

## **Ofsted consultation: A new approach to area SEND inspections**

### **Response of the Association of School and College Leaders**

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents over 21,500 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million young people in more than 90 per cent of the secondary and tertiary phases, and in a rapidly increasing proportion of the primary phase. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
2. ASCL welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

### **Response to questions**

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that our inspections should focus more on the impact that the local area partnership is having on the lives of children and young people with SEND?**

Strongly agree

**Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way.**

Strongly agree

**Children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support.**

Strongly agree

**Children and young people receive the right help at the right time.**

Strongly agree

**Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes.**

Strongly agree

**Children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities.**

Strongly agree

#### **Comments about the proposed criteria:**

It is easy to answer yes, we strongly agree to all these criteria as they are all important aspects of the lived experience of young people with SEND and their families. ASCL believes that inspectors will need considerable experience of SEND and local government

systems to interrogate these criteria in such a way that can capture the micro experiences of young people over the course of their lives.

Rather than emphasising 'impact' we would like to hear more reference in the handbook to the lived experience of young people and their families. This provides more of a focus on quality education and social experiences rather than access to delivered services, which ASCL believes is a risk with the current criteria and wording.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to introducing 3 distinct inspection outcomes?**

Disagree

Comments:

ASCL agrees that greater clarity and transparency is helpful to ensure wider understanding and the adoption of proactive, positive next steps across a local area. ASCL does not believe however that the introduction of grades can guarantee this. Grades can indeed obfuscate the very detail which is important for achieving the stated goal.

**Do you agree or disagree that inspection reports should include clear recommendations on which weaknesses or systemic issues the local area partnership needs to address?**

Agree

Comments:

ASCL believes that the proposal to identify systemic weakness and recommend priority areas for action is useful. However, decision making and strategic planning must remain with local leaders who know their context. It is important that local leaders are the ultimate decision makers in response to the report and can collaborate across health, social care and education to decide on strategic priorities. Local leaders must have scope to accept or challenge recommendations as part of their strategic planning process, providing a strong rationale for the priorities agreed.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that, following inspection, each local area partnership should update and publish its strategic plan for SEND?**

Strongly agree

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to gather more evidence directly from children and young people with SEND and their families?**

Strongly agree

Comments:

ASCL agrees that capturing and responding to pupil voice and the voice of families is important. It will at times be important to adjust the way in which evidence is collected to meet the various communication styles of young people with profound learning difficulties. It is important their voices are heard and valued equally.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree that area SEND inspections should include a focus on how local authorities use, commission and oversee alternative provision?**

Strongly agree

Comments:

ASCL would like area inspection of AP to review the following three areas of responsibility linked to the role of the LA:

1. The LA's role in the procedure and practice associated with children being referred to AP - Fair Access, etc.
2. The offer - what is the lived experience of the child in AP and the quality of commissioned provision? This should be specifically focussed on AP places that are commissioned directly by LAs. This should also be linked to an assessment of funding benchmarked nationally.
3. The reintegration process – the main focus here being the responsibility and ambition of mainstream schools to 'receive' children from AP, rather than judging AP on the number of successful reintegration's.

**Do you agree or disagree with our proposed approach to monitoring inspections?**

Strongly agree

**Do you agree or disagree that we should invite each local area partnership to engagement meetings between inspections to discuss the local SEND arrangements?**

Strongly agree

Comments:

These consultations are learning opportunities for local area partnerships and should be viewed as such.

ASCL expects these meetings to be a coming together of experts to consult on progress rather than to assess.

**Are there other ways in which you think we can make our surveys of children and young people with SEND more accessible?**

Video webinars modelling the questioning and visibly involving young people to be seen considering their response, can support pupil engagement.

**Do you have any additional comments about our proposed new framework for the inspection of local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND?**

ASCL would like area inspection of AP to review the following three areas of responsibility linked to the role of the LA:

1. The LA's role in the procedure and practice associated with children being referred to AP – Fair Access, etc.
2. The offer - what is the lived experience of the child in AP and the quality of commissioned provision? This should be specifically focussed on AP places that are commissioned directly by LAs. This should also be linked to an assessment of funding benchmarked nationally.

3. The reintegration process – the main focus here being the responsibility and ambition of mainstream schools to 'receive' children from AP, rather than judging AP on the number of successful reintegration's.

**Please provide any representations/evidence of the impact of our proposals for the purposes of the Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010).**

These proposals support ambitions to strengthen equality across the local area.

Margaret Mulholland  
ASCL SEND and Inclusion Specialist  
Association of School and College Leaders

9 September 2022