

FE AND SKILLS INSPECTIONS

PRODUCED
BY



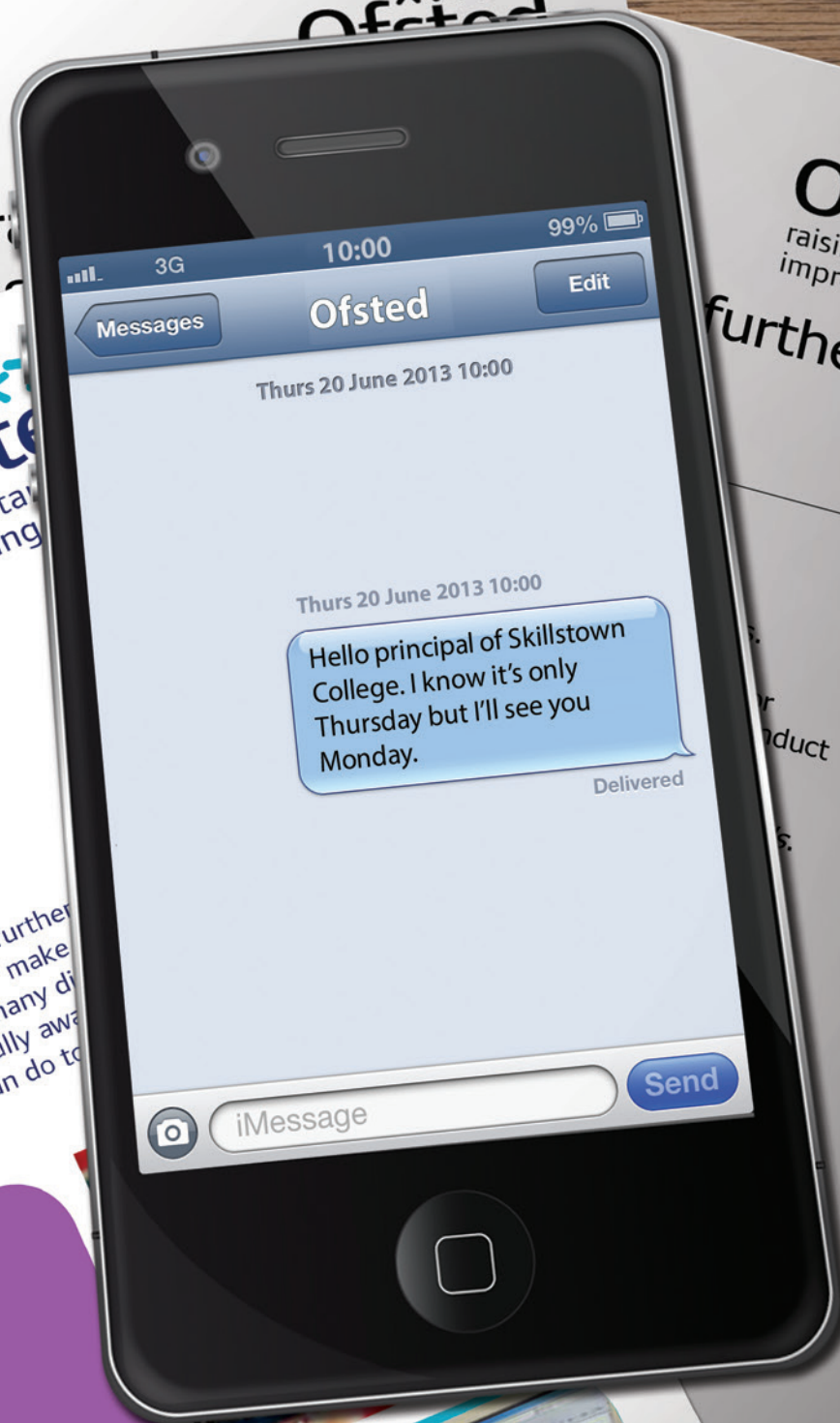
A review of 2012/13

Common Inspection Framework
for further education and skills
For use from September 2012

Ofsted
raising standards
improving lives

A good education for all

Ofsted will be introducing some significant changes to the way further education and skills providers are inspected from September 2012. We want to make sure providers understand how we have listened and weighed the many different views from the consultation. We also want to ensure that providers are fully aware of the inspection we will be introducing and why, and what they can do to make the most of the new framework for improvement.



Ofsted
raising standards
improving lives
further

Welcome to this FE Week supplement



Chris Henwood
@Chris_Henwood

It seems like just yesterday the FE sector was gearing up for bloodshed under a new Ofsted common inspection framework (CIF).
Ominously, a toughened-up regime was promised with the hallmark of, among others, a notice period slashed from 10 working days to just two (albeit that notice effectively being four days coming as it would on a Thursday for inspection the following Monday).
And who could forget the annual report in November that pulled no punches in its

assessment of the sector, pointing out how 13 colleges were graded as inadequate in 2011/12, compared to four the previous year.
It further pointed out how, for the second year running, Ofsted claimed they had not judged a single college to be outstanding for teaching and learning.
“The learning and skills sector needs re-orientating towards a moral determination to provide high quality and relevant provision, which should include reputable apprenticeship opportunities for young people,” it said.
But we have in fact had a year under the new CIF and this supplement offers a reflective look at what’s happened. Will Ofsted be able to draw upon more inspection results with which to hammer the sector in the next annual report?
Ofsted’s own gradings, ratings and classifications have been adopted, but they’ve been pulled together here by the *FE Week* team.
As such, we’d like to think we’ve got all our numbers right and included all the relevant inspection reports, but if we haven’t please do let us know.
Nevertheless, we begin on the page opposite with a broader look at some of Ofsted’s appearances in *FE Week* last year.
And it’s important to note that with this supplement’s aim to reflect on the sector’s inspection results, there is also an intention to provide critical reflection on the CIF as

well, posing difficult questions for Ofsted itself.
Ofsted’s own gradings, ratings and classifications have been adopted, but they’ve been pulled together here by the FE Week team

The new CIF is more closely examined therefore on page 4, where Denise Bown-Sackey, principal at London’s Newham College of Further Education, asks whether it, and Ofsted, is fit for purpose.
And while many might label Ofsted boss Sir Michael Wilshaw a ‘schools man’ as a former secondary head teacher, the same claim cannot be levelled against his national director of FE and skills, Matthew Coffey, whose vocational learning story is told on page 5.
It’s finally onto the matter of inspection report stats on page 6 with a focus on general FE and tertiary colleges. Joy

Mercer, Association of Colleges policy director, and Lynne Sedgmore, executive director at the 157 Group, give their views on the past year on page 7.
Three members of the Policy Consortium then look even more closely at Ofsted and its inspection results across pages 8 and 9.
The independent training provider sector is next to have its inspection performances come under review, on pages 10 and 11, with subsequent commentary from Stewart Segal, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers.
Sixth form college inspection results are examined on page 12, where James Kevin, deputy chief executive of the Sixth Form Colleges’ Association, evaluates 2012/13.
Ofsted inspector Alex Falconer outlines one of the biggest challenges facing FE and skills providers in the year ahead on page 13.
A quick-fire Q&A with Mr Coffey on the CIF takes this supplement up to page 15, where there is a piece by Dr Fiona McMillan on where the Education and Training Foundation fits in the Ofsted equation.
Note: We have adopted the Ofsted provider classifications, and in the 2013/14 edition of this supplement we hope to include results for community learning and skills providers, dance and drama colleges, higher education institutions, independent specialist colleges and the independent learning provider - employer.

FE Week is a newspaper dedicated to reporting on news, analysis, jobs and fun in the further education sector.

Editor: Nick Linford
Deputy editor: Chris Henwood
Reporter: Eleanor Radford
Reporter: Rebecca Cooney
Designer: Nicky Phillips
Sales executive: Hannah Smith
Administration: Victoria Boyle
Operations: Shane Mann
Financials: Helen Neilly

Contributors:
Denise Brown-Sackey
Joy Mercer
Lynne Sedgmore
Colin Forrest
Carolyn Medlin
Mike Cooper
Stewart Segal
James Kevin
Alex Falconer
Fiona McMillan

If you are interested in placing a product or job advert contact

E: hannah.smith@feweek.co.uk
T: 020 8123 4778

SUBSCRIBE TO
FE WEEK TODAY
FOR JUST
£75

Subscribe online now at feweek.co.uk

Annual subscribers will receive:

- ~ FE Week newspaper sent each week to a UK address (36 editions in term-time)
- ~ Online access to the current and archive newspapers (in hi res PDF format)
- ~ Special editions of FE Week at the end of each term
- ~ Regular sector relevant supplements
- ~ Email updates with the latest news, analysis, events, jobs and fun



A year of Ofsted highs and lows

Eleanor Radford
@EleanorRadford

It has been a year in which Ofsted stories have hit the front pages time and time again — starting back in September last year with Sir Michael Wilshaw’s “Deptford not Delhi” criticism.
He warned that colleges could be at risk of focusing on international opportunities to the detriment of home-grown learners.
The former head teacher and executive principal spoke on the dangers of foreign recruitment in FE at a conference organised by the Association of Colleges (AoC).
His remarks came in an introductory speech to around 160 delegates at event held in London Bridge.

And in December, AoC chief executive Martin Doel accused Ofsted of “moving the goalposts” for colleges following a damning annual report that pointed to a threefold increase in the number of colleges judged inadequate.

Mr Doel hit out after the education watchdog’s report highlighted how 13 colleges received the lowest possible grading in 2011/12, compared with four the previous year and how, for the second year running, no college achieved an outstanding grade for teaching and learning.
“Colleges are delivering what government has asked of them and we are interested to discuss how college performance might be better reflected in a wider basket of measures,” said Mr Doel.

“But if the goalposts are being shifted by Ofsted, we at least need to know the rules of the new game. A fair and transparent inspection regime makes an important contribution to this process.”

Three months later one of England’s biggest colleges fell from outstanding to the lowest Ofsted grade of inadequate.
City of Liverpool College, which achieved the highest grade almost across the board at previous inspection in early 2009, was graded inadequate in every one of the headline Ofsted fields.

The report said the college, formerly Liverpool Community College, had too many students turning up late for lessons — if at all — and leave without achieving their qualifications.

Principal Elaine Bowker said: “We accept the report and are working hard to ensure that the areas highlighted as inadequate are improved.”

But things were looking up for the sector at the end of the month when Walsall College became the first general FE college to achieve an outstanding grade under Ofsted’s tough new inspection regime.

The West Midlands provider won glowing praise and its success meant the college was also the first to get a published Ofsted report with outstanding for teaching and learning



FE Week cartoon on December 3, 2012



— a field that, under the common inspection framework, limited the overall grade.

However, in April *FE Week* reported another shocking Ofsted inspection. City College Coventry was hit with an inadequate grade four result across each inspection headline field.

The 8,000-learner college was also given grade fours throughout the main findings board, including apprenticeships and 19+ learning programmes.

Despite initially vowing to “stay on and put things right”, college principal Paul Taylor announced within weeks that he would be leaving.

Changes to the inspection framework

Following a twelve week consultation period from February 9, last year, Ofsted implemented its new common inspection framework (CIF) in September 2012.

The new CIF introduced a series of significant changes to the way Ofsted would inspect further education and skills providers. Changes included:



Two working days' notice

Providers are now given two working days' notice of inspection. Prior to 2012/13 it was 10 working days.



Limiting grade

In order to be judged 'outstanding' overall, providers now have to of achieved 'outstanding' in teaching, learning and assessment.



Requires improvement

The grade of 'satisfactory' (Grade 3) is now referred to as 'requires improvement'.



Three strikes

When a provider is judged 'requires improvement' overall twice, consecutively, and has not improved to at least 'good' on the third consecutive inspection, the lead inspector can judge the provider as 'inadequate' overall.



Reinspection

Providers that are judged as 'requires improvement' overall will be re-inspected within a 12 to 18- month period.



Staff performance

Ofsted will ask providers for anonymised outcomes of performance management procedures for teachers, trainers and assessors.



A good education for all

Ofsted will be introducing some significant changes to the way further education and skills providers are inspected from September 2012. We want to make sure learners and providers understand how we have listened and weighed the many different responses to the consultation. We also want to ensure that providers are fully aware of the changes to inspection we will be introducing and why, and what they can do to use inspection as a lever for improvement.



June 2012

Read more about the changes here: <http://tinyurl.com/mlp6kag>

Are providers fit for purpose — but is Ofsted fit to judge?

Being under the Ofsted spotlight can be an uncomfortable place, says Denise Brown-Sackey, who turns the inspection tables back on the education watchdog.

Are providers fit for purpose — but is Ofsted fit to judge?

Being under the Ofsted spotlight can be an uncomfortable place, says Denise Brown-Sackey, who turns the inspection tables back on the education watchdog.

More than a decade ago, the academic Leslie Rosenthal said: “The efforts required by teaching staff in responding to the demands of the... inspection system are great enough to divert resources from teaching so as to affect pupil achievement in the year of the visit.”

This probably doesn't come as a surprise to those who've experienced the Ofsted inspection regime first-hand — whether we're managers, lecturers, support staff or students.

Indeed, a separate study of Hertfordshire students reported a, “tenser relationship with their teachers” ahead of inspection.

Of course, as the Commons Education Select Committee pointed out in its 2010 report on Ofsted, and citing the evidence above, a degree of stress in any form of examination is arguably both inevitable and healthy.

For me, the real issue lies with the reasons for that stress, and — perhaps unsurprisingly for one whose college was inspected this year [going from outstanding to good] — there do seem to be areas for reform.

I was delighted that Ofsted's visit to Newham validated the education we provide for our 21,000 learners, and that we were deemed to be a high-performing providers.

In light of that, it could seem churlish to slander the new framework under which that visit took place, but I do believe it has serious flaws.

Essentially, the new framework for providers is now the same as that for schools.

But, for me, they are fundamentally different entities and need to be treated in the appropriate manner.

Let me take the example of community cohesion. For this to exist as a judgment in its own right for a small primary school, or even an average-sized secondary school, was arguably excess to requirements.

While many such institutions have valuable regional, national and global partnerships, the essentially local nature of their operation means that community engagement is not a constant leadership focus.

For providers, the opposite is true — the breadth of both our curricula and the geographical areas we serve make that engagement critical to our mission.

There is, in that case, a strong argument for retaining a judgment for community cohesion for FE inspections. At the moment, all that valuable work feels effectively lost in inspection week.

A further problem, as also referenced

in MPs' 2010 investigation, lies with the expertise of inspectors themselves.

Far too few have real and relevant experience of the FE sector — a problem also reflected at the higher echelons of the organisation — and it can happen that those from within the field have preconceptions about institutions which bias their judgment one way or another.

These are difficult problems to solve, although I am glad Ofsted has been recruiting more FE experts recently.

In writing this, I am well aware that the sector should not, and must not, seem over-defensive, particularly in light of some of Ofsted's own views on us and our standards.

While it may not curry me favour with some colleagues, I recognise some of Ofsted's concerns — the need for even more robust governance, for example, and to raise standards across our capital city.

But in achieving those goals, I want to work with an inspectorate — the need for which I continue to stand by, on balance — which is on my side, which is properly equipped to monitor FE providers, and which does so by looking at appropriate evidence.

At the moment, just as Ofsted may reasonably feel that our sector is some way from perfect,

I have to throw the same right back at them.

Denise Brown-Sackey, principal, Newham College of Further Education, London

Matthew Coffey ~ his story

Chris Henwood
@Chris_Henwood

Ofsted's national director of FE and skills talks to FE Week

There's a choice of comfy little red sofa with two small armchairs either side, or a cold but smart table and chairs next to the window.

My bag is plonked, hopefully, by the welcoming sofa and I hover nearby before Matthew Coffey, Ofsted's director of further education and skills, walks in.

He stands next to the table, places a pile of paperwork down and pulls out a chair — and with it, my hopes for a chatty one-to-one seem dashed.

We're in a corporate-feeling, air-conditioned room right next door to his eighth floor office at the education watchdog's Aviation House HQ in London.

But within the hour I emerge from said room with the knowledge that the man responsible for inspections of England's FE providers is a Playstation-loving wannabe helicopter pilot (among other things), “kept sane” by his two beloved spaniels, Lola and Seth. He's also a 46-year-old devoted dad to Anna, aged 25, and Rosie, 19, as well as a recently-converted Londoner.

“London has been my office for four years, but for two-and-half of them I'd been commuting from Lincoln, which is one heck of a journey,” says Coffey.

“So my life has changed for the better by moving to London and my whole family is here. I've gained four hours a day of my life back and I benefit from it. To have time back and my family around me is brilliant.

“And I'm really enjoying exploring London and making the most of my travel card every weekend.

“My family and I really like the London Bridge, Borough Market, Southbank areas — we're having a real cultural revolution.”

But it wasn't his first big move away from Lincoln.

Aged 16, Coffey left the East Midlands cathedral city for Exeter. It came just at the right time for a teenager looking to step out of the shadow of sister Nicola, three years his elder and now a nurse practitioner in Bakewell.

“I didn't enjoy school,” says Coffey, whose 48-year-old wife, Louise, is a former primary school teaching assistant.

“I was always known as my sister's brother: She was the academic genius and I bumped along. Being told consistently that I was not as academic as my sister drove me to be ambitious and to succeed.

“That was the source of my determination — if you tell me I can't do something, then I'll do it. Unfortunately I had a very nasty accident and injured my leg and that put me in plaster for a couple of years from the age of 16.

“I was working in a restaurant in Lincoln and my leg was trapped in one of their big mixing machines and it smashed it in several places, so I've got lots of pins and plates in my leg.

“I'd wanted to be a policeman and got the bare minimum to get in, but of course the injury blew a hole in my dreams so I really had to rethink what I was going to do.

“Then we moved down to Devon I went to Exeter College and chose catering and hospitality. I really got on the right tracks there and was supported very much by a teacher who recognised that I could achieve and led me to believe I could achieve whatever I wanted.”

The college came before an impressive stint running the kitchens and 40-seater restaurant of Tiverton's since-demolished Boars Head. Employing up to 30 staff, he also serviced the pub's attached 26-bedroom hotel — all around the age of 18.

“It was an incredible university of life experience,” says Coffey.

“And I kept a relationship with the college I'd just left and took on lots of summer students and gave them work experience There was such an opportunity for others to come and see what we were doing.”

He adds: “My background has been absolutely vocational and my career has developed as a result of interventions from lots of people and not necessarily on the academic side of things.

“But my journey has eventually taken in the academic route — I did my undergraduate and masters degrees later in life [criminology and social policy at the University of Lincoln, graduating in 2003].

“That's led me to want to promote the vocational route and it should be seen as a first choice route for young people at school.”

But after three years at the Boars Head, Coffey moved to a national training provider in the catering and hospitality sector where he became a teacher, before moving to an awarding body and getting involved in developing NVQ frameworks as a national quality manager.

“It was around that time the government started to talk about the need for an



Snapped: Matthew Coffey on a 2008 holiday in Florida's Everglades

independent inspectorate of government-funded training,” he explains.

“I became one of the Training Standards Council's senior inspectors and I led particularly on developing a relationship with the Chief Inspector of Prisons to inspect for the first time training and education in prisons.

“And introducing the common inspection framework into the prison world, around 2005, was a real highlight. It put prison education on the map and lifted the lid, but it took an awful lot of work. I visited and met representatives of all the prisons in the country and made sure they all understood what was happening and what we were going to do.”

Coffey later became an inspection manager at the Adult Learning Inspectorate before it merged with Ofsted in 2007.

Starting as an assistant divisional manager for the Midlands, he moved

through the ranks and in January last year was given the title national director of learning and skills. In March he was also assigned the post of regional director for the South East.

“I absolutely enjoy going out on inspections and go out on them frequently, but I don't lead them these days, I quality assure inspections,” says Coffey.

“But I don't just cover the learning and skills sector because I've got a dual role as regional director responsible for all our inspections in the region.

“The last inspection that I went to was a children's home inspection, and before that — a couple of months ago — I went to a school. I'd really love to lead FE and skills inspections, but it's not just about going out on the actual visit; it's also the planning beforehand and the writing of the report and they can be very time-consuming. So inspections for me would be a real challenge.

“It's always the dilemma when you get promoted in an organisation such as this that you move further away from the coalface of what it is that you're doing.”

He adds: “I really genuinely believe that what we do makes a difference and that makes me want to turn up to work every day.

“It can be a difficult job. It can be tiring. You're never the most popular person in the world, but I think if we do reflect a mirror back up to ourselves and if we do want to improve, that means having difficult discussions in every walk of life.”

It's a personal thing

What's your favourite book?

Swords, Sorcerers and Superheroes, by Tony Bradman — because it's dedicated to me as 'Inspector Coffey'. He's my brother-in-law and he dedicated the sequel to me, too

What did you want to be when you were younger?

A policeman

What do you do to switch off from work?

My two dogs are mad, but they keep me sane. I'm also a wannabe helicopter pilot — it's my dream. I've done about nine hours of my private pilot's licence. I asked my wife what she thought and she

said: 'You play your Playstation.' Ten minutes of Call of Duty: Modern Warfare is my little escape and I really enjoy it

If you could invite anyone to a dinner party, living or dead, who would it be?

Neil Armstrong — I would love to understand more about the journey he took as a pioneer. That's a phenomenal conversation to be had, and David Bowie because he's a hero of mine. I'd love to talk to him about his life and what inspired him to be so off-the-wall

What are your pet hates?

Poor customer service makes me really cross

College Ofsted inspection results in 2012/13*

General Further Education and Tertiary College	Grade in 2012/13	Inspection date	Previous grade	+ / -
North East Worcestershire College	3	10-06-13	2	-1
Lowestoft College	3	10-06-13	3	0
South Leicestershire College	3	10-06-13	3	0
Halesowen College	2	03-06-13	2	0
Huntingdonshire Regional College	3	04-06-13	3	0
Weymouth College	3	04-06-13	3	0
Amersham and Wycombe College	3	03-06-13	3	0
City of Westminster College	2	03-06-13	3	1
Myerscough College	2	03-06-13	3	1
Greenwich Community College at Plumstead Centre	3	20-05-13	3	0
Central Nottingham College (formerly South Nottingham College)	3	20-05-13	2	-1
Basingstoke College of Technology	2	20-05-13	3	1
Macclesfield College	2	21-05-13	4	2
Rotherham College of Arts and Technology	2	20-05-13	3	1
Aylesbury College	2	13-05-13	3	1
Epping Forest College	3	13-05-13	3	0
Waltham Forest College	3	13-05-13	3	0
Walford and North Shropshire College	3	30-04-13	3	0
Fareham College	2	29-04-13	3	1
Hertford Regional College	2	29-04-13	3	1
City of Wolverhampton College	3	29-04-13	4	1
Plymouth College of Art	2	30-04-13	2	0
Kingston Maurward College	3	30-04-13	2	-1
Doncaster College	2	29-04-13	3	1
The Sheffield College	2	29-04-13	3	1
Barking and Dagenham College	2	22-04-13	2	0
Worthing College	3	23-04-13	3	0
Harrow College	2	22-04-13	3	1
Central Sussex College	3	22-04-13	2	-1
Stafford College	3	15-04-13	4	1
South Staffordshire College	2	15-04-13	3	1
Knowsley Community College	2	15-04-13	4	2
Lambeth College	3	18-03-13	4	1
Gloucestershire College	2	18-03-13	2	0
Norwich City College of Further and Higher Education	2	18-03-13	3	1
City College Coventry	4	11-03-13	3	-1
Southport College	2	11-03-13	2	0
Bexley College	3	05-03-13	3	0
East Kent College	2	04-03-13	3	1
Hartlepool College of Further Education	3	25-02-13	2	-1
Swindon College	1	25-02-13	3	2
East Berkshire College	2	25-02-13	2	0
Loughborough College	2	25-02-13	2	0
Dudley College of Technology	2	25-02-13	2	0
City of Bristol College	4	18-02-13	2	-2
Shipley College	2	12-02-13	3	1
Kingston College	2	11-02-13	3	1
Walsall College	1	11-02-13	2	1
Northampton College	2	04-02-13	3	1
The City of Liverpool College	4	04-02-13	1	-3
Capel Manor College	2	29-01-13	2	0
Newham College of Further Education	2	28-01-13	1	-1
Boston College	3	28-01-13	2	-1
Northumberland College	2	28-01-13	3	1
Leeds College of Building	3	28-01-13	2	-1
City of Bath College	2	28-01-13	3	1
New College Nottingham	3	21-01-13	2	-1
Sussex Coast College Hastings	3	21-01-13	4	1
Redcar & Cleveland College	3	15-01-13	2	-1
Bromley College of Further and Higher Education	2	14-01-13	3	1
The College of West Anglia	2	14-01-13	1	-1
Richmond-upon-Thames College	3	10-12-12	2	-1
Croydon College	3	10-12-12	2	-1
Lancaster and Morecambe College	2	10-12-12	3	1
North Nottinghamshire College	2	10-12-12	3	1
Norton Radstock College	3	20-11-12	3	0
Brooksby Melton College	2	13-11-12	3	1
Sussex Downs College	3	12-11-12	2	-1
Stockton Riverside College	3	12-11-12	3	0
Stourbridge College	2	05-11-12	2	0
Stourbridge College	2	05-11-12	2	0
Kirklees College	2	05-11-12	4	2
South Worcestershire College	4	23-10-12	3	-1
Cambridge Regional College	2	22-10-12	2	0
Bicton College (specialist college)	2	16-10-12	3	1
South Tyneside College	2	15-10-12	3	1
City College Plymouth	2	01-10-12	3	1

General Further Education and Tertiarty College inspections 2012/13				
	Now		Before	
Grade 1	2	3%	3	4%
Grade 2	42	55%	26	34%
Grade 3	29	38%	41	53%
Grade 4	4	5%	7	9%
	77		77	

Grade improved	34	44%
Grade stayed the same	25	32%
Grade got worse	18	23%
Total inspections	77	

Older and wiser on inspection

Ofsted's criticism of the college sector last year was a bitter pill to swallow and the toughened up common inspection framework offered little hope for sector praise. However, it hasn't quite worked out like that says Joy Mercer.

At this time last year, colleges felt they had not weathered an Ofsted storm but were beached, and stranded on unfamiliar territory. The inspection results for general FE and sixth form colleges were forbidding. Of the 60 inspected, 22 per cent were judged inadequate and only 40 per cent graded good or better.

There were no colleges graded outstanding for teaching, learning and assessment. A new common inspection framework was due, with only two working days' notice of inspection and a central focus on teaching, learning and assessment.

The quality in the classroom would influence all other grades. Satisfactory became Requires Improvement, with a senior inspector allocated to a college with this grade and re-inspection within 12 to 15 months.

Governors who felt confident in their role in ensuring financial health and

probity now had a clearer strategic responsibility for what happened in the classroom.

Last year's Ofsted annual report said that 64 per cent of colleges were good or better. This year we believe it is 74 per cent.

This came against a political drive to encourage choice and competition for 16-year-olds created through new school sixth forms, the growth of university technical colleges and free schools, and employers being paid directly to deliver apprenticeships.

One year on, the story is different. Ofsted trebled its number of inspectors and our figures show that 61 per cent of colleges were judged good or better and only five were graded as inadequate.

Given that Ofsted inspects colleges on

risk, it is important not to forget the 'state of the nation'.

Last year's Ofsted annual report said that 64 per cent of colleges were good or better. This year we believe it is 74 per cent.

However, there is no room for complacency — just over a third were judged to Require Improvement.

Ofsted has indicated that the long love affair with success rates is over.

This year, they have focused on student progression to employment or further study.

Themes that run through inspection judgements of good or better colleges include strong student tracking; high levels of attendance; teaching that focuses on employment opportunities and enterprise; using every opportunity to develop students English and maths skills; teaching that challenges students; good quality work experience; and, governors who understand the quality of teaching and learning, with strategies to ensure teachers improve.

Ofsted introduced Learner View last September. Whether colleges have used this student satisfaction method or their own, students' opinions of the quality of their experience at the college is



paramount. So what of next year? Students without the gold standard of A* to C at GCSE in English and maths will be expected to gain the qualification by the age of 18.

This is likely to be measured in the new 16 to 18 performance tables as well as Ofsted inspections.

We are hopeful that after Ofsted's own report on careers guidance in schools, due soon, there will be a much stronger focus on guidance in school inspections.

This may be the year when success rates take a back seat to outcomes into jobs and HE.

Ofsted will be reporting on study programmes and 14-year-olds studying full time in colleges. With intense competition, these have to tell a good story.

Joy Mercer, policy director, Association of Colleges

Looking at the bigger college picture

A new focus on teaching and learning may well have become the valued hallmark of Ofsted's current common inspection framework, but, asks Lynne Sedgmore, is there scope for a wider examination of the college offer?

Over this past year, mention of Ofsted has generated mixed emotions in many colleges.

Some ill-informed remarks have been made, grades have fallen — and risen — and the overall narrative has been one of 'system failure' in skills, and lack of attention on teaching and learning.

It is important to acknowledge appropriate criticisms of the system — particularly perverse funding which has created bizarre incentives and an over focus on chasing funding and qualifications.

We would add to the systems failure, an inspection framework which did not always focus on the broader aspects of colleges in their diverse communities.

So it is good to feel the future is turning to one of collaboration and better mutual understanding.

Those who work in Ofsted are, on a human level, interested in the same things as the rest of us — student success and educational excellence. It is foolish to argue that the focus of the common

inspection framework (CIF) is not right in these respects. A clearer, stronger focus on excellence in teaching, learning and assessment through understanding what actually happens in the classroom rather than looking primarily at results on paper has to be welcome.

And allying every judgment to the core business of teaching and learning is vital.

The 157 Group has long argued for colleges to work with Ofsted in a mature manner, not seeing them as the enemy, but as professional partners, with differing perspectives, to bring about needed change.

Ofsted plays a crucial and invaluable role in providing a nationally-recognised quality mark — and, for some constituencies (often parents, used to dealing with schools), it is their primary quality assessment tool.

However, there is a huge risk that the current view of college success is severely limited by the criteria used in the CIF and we would argue that the nature of a successful college is much broader in scope. There is a public perception that Ofsted judgments are made on the whole college. In reality, this is not the case.

Colleges are integral to their community and any judgement of their success should also include the extent to which they have contributed to the skills and growth of their locality — as demonstrated in their

unique mission. 157 Group is keen to work with other college membership groups and Ofsted to set in motion a movement which requires additional processes and mechanisms for assessing the overall performance of colleges.

The outcome of such enhanced processes and mechanisms will provide judgements and information which will be useful, meaningful, reliable and relevant for everyone who has a stake in the skills and success of our society and economy.

We believe that colleges already hold an additional wealth of evaluation material that can usefully sit alongside current Ofsted criteria to give a more complete and rounded picture.

Suggested examples include student testimonies and industry or sector awards — awards, gained through competition and judged by peers and recognised experts in teaching and learning demonstrate innovation and excellence in the leadership of teaching and learning; and, student evaluations and employer satisfaction surveys, which demonstrate customer satisfaction and stakeholder feedback.

Further examples are winning contracts in competitive bidding processes — the recruitment of both fee-paying and employer-sponsored students and the number of associated entrepreneurs or spin-off companies demonstrates employer



engagement; and genuine engagement with local enterprise partnerships and economic impact studies, which demonstrate a contribution to the local economy and community.

Finally, there's global brand recognition — awards for international provision demonstrate the reputation of a college and the contribution they make to globalisation and UK plc; and, college support and sponsorship of university technical colleges, academies and other 14 to 19 models, which show how the college is an integral part of a whole phase approach to learning.

The future is bright — and the future may be Ofsted-plus?

Lynne Sedgmore, executive director, 157 Group

Ofsted and improvement: living up to expectations?

As the time for the next Chief Inspector's Annual Report approaches, three members of the Policy Consortium — which provides professional policy analysis for learning and skills — look for messages that may emerge about the past year, as well as some of the possible implications they might have. Colin Forrest, Carolyn Medlin and Mike Cooper lay down challenges for the education watchdog as it becomes more involved in the improvement agenda.

Crunching the inspection numbers

Highly-contested claims by Ofsted earlier this year that no colleges could be judged outstanding for teaching and learning still rankle throughout the FE sector, as people ask how and why the Chief Inspector and others involved got it so apparently wrong.

This assertion was based on the observation in the Chief Inspector's 2012 Annual Report published last autumn (and of course covering the final year of inspections under the 2009 Framework) was: "For the second year running, no colleges were judged outstanding for teaching and learning." It begged the question as to how this finding from a sample of 40 or so general FE colleges subsequently extrapolated to the college sector as a whole.

In 2012/13, the sample size of colleges inspected has doubled. In the published inspection reports since September 2012, two general FE colleges and two sixth form colleges have been awarded a full suite of outstanding grades for their cross-college aspects — including the key matter of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Will this most recent pattern reassure the inspectorate that making these elements central in the revised common inspection framework (CIF) has had the desired effect?

Some recent comments from Skills Minister Matthew Hancock have been rather more conciliatory — a change in rhetoric that may signal some changes in perception and approach.

It's hard to tell. But it would seem unlikely.

Reading individual inspection reports suggests what an overview

of teaching, learning and assessment might look like but there is little other help.

The inspectorate's Data View website was launched at the same time as the publication of the Annual Report.

Alas, it doesn't help much. At the time of writing the data set relates to March 2013.

Although the data can be presented by provider type, number of learners, organisations, and local authority, it covers only the overall effectiveness or leadership and management grades.

Moreover, apart from schools, it doesn't tell us anything about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The graphs in Data View show the proportion of providers in each of the four grading categories at August 2010, 2011, 2012 and as of March 2013.

Strangely, the plotting points are joined up, suggesting a smooth trajectory between those dates — a somewhat unlikely pattern for

any change, and perhaps still more so in such complex and shifting landscape as FE and skills inspection.

For overall effectiveness, the proportion of colleges with good or outstanding grades increased from 63 per cent in August 2011, to 64 per cent in August 2012, and then to 70 per cent by March this year.

For leadership and management, the proportion judged good or outstanding has increased from 66 per cent in August 2012 to 73 per cent as of March 2013.

Data View does report the proportion of schools with the different grades on the quality of teaching, alongside the other grades. The proportion with good or outstanding quality of teaching is 73 per cent at March this year. However, it doesn't do so for FE and skills providers — making what would be a useful comparison very difficult to see.



From left: Colin Forrest, Carolyn Medlin and Mike Cooper



Sharper than Data View

Contradictory messages and conflicting priorities set by Ofsted are in danger of leaving colleges at best confused and at worst without the essential support they need.

Although its year old Data View system lays claims to simplicity and transparency, it is too blunt a scalpel either for forensic analysis or the surgery leading to healing.

Analysis of the reports published since September last year suggests the proportion of colleges inspected in 2012/13 that are good or outstanding for teaching, learning and assessment is around 56 per cent.

Broadening the analysis to adult and community learning providers, the proportion becomes around 61 per cent for that category. For work-based learning providers it is 51 per cent.

Similar figures in 2011/12 attracted HMI comments like "teaching and learning are not good enough".

Ofsted reports that teaching and learning needs to be stimulating and demanding, involving real-life scenarios to enhance employability.

Quite how this is to be achieved across the full range of courses and subjects has been not made at all clear.

They further highlight that a vocational context often needs to be emphasised more in links with employers and there are frequent references in reports to the need to meet the best industry standards.

But again, this raises some questions about how effectively and convincingly this could universally be applied.

Subject expertise is seen as essential and the links between the curriculum and the workplace are crucial.

The role of using a range of alternative technologies to make learning "exciting and fun" is sometimes a priority as is the need to develop personal and social skills as well as employability skills.

All good points, but how to prioritise these among all Ofsted's other concerns?

As if this is not enough, then the inspectorate also highlights that more needs to be done to enhance ownership of learning by learners, in evaluating their own progress and target-setting and developing personal, vocational and functional skills targets.

Employers, providers, and teachers need to prioritise working together with learners to ensure there is shared ownership of targets.

Altogether, it's quite an agenda. Little of it is arguable per se.

The question is, what to do about it for the best, and at a time where energies, ideas, resources and time especially are all at a premium?

All of this cries out for closer, more compelling links to be made between an inspection regime that often claims somewhat loftily to be concerned solely with making judgements, and not with improvement.

However, other activities undertaken

by Ofsted contradict this stance.

It may be that linking providers that require improvement with HMIs for a limited degree of support will change the situation — and the outcomes.

It may be that more of Ofsted's good-practice reports will help. But there is a way still to go, clearly — and the route looks increasingly awkward and perilous.

Not least because that 'support and challenge' initiative is restricted in its application to grade three providers — and was not designed for the absence of an improvement body (which the new Education and Training Foundation (ETF) insists it is not).

Moreover, for the provider graded as 'requires improvement', what is the best stance to take when Ofsted return prior to the next inspection and 'provide support'?

Should the provider 'fess-up' warts and all, to help them move forward for the next inspection positively?

Or, should they put their best foot forward?

There are certainly implications with the former.

That is, while the report from the support and challenge visit is not published, a copy of that report is passed to whoever leads the next full inspection.

Does this conflict with Ofsted making judgements and supporting improvement?

Self-assessing and improving

Ofsted often argues that self-assessment ends up being unduly complex and ill-focused. If so, could it be the inspectorate's own approaches and methods are partly to blame?

At the organisational level, the inspectorate argues that the process of self-assessment

needs to be systematic in coming to judgements on teaching, learning and assessment, and to incorporate a broad base of evidence including views from those organisations to which learners progress.

How feasible this is as anything beyond a counsel of perfection for most or nearly all providers is a fair question.

Similarly, Ofsted argues that self-assessment can be overly complex and not sufficiently focussed on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

This complexity is not altogether surprising, given Ofsted's previous approaches and methods, and the size and complexity of the CIF itself.

That links, too, with the reluctance by the inspectorate to commit itself wholeheartedly to the processes of improvement in recent years.

This has begun to change to a degree, but more may well be required to convert judgement to real and positive change.

Ofsted further highlights a need to reduce the variability of the quality within providers, through the sharing of good practice internally.

This is a fair cop — learners, parents and others are entitled to be frustrated

or even angered where they perceive such gaps, and explaining them away is difficult.

Nevertheless, there are questions to be asked about how to do this effectively, on so many fronts, in a period of shrinking resource and still greater demands.

So once again, for providers of good faith who dearly wish to address such issues, and even for very good providers, this can seem an almost unattainable goal.

Here's a related observation. Is it appropriate to hope that Ofsted itself might transfer some good practice, and more consistently model its own ambitions for teaching and training? In particular, since providers come to learn, could there be more of a genuine learner-centredness in how such Ofsted sessions are handled by its own staff?

Some greater degree of better

practising what is so powerfully preached might not go amiss.

And then of course there are mixed messages around self-assessment and the report that captures it. Since April 2012, providers are no longer required to upload a self-assessment report onto the Provider Gateway.

But, if they don't and their data shows drops in performance, this could trigger an inspection.

So, in reality, if providers choose not to upload a self-assessment report, they may be more likely to be inspected.

The litany of complaint continues. For instance, weaker lesson observation processes are criticised for focussing on teaching rather than learning. There is potential, too, for learners to be involved more in organisational self-assessment and the impact of this involvement to be recognised and captured.

Both of these statements are certainly true in themselves. But to adapt a very useful response recommended by Ofsted to mere assertions with which they are presented in self-assessment, 'So what?'

It is a challenge to move beyond the mere reporting of a fact to significance — how best to make the connections with the ways that it might be made an improvement reality.

Increasingly, then, these are significant and pressing issues. Not merely for the new ETF, the wider sector, or for individual providers, but for Ofsted itself with its new improvement remit.

Since September 2012, two general FE colleges and two sixth form colleges have been awarded a full suite of outstanding grades

If providers choose not to upload a self-assessment report, they may be more likely to be inspected

Independent training provider Ofsted inspection results in 2012/13

Inspection report in 2012/13					
Independent training provider	Total Learners	Grade	Inspection date	Previous grade	+/-
Joint Learning Partnership Ltd	4,137	2	29-07-13	3	1
Aspiration Training Limited	2,121	3	22-07-13	3	0
Start Training Ltd	472	2	22-07-13	2	0
PGL Training (Plumbing) Limited	294	2	16-07-13	2	0
Chamber Training (Humber) Limited	591	3	16-07-13	2	-1
Retail Motor Industry Training Limited	8,187	3	15-07-13	3	0
Unique Training North East Limited	450	3	09-07-13	n/a	n/a
Shildon and Darlington Training Limited	82	3	02-07-13	3	0
Rocket Training Limited	646	3	25-06-13	2	-1
Strategic Training Solutions (Mansfield) Ltd	69	3	25-06-13	3	0
Haydon Training Services Limited	206	2	25-06-13	3	1
Health & Safety Training Limited	579	2	25-06-13	3	1
Skills for Security Limited	751	3	24-06-13	3	0
Valley Forge (UK) Limited	156	2	24-06-13	3	1
E.Quality Training Limited	49	2	18-06-13	3	1
Certified Computing Personnel Ltd	66	3	18-06-13	3	0
Younsave Company Limited	245	2	18-06-13	3	1
The London College of Beauty Therapy Limited	2,701	2	17-06-13	2	0
Skills Team Ltd	929	3	17-06-13	3	0
Jobwise Training Limited	819	2	17-06-13	2	0
Prevista Ltd	625	4	17-06-13	3	-1
Expedient Training Services Limited	423	3	11-06-13	3	0
Greenbank Services Limited	164	2	10-06-13	n/a	n/a
South West Regional Assessment Centre Ltd	1,813	2	10-06-13	2	0
TQ Workforce Development Limited	4,940	3	03-06-13	3	0
Elmfield Training Ltd	21,884	4	03-06-13	3	-1
Barford Education & Training (North East) Ltd	1,203	3	03-06-13	4	1
Baldwin Training Limited	1,457	2	03-06-13	2	0
TDR Training Limited	715	2	03-06-13	2	0
North West Training College Ltd	538	2	03-06-13	3	1
Sheffield Independent Film and Television Ltd	56	2	21-05-13	3	1
Woodspen Training Limited	2,836	3	20-05-13	3	0
S.Y.T.G. Limited	120	3	14-05-13	3	0
In Touch Care Limited	1,284	3	13-05-13	2	-1
TRN (Train) Ltd.	1,080	2	13-05-13	2	0
Platinum Employment Advice & Training Ltd	161	2	30-04-13	3	1
Introtrain (ACE) Limited	157	2	23-04-13	n/a	n/a
Intec Business Colleges Plc	4,151	2	22-04-13	3	1
Acacia Training Limited	1,844	3	15-04-13	3	0
Greater Merseyside Learning Providers' Fed	316	2	08-04-13	2	0
RWP Training Limited	858	2	08-04-13	3	1
Shire Training Workshops Limited	20	4	22-03-13	3	-1
YH Training Services Limited	1,139	2	22-03-13	3	1
The Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre	102	2	21-03-13	2	0
Learndirect Limited	193,340	2	21-03-13	2	0
Business Training Enterprise Ltd	116	4	19-03-13	2	-2
S.W. Durham Training Limited	943	3	15-03-13	3	0
Access to Music Limited	1,497	2	08-03-13	3	1
Hill Holt Wood	64	3	07-03-13	2	-1
Education & Youth Services Limited	2,943	3	01-03-13	3	0
Business Impact UK Limited	1,268	3	01-03-13	3	0
Market Driven Training Limited	707	2	01-03-13	2	0
South West Association of Training Providers	698	2	01-03-13	n/a	n/a
Cheynes Training (Hairdressers)	591	3	22-02-13	3	0
Ruskin Private Hire Limited	396	2	22-02-13	3	1
Oracle Training Consultants Limited	349	3	22-02-13	3	0
Farriery Training Agency	537	4	22-02-13	2	-2
British Printing Industries Federation Ltd	475	2	15-02-13	3	1
Janard Training and Assessment Centre	559	2	15-02-13	3	1
A4e Ltd	5,680	4	08-02-13	3	-1
Academy Education Limited	232	3	08-02-13	3	0
Adult College for Rural East Sussex (ACRES)	1,315	3	08-02-13	3	0
WS Training Ltd.	914	2	08-02-13	3	1

Inspection report in 2012/13					
Independent training provider	Total Learners	Grade	Inspection date	Previous grade	+/-
Norfolk & Suffolk Care Support Limited	940	4	08-02-13	3	-1
Rolls-Royce Power Engineering PLC	240	2	08-02-13	3	1
KTS Training (2002) Limited	245	2	01-02-13	2	0
CANTO LIMITED	48	3	01-02-13	3	0
Blake College LLP	22	2	01-02-13	3	1
Positive Outcomes Ltd	2,936	2	01-02-13	3	1
Sunderland Engineering Training Association	105	2	01-02-13	3	1
Age UK Trading Limited	7,845	2	25-01-13	n/a	n/a
B-Skill Limited	741	3	18-01-13	3	0
Aspire-1 Limited	1,005	3	18-01-13	3	0
Catch 22 Charity Limited	374	3	18-01-13	3	0
Mobile Care Qualifications Limited	785	2	18-01-13	3	1
Inspire 2 Independence (I2I) Ltd	1,400	3	18-01-13	3	0
Smart Training and Recruitment Limited	2,500	2	18-01-13	4	2
Working Links (Employment) Limited	1,025	3	14-12-12	3	0
DCET Training	156	3	14-12-12	2	-1
McArthur Dean Training Limited	450	2	14-12-12	3	1
NITAL	344	2	14-12-12	2	0
St Helens Chamber Limited	1,793	2	14-12-12	2	0
Capital Engineering Group Holdings Ltd	662	3	14-12-12	4	1
ACE Training and Consultancy Limited	422	3	14-12-12	n/a	n/a
The Bassetlaw Training Agency Limited	41	2	13-12-12	3	1
Anne Clarke Associates Limited	1,313	2	12-12-12	3	1
SETA	235	2	30-11-12	3	1
Yorkshire Training Partnership Limited	753	4	30-11-12	3	-1
Outsource Vocational Learning Limited	2,612	2	30-11-12	3	1
Train'd Up Railway Resourcing Limited	184	2	30-11-12	3	1
Above Bar College Limited	157	4	30-11-12	3	-1
Enlightenment Partnership Limited	829	3	30-11-12	n/a	n/a
Training for Today	1,187	3	23-11-12	2	-1
The Headmasters Partnership Limited	213	3	22-11-12	3	0
Jigsaw Training Limited	1,880	3	21-11-12	2	-1
Salford & Trafford Eng Group Training Assoc	144	2	16-11-12	2	0
Lifeskills Solutions Limited	2,027	3	16-11-12	2	-1
Rugby Football Union	190	3	16-11-12	3	0
Huddersfield Textile Training Limited	50	2	15-11-12	3	1
Southbank Training Limited	107	3	09-11-12	4	1
Nottinghamshire Training Network	1,099	3	09-11-12	3	0
Kingsbury Training Centre Limited	123	3	08-11-12	3	0
Mardell Associates Limited	3,870	2	02-11-12	2	0
Birmingham Electrical Training Ltd	146	3	02-11-12	3	0
North East Employment & Training Agency	203	3	02-11-12	3	0
In-Comm Training Services Limited	154	2	26-10-12	3	1
Nuneaton Training Centre Limited	31	2	26-10-12	2	0
M I T Skills Limited	2,000	3	26-10-12	3	0
ITS Training Ltd	372	2	19-10-12	2	0
Professional Business & Training Solutions	114	3	18-10-12	3	0
Bexley Youth Training Group	551	2	12-10-12	2	0
XTP International Limited	315	3	12-10-12	3	0
MORE Training Limited	26	3	11-10-12	3	0
Engineering Construction Training Limited	70	3	10-10-12	3	0
Business Management Resources (UK) Ltd	867	2	05-10-12	3	1
D M T Business Services Ltd	444	2	05-10-12	3	1
The College of Animal Welfare Limited	566	2	05-10-12	2	0
Springboard Bromley Trust	73	3	05-10-12	3	0
Arcanum Solutions Ltd	1,408	4	05-10-12	3	-1
UK Training & Development Limited	332	2	28-09-12	3	1
Heathercroft Training Services Limited	158	2	28-09-12	4	2
Blue Training (U.K.) Limited	1,149	2	28-09-12	2	0
Hays Travel Limited	147	2	28-09-12	n/a	n/a
Central Training UK Limited	808	4	21-09-12	2	-2
Bedfordshire & Luton Ed Business Partnership	466	3	21-09-12	3	0
The JGA Group	386	3	21-09-12	2	-1
Peter Pyne (Training School) Limited	96	3	21-09-12	3	0
Skills Training UK Limited	380	3	21-09-12	3	0
System Group Limited	2,831	2	21-09-12	2	0
B2B Engage Limited	945	2	21-09-12	3	1

Independent training provider inspections (2012/13)			
	Now		Before
Grade 1	0	0%	0
Grade 2	64	49%	35
Grade 3	55	42%	82
Grade 4	11	8%	5
	130		122

Independent training provider inspections (2012/13)		
Grade improved	39	32%
Grade stayed the same	63	52%
Grade got worse	20	16%
Total inspections	122	

Spot the inspection difference on work-based training

Different delivery environments for vocational learning are a hallmark of many independent training providers — and that's something that needs proper recognition from inspectors, says Stewart Segal.

When the latest common inspection framework (CIF) was introduced, it was clear that inspections in the sector would be very challenging.

It was not just the reclassification of satisfactory to requires improvement, but the emphasis on teaching and learning was always going to be a challenge in a sector where employer engagement and on-the-job assessment play such important roles.

Despite attempts to ensure all learning is given equal credit, many providers feel the inspection process reflects traditional classroom approaches.

Work-based learning by definition takes place in the many different environments of the workplace, often involving very small groups or even individual trainees.

The training provider may also be operating across several sites, which requires management oversight of a consistent set of standards to maintain the Ofsted standards.

It is difficult to argue against teaching and learning being more influential in the overall grading, but in the case of work-based learning and the provider's role, it is often assessment of the learner's progress and the wider support in the workplace which is so important and this may not be

given the same credit as good teaching in traditional settings.

It is also true that success rates play a significant part in determining the grade of the provider.

Delivering to some hard-to-help groups in difficult working environments can mean it is very challenging to deliver high success rates.

Many providers feel the inspection process reflects traditional classroom approaches

We have to make sure that success rates are seen in the context of the different delivery environments. Classroom-based learning has traditionally had higher success rates.

This might partly explain that under the new CIF, work-based learning providers have seen pressure on their Ofsted grades. Not enough are outstanding and too many require improvement so the grade profile overall is likely to be worse than last year.

The focus for the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) must be on how we work with providers to support them to be good or

outstanding.

The willingness to improve is not lacking, judging from the provider turnout that we see at our events on inspection, so AELP will continue to organise workshops that promote the sharing of best practice.

We have discussed with Ofsted the need to build capacity in the sector to ensure we have the skills and knowledge to deliver the standards required. The discussions have covered a number of options around provider programmes and we hope to take those plans forward shortly. The new Education and Training Foundation will also play a useful role in providing support to providers.

The new CIF is only a year old and providers need time to work with Ofsted to understand the standards and deliver the service to customers that meets the standards.

Providers score highly in terms of flexibility and meeting employers' needs and we need to ensure these factors are seen as important elements of meeting the CIF standards.

Providers that have developed good working relationships with employers are now being excluded from delivering the traineeship programme because of their Ofsted grades.

Although we understand the importance of ensuring high quality delivery, we need to ensure Ofsted grades are not used to exclude effective provision especially where employers or learners are excluded as a result.



In the case of traineeships, the critical work experience element requires a large number of committed employers on board to ensure that the programme is a success.

There are many grade three work-based learning providers with access to these employers, but the grading threshold means employers will almost certainly not be participants in the programme.

We need a balanced approach to the quality threshold that puts the learner at the centre of the decision.

A fair, transparent and appropriate inspection regime should be the objective for everyone that believes in consistent improvement. We need to ensure that the inspection framework recognises excellent delivery and creates the platform for provider improvement.

Stewart Segal, chief executive, Association of Employment and Learning Providers

Sixth form college Ofsted inspection results in 2012/13

Making maths add up in FE and skills

Sixth Form College	Grade in 2012/13	Inspection date	Inspection date	+ / -
Franklin College	2	23-04-13	4	2
Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College	3	16-04-13	1	-2
SEEVIC College	3	15-04-13	2	-1
Regent College	2	22-03-13	3	1
New College Telford	2	22-03-13	3	1
The Brooke House Sixth Form College	2	22-03-13	3	1
St Vincent College	3	15-03-13	3	0
Portsmouth College	2	15-03-13	3	1
Longley Park Sixth Form College	3	15-03-13	3	0
Havant College	2	08-03-13	3	1
Rochdale Sixth Form College	1	08-03-13	n/a	n/a
Oldham Sixth Form College	2	01-03-13	1	-1
John Leggott Sixth Form College	3	15-02-13	4	1
Havering Sixth Form College	3	15-02-13	2	-1
The Sixth Form College Colchester	2	08-02-13	1	-1
Coulsdon Sixth Form College	4	18-01-13	4	0
Leyton Sixth Form College	2	17-01-13	2	0
Birkenhead Sixth Form College	2	07-12-12	3	1
Cheadle and Marple Sixth Form College	3	07-12-12	3	0
St John Rigby RC Sixth Form College	2	09-11-12	3	1
Totton College	3	09-11-12	4	1
Stockton Sixth Form College	3	19-10-12	3	0
Cadbury Sixth Form College	3	19-10-12	3	0
St Brendan's Sixth Form College	2	19-10-12	2	0
Worcester Sixth Form College	2	12-10-12	2	0
Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College	1	12-10-12	2	1
Sir George Monoux College	2	05-10-12	3	1
City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College	3	05-10-12	3	0
Thomas Rotherham College	3	05-10-12	3	0
Gateway Sixth Form College	3	28-09-12	3	0
Varndean College	2	28-09-12	2	0

Sixth form college inspections (2012/13)				
	Now		Before	
Grade 1	2	6%	3	10%
Grade 2	15	48%	7	23%
Grade 3	13	42%	16	53%
Grade 4	1	3%	4	13%
	31		30	

Sixth form college inspections (2012/13)		
Grade improved	12	40%
Grade stayed the same	13	43%
Grade got worse	5	17%
Total inspections	30	

Picking up the pieces of school-leavers' maths GCSE failings is a heavy burden for the FE and skills sector. It is also one in which Alex Falconer thinks improvements are needed.

This year more than 550,00 year 11 pupils in England will complete their GCSEs. Most (86 per cent) will go on to training or FE of one sort or another. Recent figures show that of these, roughly a third will stay on to their school sixth form, one in ten (68,000) will study at a sixth form college and another third (185,000) will transfer to general FE colleges for (mostly) vocational education. Around 5 per cent will take apprenticeships, some will get employment and the rest will join the ranks of those not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

For those aspiring to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) careers, a GCSE C grade or better in maths is essential.

The national A* to C grade GCSE maths pass rate in schools is currently around 70 per cent.

However, the fact that 172,000 pupils fail to achieve a grade C by the age of 16 has been a concern for some time.

In fact this year, around 64,000 school leavers will achieve a D grade in GCSE maths.

Of those who repeat GCSE maths in post-16 settings — school sixth forms, sixth form colleges, FE colleges and work-based learning providers — fewer than half achieve a C grade or better each year.

Certainly, the recent emphasis on teaching maths for understanding in our schools has had a positive effect on pupils and their attainment levels.

However, there are still too few pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds achieving five A* to C grade GCSE passes.

These young people are far more likely to miss out on well-paid jobs because they have not achieved their potential at GCSE.

This is precisely why, following the recommendations in the Wolf report, there is now a clear expectation from government that all post-16 learners will continue to study maths and will either prepare for, or take GCSE maths.

This is a huge challenge for all FE and skills providers. Ensuring all learners get their entitlement to maths provision that leads to a level two qualification or GCSE is currently taxing their minds and resources.

It is not an easy task as there is a shortage of teachers qualified to teach GCSE maths.

Where possible, providers have been actively recruiting more maths teachers



and making sure that relevant training for others is in place.

However, it does look as though demand will continue to outstrip supply. To provide an initial solution, the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics (NCETM) has developed a Mathematics Enhancement Programme to provide continued professional development.

But spare a thought for those who did not achieve a D grade or better — all 108,000 of them.

Many of these young people will train for apprenticeships, NVQs, BTecs and the like. Most of these learners will take functional skills courses in foundation English and/or maths.

From Ofsted's perspective, teaching and learning in functional skills maths require considerable improvement. But where it is most successful, lessons are firmly rooted in vocational contexts.

That is to say, the maths operations they learn are taught within relevant, subject-based contexts.

It is therefore that maths is seen as a key underpinning subject, integral to all the 16 to 19 study programmes and not as an 'add-on' extra. A more numerate and mathematically confident workforce will make a positive contribution to the economy.

In addition, FE — always the leader in the 'second chance' market — can change the employment prospects of thousands of learners, and we might even see fewer people leaving saying, 'I'm useless at maths, me'.

Alex Falconer HMI, Ofsted national lead on post-16 STEM, with additional research by Norma Honey, National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics

College framework fears prove to be unfounded

The new 'toughened up' Ofsted inspection regime looked likely to make 2012/13 an unhappy year for sixth form colleges, but the general result was an improvement in grades, says James Kewin.

It is fair to say that the introduction of the new common inspection framework (CIF) in September last year was greeted with a degree of trepidation by many in the sixth form college sector.

The previous academic year had been a bruising one in inspection terms.

The more risk-based approach to selecting providers for inspection had seen just one of the 13 colleges inspected receive an improved grade for overall effectiveness and 10 receive a lower grade.

These figures, combined with the increasingly bellicose rhetoric from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector and some of the significant changes to the new

CIF — particularly the move to limited notice inspections — left many sixth form colleges hoping 2012/13 would not be the year inspectors called.

But call they did, and in significant numbers. Of the 93 sixth form colleges in England, no fewer than 30 were inspected.

Interestingly, the inspection performance of the sector improved markedly under what Ofsted itself described as a tougher, more rigorous CIF.

A total of 10 sixth form colleges received an improved grade for overall effectiveness and two were judged to be outstanding, while three of the colleges previously judged as inadequate received an improved grade for overall effectiveness.

How can the improved inspection performance of the sector be explained?

Well, in some respects the approach of inspection teams and their interpretation of the new CIF were as significant as the

CIF itself.

For example, the Sixth Form Colleges' Association (SFCA) has long campaigned for inspectors to stop using a separate success rate benchmark for sixth form colleges.

This benchmark is higher than that used for other colleges and is based on a misguided assumption about the prior attainment profile of students that attend sixth form colleges.

Some of the more inexplicable inspection grades awarded during 2011/12 can be largely explained by this practice. In 2012/13 this was much less widespread and on the whole, inspection teams were more willing to take 'all college' and sixth form college national averages into account.

The greater emphasis on teaching and learning has seen an increase in lesson observations and learning walks under the new CIF. This has helped to change

the perception that inspection judgements were entirely data-driven.

In some sixth form colleges, there was a clear sense that what was observed in the classroom, and the general 'direction of travel' being taken by the institution was a bigger factor in arriving at the final judgement.

Despite initial misgivings over the limited notice regime, some colleges found having less time to prepare resulted in less anxiety among staff and a more effective performance.

But concerns remain. The approach of inspection teams, and in particular their use of data, can still vary dramatically.

The inspections of outstanding sixth form colleges this year have in some cases been conducted harshly. And inspection teams have been largely uninterested in the work sixth form colleges are doing to support schools, academies or other colleges.



Q&A with Matthew Coffey, Ofsted's Director of Learning and Skills

Have two-day notices of inspection proved successful?

I think that was always going to be a challenge and there's a double-edged sword. The two-day notice is the right compromise.

I think while my starting point was that no-notice was going to be too much of a challenge, we really saw some benefits that came out of the pilots with absolutely no notice.

We saw much better teaching, learning and assessment. That's because people weren't expecting us so they were doing their thing. When they know we're coming they do what they think we want to see. There's a message in that for us, but also one for the sector.

The great challenge is that we give the two-day notice to the head of an organisation and could they keep that quiet from their staff? That would be a challenge, but it would produce really interesting results.

Logistically, it's worked. It's fine and it's alleviated some of the pressure that came from a three-week notice period and we've done an evaluation and providers tell us the two-day notice works well for them.

Was making learning and teaching a limiting grade the right decision?

There was some scepticism out there that there would be more than one limiting grade, which would be outcomes, but I think our statistics and our inspection results have shown us that teaching is the prominent grade.

It's teaching that matters and our grade profile supports that. Everybody accepts that our focus on teaching, learning and assessment is the right thing to do and is driving significant improvements in the sector.

Everybody accepts that our focus on teaching, learning and assessment is right

Thoughts on satisfactory being changed to requires improvement?

Probably one of the biggest influencers that the new framework brought.

Everybody will agree that's a real motivator for improvement and I'm really pleased that we've been able to support

that with inspectors following on behind that judgement of requires improvement by being able to support and challenge more rapid improvement.

The proof of that will be when we start to reinspect those providers which will come next year.

Are the new shorter reports better?

Reporting is always a challenge if I'm honest.

We've got reports that do say succinctly what our judgements are; that enable improvement to be made, but we're trying to talk to many people here and I'm not convinced that we talk to employers enough through our reports.

We need to find different ways, I think. If you try and do everything in one single report it becomes inaccessible and therefore it doesn't get used.

I'm comfortable with where we are. I think we've sharpened it.

I think our recommendations are much clearer, but I still think there's more that we can continue to do and we have a programme of training and development for our own inspectors and the sharpness of report writing is always up there, so that we can continue to learn from each other.

The evaluation of the new CIF is a very positive story. I'm pleased with the responses providers are giving us — 92 per cent of providers are telling us the inspection has prompted them to make improvements and has found the right judgements, so we're still getting a high satisfaction rate from our post inspection evaluations.

How has Learner View gone? Any plans to tweak the service?

Learner View is being well-used — 67 per cent of providers have got responses from their learners that are publishable.

I've had more than 63,000 individual responses from learners, but I want to do more with it.

On an individual level it's good for inspectors because we can instantly see what people are saying, but it's not getting used enough out there.

There's more evaluation that we can do of it that would be more beneficial for the sector, particularly with the likes of the Education and Training Foundation coming in and other membership organisations.

We can do more global analysis of it that we can reflect back to the sector. Even though the overall responses from learners, predictably I guess, are high, you really can see the differences in each of those questions.

The satisfaction ratings always

dip when the question comes about assessment and feedback and they're always a little bit lower than they are about other kinds of support that's offered for learners.

We do a very similar thing for employers but we don't publicise it in the same way as Learner View.

What I'd like to do is to introduce Employer View and I think the time is right and it's important that employers have got choices to make about where they engage with learning providers.

50 per cent of our inspection team comes from the sector itself — they are current practitioners

How do you see Ofsted's relationship with ETF developing?

Sector-led improvement has really got a place in further education and skills

That's why when Frank McLoughlin led his commission and came to see me about how we might work together, we embarked on this joint project to identify good practice — not good practice identified by inspectors, but by the sector to which inspectors and peers within the sector would validate jointly.

That work is coming to a conclusion and that's really valuable. I want to continue to find ways to work with the sector through the ETF and use the knowledge that we have to work with those other peers so that together we can go on this journey of improvement.

One of my well-worn defence mechanisms is that 50 per cent of our inspection team comes from the sector itself — they are current practitioners. That's such a valuable resource and I want to do more work with

the sector in that way.

Ofsted's growing role in supporting improvement.

Our improvement activity is a kind of three-pronged strategy.

The first is the individual institution and we will deploy one of Her Majesty's Inspectors where a judgment of requires improvement has been delivered then, using our regional structure, we will identify trends and themes within a particular region that need to be addressed.

The regional director will pull her Majesty's Inspectors together and find resources and take those out into the region to a collective of providers.

And then there's the national picture and what comes out of the annual report. We've just done a series of national conferences and seminars related to the value of self-assessment.

These are all very valuable things that we continue to do and they're certainly having an impact. They're definitely getting a positive response from the sector.

Those seminars are really valuable when we've got providers with us who have made that journey from requires improvement to good or outstanding.

What is the FE Commissioner's relationship with Ofsted going to look like? How do you want it to develop?

Inspection reports have got to speak to a number of people and one of them is the commissioner, so we've got to be very clear in our reports about what it is that we found.

I see that the commissioner is going to be a key audience member for our reports, so I want that relationship to be one that they can access our reports very quickly and understand exactly what it is that we found.

Speed is of the essence, but I think it's got to be a sensible pace that we work to.

So where we judge a provider to be inadequate, pre-September 2012 we would reinspect within six to eight months, but we're bringing reinspections forward to within six weeks of first inspection.

That enables us to judge the progress that's been made.

That's going to be a very valuable judgement that we make for the commissioner and I'm confident they'll want to see very early on what Ofsted has got to say and then we'll continue to do that robust monitoring — we'll do it more

frequently than we've done it in the past.

That gives the provider the opportunity to demonstrate it's on the right journey to more rapid success.

I hope that's going to be of comfort to the public to see we're discharging our duty to bring about more rapid improvement and I suspect it'll be very valuable to the commissioner as they go about discharging their duty. But we need to be really clear that they're two separate organisations.

Ofsted is an independent and objective non-ministerial government department and we retain our objectivity and independence and will continue to do what we do in the hope it's accessible to the FE Commissioner.

Has the CIF been amended to take into account the new study programmes and traineeships?

Our inspectors are very familiar with the concept of a programme of study. I haven't changed the CIF nor have I got any plans to do so. We've produced some guidance and some FAQs, and have run workshops, laying out good practice.

We're quite comfortable the CIF will continue to work through its current guise with subject areas and makes sure learner needs are being met in their broadest sense.

We've given information to inspectors so that they're very clear on what traineeships are — but that's publicly available anyway.

We've tweaked our handbook that's also publicly available to make sure we're referencing those qualifications and programmes of study that are out there now.

Last year's Ofsted annual report was critical of the FE and skills sector. Do you expect that to be the same case this year?

Since last year we've changed our name from Learning and Skills, and from this month it's further education and skills

It's more reflective of the breadth of what we do. We've also really focused down on the area that last year's report said was the weakest, which was teaching, learning and assessment and there we were coming out with a new CIF that focused specifically on that.

However, for the last two years we really highlighted what the challenges were and this year we focused our inspections on it.

I'm hopeful this year we're going to be able to see that providers have responded well to those uncomfortable challenges of last year and the year before and I'm hoping we'll be able to celebrate within the annual report where providers have really made a phenomenal difference.

I'm also hopeful the report is going to be able to highlight the collective challenges we have, in order to ensure we achieve the best for everybody. This year's report is going to look at those that were judged outstanding — and I'm really pleased we had a number of those — to understand better what it was about them that's so good and to turn that into a challenge back to the sector.

Any more changes afoot?

I've identified a number of priorities. I want to continue to improve the CIF so it has the greatest impact. I want to continue to improve our improvement work — we've got defined resources and I've got to deploy them sensibly, in the public interest and I've got to make sure they have an impact.

We've got to find better, more innovative ways of engaging employers

We've done an awful lot of different type of activity and so next year is about consolidating that which has the greatest level of impact.

English and maths is a very, very clear priority, so I've got to continue to focus to make sure we've got the capacity and the capability to deliver what employers want in terms of a functional English and maths.

Another priority is about employers, for sure.

We've got to find better, more innovative ways of engaging employers, but there's a challenge out to employers as well and that's about them stepping up to the mark to get much more engaged to be involved in the governance of college and other providers.

There's a challenge that we need to be looking at there. I do engage with the employers community and often come back to them.

Ofsted not involved in the employer ownership pilot. Is that indicative of Ofsted's future with regards involvement in work-based learning inspection?

I don't think it is. We continue to be in discussions with the government about Ofsted's evaluation of the pilots.

It's important that we do understand better that what the pilots are delivering their success, or their areas for further development.

Building on the vocational professionalism & expertise



Concern for vocational teaching and learning goes beyond Ofsted. It is shared by many, if not all FE sector bodies, including the new Education and Training Foundation, explains Fiona McMillan.

One of the privileges of being vice-chair of the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) was the opportunity to see genuinely world class vocational teaching and learning in action in a whole range of settings — with employers, colleges and training providers, across different sectors of the economy — much of which challenged our initial assumptions.

From the practice that commissioners saw, from the evidence that was submitted by employers, learners, and teachers and trainers, and the research we commissioned, we identified four key characteristics on which excellent vocational teaching and learning depend.

They were firstly, a clear line of sight to work on all vocational programmes; and secondly, 'dual professional' teachers and trainers who combine occupational and pedagogical expertise, who are trusted and given the time to develop partnerships and curricula with employers. Thirdly, access to industry-standard facilities and resources reflecting the ways in which technology is transforming work; and, finally, clear escalators to higher level vocational learning, developing and combining deep knowledge and skills.

What we also noted though, was how much vocational education and training practice was inconsistent, "because of the requirement to work within a system which continues to seek to specify so much from the centre".

The commission argued that a key route to more widespread high quality practice will involve empowering and trusting vocational teachers and trainers to be "dual professionals" — to combine their occupational and pedagogical expertise, build strong partnerships with employers to deliver relevant vocational programmes, and to work together to spread and improve the practice and impact of quality vocational teaching and learning.

We called on partners to "play their respective roles in enabling adult vocational teaching and learning to flourish by addressing our recommendations to them".

One of the recommendations was to Ofsted. We asked it "to consider the distinctive features of vocational teaching

and learning identified [by the commission] as an additional lens through which to review vocational provision".

We were delighted when Ofsted suggested a joint project, which we hope will do just that. We are now working with Ofsted and the CAVTL commissioners to further explore excellent vocational teaching and learning. By visiting providers and employers, who recently applied to be part of a case study project, Ofsted inspectors and the commission are seeking to further illuminate the characteristics of excellent provision, and the distinctive features of effective vocational teaching, learning and leadership.

Over the summer, I was delighted to be asked to lead the new Education and Training Foundation's work to take forward the commission's recommendations, working with Jenny Williams, author of the CAVTL report.

Building on our approach to the commission — of working from practice to theory — we are keen to learn from the case study examples from the joint Ofsted/CAVTL project, to be published later this year, as we develop arrangements to support vocational teaching and learning professionals.

Our contribution to the foundation's goal — to enhance the professionalism of further education and training — will be to focus on building on the vocational expertise that already exists, making it more visible to teachers, trainers and leaders, to enable it to be adopted and adapted more widely.

Nothing less will do if we are to realise our collective ambitions to further improve the quality and impact of vocational education and training so that it genuinely supports individuals, businesses and communities to grow and succeed.

We want to consult widely as the Foundation's programme develops over the autumn and will be putting in place a range of ways to engage with vocational education and training partners. We look forward to hearing from the sector and working with it as we do.

Dr Fiona McMillan OBE, deputising chief executive of the Education and Training Foundation and vice chair of the CAVTL

“FE Week has transformed media coverage of FE by creating an outlet for detailed information and real investigative analysis of what’s going on under the surface of the sector”

Toni Pearce, President of the National Union of Students

“Set against a backdrop of dwindling coverage of FE issues in the wider media, it has created a real buzz and filled a void for news specifically for our sector”

Brian Lightman, general secretary of the ASCL

“It is not often that a publication makes its mark as quickly as FE Week has, but the sector has welcomed having its own expert journal and powerful investigative journalism focused on the critical issues, however uncomfortable that may be at times”

Lynne Sedgmore, executive director of the 157 Group

“FE Week is the sort of publication that the sector has been crying out for. It places FE at the centre, not the margins of government agendas”

Maxine Room, Principal of LeSoCo

“FE Week is a great read and I look forward to it landing on my desk every week. It’s much needed in the sector and long overdue”

Karen Dobson, Principal of Newcastle under Lyme College



“Independent providers are welcoming that their part of the sector is receiving regular coverage and, surprise, surprise, this means that they have started advertising in FE Week”

Graham Hoyle, former chief executive of the AELP