

**Reflections on  
Brighton & Hove's  
SEND Inspection  
May 2016**



**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

# If it's May it must be Ofsted time....

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# Why us?

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- Along with Bolton, we were the first local area to be inspected using the new framework
- We were an SEN Pathfinder national champion LA so had a long history of building up capacity to implement reforms
- We'd had our SIF in April/May 2015 so no conflict there in terms of Ofsted planning
- Following a redesign of our Learning Support Services, complaints about the proposed changes were sent directly to the DfE.

# What we'd done to prepare

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- Our SEND Reforms Working Group had already turned attention to preparing for inspection
- We'd already been working on our self evaluation – based on the inspection criteria
- We were already working very closely with CCG and wider partners
- Schools had been briefed on a potential upcoming inspection.

# Notification

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- Notification all happened as set out in inspection handbook
  - Lead phoned between 9 and 10 on Monday to inform us
  - then called back at 11.30 to go through initial arrangements
- Our DCS was on leave and arrangements were already in place for our Assistant Director (Health, SEN and Disability) to act up and to be the Lead Nominated Officer
- We'd prepared an agreed communications plan before hand – everyone who needed to know was made aware
- We were told more inspectors were coming than expected
  - there was a lot of interest in observing it!

# Week one – off site preparation

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- Lead confirmed our report would not have grades as all LAs on a journey from September 2014 implementation - would be a summary of strengths and weaknesses
- Report would be a letter of around 2000 words – four sides of A4 – and stressed would cover the local area i.e. the council, health partners and all related services
- The lead gave a list of schools and nurseries (no colleges) that the team would like to visit – he allowed us to substitute one school and to add another one
- He asked for a list of the names of all children in those schools/ nurseries on SEN register and said they would want our files on them as part of their evidence base
- Soon became apparent they did not have the capacity to make the number of three hour school/ nursery visits and list had to be trimmed
- Ofsted visited schools and CQC the nurseries.

# Week one – cont...

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- Our time in week one was mostly occupied with collating briefings and data in response to the trails, the logistics of finalising the meeting schedule for the on site week (including to settings), finalising self-evaluations and drafting the presentation for the kick off meeting
- This was all quite exacting and meant a number of us working the Saturday before the inspection preparing files and completing responses to the inspection trails
- Lead was clear the inspection did not begin until the Monday of the following week – nothing in the preparatory week was part of the inspection and we did not need to provide any self-evaluation until then BUT it would be very helpful if we did...
- By mid-week we were told our inspection trails (lines of inquiry) – this was helpful as it meant we could finalise our self evaluation with those in mind
- We did begin over the week to upload onto the 'Huddle' pieces of self-evaluation and had completed this process before the inspection began the following Monday
- We also uploaded a raft of policy and strategy documents we already had to hand.

# Communications with inspection team

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- We (B&HCC) liaised directly with Lead Inspector and CCG liaised directly with the CQC Lead Inspector
- This worked well for us all as otherwise we would have been in the middle of discussions between CCG and CQC
- We did however hold the master version schedule for the on-site week and of the opening presentation – it was important to retain version control.

# Our self evaluation

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- We scaled back on some of our planned self evaluation documents once we heard the trails, realising there were some areas they were unlikely to explore in detail
- We produced specific SEF summaries though on each of the key areas - identification, assessment and meeting needs, outcomes, joint commissioning and co-production with parents and young people
- We also provided one and sometimes more than one report directly addressing each inspection trail – this had to be done in the week before and during the inspection week involving quite a number of colleagues from across agencies and services – required very swift and agile response particularly from data/ performance teams.

# Week two – the timetable

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- Both Ofsted and CQC gave suggestions of what meetings they wanted and when in the week they should be
- It was a schedule based on focus groups rather than 1:1s
- We had mostly agreed the timetable with the inspectors by end of Thursday in week one but tweaking continued throughout the inspection
- We had a corporate commitment to help us clear large meeting rooms at short notice
- All focus groups, where relevant, had parent reps involved and often school reps – very useful as inspectors often turned to them to ask: “Is its true what we are hearing?”

# Week two – the opening presentation

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- We worked hard on a PowerPoint which illustrated the City context and then summarised our strengths and weaknesses - written with a view to this being the substance if evidenced in their report
- This was a joint presentation with the CCG and we also had public health / health providers and parent groups present – the CEOs of Council and CCG opened
- We didn't go through each slide in detail but important as background reference and we had positive feedback on this from the senior HMI
- In reality this session turned in to more of a discussion but that was helpful as we were able to get our more important points across.

# Week two – on site

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- We were able to have a Keeping In Touch meeting each morning with inspectors where they told us their inspection trails / hypothesis except for last morning which did not feel right so we asked for a meeting with lead – otherwise the DCS and nominated lead would not have had feedback first
- It was logistically challenging to ensure everyone (including inspectors) were in the right rooms at the right times
- We used name plates as some of our groups were (too!) large (15+ attendees) although it did mean all their questions could be answered more easily in detail
- We used Huddle to upload additional information throughout the inspection although we were not sure the inspectors always read everything on there.

# Week two – on site cont...

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- We kept a tight control on the inspection process in the week before and during the inspection
- We had a 5pm meeting every day to ‘wash up’ and note any action needed for the next day - very good attendance at these meetings from Council, key health colleagues and parent reps
- We collected feedback after each focus group from the lead (and informally from others) to help us focus discussions in future groups
- By the Thursday morning the lead told us they had closed all trails to their satisfaction.

# Co-production

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- To ensure their voices were heard and to maximise our messages in self evaluation about co-producing well with families we ensured there was a parent/carer rep in each focus group, including those based in health settings
- This was hard work for our parent groups but promoted a city-wide commitment to this approach.

# Visits to settings

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- The first two days were central meetings in council and health buildings – the next two were the visits to settings
- We spent some considerable time and effort to prepare our settings (mixture of primary, secondary and early years settings) for the visits – SEND officers and educational psychologists phoned SENCOs to provide support if needed – some were quite nervous
- Settings were asked to provide a meeting with leaders, governors, children and a group of parents
- Inspectors were keen to reassure settings they were not being inspected, it was about collecting evidence about us
- We had excellent support from our settings who were keen to ‘get it right’ for themselves and for us.

# Visits to settings and focus groups

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- During week two they visited four secondary schools, two special schools, two primary schools and three nursery / children's centre settings
- They had focus groups on early years, identification and early intervention, vulnerable groups, disability services, transition to adulthood, outcomes, assessments, participation and joint commissioning
- They attended health meetings on Children in Care Health, DMO, integrated therapies, health visiting and school nursing
- They also attended a meeting focussing specifically on some of our future changes to SEND provision in the city.

# Cases

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- It didn't feel like a case-led inspection (very different from SIF)
- Inspectors asked for files on c20 children from the chosen settings but didn't always look at corresponding files on their visits
- Feedback sometimes referred to cases but we weren't given names / ID numbers so hard to follow up and provide counter evidence
- Hypotheses tended to be formed based on national data and conversations in the focus groups.

# Joint inspection?

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- There were times when the inspection did not feel joined up
- Communications tended to slip into Council & Ofsted and then CCG & CQC
- Visits to settings were split across the inspectorates, could have mixed inspection teams
- CQC's style and approach seemed quite different to Ofsted.

# Asks of us during the week

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- Whilst it was very busy, very labour intensive and difficult to manage 'business as usual' throughout the fortnight the demands were relatively low compared to SIF
- We had to respond to emerging inspection trails but there were few focussed and direct asks for additional information
- We were asked to follow up on one or two young people/ parents who had raised concerns in meetings without names and fairly vague identifying info – required some detective work!
- No data sets were requested.

# Feedback

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- We received feedback on the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings of the inspection which helped us keep on track on what needed further responses to
- Our nominated lead also met with the Senior HMI monitoring the inspection on her own on the first morning and then again with the DCS on the last morning at her request – this was to receive feedback on the process – clear they were aware of the need to learn themselves.

# Feedback – our letter

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- Draft arrived four weeks after inspection and allowed us to make factual accuracy comments
- Overall very positive - praised services for their 'unwavering focus on the overall needs of children and young people who have SEND' and that the city puts SEND CYP and their families, at the centre of its vision to improve services
- Nothing unknown in areas for development – quite specific points, no real strategic concerns.

# What worked well?

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- Inspectors consistently gave feedback in format of identification, assessment and meeting need and of outcomes
- We presented very much as a joined up team – council staff, health staff, school reps, parent reps and young people reps – that felt very important
- Everyone (including parent reps importantly) were listened to in focus groups, people felt like it was a good use of their time.

# What might have worked better...

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- Could have been more joined up between inspectorates
- Inspectors could have been more directive, SIF handbook has really clear demands re Annex A – it was left up to us to decide what to share or not
- Focus groups should have been kept smaller – hard to get all the necessary points across
- Probably all the work on the SEF not really needed – not sure the inspection team had the time to read all our docs and we could have provided the info from other sources as needed rather than compiling a SEF per se
- Was scope of inspection clear – mission creep?
- Lack of evidence base in some enquiries – big issues made of comments by one person
- We were not clear before the wider feedback meeting exactly what the feedback was going to be
- Little interest in our Elected Members and their roles / responsibilities. We did invite them to kick-off and feedback meetings and kept them briefed but inspectors did not seem interested to meet with them.

**Any questions?**



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