

PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

18 April 2013

THE INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY SERVICES FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Report of the Strategic Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	Creating a Brighter Future for All
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide information for members on the new, proposed framework for the inspection of school improvement services by Ofsted.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Scrutiny Panel discuss the proposals.**

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 In January 2013 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector at Ofsted, Sir Michael Wilshaw, announced a consultation on a new inspection framework for school improvement services. The same day 2 teams of inspectors arrived in Derby City and Portsmouth Local authorities to pilot the framework. The letters issued following the visit are attached at Appendix A and Appendix B. The proposed framework states:

3.2 **What determines the timing of an inspection?**

- a) Ofsted does not intend to inspect all local authorities to a regular cycle or interval. Where inspections of schools or other providers, under either section 5 or section 8 of the 2005 Education Act, 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.
- b) 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.
- c) 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, including where one or more of the following apply:
 - i. where the proportion of children who attend a good or better maintained school, pupil referral unit and/or alternative provision is lower than that found nationally
 - ii. 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

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

3.3 What will be inspected?

Ofsted will inspect the effectiveness of local authority education functions in promoting improvement, high standards and the fulfilment of educational potential of children and young people in schools. Ofsted recognises that the configuration of school improvement functions will be diverse and relevant to local circumstances. Ofsted has no fixed view on the configuration of such functions, but will focus on their impact and effectiveness. In particular, Ofsted will evaluate:

- i. the effectiveness of corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement
- ii. the clarity and transparency of policy and strategy for supporting schools' and other providers' improvement, including how the local authority complies with its statutory obligations and powers in relation to school improvement work and how clearly the local authority has defined its monitoring, challenge, support and intervention roles
- iii. 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
- iv. the effectiveness of the local authority's identification of, and intervention in, underperforming school, including the use of formal powers available to the local authority
- v. the impact of local authority support and challenge over time and the rate at which schools and other providers are improving

- vi. the extent to which the local authority brokers support for schools and other providers
- vii. the effectiveness of strategies to support highly effective leadership and management in schools and other providers
- viii. support and challenge for school governance
- ix. the way the local authority uses funding to effect improvement, including how it is focused on areas of greatest need.

3.4 Many local authorities have already taken steps to reduce their staffing capacity for school improvement. Rutland is in this position, although there is a good school improvement strategy in place. In the light of these developments this will need to be reviewed.

4. FINANCIAL

4.1 Careful consideration will need to be given to any additional financial implications – either through commissioning of services externally or internal staffing needs. It is too early to give details at this stage.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

RISK	IMPACT	COMMENTS
Time	High	The new framework is 'live' from May 1 st .
Viability	Medium	The LA has a good strategy in place but this will need to be reviewed.
Finance	Medium	The budget for school improvement has been reduced over the last 2 years. There may be a pressure in the future, but it is difficult to quantify at this stage.
Profile	Medium	Whenever a school receives a poor inspection report there is considerable concern from parents and the local community.
Equality and Diversity	Low	This is a universal service for all children where all children receive an appropriate education based on their individual needs.

Background Papers

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