

Preparing for Inspection - Second Edition - Annex 3

Analysis of Focused School Inspection Letters
(One page per local authority - suitable for printing)

The Ofsted letters recording the seventeen Focused School Inspections published between 19 February 2013 and 16 September 2014 have been analysed against a set of common headings. A process of reverse engineering was used to reveal the common areas against which Ofsted made judgments. The narrative judgments for each of the common headings for every inspection are recorded on the following pages. For convenience, the boxes are colour-coded, with red, amber and green taking the usual meanings.

It must be noted that the list of common areas and the colour coding explicitly do **not** represent official Ofsted judgments but are instead a *post facto* assessment derived from the detailed analysis of all the letters.

Key

O = outstanding

G = good

S = satisfactory

RI = requires improvement

I = inadequate

CC = category of concern

SW = serious weaknesses

SM = special measures

NI = not previously inspected

LA is inserted into quotations to replace any reference to the local authority, except if the name of the local authority is used specifically.

HR is inserted into quotations to replace any reference to human resources.

Otherwise, text in *italic* is taken directly from the Ofsted letters, and other text provides further summary information to aid analysis.

The reverse engineering of the letters revealed the following common headings:

- Reason for FSI
- School inspections
 - Before
 - After
- School standards
 - Before (note: this heading turned out to have no entries, so was deleted)
 - After
- Collaboration
 - Networking
 - School-to-school
- Personnel
 - LA training
 - Clerking of governing bodies
 - LA - governors
 - LA - NQTs
 - LA - advisers
 - LA - changes of personnel
- Data
 - LA - use of data
- LA effectiveness
 - LA - accountability
 - LA - strategy for improvement
 - LA - knowing schools
 - LA - relationship with schools
 - LA - support and challenge
 - LA - recognition and addressing of weaknesses
 - LA - recognition and utilisation of strengths
 - LA - reactive / proactive
 - LA - specific initiatives
 - Use of external services
- LA and specific schools
 - LA - academies
 - LA - cause for concern schools
- LA structure
 - LA - HR
 - LA - finance
 - LA - behaviour management

Bristol City Council

General						Collaboration	Personnel	Data						
Date of FSI Letter	Reason for FSI	School Inspections - Before	School Inspections - After	School inspections - Notes	School Standards - After	Networking	School-to-school	LA - training	Clerks of governing bodies	LA - governors	LA - NQTs	LA - advisers	LA - changes of personnel	LA - use of data
6 September 2013	32% of schools "less than good" - higher than the 26% average in England	2/15 G 13/15 S	1/15 G → O 1/15 G → G 9/15 S → G 3/15 S → RI 1/15 S → SM			"The LA has established a strong support network for clerks of governing bodies"	"...increasing levels of inter-school support ... is facilitating school improvement initiatives"	"Many of the schools comment positively about the quality of training their governing body has received"	Thanks to a strong support network, "clerks are knowledgeable about educational issues and are well supported in their work"	"There us widespread praise for the high quality of the LA's governor support services"		"Schools value the engagement with the school improvement officers"	Many school improvement officers "have worked with the same schools for a number of years"	
						"strong headteacher networks" cited as a strength						"...many school leaders are less confident hat the LA's senior officers have a good knowledge of the wider achievements taking place in their schools"		
LA effectiveness										LA and specific schools		LA structure		
LA - accountability	LA - strategy for improvement	LA - knowing schools	LA - relationship with schools	LA - support and challenge	LA - recognition and addressing of weaknesses	LA - recognition and utilisation of strengths	LA - reactive / proactive	LA - specific initiatives	Use of external services	LA - academies	LA - cause for concern schools	LA - HR	LA - finance	LA - behaviour management
LA input on data analysis "has helped governing bodies develop the capability to hold their schools accountable for students' progress"	"School leaders' understanding of the LA's strategic plan for school improvement is too variable"	Thanks to the longevity of their relationships with schools, many school improvement officers "know their schools well"	"The LA's relationship with its schools is too inconsistent"	Thanks to the longevity of their relationships with schools, many school improvement officers "offer a high level of support an challenge"	Evidence from unimproved, previously inadequate schools "indicates that the LA has been slow to recognise the issues and instigate early intervention"	School leaders say the LA is not "strategically commissioning the best practice in some schools to benefit those in need of improvement"			"...many schools have chosen to use external providers to deliver" HR services to their schools	"The relationship between the LA and academies ... is not strong enough"		"There is general agreement across schools that the LA's HR team do not deliver an efficient or effective service"		
	"There is still some way to go in establishing a widely understood and methodically delivered strategy for improvement"		"...a culture of mistrust and uncertainty across schools ... has hindered open and transparent communications with the LA"						"As a result of lack of availability and some dissatisfaction with quality, many schools opt to purchase support services from neighbouring LAs and other providers"	"Leaders of the academies state that, despite sharing their data with the LA, the LA's senior leaders do not have an up-to-date knowledge of current strengths and weaknesses"				
										The relationship between the LA and academies "has not been defined precisely enough"				

Cumbria County Council

General						Collaboration	Personnel		Data					
Date of FSI Letter	Reason for FSI	School Inspections - Before	School Inspections - After	School inspections - Notes	School Standards - After	Networking	School-to-school	LA - training	Clerks of governing bodies	LA - governors	LA - NQTs	LA - advisers	LA - changes of personnel	LA - use of data
10 February 2014			1/14 G → G 2/14 O → G 5/14 → RI 1/14 G → SW 5/14 → SM	Secondary schools only		"Most headteachers were positive about the embryonic development of federations, including the Cumbria Alliance of System Leaders (CASL)"	"...LA ... brokering school-to-school support was valued"			"...LA support for ... governors ... was valued"	"...LA support for newly qualified teachers ... was valued"	"Secondary headteachers said there is a lack of confidence in the ability of some LA advisers, particularly those who come from a primary background, to provide useful advice to secondary schools"		
						Most headteachers "were also please by the LA's move to inject significant resources into" the development of federations, including the CASL								
						"...there is an urgent need for the LA to ... extend partnership working"								
LA effectiveness										LA and specific schools		LA structure		
LA - accountability	LA - strategy for improvement	LA - knowing schools	LA - relationship with schools	LA - support and challenge	LA - recognition and addressing of weaknesses	LA - recognition and utilisation of strengths	LA - reactive / proactive	LA - specific initiatives	Use of external services	LA - academies	LA - cause for concern schools	LA - HR	LA - finance	LA - behaviour management
	Headteachers states that recent changes to strategy have created more optimism within the system"	"In the discussion with headteachers, only a minority indicated the the LA knew their school well"		"...there is an urgent need for the LA to provide greater challenge and support to its secondary schools..."			"Headteachers, generally, indicated that LA support is too reactive and dependent on the outcome of inspections"							"...LA support for ... behaviour management ... was valued"

North Somerset Council

General						Collaboration	Personnel						Data	
Date of FSI Letter	Reason for FSI	School Inspections - Before	School Inspections - After	School inspections - Notes	School Standards - After	Networking	School-to-school	LA - training	Clerks of governing bodies	LA - governors	LA - NQTs	LA - advisers	LA - changes of personnel	LA - use of data
6 June 2014	"...our concern centred on the comparatively low proportion of good or outstanding schools primary schools"	11/17 G 6/17 S / RI	2/17 G → O 7/17 S → G 5/17 S / RI → G 2/17 G → RI 1/17 RI → Ri		Common areas for improvement to teaching: "...a stronger focus on the performance of specific groups of pupils, particularly the most able, and ensuring that marking helps pupils improve the quality of their work"	"Partnerships brokered by the LA between experiences headteachers and those appointed recently to a leadership role are regarded as working well"		"New headteachers value the LA's induction programme"		"Governors ... are positive about the support they receive for improving the quality of school governance"		"Schools are confident that North Somerset's advisers understand the performance of schools in their area"		"Schools are fully aware that the information gathered by the LA's advisers is used to risk assess each school's performance"
								"The LA's training eosins for school governors ... are valued by most users"		Some governors are "less clear" about the LA's strategy for school improvement than those who are confident		"The level of consistency in the work carried out by the LA's advisers is appreciated by schools"		"Schools report that they value the high quality advice and guidance on offer for other aspects of school improvement, including data analysis ..."
												"The LA's advisers meet regularly with headteachers but do not routinely ensure that the Chair of the Governing Body, or their representative, attends"		
												"...some advisers comment that not enough account is taken of the performance of specific groups when making assessments about a school's effectiveness"		
LA effectiveness										LA and specific schools		LA structure		
LA - accountability	LA - strategy for improvement	LA - knowing schools	LA - relationship with schools	LA - support and challenge	LA - recognition and addressing of weaknesses	LA - recognition and utilisation of strengths	LA - reactive / proactive	LA - specific initiatives	Use of external services	LA - academies	LA - cause for concern schools	LA - HR	LA - finance	LA - behaviour management
"Many governors reported that ... they were better informed about their school's performance and felt confident to challenge school leaders and them to account for pupils' performance"	"Schools report that they value the high quality advice and guidance on offer for other aspects of school improvement, including data analysis, self-evaluation, safeguarding and improving the Early Years Foundation Stage"	"...North Somerset is well informed about its schools and knows where improvement and intervention are required"	"North Somerset has developed a strong partnership with its primary schools"	"A few schools indicated that the LA's level of challenge was not rigorous enough"	"A range of monitoring activities track performance and identify where further support is required"	"...a number of headteachers of good and outstanding schools report that their own strengths have not been fully utilised"		"The development and implementation of the LA's 'learning exchange' is understood by all schools as the key tool to enable schools to improve the quality of their provision and their effectiveness"	"Almost all of North Somerset's primary schools have elected to exercise their preference for purchasing LA services" as opposed to purchasing external services			"Those schools requiring advice and support from the LA's HR department praised the quality of support and guidance they have received"		
					"The LA is responsive to changes in a school's situation and uses its intervention powers accordingly"			"The LA's 'Big Meetings' are very well received by headteachers and governors"						

