

SCHOOLS WILL FACE SURPRISE OFSTED VISITS IN ORDER TO IMPROVE BEHAVIOUR

Chief inspector of schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw, promises ‘concerted focus on culture and behaviour’ in the year ahead

Sir Michael Wilshaw: ‘Classrooms must be orderly places. Around 700,000 pupils attend schools where behaviour needs to improve.’

Ofsted inspectors will begin making “no notice” visits to schools in England identified as rife with poor behaviour, Sir Michael Wilshaw, the chief inspector of schools, has announced.

“Classrooms must be orderly places. Around 700,000 pupils attend schools where behaviour needs to improve,” Wilshaw said as he promised “a concerted focus on culture and behaviour by Ofsted in the year ahead”.

“Unless this changes, teachers will struggle to create an environment in which all children will learn well.”

The chief inspector also said that the government should consider formal testing for primary school children at the end of key stage one – age seven – to measure progress.

The report also states that the significant growth in the number of schools with academy status “has helped raise the standards in many of England’s weakest schools”.



Wilshaw’s remarks came at the launch of Ofsted’s annual schools report card, which found that overall, schools and colleges had improved their performance compared with the previous year.

But challenges still remained, Wilshaw warned, highlighting “mediocre teaching and weak leadership” alongside regional variation in school quality and underachievement among white children from poor backgrounds.

“If our destination is the high peaks of a world-class education system and the economic benefits that follow, we are now in the foothills,” Wilshaw said.

The Ofsted survey of its inspections in the past year showed that nearly eight out of every 10 schools in England were judged to be good or outstanding, the highest proportion in Ofsted’s 20-year history.



There are now 485,000 more primary school pupils and 180,000 more secondary school pupils attending good or outstanding schools compared with a year ago.

“Looking at the evidence across all sectors, there are unmistakable signs that England’s education system is gradually improving,” said Wilshaw.

“Tenacious and committed teachers and leaders are at the forefront of this. At the same time, our new frameworks have raised expectations and established that only ‘good’ is good enough.”

But almost 250,000 pupils are taught in schools judged to be inadequate by Ofsted – with 13 local authorities having less than half of their pupils in schools rated good or better.

English and maths teaching was found to be weaker than other subjects. The report said that good teachers were not always being deployed where they would have the greatest impact.

Ofsted inspected 7,905 schools in 2012-13. The best primary schools were to be found in Darlington. The Isle of Wight and Barnsley were at the bottom of the national table for secondary school performance.

“Serious challenges remain and all the while, many of our international competitors are improving at a faster rate than we are,” said Wilshaw.

“It is not an exaggeration to report that the story of our schools and colleges today is a tale of two nations. Children from similar backgrounds with similar abilities, but who happen to be born in different regions and attend different schools and colleges, can end up with widely different prospects because of the variable quality of their education.”

Wilshaw also said that it had been a mistake to abolish formal testing for primary and early secondary school years pupils at key stages one and three.

“I am calling on the government to reintroduce more formal external testing,” Wilshaw said.

“Talk to any good headteacher and they will tell you it was a mistake to abolish those tests. That’s because good teachers use those tests to make sure every child learns well.

“In getting rid of those tests we conceded too much ground to vested interests.”

But Christine Blower, head of the National Union of Teachers, said that the call for formal testing for seven-year-olds was “an unhelpful step”.

“We already have formal assessment in the early years and the phonics check at age five. This is all too much testing too soon,” she said.

