
Ofsted Strategic Plan: 2007–2010

Response to Ofsted's online consultation, May 2007

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I. General comments

1. **Clarity of document**

The *Strategic Plan 2007–2010* provides a clear indication of the starting points, priorities and aspirations of the new inspectorate. The extensive reach of the revised Ofsted is adequately reflected in terms of general principles and plans with the background duly set out. The framework (*What We Know, What We Will Do, What Will Happen As a Result By 2010: Possible Targets*) for displaying the priorities provides a lucid overview of Ofsted's strategic direction.

2. **Anything to be added**

The internal management task of combining the work of four predecessor inspectorates is highly complex and challenging and it may be helpful if some of these issues, and strategic responses to them, were better highlighted in the plan.

The main pressures on the different types of provision now covered by Ofsted could be spelt out to demonstrate where the greatest rigour and priority action needs to be applied as this should influence key actions over the three-year period covered by the plan.

3. **Comments on priorities**

Aspect applauds the emphasis given to system improvement in Ofsted giving paramount importance to "better outcomes – an organisation with impact". The key purpose of inspection must be to help institutions work more effectively and it is in its ability to do this that the success of Ofsted should be judged.

Nevertheless, Aspect suggests that the priority of a sharper focus on inspecting weaker provision should not detract from the more constructive roles that Ofsted can play and has played in terms of identifying and disseminating good practice and sponsoring early intervention to avoid weak provision developing.

With respect to the former, Aspect welcomes Ofsted's intention to create an electronic library of specific instances of 'good practice' and not rely on stakeholders finding the relevant sections within its publications.

Regarding issues concerning Ofsted's role in early intervention, the key is its practical ability to pinpoint causes and provide definitions of features that seem to indicate potential weakness in provision.

4. **Suggestions about being kept informed**

Aspect is informed through existing consultative fora which should be retained and developed, and the approaches to communications set out in the plan are all sound in general terms. The use of survey feedback is highlighted strongly in the plan and while the targets are commendable, Aspect would like to remind Ofsted of the high quality systems previously operating within the social services inspectorate from which lessons may be drawn.

5. **Further comments**

It is impossible not to be concerned about the possible detrimental impact of the forthcoming comprehensive spending review on the ability of Ofsted to deliver its already demanding agenda. Aspect hopes that in the event of financial cutbacks, Ofsted retains the priority focus of promoting 'better outcomes' and that its positive trends are retained.

Finally, Aspect seeks reassurance that Ofsted's quality assurance and enhancement programmes can and will be applied with a high level of consistency to the work of all inspectors as the balance between core and contracted staff potentially shifts over the coming period.

Copies of Ofsted's strategic plan are available at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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