

## A) Top ten tips for a 'happy' Ofsted – The new framework

Sorry if this is teaching grandmother to suck eggs.....

1. Make sure your SEF is brief and contains evaluative judgements. Two or three paragraphs for most sections is enough. The lead inspector only has a few hours to analyse it in order to write the pre-inspection briefing. Loads of waffle will annoy the inspector and make him/her think you don't know your job.
2. The long phone call with the lead inspector the day before the inspection is key to show you know your stuff – it is not just about the organisation of the inspection. Make sure you sound confident and be frank – be candid about the good and the bad.
3. The inspection framework still focuses on the judgement of the Head. The key to a successful inspection is convincing the team that you understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have a plan on how to improve things. Once they are confident about your judgement they will take what you say as read. Make sure your judgements of teaching quality are correct. If you have a weak teacher tell the inspectors, and tell them what you are doing to support the teacher. It will confirm their confidence in you.
4. Safeguarding is very important. Make sure you have procedures in place and that they adhere to the current guidance on the Ofsted website. Don't completely trust the model policies on any website – most are out of date. Prepare a 'case study' to show how the process works in practice.
5. The new framework encourages inspectors to do observations and 'learning walks' with the head and senior leaders. Be prepared. If you allow a senior leader to do this make sure that you have confidence in their judgement.
6. There is a much greater emphasis on governors role in 'challenging' the Head and senior leaders. Prepare the governors by thinking through areas where they have questioned practice or called in leaders to account for poor results etc.
7. 'Community cohesion' is another key area. It is not just about how the school reaches out to the local community. It is equally about how the school is preparing children to meet the challenges of a multi-ethnic, egalitarian, complex modern urban society. Make sure that displays, learning environment and the curriculum show how you are exposing children to different cultures, environments and to people with different needs within Britain. Make sure displays show balance of gender/ SEN work etc.
8. If you talk about a recent policy change make sure that there is some evidence that it is in place. Claims about how target setting is improving learning have foundered when the inspectors have talked to the children....
9. Although Ofsted have 'raised the bar' there is no evidence that the judgements on teaching quality have changed. The descriptors are still largely the same. A satisfactory lesson before the summer is still satisfactory now.
10. Finally – **Don't Panic!** You must remain calm and show you are confident. Don't rush around trying to change things – it will be very obvious to any inspector! If things are only satisfactory on Tuesday there is no way they are going to be good by Thursday!

## B) Top Tips

1. Attainment. It is what it is. Get over it! Record the judgement in line with guidance and then build your case for attainment and progress. Vulnerable groups, intervention and impact are important here.
2. Case studies. Build case studies of vulnerable children (I had an A4 summary sheet on needs, intervention including other agencies, and impact. Examples of work and IEPs, where appropriate, were then put behind) Ofsted followed 2 of these 6 children to see theory in practise and also talked to them outside of the 'official' pupil interview group. If you pick individuals carefully it can show a lot of the ECM agenda e.g. This gave us a chance to flag up how we have people like a counsellor working with children in school.
3. Leadership and management. Be prepared to show how all staff are developed e.g. NQT year into subject leadership. Development of leadership was also part of subject leader interviews (skills, training, support from SMT). Succession planning also came into this e.g. 'emergent leaders training'. Gobs need to be able to say how they lead and how they know what is going on in the school aside from what they are told by the head.

## C) Ofsted

The whole experience (although stressful!) was quite positive. We felt that the new procedures allowed the school to demonstrate what we do well. Class teachers felt more involved due to the increased emphasis on lesson observations and there was continual dialogue between the RI and the head which meant that there were no surprises in the feedback. Some things I think helped:

- Good rapport between the Inspection team and HT. I was fortunate to have a very astute and professional lead inspector, who was prepared to listen and consider a wide range of evidence.
  - Being honest about problems / underachievement but prepared to argue the case.
  - Knowing every child in the school and being able to tell the stories behind dips in attainment.
  - Accurate self evaluation. The issues picked up by Ofsted had already been identified and included in the School improvement Plan, eg strategies for spelling had already been introduced and robust procedures implemented to address poor teaching in one class.
  - I had hard evidence of challenging underperformance in pupil progress meetings in monitoring file. She also liked all the annotations I had made on the pupil tracking sheets.
    - The teacher interview (SENCo) had been rehearsed.
    - All teachers and TAs had been well briefed about what to expect.
    - Support from LA and cluster heads.

### Tips:

- Make Ofsted inspectors sign in
- Have a room available with refreshments (fruit bowl not biscuits!)
- Check the date on the parent questionnaire. Mine was wrong and gave the parents the impression I'd been hanging on to it, which put some of them in a bad mood! The turnaround was very short; sent one day & had to be returned the next.

## **D) The whole inspection focused on :**

- progress- I drew a table to show the progress of every child in the school from FS2 to year 6. - she was looking to see 2 sub levels of progress every year.
- Safeguarding children - everything included in the LA chart was essential
- Teachers need to be aware of exactly what sub levels their children are all working at and need to show that there is sufficient differentiation so that everyone is working towards the next sub level in every lesson
- Headteacher needs to have complete knowledge on where the school is at, my opinion was sought on just about everything, she wanted to be sure I had the correct picture including joint lesson observations

## **E) How to Survive an Inspection**

Be proud of your school and what it is good at. Do not be complacent about the areas it is weaker on.

Pre warn the children that important visitors are coming for a visit.

Smile and give them a room with a kettle and biscuits/fruit. This keeps them away from the staff room and from wandering around the school.

I know it's really hard BUT get some rest and relaxation. You will need to be on top form for the inspection and if you go in tired then you will find it difficult to do the best you can for the school.

Make sure subject leaders know the standards across the school in their subject and give them the Ofsted evaluation schedule for attainment and quality of Teaching and Learning. They can use this to support their discussions with the inspectors and use the language that Ofsted recognise. (no not that sort of language!) Do they know the vulnerable groups and what is being done to support them? The same applies to EYFS.

Make sure EYFS children are learning through doing and not from being directed in a very structured way. Get FS2 children moving.

Afl – is it evident in planning and in the teaching, do children know how to make their work better and what their targets are?

Challenge all visitors including Ofsted, 'May I see your CRB number?' Single central register filed away in a locked drawer and up to date. They will select at least one member of staff and track everything is in place for them. If you have not been trained at level 3 for safeguarding in the past 3 years contact Sarah King immediately.

LAC will be focused on and a file will be looked at to see that appropriate paperwork is there.

If the inspection looks like it is going badly contact the LA immediately. They will do all they can to support the school.

Don't overwhelm inspectors with books but make sure they see what you want them to see. Is marking up to date and informative?

The observations are harder; use that schedule to help judge the quality of teaching and learning accurately. Check any weak teachers planning before the inspection, get them to run through their lesson with you. If the lesson is going wrong on the day tell the staff to not worry about saying 'I think we need to change what we are doing and come back to this another day.' Invite the inspector back in the following day to see how you have used the assessment to amend the direction of your teaching.

Be prepared to stand your corner, if you can find evidence to disprove a judgement present it to the team. That is why you need to be rested.

If your data shows only adequate attainment and progress make sure the childrens' books show that work is of a higher quality.

The inspection is much tougher than it was and it is very hard to achieve a judgement that is on a par with previous ones.

There is no 'off the record'.

Govs need to know strengths and weaknesses of the school and what is being done to address them.

Rest and relax. Treat the staff to some cake.

## **F) Ofsted Key Points**

**Safeguarding** – This appears to be everyone's main concerns.

Single Central register.

If you use the LA advised format then this meets Ofsted requirements. However points to note. There must be a hard copy printed out in a file. It all must be on one continuous sheet, not separate ones for helpers, Governors etc.

The form must be completed fully – dated and signed.

Any staff awaiting CRB's must have a risk assessment in the file.

The inspector spoke to me about the form. CRB procedures as well as my Admin Officer to triangulate evidence!

Child protection

The Inspector looked at where CP records were kept and then wanted 2 children's files. I gave him "meaty" ones which included children with plans and meetings with many agencies. He looked at how we referred concerns and followed up referrals and outcomes from contacting Children and Families. Training records for ALL staff regarding Child Protection were also asked for. He also spoke in detail with the CP governor and her knowledge on safeguarding, including safer recruitment.

Policy. The Wiltshire model policy needed tweaking and also all the procedures needed to be included with it as well as any other safeguarding policy. This was nearly a "slip up" for us as although we have all the policies they weren't with the Child Protection/Safeguarding policy. Luckily he allowed me the evening to collate all the policies so that they were then presented together.

## **Data**

Show PROGRESS. If KS2 results were a cause of concern show how much progress every child has made, what intervention was used and what you are doing to make sure standards improve.

Vulnerable Groups. He liked the way I tracked all groups of children with progress measured by APS. I compared yearly progress for: girls v boys, FSM v non FSM, Forces v non forces, SEN (SA SA+ Statement)v non SEN, EAL v non EAL, split year groups, new children. He asked me about the progress and where it differed what we were doing to address it. I also used this data to show where attendance concerns were impacting on progress.

## **PIB.**

I found this really useful as it was very focussed with evidence that the team would want to see. The inspection did focus on the main issues in the PIB.

## **Lesson Observations**

We had 2 inspectors observing lessons. I accompanied the HMI lead inspector for all of the observations that he did. They were all conducted in professional ways and with professional dialogue between us after the lesson where we discussed any issues and the strengths. The inspector then looked at my lesson observation file which supported my grading. I did not do any shared observations with the other inspector but did discuss lessons that she had observed. There are more observations in the new process. ALL teachers were observed at least twice. In the Foundation Stage they popped in and out so that they could see free flow learning and the use of the outdoors. Get the children out – whatever the weather! They also observed behaviour around the school, lunch times, playtimes, assembly and the coming and going at the end of the day.

## **Community Cohesion**

My community cohesion action plan is in my School Development Plan and we got down graded because I did not have a separate community cohesion action plan! ARGH! My one gripe!

Overall the inspection was a positive experience and felt like the inspectors were working with us rather than “doing” unto us. The days are very intense as leadership team are invited to mini debriefings as the day goes along. My Deputy has a full time (0.9) teaching commitment are found trying to attend lunch time meetings and the after school ones a difficult ball to juggle. The team were very supportive when I told them that I would prefer my teacher to be preparing for afternoon teaching instead of sitting in the meeting.

## **G) Thoughts on and feedback from recent Ofsted Inspection**

Many of the parent questionnaires missed the data collation. We only had the questionnaires emailed by Tribal at 4pm on the Tuesday. They were sent to parents on the Wednesday and had to be back by 0900 the Thursday. If possible, get the survey out the same day that you are notified of the inspection to give people a reasonable chance to return it.

There is much more of a focus on learning than on the teaching. Ofsted do not grade the lessons for feedback to teachers but give it in terms of areas of strength and areas to be developed. This can give mixed messages to the teacher! Inspectors will feed back to the HT in terms of grades though.

The Safeguarding interview was at the start of the inspection and lasted for over an hour.

Ensure you have CRB checks for the supply teachers you use from agencies.

Remember to ask inspectors for CRB clearance (the person doing the QA of our lead inspector did not have it with her and we spent over 2 hours trying to confirm with Tribal that she had clearance).

EYFS: There must be a member of staff present at all times who has completed paediatric first aid training (minimum of 12 hr course).

Ensure the freeflow/outside area of EYFS has been risk assessed and that this is regularly updated as activities change.

Ofsted will have selected particular groups of pupils who they will make an evidence trail for. All observations will be based on the attainment and progress of these pupils (in our case, pupils with SEN and EAL).

They will expect to see records for any LAC in school.

It is helpful to have completed the community cohesion audits and have a specific plan for addressing this area.

The HT will probably be asked to carry out joint observations and take part in a learning walk with a specific focus.

There were no formal interviews with subject leaders. The meeting for staff to contribute was a joint meeting at the end of the first day.

The safeguarding theme ran all the way through the inspection. Ofsted said the behaviour they had seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory and although they had not seen examples of poor behaviour it was still deemed inadequate. This was because in the pupil survey and in discussions with pupils, some stated they sometimes felt unsafe because of the behaviour of a few pupils. The emphasis was on the opinions of KS2 pupils – I had to ask for this to be reconsidered to get a fairer balance across the whole school.

The wording for the areas for improvement was fully prepared for the feedback at the end of the second day.

Be prepared to discuss the ofsted terminology (they have lists of percentages for use of wording such as majority, minority, average...etc). I managed to improve the attendance grade by challenging these with my attendance data.

Evidence forms may be completed for things that are noticed which are not the focus of an agreed observation. For example – whilst watching a part of a session that was outside, there was also a PE lesson taking place. Evidence was submitted about the PE lesson.