Report on the Debate and discussion held at the House of Commons on March 28th 2023 on ‘Ofsted’ - convened by the Fabian Education Policy Group.

**Title: OFSTED - Time for Change? Issues and solutions**

Chair for meeting: Dr Deb Outhwaite

In attendance, around 100 including:

* Staff from 3 Labour and 2 Lib Dem MPs offices; 22 Heads; 12 CEOs; 18 Directors of Ed; 5 Profs of Ed; 15 Assoc Profs of Ed; 24 Policy Directors.

Statement from Prof Julia Waters

1 minute silence for Ruth Perry

Introductions to the Hockerill Anglo-European College staff, and then a 10-minute slot on their Ofsted Journey (3 inspections in a nine-month window), published the day before.

10-minute slot student experience of Ofsted from UCL States of Mind project, led by Dr Chris Bagley and Jaspar Kawaja who carried out a 2-year project on OFSTED led by young people, their documentary is on the Fabian website:

https://www.statesofmind.org/breaking-the-silence

There were 8-minute talks from the 5 participants:

Prof Marilyn Leask - Visiting Professor, DMU (Marilyn’s part, read out by Prof Sarah Younie because of illness.

Alison Kriel - Former Trust CEO, London

Tom Middlehurst - ASCL

Steve Rollett - CST

Ros McMullen – Former Trust CEO, Headrest and Heads RoundTable

There was then a lively Question and Answer session.

**Amalgamated key points:**

* There was strong agreement that the implementation the framework has been inconsistent and unreliable.
* Too many high-stakes judgements are made using subjective evidence, which is not always properly triangulated.
* Ofsted do not have a transparent and independent process of complaints or quality assurance of reports.
* The impact has been the continuation of a perceived high-stakes accountability system, compounded by the fact that many outstanding schools (previously exempt from inspection) have dropped their grading.
* ASCL has made several recommendations in its paper *The Future of Inspection* (Jan 2023) including the removal of graded judgements, decoupling safeguarding from Ofsted inspections, requiring Ofsted to publish its inspector training materials, ensuring that inspectors have experience of the phase or type of education they are inspecting, and a new balanced scorecard to provide a more holistic view of accountability.
* The current model has shattered the confidence of teachers and headteachers, and medic to a decline in pedagogy and conscious leadership.
* It has also narrowed our understanding of pupil success.
* The current framework is having a huge negative impact on physical and emotional well-being of school staff, pupil wellbeing, lost teaching and learning time, morale, budget.

**Amalgamated Recommendations:**

1. National associations representing teachers to form a **National Education Board,** to which they invite representatives of the political parties to meet to talk, debate and reach a consensus on those matters where national decisions need to be made including on models of inspection and extending to CPD, curriculum and qualifications.
2. Research suggests inspection is not as useful for informing parental choice as people have assumed.
3. Leaders don’t have faith in Ofsted’s complaints process. It should be reformed.
4. Inspectors should not play a more direct role in school improvement. Doing so would risk confusing roles, responsibility and accountability in the system.
5. Ofsted’s conception of subject quality has become more elaborate over time. These risks create an explanatory gap between school and inspector. Ofsted should calibrate its subject investigation work with the capacity of the school system.
6. There is a recruitment and retention crisis currently. While this isn’t all down to Ofsted by any means, reform of the accountability system could make a contribution to addressing this.

Please contact any of the organising team to share ideas and expertise.

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