

Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education
The Department for Education
SW1P 3BT

Sir Martyn Oliver
His Majesty's Chief Inspector
Ofsted
SW1H 9EX

Tuesday 24 June 2025

Dear Bridget and Martyn,

Yesterday, we wrote jointly with the NASUWT and NEU expressing our collective concern about the decision to press ahead with Ofsted inspections under the new framework in November regardless of the delayed consultation response. This decision will leave school and college leaders with an unfeasibly narrow window of time in which to prepare for a completely new, and radically different inspection framework.

We were already concerned about the timeframe when Ofsted was due to publish its response this term. Given that we now won't have a response until the autumn term, Ofsted and the DfE's determination to start inspecting later that term is entirely unacceptable. It will significantly add to workload pressures, negatively affect leaders' and teachers' wellbeing and mental health, and further undermine trust in the proposed framework.

We have also previously set out, on several occasions, our significant concerns about the proposed five-point grading scale. We do not believe it will be possible for inspectors to make so many finely balanced judgements during the course of a single inspection in a way that is reliable and consistent. Telling schools and colleges that 'secure' is not good enough and they must strive for 'strong' and 'exemplary' will add to the considerable workload and pressures they already face and will further impact recruitment and retention.

As we've previously discussed, our preferred approach is a binary model based on whether schools and colleges have or have not met statutory standards. However, we have also said we would be comfortable with a 'three+' grading model. This approach would consist of three grades for each evaluation area – 'causing concern', 'attention needed' and 'secure' – with exemplary practice in any area optionally included as a narrative description.

We are writing to you further to our joint letter with NASUWT and NEU to inform you ASCL Council recently determined that unless there are changes to both the timeframe of implementation and to the five-point grading scale, then ASCL will consider encouraging its members to withdraw their service from Ofsted as OIs in the autumn term. At its meeting of 20 June the NAHT resolved to do the same. This would be an unprecedented step for ASCL and NAHT and underlines the strength of feeling about the proposed reforms. We very much hope this is not an action we have to take.

In the interest of transparency, we have shared these concerns with Dame Christine Gilbert, who we are pleased has been appointed as Chair of Ofsted's Board from September. We are also sharing this letter with our members.

Yours sincerely



Pepe Di'Iasio
ASCL General Secretary



Paul Whiteman
NAHT General Secretary