Ofsted announces new pilot to use more serving school and college leaders as inspectors

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Ofsted today announced that it is piloting a new way of involving more serving education leaders in the inspections of schools and further education providers.

Inspections already bring together the expertise of Ofsted's full-time His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and the real-time sector knowledge of contracted Ofsted Inspectors (OIs). This new pilot is exploring how Ofsted can enhance that crucial blend with even more shared insight into the context, challenges and day-to-day realities providers face, and how inspection can support improvement.

This is part of Ofsted's commitment to making sure inspection teams include people with relevant, sector-specific experience, who are best placed to understand the part of the system they are inspecting.

Currently, most OIs join Ofsted as individuals and their interaction with other OIs and HMI is largely limited to their inspection work. While this has worked well for inspection, it can restrict chances for two-way professional reflection and shared learning. The pilot is developing structured engagement opportunities for OIs, provided by the Ofsted Academy, to help forge an even deeper and more enduring connection between Ofsted and the education sector.

The scheme, which is already underway, involves OIs joining Ofsted as groups of peers drawn from the professional organisations and networks they're already part of, such as multi-academy trusts, local authorities, dioceses, local school networks, independent learning providers and general further education colleges.

OIs recruited in this way will form a professional community with each other and with HMI. Ofsted will ensure they have regular opportunities to share feedback collectively and to reflect on what they're seeing and learning day-to-day. Their experiences will then feed directly into how Ofsted continuously improves inspection.

Announcing the pilot at the Association of School and College Leaders Annual Conference this morning, His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Sir Martyn Oliver, said:

> I'm really excited about this pilot. It means we can bring in current sector insight in a more systemic way. It means more people in the sector, inspecting the sector. Even more colleagues who understand what it means to lead a school through challenges, to make the difficult calls you all make every day.
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> I know there are thousands of you who want to be inspectors. And I want to bring in as many people from the sector as possible! It is a chance for you to give back to the system, to shape how inspection works, to carry your expertise into schools and providers across the country. I believe this should be part of every leader's journey. So join us.
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> I want to make inspection more collaborative than ever before. We should work together

> to challenge each other in the interests of children and learners and to keep raising standards.

While this is a new route into the role with increased opportunities for professional engagement, OIs recruited through the pilot will continue to be trained to the same high standards as existing OIs and will carry out the same inspection work.

Under this new model, there is no separate inspection fee. Instead, Ofsted will contribute to employers' costs so that staff can become an OI as part of their professional development pathway. Ofsted is also developing additional learning and development opportunities to complement inspection training and make sure becoming an OI offers clear professional value for participants and their employers.

The first participants in the pilot began inspector training in January and are currently taking part in shadow inspections. They are expected to be ready to participate in live inspections later this term, with further cohorts to begin training later in the year. The pilot will continue throughout 2026 and feedback from participants will help inform how Ofsted recruit OIs in the future.

Ofsted is also exploring whether a similar approach can be adopted across early years and social care inspection.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-announces-new-pilot-to-use-more-serving-school-and-college-leaders-as-inspectors