



THE ALTERNATIVE BIG LISTEN

Main Findings on school inspection

OFSTED IS NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE

ONE- OR TWO-WORD JUDGMENTS SHOULD NOT BE USED

A MORATORIUM ON ROUTINE INSPECTIONS IS NEEDED

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1992 Ofsted has been tasked with inspecting all state-funded educational settings in England. Over thirty years on it has now become the centre of intense and often critical professional and media scrutiny. Following the tragic death of Ruth Perry, the headteacher at Caversham Primary School, and the publication of the Coroner's Report. Ofsted launched the Big Listen (BL) to gather views on its inspection activity.

'The 'Alternative Big Listen' (ABL) offers an opportunity to remedy the major deficiencies in Ofsted's BL survey by asking respondents to review the inspectorate's current and past performance. It includes many of the key statements used by Ofsted but asks very different questions. In order to make the most effective use of limited resources it focusses on schools and post-16 settings. **It raises serious issues for the new Secretary of State who has committed to the reform of school inspection in England.**

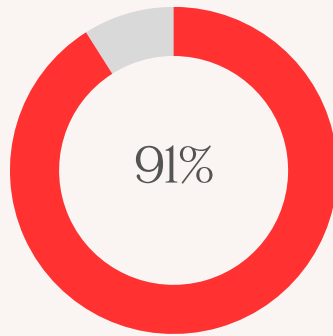
The Alternative Big Listen is self-funded and has been supported by many leading commentators and practitioners, including Professor Julia Waters, sister of Ruth Perry. Over 13,000 have visited the ABL website and 1,368 have completed the survey.

MAIN FINDINGS

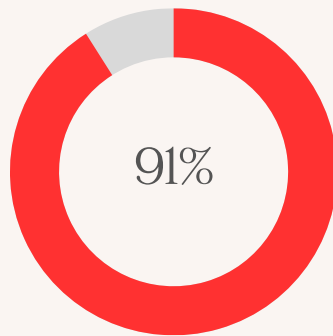
The findings from the ABL reveal Ofsted has lost very significant levels of trust and confidence from the school sector and strongly suggest that fundamental, not piece-meal, change, is required to craft an inspection system fit for purpose in the second quarter of the twenty-first century. This is urgent given the parlous state of relations, indicated by the ABL survey, between Ofsted and those who work in schools.

Very high percentages of respondents are dissatisfied with Ofsted

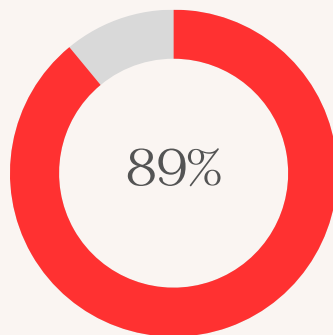
Ofsted is **NOT** fit for purpose



Ofsted should **NOT** use one or two word judgements to characterise the overall effectiveness of schools



Ofsted does **NOT** sufficiently consider the context of school's local area in the judgements they make

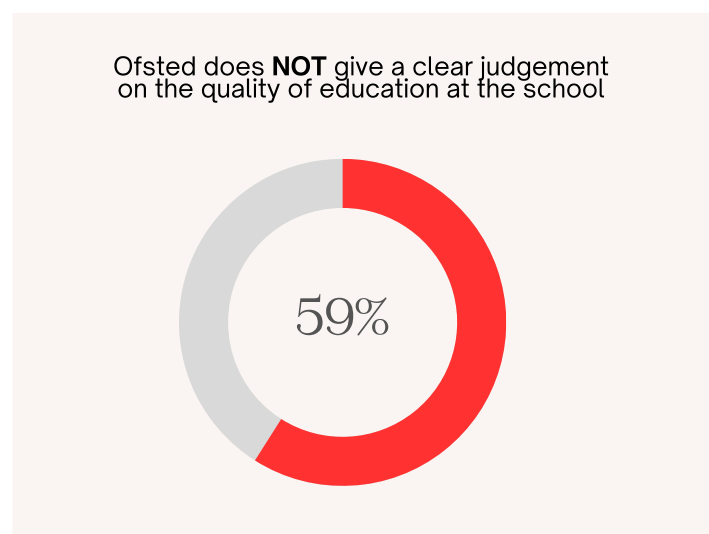
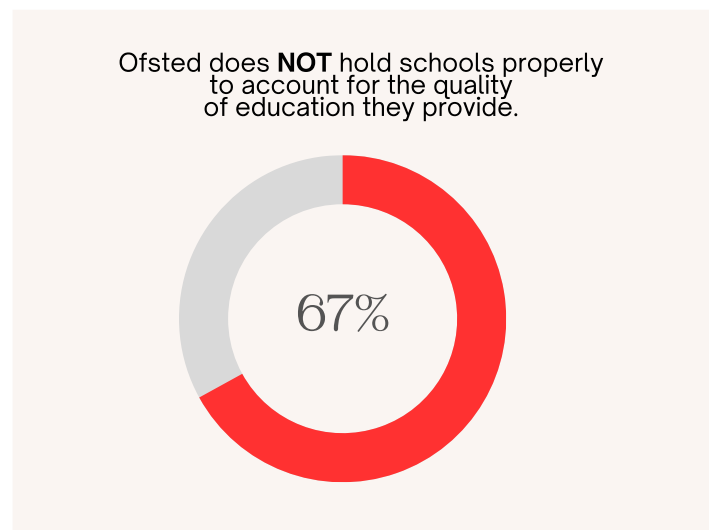


Very significantly too, 90% believe inspections are not carried out in a way that is consistent from place to place.

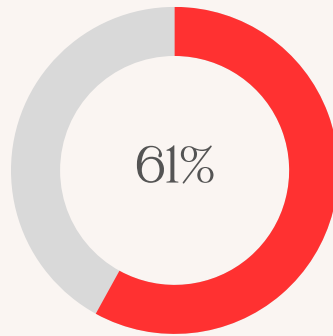
Also significantly, 85% disagree that the number of schools graded Good or Outstanding give a strong indication of the overall quality of the schools' system.

83% believe that there should be a moratorium on routine inspections (but not all) until a fundamental review has taken place.

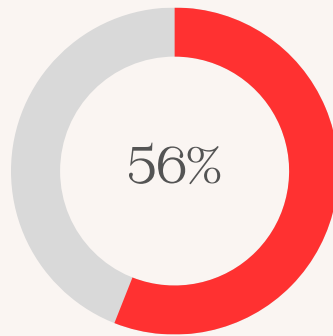
Ofsted's reporting of other key aspects is also heavily criticised by the majority of respondents



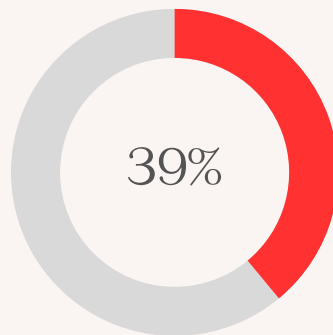
Ofsted does **NOT** give a clear judgement on the quality of leadership and management and how it impacts children or learners



Ofsted does **NOT** make clear what the school does to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.



Ofsted does **NOT** hold schools properly to account for keeping children safe



39% of respondents do not believe Ofsted holds schools properly to account for keeping children safe; around 20% don't know. This response reinforces the critical comments made within the Coroner's Report following the death of Ruth Perry.

IN CONCLUSION

Readers of this report will draw their own conclusions from the findings of the ABL. It is clear that Ofsted is facing an existential crisis – whether to engage in piecemeal change, to be fundamentally reformed or to be replaced altogether. Our findings imply that the first of these is no longer a viable option.

Bridget Phillipson, the new Secretary of State for Education, and Sir Martyn Oliver, Ofsted's Chief Inspector, need to take note of our findings and to take urgent principled action to reform the current school inspection regime.

A more detailed breakdown of the findings and the full report can be found at www.thealternativebiglisten.co.uk