



<u>Committee and Date</u>	<u>Item</u>
Young People's Scrutiny Committee 17 December 2013	7 <u>Public</u>

OFSTED INSPECTIONS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUPPORTING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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1. Summary

This report summarises the focus of the new Ofsted inspections of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement. It also outlines Shropshire's preparation for a possible inspection during 2014.

2. Recommendations

That members accept the position as set out in the report.

REPORT

3. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

Not applicable

4. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

5. Background

5.1 In June 2013 Ofsted introduced inspections of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement. Inspections are not universal but will be targeted where concerns about performance are apparent or where requested by the Secretary of State. Inspections report on the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the local authority functions for promoting improvement in relation to education.

5.2 The criteria that could trigger an inspection are:

- 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
- where the Secretary of State requires an inspection of local authority school improvement functions.

5.3 Local Authorities have up to five days notice of an inspection, and a team of two or more HMI spend up to five consecutive days in the local authority. Much of the time is spent gathering evidence directly from schools.

5.4 Judgements are made across nine focusses:

- 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
- the way the local authority uses any available funding to effect improvement, including how it is focused on areas of greatest need.

5.5 To date a small number of local authorities have been inspected under these arrangements, including the Isle of Wight and Norfolk. Suffolk has not had a full inspection, but has had a fortnight of focussed school inspections which resulted in a similar report. Both Norfolk and Suffolk are in Shropshire's statistical neighbour group. Although Ofsted do not use the overall effectiveness grade descriptors of outstanding, good, requires improvement or inadequate to evaluate and report the effectiveness of the local authority the reports on these LAs have been broadly critical.

5.6 The School Improvement Team has undertaken preparation for a possible inspection by:

- developing a self-assessment document, making judgements against the nine main headings and the effectiveness descriptors in the handbook for inspection
- collating evidence to support the self-assessment judgments, including a range of documentation, analysis of data, a detailed commentary, extracts from Ofsted inspections of schools, feedback from schools and case studies demonstrating effective school improvement
- refreshing the Shropshire Development Plan for School Improvement, ensuring a sharp focus on areas of relative weakness.

5.7 Headteacher groups are aware of these developments, and have been involved in providing feedback for early drafts. In the spring term

headteachers will be involved more fully and members of Scrutiny may wish to be involved in validating the self-assessment, supporting evidence and the development plan.

6. Additional Information

- 6.1 Local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement in schools and the education of children and young people have not been inspected by Ofsted and other inspectorates since 2004/05, when the former local education authority (LEA) inspections by Ofsted were replaced by joint area reviews.
- 6.2 The reintroduction of inspection aims to assist local authorities in their duty to promote high standards and fulfilment of potential in schools and other education and training providers so that all children and young people benefit from at least a good education.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Refs:

The framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement, May 2013

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-inspection-of-local-authority-arrangements-for-supporting-school-improvement>

Handbook for the inspection of local authority arrangements for supporting school improvement, May 2013

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-local-authority-arrangements-for-supporting-school-improvement>

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Ann Hartley

Local Member

N/a

Appendices

None