

Summary of the framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement

(Appendices 'A' and 'B' refer)

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Executive Summary

The report sets out the key features of the Ofsted framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement and highlights the main areas of focus for inspectors.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the inspection arrangements.

Background

HMCI's Annual Report 2011/12 drew national attention to the inequality of access by children and young people to a good education across England. This inspection framework (Appendix 'A') acknowledges that the role of local authorities has changed in relation to schools and for those 14-19-year-olds attending a college outside of local authority control but also highlights the local authority's statutory duty to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential.

This inspection framework is seen as a powerful lever for improvement in helping to challenge inconsistencies in educational provision and will enable Ofsted to report more rigorously on the contribution of local authorities to improving education in England.

The framework is accompanied by a handbook which sets out what inspectors must do in the course of local authority inspections. (Appendix 'B')

The Inspection Framework

The framework for the inspection of a local authority (Appendix 'A') provides an independent external evaluation of how well it carries out its statutory duties in relation to promoting high standards in schools and among other providers so that

children and young people achieve well and fulfil their potential. This includes support for schools causing concern as set out in Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

In carrying out inspections of local authorities, Ofsted is committed to: supporting and promoting improvement; being proportionate; focussing on the needs of children, young people and the local authority; providing value for money; being transparent and consistent; and being accountable (reporting its findings without fear or favour, gathering stakeholder views and publishing accurate timely letters).

Ofsted does not intend to inspect all local authorities to a regular cycle or interval. Where inspections of schools or other providers raise concerns about the effectiveness of a local authority's education functions or where Ofsted becomes aware of other concerns, an inspection may be carried out. In practice, this means that some local authorities may not be inspected at all, while others may be inspected more than once over a particular period.

HMCI may cause a local authority to be inspected, in relation to its support and challenge for schools and other providers, so that they improve, where one or more of the following apply:

- 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;
- 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;
- where there is a higher than average proportion of schools that have not been judged to be good by Ofsted;
- where attainment levels across the local authority are lower than that found nationally and/or where the trend of improvement is weak;
- where rates of progress, relative to starting points, are lower than that found nationally and/or where the trend of improvement is weak;
- where the volume of qualifying complaints to Ofsted about schools in a local authority area is a matter of concern; and
- where the Secretary of State requires an inspection of local authority school improvement functions.

Notice of up to five days will normally be given and the purpose of the inspection, the powers under which it is carried out and the arrangements for reporting on the inspection will be sent in writing to the relevant local authority. An inspection team will normally comprise of two HMI irrespective of the size of the local authority.

The inspection will focus on:

- the effectiveness of corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement;
- the clarity and transparency of policy and strategy for supporting schools' and other providers' improvement, and how clearly the local authority has defined its monitoring, challenge, support and intervention roles;

- the extent to which the local authority knows schools and other providers, their performance and the standards they achieve and how effectively support is focused on areas of greatest need;
- the effectiveness of the local authority's identification of, and intervention in, underperforming schools, including, where applicable, the use of formal powers available to the local authority;
- the impact of local authority support and challenge over time and the rate at which schools and other providers are improving;
- the extent to which the local authority brokers support for schools and other providers;
- the effectiveness of strategies to support highly effective leadership and management in schools and other providers;
- support and challenge for school governance, where applicable; and
- the way the local authority uses any available funding to effect improvement, including how it is focused on areas of greatest need.

A more detailed explanation of these areas and the expectations of inspectors is set out in the Handbook for Inspection (see Appendix 'B').

Ofsted will publish the inspection findings in letter form, setting out briefly the context of the inspection, the evidence gathered, any strengths and weaknesses and areas recommended for improvement. The common grading scale for Ofsted (grades 1-4) will not be used in reporting the findings of the inspection. There will, instead be a single judgement on whether the local authority's arrangements to support school improvement is effective or ineffective.

The report is normally sent to a local authority within 20 working days of the end of the inspection, and published on Ofsted's website within 25 working days of the end of the inspection.

The Quality and Continuous Improvement Service is constantly evaluating its support for school improvement and the impact upon the quality of education provided in Lancashire and the achievement of pupils. In response to the new inspection framework the process of self evaluation is being reviewed to ensure that it reflects the criteria set out in the handbook for inspectors. Over the past year there has been a significant improvement in the proportion of schools judged to be good or better in Lancashire and the latest information indicates that Lancashire's performance is above the national average and compares well with the quality of provision in similar local authorities.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

N/A

Risk management

There are no implications for risk management arising from this report.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement	May 2013	Jonathan Hewitt Directorate for Children and Young People 01772 531663
Handbook for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement	May 2013	Jonathan Hewitt Directorate for Children and Young People 01772 531663
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		