



# Association of Colleges

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Martin Doel CBE  
Chief Executive

Sir Michael Wilshaw  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector  
Ofsted  
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London WC2B 6SE

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*Dear Sir Michael,*

I watched with interest your appearance before the Education Select Committee this morning. Clearly, and as you would expect, your comments in relation to the suitability of colleges to provide education to 16-18 year-olds has caused a good deal of consternation and anger amongst those in colleges, not only principals and their staff, but also students and governors.

I understand that you stated your conclusion that all 16-18 year-olds should be either at school, a UTC or a sixth form college was a personal opinion and not the official position of Ofsted. Quite apart from the conflict inherent in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector being called to give evidence in his official capacity and then providing a personal opinion, even personal opinions require justification if they are not to be regarded as mere prejudice or an unreliable anecdotal judgement.

I would, therefore, request as a matter of urgency a clear rationale for your conclusions. It would be all the better if those conclusions corresponded with the judgements of the inspectors in your own organisation; I fail to see how this could be so given that 82% of colleges who provide 16-18 education have been judged "Good" or "Outstanding" in recent Ofsted inspections. In many such inspections, a particular identified strength is the pastoral care and support for young people. Moreover, schools and UTCs have neither the capacity nor the proven expertise to take on the task of providing the high quality technical and professional education currently provided in colleges, nor the breadth of academic studies provided in many colleges.

I look forward to your response and to the opportunity to discuss this further when we meet on 14 March.

*Yours sincerely,*

*cc Chair Ofsted*  
*Minds of State for Skills*  
 INVESTORS  
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