

## NGA London Regional Conference

*Good and outstanding schools –  
governance makes a difference*

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# Overview

## **An opportunity to:**

- update on the common inspection framework
- identify what school inspections tell us
- reflect on the role of governors in contributing to good and outstanding leadership and management
  - key points from the school inspection handbook

### **School governance has never been more important**

- Schools are subject to sharper accountability for the outcomes of their pupils
- Our increasingly autonomous school system requires highly effective governance, holding all leaders to account robustly
- Effective governance is an intrinsic part of good leadership
- Good governance is not universal
- Governors have more autonomy and responsibility

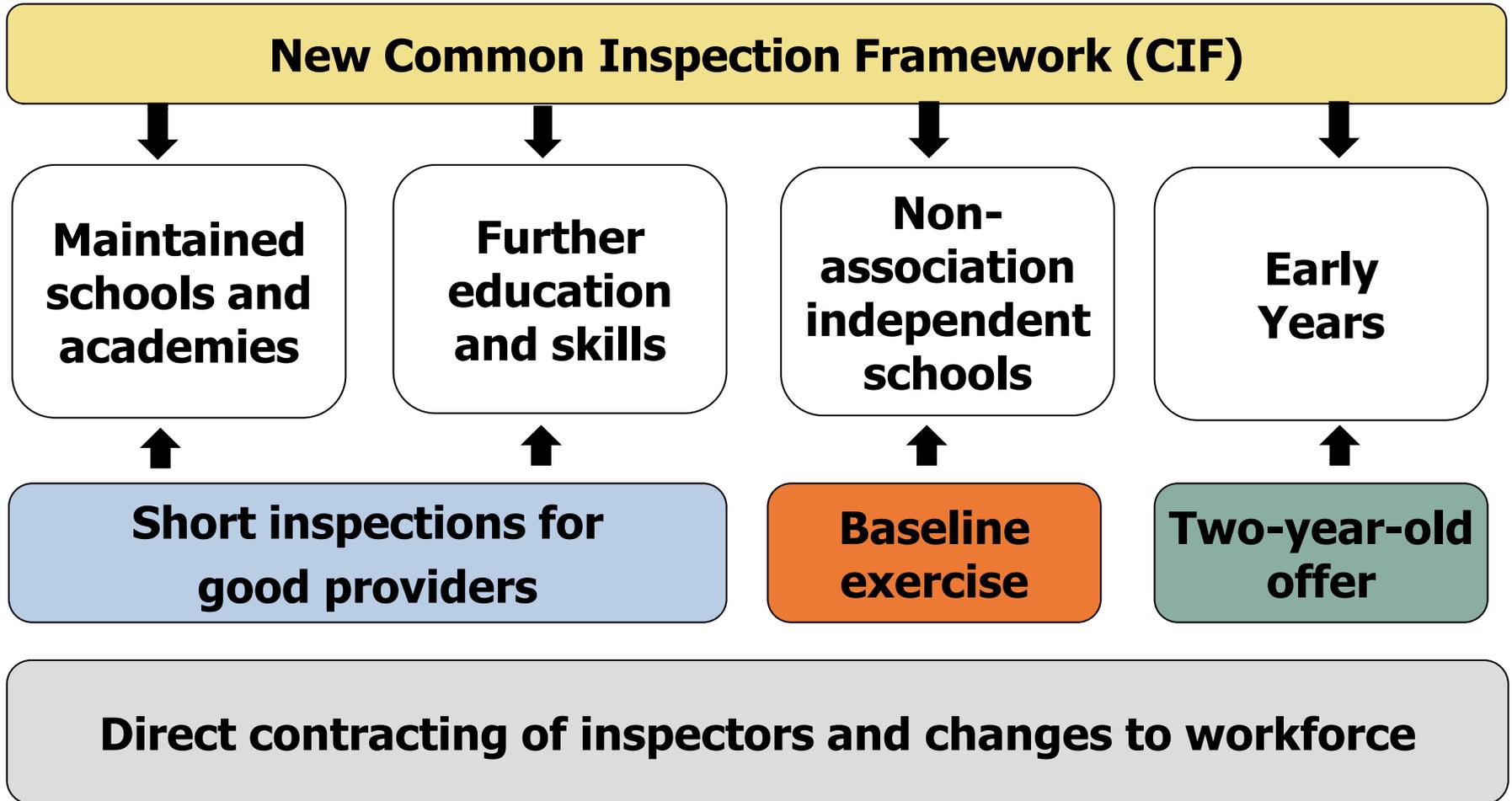
# **The Common Inspection Framework**



## Principles of inspection reform

- Inspect the **right things in the right way**
- Provide **comparable** and **accurate information** for parents, carers, learners and employers to inform their choices
- Deliver **timely** inspections where there are signs of decline or improvement
- Have a **proportionate** approach to inspections
- Ensure rigorous **quality** of all inspections

# 'Better inspection for all'



# 'Better inspection for all' consultation



- **Very large response:**
  - 4,400 through the online consultation
  - 330 attendees at regional events
  - 115 parents and 180 pupils at focus groups
- **Responses highly positive** – our proposals supported by all groups
- **Short inspection pilots** – to test the methodology. Positive feedback. More pilots taking place.
- **Taking on board** – views from the consultation and feedback from the pilots.

# New Common Inspection Framework



- for schools, non-association independent schools, further education and skills providers and registered early years providers
- under it – four graded judgements across all remits:
  - leadership and management
  - teaching, learning and assessment
  - personal development, behaviour and welfare
  - outcomes for children and learnersand greater emphasis on safeguarding and curriculum
- will provide greater clarity, coherence and comparability for users, learners, parents and employers

# Short inspections for good providers



## **Frequent, shorter inspections for good schools, academies and FE and skills providers – every three years approximately**

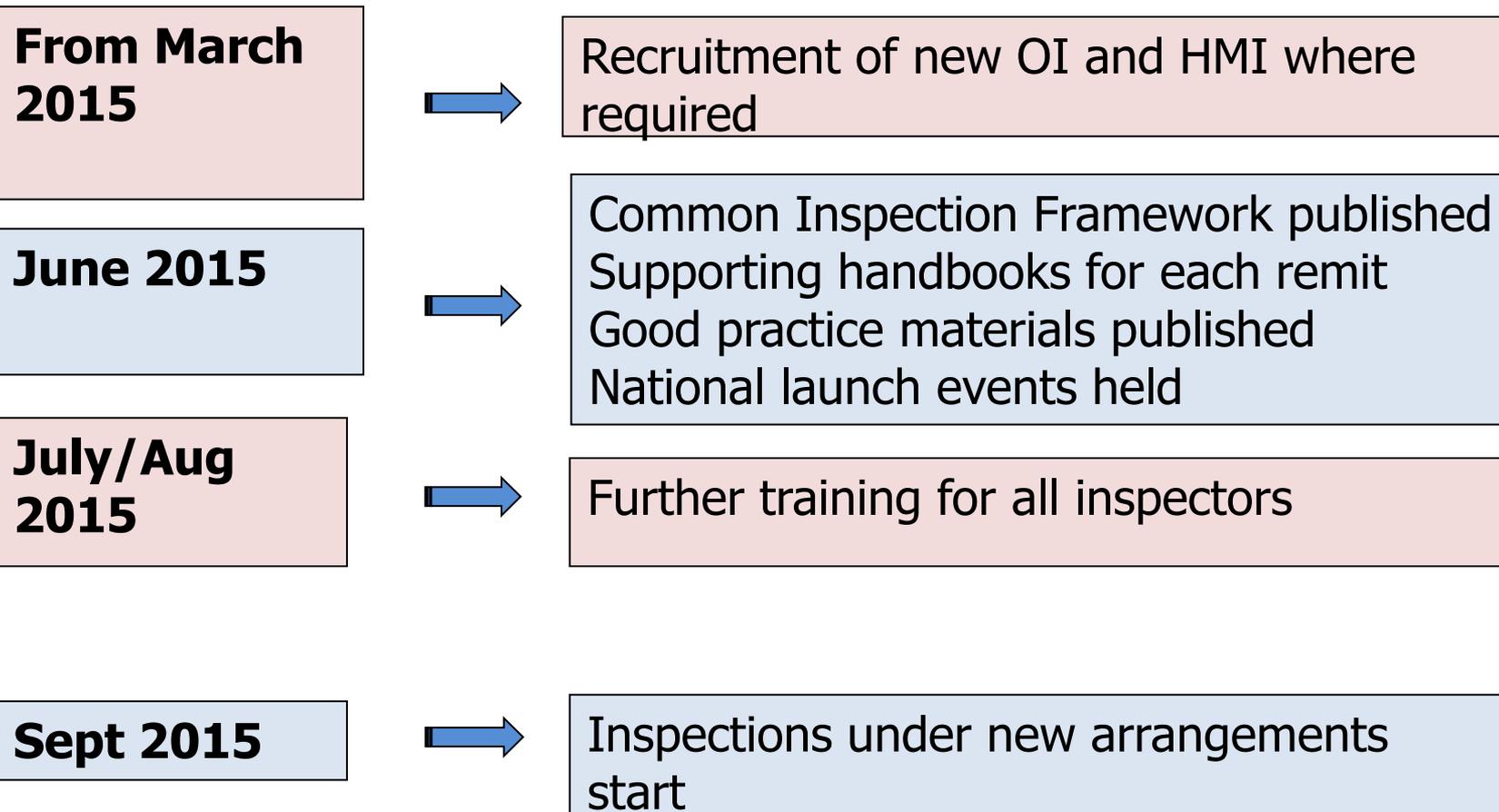
- More proportionate: the right sort of inspections at the right time
- Designed to check if the quality of provision is being sustained, and leaders have the capacity to drive improvement
- Help support rising standards with greater professional dialogue
- Regular reporting to parents, carers, learners and employers
- Identify decline early and give schools and providers opportunity to demonstrate improvement sooner.

# Commitment to quality and consistency

## **From September, we will :**

- expect a higher standard of inspections and consistency among inspectors when making judgements
- place more emphasis on directly providing high-quality ongoing training, mentoring and development for all inspectors
- quickly and fairly address underperformance, putting in place training where needed or terminating contracts where performance does not improve
- invest significant time to oversee quality and consistency in regions to ensure all providers have a positive experience of inspection.

## Next steps



**What does inspection tell us?**



## Inspectors found governors were very well informed



'The governing body **seeks the views** of parents, carers and pupils and **uses the information** obtained to inform the school's self-evaluation and the school development plan.'

'Governors have a **good awareness** of the school and a clear view of the **strategic direction** of the school.'

'Governors **carry out their own monitoring of the school's plans** and use this to evaluate how well all aspects are doing. They clearly **understand how well pupils are progressing**, making it their business to **probe the school** about any concerns, should they arise.'

'Governors are closely involved in **self-evaluation** procedures, ask penetrating questions and expect and **receive regular reports** and presentations from staff to inform their strategic decision making.'

## Governors in know how to hold leaders to account and have the right skills



'The governors receive regular and comprehensive reports from the headteacher and have also requested that **heads of subject areas** attend meetings of the governing body where they are challenged to explain any remaining gaps in attainment for different groups of students.'

'The members of the governing body are extremely well informed and possess a **range of skills and expertise** to challenge leaders and managers about the performance of the school - there are many established members who are critical friends of the school's leaders and have effectively challenged many aspects of the school's performance including the **new curriculum developments**.'

'The **Chair of the Governing Body** is capable and astute. He has used his wealth of business experience to support the school in challenging underperformance.'

'Governors have an excellent understanding of the link between **performance management and the salary structure**.'

# Some characteristics from reports

## Governors:



- understand their role and how it complements that of leaders
- have a range of skills that brings something extra to the school and to develop a strategic vision
- have technical knowledge – of education, data, statutory responsibilities and performance management in particular
- want to see and hear from middle and senior leaders about their work - and ask searching questions of them
- have the skills and time to be a visible presence in the school
- set challenging targets for performance at all levels, including in achievement, teaching and senior management work
- can form their own analysis of the school's performance without relying solely on the headteacher

# A model of what goes wrong in declining schools: problems start when processes to ensure accountability or drive change start to falter

## Factors influencing accountability:

- lack data skills and training
- excessive trust or too friendly
- lack of external evidence, eg SIP
- headteacher provides unbalanced information
- lack of own monitoring and information
- misplaced loyalty

Over-reliant on headteacher for  
knowledge of the school

## Factors restricting capacity, e.g.:

- Chair of Governors in post a long time and 'world has moved on'
- governors not strategic or evaluative in thinking
- diverted by building plans, falling rolls, academisation, etc.
- internal 'turbulence'

Lack of urgency due to  
complacency or distractions

Governors fail to provide enough challenge to headteacher

## Governors fail to engage in effective activities



This HMI comment illustrates some 'classic' problems with governors:

'The governors were too reliant on the school improvement partner's reports and those from the headteacher about better outcomes in Key Stage 2 and were unable to challenge the school sufficiently about the lack of improvement over a number of years at Key Stage 1 as they were not aware of the situation.'

### ■ **What are the problems here? Can you identify four?**

- Governors relied on the headteacher for selecting the information they should see and were too accepting of what they were told
- The SIP was unable to provide genuine challenge
- Governors lacked the skills to know what to ask for
- Governors had no means of identifying problems
- Problems were not discussed for years.

## Governors fail to engage in effective activities



This HMI comment illustrates some 'classic' problems with governors:

'The governing body was too trusting. They accepted what the headteacher told them without questioning it. So, when the headteacher told them that results were good, they simply accepted this, when in fact they were very low. Performance management of the headteacher by the governing body was also very poor, with targets such as "appoint a SENCO" rather than related to the school's performance. They accepted excuses, such as high mobility (it wasn't high) without question.'

### **Identify the three main weaknesses of the governing body.**

These governors were unable to provide effective challenge because:

- they had a poor grasp of target setting and performance management
- they did not see challenging the headteacher as a key part of their role
- they had no independent understanding of data.

**A correctly balanced relationship between the governing body and the headteacher is crucial, however good a school is, and vital to maintain excellence**



**Do you think the governing body has played a significant role in school improvement?**

'The governing body are very supportive. I wouldn't change them but not sure that they are instrumental in raising standards – that is my job and the job of my staff. Governors help with setting vision and ethos; clerk is excellent. They have been very helpful in getting out 'all the dreaded policies.'

**This headteacher had overseen the improvement of her school to be outstanding – but are there any warning signs in this relationship?**

- Headteacher denies governors have a role in raising standards
- Sees governors as about setting vision and managing policies, not education
- There is a risk governors will not be able to provide sufficient challenge in future

**Identify the good practice here**

**Is that sort of practice happening at your school?**



**Do you think the governing body has played a significant role in the improvement?**

'Yes. I have empowered the governing body to be proactive and challenging to me as a leader. We have used Governor strengths analysis to ensure they sit on the right committees to utilise their expertise.'

**If so, how have effective governors been recruited?**

'Governors are recruited because the school promotes the importance of a strong governing body and the positive impact it has on children's learning. All governors recruited are made aware of the importance of training to make them effective in this role.'

All governors are assigned a governor buddy.'

## Governors tend to underplay their long-term, strategic role:



An extract from the 2014 report on a school judged to be inadequate, and to have serious weaknesses. The inspection commented on the strengths of the governors:

The governance of the school:

- ensures that safeguarding and child protection procedures are fully in place
- monitors the performance of all staff, including the headteacher, before they agree increases in pay
- has carried out routine monitoring of teaching in order to understand how well pupils are doing. This is so they can support the school as well as hold school leaders to account for the progress made by students.

■ Previous inspection results: 2005 – satisfactory; 2009 – Notice to improve/inadequate; 2010 – satisfactory; 2012 – requires improvement; 2014 – Serious weaknesses/inadequate.

■ **What do you think the governors SHOULD have done in this situation?**

## Some governing bodies do not use their websites to engage with stakeholders such as parents about what they are doing



Governors' visits to the school are described in posts on the school website.

**Is this a good way of engaging with your stakeholders?**

On **Wednesday 21 November** I was in school twice. Firstly to see my mentee for half an hour. This always proves to be very worthwhile and I thoroughly enjoy the time spent with her.

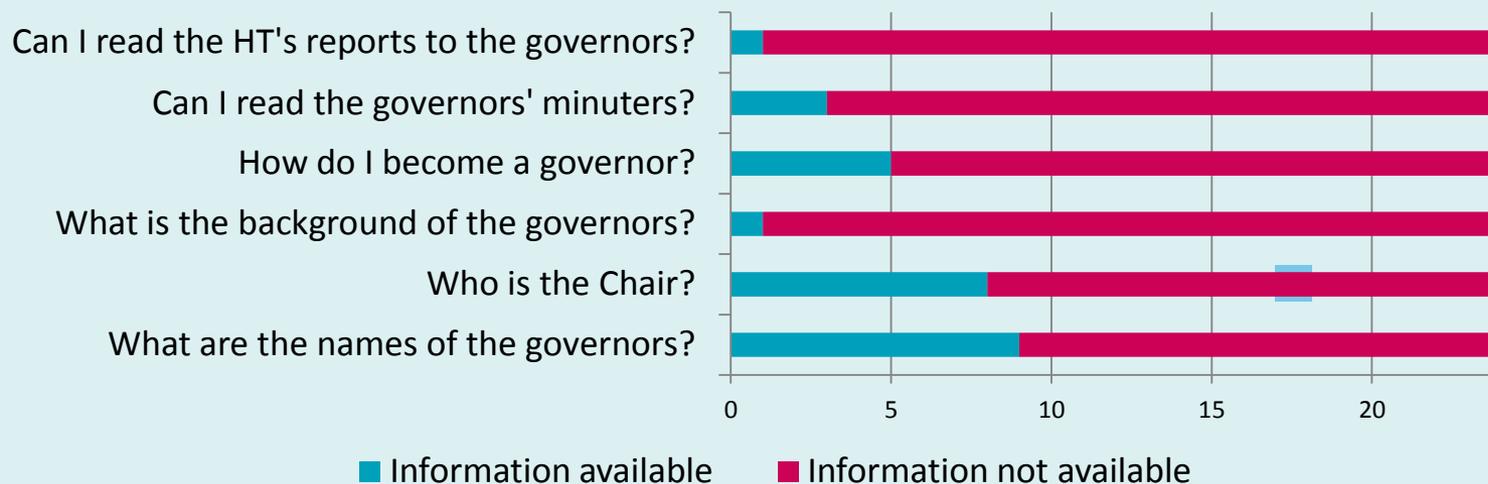
The afternoon saw me back in school for the Performance and Standards meeting. I was delighted to be asked to Chair this panel again. Two hours were very well spent ensuring students' progress is well monitored. The attendance, punctuality and exclusion figures scrutinised by Governors were all showing very positive trends.

**Friday 30 November** was spent meeting all the Senior Leadership Group with a small group of governors reviewing their performance and remuneration. We also were given a very good lunch!

**15 October 2012:** I attended two 'learning walks' with Ann Rickard and two visitors from a School in Birmingham on Monday. I was particularly impressed with the assessment and marking standards as evidenced in the randomly selected exercise books seen by me. The teacher's comments were constructive and pointed the student towards achievable targets; in all instances the students had responded with the additional information required.

# Even outstanding schools do not openly provide information about their governors and what they do in the school

## Sample of outstanding schools' websites governor information



A very small number of schools provide detailed information about the governors, including biographies; the headteacher's termly reports to them; and lists of which faculties each is attached to. Governor biographies are more common for independent schools.

## Governors - what inspectors should consider 1



- Do governors carry out statutory duties, e.g. safeguarding?
- Do they understand the boundaries of their role?
- Do they and the school promote tolerance and respect and prepare children positively for life in modern Britain
- Do they ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- Do they contribute to self-evaluation and know the school's strengths and weaknesses?
- Do they assure themselves of the rigour of assessment processes?

## Governors - what inspectors should consider 2



- Do provide challenge and hold leaders to account?
- Do they use additional funding to overcome barriers to learning?
- Do they ensure that resources are managed effectively?
- Do they provide support for the headteacher?
- Do they monitor performance management systems?
- Do they engage with stakeholders?
- Are they transparent and accountable?

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