

# Speech: Amanda Spielman's speech at the Nursery World business summit

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me here to speak you today.

It's great to be part of such a rich programme of speakers and discussions. You certainly pack a lot into a day. Apprenticeships, Brexit, workforce strategies – all before lunch – that's some work ethic.

When I took on the role of Chief Inspector, I was clear that every part of our work was of equal importance. I made a commitment to myself, and others, that I would engage with every aspect of our broad remit.

In particular, I wanted to get a better understanding of the issues affecting early years. After all, you are responsible for the crucial first stage of a child's development. I am grateful, therefore, to the nurseries that welcomed me as a visitor during my early months in post and the time the leaders in your field took in getting me up to speed.

So thank you to all of you, particularly members of our National Consultative Forum, for your efforts in educating me. And of course a tribute to Ofsted's own Gill Jones, our early years supremo, and her team who have helped me immeasurably.

One of the clearest messages I took away from those early discussions was the importance of the honest dialogue, from both sides, that exists between Ofsted and the sector. Through the work of our consultative forum, grassroots initiatives like the 'Ofsted Big Conversation' and the myriad of events like these, it is clearly 'good to talk'. I know that countless issues have been raised and resolved as a result of these efforts, from concerns about complaint-driven inspections to consistency of inspections. Long may the dialogue continue.

And in that spirit of openness, I wanted to share with you a bit of my story and what brought me to the post of Chief Inspector. My early career was spent in business and finance, but after 15 years, and having children, I realised that education was my real passion. So I took the plunge and did a Masters in comparative education, and a year or two later got involved in the Ark academy chain, just as it was starting out. A chain, incidentally, that built in primary education from the very beginning.

The work at Ark was very much focused on turning around tough schools. It was about making sure that children who had been getting a raw deal started to receive a proper education. The education they deserved. The experience of Ark's primary schools demonstrated first-hand how a solid early education sets young people up for life.

After Ark, I spent five years at Ofqual, steeped in the reform of assessment and qualifications. And then at the start of this year, I joined Ofsted as

Chief Inspector.

And it has been an incredibly rewarding year so far.

Ofsted turned 25 this autumn. And although the educational, political and economic landscape is now very different, our mission to raise standards in education and care remains unchanged. Because, despite momentous social and cultural shifts, our work to improve children's lives is as important today as it was quarter of a century ago.

As you would expect, much has changed in Ofsted since 1992. Today, we are more focused on what works and far more engaged with all of the sectors we inspect.

As part of our continuing evolution, at the end of September we published [our new corporate strategy](#), which will guide every area of our work, including early years, until 2022.

The strategy centres on one fundamental principle: that Ofsted will be 'a force for improvement through intelligent, responsible and focused inspection and regulation'.

Being intelligent: that means that our work will be evidence-led, and our judgements will be valid and reliable.

Being responsible: that means our findings will be clear and accessible, and we will be fair in our expectations of others.

And being focused: that means our time and resources will be targeted, as far as possible, where they can lead directly to improvement.

And just like you, we will always put children first.

I appreciate that talk of 'corporate strategies' and 'fundamental principles' might seem a bit removed from your daily concerns. You may well ask: 'all very nice but what does it mean for me and my nursery business?'

Perhaps I can unpick it a bit for you by relating it to the work we are doing specifically in your area.

## **Intelligent**

So starting with intelligent.

For inspection to be intelligent, it must be led by a professional, highly skilled and well-trained workforce. With our early years inspectors back in house, we are in a better position to ensure the quality of training and support given to our teams. As these teams move into our established regional structures, I am confident that we will see further benefits through the sharing of insight and intelligence with colleagues from schools and social care.

We will also be using inspection evidence to offer perspective and insight to

those we inspect. That doesn't mean 'how to' manuals, but it does mean making the most of our bird's eye view of the totality of children's experience in education to help lead improvements right from early years to college. We will publish more research on what we learn about what works so that we can help others to improve.

## **Responsible**

Then being responsible. I am, of course, intensely aware of the impact of Ofsted judgments. We must use our power responsibly. In your industry, perhaps more than any other area, a poor judgement can have significant financial consequences. There can be big impacts on funding and the ability to even continue in business.

Now, as you would expect, I will reiterate that first and foremost our concerns are for the education and welfare of children. We will always report honestly on provision that is not good enough. But our responsibility to you is to make sure that our expectations of you are clear. That they are not constantly changing. And that you have fair recourse when you believe something has gone wrong during an inspection.

That's why we recently expanded our successful myth-busting campaign into the early years sector. And why we will carry on being open about any future changes we plan to make to inspection. It is also why I have committed to there being no major changes to the common inspection framework until 2019, so that you can have certainty about what is coming and when. [When I say 'major', I don't mean to sound weasely, but simply need to acknowledge that sometimes changes are needed to make sure things are clear or because of new legislation].

Our duty to act responsibly also lies behind a major revamp of our online registration and payment systems. I know that our current systems aren't good enough. I appreciate that time and effort of your staff spent on working through these clunky and sometimes impenetrable systems is time away from children. That simply isn't good enough. That's why we are investing in a major overhaul.

The project is only part way through, but I am confident that when complete, your experience will be transformed.

It is only by learning what you need that we can design a service that is right for you. So we are testing and refining the service as we go, with input from the sector at each stage, to make sure that working with Ofsted and completing tasks online is simpler, clearer and faster.

## **Focused**

And thirdly, being focused. Like all public sector organisations, Ofsted faces the challenge of doing more with less.

This challenge can be met, in part, through greater efficiency but we also have to be honest and realistic about the choices we face about how we target

inspection. We have to ask ourselves how finite resources can be put to best use.

This isn't just about deciding which nurseries and childminders we prioritise for inspection. It means working out how our models should evolve to match the changes taking place in the sector. As with the growth of multi-academy trusts in the school space, with the trend towards chain operators of nurseries I want to be sure that inspection properly reflects how things work. That it allows us to get the best assurance about young people's education and well-being, at minimum burden to providers.

So, over the next year we will be developing our conversation with you about how we can improve our regulation and inspection. And we will use your knowledge and insight to focus our inspections where they will have the most impact. Indeed, that conversation has already started.

Making sure our work is focused is not just about who we inspect and when. It also means thinking about what we look at during inspection and where the role of an inspector has the biggest impact. We need to ask: what are the elements of provision that are genuinely best explored through inspection?

As we work towards a new inspection framework for 2019, there are a number of areas that we are reflecting on.

## **Risk**

One of these is risk. Earlier this year, I wrote about the importance of achieving the right balance when it comes to keeping children safe. That we must be careful not to deprive children of fulfilling educational experiences for fear of 'what if'.

For those of you who saw the piece in the news, I had more feedback, and it's been positive feedback, about this than anything else I've said or written before or since. It is clearly a debate that generates significant interest and passion. I believe it is debate that is just as relevant to the early years as any other part of the education world.

The welfare and safety of children, of course, are at the very core of all early years provision. For parents, handing over their precious child into the care of strangers is a hugely emotional act. We should never underestimate the level of trust those parents are placing in childcare providers. First and foremost, parents want to be sure that you can keep their child safe from harm.

And of course you must be able to assure them of that. But my concern is that in doing so, and through the best of intentions, we are creating overly risk-free environments. Young children do need to have the opportunity to explore the world around them, to develop their physical skills or even sometimes just to run around until they are exhausted.

I am acutely aware that Ofsted hasn't always got this right in the past. I want to be sure that our inspections and our inspectors aren't

driving any of the risk-averse behaviour.

So please understand that of course we expect you to take risk seriously and supervise young children properly. But we don't expect you to take away the climbing frame in case someone falls or avoid journeys to the park for fear of crossing the road. It goes without saying that children need physical exercise to develop their muscular strength and dexterity but it is also important that their natural instincts to discover and explore aren't stifled. This is, after all, one of the ways they learn.

Many of you are already striving to get this balance right. Happily, from what I observe, trends in the sector are also in the right direction. Indeed, I see one of your workshops this afternoon features forest nurseries. I know at least one of my children would have loved to spend their early childhood at one of those!

In the next few weeks, our inspectors will be doing some refresher training on how we look at safeguarding. And I do expect future inspection frameworks to be more explicit about the balance between risk and safety, always keeping in mind the requirements of the EYFS [Early Years Foundation Stage]. In the short term, we will be continuing our myth-busting campaign to make clear what we look at during an inspection and how we reach our judgements.

Speaking of myths, there is one that may be helpful for me to debunk right here, also in the spirit of being clear about what inspection does and does not focus on.

On my travels, I have had a lot of discussions about snack time and what Ofsted expects to see. I believe there are such things as 'rolling snacks', 'self-serve snacks', 'free-flow snacks', 'continuous snacks', 'communal snacks' – I could go on.

At first, I was perplexed. Why should the way a nursery organises its snack time be so important to Ofsted? Then I discovered that advice from various sources recommends the sort of snack that Ofsted prefers. That might have been born of a well-intended comment from one inspector to a single setting at some point, but it seems to have escalated into an enormous and pervasive myth.

So I will say here, inspectors do not expect to see any particular way of organising snacks. Communal snacks may be a useful way to introduce children to good table manners and help them to learn courtesy words, such as please and thank you.

But it is really a decision for you as providers to make. If children have other opportunities to pour water in play time, then self-service pouring is less important, and vice-versa. Ofsted is more interested in why you choose activities and the effect that they have on children's development.

Something else that I'd like to be clear on are my comments to the Education Select Committee last week. As you may be aware, I gave the view to the committee that the quality of care in early years was very good but that of

education not quite as good. I certainly was not intending to trash an entire sector, which might be the impression left from some of the follow-up coverage. I also made the point that, in my view, the problem lies, in part, with the EYFS. In the next few weeks, we will be publishing research on this issue which I hope you will find of interest.

#### Language development/the vital role of nurseries

This brings me to the final point I would like to raise today. There is a very important discussion to be had about the role of nurseries and childminders in preparing children for school.

The curriculum (or, to use EYFS terminology, the programme) that children experience in their early years is vital in this task. We know that young children are especially receptive between birth and age 5, when their brains develop at the fastest speed and they learn more rapidly than at any other age.

This means that the choices we make for very young children about the play things we provide, the games we play, the words we use, the stories we read and the songs we sing are all hugely important. I know that many of you here will have given the curriculum and the way you provide it much thought and I encourage you to do so.

I imagine most of you in the room today could stand with me now to recite 'Sing a song of sixpence' or 'The grand old Duke of York'. But I don't know that we can say that is still the case for children in lots of nurseries today.

That is a shame, because of the other great joy of nursery rhymes. They are a unifier. Providing a collective memory and experience for young children across the country. And often teaching a little bit of social history to boot. Which is why I would hope that every nursery and childminder would find the time for a nursery rhyme.

Nursery rhymes also help with vocabulary and we all know the huge value in helping young children develop their language skills. Put simply, the more words a child has heard by the time they start school the better. You have such an important job here, particularly to fill the gaps for those children who might not be exposed to the same range of vocabulary at home.

Children need to hear new language all the time. It might be taking the opportunity with a child looking at a pretty flower to talk to them about all the different parts of the plant. Or being more basic, talking to them while washing their hands, making suds from the soap, turning on the tap, running the water, oh dear too fast, too slow... I could go on because everything we do with children is an opportunity to introduce them to more words. Children are so open to absorbing new language. I remember when my younger daughter was 4, she had an Australian Reception teacher. I would often hear his voice in what she said – I must confess I wasn't always thrilled about it!

So please don't be afraid to teach them things. And before I get shouted down

by the 'save our childhood' brigade, of course I don't mean long lists on blackboards in formal lessons. I mean passing on new words, ideas and skills. Encouraging curiosity and rewarding inquisitiveness. Everything that helps a young child develop and be ready for school.

## Conclusion

I know every one of you in this room shares the same ambitions that we all have at Ofsted. We all want the very best for young children across the country.

At Ofsted, we want to give you the space to do the right things. And we certainly don't want to waste our time and yours inspecting the wrong things. We are on a journey of change, much as you are as you adapt to the new 30-hours programme. There will always be room for all of us to improve, Ofsted included. I hope we can be on that improvement journey together.

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## Press release: Brexit Secretary reaffirms UK's commitment to shared goals

David Davis has met leading Polish politicians and been briefed by British military personnel on the UK's role in NATO's deployment on Poland's Eastern border as part of a visit to the country today.

Reaffirming the UK's commitment to strengthening its relationships across Europe after exit, the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union met with Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski and Europe Minister Konrad Szymanski to discuss progress in the negotiations.

They spoke about an agreement on citizens' rights being within touching distance, and the importance of providing certainty to people from the EU living in the UK and British nationals living in Europe. David Davis also stressed the importance of maintaining the momentum that the Prime Minister's speech in Florence injected into the negotiations.

While in Warsaw, the Secretary of State was also briefed by service personnel on the British deployment in Poland.

NATO has deployed an Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in the eastern part of the Alliance, with four multinational battalions in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, on a persistent, rotational basis. The EFP initiative is part of the biggest reinforcement of NATO collective defence in a generation.

David Davis also took part in an act of Remembrance, laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw to commemorate the sacrifice of the Polish people during the Second World War and the UK's lasting ties of friendship with Poland.

**Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis said:**

We have a historic and deep relationship with Poland, which will endure long after we have left the European Union.

The Prime Minister's Florence speech gave new momentum to the negotiations and we are now within touching distance of an agreement on key issues such as citizens' rights.

We welcome the EU's move to start their own preparatory work on how they see the future relationship working; that will allow us to accelerate talks once they are ready to participate in this conversation.

We are approaching the discussions in a spirit of goodwill and at the December European Council we hope to rely on the support of our friends in Poland in progressing discussions to the next stage.

The visit to Warsaw confirms the UK's commitment to deepening its bilateral relationships with countries across Europe after its departure from the EU.

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## **Press release: Nottingham man arrested in connection with Walesby Fire**

A 41-year-old man was today (Wednesday Nov 8) arrested for questioning in relation to a fire which burned for over two weeks on a farm near Walesby in north Nottinghamshire last September.

He was arrested in a joint operation involving officers from the Environment Agency and Nottinghamshire Police.

He is being questioned in connection to a fire at Oakfield Farm, in Forest Lane, Walesby, which contained dumped illegal waste.

No permit existed for waste to be stored on the farm.

The man from the Sneinton area of Nottingham was also answering questions about two other enquiries following the discovery of illegal waste at a site on Hathernware Industrial Estate in Loughborough and a farm in Leicestershire.

When officers entered the property in Sneinton they discovered around 40 suspected cannabis plants. The man is also being questioned over this matter.

Peter Haslock, Area Enforcement Team Leader for the East Midlands, said:

The arrest was made as part of a joint investigation involving enforcement officers from the Environment Agency and colleagues from Nottinghamshire Police.

We know the Walesby site did not have a permit for waste activity and we believe the waste was involved in the fire.

These are extremely serious cases and the Environment Agency is determined to bring the culprits to justice.

We are working closely with partners to share intelligence on illegal waste activity. And we're encouraging property and land owners to be vigilant. Anyone who sees waste crime taking place is advised not to approach as these people can be dangerous.

Report it by calling our incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60 or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Advice to land and property owners:

- Check any empty land and property regularly and make sure it is secure.
- Carry out rigorous checks on prospective and new tenants. Land and property owners have a responsibility to ensure anyone leasing their land/property complies with regulations. They may be committing an offence by allowing waste to be stored on land or property without the relevant permissions and could leave them liable to prosecution
- Be vigilant and report any unusual behaviour.

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## **[Press release: A passport to safety](#)**

With an ambition to set a common safety standard for more than 50 thousand workers across its whole supply chain, Highways England has today (8 November 2017) announced a new Health and Safety Passport scheme. Safety is at the centre of this new scheme. The passport strives to simplify the method of gaining access to construction sites with a personalised smart card, assuring competency, qualification and fitness to work across Highways England's construction workforce.

Operations Regional Director at Highways England, Simon Jones said:

Safety is at the heart of everything we do at Highways England.

Our Health and Safety Passport scheme sets a common safety standard for colleagues across our supply chain. It will make it simpler for staff to transfer between sites and for companies to verify that the people who work for them have the training, qualifications and competencies to work on any site.

We hope that within 12 months all the suppliers we work with will be using the system.

The card is checkable using smartphone technology to help build a picture of the workforce and help colleagues to transfer between sites and suppliers with ease.

Working together with over twenty different suppliers and partners from across the industry, the common introduction course delivered by Lantra covers all major projects and construction and renewal sites. Alongside the common induction training, a passport smartcard will be issued to the individual who will be able to carry around their training record, qualifications and competency details in their pocket wherever they work.

To gain register for training and your passport card, please contact either the helpdesk on 0330 726 0225 or email [he.validate@mitie.com](mailto:he.validate@mitie.com)

The new Health and Safety Passport scheme was launched today (8 November 2017) at the [national Highways UK conference](#), in Birmingham.

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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## **[News story: Wise up to social media: GLD runs pro bono workshop for teenagers](#)**

During National Pro Bono Week 2017 (6 to 10 November) London teenagers spent time learning about the legal implications of what they say and do online.

The session was hosted by lawyers from the Government Legal Department as part of the Citizenship Foundation's Lawyers in Schools programme.

The workshop focused on the law on social media, and helped 30 students from the Ark Academy schools and the London Nautical School to understand the balance between freedom of expression and when the law has been broken.

National Pro Bono Week highlights the legal community's work of providing free legal support and advice.

The Lawyers in Schools programme is made up of a series of legal workshops facilitated by legal professionals. It is aimed at increasing young people's awareness and understanding of the law, developing listening and communication skills and raising aspirations and confidence.

Speaking after the event, Stephen Braviner Roman, GLD's Director General who sponsors pro bono activities, said:

The Citizenship Foundation's Lawyers in Schools programme gives students practical support so they are more aware of their rights and responsibilities. Today's session helped these young people navigate the complexities of what they can and can't say online.

I'm really pleased that GLD lawyers can be involved in projects like this. It gives them the opportunity to give back to their local communities and help teach young people about their rights and responsibilities.

Tom Franklin, Chief Executive of the Citizenship Foundation, said:

It's fantastic that GLD is volunteering to help young people understand a crucial element of the law that affects them.

Like many thousands of legal professionals who volunteer on our programmes, they are helping young people become active, informed young citizens.

GLD also launched its Pro Bono Strategy this week. As a founding signatory to the Law Society's pro bono charter, GLD committed to developing a pro bono strategy to support and encourage pro bono activity across the organisation. The new strategy demonstrates GLD's ongoing commitment to the pro bono work carried out by its lawyers and aims to increase awareness of the opportunities and benefits of getting involved in pro bono work and develop a strong pro bono culture across the department.