

Ofsted: Better Inspection for All

A consultation on Ofsted's proposals for a new framework for the inspection of maintained schools, academies, further education and skills providers, non-association independent schools and registered early years settings.

Consultation document at:

<https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/better-inspection-for-all-consultation-proposals-for-new-framework-for-inspection-of-schools-further>

Response from CILIP (December 2014)

- 1. Do you agree or disagree with the introduction of a new common inspection framework for maintained schools, academies, further education and skills providers, non-association independent schools and registered early years settings from September 2015?**

Agree

Comments: CILIP agrees with the proposal to introduce a common inspection framework so that education provision for all children and learners of the same age is judged by the same criteria. However we believe that library provision should be seen as an integral part of a school's and an FE and skills provider's levels of achievement and should be part of the Ofsted inspection. Too often it does not feature despite being integral to the learning process, and the quality of library provision varies immensely between providers.

School libraries

A good school library is at the heart of the school. Through the knowledge, expertise and skills of the school librarian, children are introduced to, and taught how to access and explore for themselves, the best that has been thought and said in all the National Curriculum subject areas and across the wider curriculum. This has been shown to impact positively on their literacy levels, enjoyment of reading, information literacy skills, confidence and self-esteem. However, there is no statutory duty to provide school libraries in England. Whether children and young people have access to a school library and the benefits it brings is entirely dependent upon head teachers. There are currently no government statistics available that give a comprehensive picture of school library provision, which makes attempting to improve it more difficult.

Further Education libraries

The library and its resources should also form part of the judgement on the quality and enhancement of student learning opportunities in FE institutions. An

outstanding FE provider should be able to present evidence that its students have access to and use current and relevant library stock, have access to appropriate electronic resources, and that good digital/information literacy programmes are in place so students can not only pass their course but develop wider skills which will prepare them for higher level study or for the job market.

CILIP would welcome working with Ofsted to help decide the criteria by which a school and FE library and its staff should be assessed.

2. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed ‘effective leadership and management’ judgement?

Agree

Comments: Whether or not a library is an effective one, able to contribute fully to the learning outcomes of a school or college, is dependent upon the effectiveness of leadership and management within an institution.

Effective leaders, managers and governors will ensure that school library activities are integrated within a school’s plan for teaching and learning and that it is sufficiently resourced so that it can support educational attainment. The library’s contribution to pupils’ progress will be enhanced if librarians are fully integrated into the management structure.

Providing, planning and managing a suitable curriculum

We welcome the proposal that inspectors should make a judgment on the breadth, depth and relevance of the curriculum and how far it meets any relevant statutory requirements, as well as the needs and interests of children, learners, employers and the wider community. A well managed and resourced library underpins and enriches the curriculum, supporting both teaching and learning. Where professional librarians have been integrated into the management structure of a school or college they can assist with the planning and management of the curriculum and other learning programmes.

Preparing children and learners for the next stage in their education or training

We agree that a judgement should be made on how well prepared children and learners are for the next stage in their education or training. Good school libraries provide opportunities for extended and complimentary studies that aid progression between Key Stages and into further and higher education, as librarians have the expertise to develop the independent learning skills pupils need to succeed throughout their school life and beyond.

Having good information literacy skills makes a huge difference to students transitioning between stages and is central to the university learning experience. Despite this research has demonstrated the existence of a skills gap, with students

arriving at university lacking the information literacy skills required to locate and engage with resources such as academic journals.¹

CILIP defines information literacy as “knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner”. Children and young people need to be taught information literacy skills to enable them to access and use information in all media, for learning and for life. Without developing such skills today’s children struggle to progress their education and run the risk of being excluded and disenfranchised from day-to-day life as adults. Librarians are contributing to essential information literacy work in schools and colleges by teaching information literacy skills, motivating independent inquiry and promoting critical and creative reading and thinking.

Narrowing gaps in achievement

We agree that any judgement of the effectiveness of leadership and management in a school or college should include a consideration of how successfully gaps in achievement between different groups of children and learners are being narrowed. However, this should also include an evaluation of the library’s contribution in this area.

There is a positive correlation between a good school library and student attainment, achievement and motivation. There have been numerous reports and research projects both nationally and internationally that support this proposition.² A school library programme that is sufficiently staffed, resourced and funded can lead to higher student achievement regardless of the socio-economic or educational levels of a community. This can be achieved by offering more personalised, differentiated and innovative support to different user groups. For example, a National Literacy Trust survey carried out in 2012 received compelling evidence of the role of school libraries in engaging boys in reading to tackle the problem of boys’ underachievement in reading when compared to girls in 76% of UK schools.³

Promoting equality and diversity and tackling bullying and discrimination

The role the school library plays in promoting equality and diversity is often overlooked. Importantly in a school environment a library is a neutral space where children are valued as individuals and where they can access reading materials that support their diverse needs and interest. The school librarian is also key in forging partnerships with neighbouring schools and other organisations which helps to create the school as a community hub.

A good school library will be a safe and secure environment for learning during and outside school hours, where help, resources and advice are freely available to all. Evidence presented to the School Library Commission (2010) suggests that the

¹ Cited in Waller, R et al (2013) *Developing the Information Literacy Skills of New Students: Bridging the Gap Between School and University*. Keele: Keele University <http://tinyurl.com/cjj9ofd>

² For evidence see Libraries All Party Parliamentary Group, 2014. *The Beating Heart of the School*. London: CILIP

³ Clark, C and Burke, D., 2012. *Boys Reading Commission 2012*. London: National Literacy Trust

school library has a significant role to play for children who, for a variety of reasons, find the school environment particularly unwelcoming.

Likewise, a good FE library will play an important part in ensuring equality and diversity is supported throughout a college, and that bullying and discrimination is challenged, by, for example, providing access to a diverse range of stock, ensuring that resource provision meets accessibility requirements and providing advice and guidance to learners and staff on staying safe online.

3. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed ‘quality of teaching, learning and assessment’ judgement?

Agree

Comments: We welcome the emphasis on the effectiveness of learning outcomes as well as on teaching when judging quality. A well managed school library supports both teaching and learning. In the best cases, where the library is fully integrated into the life and ethos of the school, the benefits a good professional partnership with the teaching staff can bring to the quality of teaching and learning should not be underestimated. Numerous studies have concluded that a measurable improvement in children’s educational attainment is achieved when librarians play active and collaborative roles with teachers.⁴ Good school librarians help teachers to introduce children to new learning experiences based on access to a wide range of content. The librarian will also support the teacher in developing and/or refreshing their own knowledge of a subject.

We believe that an assessment of how effectively information literacy skills are promoted across the curriculum should inform judgements on the teaching and learning of “skills necessary to function as an economically active member of today’s British society”.

We welcome the focus on the importance of engaging with parents, carers and employers when carrying out assessments of teaching and learning strategies and outcomes.

4. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed ‘personal development, behaviour and welfare’ judgement?

Agree

Comments: We agree that judgements should be made on “personal development” and “welfare”, as well as behaviour, rather than just ‘behaviour and safety’, which is the case at present.

⁴ A summary of the evidence is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/cdj6rgz>

E-safety and bullying

We applaud the proposal to judge the extent to which a provision is successfully promoting or supporting learners' understanding of how to safely use the internet and social media.

E-safety issues are part of the wider remit of teaching information literacy skills and good librarians are educating learners and the wider school and college community about internet safety, including the safe use of social media. School and FE librarians often contribute to written internet safety policies for their institutions, recognising that children and young people are best protected when they are given access to the internet while at the same time being taught how to differentiate the good from the bad.

With the growth in electronic communications and the increasing mobility of the internet, online bullying is becoming an increasing issue for schools and colleges. This is a particularly invidious form of bullying as although persistent it can be barely visible to adults. School and FE librarians have a definite role to play in the education and welfare of not only learners but also staff and the wider community about internet safety.

Supporting personal, social, moral, cultural and spiritual development

We welcome the proposal for inspection reports to include a judgement on a provision's support for personal, social and cultural development and the opportunities it provides for accessing cultural experiences. Good school libraries can play an important role in delivering this. The library is often a place where heritage and culture is celebrated through activities organised by school librarians, such as author visits and reading clubs. A good library service also provides every learner with access to reading materials to support their emotional, cultural, leisure and wider needs.

The potential to be "a successful learner"

We'd like to see the inclusion of the phrase "life-long learner" as well as a "successful" one. A skilled library practitioner with responsibility and time will help children and young people to become lifelong learners and to meet the future job market's need for problem solvers and independent thinkers.

5. Do you agree or disagree with the proposed 'outcomes for children and learners' judgement?

Agree

Comments: Library and information professionals in schools and FE colleges will have evidence to inform judgments on "other learning outcomes" for children and learners.

6. Do you agree or disagree with the additional judgements proposed for the common inspection framework?

Agree

We agree with separate reports for Early Years, sixth forms and FE and skills providers. As stated above, a judgement should be made on the suitability and adequacy of library services for each provision. CILIP would welcome working with Ofsted to help decide the criteria by which a library serving these different settings should be assessed.

7. Do you agree or disagree that Ofsted should continue to report on the curriculum as part of the judgement on leadership and management?

Agree

Comments: CILIP can see benefits in a separate judgement on the quality of the curriculum as it is such an important component to how children and learners engage in learning. With academies and free schools being exempt from the National Curriculum, it's important to have a judgement on what they've chosen to include in their curriculum.

A good school library supports teaching and learning in all areas of the National Curriculum, not just English, as well as the wider school curriculum. Likewise, a good FE library is a core curriculum support service.

CILIP believes that every child and young person is entitled to high quality and wide-ranging library and classroom resources to support their curriculum which have been carefully selected to meet the needs of their age, learning style and ability and organised to provide easy access and availability. We also believe that every school's teaching team is entitled to a designated library professional who understands the curriculum and pastoral needs of teaching staff and who will support these with managed resources, and who will collaborate with staff on curriculum planning and development and be involved in teaching.

8. Do you agree or disagree with the proposals for short inspections of good maintained schools and academies?

Agree

Comments: The proposals to reduce the number of inspections a good maintained school or academy receives are welcome. However we are concerned that, according to the consultation document, short inspections will not consider "personal development, behaviour and welfare". Some provisions that are deemed "good" or "outstanding" under the current inspection framework may not be "good" or "outstanding" under the new criteria that places greater emphasis on this important area.

9. Do you agree or disagree with the proposal for short inspections of FE and skills providers.

Agree

Comment: The comments outlined in response to question 8 are also pertinent to further education and skills providers.

10. Do you agree or disagree with the proposals for non-association independent schools?

Agree

Comments: For reasons of equity we see advantages in all independent schools being inspected under the common inspection framework, not just “non-association” schools.

11. Are there any specific changes to the way that inspectors gather evidence that you think could make our judgement more reliable and robust?

Comments: We repeat our call for library services to be included in the Ofsted inspection framework.

The new National Curriculum calls for every school to provide a library facility. While this is welcome, provision currently varies from excellent to invisible, with many head teachers perceiving the library as low priority.

Despite Ofsted’s acknowledgement that school libraries are an important resource that should be used effectively, schools that gain an excellent assessment in an Ofsted inspection can do so without a school library. Ofsted inspections should gather evidence of library provision so its impact can be assessed. The assessment should include criteria demanding that:

- Standards of library provision are specified
- Library staff are properly trained to manage the library and undertake CPD to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date
- School librarianship training includes child development and an understanding of pedagogy.

Ensuring that the library is a part of the judgement on the quality of student learning opportunities would give parents/guardians confidence that their children are receiving a holistic and robust education and give assurance to learners in FE colleges.