

An Inspector Calls! The first contact

The initial call to the school is very important as it is the first opportunity to start establishing a relationship between the Lead inspector and the Headteacher. The conversation lasts no longer than 30 minutes and sets up the practical arrangements for the two days.

The initial call is made to the Headteacher after midday on the day before the inspection is due to take place. If the Headteacher is not available then the most senior member of staff takes the call. The sooner the call is made, the more time the Head has to make the arrangements.

Firstly, the Headteacher is given information about the inspection team and assured that they have undergone rigorous safeguarding checks. The CV's of the inspectors are available on the portal which the head is given access to. The portal is the key area which the Head can access and will include all necessary information for them: letters to parents; staff questionnaires; framework details; and the name and telephone number of the person responsible for ensuring that the admin side of the inspection goes smoothly.

At this stage I want to be very clear too about the level of involvement that the Head and other Senior Leaders want to play:

- Do they want to be involved in lesson observations?
- Do they want to come along to team meetings at the end of the school day where the inspection team discuss the findings and plan for Day2?
- Is the Head happy for staff to complete the staff questionnaire?
- Are there any activities going on during the next two days that will affect the timetable? I will always try to work around these to accommodate the school. If the Head wants to defer the inspection, there are specific criteria which need to be met and these are discussed fully before OFSTED is called. Ultimately, it is their decision.

Secondly, there are the practical arrangements which need to be made:

- Will the inspectors be able to park at the school?
- Will there be a room where they can base themselves?
- Will lunch and refreshments be made available for them? Inspectors have to pay for these so please don't be offended when we refuse the school's offer of free hospitality!

The team will arrive at the school in time to enter about 8 am. Earlier arrival is not really fair to the school on the first day. The time for final feedback at the end of Day 2 is also agreed. The school has to put notice of the inspection on their website, put a sign on the door of the school and also ensure that all parents receive a letter about the inspection which asks them to contribute their comments about the school via the "Parent View" on-line questionnaire.

Thirdly, certain meetings need to be arranged:

- A meeting with staff – usually first thing. Always good to put staff at ease and let them know how the team will operate. I always stress here that if they are unhappy for any reason with members of the team then they are to speak to the Headteacher straight away and this will then be communicated to me. Details about how teaching and learning will be observed and how they will receive feedback is given. Feedback will be scheduled for the end of Day 1.
- A meeting with the Chair of Governors and other members of the Governing Body - usually about 45 minutes.
- A meeting with different members of staff – usually those with a Leadership responsibility. This will happen after school on Day 1.
- A meeting with a member of the Local Authority, if it is applicable, or in other cases the people responsible for the school.
- A meeting with selected pupils. This will take place at lunchtime on Day 1.

Finally, the school is asked to have a range of documentation in place for inspectors:

- Single Central Record, along with all other related policies to Safeguarding. This is looked at first thing and combined with a tour of the school to ensure that the site is safe. Checks are made to ensure that all training is up-to-date and appropriate structures are in place.
- Copy of individual year timetables and plan of school and a full staff list.
- Behaviour records, exclusion details, bullying logs, racist logs.
- Attendance figures and any breakdown of particular groups the school has undertaken.
- The school development plan and examples of the school's own self-evaluation processes.
- Records of the school's own monitoring of teaching.
- Information relating to Performance Management processes – anonymised.
- Minutes of Governors' meetings- specific evidence on Use of Pupil premium, Sport Funding etc.
- Meetings with Local Authority or any other school improvement partners they might work with.
- Two - three case studies of vulnerable pupils. Usually, these are pupils with special educational needs or in receipt of pupil premium. If the school has any looked after children, then case studies for these pupils need to be presented in addition, as specific evidence forms need to be completed on these pupils.

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