Amanda Spielman
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector
Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
Clive House, 70 Petty France
London, SW1H 9EX

Dear Ms Spielman

Thank you for giving evidence to my Committee on 23 January 2019 and for your letter of 4 February 2019 providing the additional information we requested. I am writing to follow up on some of the matters we discussed.

School funding pressures

We are, as you know, concerned that neither Ofsted nor the Education and Skills Funding Agency assesses the impact of funding pressures on the quality of education and the outcomes that schools achieve. We are therefore interested in the research project that you are undertaking to look at the decisions that schools are taking about spending and how they are taking them. I would be grateful if you could send us a copy of your research report when it is completed later this year.

We await the Government's response to the recommendation in our recent report Academy accounts and performance that, as part of its school inspections, Ofsted should examine and report on whether the quality of education and the outcomes schools achieve are being adversely affected by the need to make savings. Thank you for clarifying in your letter that parents did in fact raise concerns during your focus groups in 2017 about funding cuts and their impact on schools. This adds weight to our view that Ofsted should cover this issue during school inspections.

At the evidence session, you told us that it is not currently in Ofsted's brief to look at how schools spend their money and that to do so would need direction from the Department for Education. You also said that only by fully reviewing the whole allocation and spending by a school could you attribute the inadequacy in any kind of education standards to budget shortfalls.

We are not convinced by this argument. As a minimum, your inspectors could ask school leaders, teachers, governors and parents questions about how schools are responding to funding pressures. This would help you build up a body of evidence. We also note that you have reached firm conclusions on further education funding pressures from your inspections and indeed have recommended that funding for this sector should be increased. Without prejudging what your conclusions might be, we would expect you to be able to adopt a similar approach with schools.

Off-rolling

We are concerned, as you are, about the way that some schools are removing significant numbers of children from their registers where there is no legitimate reason to do so. We welcome the work that you are doing to tackle this. You told us that you have identified 300 schools that the data suggest may have been engaging
in off-rolling. You have inspected 16 of these schools so far and reported one school (plus another school that was not on the original list) for this practice. As you inspect more of these schools over the next year or so, you expect to have a better understanding of the situation. I would be grateful if you could update us on your findings on this issue at the end of the 2018/19 academic year.

Other points

We would also be grateful for further clarification on the following points that we covered during the session:

- **Inspection of outstanding schools:** Following our report on Ofsted’s inspection of schools, you have been asked by the Minister for School Standards to increase inspections of exempt outstanding schools to 10% in the current academic year. You told us at the recent evidence session that you were on track to meet this target, but we are unclear how many more outstanding schools will now be inspected. I would be grateful if you could write to confirm: (i) how many schools previously graded as outstanding you plan to inspect in 2018/19; and (ii) how many schools previously graded as outstanding you inspected in each of the preceding three academic years.

- **Short inspections:** You told us that you are currently consulting on the new Education Inspection Framework, and that you are proposing to increase the length of short inspections from one day to two days. I understand that the lead inspector will be on-site for two days and that, for all school inspections, you also plan to introduce on-site inspector preparation on the afternoon of the day before the inspection. I would be grateful if you could clarify if, for a short inspection, the on-site preparation is additional to, or included within, the two days on site.

- **Deferral of inspections:** We asked if, as a result of cases such as Learndirect, you had changed the way that you approach the deferral of inspections. You told us that you had added the size of the organisation to be inspected to your risk assessment criteria, and now explicitly draw attention to commercial providers in your deferral policy. In the Treasury Minute response to our report *Monitoring, inspection and funding of Learndirect Ltd*, you undertook to publish an updated deferral policy in May 2018 to take this into account. However, we note that the policy document available online at [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/deferring-ofsted-inspections](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/deferring-ofsted-inspections) was last updated in June 2016. I would therefore be grateful if you would publish the revised policy and confirm to us that you have done so.

I would welcome your reply on these points by 10 April.

I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Education.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

MEG HILLIER MP
CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTs