

Response to Ofsted consultation on draft inspection framework

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The Society of Authors exists to protect the rights and further the interests of authors. It has 10,500 members writing in all areas of the profession.

The SoA's Educational Writers Group (EWG) serves the 800+ members who create materials for learners and teachers.

We welcome Ofsted's plan to create a new inspection framework, and particularly the proposal to focus on the 'substance of education' and include a new 'quality of education' judgement in inspections.

We believe that in recent years the curriculum and Ofsted's approach has been too focused on exams at the expense of a well-rounded education that encourages interest in learning and develops creativity. We hope that the new emphasis on examining the overall breadth and quality of education will go some way to address this imbalance.

It is not clear exactly what benchmarks inspectors will use to make judgements about how appropriate, worthwhile and educationally sound a school's curriculum is. We would appreciate more clarity on this question.

We also support the emphasis on teaching a 'full range of subjects'. We hope that this will help reverse the declining emphasis placed on creative subjects in schools.

In recent years we have seen a narrowing of the curriculum and a year-on-year decrease in the number of students taking creative subjects, largely due to the expansion of the EBacc which excludes creative subjects. We hope that a new approach from Ofsted, which recognises the value of a broad education, will encourage more schools to invest in creative subjects. It is essential that this commitment to valuing a 'full range of subjects' isn't neglected by inspectors.

We applaud the emphasis placed on reading in the draft framework, and particularly the outcome that students should 'read widely and often, with fluency and comprehension'. In order for this to happen, schools need well-stocked libraries, a plentiful supply of textbooks and further teaching resources. Budget cuts have meant that many schools are unable to purchase the resources they require, and teachers are struggling in the classroom as a result. We would like to see Ofsted assess the quality of teaching resources provided by the school as part of its assessment of Quality of Teaching.

A school library with a trained librarian is a vital part of improving reading ability. We support the Great School Libraries campaign, which includes the aim for Ofsted to only designate a school as 'outstanding' if it has a school library.

We are impressed by the 'Overview of research' document which accompanies the draft inspection framework. However it is unclear exactly what status this document will have under the new system, as it is not mentioned in the draft framework. For example, will schools have access to it? Will it be used by inspectors? We would encourage Ofsted to highlight the research contained in this document to teachers and inspectors.

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