



Wooff, David (2019) Looking Beyond Exam Results. University of Sunderland.

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Looking Beyond Exam Results

The way nurseries, schools and colleges in England are inspected is to undergo a major overhaul, with proposals by Ofsted addressing concerns that education has been too narrowly focused on exam results.

The new guidelines were launched by Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector of schools in England, in a speech last week to unveil the latest draft version of the Education Inspection Framework (EIF). This triggers the start of a public consultation into the EIF which encourages feedback from anyone who is interested.

One of the main headlines of the new EIF is the introduction of a new inspection category 'quality of education' which replaces the previous category of 'outcome'.

Under the new proposals, schools that push out less able children – a practice known as "off-rolling" – or teach a narrow curriculum designed solely to improve test results and gaming league table rankings risk being punished by Ofsted's inspectors.

David Wooff, Ofsted lead for the School of Education at the University of Sunderland, says that the move is to be welcomed but he suggests that there are a number of areas within the proposals that still need to be ironed out.

David explains: "The new EIF seeks to address a number of issues, but at the core of it is the declared shift away from outcomes (grades) and a move to use the curriculum as a measure of the quality of a school.

"Within the framework Ofsted state that *"the heart of an effective Key Stage 4 curriculum is a strong academic core: the EBacc"*, but this implies that only subjects included in the EBacc are strongly academic and it gives little support to other subjects which find themselves outside of the EBacc, yet contribute to high quality education.

"In addition to this, there are obvious tensions between the old framework and proposals within the new one."

David says that these are illustrated in the curriculum study used by Ofsted to underpin the new EIF. He highlights that only three out of the 64 schools included in phase three of the two-year curriculum study undertaken by Ofsted were deemed to have *"curriculum design [which] is central to the school's work and may include examples of exceptional curriculum"*. [16 other schools judged to be outstanding do not achieve the highest grade in respect of their curriculum.](#)

He adds: "The impact on initial teacher trainers should not be underestimated, and plans are already underway at our University to ensure that all students training to become qualified teachers understand what Ofsted deem to be an effective curriculum as the new inspection framework is due to be implemented from September 2019 – the time when those graduating from the class of 2019 will hopefully be commencing their first year in post as Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)."

Not all changes are curriculum focused, and David highlights that embedded within the Leadership and Management section of the new EIF is the inclusion of a judgement around ensuing that *"Leaders aim to ensure that all learners complete their programmes of study. They provide the support for staff to make this possible and do not allow gaming or off-rolling"*.

Something he argues is long overdue but acknowledges that this may lead to a rise in permanent exclusions by some schools as a way to mitigate this.

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