



**Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP**  
Secretary of State

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Amanda Spielman  
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*Dear Amanda,*

Thank you for raising with me your concern about safeguarding at the Steiner schools, following two recent inspections of Steiner schools, in both the state and independent sectors.

While there is evidence of effective safeguarding in other Steiner schools, again in both sectors, it is also true that the incidence of safeguarding issues in the independent Steiner schools appears to be higher (in about 30% of the schools, over the last inspection cycle) than the average for safeguarding failures in the non-association independent schools inspected by Ofsted (about 10%).

I therefore agree with your advice, based on this evidence, that there should be additional scrutiny to examine the situation. In the case of the independent schools, I would like to commission Ofsted to conduct a series of inspections of some of the Steiner independent schools, rather than the School Inspection Service (SIS), and for this to go alongside increased monitoring by Ofsted of the SIS inspections, as mentioned below. I understand that officials have met and have already agreed a programme to take place over the next term. As officials have discussed, these will be standard inspections and Ofsted will be deciding their scheduling, as is usually the case for standard inspections. I also understand that your officials have agreed that Ofsted will bear the cost of these inspections. As you are aware, the pedagogy of Steiner schools is different to mainstream state-funded schools and I appreciate that your inspectors will continue to take this into account when carrying out their inspections.

I would be grateful if you could report directly to me at the end of next term on your conclusions from this exercise and we can then consider what next steps might be appropriate.

When we met, you also raised the issue of Ofsted's monitoring of the other independent schools inspectorates. I know that you take a different view to

your predecessor, who had asked for the monitoring to be scaled back, and that you now want to collect more evidence to better inform your assurance role. On the basis that you now feel able to allocate more resource to this activity, I am happy to commission additional monitoring. I am confident that the arrangements can be agreed at official level and I understand that officials have already had an initial discussion on this and a more detailed discussion is planned later this month.

*Yours*



**Damian Hinds**  
**Secretary of State for Education**