



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 12 October 2006

Subject: Ofsted Inspection Framework

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At the last meeting of the Board, the following Members' question was asked:

"What is the impact of the new Ofsted school inspection framework on schools and the LEA?"

1.2 Although the Chief Executive of Education Leeds provided a response, there was not time at the meeting for members of the Board to have any discussion arising from the information presented.

1.3 It was therefore agreed that the issue should be included on the agenda for the next meeting of the Board, in order to provide more time for discussion.

1.4 A summary of the points made by the Chief Executive of Education Leeds at the September Board meeting is attached as Appendix One to aid this discussion and avoid duplication.

1.5 A representative of Education Leeds will attend the meeting to respond to members' questions and comments.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the board identifies any issues for further scrutiny arising from the discussion.

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) - 7th September 2006

What is the impact of the new Ofsted school inspection framework on schools and the LEA?

This is a summary of the response given to the above question by the Chief Executive of Education Leeds at the scrutiny board meeting held on 7th September 2006.

The board was reminded that Education Leeds produces a termly report for Executive Board summarising the outcome of every Leeds' Ofsted inspection. Education Leeds also sends copies of individual inspections to the relevant ward Councillors.

Chris first discussed the positives of the new framework as follows:

- It was a clearer, more focused and simpler framework for the inspection of schools
- It was based on the school's self evaluation carried out by the school and the governing body. The school looks at itself and asks three questions: What is good about what we do? What is not so good? And, how can we do better?
- That it was important that the new inspection regime sought to raise the standard expected of schools; it was good therefore that the inspection itself was a harder test
- The new regime was a three year rather than a six year cycle
- It was a light touch inspection framework; even in a large secondary school the inspectors were only on site for 1½ days
- Under the new framework, schools only had 3 days notice before an inspection, this would hopefully help to ensure that schools were seen as they are
- The new framework focused on leadership and governance; there was also a new focus on value added indicators
- A disadvantage of the old system was that often schools which performed well were not getting the challenge they needed to improve, as it focused on poor performing schools. The new system addressed this weakness.
- The engagement of young people was also important: the inspectors talked to young people and the self assessment process was designed to draw in the views of young people
- Of the 70 inspections Leeds had had, the outcomes were reported to be very good:
 - A significant number of Leeds schools had been described as outstanding
 - A small number had received notices to improve

Education Leeds was working closely with Ofsted and Headteachers with regard to the negatives as there were a significant number:

- It was a harder test and that this has created some additional stress amongst those who worked in schools
- The much reduced notice had also created an additional fear factor
- A poor inspection result now usually meant that the Headteacher would be sacked or at least serious questions would be asked because the new inspection regime was a leadership test
- There were concerns about the variability of Ofsted teams, and how well Ofsted was performing its quality assurance role in this regard
- The focus on value added was reported to be a challenge as Leeds schools' data systems in this regard were not yet sophisticated enough
- Schools had to be able to track their children and show the progress they were making
- Schools which had a high mobility rate struggled to track their children, and as a result the accuracy of their data was questionable
- The inspection result scale had changed from a 7 point to a 4 point scale: in particular the very good score had disappeared so there was nothing between outstanding and good. As a result some school's assessments have gone from very good to good, giving the impression the school's standards were slipping when they were not