

Monday 11 January 2016

By email: outofschoolsettings.REVIEW@education.gsi.gov.uk

Out-of-school education settings: registration and inspection

1. The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd (ADCS) welcomes the opportunity to make a brief submission to the DfE's out-of-school education settings: registration and inspection call for evidence. ADCS is the professional association for directors of children's services (DCSs) and their senior management teams. Under the provisions of the Children Act 2004, the DCS is the chief officer responsible for the discharge of local authority functions with regard to education and wider children's services, including social care.
2. Although the exact number of supplementary schools in England is unknown, it is estimated this figure is somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000. These schools are generally community-led and offer an informal learning environment that seeks to complement mainstream education. While the majority of provision serves a specific, linguistic, religious or cultural community, many also offer access to performing arts activities, such as music or dance. Extra literacy and numeracy lessons are often available along with help and advice for parents.
3. Unlike private tuition, supplementary schools offer group-based learning, and tend to come at little or no cost to parents. Settings vary in size, subject offer and teaching methods. The diverse natures, intakes and practices of supplementary schools makes it difficult to generalise - some have paid staff and others are run by volunteers. Some operate out of mainstream schools, others from community centres or residential properties.
4. Published evaluations of supplementary schools to date are largely favourable as are student surveys. At their best, supplementary schools offer children and young people access to personalised learning with strong pupil-teacher engagement.
5. ADCS believes it is both important and necessary to review the regulations regarding registration of all out-of-school provision for children and young people. There are undoubtedly schools operating under the radar without any engagement with authorities, or mainstream schools, which is worrying on a number of levels.
6. It is our belief that a light-touch mandatory registration process for out-of-school education settings, including elective home education, is therefore needed. This system should be co-ordinated and overseen by local authorities, with Ofsted intervening if serious concerns arise that warrant further investigation during local authority checks. If this proposal is accepted the government should fully fund local authorities to fulfil this vital intermediary role.
7. Although there is currently no legal requirement for compulsory registration, many local authorities already map supplementary schools using a range of intelligence sources. They work closely with school leaders to encourage them to undertake appropriate staff training and share details such as the number of teaching hours per week, the age range and numbers of children, DBS checks and information about public liability insurance.
8. Local authorities also work in partnership with the LSCB, for example, or third sector organisations, to offer safeguarding sessions for supplementary schools and support them to draw up policies and procedures to safeguard the children, staff and

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volunteers attending these settings. This activity is not directly funded by central government and is consequently at risk as local government budgets continue to fall.

9. As already stated, ADCS welcomes, in principle, a light-touch regulation and inspection regime applicable to all out-of-school settings, not just 'certain' supplementary schools. The emphasis on the 'Prevent' agenda in the consultation, while understandable in the current climate, is somewhat limiting. The suitability of the learning environment and the curriculum must not be overlooked, in the case of the latter suitability should be assessed against the purposes of the activity and whether or not it is full or part-time. There is a great deal of difference between an after school club and an unregistered training centre.
10. There are already a number of recognised quality assurance schemes to help supplementary schools meet minimum standards for safe, effective and enjoyable out-of-school hours provision for children and young people. We believe that more training should be considered by the government as part of any reforms - additional support and resources will enable supplementary schools to work towards the provision of high quality services in a safe environment. Mandatory registration alone will not guarantee the safety of children and young people.
11. A recently published report by the Institute of Public Policy and Research (IPPR) entitled 'Success on Saturdays,' highlighted the London Borough of Harrow for good practice in this area. Over a number of years the authority has developed a series of local networks and forums for supplementary schools, this co-ordinated approach has significantly improved standards across the borough. Leeds City Council has also fostered a strong network for supplementary school providers operating in the city and the authority works hard to showcase the valuable contribution they make to the local community via the publication of an annual review.
12. It is important that both the government, and its regulators, recognise the diverse nature, intake and practices of supplementary schools. The inspection framework must be based on a set of safeguarding and education standards that reflects the wide range of faiths, communities and proprietors who operate these schools.
13. ADCS would be pleased to welcome representatives from the Department for Education or Ofsted to a future meeting of the Educational Achievement or the Standards, Performance and Inspection Policy Committee to discuss the points raised in this submission of evidence.
14. For further information, please contact Katy Block, ADCS Policy Officer, katy.block@adcs.org.uk / 0161 826 9490.

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