

Ofsted judging schools negatively for teacher shortages

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Ofsted inspectors are judging schools on how well they are handling teacher shortages, with two schools rated as inadequate found to have too many vacancies.

Joanna Hall, deputy director for schools at Ofsted, told the commons education committee last week that inspectors would start asking leaders about teacher shortages as part of inspections.

But Schools Week has found the watchdog is already judging schools on how well they are coping with the recruitment crisis.

Teachers have criticised the practice, saying that they are doing their all to recruit staff and that the shortage is not their fault.

The disclosure comes after a scathing public accounts committee report last week found that the government had “no plan” to deal with teacher shortages.

The Department for Education was also criticised for a lack of “leadership or urgency” and was said to “not understand or show curiosity about shortages”.

John Dexter, acting headteacher at Trinity school, in Nottingham, told Schools Week that many heads were “losing sleep” over recruitment.

“Heads are not trying to make excuses here, but is it fair to heavily criticise a department where for a number of years recruitment to that subject or position, despite best efforts, has not yielded staff?”

Twickenham academy in west London was rated as inadequate last month, including in the “effectiveness of leadership and management” category. Under that heading Ofsted noted that the school “struggled to recruit the number of permanent teachers it needs”.

The report added: “The management of temporary teachers does not place enough emphasis on maintaining the quality of teaching at a level that is at least good.”

Worle community school, in Somerset, was also rated inadequate last month. It was told that it must “urgently improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that the amount of supply cover is kept to a minimum and that supply teachers have enough information, guidance and support to be able to teach effectively”.

In the “quality of teaching, learning and assessment” category, which was rated inadequate, Ofsted said “many pupils are frustrated by the relatively high proportion of supply cover”.

Micon Metcalfe (pictured), a school business director who also trains other education leaders, said she was “surprised” Ofsted was reporting on a school’s recruitment struggles.

If supply teachers were affecting the quality of education then it was relevant to the judgment, but she added: “How far recruitment is within the control of school leaders is another matter.”

Schools might now have to look at new ways of working, she said, including engaging with initiatives to get people into teaching and committing to training and developing student teachers.

Hall told the parliamentary committee that under Ofsted’s new framework “one of the key questions inspectors might ask headteachers is about teacher supply”.

She said this might include how many subjects had temporary cover and how that affected the schools. It would fall under Ofsted’s leadership judgment.

“In terms of how you manage your workforce and deal with those particular issues, one would hope that all leaders and governors have a clear picture of impact of what they are facing.

“Certainly in terms of good leadership and good high-quality teaching, one would expect we could see evidence of that and how those subjects are taught, even if it is not a subject specialist.”