

The Leadership of the SENCO

Some Notes on Inspection from September 2019

This briefing note is of relevance to SENCOs expecting either a Section 5 or 8 inspection under the new framework. While not exhaustive, it identifies some key aspects relating to demonstrating good or better leadership and provides some key questions to use as starting points for Ofsted preparation.

For those of you anticipating a Section 8 inspection under the new inspection framework where 'inspectors have reason to believe that the quality of education might be better than good if it received a section 5 inspection at the time of the section 8 inspection' (from: School Inspection Handbook – May 2019) this note not only provides some pointers on how to prepare but also what you may need to do next!

Section 8 inspections

Under the new framework for Section 8 inspections 'Outcome 2' still relates to schools that 'remain good and there is sufficient evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school might be judged outstanding if it received a section 5 inspection at the time of the section 8 inspection.'

Schools that remain good with marked improvement are those where the lead inspector considers that a school **not only** remains good, but also:

- there is sufficient evidence of strong practice
- **and** marked improvement in its performance in specific areas to believe that the school may be judged outstanding under a section 5 inspection if carried out now

The post-inspection letter will confirm that the school remains good, highlighting the specific areas where particularly strong practice has been evidenced, as well as priorities for further improvement.

The section 5 inspection will usually take place within **one to two years** after the publication of the section 8 short inspection report, 'giving the school time for the strong practice and marked improvements to be **consolidated**'.

As a key leader in the school the SENCO has an important role to play in ensuring that the school achieves a good or better outcome at any Ofsted inspection. **After** a very positive Section 8 there is still more to do, not least tackling the subjects, topics or areas of provision identified by the lead inspector as the focus of a subsequent section 5 inspection. This will involve the SENCO in action planning against key improvement priorities; driving the momentum of improvement; ensuring that monitoring and evaluation activities are completed; using the outcomes of evaluation to adjust, re-focus and identify next steps; consolidating strong practice and improvement and gathering the hard and soft evidence/data of **your impact** as a **leader** on pupils' academic and other achievements.

After a positive section 8 it is important to recognise that a sense of urgency and ambition needs to be applied to the improvement agenda as the next 'visit' could come sooner than you think!

Section 5 (or 8) inspection

If your school is expecting Ofsted inspection (section 5 or 8), we advise you to read through the new inspection framework and associated documents and, with other colleagues in the school/leadership team, identify the implications for SEN provision in the school. You can then begin the planning and action needed to demonstrate good or better SEND practice and provision and start the process of collating a representative evidence base.

You will need to be able to identify your contribution to:

- overall effectiveness
- quality of education
- behaviour and attitudes
- personal development
- leadership and management

and the following questions may help you make a start:

- What have **you** got/what will **you** have that will demonstrate **your** contribution to these aspects?
- How will **you** go about ensuring that relevant **evidence** exists and is accessible to external scrutiny?

If you are currently working in a school previously judged by Ofsted as 'good' your next inspection could be a Section 5 or 8. As a SENCO and leader of SEN it is worth considering the differences between 'good' and 'outstanding' across all aspects of inspection but particularly in relation to **Leadership**.

Differences between good and outstanding **Leadership** relate to the extent to which the **quality** of the following is exemplified in the school:

- Culture
- Relationships
- Ambition
- Disadvantaged – importance of all pupils
- Improvement as a result of action
- Leaders understanding of their school

In preparation for a successful outcome SENCOs will need to ask and answer the following questions:

- How do **you** make **effective** contributions to these aspects?
- What is the **impact** of the actions **you** take?
- How will **you** present the actions **you** take and the **outcomes** of these?

Sources

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-8-school-inspection-handbook-eif>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework>

A bank of additional resources which will support you with your leadership of SEND including identifying and tackling improvement priorities is under construction and will be uploaded onto Moodle+ over the course of the next term.

In the meantime, if there is anything the SEN team can help you with we will be pleased to hear from you.

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