

‘Hampshire Ofsted commitment to schools’

Supporting schools through an Ofsted inspection

Hampshire Education and Inclusion Service (E&I)

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Audience

This document defines how members of the LA will seek to support maintained schools in Hampshire 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 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.

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.”

Reading Borough Council.

1. What is the relationship between E&I and Hampshire schools?

The Local Authority (LA) 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.

E&I 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. What is Hampshire's relationship with Ofsted?

Hampshire County Council has a strong working relationship with Ofsted.

Senior local authority officers, including the assistant director, E&I and county education managers for primary and secondary meet regularly with linked His Majesty's inspectors (HMI's) for Hampshire. These meetings create an opportunity to provide updates and share any general concerns about the inspection process as made evident within Hampshire.

The team of LA advisers work closely with the HMI's and Ofsted inspectors that typically inspect in Hampshire to ensure that they understand the LA perspective on the school and any LA support provided.

3. How does E&I ensure that school leaders and governors, and school staff, understand the school inspection process?

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 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 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) and include opportunities for headteachers to raise any specific issues being faced.

School leaders can also directly commission professional development on the Ofsted inspection framework from the local authority. Typical activity includes staff training and working with school leaderships teams.

The Governance Team (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. What can school leaders expect from E&I following notification of inspection?

The current 'School inspection operating guide for inspectors and Inspection information for state-funded schools (November 2025)' details the expected involvement of the Local Authority during an Ofsted inspection:

“Meeting a Local Authority representative

During inspections you may also meet or telephone a representative of the local authority, if this is necessary. This should include a discussion about the school's provision for pupils with SEND, safeguarding and any use of AP.

Similarly, you may also speak with any virtual school head(s) who are responsible for current or previous looked-after children, those with a child in need or child protection plan, or those living under kinship care arrangements.

Attendance at Reflection Meetings

Limit the number of attendees at each reflection meeting (including the grading meeting) to allow for a productive conversation in the time available. Always invite headteachers, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust or their delegate (where applicable), and the nominee (if there is one). Additional members of staff (including trust staff or a local authority representative) may attend at your discretion.

Attendance at final feedback

Those who may attend the inspectors' final feedback meeting include a representative from the local authority (for maintained schools; this also applies to academies if we have told the school that we are likely to grade safeguarding as 'not met')."

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 local authority staff associated with the school are informed including the relevant SIM or school improvement partner (SIP) will make contact with the school to acknowledge the notification of inspection and to detail the expected involvement of local authority staff.

The SIM and the SIP will discuss the likely local authority involvement based on a shared knowledge of the school. On some occasions, the SIP 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. School leaders are also able to approach HIAS subject advisers for support. For example, to answer questions relating to subject specific deep dives.

A bespoke approach is implemented for each school. The SIM or SIP 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 SIP speak with the headteacher at the end of day 1.

The SIM or SIP 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 \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/deferring-ofsted-inspections). It is expected that the school leader will notify the SIM or SIP if a) the request to defer has been made and b) the outcome of the request.

During the inspection

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

Where concerns are raised, the school leader should seek resolution during the inspection. This should include contacting Ofsted using the helpline number provided at the start of the inspection. Concerns should also be shared with the SIP so that an agreed course of action can be identified. This may include escalating concerns or seeking to pause the inspection.

School leaders in Hampshire are also able to access a range of peer-to-peer support through both formal and informal groups. If appropriate, it would be expected that school leaders would draw upon this support throughout the inspection process.

At the final feedback, a representative of the local authority will ensure that clarity is provided as to why judgements have been made in addition to gathering key feedback that can a) support the school and b) support other schools. If there are concerns about the conduct of the inspector, or if there is a potential need to signpost appropriate welfare support, these will be shared with the SIM.

The county education manager will ensure that an adviser with an appropriate level of knowledge of the school is available to meet with the inspector as requested. Unless it is not logistically possible, the same adviser or the SIM for the district, will attend final feedback (in person or virtually) at the end of the inspection.

If, through the course of the inspection, concerns are raised that suggest the school may be subject to an unexpected judgement, the relevant SIM will contact the headteacher and agree a course of action.

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 SIP 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).

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.

5. What support is provided should a *needs attention* judgement be made for one or more areas?

Where a school enters the Ofsted monitoring cycle following the identification of one or more areas for attention, E&I will work closely with school leaders and governors. Prior to any monitoring call or visit, the LA will support school leaders to understand the focus of the activity, review the evidence available and support leaders to articulate the actions taken and the impact achieved. Throughout the monitoring period, the Local Authority will continue to maintain regular contact with the school, providing support to help secure the necessary improvements.

6. What does E&I expect of school leaders before, during and after inspection, in order that we can best support you?

As detailed in part 1, E&I has 'a **strong respect** for and belief in schools' self-determination and autonomy'. We recognise that school leaders are best placed to lead their school through an inspection process.

In order to ensure that the inspection process is led effectively, school leaders and governors will need to ensure that they understand the current framework well so that they can provide the required evidence to support any judgements made and challenge where appropriate.

The SIM and SIP can best support the school where up to date information is shared, both before, during and after the inspection. Where school leaders feel that an unexpected outcome may be possible, or where there are concerns about the conduct of the inspector that cannot be resolved during the inspection, they should share this with the SIP at the earliest opportunity. Effective communication is essential if the local authority staff are able to provide timely and appropriate support.

7. What would happen if I had a concern about the inspection in my school?

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/publications/ofsted-code-of-conduct). 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/publications/pausing-state-funded-school-inspections). If appropriate, the local authority would 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 7 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 some responsibility on the part of school leaders to share information timely and notify the local authority if this is the case.

The opportunities for local authority officers to formally engage with the inspection is detailed within part 7 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 SIP will support school leaders to ensure that the process is conducted in accordance with the relevant guidance.

8. What support is available to develop professional resilience and 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
- HeadsUp4HTs
- Power of Your materials via Leadership Moodle.

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

9. What support is available from E&I in relation to Ofsted for academies?

E&I receives notification of all Ofsted inspections in Hampshire including academies. Following notification, a SIM 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.

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