

## Guidance on NEU advice with regard to Ofsted inspections

The National Education Union (NEU) recently wrote to its members regarding concerns about Ofsted's new Education Inspection Framework. In short, NEU is concerned that teachers without a paid TLR for leading a subject might find themselves being held accountable by inspectors for curriculum leadership and standards across a subject.

You can read the full detail of NEU's guidance [here](#).

ASCL's advice to members is as follows:

### 'Deep dive' meetings with curriculum leaders

- ASCL agrees that teachers without a paid TLR for leading a subject should be accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team to Ofsted meetings that explore curriculum leadership and standards across a subject. It is important to note that individual teachers are not held to account as such by Ofsted, but we recognise that teachers are likely to benefit from the support of a senior colleague when answering inspectors' questions. It may also be that senior leaders are better placed to answer particular questions.
- In the absence of a teacher leading or coordinating a subject, a school leader should meet with Ofsted to discuss curriculum leadership and standards across the subject.
- Ofsted's [September](#) School Inspection Update newsletter states that: "Inspectors should note that there is no requirement for senior leaders to be present in those meetings, but neither is it prohibited." It is our expectation that Ofsted inspectors **will** allow school leaders to attend meetings in the situation described above. We have written to HMCI Amanda Spielman to seek clarification of this point.
- As a wider point, we are concerned to hear some of these meetings described as 'brutal' by colleagues at NEU. While some of our members have described positive experiences, we have also heard reports of an unnecessarily combative approach taken by some inspectors. Conversations – and indeed the whole inspection process – must always be professional, respectful and mindful of the wellbeing of teachers and leaders. We have made this point in strong terms in our letter to Ofsted.

### Resourcing a high-quality curriculum

- NEU have suggested that school leaders write to their Ofsted Regional Director to "state that the school cannot implement a part, or parts of the quality of education judgement requirements, because it does not have the resources necessary to provide staff with the time and payment to undertake those responsibilities fully." ASCL does **not** advise its members to do this. Given our high stakes accountability system, we do not want schools to make themselves vulnerable by appearing to preempt the outcome of an inspection.
- However, we share NEU's view that resources in the system need to be sufficient for schools to develop and teach a high-quality curriculum. After the General Election, we will be writing to the Secretary of State for Education on behalf of ASCL members to make the case that greater funding is required to ensure that all schools have the capacity and resources they need to develop and deliver a high-quality curriculum.

## Transition arrangements

- We have encouraged Ofsted to use the ‘transition arrangements’ in the inspection handbook to support schools during the first year of this new framework. The handbook states “Inspectors will bear in mind that developing and embedding an effective curriculum takes time, and that leaders may only be partway through the process of adopting or redeveloping a curriculum.” (para 180). Furthermore, it states, “we recognise that not all schools will have had the opportunity to complete the process of adopting or constructing their curriculum fully by September 2019.”
- We are concerned that the transition arrangements may not be being applied as frequently as is necessary in order to support schools during a period of potential change. It takes a long time for schools to change curriculum, with potential implications for staffing structures. Inspectors need to understand this and keep their expectations in line with what can reasonably be achieved, given it is not even a year since Ofsted published its draft handbook for consultation and only just over six months since the final version was published.
- We advise members to remind inspectors to apply the transition arrangements in the handbook where necessary. Further details can be found in both the inspection handbook and Ofsted’s September School Inspection Update.
- Our letter to Ofsted includes these concerns and seeks assurance that the transition arrangements will be used as intended to support the school system. We have also asked Ofsted to consider whether the transition arrangements may need to be extended beyond this year, to ensure schools have sufficient time to develop and embed high-quality, sustainable approaches to the curriculum.

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