continue to place the effectiveness of safeguarding at the heart of every inspection. When considering children's outcomes, inspectors will want to see that the children currently at the setting are making good progress.

There will be three new judgements: teaching, learning and development; outcomes for children; and personal development, behaviour and welfare. These will all sit alongside the existing leadership and management judgement. Many aspects of inspection will feel the same as before. We have kept what was working and have built on previous improvements. The way in which we inspect and the type of evidence that inspectors look for will not change significantly. We have taken great care to ensure that the judgement about the effectiveness of early years provision in schools aligns with judgements on registered early years provision so that parents can make informed choices across different types of setting.

The inspection of settings registered on the Childcare Register, childminder agencies and children's centres will not be inspected under the common inspection framework. This is because there is no universal inspection of provision registered on the Childcare Register and neither children's centres nor childminding agencies directly provide education.

Changes to the inspection workforce

I am radically reforming Ofsted's inspection workforce for schools and further education and skills providers. From September 2015, the inspection of schools will no longer be outsourced. Instead, we will contract directly with new Ofsted Inspectors, with Her Majesty's Inspectors leading the great majority of inspections.

I understand that not making a decision to bring early years inspections in-house has created a degree of uncertainty in the sector. To align this process alongside schools

and further education and skills providers would have made the project unmanageable. I continue to have discussions about early years inspections and hope to make a decision soon. In the meantime, I have made some changes to strengthen quality assurance arrangements. I am also deploying Her Majesty's Inspectors to provide training for all inspectors, including for the inspection service providers, in order to ensure that my expectations about quality of inspection practice are clear. This includes the current training programme for all inspectors on the new common inspection framework.

Notification of inspection

Following pilot inspections in the spring, I have decided to provide notification of inspection to early years providers. This is something the early years sector has regularly asked me to change. Most settings on non-domestic premises will receive half a day's notice of their inspection. Settings that have been judged inadequate or those that we inspect as a priority arising from a concern will not receive notification of inspection. The arrangements for inspection of childminders will not change under the common inspection framework.

Exceptional leaders

Throughout England today, there are exceptional leaders who are not only improving the prospects of children in their own settings but who are also transforming the life chances of youngsters in underperforming settings elsewhere, particularly in the most challenging areas. I am determined that Ofsted will recognise these system leaders.

From September, when inspectors identify a leader who has played a key role in turning around other institutions, I will send a letter to that leader to acknowledge their exceptional leadership. A copy of this letter will go to the Secretary of State and I will use my Annual Report to feature those leaders who have been recognised in this way.

To be recognised as an exceptional leader, a number of criteria will have to be met. The details of the criteria for early years will be discussed and agreed with the sector.

Complaints about Ofsted

Finally, Ofsted should be transparent in the way it handles complaints made about inspection. We have always handled such complaints fairly and openly, but this September I will go further. Each of Ofsted's regions will set up a high-level scrutiny committee made up of Senior HMI and sector leaders who are not involved in carrying out inspections for Ofsted. These scrutiny panels will assess and rule on the

internal reviews of complaints about inspection. Their decisions will be binding on Ofsted. The membership of these committees will be resolved in the next couple of months so that they can start their work in September. We will publish the names of the committee members on our website in due course.

The impact of these reforms

I hope that these reforms will encourage settings to focus on what is best for their children, rather than concentrating on what they think is required for inspection.

Ofsted's mission remains unchanged. Our inspections will remain as rigorous as ever. As Chief Inspector, I will continue to shine a spotlight on underperformance, even when this is uncomfortable for those involved.

I encourage you to share this letter with your staff and parents. All our inspection materials, further information and some short videos explaining the changes from September 2015 are available on the Ofsted website:

www.gov.uk/guidance/changes-to-education-inspection-from-september-2015 .

Thank you for all the hard work you and your staff are doing to raise standards and improve children's lives. I know you are as committed as I am to improving early education for all.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Wilshaw". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

Sir Michael Wilshaw
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector