

Context – (What each area means?)

Core Team

A successful inspection is a team approach. Decide in advance which members of staff need to form part of the core team with responsibility for co-ordinating arrangements for the inspection. Think about where and when they will meet. For example, you may want a meeting as soon as possible after the call is received – the call from the inspector often seems to come just after midday Monday to Wednesday – so this could be at lunchtime, followed by a meeting after school and also at the end of the first day to gather information and possibly the morning of the second day. The COBRA Team are responsible for pulling together and implementing your #5MinInspectorCallsPlan.

Notifications

Some thought needs giving to the best way to inform staff and students. For example it might be most efficient to send an e-mail to all staff or you may prefer to call staff together in the staff room to notify them at lunch time is a more personal way to receive the news and staff will be able to give each other a bit of support.

Briefing students so they know what to expect and be at their best is really useful. Many students have a real affinity for their school and will want to raise their game for the inspection days

Letters need to be handed out to parents about the inspection including information about the Parent View website and these can also be put onto the website.

There are a number of people who need contacting about the inspection including: Chair of Governors/Directors, local authority or Diocese (or other trustees possibly).

This is a simple administrative task that can be sorted quickly by an efficient PA or secretary who can have an e-mail group or list of telephone numbers to call as soon as the call has come in. Don't forget some of these people will also be required to meet inspectors.

Diary & Events

This will be an important decision about what you will allow to go ahead in terms of activities, whether there are training courses that will have to be cancelled and possibly appointments that can be rearranged. It's going to be a pretty stressful couple of days and managing staff and students carefully will help ease the pressures. A good question might be, "Will this activity or event help support a positive inspection outcome or not". A lot of lessons being covered, given the focus on observing lessons during an inspection, may be counter-productive. Make decisions and record them along with the name of person who will be auctioning them.

Key Meetings

Inspectors will want to meet, in the next few days, with:

- Governors, including the chair of governors,
- Middle leaders (Heads/Co-ordinators of English, Maths & Science are a pretty obvious group),
- The Special Education Needs Co-ordinator and
- Senior leaders - one of the senior leaders - in a primary school the expectation may be that it should be the headteacher - will need to be able to pull together data requests very rapidly. Use your #5MinOfstedPlan to ensure your self-evaluation form is rich with data including outcomes for students in receipt of pupil premium.

Think about what meetings might be requested, who will be in them, where they can be held and any last minute briefings. Remember to give this responsibility to a named person.

Staff Well-Being

The stress levels almost inevitably start rising and can sometimes go through the roof as the inspection process starts and then escalates. Our experience of Ofsted Inspections is that it can bring a staff together against the "common enemy" and staff teams are often at their best in the face of adversity.

There are two dimensions to think about:

- Emotional support for staff who may just need someone to chat to, ask a question of or have what they think or has actually been a bad moment. Who is available and where should they go?
- Energy boosts with some cakes, additional breakfast or fruit can all help keep the engine room of the school running. Be aware that many staff will want to get things just right and irrespective of what you say will use breaks and lunches to prepare for their next lessons. Equally a member of staff could be in conversations with inspectors for part of their break or lunch. The option of a quick refuelling station may be necessary and very well received.

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Ofsted Hymn Sheet & Staff Meeting

Some schools will prepare a last minute briefing sheet for staff – keep it concise and only include key issues to focus on. For example, “make sure you know the data for your classes” – targets, current attainment, G&T, SEN, Pupil Premium students etc. A few bullet points related to the great work you have been doing on pedagogy can be prepared in advance – nothing new or glitzy it’s too late for that.

Staff might want to come together at the end of the day for a short briefing, to ask some questions and support each other. So a meeting time and place should be arranged. Be sensitive to staff who already have other commitments and can’t make it. Keep the briefing brief – the main focus now is on getting the lessons and learning right and trying to get a bit of sleep.

Document Preparation

There are some that will need to be at hand the following day for scrutiny, these include:

- The Single Central Record – always worth one last check that it is up to date and complete.
- Log of exclusions, pupils recently taken off role, racist incidents, incidents of bullying including homophobic bullying. Make sure that these are regularly collected and analysed for trends including looking at sub-groups.
- Up to date attendance information including the days of inspection as they become available
- Documents evidencing the work of governors, including how they have challenged the school where outcomes are below expectation, are required. It maybe useful to record “challenges” in meetings so these can be easily evidenced later if you don’t already routinely do so.

Domestic Arrangements for Inspectors

Whilst some inspection teams make easy guests and others are less welcomed or badly behaved it is important to have a professional approach to these visitors to your school. Car parking arranged for them can be helpful as well as WiFi access. There will need to be a room organised and cleaned with arrangements made for tea, coffee and meals. You might want to think about a meet and greet team – be warned inspectors tend to arrive early. A lead inspector wandering into and all over the school first thing doesn’t do your safeguarding rating a great deal of good. Equally you might consider it an appropriate way to welcome visitors to your school.

Feedback including Staff & Students

Senior staff, governors or trustees, the local authority and Diocese, if you are a faith school, will all be invited to the feedback by the inspectors. Who will communicate these arrangements? At the feedback often two different senior leaders are tasked with making notes on each section and one given the task of writing them up. This will be a useful aide memoir in the days ahead.

However, the staff and the students will also be desperate to know how things have gone. This is a careful balancing act as the outcomes of the inspection will need to be moderated prior to being made public so you will need to think carefully about what is said. Plan a time to give feedback to the staff pretty soon after the inspection finishes. Students are often happy to be given a genuine thank you, for all their support and great work during the inspection, and an idea when the inspection report is released. At St. Mary’s Catholic College all students received a Mars bar along with the last inspection report. We considered this part of our healthy eating programme as they weren’t deep fried!

Staff Celebrations & Party

At the end of the inspection process many staff will want to come together for support and hopefully to celebrate a good or possibly outstanding couple of days. This is an important part of being a community. Give one person the lead for this – it is a job that possibly a support member of staff would happily take the lead on and do exceptionally well. It may be you celebrate with a cup of tea or coffee and cakes at the end of the day. You may organise to go out for a drink a bit later on or organise a more formal celebration a week or two later once the report has been released. Or why not all three – the staff deserve it.