

Schools and Inspection

Issue 13, March 2010

This document mainly comprises minor changes and clarifications to existing guidance.

Safeguarding

- Clarification of the statutory requirements with regard to the appointment of staff, including volunteers
- Reminder that it is an offence not to refer to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) details of anyone who leaves a school while under investigation for allegedly causing harm or posing a risk of harm
- Clarification of the situation with regard to judgements for safeguarding – an inadequate judgement for Key Stages 1 and 2 will not necessarily lead to an inadequate judgement for the EYFS
- Ofsted inspectors should not be asked to produce their CRB checks when visiting schools – verification of their identity through their photo identification is sufficient
- Secondary-aged pupil mentors for primary-aged pupils who are aged 16 or over will need to register with the Vetting and Barring Scheme and have a CRB check. Schools should also carry out a risk assessment and put in place appropriate control measures

Judging attainment and achievement

Attainment

The document gives some useful clarification of the use of the Supplementary Guidance on Attainment. The document makes clear that the guidance on the use of indicators in RAISEonline should be used as an **initial indication** of the general standard of attainment. It stresses that the statements such as 'over half' should not be interpreted too rigidly – they should be regarded as giving general guidance for pre-inspection hypotheses. The document also draws attention to the need to take the size of the school into account, pointing out, for example, that it is more likely that a large school will have significantly positive or negative indicators. The need for professional judgement is stressed.

Achievement

There is some clarification of the use for the awarding of a satisfactory judgement for achievement where attainment is low and learning and progress are satisfactory. This is seen as an exceptional judgement and should only be used where there is convincing evidence that learning and progress are improving securely and rapidly. Inspectors must explain clearly how the school is improving pupils' learning and progress.

It is also made clear that, although a judgement for good achievement where there is low attainment is possible, there will need to be compelling evidence that the quality of pupils' learning and progress is outstanding. If achievement is judged good, inspectors must explain why outstanding learning and progress have not enabled pupils to attain broadly average standards.

The document cautions against too heavy a reliance on CVA and other measures for small groups of pupils. The overall judgement should not be determined solely by the RAISEonline data, particularly in the case of small groups.

Questionnaire pilot

During the spring and summer terms Ofsted is carrying out pilots for the use of online questionnaires for parents/carers, pupils, and staff. Although the questionnaires for parents and carers will be sent in a paper version as usual, there will also be an invitation for parents to complete an online version. However, only online questionnaires will be used for pupils and staff. For pilot inspections there will be no on-site clerical support in schools.

Data

RAISEonline now has a new Key Stage 1 to 2 forward estimates report available. It provides estimates of 2011 KS2 school performance based on the norms for similar schools. The document states that this will support the target setting process, although it seems rather late for this purpose.

To access this report from the RAISEonline home page go to *View Attainment Reports*. Then select *KS2* for Key Stage and *School Forward Estimates for Category*. Then press *Search*. *KS2 Forward Estimates* will appear in the box at the bottom of the page. Press *Select* and a table will be produced showing estimates for the school for 2011 for percentages of children achieving L4+ for English and maths separately and jointly and for the percentage of pupil making two levels of progress in the subjects. These are compared with the percentages for similar schools in the top 75%, 50%, 25% and 10%

Scheduling Inspections

The document reiterates that good and outstanding schools may be inspected within three years if

- The annual assessment of the school's performance suggests that there has been a significant decline,
- The school is part of a hard federation making it desirable to inspect both schools together
- The school is selected in the 10% randomly chosen sample

Schools that have come out of special measures will usually be inspected after about two years after coming out of category, although this will depend on the results of its annual risk assessment. It may also be selected as part of the random 10% selection.

Attendance

The document makes it clear that the guidance that attendance rates that lie within the lowest quartile should be judged as low should be considered alongside other available evidence for the last three years. This might include for instance information as to whether the low figure is for a single year, whether the school lies just within the lowest quartile and information about trends and patterns from schools. Inspectors should use professional judgement when coming to a view about the school's performance.

The document also makes it clear that schools that stay open during periods of inclement weather, for example, the recent snowy period, should not be penalised for poor attendance figures during that time. Remaining open in difficult circumstances might reflect well on leadership and management.

The document acknowledges that attendance in schools that serve families of service personnel may be affected by the two weeks' leave allowed to those returning from active deployment overseas when most families will take a holiday. The DCSF guidance is that absence in these circumstances should be regarded as a special case and would warrant the school allowing up to 10 days holiday in term time, subject to minimal disruption to children's education. Inspectors should be prepared to look at the school's evidence for this and take it into account when making their judgement. They should also examine how well the school mitigates the disruption to pupils' education as part of the care, guidance and support judgement.

Low attendance will not **necessarily** lead to an inadequate judgement for the extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills. Again, inspectors should use their professional judgement.