

Hampshire Education and Inclusion Service (E&I)
and
Ofsted
GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Audience

This document provides guidance for school leaders of maintained schools in the support offered and roles undertaken by different teams within E&I branch of Hampshire Children's Services directorate, through an Ofsted inspection.

Context

Following the tragic death of Ruth Perry, the headteacher at Caversham Primary School in January 2023, the report from the coroner highlighted a number of concerns in relation to both Ofsted and Reading Borough Council.

Reading Borough Council

- 1. Reading Borough Council indicated an intention to adopt a much more robust and proactive approach to dealing with Ofsted, particularly where there are concerns about an inspection. This is not in written policy or guidance – which may go some way towards reassuring school leaders that their employer 'has their back' – both now and in future years.*
- 2. Reading Borough Council also did not carry out any form of internal review. I was not made aware of any policy setting out when such an internal review should take place.*
- 3. We heard in evidence that school leaders have received correspondence from Reading Borough Council about what mental health support options are available. I am concerned to know whether there is now written policy or guidance about communicating this, so that this continues to happen in future years.*

[Coroner's report: Ruth Perry – Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths \(judiciary.uk\) 12.12.2023](#) This document defines the expected local authority approach to dealing with Ofsted inspection of maintained schools in Hampshire. It should be noted that the Local Authority would only be included in discussions re non maintained schools if invited to by the school or on request of Ofsted; the circumstances of the Local Authority involvement in the inspection of non maintained schools is detailed below.

1. Our relationship with schools

The Local Authority is in a partnership with all schools to secure the very best education for every child. We have a shared vision for education in Hampshire as detailed within the Leadership and Learning Progress Review (LLPR) guidance:

- committed to providing a broad, relevant, and exciting curriculum
- focusing on performance in core subjects as enabling knowledge and understanding
- developing emotional intelligence and fostering social skills
- building a fully inclusive culture in which all our children learn to be and to belong
- playing our part in making sure that children have an enjoyable and memorable childhood.

The relationship with schools is based on a shared vision of excellence in which we work together to help every school become highly effective, so that all pupils, including the more vulnerable and disadvantaged, get the opportunities, provision and outcomes they need to flourish, achieve and succeed – now, and in the future.

Our local authority school improvement service is well regarded and accessed by schools in Hampshire and beyond. We strive to develop and maintain this relationship based on a number of key characteristics detailed below.

- A **strong respect** for and belief in schools' self-determination and autonomy.
- A **commitment** to support and challenge all schools to help them achieve their ambitions for the young people and communities that they serve.
- A **duty** to prevent schools from failing and to intervene effectively to this end. Prioritising our work so that schools rapidly secure improvements where they are in danger of low standards or not yet judged by Ofsted to be good or outstanding.
- A **promise** of appropriate support if schools find themselves in difficulties.
- An **understanding** of the power and importance of schools helping to improve other schools.
- A **belief** that jointly developing good practice across the system can bring benefit to all, coupled with the knowledge that in our schools we have some of the very best leaders, teachers, practitioners and governors in the country.
- A **conviction** that developing the thinking of leaders, teachers and practitioners can have a direct impact on the thinking and progress of the children that they work with, and that this is the way in which new and innovative ways of working emerge.
- A **pledge** that we will act as champions of pupils, parents and the pursuit of excellence in all its forms.
- An **unwavering** focus on the most vulnerable children and young people in our society, including children in care, children in receipt of pupil premium, children open to social workers and children who have SEND. The harnessing of leadership capacity for the improvement of the whole system.

2. Our relationship with Ofsted

Hampshire County Council has a strong working relationship with Ofsted.

Senior local authority officers, including the Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion and County Education Managers for Primary and Secondary meet regularly with three linked His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) for Hampshire. These meetings create an opportunity to share any general concerns about the inspection process as made evident within Hampshire.

These meetings also enable more general information sharing from both sides including in relation to specific complaints made against a school and in relation to organisational changes such as school closures or expansion of age ranges.

3. Information sharing in relation to Ofsted

Hampshire Improvement and Advisory Service (HIAS) with E&I runs regular Ofsted briefings to ensure that school leaders are informed and understand the current inspection framework. These sessions are voluntary and typically include input from a headteacher who has a recent experience of inspection. Information about what is covered within the framework alongside practical activities such as what to have ready on the first day of the inspection is covered. These sessions also highlight the support available from the Local Authority before, during and after the inspection.

Information is also shared through half termly district and area headteacher meetings. Local authority input into these sessions includes key information about Ofsted to ensure that school leaders understand the expectation of the inspection process alongside a range of other information. The agenda of these meetings is determined by the headteachers who direct the input provided by the local authority. The wellbeing support available to headteachers, not specifically relating to Ofsted, is also shared at every meeting. These sessions are typically face to face led by the school improvement manager (SIM) or County Education Manager (CEM) and include opportunities for headteachers to raise any specific issues being faced.

School leaders can directly commission professional development on the Ofsted inspection framework from the local authority. Typical activity includes staff training and working with school leaderships teams to understand the process and support preparedness for inspection.

Governor Services (HCC) offer whole governing body training on Ofsted as part of a wider development offer. This can be commissioned by the school and is available to all schools.

Schools in Hampshire are routinely invited to host Ofsted events for school leaders.

4. Expected contact between E&I and schools following notification of inspection

The current School Inspection Handbook (January 2024) details the expected involvement of the Local Authority in any inspection of a maintained school. This includes:

100. In a maintained school, the lead inspector will:

- *request either a face-to-face meeting or a telephone call with a representative from the local authority, diocese or other relevant responsible body*
- *request that a representative from the local authority, diocese or other relevant responsible body is present at the final inspection feedback meeting*

Ofsted: School Inspection Handbook. 24 January 2024

Before the inspection

E&I receives notification of all school inspection within Hampshire County Council; this includes new schools, maintained schools and academies. Upon receipt of the notification, key staff LA associated with the school are informed including the relevant SIM and attached inspector (AI). The SIM or AI makes contact with the school to acknowledge the notification of inspection and to detail the expected involvement of local authority staff including, for example, times for keeping in touch and meeting/speaking to the Ofsted inspector.

The SIM and the AI will discuss the likely local authority involvement based on a shared knowledge of the school. On some occasions, the AI may visit the school in advance of the start of the inspection to support senior leaders. Alternatively, support may be provided via email or through telephone conversations. A bespoke approach is implemented for each school as determined by the SIM and the AI. The SIM or AI will establish how and when information relating to the ongoing inspection will be shared during this initial contact with the school. Typically this would be at defined points during each day so that school leaders feel supported throughout the process. For example, it is expected that the AI speak with the headteacher at the end of day 1 when the key areas of focus for day 2 have been identified.

It is sometimes necessary for the SIM to make contact with the inspector in advance of the inspection to share contextual information that may impact upon the inspection. This may include highlighting significant leadership turbulence or an event that has impacted upon the whole school community.

The SIM or AI will also provide support should the headteacher seek to defer the inspection. This typically involves reviewing the circumstances for the deferral request as detailed within the Ofsted guidance document - [Deferring Ofsted inspections - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

During the inspection

The AI will ensure that the agreed approach is actioned in order to keep in touch with the process and will inform senior officers if any concerning information is shared, both in relation to the conduct of the inspector and in respect to a potential unexpected inspection outcome.

Where concerns are raised, these should be shared with the SIM and the CEM and school leaders will be encouraged to raise concerns directly with the inspector as soon as the situation arises. If the concern is not resolved, an agreed course of action will be identified; this may include escalating concerns to the linked Senior His Majesty's Inspector (SHMI) for the region.

At the final feedback, the role of the SIM or AI is to ensure that clarity is provided as to why judgements have been made in addition to gathering key feedback. The SIM or AI should also identify if there are any concerns raised by the school in relation to the conduct of the inspection team and if there is a need to signpost school leaders to the welfare support available. This should be recorded on the feedback template.

After the inspection

Following the inspection, the SIM will determine the appropriate follow up action. Where no concerns were raised, either by school leaders, the AI or Ofsted, this may be an email or a telephone call in the days following the inspection.

Where concerns were raised, the SIM will ensure that a combined approach, involving the local authority and governors at the school, is put in place to support the school leaders. This

would include regular checking in through visits or telephone calls and signposting to any additional support such as that provided by Education Personnel Services (EPS) – detailed in part 7 of this document.

Where schools receive an overall effectiveness of grade of Requires Improvement or Inadequate, specific local authority guidance is followed. This would involve the development of a programme of support that details the required action for the school and the role of the local authority in securing improvement.

Where concerns are raised about the conduct or behaviours of the inspection team, the SIM will support school leaders to address these through following the appropriate guidance. These concerns would also typically be shared through the regular meetings between senior local authority officers and Ofsted.

The local authority officer attending the feedback will complete the appropriate feedback form (linked to the type of inspection). This will be shared with senior local authority officers and governor services who will determine if further action is required to support school leaders and/or school governors. Information from school inspection is also recorded and collated to inform future work and discussion with regional HMIs.

The above would be considered should the LA or school instigate an 'Ofsted Learning Review' which reviews the reasons for the Ofsted judgement, the approach taken to determine the outcome and the evidence base.

5. Where there are concerns about an inspection

When making a judgement about the conduct of an inspector, the following document should be used. [Ofsted code of conduct - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118222/Ofsted_code_of_conduct_-_GOV.UK.pdf). This document details the expectation of both the inspector and the provider during an inspection. Information relating to conduct during inspection is also provided with the school inspection handbook (sections 8 – 12).

Where concerns are raised, in the first instance we would expect the school leader to make the inspector aware of the concern. Ofsted released information on the 19 January 2024 that details how leaders should go about pausing an inspection - [Pausing state-funded school inspections - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118222/Ofsted_code_of_conduct_-_GOV.UK.pdf). If appropriate, the local authority will support school leaders to undertake the required action detailed in this document.

The expected contact between school leaders and the local authority detailed in Part 4 should enable any concerns in relation to the inspection to be identified and actioned swiftly, ideally during the inspection. However, it should be recognised that there is responsibility on the part of school leaders to share information swiftly and notify the local authority if this is the case; this will enable the local authority to provide urgent and appropriate support.

The opportunities for local authority officers to formally engage with the inspection is detailed within part 6 of this document. E&I will continue to highlight the importance of school leaders sharing concerns with the local authority during the inspection itself so that these can be addressed before the inspection ends. This will be achieved through periodic input into district headteacher meetings and Ofsted briefings.

Should a school wish to make a complaint about an inspection once the process is complete, the SIM or AI will support school leaders to ensure that the process is conducted in accordance with the relevant guidance.

6. Support for headteacher wellbeing

The following support is available to school leaders in Hampshire:

- Workforce Development Group offered by Education Psychology
- Heath Assured Service Level Agreement
- Wellbeing training available from Governor Services
- School Staff Resilience Website
- HeadsUp4HTs

The support above is highlighted to school leaders through regular headteacher meetings and through specific discussions with school leaders.

7. Support for non maintained schools

E&I receives notification of all Ofsted inspections in Hampshire including academies. Following notification, a School Improvement Manager will contact the school to acknowledge the inspection and to offer an appropriate level of support.

Non maintained schools can commission support and access a range of Local Authority training.

Occasionally, Ofsted will request a conversation with the Local Authority in relation to a statutory function such as safeguarding. Ofsted also request that a representative of the Local Authority be present at feedback where safeguarding is judged to be ineffective.