3 September 2014

Mr Graham Stuart MP
Chair, Education Committee

Sent by email

Dear Graham

*Education Committee hearing on extremism in schools - 9 July 2014*

I was grateful for the opportunity to appear in front of the Education Committee in July. I hope that the members of the Committee found Ofsted’s evidence helpful.

I undertook at the time to write to the committee to outline Ofsted’s arrangements for ensuring the confidentiality of people who come forward with concerns about schools. I also offered to provide figures for how often inspections of schools were triggered by such concerns being raised.

Ofsted has well-established processes for dealing with information which may require sensitive handling. We handle all confidential information strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and any other relevant legislation.

If requested, Ofsted will take all necessary steps to ensure that details of those contacting us are treated in confidence. However, as with other public bodies, we are unable to give an absolute assurance to any person with regards to confidentiality. Ofsted must disclose relevant information whenever it is legally required to do so, for example, when disclosure is ordered by a court.

In addition, Ofsted is in the process of becoming a prescribed ‘person’ under the Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998. This will give further protection to whistleblowers contacting Ofsted with concerns about their employer. Under PIDA, whistleblowers will be protected from detrimental treatment by their employer in the event the employer becomes aware that they contacted Ofsted.

I also offered to provide figures for inspections of schools triggered by such concerns being raised with Ofsted. In 2013-14 there were 58 immediate inspections of schools as a result of concerns or complaints raised.
I hope you and your Committee find this information helpful. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely

Sir Michael Wilshaw