

Reflections on an Ofsted Inspection

First of all, let me say that these are just my thoughts based on our inspection. I am very aware that every school is different, with its own strengths and challenges and that the relationships between governors and staff vary tremendously.

As a little bit of background, we are a single form entry VC primary with around 33% SEN and 24% FSM. Currently 200 pupils.

Pre Inspection Briefing (PIB)

This is a critical document – make sure you see it. E-mailed to the head at 6pm the day before the inspection, this details the inspectors perceptions of the school based upon their telephone conversation with the head and their perusal of your SEF. For this term only, they will be using the old and new SEF at the same time. The PIB will highlight any perceived anomalies in the SEF and should enable you to do your homework ready for the following day.

Inspection Day

The lead inspector arrived at 8am and walked around the school with the h/t and myself. A very close eye was kept on doors, security, fences etc. At 8.30 a brief introduction to staff laid out the expectations / protocols for the inspection – mainly around observing teaching. From 8.45 until 11.15, the lead inspector, head and myself met to discuss topics as advised in the PIB. I would expect the topic headings to be broadly similar for everyone and ours were as follows:

Safeguarding

In the event of a child going missing, the investigating authorities will expect to receive your OCR – One Central Record – for safeguarding. This can be on paper or held electronically but should be concise with all the data on CRB, employment dates, list 99 etc in a common format for everyone to whom it applies. This is checked very carefully. All the usual governors' policies are obviously expected to be in place. Looking back, I thought that the scope of the safeguarding checks were actually quite narrow – and pretty predictable.

Community Cohesion

This covers your local community – make sure you know the major issues facing the families – as well as the wider world (UK and abroad). Our SEF was very sketchy on this but the children were able to provide all the evidence needed. I think the comment “We would rather you did it and not write about it than the other way round.” was made.

Data

DGS run some excellent courses on RAISEonline and such-like so there is no excuse not to know how your children are doing. Having systems in place to monitor progress across key stages is also critical. Our inspectors were very keen on looking at progress in the reception class – from on-entry to FSP. The big question with all of this is what have you done as leaders and managers as a result of the monitoring? What have you put in place to plug

the gaps in learning and has it worked? The DCSF view is that governors should share 50% of the leadership and management of a school and I was surprised at how the inspection regime had changed to reflect this. We were even asked to predict the quality of teaching that they might expect to see in each class. The inspector was aware that not all chairs were as integrated into staff matters as I have come to be.

The second inspector arrived at around mid-day and they spent a lot of time observing teaching and learning – twice in most classes. All teachers were obviously interviewed as part of the process.

Another change from before is that the h/t and assistant h/t were expected to sit in on the inspectors' discussions around judgements.

The official feedback to governors took place at 3pm on day 2.

Just a couple of points to note:

If you have a children's centre on site, they will be very likely to receive a 'no notice' inspection at the same time.

40% of schools achieving a 'satisfactory' grade will have a 1 day inspection by an HMI after approximately one year.

Upon reflection, I think that everyone in the school thought it was a very fair and thorough inspection. There is no doubt that the bar has been raised but it's the same for everyone. Our last judgement was 'good and improving' and they returned after 2 years 9 months so we'll all be through it before long. If you have concerns that the school down the road was judged outstanding under the old system, you'll just have to make sure your pr committee does its job.

If anyone has any particular questions they'd like to ask then please feel free to contact me at r.endean@virgin.net. I would repeat that these are just my jottings following my experiences and do not represent any kind of 'official' document.

Good Luck!

Richard Endean

Chair of Governors
Totnes St John's CE Primary
September 2009