

A Taste of the New Ofsted school Inspection

All schools are different, with their own strengths and weaknesses and so the following is based on my recent experience of the new two day Ofsted Inspection as a governor at our small rural primary school.

The main areas that I felt the Inspector concentrated on were as follows:

How do we challenge our staff to ensure that the children across the school are improving in all subjects?

It is no good just to accept the word of the teaching staff; we have to challenge, observe and gain knowledge in order to be absolutely sure how our school is performing. Also in any areas of weakness the governors should know what steps have been put in place to improve the situation. The Inspector also questioned how the governors assess the School Improvement Plan and know that actions are completed on time.

Safeguarding

We were warned that Safeguarding would be high on the Inspector's list. All paperwork had to be in place. The Inspector spent time with the administrator very carefully checking the records of CRB's, employment dates etc. The governors safeguarding polices were also checked in detail to see that all were in place; this was made easier by having them all in a safeguarding file. The following slide may help to check that you have all the relevant safeguarding polices in place.



As Governors the Inspector asked us how we challenge the school to ensure that the policies were in place to safeguard the children. It is essential that during Governors meetings we challenge the Headteacher to provide evidence of this and that this is recorded. The Inspector will look at all committee meeting minutes for the previous 12 months and will make note of these challenges. It can be difficult as a Governor to challenge a teaching professional but it is possible to do this by asking the head to relate three instances where safeguarding policies were followed and produced results.

Community Cohesion

So many schools can provide excellent evidence of cohesion within the local community and globally, but have not got a sufficient UK cohesion link up and running. Governors are responsible for the schools community Cohesion Policy. If this is the case with your school the Inspector will pick up on this missing link and see it as your pupils missing opportunities to appreciate and learn about Britain as a multi-cultural society. The Inspector will want to see the Governors Community Cohesion Audit. If you have yet to complete this an example can be found on Teachernet site and by typing Community Cohesion in the search box, following down the subject headings you will come to the heading Teachernet, Auditing your schools effectiveness in promoting community cohesion. There you will find three audits to complete.

Being relatively new to my current position as Vice Chair I did at times feel quite daunted by the Inspectors questions, but I have come away from the experience with a deeper understanding of where I need to improve my knowledge and areas where as a Governing board we need to progress. I am very grateful to the other governors who came in at different times over the two days to meet the Inspector and share their knowledge of the school.

To Sum up the main areas for Governors to prepare for the new Inspection:-

1. Challenge the school staff on pupils progress and their assessment system, visit the classroom and study the school monitoring system and ask questions to gain understanding.
2. Make sure all safeguarding policies and data are in place and easily assessable. Challenge the school leader to produce real case examples of safeguarding pupils.
3. Have Completed Community Cohesion Audits in place and all areas of the community cohesion in place.
4. Make sure that any challenges at Committee meetings are fully minuted and records of Governor Visits are kept.

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