



2021-0053015RWPO

Robin Walker MP

Minister of State for School Standards

Sanctuary Buildings Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe

Ms Helen Osgood,
National Officer, Voice Community
By email: hosgood@community-tu.org

20 January 2022

Dear Ms Osgood,

Thank you for your letter of 13 December, on behalf of yourself and Assistant General Secretary Deborah Lawson, regarding Ofsted inspection visits.

I am grateful to you both for taking the time to meet with me to discuss your concerns about the education sector, particularly in the context of the Omicron variant and its impact on schools.

With regard to Ofsted inspections, there are no plans to suspend school inspections at this time. Inspection by Ofsted serves an important purpose in providing independent assurance about the quality of education and safeguarding in schools. That assurance is particularly important in the context of the pandemic, given the impact it has had and continues to have on pupils' education.

As you may be aware, on the final week of the autumn term 2021, the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector suspended inspections, recognising the immediate priority of dealing with the Omicron variant. Ofsted additionally confirmed that it would not inspect secondary schools during the first week of term in January, as schools undertook on-site pupil testing.

In addition, the Government announced that Ofsted would not ask school leaders, who are also Ofsted inspectors, to undertake inspections, and that this would be a temporary measure from the start of January. This meant they could focus entirely on their leadership responsibilities at such a critical time.

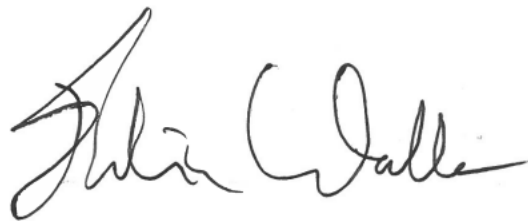
Ofsted will also encourage early years settings, schools and colleges that are significantly impacted by COVID-related staff absence to ask for their inspection to be deferred.

Ofsted's deferral policy provided reassurance to schools, colleges and early years settings that have been significantly impacted by staff absence in recent weeks. That policy remains in place and Ofsted will continue to remind providers about it for the remainder of this half-term.

On 19 January the Government announced that Ofsted will invite those who are able to inspect again to do so from 31 January. As has always been the case, it will be for leaders to decide whether to offer their services to Ofsted.

We will continue to keep these arrangements under review and engage closely with Ofsted and those in the sector and will respond and reassure wherever possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Waller'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Julian' and the last name 'Waller' clearly distinguishable.