

17 November 2021

Martin Hamilton

Our reference: CAS-458643-6MDYFB

Sent via email:

request-806383-11f598f1@whatdotheyknow.com

Dear Mr Hamilton

Your request for information

Thank you for your email of 14 November 2021 in which you requested disclosure of the following information:

'On the BBC Radio 4 Today programme on 14th November 2021, Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman stated that she expected the number of schools in England rated 'outstanding' to halve under the new round of inspections taking place during the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please can you advise as to whether this is Ofsted's formal position.

If so, please can you share any documentation relating to how this position was established, such as formal papers, meetings of minutes or email messages.

Additionally, please can you share any guidance given to inspectors on Ofsted's expectations regarding grading of schools beyond that already published on the gov.uk website.'

The Freedom of Information Act

We have dealt with your request in accordance with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000.

In this case, Ofsted does not hold any information that matches the description of your request. All our policies on how school inspections are conducted, as well as the criteria that forms the basis of the judgements awarded, are published on our website. ¹

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook-eif>

It may be useful for me to clarify that, this term is the first time in 10 years that we've been allowed, by law, to routinely inspect outstanding schools - some of which have not been inspected for as long as 15 years.

We are prioritising those that have gone the longest without an inspection, and, while it's still very early days, from what we've seen so far, a significant number of these schools may lose the top judgement. This is not unexpected or surprising. The exemption operated like a one-way valve; for more than a decade schools were recognised for getting to the top, and then removed from scrutiny. So we have, in effect, been accumulating outstanding schools. When the exemption was brought in, 1 in 10 schools were graded outstanding, now the figure is 1 in 5. It's too early to estimate where we'll end up, but we're seeing a rebalancing start this term, and over time we can expect a broadly similar proportion of schools to achieve the highest grade as was the case before the exemption.

I trust that this letter clearly explains our position. If you have any queries about our response, please contact me at 0300 013 1287 and I will do my best to address them.

Alternatively, if you are dissatisfied with our response or the handling of your request, you may request a formal internal review. In order to do this, please write to Richard McGowan at informationrequest@ofsted.gov.uk setting out which areas of the response you are unhappy with.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you also have the right to apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision as to whether or not we have complied with our obligations under the FOI Act with respect to your request. Details of how to contact The Information Commissioner can be found at <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alastair O'Neill", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alastair O'Neill
Information Access Officer
Information Rights and Access Team