

## Effectiveness descriptors –the arrangements for supporting school improvement

Note: These descriptors should not be used as a checklist. They must be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach which relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team and taking into account the context of the local authority.

Aspect	Descriptors for effective arrangements to support school improvement.
	<b>Corporate leadership and strategic planning</b>
<b>1. The effectiveness of corporate and strategic leadership of school improvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ 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 (LAs) 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.</li> <li>■ 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.</li> <li>■ 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.</li> <li>■ 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 LA.</li> <li>■ 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.</li> </ul>
<b>2. The clarity and transparency of policy and strategy for supporting schools and other providers' improvement, and how clearly the LA has defined its</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Priorities in the LA's plans for school improvement (including commissioning plans) are clearly articulated and reflect both national priorities and local circumstances.</li> <li>■ Schools and other providers and stakeholders have been fully consulted and agree the strategy and priorities for school improvement.</li> <li>■ Plans for school improvement demonstrate close</li> </ul>

<p><b>monitoring, challenge, support and intervention roles</b></p>	<p>integration with the programme for differentiated LA support and intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reliable and valid measures are used to monitor progress of the school improvement strategy. Evaluation of its impact is comprehensive and regular and its effect on standards and effectiveness of schools and other providers is identified.</li> <li>■ The rationale for support is explicit, flexible, tailored to need and endorsed by schools and other providers. Every effort is made to coordinate partnership arrangements and expertise residing within schools.</li> <li>■ The LA promotes the effective participation of all 16- and 17-year-olds in education and training and makes arrangements identify young people who are not participating.</li> <li>■ The LA's definitions, arrangements, procedures and criteria for monitoring, challenge, intervention and support are clear, sharply focused, comprehensive and understood by school leaders and governors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monitoring, challenge, intervention and support</b></p>	
<p><b>3. The extent to which the LA knows its schools and other providers, their performance and the standards they achieve and how effectively support is focused on areas of greatest need</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Senior officers and schools make intelligent use of pertinent performance data and management information to review and/or revise strategies for school improvement.</li> <li>■ The LA systematically and rigorously uses data and other information effectively to identify schools which are underperforming. It uses this information consistently to channel its support to areas of greatest need, resulting in interventions and challenge that lead to improved outcomes in schools and other providers.</li> <li>■ The LA provides a comprehensive range of performance data, including data about the local performance of different pupil groups, local benchmarking and post-16 destinations comparative data. Schools and other providers have high regard for this, which is influential in helping them to identify school based performance priorities.</li> <li>■ School improvement staff are well equipped to use data and to challenge and support schools.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. The effectiveness of the LA's identification of, and</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where appropriate, the LA deploys its formal powers of intervention promptly and decisively.</li> <li>■ Weaknesses are typically identified early and</li> </ul>

<p><b>intervention in, underperforming schools, including the use of formal powers available to the LA</b></p>	<p>tackled promptly and incisively. Headteachers, staff and governors in all schools causing concern to Ofsted and the LA, and those schools requiring improvement to become good, receive well planned, co-ordinated support, differentiated according to their needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The LA engages systems leaders to support and challenge those in need and actively promotes sector led improvement.</li> <li>■ Progress of schools and other providers is monitored regularly and to a planned programme. Reports to headteachers and governing bodies are fit for purpose. The work of the LA with its underperforming schools and providers results in sustained improvements in standards and provision.</li> <li>■ The progress of schools causing concern is kept under continuous review by senior officers and scrutinised by elected members frequently and regularly. Robust action is taken where progress is judged to be insufficient.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. The impact of LA support and challenge over time and the rate at which schools and other providers are improving</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Timely, differentiated intervention and coordinated strategies to support school leadership contribute to the improvement of school performance. All services recognise and actively support the autonomy of schools.</li> <li>■ Support services, either provided or procured, are well coordinated and accurately focused to make a sustainable improvement to overall educational standards and performance.</li> <li>■ The number of schools on the LA's own list of schools causing concern is reducing rapidly. Inequalities in the quality of education in schools and other providers in different areas of the LA are minimal and reducing.</li> <li>■ The support and challenge of the LA to its providers is rigorous, sharply focused on areas of greatest need, and results in sustained improvements in standards and provision.</li> <li>■ With very few exceptions, schools are either at least good or improving rapidly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. The extent to which the LA commissions and brokers support for schools and other providers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Schools and other providers are clear about what is provided by the LA or brokered or commissioned from other sources. Support brokered (and monitored) by the LA leads to sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ The LA has comprehensive knowledge of best practice within and beyond the LA that is drawn from wide sources of information and routinely</li> </ul>

	<p>shared with schools. Local networks and collaborative work between schools are well established and linked to an identified strategy, with evidence of sustained improvement. There are well developed links with partners, including further education, vocational providers and higher education.</p>
	<p><b>Support and challenge for leadership and management (including governance)</b></p>
<p><b>7. The effectiveness of strategies to support highly effective leadership and management in schools and other providers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The LA provides or secures expert advice and differentiated training for headteachers, governors and middle managers. This support and training is improving the capacity of schools and other providers to develop accurate self-evaluation and secure continuous improvement.</li> <li>■ The LA identifies accurately all schools that need support or intervention for leadership and management and governance, including the prompt application of statutory powers when necessary.</li> <li>■ The LA brokers or commissions effective school-to-school or other support for leadership and management in weaker schools.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Support and challenge for school governance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where school performance and effectiveness is a cause for concern, the LA acts promptly to remedy concerns, including applying its powers of intervention, with demonstrable evidence of rapid and sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ The LA has a successful strategy for managing governor recruitment and retention of high quality governors. The LA has access to experienced governors who are prepared to be deployed to, or support, governing bodies of schools causing concern or those schools not yet good.</li> <li>■ Governors are deployed where they are needed and any weaknesses in governance are being acted on.</li> <li>■ Training programmes for new governors and chairs are of good quality, well attended and highly valued, utilising a range of modes of delivery.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Use of resources</b></p>
<p><b>9. The way the LA uses any available funding to effect improvement, including how it is</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Resourcing decisions are based on an accurate analysis of the needs of schools.</li> <li>■ The LA undertakes regular and thorough reviews of the cost-effectiveness of any resource allocation and acts decisively and</li> </ul>

<b>focused on areas of greatest need</b>	<p>effectively on its findings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The LA's budget-setting process is based on a thorough and detailed review of spending needs and is both timely and transparent. Consultation on the budget ensures that the deployment of LA resources are well understood by schools and other providers.</li> <li>■ The LA rigorously monitors and challenges the sufficiency and use of resources and those delegated to schools.</li> </ul>
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## Guidance for inspectors

All nine key aspects of a local authority's arrangements for supporting school improvement should be evaluated. For reporting purposes, the nine aspects have been aligned into four reporting areas, as follows:

- corporate leadership and strategic planning
- monitoring, challenge, intervention and support
- support and challenge for leadership and management (including governance)
- use of resources

As previously stated, inspectors are likely to encounter significant diversity in the way in which local authorities configure their arrangements for supporting school improvement. Professional judgement should be applied at all times when evaluating the effectiveness and impact of the arrangements on school improvement.

Inspectors should note that the framework for inspection is focused on school improvement and what the local authority does to effect improvement. It is very likely that other important services have a part to play in supporting school improvement, such as human resources, early years services, admissions and school place planning, pupil and student services for those with additional needs. Inspectors should take care to ensure that these services, where encountered, are not inspected discretely, as they fall beyond the remit of this inspection framework. However, where such services are making a significant contribution to coordinated strategies for improvement, or otherwise, reference may be made to this when evaluating the strengths and weaknesses and arriving at the overarching judgement about effectiveness.

### Corporate leadership and strategic planning

Inspection must examine the impact of corporate and operational leadership and evaluate how efficiently and effectively the local authority school improvement arrangements are led and managed.

Inspectors should consider:

- the local authority's vision for better education and how strategic planning has matched the delivery of those changes
- the quality of its decision making, including the effectiveness of its consultation with schools and other parties
- the commitment of members and senior officers to school improvement
- the degree to which schools understand the strategy and the priorities for school improvement.

### **Monitoring, challenge, intervention and support**

Inspection must examine the impact of the arrangements for monitoring, challenge, intervention and support.

Inspectors should consider:

- how effectively, or otherwise, the local authority uses pertinent data and management information to inform actions within the area
- the effectiveness and responsiveness of its monitoring of schools
- the form, nature and particularly the impact of its challenge to schools
- how swiftly, robustly and effectively the local authority has intervened, particularly in schools causing concern
- the quality of the support that the local authority has led, brokered and commissioned (and monitored) to enable schools to improve standards and outcomes for children and young people
- the use and effectiveness of formal powers of intervention
- how effectively the local authority engages systems leaders, National and Local Leaders of Education or training schools in promoting sector-led improvement
- the extent to which any significant regional variation in school performance in the local authority area has been tackled successfully.

### **Support and challenge for leadership and management (including governance)**

Inspection must examine how effectively the local authority arrangements promote and support highly effectively leadership, management and governance in schools.

Inspectors should consider:

- the effectiveness of the local authority's support for senior and middle managers across its schools, from those graded outstanding to those in categories of concern

- the precision with which support or intervention is identified, including the prompt application of statutory powers where appropriate
- strategies for the recruitment and training of senior managers and governors
- how effectively the local authority arrangements are promoting autonomy and utilising systems and sector-led resources
- the support and challenge of the local authority for governing bodies; this should take account of the effectiveness of any brokered or in-house training aimed at improving governors' ability to challenge the senior leadership team and to interrogate and question schools on their data and information. Lead inspectors should also take account of any training the local authority has sponsored on the use of such aspects as the School data dashboard.

### **Use of resources**

Inspection must examine how any available funding/resources are deployed to effect improvement.

Inspectors should consider:

- how well the local authority has used any resources (such as staffing, local authority's training courses, funding) and their sufficiency to support schools to achieve best value for money
- how resourcing decisions are made and understood by schools
- how delegated resources to schools are monitored and challenged where appropriate.