

# Report on the Consultation on National Framework grade descriptor changes

September 2023

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## Introduction

In July 2023, following feedback from schools, dioceses and inspectors, the Catholic Schools Inspectorate consulted on two proposed changes to the framework from September 2023 onwards. The changes focused on two aspects of the framework in use in the academic year 2022-2023:

1. The key judgement aggregate grade descriptors
2. The grade 3 descriptors in each of the nine evidenced judgement areas

The details of the proposed changes and the reasons for them are outlined below. The consultation closed on Friday 21 July. 178 responses were received. The inspectorate is grateful to all those who took the time to complete a response, each of which was considered in arriving at final decisions about implementation of the proposals.

## The proposals

### 1. Key judgement aggregate grade descriptors

The framework (January 2023, v1.3) has two levels of aggregate grade descriptors, one for the overall effectiveness grade (p.24) and one for each of the key judgement grades:

- Catholic life and mission (p.26)
- Religious education (p.45)
- Collective worship (p.61)

These aggregate grades are summaries of the evidenced grades that sit beneath them (outcomes, provision and leadership in each key judgement area).

No changes to the overall effectiveness grade were proposed, which currently states that if any of the key judgement grades is a grade 3, then the school overall will be a grade 3. Given the significance and equal weight given to each of the three key judgment areas, this appears to be the right way of aggregating the key judgment grades into an overall effectiveness grade.

However, the aggregate grade descriptor for the key judgement grades also states that if any one of the three evidenced grades in each key judgement area (outcomes, provision and leadership) is a grade 3, then the key judgment grade for that area will also be a grade 3. This, taken together with the overall effectiveness descriptor, means that if any one of the nine evidenced judgements is a grade 3, then the overall effectiveness can be no better than a grade 3, irrespective of how well the school has done in the other eight areas. Some dioceses and schools have pointed out the potential unfairness of such an outcome for a school.

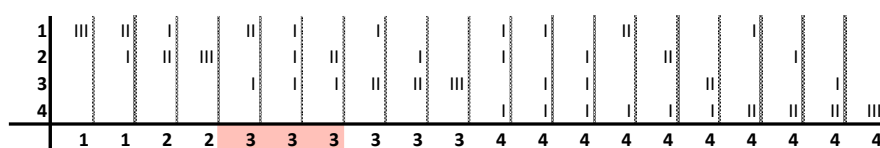
We therefore proposed rewriting the key judgement aggregate grade descriptor so that it will be a best fit summary of the three evidenced judgments that sit beneath it, meaning that a single grade 3 would no longer automatically limit a key judgment grade to a grade 3, with its subsequent impact on the overall effectiveness grade.

The **current** and **proposed** key judgement grade descriptor for Catholic life and mission are given on the next page as an example. The proposed changes are underlined in the proposed grade descriptor.

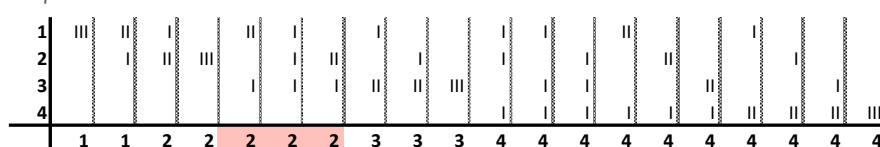
	Current	Proposed
1	<p>Each of the following must be at least good, and at least two of the following must be outstanding/excellent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil outcomes: the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Provision: the quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Leadership: how well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> </ul>	<p>Each of the following must be at least good, and at least two of the following must be outstanding/excellent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil outcomes: the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Provision: the quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Leadership: how well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> </ul>
2	<p>Each of the following must be at least good:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil outcomes: the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Provision: the quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Leadership: how well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> </ul>	<p>Each of the following must be <u>no less than 'requires/in need of improvement'</u> and at least two of the following must be at least good:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil outcomes: the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Provision: the quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Leadership: how well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> </ul>
3	<p>The Catholic life and mission of the school will require improvement if any one or more of the following requires improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil outcomes: the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Provision: the quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Leadership: how well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> </ul>	<p>The Catholic life and mission of the school will require improvement if <u>any two</u> or more of the following require improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil outcomes: the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Provision: the quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Leadership: how well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> </ul>
4	<p>The Catholic life and mission of the school will be inadequate/unsatisfactory if any one or more of the following is inadequate/unsatisfactory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil outcomes: the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Provision: the quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Leadership: how well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> </ul>	<p>The Catholic life and mission of the school will be inadequate/unsatisfactory if any one or more of the following is inadequate/unsatisfactory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil outcomes: the extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Provision: the quality of provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> <li>• Leadership: how well leaders and governors promote, monitor, and evaluate the provision for the Catholic life and mission of the school.</li> </ul>

The difference this would make to the key judgement grades is highlighted in the two tally charts below:

Current



Proposed



It was recognised that this change could potentially have an impact on some schools that were inspected in 2022-2023 and we sought views on whether this new key judgement grade descriptor ought to be retrospectively applied to schools that underwent inspection in the academic year 2022-2023.

## 2. The grade 3 descriptors

Another issue that has been raised as a consequence of last year's inspections is the large gap between grades 2 and 3 for each of the nine evidence judgements, such that a school that is not securely good often does not meet the grade 3 descriptors either. This makes a best fit judgement more difficult to arrive at during an inspection. Therefore, we sought views on whether to replace the grade 3 descriptors for each of the nine judgements with the phrase **'The school is not yet securely good in this area.'**

### The consultation questions

The questions we asked were:

1a. Do you agree with the proposed change to the key judgement aggregate grade descriptor?

Please add any further comments you wish to make in answer to this question.

1b. Do you think the change to the aggregate e grade descriptor should be retrospectively applied to schools inspected this year upon whom it would impact?

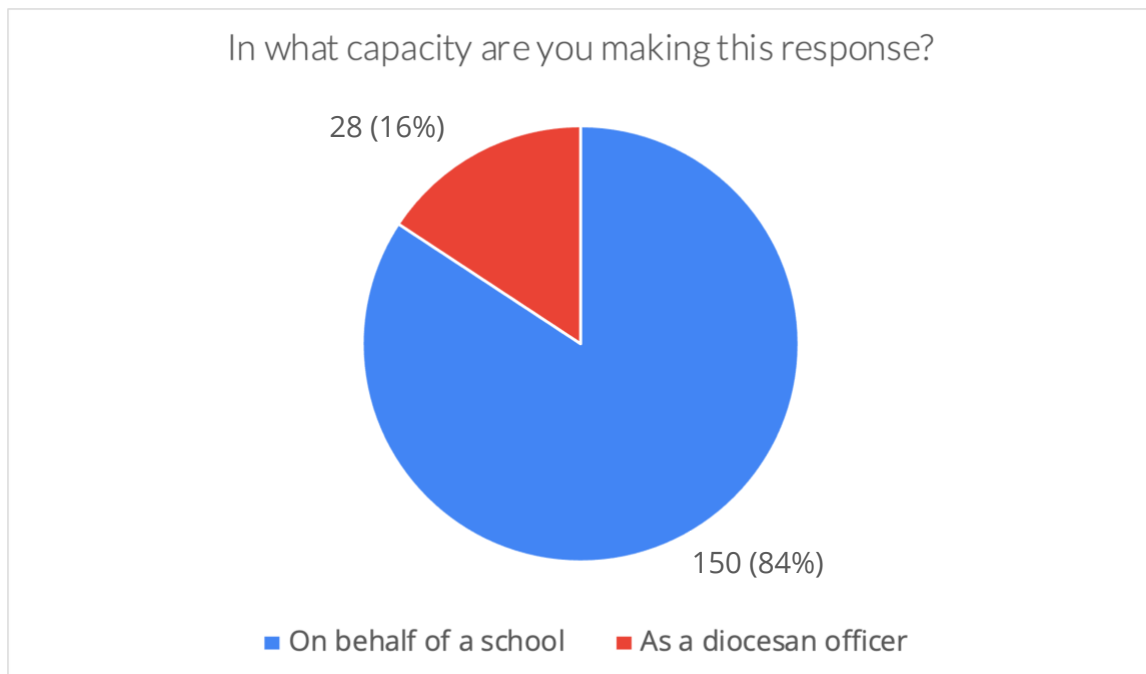
Please add any further comments you wish to make in answer to this question.

2. Do you agree with the proposed changes to the grade 3 descriptors?

Please add any further comments you wish to make in answer to this question.

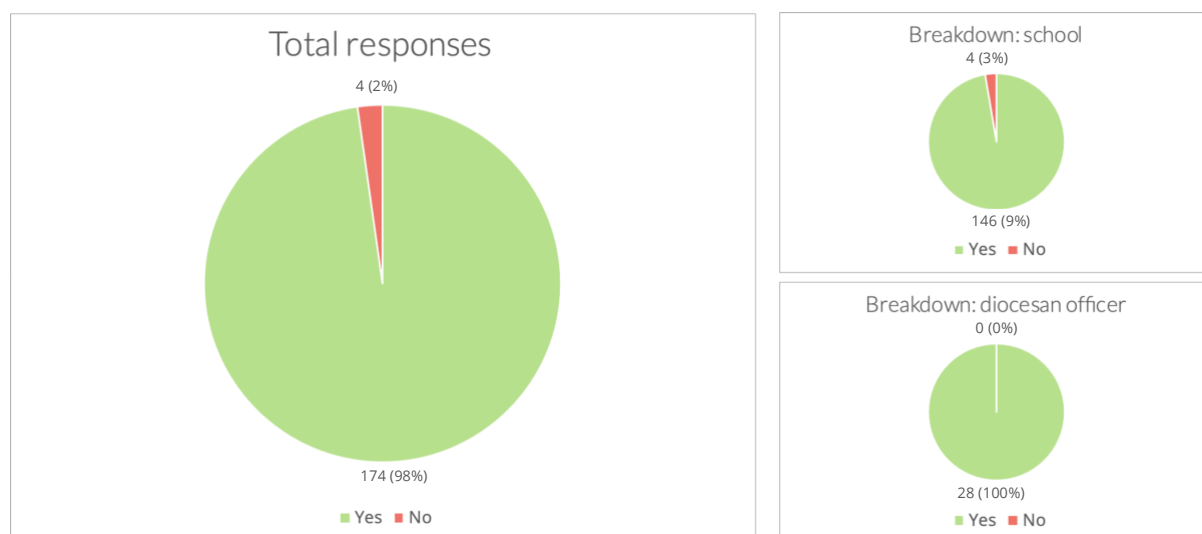
## Consultation responses

We received a total of 178 responses, 150 were from schools, 28 were from diocesan officers. The breakdown of the respondent types is indicated in the chart below.



On reflection, it would have been useful to know which respondents were current serving inspectors and, indeed, which of them had inspected using the current framework. In the absence of that level of granularity, the responses to this survey will be assessed alongside other feedback received from the strategic oversight committee, diocesan officers and individual inspectors.

1a. Do you agree with the proposed change to the key judgement aggregate grade descriptor?



In addition to the tally of responses given above, respondents were given the option of writing a comment to explain their choice. Not every respondent submitted an accompanying comment, but of those that did, 109 (96%) were in favour of the proposed change, and 5 (4%) were opposed.

Those in favour of the proposed change spoke most often of the increased fairness that the change to the key judgement aggregate descriptors would bring. The following example is representative of these kinds of comment:

I think this [change] is crucial as there has to be a reasonableness and fairness around this. A limiting judgement seems very unfair to a process that could reflect a good overall report in its prose, yet an overall judgement in numbers as satisfactory [requires improvement].

Some also pointed out that this increase in fairness would make the framework more consistent overall and would lead to greater integrity in inspector judgements, since inspectors would be more willing to honestly report an area as requiring improvement if they knew it would not have an impact on the overall effectiveness grade. For example:

We feel this would make the framework fairer because it would mean the weight of a single grade 3 within a key judgement area when looking at 'Good' would be equal to the weight of a single grade 2 within a key judgement area when looking at 'Outstanding'. Specifically concerning RE, it would allow inspectors more flex when a school has achieved a weak set of outcomes as an anomaly.

Many of those who responded on behalf of schools commented that a report using the proposed aggregate descriptors would be a more accurate reflection of what a school is



like, and at the same time would both celebrate a school's successes whilst more accurately identifying areas for improvement within an overall more positive picture:

I agree that this would help schools to celebrate their successes and focus on the area that is needed for improvement without having a detrimental effect on the overall effectiveness.

And again:

The changes would mean that areas of good practice will be celebrated even if one of the 9 areas is still a work in progress.

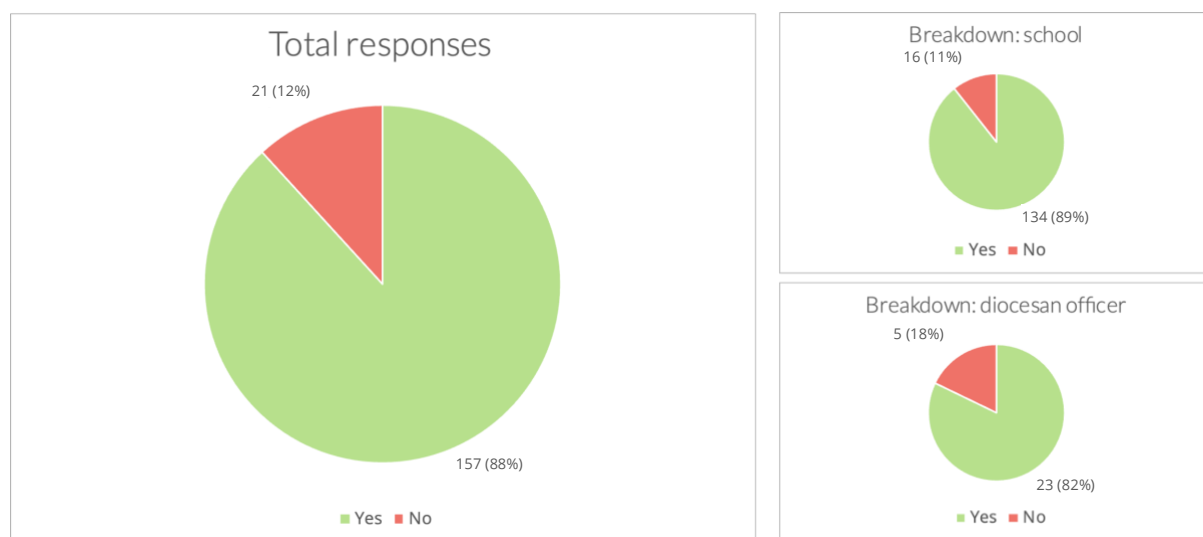
However, there were a small number of contrary opinions who gave various reasons for rejecting the proposed change, the most salient of which was a concern about the impact of the change on the rigour of inspection. For example:

I think the change is unnecessary and will devalue CSI inspection [with] a disproportionate number of Catholic schools receiving Good for CSI and lower grades for other inspections.

This was a minority view, and the overwhelming majority of responses viewed the proposed change as one that would enhance, rather than detract from, the accuracy, and therefore the rigour, of inspection:

Inspection judgements will reflect schools more accurately. Under the current system, there is a risk of schools which are mostly good not being distinguished from those which are mostly RI.

1b. If a change is made, do you think the change to the aggregate grade descriptor should be retrospectively applied to schools inspected this year upon whom it would impact?



Again, in addition to the tally of responses given above, respondents were given the option of writing a comment to explain their choice. Not every respondent submitted an accompanying comment, but of those that did, 53 (76%) were in favour of the proposed change, and 17 (24%) were opposed. It is also worth noting that of the 174 respondents who agreed with the change, 18 (10%) did not agree it should be retrospectively applied. It is perhaps also worth noting that diocesan officers were more opposed than those responding on behalf of schools.

Those who agreed, again, most often cited that this was the fairest way forward, especially given the context where not every diocese began inspecting under the new framework in 2022-2023:

This [is] crucial as those dioceses who have undertaken more inspections earlier and consequently informed the early process are being penalised due to a learning and refinement to the overall grading system. There are only a small number of schools this would affect but it is hugely important for those schools.

One respondent made the case that since dioceses implemented the framework at different points in the academic year 2022-2023, it was in effect, an extension of the pilot phase of inspection and therefore appropriate for the change to the aggregate grade to be applied retrospectively.

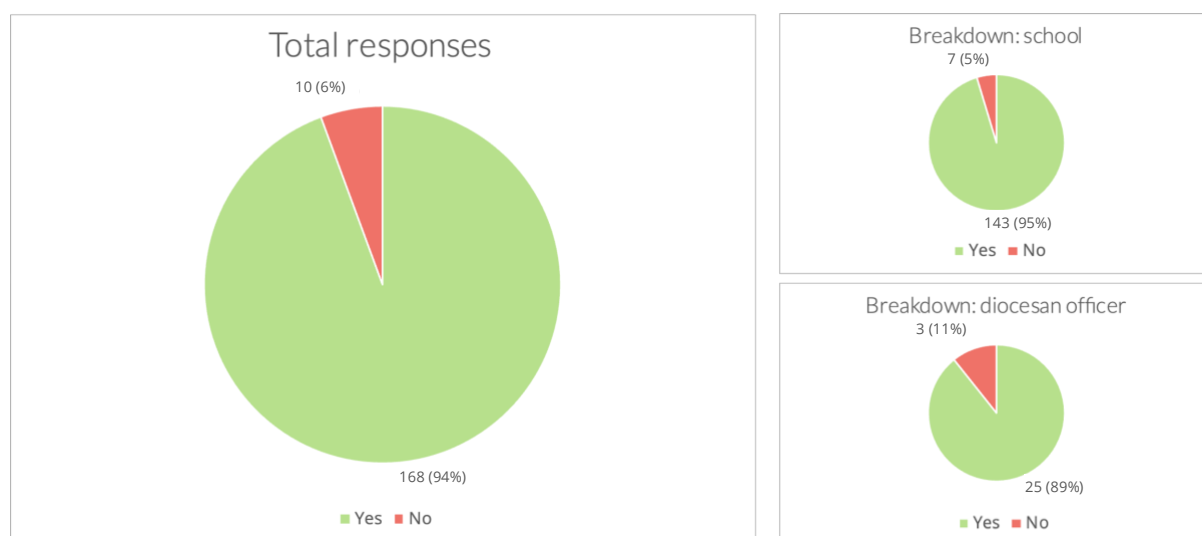
Those who disagreed were concerned about the impact that this would have on the reputation of the inspectorate and did not agree with the unfairness thesis since all schools were judged against the framework in place at the time:

Schools were judged according to the inspection framework at the time. Any retrospective change will lead to confusion for stakeholders. It may be necessary to complete one full cycle without any amendment if you wish all schools to be treated fairly. Making this change mid cycle indicates that the system was flawed in the first place and is a dangerous admission to make.

Others recognised this risk but given the small number of schools it will affect, and the apparent unfairness for those schools, the potential reputational damage arising from retrospectively applying the change was viewed as not as great as the reputational harm that could arise because of perceived unfairness.

One respondent also pointed that if the aggregate grade had been in place at the time of inspection, inspectors may have been more willing to give individual RI judgements if they knew it would not impact on the overall effectiveness grade. For this reason and others, a minority of respondents proposed an inspection revisit, focussed monitoring visit, or early reinspection rather than a retrospective application of the change to the aggregate grade.

### 3. Do you agree with the proposed changes to the grade 3 descriptors?



This proposal appears also to have overwhelming support. However, the comments both in the consultation and in the meetings with inspectors and the oversight committee, indicate the true position is more difficult to determine. Once more, not every respondent submitted an accompanying comment, but of those that did, 83 (88%) were in favour of the proposed change, and 11 (12%) were opposed.

Again, as with the two proposals, it was perceived that the change to the grade 3 descriptors would be fairer on schools as well as providing clarity for inspectors who can sometimes struggle to arrive at a judgment when they are not convinced that a school is good in a particular area, but nor are they convinced that the grade 3 descriptors, as written, apply. Many pointed out that there is currently a large gap between grades 2 and 3 which exacerbates this difficulty. Those taking this view argued that the proposed change would lead to more reliable outcomes for inspection and more accurate self-evaluation for schools:

We believe this will enable greater precision in the quality of schools' self-evaluation as they would not be limited by descriptors that were too specific; it would ensure grade 2 would only be awarded to schools achieving an authentic grade 2, rather than achieving it because "they're not a 3". This would also make inspectors consider grade 4 more carefully, as it currently gets 'auto-dismissed' because grade 3 is "bad" and grade 4 is "really, really bad, and surely no school could be this bad". In essence, we think this change would support inspectors to make more accurate judgements.

There were some who agreed with the proposed change in principle but who objected to the language of 'not yet securely good':

The phrase "a school is not yet securely good" is unhelpful and ambiguous. A more positive and supportive way of putting this would be 'Working towards Good'.

Others disagreed with the change in its entirety. Several pointed out that this would introduce a level of subjectivity and lead to less reliable inspection outcomes. This was a concern even for those who ostensibly agreed with the change. For example:

I have said yes, though this is a more difficult question to respond simply Y or N. I agree that the current descriptors for Good and RI have too wide a gulf between them, however there is likely to be a significant degree of subjectivity in determining what is 'securely good'. Will there be specific training for inspectors on what this might look like on the ground?

Equally, there was concern expressed at meetings of diocesan officers and at the oversight committee meeting at losing the detail and clarity that the current descriptor presently brings. One diocesan officer pointed out that the current descriptors mean that, while the gap is large, that a good school really is good, and a school judged to require improvement really does need it. These concerns were summarised in one of the written responses to the consultation, with an alternative proposal to add to the descriptors rather than modify them:

While it might make sense to add a "not yet 'good'" descriptor to each of the grade 3 descriptors to solve the problem identified, losing distinctive descriptors for this grade altogether would weaken the system overall and make it more difficult to distinguish between genuine deficiencies (what one may call 'genuine adequates') in schools (which do exist, after all!) and a simple 'not quite good enough for 'good' as yet'. It would diminish differentiation, in other words and make the instrument more 'blunt'. It also may not help schools improve because the 'feedback' received from the report would not be specific for 'adequate' schools. Finally, it makes 'good' a potentially even 'broader' category (see above), with their descriptors in effect functioning for two grades via a secondary performance scale (namely 'secure' and 'not yet', applied to the same set of descriptors). Hence it would be better to add 'not yet good' to the list of grade 3 descriptors as an option, but not the only thing inspectors can use. In informal conversations here, inspectors indicated they would not want to lose the greater 'breadth' of a toolkit including distinctive descriptors.

## Other comments

It is also worth noting that some respondents used the opportunity to make wider comments on the inspection system in general. These were usually negative and, clearly, passionately felt. The context of Ofsted's own review of its systems in light of the tragedy of the suicide of Ruth Perry were clearly, sometimes explicitly, informing these responses. Others who agreed with the proposals were angry that the change had not happened sooner:

I wholeheartedly agree with this more fair and indeed just proposal. It is a pity that it has taken such a long time to come. The current proposal has impacted already significantly on leaders' mental health and wellbeing and as Catholic Schools this surely is not what we are about. The new proposal is more fair and supportive, particularly for schools who have worked hard to make improvements. It is important that recognition of such improvements are made and it would be incredibly demoralising for schools in this position to receive an RI judgement overall if it is only one area. It gives the wrong impression to prospective parents, is damaging to the potential reputation of the school, damaging to staff morale and wellbeing and does not give the school rightful credit for what they may have achieved, which wholly goes against the Catholic Social Teaching principles which underpin all that happens in Catholic Schools; particularly also when Staff Wellbeing is mentioned within the framework.

Some also clearly felt that the entire framework was not fit for purpose or compatible with the Catholic mission in education and that it was time for a more wide-reaching reform of the system:

By emulating the Ofsted approach with a four point grade for school effectiveness, you are emulating a broken system that is not fit for purpose and I would expect better from the Catholic Education Service. Surely you can develop a better, more humane system. I am disappointed in you.

At the same time, there were those who expressed opposite views in support of inspection:

We are called as inspectors to inspect without fear or favour and give the correct outcome. Each day counts for children and we are called to provide at the very least a good education for all. If it is not up to scratch we owe it to the children to get schools to be better.

## Consultation Outcomes

In response to the consultation, from September 2023, the Catholic Schools Inspectorate:

1. **will** change the key judgement aggregate grade descriptors such that one single grade 3, will not, by itself, lead to an automatic grade 3 for that key judgement area, as outlined in the proposal and the amended aggregate descriptor (see p.5);
2. **will** retrospectively apply this to schools inspected in the academic year 2022-2023 under the National Framework;
3. **will not**, at this time, make any changes to the grade 3 descriptors.

The reasons for each of these decisions are summarised below.

### 1. Changes to key judgement aggregate grade descriptors

On balance, the arguments in favour of fairness and accuracy outweigh the risk that this will lead to less rigorous inspection outcomes. Rigour in inspection must be allied to accuracy of reporting. An inspection outcome is not more rigorous merely because the judgement is lower. On the contrary, an overall effectiveness grade that does not accurately reflect the true nature of a school would not in fact be more rigorous, merely less accurate. It is important for schools to receive accurate judgements so that they are not unfairly judged. It is also important for dioceses to have a clear picture of which schools require most support, and this change will aid this evaluative process. Finally, it is also important for the inspectorate to have an accurate picture of the real quality of Catholic education across England and Wales. This change will bring about a greater accuracy in the reporting of overall effectiveness for Catholic schools in England and Wales.

### 2. Retrospective application of these changes

This was a more difficult decision to make, since the charges that retrospective application of the change lacks integrity and risks the reputation of the inspectorate carry significant weight. However, the determining factor here is the small number of schools this will affect. The inspectorate holds a complete dataset for Autumn 2022 and Spring 2023, and an almost complete set for Summer 2023 (four dioceses have yet to make returns for Summer 2023). With the data held, it would seem that the retrospective application of the rule would only affect six schools out of the 210 schools inspected and of those, only three would require a change to the overall effectiveness grade. In balancing the risks, the reputational risk of insisting that this small number of schools sit on a grade for the next three years that does not reflect the standard against which all other schools will be judged, was deemed greater than the appearance of fallibility brought about by the retrospective application of the amended descriptor.

Consideration was given to requiring reinspection of the schools affected rather than retrospectively applying this change. However, there were a number of factors that weighed against this. First, the schools themselves might regard this as adding insult to injury – having to submit to a second inspection because of a defect entirely outside of their control. Second, there would be additional cost to dioceses, a consideration that carries some weight given the increased cost of inspection in general that many dioceses are experiencing. Third, it could potentially disrupt the statutory scheduling of inspection which has already been set by the receipt of grants for these schools in the school terms already indicated.

### 3. Not changing the grade 3 descriptors

Despite the broad support for this proposal, the counter-arguments, though small in number, were sufficiently strong that it is not clear at this time that making the change would lead to improvements that offset potential disadvantages. The grade descriptors as they currently exist were arrived at after lengthy consultation and have only been partially tested by inspection, given the relative infancy of the Framework. Nor was it clear that making the change would address the difficulty identified: that of distinguishing clearly between grades 2 and 3 in each of the nine areas of inspection. The risk of increased subjectivity, and the relative impact on the accuracy and reliability of inspection, were sufficient to give the inspectorate pause at this point. Once more data has been collected, and one full cycle of inspections completed, the gap between the grade 2 and grade 3 descriptors can be revisited and, in the meantime, kept under review. The alternative proposal of supplementing the current descriptors with an additional 'Not yet securely good OR...' was considered but the inspectorate determined this would more likely lead to greater confusion than maintaining the current descriptors while keeping this aspect of inspection under review.

### Response to wider critiques

The criticism that this change to the aggregate descriptor should have followed the pilot phase rather than occurring a full academic into the first cycle of inspection is fair. However, the pilot inspections carried out did not encounter this issue, so identifying it was not as straightforward as appears in hindsight. Ideally, it would have been better to amend the aggregate descriptor before launch, but failing that, the inspectorate has made the decisions it has in as timely a manner as possible.

The inspectorate is aware of the wider calls to remove single word judgements and of the view, expressed by some, that inspection in general is contrary to the Catholic educational mission. It is important that these voices are carefully attended to and that we are sensitive to the pressure that school leaders are always under. The possibility of removing single word judgements, and/or removing overall effectiveness grades is one



that will be kept under review, but as this was not the substance of this consultation it is not a decision that will be made at this point.

As to the accusation that inspection itself is not compatible with a commitment to Christ, this is obviously something the inspectorate is bound to deny. From the very beginnings of Catholic education in this country following the restoration of the hierarchy, inspection has been an integral part of securing the quality of Catholic education in every corner of the land. More than that, inspectors, alongside school leaders, diocesan officers and governors are guardians of the educational mission entrusted by Christ to the Church in England and Wales. Responsible stewardship demands that we do it consistently and well, so that we all may hope to hear the voice of Our Lord say:

'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' (M2 25:23)

Philip Robinson  
Chief Inspector, Catholic Schools Inspectorate  
4 September 2023

## Appendix: List of all additional comments

The text below is a list of all additional comments, with any personal identifiers redacted. Spelling and grammatical errors have not been corrected. Comments that were simply statements that a comment would not be made have been removed.

1a. Do you agree with the proposed change to the key judgement aggregate grade descriptor?

I think the change is unnecessary and will devalue CSI inspection which a disproportionate number of Catholic schools receiving Good for CSI and lower grades for other inspections.

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Only 2 amendments have been made yet all four descriptors have been shared.

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I think this is crucial as there has to be a reasonable and fairness around this. A limiting judgement seems very unfair to a process that could reflect a good overall report in its prose yet an overall judgement in numbers as satisfactory.

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I agree that this would help school's to celebrate their successes and focus on the area that is need of improvement without having a detrimental effect on the overall effectiveness.

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I agree

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Best fit makes for a fairer process

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These judgement aggregates should have been modelled before the CSI was launched. It is disappointing that the goalposts are being moved.

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This seems much fairer

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It is fairer

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I think this is a good idea

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I think this will aid more accurate self evaluation if there is an area which does require improvement

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We think this will be a more fair way of judging a school.

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In the interests of fairness and accuracy we agree with changes.

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The grades can be so devastating for a school community they need to be removed altogether rather than tinkering with aggregation. If anything a change to the aggregation may widen the perceived gap between schools and throw an even greater sense of failure and shame on developing schools or those serving particular communities. The tinkering proposed does not reflect the national conversation around single word judgements being used to define a school that has had and continues to have a devastating impact on school staff. In my opinion, the wording of any report goes unread by the almost all stakeholders and the single word is the only thing anybody takes any notice of and consequently areas of strength and development are not recognised.

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Appears fairer.

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I think this is less limiting in terms of the overall judgement

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This will enable inspectors to indicate where a school falls below in an aspect, even if other judgements are in line with/better than good - without appearing to plunge the school fully into a 'requires improvement' overall judgement.

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Adding limiting factors can stop inspectors from coming to the fairest overall judgement for the school.

Another example of this is the way that school actions against previous areas for improvement can lead to an RI judgement. The problem is that two schools could have exactly the same quality of provision, but one could be judged good (because previous targets are no longer relevant and ignored) while the other could be judged RI because they were given very broad areas for improvement that they have not yet fully met. Is

it the intention of the framework that two schools with exactly the same quality of provision for a Catholic school end up with different grades?

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Small areas of improvement are to be expected in all schools. This change will support those schools to not be overly 'judged' on one small area of improvement. This should be highlighted in the report and 'checked' on regularly by leaders.

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The example given is from catholic life and mission but I am assuming that this change will be the same for all three grade descriptors and appears far more balanced in terms of making judgements on schools as it allows for areas of strength to have a greater impact than areas for improvement at present the areas for improvement appear to drag down the grading and take away any recognition for the areas of strength

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I feel, having been through an inspection extremely early on in the framework that it is don't fit for purpose, and agree that a lot of this is due to the "fail one, fail all" model. I believe that single word grading judgements should be scrapped, and the CSI should lead on this, not follow behind Ofsted, but receiving RI in one of 9 and getting RI overall is extremely unfair. I believe it should be a best fit over all of the 9 areas (i.e 5 holds sway) but this is a small step in the right direction.

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Unless this is changed it is a system of any one of the 9 areas being graded a 3 the overall inspection is. This is grossly unfair.

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The reasons given are a real concern for many schools that ARE good. The framework is far too strict.

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Fully supportive given the experience over the last 12 months and having read numerous reports. Listen to the people who work in these schools on a daily basis.

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I feel this will then be a fair representative of the school.

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I understand the desire to have a high standard for outstanding and good schools but this change does seem logical and coherent

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This seems a much fairer approach

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The changes make the judgement grades fair

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The proposed changes go some way to make judgement grade fair.

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This is much fairer to schools.

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A sensible change.

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Much fairer

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This seems more fair and increases the accuracy of balance in the reaching of the overall judgement.

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A more reasonable approach.

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It is fairer

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Inspection judgements will reflect schools more accurately. Under the current system, there is a risk of schools which are mostly good not being distinguished from those which are mostly RI.

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This seems like a fairer system

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The changes are very welcome.

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This proposed change is imperative as otherwise schools are unfairly downgraded due to a minority of a lower sub judgements. This is therefore in conflict with the majority sub-judgments of a higher grading and also the report text does not match the overall grading.

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This seems much fairer.

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I whole heartedly agree with this more fair and indeed just proposal. It is a pity that it has taken such a long time to come. The current proposal has impacted already significantly on leaders' mental health and well being and as Catholic Schools this surely is not what we are about. The new proposal is more fair and supportive, particularly for schools who have worked hard to make improvements. It is important that recognition of such improvements are made and it would be incredibly demoralising for schools in this position to receive an RI judgement overall if it is only one area. It gives the wrong impression to

prospective parents, is damaging to the potential reputation of the school, damaging to staff morale and well being and does not give the school rightful credit for what they may have achieved, which wholly goes against the Catholic Social Teaching principles which underpin all that happens in Catholic Schools; particularly also when Staff Wellbeing is mentioned within the framework.

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It is much fairer

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I believe this is a much fairer system than the current approach.

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Grading should go. Follow the lead of the Church of England. Reduce stress and add to the formation of the inspection process. Learn from the OFSTED debate.

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The limiting factor is an awful concept. Many groups in society are anti-Catholic Schools and this limiting factor will result in an unfair grade for a school, thus providing such groups to state why Catholic schools do not have a place in society. I urge you to make this change for the dedicated HTs and staff who working in extremely trying circumstances. Please take note of the good things that happen within a school and celebrate them. All schools have challenges with staffing, attendance etc and work tirelessly to combat theses.

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This is a sensible and thoughtful change based on feedback from schools. The current framework feels overly critical and more aggressive than the Ofsted framework. The chasm between good and requires improvement currently doesn't reflect the practicalities of school life or recognise the hard work and commitment that our schools have towards our children. We have a great concern about the message that the current framework sends to Catholic leaders of schools especially around workload. This was due to it not being a best fit model.

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The proposed changes are reasonable and show the hard work the school may be inputting in other areas. Thus it is important that their good effort is recognised.

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Fair

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This would give clarity

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This seems far fairer!

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I do

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I am not sure this would be fair.

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It is so important that one 3 grade out of nine does not overshadow all the other 1/2 grades given

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Excellent idea

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In my experience of leading and taking part in inspections this year, the change reflects how team members and I have felt about the key judgement aggregate grade.

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The current system of aggregation is unfair and could lead to schools unfairly ending up RI overall when one sub-judgement is RI

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I believe that this is a sensible measure, particularly with the current scrutiny Ofsted is receiving on judgements. One judgement of 3 should not overpower all of the good and outstanding aspects of a school.

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This seems much fairer and more in line with the general spirit of an inspection - to celebrate what is good whilst acknowledging where schools need to improve

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Given the grave circumstances earlier in the year regarding ruth perry the single grading of a school or parts of its practice is abhorrent and to issue this consultation is quite frankly a disgrace.

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This seems a more balanced approach to me

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I think it would be even better in the future if the number of judgements is reduced much further so that a school is either meeting the standard expected or it isn't. I don't feel that the grades are helpful an having so many just adds unnecessary stress to the inspection process.

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This seems a fairer option, particularly if there is only one 3 and eight 2s.

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This proposal is a much fairer way of arriving at an overall judgement and allows inspectors to provide feedback that some aspects do require improvement while not changing the whole effectiveness judgement

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I think it makes it fairer

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This system I feel is fairer

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Yes we agree

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It feels a much fairer way of working and recognising good practice

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I am fully in support of this measure. It does not make sense to me that you could have eight Good judgements and one RI and come out with RI overall.

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CSI inspects the core of our purpose as Catholic schools. The current way of determining the aggregate grade and the possible impact of a negative result on staff has always seemed very harsh. In a climate where encouraging and recruiting Catholic leaders is becoming increasingly difficult due to other constraints on the role requirements the severity of the grading process does nothing to help with this issue.

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"It is a fairer way of making a judgement that can have significant consequences for the school and staff involved.

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It certainly did seem that getting a single Grade 3 judgement on only one of nine criteria then leading to an overall Grade 3 judgement was rather harsh

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It is fairer than the old system

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It is a positive move forward

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The original grading had no flexibility and could be open to subjectivity. The new proposed changes offer a more holistic, 'best fit' outcome.

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This is a much fairer way to do it and makes a lot more sense.

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The change to the key judgement aggregate grade descriptor is an important step forward and much fairer and reasoned in approach.

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IT represents a fairer system where strengths can still be celebrated

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This seems to be by far the fairest way to proceed.

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This is a much fairer way of making a judgement

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"It certainly did seem that getting a single Grade 3 judgement on only one of nine criteria then leading to an overall Grade 3 judgement was rather harsh – a best fit seems to more accurately reflect reality with a little light and shade.

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Certainly it should be applied retrospectively.

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A best fit grading would be a fairer process. Schools are working hard to meet the criteria set out and sometimes need time to ensure all nine areas are securely good so if one is still being worked on, it shows the work which is happening in the other two for each key judgement area.

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The changes would mean that areas of good practice will be celebrated even if one of the 9 areas is still a work in progress.

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Having discussed it at the Diocesan CSI meeting and have zoomed with colleagues we agree this is a good and fair proposal. I am completing this on behalf of ...

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Because of the way the grades are aggregated it means that a school which is clearly a good school will become RI because of one

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It must be taken into account that each school is on a journey, it always creates a false picture if schools feel they have to prove themselves in areas where they still actually know they have work to do.

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Anything that supports schools in their good work will help. The framework has taken on an Ofsted feel and given the loss of faith in Ofsted, challenges post cv19, 8 days of industrial action this academic year

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alone, reduced Mass attendance across the county (fall in religion - census), difficulty getting priests in schools, falling rolls, a recruitment crisis of good quality staff, no strategy to recruit specialist RE teachers, reduction in Catholic children, the framework shouldn't be a stick to beat, but a celebration of all that is good about our Catholic schools.

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It would be fairer and more reflective of school outcomes

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It would provide a much fairer reflection of the school.

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I agree that this would be fairest approach but only if those schools already judged using these descriptors had their judgments re-evaluated in the light of these changes.

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This will give a fairer overall judgment and whilst identifying areas for immediate improvement, still allows for the celebration of all that is good / outstanding.

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This will be fairer for schools where there are strengths within a school that are acknowledged as this will also give parents a more accurate picture.

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Think this is fairer

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This does appear to be a fairer application of the judgement. However, it allows schools to challenge inspectors in order to ensure that two grades meet to criteria and avoid the key judgement being graded as a 3 - this could potentially lead to problems for inspectors.

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When the new Framework was shared with us, we immediately questioned the aggregate grade.

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This is a fairer, more realistic reflection of where a school may be i.e. Good generally with an area or two that still requires improvement. However, we would need to be mindful of inspectors then shying away from issuing more than one '3' in a key area. There is always the danger that inspections continue to grade schools largely 1 or 2 and rarely 3 (4).

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This change makes sense and addresses a concern previously raised by us. The one drawback might be that it will make 'Good' and even broader category (fine in one sense, since the system 'starts with good', but making it perhaps harder to distinguish between different 'levels' of good). One may round all this could be to consider long-term, whether the aggregate grade is necessary: one could have a system that communicates a more differentiated picture by reporting 3 or even 9 judgments. One to monitor.

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I think a grade 3 should alert to an area of need but one 3 in eg. CLM shouldn't result in an overall 3 as the final judgement.

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the point of a CSI inspection is to validate the schools CSED - it must be seen as a positive thing and if it allows for a school to be good with outstanding features then it also needs to allow a school to be good with some areas that require improvement rather than being labelled as completely requires improvement

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We feel this would make the framework fairer because it would mean the weight of a single grade 3 within a key judgement area when looking at 'Good' would be equal to the weight of a single grade 2 within a key judgement area when looking at 'Outstanding'. Specifically concerning RE, it would allow inspectors more flex when a school has achieved a weak set of outcomes as an anomaly.

1b. If a change is made, do you think the change to the aggregate grade descriptor should be retrospectively applied to schools inspected this year upon whom it would impact?

It would make a mockery of the original inspection.

This crucial as those Diocese who have undertaken more inspections earlier and consequently informed the early process are being penalised due to a learning and refinement to the overall grading system. There are only a small number of schools this would affect but it is hugely important for those schools. It also means if the judgments are not applied retrospectively we are putting more pressure in a 3 year cycle on an already pressured system.

If the framework is changed after the first year of use then this absolutely should be applied retrospectively as those schools inspected this year would be unfairly disadvantage and it will be many years before inspection comes around again

If you're going to move the goalposts after inspection, then it's only fair to move them for everyone.

This would be the only just way of dealing with this

As the new framework is completely different to any predecessor and dioceses were free to do their own thing, at present the grades are not comparable between schools / diocese so it probably makes little difference as a mechanism to compare schools. However as it can only improve a schools grade without changing any underlying judgements it would be the compassionate thing to do rather than to beat schools that were unlucky enough to be graded during 2022/23 as they already have to face the issues arising from a new framework that neither schools or inspectors had any real experience using.

This is really difficult. I want to say yes but equally I am cautious about retrospectively applying changes to previous inspections. Schools are after all inspected under the criteria in place at the time of the inspection. However, this does seem a little unfair in some respects.

For fairness. However, it must be said that this also risks schools who might have not received any 3s, but might have done under the revised ruling, not being regraded 'the other way'. I imagine this change would only benefit the schools who come out of an overall 'RI' - not that 'good' schools, who were on the edge, would suddenly inherit a retrospective 3 in answer to one of the 9 key questions.

It is always about doing what is right and just. Those schools should not be penalised for being first in the cycle.

The only fair way to ensure that these schools are not at a disadvantage

The inspection process is very challenging for schools and huge amounts of work is placed into the process by schools, the fact that the quality assurance has uncovered that the grading is can affect a schools performance negatively should 100% be altered for the schools affected, especially because of the change from the old inspection process to the new. There also needs to be greater clarity around the extent to which a schools performance in comparison to national average is taken into consideration, especially where a schools data outcomes is showing signs of progress.

Of course. Without inspection. It is clear that people who have been inspected early in the framework have received a tougher inspection standard.

Fair way of approaching it.

However there could be a one day single person inspection to look at the specific area up for discussion.

In the interest of fairness moving forward, this seems a logical step.

Definitely should be retrospectively applied

That would only seem fair.

History should be confined to the past

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It would have been better to have resolved this issue at the outset- it was pointed out in the pilot phase of the process, but there is a danger in the precedent that gradings are changed retrospectively. Schools were inspected against the handbook that was in place, for good or ill, at the time of their inspection. Perhaps a fair alternative solution would be to offer those schools that are unhappy with the overall judgement the opportunity to be reinspected more swiftly under the revised guidance from September 2023 onwards.

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If schools will be judged on this criteria, it's only fair that previous inspections take this into account.

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This is important to do so to maintain fairness and equity both locally and nationally as some diocese have already undertaken more inspections than others. Also it has been almost like a pilot year, so it would only be fair to those schools who have been impacted on so far.

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Absolutely - it would be wholly unfair to change the system based on feedback, and yet continue to apply a potentially agreed unfair overall judgement to a school and expect them to have to live with that until they are next inspected, when potentially the Catholic school down the road is inspected after them, is in the same situation and benefits from the new proposal. This would be utterly unfair and would give the wrong impression to prospective parents, damage the reputation of the school, impact negatively on staff morale and make school leaders feel like they have failed, when in fact it is the system that would have failed them! This would be totally against what we are about as Catholic Schools, so indeed a retrospective judgement should be made.

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Equity in terms of the approach for all schools, even those already inspected is a fair and just move forward.

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It is hard to go from 2 to 1 too! The inspectors receive little training. Inconsistency is inevitable.

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This would be fair and just.

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It is only fair that this is applied or schools reinspected around a specific area where they didn't meet the higher descriptor.

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This would only be fair

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I do

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I think it would be unfair not to apply it to schools inspected this year upon whom it would impact. For Instance, in the only RI overall grade for a school where I led an inspection, the RI judgments were: one in RE, in leadership, and one in CW, in leadership. As a best fit, the school was Good but the limiting judgements of RI did not allow for that.

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Many schools already judged RI on the current aggregation would feel cheated.

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You should not be judging schools by a single number or word or phrase

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This would need to happen for the sake of consistency

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I think all schools should be treated fairly and not disadvantaged by being inspected earlier in the introduction of the new framework.

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We all know the parameters we work with and to change them retrospectively undermines the integrity of the process

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It needs to be fair for everyone

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If I was in this situation I would feel it would again be fairer.

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Yes we agree

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If we are wiser having gone through the process it does not feel fair that those in the first round should be penalised

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I think it would be outrageous to suggest a change where one school could have three RI grade descriptors and be called Good and a school inspected last year could have received only one RI judgment and become RI overall under the same framework. This MUST happen if the change is made toward an aggregate.



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Some colleagues across the country who have fallen victim to this grading structure have been deeply distressed by the outcome and have questioned whether they want to remain in Catholic education. It is only fair that changes should be implemented retrospectively.

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Because that is the fairest thing to do.

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It most certainly should be applied retrospectively

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In the first instance, I disagree with retrospective grading. I would propose a review of inspection paperwork for accuracy/omissions that could then trigger a re-inspection. Initially undertake a desk-top exercise to quality control past inspections impacted by grading.

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It has to be restrospective to be fair to all schools inspected under this framework.

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Any school already inspected should in the interest of fairness be reassessed with new grade descriptor.

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All schools should go through the same process as a benchmark.

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It would seem the fairest thing to do, especially as the next Inspection will not happen for a while and so it seems fitting to celebrate areas of success within the RE framework.

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No because it wasn't in place at the time of inspection; it will make it look as though the process was not well thought through in the first place.

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We think it is only fair if they were downgraded based on this being a small issue.

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Because this is the rule for this year therefore all schools who have been inspected have had this rule apply so need to leave for this year and then from the change apply.

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if this is not changed then can you change the grades?

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In relation to 1b, the common good and truth is important.

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It is a case of natural justice

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Fair process for all

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This would make it fair for all.

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Yes - I think where this does change the grade that this should be retrospectively applied as this will bring positivity to the school, improve staff morale and strengths will be recognised for the stakeholders.

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I think it would be unfair not to apply it retrospectively to those schools affected if the change is made

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Schools were judged according to the inspection framework at the time. Any retrospective change will lead to confusion for stakeholders. It may be necessary to complete one full cycle without any amendment if you wish all schools to be treated fairly. Making this change mid cycle indicates that the system was flawed in the first place and is a dangerous admission to make.

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If you don't change it schools that have been inspected would be unfairly graded on a different criteria

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I think that this change would be fair and reflect a more accurate judgement on schools.

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This is only fair. By virtue of scheduling they have been judged by a harsher measure than other schools will be. They have no control over the scheduling.

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This is tricky because I'm sure inspectors were mindful of this when allocating grades and therefore factored this in so those schools with overall 3 maybe justified. Ofsted never retrospectively reversed outcomes so perhaps we inspect those schools sooner again, maybe 12months. This equally will have allowed them to review and improve.

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possibly - although I am not sure how that would work in a way as the impact of being labelled requires improvement will already have been taken. It might be better to try and fully inspect again.

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This is on the basis that we believe this only applies to a very small number of schools. No further changes to outcomes must be agreed now, otherwise it would negatively impact on the perceived rigour of the framework

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For absolute clarity, we think it is important that reports serve as an accurate historical record written against the framework that was published at the point of inspection. To change judgements now could imply to schools that reports are now open to challenge, which they are not. We are unaware of any other school inspectorate having done this, and for the sake of parity of status, would be wary of taking this action. Furthermore, we do not believe it would be good public relations for the bishops to be seen to change their minds retrospectively; conversely, we think it would be good public relations for them to be seen to reviewing the new national framework and making amendments going forward, as they see fit. However, despite this, the tension remains unresolved which enables a school to wilfully and deliberately disobey their bishop, but still be judged by their agents as a Good Catholic school.

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It would be grossly unjust not to do this.

### 3. Do you agree with the proposed changes to the grade 3 descriptors?

Clear and less derogatory in nature and looks forwards rather than backwards or static.

Clarity around what "The school is not yet securely good in this area." means for both inspectors and schools would be important. For example- if a school does not "hit" all the criteria for good in the relevant area, will that automatically mean a grade 3 or is it up to the inspector's discretion on best fit?

We should also urgently review the limiting judgement of 10% of curriculum time being given to RE or at least allow schools to use retreats, assemblies, Masses, etc... to make up that 10%.

Less harsh

Yes, this provides greater clarity.

The changes will make the process fairer.

The changes provide clarity for all.

Completely agree - it is much more fair and just, is more supportive of schools which find themselves in that position and would be more reflective of the position that they are in. It would therefore support them better in improving moving forward, recognising the achievements made and outlining areas to improve further to achieve the 'Good' grading.

It is much fairer

Again, this is a fair and reasonable change to the system already in place.

Please be pragmatic. Working in Catholic schools is a wonderful vocation but the CSI framework has added an immense amount of pressure. Time for change!

I agree

This feels far fairer and in line with our Catholic ethos.

Yes because that shows a journey in which a school has undertaken to improve towards good and this will generally take some time. By enacting these changes means that the good work being done by the school is encouraged and this will lift the morale for the school to be a good or outstanding school.

Allows schools to use descriptors to indicate periods of growth

Again, this would be far fairer and another school already undertaken inspection should not be penalised.

We really need to move away from grades. I hear other Dioceses are doing this. Even if that is hearsay, we could be the first to enforce this. I bet others will follow. All my parents want to know is what we do well and what we need to improve on. A report can do that.

More details needed than not Good

yes it is a fairer

Makes perfect sense. Will make Inspection much easier for Inspectors and fairer for schools.

The 'jump' between Good and RI grades is very wide and the change to wording is preferable.

As a serving inspector it has been a challenge to judge a school good overall because of aggregation. It is rare for a school to be good in all subjudgements.

I agree that there is a clear gap between Grade 2 and 3 descriptors. By softening the impact of a 3 in the first change I think it will be easier on the conscience to award a 3 with the new wording.

It seems much more straight forward to word the descriptors towards good being the minimum expectations and anything requires improvement if it does not meet this standard.

BY EMULATING THE OFSTED APPROACH WITH A FOUR POINT GRADE FOR SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS, YOU ARE EMULATING A BROKEN SYSTEM THAT IS NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE AND I WOULD EXPECT BETTER FROM THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION SERVICE. SURELY YOU CAN DEVELOP A BETTER, MORE HUMANE SYSTEM. I AM DISAPPOINTED IN YOU.

This would seem sensible to me

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I think it would be even better in the future if the number of judgements is reduced much further so that a school is either meeting the standard expected or it isn't.

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The wording is more appropriate.

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I agree with the changes

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It is more positive and supportive for schools

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I feel this a more supportive way for schools.

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Yes we agree

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The language is more indicative of the judgement

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The current descriptor makes the gap between Good and RI too wide.

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This appears to be a much fairer way of dealing with this issue.

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It is more supportive and helpful terminology

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Again this seems a more fair way

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I am unsure of the wording "not yet good" - perhaps something which incorporates "working towards"

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As an inspector, I have found it very hard to accurately distinguish 2 and 3, so this makes it much simpler.

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The Grade 3 descriptors are better and more nuanced for the inspection team to work from.

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The language sounds far more supportive and surely that is what the whole process is designed for - celebrating successes and supporting development

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See answer above.

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The change seems rather more nuanced, therefore a positive development.

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No further comments, if a school is not securely good then they would have to be graded a 3

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The statement 'not yet good' gives a clear indication of what is being worked on and will have clear targets.

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The detail is useful to schools and dioceses.

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We as a school appreciate that there are on-going discussions and consultations to help modify and make the overall grades as accurate as possible to reflect the school that is being inspected.

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Because this will alleviate all of the above

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schools are on journey and should be encouraged

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Whilst i accept a national framework was needed, i don't feel we should surrender to Caesar more than God and i can't help but think this framework could undermine and de value Catholic education and our schools at a time in Society when they are needed most. Currently they are the only counter cultural voice and parents need us, but there are real challenges, this framework shouldn't be another.

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Whilst removing the grade descriptors for Grade 3 in line with Ofsted seems sensible, the move may remove examples of why a school is not good that often form part of an inspector's professional dialogue with a school leader. Having a redundant bank of grade descriptors may tempt a future rewrite of the Grade 4 descriptors to incorporate descriptors from Grade 3 with corresponding consequences.

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I am ambivalent to the statement the school is not yet securely good in this area. Often that is the reason why there is a difficulty in awarding good. Perhaps there should be a supporting statement in good grade descriptors that indicates that the school is already actively identifying and/or improving in the field?

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Although this approach more closely matches the Ofsted approach, the risk is that "not securely good" could be seen as too subjective. We would change our answer to 2 to a yes if it was made clear in the framework that this means that the Good criteria do not "best fit" the evidence collected i.e. that Good would be awarded if, in the main, the good criteria are met. At the moment, the proposed "not securely good" could be understood to mean if even one of the bullet points was not met, then it moves to RI.

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Yes as long as targeted and specific feedback is given to schools on what they can do to improve in this area. This could be further supported by timely monitoring visits to further support schools.

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Inspectors can use their 'best fit' judgement as an experienced professional ensuring that the inspection process is a force for good in communities.

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Brings in line with Ofsted

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Again would appear to fairer but is also open to more challenge for inspectors from the school.

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I hope this change happens as soon as possible and is made very clear to the Inspection Teams.

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I have said yes, though this is a more difficult question to respond simply Y or N. I agree that the current descriptors for Good and RI have too wide a gulf between them, however there is likely to be a significant degree of subjectivity in determining what is 'securely good'. Will there be specific training for inspectors on what this might look like on the ground?

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While it might make sense to add a "not yet 'good'" descriptor to each of the grade 3 descriptors to solve the problem identified, losing distinctive descriptors for this grade altogether would weaken the system overall and make it more difficult to distinguish between genuine deficiencies (what one may call 'genuine adequates') in schools (which do exist, after all!) and a simple 'not quite good enough for 'good' as yet'. It would diminish differentiation, in other words and make the instrument more 'blunt'. It also may not help schools improve because the 'feedback' received from the report would not be specific for 'adequate' schools. Finally, it makes 'good' a potentially even 'broader' category (see above), with their descriptors in effect functioning for two grades via a secondary performance scale (namely 'secure' and 'not yet', applied to the same set of descriptors). Hence it would be better to add 'not yet good' to to the list of grade 3 descriptors as an option, but not the only thing inspectors can use. In informal conversations here, inspectors indicated they would not want to lose the greater 'breadth' of a toolkit including distinctive descriptors.

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We are called as inspectors to inspect without fear or favour and give the correct outcome. Each day counts for children and we are called to provide at the very least a good education for all. If it is not up to scratch we owe it to the children to get schools to be better.

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it allows for more "wiggle room" and to show that a school has lots of good features but not quite secure enough.

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Changes should allow for the large disparity between good and requires improvement.

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We believe this will enable greater precision in the quality of schools' self-evaluation as they would not be limited by descriptors that were too specific; it would ensure grade 2 would only be awarded to schools achieving an authentic grade 2, rather than achieving it because "they're not a 3". This would also make inspectors consider grade 4 more carefully, as it currently gets 'auto-dismissed' because grade 3 is "bad" and grade 4 is "really, really bad, and surely no school could be this bad". In essence, we think this change would support inspectors to make more accurate judgements.