

**Hello** – and welcome to our regular newsletter. I hope you had a good summer and made the most of the glorious start to October. Please remember, if you don't want to receive our newsletter, drop me a line by return and I'll remove you from the list, alternatively, if there is a topic you want to see included, let me know. And finally, a reminder that this and previous copies of this newsletter are now available on our website [www.kevindowson.co.uk](http://www.kevindowson.co.uk) so you can access them at any time.

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**Consultation on the new Common Inspection Framework**

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**Apologies** to those readers outside England as this newsletter takes Ofsted's proposed new Common Inspection Framework (CIF) as its theme. As you are probably aware, the consultation period remains open until 24 November and contains a few interesting changes. The overall aim of the review is to streamline and simplify the CIF, allowing it to focus on areas that have most impact. The intention is that this will result in more focused inspections with fewer judgements and grades, leading to reports on the most important aspects of learning and skills provision.

The first casualty seems to be the grade for Capacity to Improve, which is set to disappear, and not before time in my opinion! This has always been a slightly bizarre judgement, always carrying with it an assurance by inspectors that it is not "crystal ball gazing", but its very title suggests that is exactly what it is. Often used, I think, as a sweetener to accompany a weaker leadership and management grade, it will be good to see this back to where it belongs, firmly embedded within leadership and management.

The proposals for Outcomes for Learners also seem entirely sensible. Although there is not a significant change from a learning and skills perspective, the focus is back to where it should be, rather than taking the Every Child Matters themes as a basis for the aspect, a use for which I suspect they were never intended!

I think it is excellent news that Ofsted intends to continue inspecting sector subject areas, which at one time seemed to be in doubt, but there now seems to be a recognition that this is a key aspect of inspection. Indeed the changes to the Quality of Provision aspect of the CIF seem to recognise the strength of this by proposing that this aspect now becomes Quality of Teaching, Training and Assessment. The proposed award of a single grade for this area demonstrates its significance on learning and outcomes – a balance that the last framework never seemed to get right.

The downside of this is that the proposals include a suggestion of scrapping the separate sector subject area reports, with the grades and SSA reports being contained in the main section of the report rather than as separate reports. The proposal is that individual sector subject areas will be the focus of national thematic studies as part of Ofsted's programme of survey reports. Something of a significant backward step, given that almost every provider I have ever worked with, either in a support capacity, through reviews of their provision or indeed through inspection, has particularly valued the individual SSA feedback.

Some big changes under leadership and management to! It is proposed that equality and diversity loses its separate paragraph and is integrated into each of the other aspects. This seems particularly sensible given that it is what inspectors have been telling providers do for quite some time! The big change though is the removal of the limiting grade status from safeguarding and the proposal to judge and report only on whether a provider is meeting their statutory safeguarding responsibilities. I have to confess to mixed feelings about this one. There is a big question for me that asks how a provider can be anything better than satisfactory if it is not having due regard for the safety and welfare of its learners. On the other hand, there is so much variation on how safeguarding is reported, judged and graded that the notion of a consistent grade has become more than a little pointless!

If you have not already done so, please take some time to provide your views. Whilst Ofsted stays under the control of acting Chief Inspector Miriam Rosen (who never fails to underwhelm me) there is a real danger that the CIF will adopt a schools approach as its fall-back position. You can access the document through Ofsted's website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk), but I also attach a copy of the document for your reference.

**Until** next time ...