

Being ready for an OFSTED inspection

A best practice guide for Clerks

The ACER Clerks' Network has a track record of running highly focussed short development workshops to draw together and share good practice amongst its members. The outputs from these workshops are published as practical good practice guides for its members and the wider benefit of the FE Sector.

This output arises from a workshop on 17 October 2013 and builds on a presentation to the ACER Clerks' Network meeting by Paula Heaney (OFSTED). The Group would like to thank Paula Heaney for her excellent presentation and for agreeing to allow her presentation and her paper 'What does outstanding look like?' to be published with this good practice guide.

This Document contains:

- The good practice guide - Being ready for an OFSTED inspection (pages 2- 4)
- The short paper - What does outstanding look like? (pages 5)
- The OFSTED presentation - The Inspection Framework "What Clerks need to know"



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<http://www.acer.ac.uk/Ofsted%2017.10%20final%20for%20circulation.pdf>

Being ready for an OFSTED inspection

A practical best practice guide for Clerks

Introduction

Under OFSTED's current Common Inspection Framework (CIF), they will focus a considerable amount of the inspection on the quality of teaching, learning and assessments (TL&A) at your college. As part of the inspection they will seek to interview some of the Governors either on a one-to-one basis or as a small group. You as the Clerk will not usually be invited to these meetings although, depending on the preferences of the inspector, you may be allowed to be in attendance if you request. Experience informs us that even some of the most active and effective Governors can sometimes freeze in these interviews and fail to do themselves or the College justice.

Steady state – being ready for the inspection call

The Clerk

- You should read and consider the current OFSTED handbook [paying particular attention to the inspection processes.
- Using your knowledge of the college, and liaising with the member of the senior team leading the inspection on behalf of the college, identify what you think inspectors may focus on during your college's inspection. This will help you to identify any gaps in the schedule of reports to governors on key issues during the year at their meetings, and will assist you in preparing governors for inspection. It will also assist you if you are going to create an Evidence File (see below) for inspectors in identifying evidence to be included.
- You should seek to plug into routine feedback from other inspections to pick up on trends in the issues that are arising and any changes in emphasis that are occurring over time. Contact with other colleague Clerks nationally and particularly in the region is useful.
- As a matter of on-going preparation you should be routinely compiling and updating an Evidence ("telling the story") File which will support your college during an inspection. The Evidence File would:
 - Have case studies demonstrating Governor activity that shows:
 - The on-going and effective monitoring of TL&A by Governors and examples of positive outcomes resulting from their engagement
 - Effective Governor challenge generally in terms of the executive team's performance and the strategic proposals they bring forward
 - Effective tracking and monitoring of executive action and college performance
 - Show the operation of active and valuable business plans
 - Show the engagement of students and the community in developing and setting the strategic plan
 - Show that the active and effective promotion of equality and diversity is embedded across the College and particularly TL&A
 - Show the active and effective application of safeguarding policies across the College

- Show the effective application of a skills audit and strategy in the selection, appointment and development of Governors
 - Demonstrate good Governor attendance at meetings and events
 - Show the active Governor recruitment plan and demonstrate active succession planning
 - Show an active and effective Governor development and training programme
 - Show the Colleges self-assessment strategy
 - Demonstrate the ongoing importance of Governors knowing key student attendance data
 - Demonstrate any other key activity that you and the lead member of the senior team for inspection feel is relevant to your college's circumstances.
- Agenda and meeting papers should show the weight given to TL&A. This may effectively be shown by their ranking on the agenda, the planned timings of items, and the weighting of minutes etc. Minutes should clearly identify Governors' challenge of the executive team and their reports and Governors' monitoring of the executive team's actions to commitments.
 - Ensure the college's website is up-to-date. OFSTED will look at the website before and during the inspection to look at how up-to-date it is and the extent to which the local community and stakeholders can access relevant up-to-date information relating to college performance and governance. Minutes of meetings should be on the website in accordance with your Corporation's policy (i.e. marked as draft or not uploaded until approved). It may be helpful to outline this policy on the website.
 - Monitor the hits on the college website (and particularly governance issues) as this may be a precursor of an OFSTED inspection or other external interest generally that it would be wise to know about as early as possible.
 - Be prepared to be able to provide electronic versions of all your college's meeting papers at two days' notice.

Governors

- All Governors should be aware of and be playing an effective role in their college's self-assessment process.
- The importance of Governors being aware of and taking an active interest in the results of the self assessment of TL&A cannot be overstated in the current CIF.
- Governors should have an up-to-date awareness of key student attendance information
- All Governors should be aware of: the processes supporting; the monitoring reports; the outcomes; and, the strategic direction of travel arising from, the self-assessment of the quality of TL&A.
- Identify those Governors who you would consider most suitable to be interviewed by OFSTED. It may vary but generally inspectors are seeking to speak with between 3-6 governors. Consider those that might take their place if required. Also identify those that might with their current knowledge not do the Corporation justice if they were chosen, and consider if there is any inspection preparation that would assist them, to enable them to do so.
- OFSTED may ask to see some specific Governors (Chair of Corporation or Committees) but because of the short notice given they will have to accept seeing who is available when the

inspection occurs. They do however accept that some of these interviews may need to be undertaken by telephone or other electronic means.

- Governors are not expected to routinely hold all the information constantly in their heads. During these interviews they are allowed to refer to their own notes and college papers. They must however have these with them. Consider producing a summary key facts/"crib" sheet that may be used to support your Governors in their meetings with OFSTED.
- The "crib" sheet needs to be unique to your college and as well as being a reminder about the ongoing assessment on the quality of TL&A should highlight your college's key strengths, weaknesses, trends and direction of travel on key strategic aims.

When you get the call – you will have just two days notice of an inspection

- Liaise with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) member who is acting as the lead for the inspection.
- Make sure that your preparations are up-to-date:
 - Having an up-to-date evidence file ready
 - Contacting your "A team" of Governors (or possible substitutes/replacements) to ensure they will be available
 - Update and finalise the "crib"/key facts sheet for the Governors who have been selected for interview (providing cover for possible substitutes) – drawing on your up-to-date Evidence File. It may reassure Governors to have a preparation meeting if it is possible to gather them together in time.
 - Prepare an up-to-date electronic version (e.g. USB) of your meeting papers for the inspectors
 - If you are present in the meeting between Governors and the inspector, make a note of the questions asked both for your college's use and to assist other clerks in the area regarding common "themes".
- Consider briefing the Student Governor(s) and securing a Student Governor's input to the inspection if you consider they would add value if they are part of your "A team".

During the inspection

- Support Governors with "crib"/key fact sheets
- Brief Governors who are to be interviewed with any feedback you have about the focus or particular interests being shown by the inspectors. Seek to supplement the "crib"/key fact sheets if possible.
- Secure feedback from Governors after interviews
- Provide relevant feedback to SLT lead

What does outstanding look like?

Grade 1 for overall effectiveness from September 2012:

- Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College
- Walsall College

Extracts from inspection reports

Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College

From 'Summary of key findings for learners':

- The principal, senior managers and **governors** have ensured that the college is very successful and that learners make excellent progress and achieve very well.

From 'The effectiveness of leadership and management' report text:

- The principal, senior managers and **governors** have a clear strategic vision for the college that they have translated successfully into practice. The overall progress made by learners is excellent, and consistently high success rates are attained.
- The **governing body** is experienced and highly skilled. **Governors** monitor the performance of learners' outcomes very well, receiving detailed information on results, particularly the progress learners make from their starting points. **They** offer highly effective support and critical challenge to senior managers.
- Staff and **governors** are well trained and have a high awareness of correct safeguarding procedures.

Walsall College

From 'Summary of key findings for learners':

- Leaders, managers and **governors** have an ambitious vision for the college and its students. The college is rooted in its community and works in very strong partnership with key organisations for the benefit of students and to promote the regeneration and prosperity of the borough.

From 'Summary of key findings for learners':

- The principal, senior leaders and **governors** set a very clear strategic direction and have an ambitious vision for the college and its students. **They** are clearly focused on attaining very high standards of teaching to ensure that students achieve as well as they can.
- **Governors** are very well informed and provide excellent support to senior leaders. **They** ask the right questions to ensure managers are sufficiently held to account and their skills and experience are very well matched to the developing needs of the college. **Governors** meticulously monitor outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the college.
- **Governors**, staff and students benefit from frequent and regular training in equality and diversity and have an increased understanding and awareness of issues such as forced marriage.