



Department  
for Education

Independent Education Unit  
Level 3, Riverside  
Bishopsgate House  
Feethams  
Darlington  
DL1 5QE

Date: 29 March 2023

Vanessa Ward  
Chief Inspector  
Independent Schools Inspectorate ("ISI")  
Cap House,  
9-12 Long Lane,  
London EC1A 9HA

Dear Vanessa

I am writing to formally re-appoint the ISI under section 106 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 to continue to undertake inspections of independent schools which are, or whose head teacher is, a full member of one of the following associations: GSA, HMC, IAPS, ISA, the Society of Heads, AGBIS and ISBA. Your approvals under s87A of the Children Act 1989 and s49(4) of the Childcare Act 2006 to inspect boarding and EYFS of the same schools will continue.

The agreement which is annexed to this letter will continue to apply unless either the Secretary of State or ISI gives at least one year's notice to terminate the agreement (or unless both agree to terminate the agreement). Before giving notice to terminate the agreement, the party giving it must give the other reasonable warning of its intention to do so. Both parties agree to make every effort to seek to resolve any issues that may give rise to the party in question intending to give notice.

DfE currently intend to review ISI's approval under section 106 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 in 2029 and following this review any proposed changes to the agreement, which is annexed to this letter, will be need to be agreed between DfE and ISI. If DfE revoke ISI's approval given under either section 106 of the Education Act 2008 or under section 87A of the Children Act 1989, its policy is that it will give at least one year's notice of its intention to revoke.

Yours sincerely

Independent Education Division

**Agreement between the Department for Education and the Independent Schools Inspectorate in respect of the approval of the Independent Schools Inspectorate under section 106 of the Education and Skills Act 2008 and as a person appointed under section 87A of the Children Act 1989, and additional responsibilities as agreed**

**Formal approval**

1. The Secretary of State recognises the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) as a body approved for the inspection of registered independent schools in England. Schools which are, or whose head teacher is, a full member of one of the following associations: GSA, HMC, IAPS, ISA, the Society of Heads, AGBIS, ISBA (herein after called the associations), may be inspected by ISI under s109(3) of the Education and Skills Act 2008.
2. Since September 2008, ISI has been approved under section 49(4) of the Childcare Act 2006 for the inspection of registered Early Years Foundation Stage provision.
3. Since 1 September 2011, ISI has been appointed under section 87A of the Children Act 1989 for the inspection of boarding welfare provision. The Secretary of State remains satisfied that ISI is an appropriate person to determine whether the welfare of children provided with accommodation by schools under section 87 of the Children Act 1989 is adequately safeguarded and promoted whilst they are accommodated by them. ISI, by virtue of this agreement, acts as an inspector for other purposes in relation to schools to which section 87(1) applies.
4. As a person appointed for the purposes of section 87A of the Children Act 1989, ISI may enter into agreements with any school which provides accommodation for children and which is, or whose head is, a full member of one of the associations. Where that agreement provides for ISI to have the function of determining whether the school is complying with its duty, under section 87(1) of the Children Act 1989, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children accommodated by the school, ISI will notify Ofsted that the agreements in respect of such schools have come into effect, and will copy that notification to DfE.
5. As a condition of approval under s106, ISI must continue to make all reasonable efforts to meet the terms of the Department for Education (DfE) Advice Approval of Independent Inspectorate. In addition, ISI and DfE agree that it is appropriate to enter into a memorandum of understanding to make additional provision supplementing this agreement. They will use their reasonable endeavours to agree such a memorandum of understanding and where one is agreed, to comply with it.
6. ISI will be responsible for any reasonable costs incurred in meeting the requirements set out herein.
7. ISI will inform DfE of schools that have been accredited by associations. Schools applying for accreditation will remain with Ofsted for inspection purposes until ISI has informed DfE of the transfer. Schools will not be permitted to transfer unless they met all the independent school standards at their last published inspection, or have provided satisfactory evidence to DfE following the inspection. Schools leaving their

association immediately move back to Ofsted (unless simultaneously being accredited by an alternative association).

8. Where a non-association school and an association school amalgamate, ISI will advise DfE whether the non-association school will be accredited to the relevant association or absorbed into the accreditation of the association school.
9. DfE retains the right, in exceptional circumstances, to ask Ofsted to undertake an inspection of a school normally inspected by ISI, and will inform ISI of its intention to do so where this is the case.

### **Independence**

10. ISI will ensure that it maintains its independence from the associations, and will publish a statement of its independence.
11. ISI will appoint a minimum of five and a maximum of eleven independent board members in accordance with its Articles of Association. The Directors shall ensure the Board includes individuals with an appropriate range of skills and experience, commensurate with ISI's function and purpose, including in education, inspection and safeguarding.
12. ISI will ensure that at least two of the independent board members have no connection, including financial investment or interest, with inspected schools or the body/ies which established the inspectorate or the associations.
13. ISI will publish on its website the names of Board members and make available on request to DfE a register recording their interests in ISI inspected schools (employment, governor positions etc).
14. ISI will seek the Secretary of State's approval before appointing any new Chief Inspector or making any change to the composition of the pool from which inspection teams are drawn.
15. No association shall seek to influence the conduct of any ISI inspection, including the composition of the inspection team and the conclusions of the inspectors. Any attempt at undue influence shall be promptly reported by the Chief Inspector of ISI to the Chair of the Board of Directors of ISI, and the actions taken in response to any such complaint shall be reported to DfE.

### **Inspection Framework**

16. Inspections will be carried out in accordance with ISI's framework (the framework), which will include a requirement to report on schools' compliance with the Independent School Standards and, where applicable, with the Early Years Foundation Stage provision for pupils. In addition, when ISI carry out an inspection of a boarding school under section 87A of the Children Act 1989, it must assess whether the school is adequately safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the children for

<sup>1</sup>[The Independent Educational Provision in England \(Provision of Information\) and Non-Maintained Special Schools \(England\) and Independent School Standards \(Amendment\) Regulations 2018](#)

whom accommodation is provided (including schools where all boarders are 16 or over) by reference to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.

17. The framework should be agreed by DfE. Any subsequent changes to the framework must continue to enable ISI to report effectively on all the relevant standards and must be agreed with DfE. ISI will make any alterations to the framework needed to maintain alignment with any new regulations or standards.
18. ISI will publish the framework on its website. The published framework will include, but not be limited to, reporting on the relevant standards, composition of inspection teams, Inspection timelines, notice periods, key judgement areas, methodology for evaluating provisions and arrangements for publishing reports. The framework may also include reporting on other matters as determined by ISI after consultation with its stakeholders.
19. The framework should also include reporting on the extent to which a school complies with Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.
20. ISI will consult schools and DfE on substantive changes to its frameworks and DfE will offer timely comments on any changes proposed.

### **Inspection commissioning**

21. ISI will send a schedule of inspections for DfE approval at least one term in advance. Any request from a school to defer an inspection should be agreed in advance with DfE. DfE may request an inspection to be deferred or brought forward from the schedule where circumstances require this.
22. Where relevant, ISI will align education and welfare inspections, and inspections of registered EYFS as much as possible.
23. ISI will provide DfE with updates at least monthly during term time of inspections scheduled and completed within the term, including inspections commissioned by DfE outside of the regular cycle.
24. ISI will carry out emergency inspections commissioned by DfE, and will discuss with DfE where there are any questions about the commission, its supporting evidence or the timescales.
25. ISI will carry out progress monitoring inspections when commissioned by DfE.
26. ISI will carry out material change inspections when commissioned by DfE.
27. ISI will evaluate action plans when commissioned by DfE, following action by DfE in relation to regulatory failings.
28. ISI will provide witness evidence and representation at tribunal hearings, and provide inspectorate representation at local authority strategy meetings and serious case reviews when agreed with DfE.

## **Inspection reporting**

29. ISI will publish inspection reports in a timely manner for regular cycle inspections, progress monitoring inspections, other additional inspections and emergency inspections.
30. ISI will seek advice from DfE where there are doubts as to whether publication is advisable, for example where a report contains personal or sensitive information.
31. Before publication, ISI will send reports to schools to allow them to check for factual accuracy.

## **Complaints handling**

32. ISI will publish and implement a policy which is agreed with DfE for handling complaints about ISI inspections, to include consideration by an independent adjudicator where necessary. This policy should make provision for the making of complaints about ISI.
33. The ISI complaints process will include provision for the DfE to consider postponement of publication of a report on request from a complainant. ISI will notify the DfE if it anticipates that there may be delay to publication for any other reason.
34. ISI will direct concerns about schools to DfE for consideration and will forward any concerns received directly by ISI to the DfE for consideration. DfE will assess whether the concerns so forwarded indicate that the standards may not be being met and, if so, whether an inspection or any other action may be commissioned.

## **Quality Assurance**

33. ISI will provide DfE with a report on a termly basis to provide management information about the inspectorate's performance.
34. DfE will review each inspection report received from ISI and may seek clarification from ISI about any issues which arise having reviewed such a report. ISI will respond to any such requests for clarification in an appropriately timely fashion.
35. ISI will meet with DfE at least once every three months to discuss ISI's performance.
36. ISI will agree to Ofsted monitoring of inspections and reports, where this is requested by DfE. Any monitoring will cover the requirements set out herein and ISI's own framework as agreed with DfE. Under ministerial direction, ISI and Ofsted currently have a joint working arrangement based around the exchange of knowledge and understanding, with a view to informing best practice in each organisation.
37. ISI will provide Ofsted with details of scheduled inspections including inspections commissioned by DfE outside of the regular cycle, inspection documentation such as frameworks and guidance for inspectors, and other information as reasonably requested by Ofsted and agreed by DfE.

## **Review**

38. ISI will keep the quality and reliability of its inspections and reports under rigorous review and take all necessary actions to improve quality and remedy deficiency.
39. Any questions arising on a day-to-day basis about the operation of this agreement will be taken forward between the Chief Inspector of ISI and the Independent Education Unit at DfE.
40. DfE intends to formally review the approval of ISI in 2029, but may do so earlier if it considers this appropriate.
41. Any future changes to this agreement will be discussed fully between DfE and ISI.
42. This agreement will continue unless one years notice is given of termination by either party, subject to both parties making every effort to resolve difficulties leading to termination including, if appropriate, formal warning of the intention to terminate.