Implications for Headteachers and Governing Bodies when their school receive a poor Ofsted outcome

It is important to state that out of 600 schools in Kent we currently have 25 schools (and 3 academies) who are currently in an Ofsted category. Since September a number of schools have dropped one or two grades, either from Outstanding to Good or Requires Improvement, or from Outstanding to Good or Good to Requires Improvement.

- When there is a downward movement all schools are reviewed on an individual basis
- All available information about a school is bought to the review process

Process

When a school has a poor Ofsted inspection resulting in a category judgement, securing the leadership and governance of the school becomes critical. The Local Authority is expected to take rigorous and robust action ensuring that this is reasonably embedded prior to the first HMI monitoring visit, often only 12 weeks after the Section 5 inspection.

Where a school drops a grade or more than one grade but does not require a category judgement, the Head and the chair of Governors is invited to a scoping meeting. The purpose of this meeting is a professional deep dive of the school in order to support the school to quickly regain its previous status or indeed further improve. Depending on the outcomes of the first scoping meeting it may be necessary to plan for a second such meeting, in order to ensure at least reasonable progress.

Serious Weakness

If the judgement is Serious Weakness we do not expect to replace the leadership or the governance. A Serious Weakness judgement says that Ofsted believes the leadership and governance has the capacity to turn the school around. In all cases to date we have concurred with this judgement. The Local Authority then works with the school to ensure that the first monitoring visit by HMI shows reasonable progress. If this is not the case we will review our options around leadership and governance.

Special Measures

If a school is deemed to require Special Measures, Ofsted is clearly stating that neither the leadership nor the governance has the ability to turn the school around. We would therefore expect to act quickly to ensure the school has good leadership and governance. The Local Authority has intervention powers under Section 60 of the Education Act and we are expected to consider each of these when a school either causes concern or fails its Ofsted Inspection.

Actions:

- An internal meeting is held to discuss possible options. This will involve the Diocesan Director of Education for Rochester, Canterbury or Southwark, where appropriate.
The Headteacher and the Chair of Governors will typically come into County Hall for a discussion on the most appropriate way forward. Where the Head has been in place for less than a year, and in some cases slightly longer than that, we would not expect to take any formal action with the Headteacher. Where Governance has been in place for significantly longer, we may look to make changes to the Governing Body, whether by strengthening it or by looking to secure an Interim Executive Board (IEB).

Where a Head has been in place for at least two years we would expect to take significant action. Following the discussion at County Hall, the Head and Chair will have an opportunity for reflection. In most cases, with the Headteachers agreement, they will be placed on gardening leave whilst discussions take place with the union. If a Head does not wish this option then we go immediately to the formal target setting process. As formal targets become a matter of record most Heads do not wish to take this option.

The Local Authority then ensures that suitable leadership is in place.

In the past, where a school is deemed to require Special Measures, we have taken the view that we should try and work with Governing Bodies by forming a strategy group from the existing Governing Body to see the recovery through. In addition we have strengthened the Governing Body with additional Governors such as National Leaders of Governance (NLGs). However, this has, in all cases, been fraught with difficulty, and in most cases we have lost time before ultimately having to apply for an IEB. In all cases where this has happened we have been granted an IEB quickly. As a result of recent experience we will now as a matter of course seek an IEB immediately a school goes into special measures. Members of the Governing Body who meet the skills profile for members of the new IEB will be considered for inclusion in the new IEB. This has been successful in some cases and we are keen to encourage this in the future.

**Supporting the outgoing Head**

We work hard to ensure that when Heads leave their schools as a result of Special Measures, or indeed for any other reason, that we provide dignity and respect in the subsequent process.

- The Principal Adviser Primary, Secondary and Special open up and continue to be the only point of contact with the Heateacher’s union representative.
- From this point everything is confidential and whilst this is difficult for colleagues and the wider community, we will not deviate from this until the negotiations with the unions are complete and the compromise agreement and the agreed reference are confirmed.
- In the vast majority of cases we recommend colleagues for senior leadership positions short of headship.
- The Principal Advisers organise the compromise agreements with the Chair of Governors or with the Chair of the IEB. The compromise agreement comes from the school budget. Where there are financial difficulties this is negotiated with the Director of Finance at Kent County Council.
- The press office at KCC supports the Governors, school or IEB with relevant press statements on request. The press office is highly skilled with these situations and we strongly advise all parties to take advantage of that support.

Support for Governing Bodies comes from both the Head of Governance and her team as well as the School Improvement team. National Leaders of Governance and additional Governors are used as extensively as possible and support is always given as Governing Bodies change to IEBs.
Important Note:

Many Heads who have left their posts for a variety of reasons where a compromise or agreed reference has been required, are actively working in Kent in a variety of positions. These include as Deputy Heads, Assistant Heads, Heads of Department, as consultants or indeed as teachers. Some Heads have secured senior leadership positions in other Local Authorities.

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