

# Ofsted's review of careers guidance - using inspector and policy staff expertise in research



# Project research questions

How well do leaders:

- fulfil their statutory duties to provide independent careers guidance?
- ensure that careers education is of high quality?

To what extent do schools and further education and skills (FES) providers:

- engage with stakeholders (such as employers, careers networks and other providers)?
- ensure careers education contributes to local, regional and national opportunities and skills needs?

How does the curriculum help learners make informed choices about their future education, employment and training?

# Sub-questions

## Leadership

- Is careers guidance seen as a purposeful activity across the whole school or college, integrating school/ college leadership, whole-curriculum planning, employers and parents?
- Does the careers leader have the explicit and visible backing of school leaders?

## Employer/provider engagement

- Is the school/ college an active member of local careers networks, such as the local Careers Hub and Enterprise Adviser networks (where available)?
- What is the quality of provision around working with government-funded delivery partners?
- To what extent are schools and colleges involving parents and carers in the careers guidance process?

## Curriculum

- Are schools giving equal prominence to both technical and academic routes when informing young people and their parents about future options?
- How have providers developed their careers offer since the pandemic? What change and innovation have we seen since the pandemic?
- How are providers meeting statutory guidance and associated actions?

A research team

Working in conjunction with

His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) acting in a research role

# Data we have collected

- Targeted literature review (autumn 2022)
- Focus groups with HMI [4 focus groups, 16 inspectors] (autumn 2022)
- Research visits led by HMIs to schools [n30] and further education and skills [n14] (February and March 2023)
- Inspection evidence analysis for schools [n21] and FES [n15] (January to March 2023)
- Roundtables with employers (May 2023)

# Ethics

- Review by the Ofsted ethics committee – diverse perspectives – external academics, legal department, data protection
- Research by Ofsted needs to come within our legal powers as a non-ministerial government body, as set by parliament; it needs to support our wider inspection and regulation activities
- Ofsted is quite unique in England in directly undertaking social research with schools and social care organisations
- Ofsted has particular positioning in terms of power relations
- In the careers project, ethical voluntary informed consent to participate was central to our work

# Working with policy and inspector colleagues and expertise

- Working with Senior HMI (specialist advisers) in our policy section to understand the landscape and formulate detailed research design
- Focus groups with HMI with expertise in careers guidance to help us design the data collection tools
- Training materials and training sessions with HMI run by the research team
- HMI lead research visits with research team supporting on some visits

# Working with policy and inspector colleagues and expertise

- Regular check-ins with specialist advisers and senior policy colleagues
- Thinking about two-way dialogue – how policy can inform the research process and how research can inform policy development



# What inspectors and policy staff bring to research (1)

Ofsted is an inspectorate and regulator

It has an inspection workforce and inspection policy teams

Inspection and research - symbiotic

# What inspectors and policy staff bring to research (2)

- Policy and inspector colleagues provide:
  - the evolving government policy context
  - the wider sector context
  - the context of different types of provider and provision
  - insights into how things work 'on the ground'.

# What inspectors and policy staff take from research



- Findings from research can inform:
  - inspection policy
  - inspection practice
  - inspector training

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