

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Executive Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	25 April 2014
Subject:	The framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement: Self-Evaluation

Summary

Ofsted can undertake two types of inspection in Local Authorities with regard to school improvement. One is a "focussed schools" inspection where Ofsted inspect a number of schools in the Local Authority over a one or two week period. The second, which can be triggered by the first, is when Ofsted inspect the effectiveness of school improvement arrangements within a Local Authority. These arrangements include strategic and political oversight as well as the effectiveness of service delivery. The inspection would be of the Local Authority itself although it would also include inspections of schools.

The criteria for triggering an inspection of school improvement arrangements have been considered. Although an inspection would appear to be unlikely in the near future, it is timely to consider what such an inspection would explore so that the County Council can be fully prepared.

If an inspection were to be triggered, the nine areas that would be the focus for Ofsted would fall under four main headings :-

- i. The effectiveness of corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement (and its impact)
- ii. Monitoring, challenge, intervention and support
- iii. Support and challenge for leadership and management including governance
- iv. Use of resources

A self-evaluation against the criteria for inspection and against the nine areas of scope has been undertaken. This report highlights the key strengths and areas of development that have resulted from that process.

Actions Required:

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee is requested to:

1. Note the report and particularly the section relevant to the role of elected members. It is likely that the Lead Member would be required to meet with the inspection team should the need arise.
2. Continue to scrutinise reports on school improvement demonstrating rigour, challenge, ambition and vision in order to demonstrate political oversight.
3. Support an ambitious vision for improving schools, which is clearly demonstrated in public documents.
4. Be prepared to articulate the Local Authority's strategic role, and enhance schools' ability to self-manage should an inspection arise.

1. Background

Despite the growing number of academies, local authorities retain a legal responsibility for performance in the area as a whole, under the 1996 Education Act. Local authorities have powers of intervention with their maintained schools that are set out under part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 but these do not apply to academies, which are state-funded independent schools.

Nevertheless, the Secretary of State for Education has made it known that where the local authority has concerns about the performance of an academy, it should, "within the confines of its responsibilities, take reasonable steps to discuss this with the individual establishment, the executive leadership and governance of the chain, and/or the Department for Education, where appropriate."

Sir Michael Wilshaw said to the House of Commons select committee in the Autumn, *'If they (Local Authorities) identify underperformance in an academy, they should be writing to the chair of governors and the sponsor of the academy and contacting the Academies Division at the Department any good local authority will know whether an academy is doing well or not and will alert the Department for Education to their concerns.'*

OfSTED consulted upon and then published in May 2013, a "Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement". The framework is designed to assess the extent to which a local authority is meeting its statutory duties to:

- Monitor the performance of all schools.
- Promote high standards in schools and among other providers so that children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential as defined by section 13A of the Education Act 1996.
- Exercise its statutory powers of intervention authority maintained schools support for local authority maintained schools that are "schools causing concern" as set out in Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Challenge academy schools that are underperforming and refer these to Department for Education where necessary.

There are seven possible triggers for an inspection of a local authority:

- a. where the proportion of children who attend a good or better school, pupil referral unit and/or alternative provision is lower than that found nationally
- b. where there is a higher than average number of schools in an Ofsted formal category of concern and/or there are indicators that progress of such schools is not securing rapid improvement
- c. where there is a higher than average proportion of schools that have not been judged to be good by Ofsted
- d. where attainment levels across the local authority are lower than that found nationally and/or where the trend of improvement is weak
- e. where rates of progress, relative to starting points, are lower than that found nationally and/or where the trend of improvement is weak
- f. where the volume of qualifying complaints to Ofsted about schools in a local authority area is a matter of concern
- g. where the Secretary of State requires an inspection of local authority school improvement functions.

Recent inspections have only been triggered where there are multiple concerns. Our analysis against these criteria is shown in Annex 1. On this basis we do not believe that an inspection is imminent. Nevertheless, the framework provides a useful reference for further development of our services and enables us to be well prepared.

This report will now highlight briefly the strengths and areas for development in each of the four main areas of focus (areas (i) to (iv) on the cover page). There is a full Self Evaluation Form (SEF), signed off by the Director of Children's Services and a supporting Action Plan plus an evidence bank to support statements. The SEF will be updated termly.

(i) The effectiveness of corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement (and its impact)

This section relates, in part, to the role of elected members and senior officers. As it should be of particular interest, the descriptors used by Ofsted to judge effectiveness are shown in Annex 2.

Strengths identified in the Self Evaluation include:

- Strong arrangements to deliver school improvement through CfBT as demonstrated by Key Stage outcomes and overall performance of schools' Ofsted outcomes
- Consistent and methodical approach to challenge through reports to the Children's Services Directorate Management Team (DMT), Executive DMT and Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
- 81% of primaries are good or outstanding
- 70% of secondaries are good or outstanding. Although lower than primary, it is 11% above the national figure of 59%
- 95% of special schools are good or outstanding

- The number of primary schools causing concern reducing from 28 in 2011 to 8 in 2013
- Increase in percentage of good or better schools in all phases from 68% in September 2012 to 81% in December 2013. This is slightly above the national figure at 79%
- Small schools partnership project has been shown to be successful in improving outcomes. This was led strategically by the School Improvement Service.

Strategic developments underway:

- The School Improvement Strategy is being revised to be sharper and more succinct. This will be clearly communicated and shared with Headteachers and Chairs, and their feedback taken
- Only 67% of secondary schools are good or outstanding. Advisers have carried out a risk assessment, visited schools, including grammar schools, and intervened as appropriate
- Work with all post-16 learning providers to ensure sufficient breadth of provision is maintained
- The development of a sector-led improvement model within a mixed economy that meets the needs of Lincolnshire schools is being developed. It will include a stronger partnership working with Teaching Schools over deployment of NLEs and LLEs
- There is a strong need to focus school improvement on closing the gap for vulnerable pupils and groups of pupils. This is a Children's Services priority and work led by schools and a Closing the Gap team has begun. The gaps in Lincolnshire are above national. Closing the Gap work is focussing on inequities across the county i.e. between Districts.

(ii) Monitoring, challenge, intervention and support

Strengths identified in the Self Evaluation include:

- Appropriate monitoring, challenge, support and intervention has resulted in strong Ofsted outcomes for primary, nursery and special schools
- School improvement staff are Ofsted trained which gives credibility and a very helpful perspective
- The performance team provides relevant and helpful data on a regular basis
- The Local Authority uses its powers of intervention appropriately
- There are regular monthly meetings with the Director of Children's Services (DCS) and Lead Member to update them with school issues so they are fully aware and the DCS is kept fully informed at all times
- Support services (e.g. People Management Services, Finance, Governance) are involved in termly schools causing concern meetings
- Local networks, partnerships and Executive Headships are used to support schools and to effect improvement.

Strategic developments underway:

- The relationship with academies, particularly those that could require intervention, is being further developed
- Although well above the national average, the percentage of secondary schools that are good or outstanding needs to improve further. Some grammars are at risk of not being good or outstanding when next inspected due to increased focus on progress rather than attainment
- The core school improvement offer is being revised to reflect the priorities highlighted by the Ofsted framework.

(iii) Support and challenge for leadership and management, including governance

Strengths identified in the Self Evaluation include:

- The training programme for leadership, teachers and governors is comprehensive and courses are well-attended
- Effective school to school support through Associate Education Advisers (who are Headteachers) and Education Advisers is demonstrated through supported schools improving
- The Local Authority uses its powers of intervention effectively.

Strategic developments underway:

- The number of additional governors to support schools causing concern and as members of IEBs (Interim Executive Boards) needs to be increased.

(iv) Use of resources

Strengths identified in the Self Evaluation include:

- Resources to support schools are based on strong understanding and knowledge of school needs. The Local Authority has a budget to support Interim Headteachers and for schools causing concern.

Strategic developments underway:

- Reports on allocations of funding and its impact need to go to Schools Forum so they can see that impact and whether value for money is being achieved
- The Local Authority outsources its school improvement functions and regular Contract Board meetings are held to monitor outcomes and spending of resources.

2. Conclusion

The Local Authority has strong outcomes overall and the percentage of schools (all phases) that are good or outstanding is 81% which is above the national proportion.

Mirroring the country-wide pattern, there is a lower percentage of secondary schools than primary, special or nursery schools with good or outstanding grades but the proportion is still significantly above national. Challenge is robust in all phases and support is strong for maintained schools in particular. Given these impacts that demonstrate the effectiveness of school improvement arrangements, the overall self evaluation is that they are effective.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

Not Applicable

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Annex 1	Criteria for triggering inspection of Local Authority school improvement arrangements or a focussed schools inspection
Annex 2	Ofsted descriptors that characterise effective corporate leadership and strategic planning of school improvement

5. Background Papers

The framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement	Available at: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-inspection-of-local-authority-arrangements-for-supporting-school-improvement
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Annex 1: Review of indicators that can trigger inspection

	DfE Indicators	Does this apply ?	Current position		Comments	
			RAG (red, amber, green)	Evidence <i>How we can demonstrate this?</i>		
A	The proportion of children who attend a good or better school, pupil referral unit and /or alternative provision is lower than that found nationally	No	G	OfSTED Annual Report 2012/13	National	Local Primary 81% Secondary 78%
B	There is a higher than average number of schools in an Ofsted category of concern and/or there are indicators that progress of such schools is not securing rapid enough improvement	No	G	Most recent data Dec 31 st 2013	National 3%	Local 1%
C	There is a higher than average proportion of schools that have not been judged to be good by Ofsted	No	G	Most recent data Dec 31 st 2013	National 21.0%	Local 18%
D	Attainment levels across the local authority are lower than that found nationally and/or where the trend of improvement is weak		G for primary A for secondary	See data in the right hand side column	<p>National figures in blue / Lincolnshire in red</p> <p>Early Years Foundation Stage 52 65 Above national (new measure in 2013)</p> <p>Phonics 69 76 Test new in 2012. Lincolnshire shows 2-year upward trend and is above national</p> <p>Key Stage 1 Level 2+ Reading 89 88 3-year trend upward trend against a national upward trend, however, remains below national Level 2+ Writing 85 86 3-year upward trend against a national upward trend, below national in 2011 & 2012, now above national above national Level 2+ Maths 91 92 3-year upward trend against a national upward trend, below national in 2011 & 2012, now above national</p> <p>Key Stage 2 Level 4+ Reading 85 86 1% below the 2012 figure against an unchanged national figure, remains above national Level 4+ Writing 83 84 3-year upward trend against a national upward trend, remains above national Level 4+ Maths 84 85</p>	

Annex 1: Review of indicators that can trigger inspection

	DfE Indicators	Does this apply ?	Current position		Comments
			RAG (red, amber, green)	Evidence <i>How we can demonstrate this?</i>	
					<p>Lincolnshire in-line with national in 2011 and 1% above in 2012 and 2013</p> <p>Level 4+ GAPS 73 72</p> <p>1% below national (new measure in 2013)</p> <p>Level 4+ Reading, Writing & Maths 76 75</p> <p>Lincolnshire and national figures same as in 2012. Lincolnshire remains above national in 2013.</p> <p>GCSE</p> <p>% 5+A*-C inc. English & Maths</p> <p>61.8 59.2 3-year downward trend in Lincolnshire against a 3-year upward trend nationally, however Lincolnshire remains above national</p> <p>A Level</p> <p>% A or A* 26.3 25.5</p> <p>Improvement on 2012 figure against a fall in the national figure, however remains below national</p> <p>% Grades A*-E 98.1 98.5</p> <p>Decrease on 2012 figure against a national upward trend, however, remains above national</p>
E	Rates of progress, relative to starting points, are lower than that found nationally and/or where the trend or improvement is weak	No	<p>G for primary</p> <p>A for secondary</p>	See data in the right hand side column	<p>National figures in blue / Lincolnshire in red</p> <p>Key Stage 2</p> <p>2 Level Progress Reading 88 90</p> <p>Decrease on 2012 figure (1%), national figure also decreased (2%). Remains above national</p> <p>2 Level Progress Writing 91 93</p> <p>Increase on 2012 figure in-line with national increase, remains above national</p> <p>2 Level Progress Maths 88 89</p> <p>Same as 2012 figure, but remains above national.</p> <p>Key Stage 4</p> <p>English 70.4 69.0</p> <p>Decrease on 2012 figure against a national increase. Below national (above in 2012).</p> <p>Maths 70.7 72.0</p> <p>Above 2012 figure as national. Remains above national.</p>

Annex 1: Review of indicators that can trigger inspection

	DfE Indicators	Does this apply ?	Current position		Comments
			RAG (red, amber, green)	Evidence <i>How we can demonstrate this?</i>	
F			G	Small number of complaints made but none triggered inspection and school and local authority able to show appropriate action taken. Senior HMI very pleased with performance of Lincolnshire local authority.	
G	The Secretary of State is known to have concerns about the effectiveness of local authority school improvement arrangements	No	G	DfE representative made clear that Lincolnshire is not a priority. Only 1 primary school sponsored academy.	Termly meetings with DfE representatives.

Annex 2: Ofsted descriptors for effective arrangements to support school improvement

Aspect	
	Corporate leadership and strategic planning
<p>The effectiveness of corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected members and senior officers have an ambitious vision for improving schools, which is clearly demonstrated in public documents. Elected members articulate the Local Authority’s strategic role, and enhance schools’ ability to self-manage. Accountability is transparent and efficiently monitored in a systematic way. Members’ challenge of officers is well informed by high quality information and data. • There is coherent and consistent challenge to schools and other providers to ensure that high proportions of children and young people have access to a good quality education. • Communications and consultation are transparent and lead to a shared understanding with schools. Schools respect and trust credible senior officers, who listen and respond to their views and advice. • Senior officers ensure that strategies for school improvement are understood clearly by schools, other providers and stakeholders. There is tangible evidence that the strategy is effective in preventing failure, securing higher proportions of schools ‘getting to good’ and eroding inequality in different areas of the Local Authority. • Elected members and senior officers exercise their duties in relation to securing sufficient suitable provision for all 16-19 year olds and in respect of raising the participation age (RPA) requirements.