

## **In the know ...**

### **Schools to get curriculum review grace period under new Ofsted inspection framework**

By Freddie Whittaker

Schools will be given the chance to implement a new curriculum before being judged on it under new plans announced by Ofsted today.

The watchdog plans to build in a grace period of at least a year into its proposals to rate schools on what they teach, rather than the outcomes of pupils.

Under the proposal, schools which have a “plan” to review their curriculum and can demonstrate “genuine action” to do so will not be downgraded. This system will remain in place until at least September 2020.

In its response to the consultation on its new inspection framework, due to come into force this September, Ofsted has confirmed it will proceed with plans to replace its current “quality of teaching, learning and assessment” judgment with one overall “quality of education” judgment.

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector of schools, has placed a greater emphasis on the curriculum since she took up the role in early 2017, and says the new framework will reward schools for the “substance and integrity” of the education they provide.

But the expected scale of the change to the way inspectors will assess schools and the pace of its implementation had prompted concerns that schools would struggle to change their ways in time.

In its response, Ofsted said it recognised “that the shift in focus may mean that some providers want to review their curriculum”, and that such a change would take “time and careful consideration”.

“This is why we plan to phase in how we use the ‘intent’ grade descriptors in the ‘quality of education’ judgement,” the response states.

“While we are phasing it in, the judgement will not be negatively affected if it is clear to an inspector that leaders have a plan for updating the curriculum and are taking genuine action to do so. We will review this transitional phase in the summer of 2020.”

Nick Brook, from school leaders’ union NAHT, welcomed the change, but called on Ofsted to clarify exactly what it would be looking for in terms of a “plan” or “action” from schools.

“We expressed concerns about the lack of time that schools would have to get up to speed with the new requirements,” he said.

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“At that time we were calling for a pause on the implementation of the framework and this was as far as Ofsted were prepared to move on that particular issue. It's recognising that schools will need time to actually get to where they need to be, and that's certainly welcome that Ofsted are going to have a more flexible interpretation around that particular aspect of it.

“However, what we'd want to push a little bit further on is understanding what will constitute [evidence] that schools are moving in the right direction.”

Geoff Barton, from ASCL, said he was “pleased that Ofsted has indicated that it will give schools time to make changes to the curriculum without being negatively judged”.

“However, we are not convinced that its intention to review this transitional phase in the summer of 2020 is long enough to make and embed changes to the curriculum, and we think this period may need to be extended.”

Gareth Jones