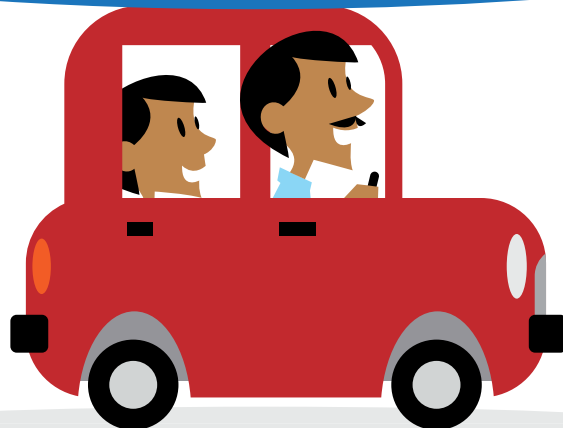


Consultation Document on the School Improvement Partner Programme



**“Our vision is to make this
the best place in the world
for children and young
people to grow up.”**



Foreword

Our vision is to make this the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. Schools are central in helping to achieve this vision by ensuring an excellent experience and good outcomes for every child.



The White Paper we published in June 2009 describes our plans for a radically different model of school improvement, with every school responsible for driving its own improvement and seeking to improve continuously. Teachers are better informed than ever before about effective practice, following a decade of reform and support. Improving schools further from this strong base now requires a more differentiated approach, in which every school receives tailored challenge and support.

The School Improvement Partner will play an integral role in this revised model. The SIP will support each school to develop its own improvement priorities across the full range of Every Child Matters outcomes. SIP responsibilities will include supporting the process of self-evaluation, using diagnostic skills to identify areas for improvement, and brokering in appropriate support. SIPs will signal where a school does not have the capacity to improve and ensure under-performance is tackled swiftly.

To perform this role, the SIP needs to have a deep understanding of the school. SIPs will be deployed in a way which is more responsive and proportionate to need, with extra support to the most challenged schools. We will ensure quality is at the heart of the revised model by reforming training, quality assurance, and performance management. We will make it clear how the model will work including what quality assured resources are available to be drawn down – both nationally and locally.

SIPs in their new role will help ensure every child makes good progress and achieves. The enhanced model fits with the wider thrust of the White Paper, which focuses on partnership working with other schools, other services, parents, Children's Trusts, local and central government

We understand that these changes represent a significant shift in the way in which SIPs work with schools and local authorities. This consultation is your chance to help shape the design of the new model. We very much welcome your feedback.

Vernon Coaker

Vernon Coaker

Background

School Improvement Partners (SIPs) were introduced in 2005 alongside a number of other policies which, together, were known as the New Relationship with Schools.

The policies included:

- an emphasis upon school self-evaluation
- a new inspection framework that started from school self-evaluation
- a focus on much more sophisticated data through RAISEonline, to help schools to understand their performance more closely than previously.

The SIP programme was welcomed by headteachers when it was introduced. This was underpinned by the guiding principle that the role of the School Improvement Partner was to be that of a critical friend. The current role of a SIP is to provide professional challenge and support to the school, helping its leadership to evaluate performance, identify priorities for improvement, and plan effective change. The SIP acts for the LA and is the main (but not the only) channel for LA communication about school improvement with the school.

There has been a SIP in each maintained school since April 2008. SIPs are contracted by LAs to support and challenge schools and to fulfil their statutory functions under the School Standards and Inspections Act 2006. There has been an expectation that a large proportion of secondary SIPs should have headship experience and that some SIPs in each phase should be from outside the LA. The purpose of SIPs has been to:

- help set the school's development priorities, its targets and its support needs
- ensure school targets are set against a clear picture of national priorities, and are based on rigorous self evaluation and local needs
- support the performance management of headteachers, based on a balanced picture of the school's development priorities and achievements

The enhanced SIP Model as set out in the White Paper

The DCSF is enhancing the SIP programme to build on success so far and ensure we meet the needs of the 21st century school. The White Paper explains that SIPs will be...

“... responsible not only for monitoring and challenge, but have a wider role of brokering support, based on a deep understanding of a school, its challenges and what will be effective in generating improvement. SIPs will work with school leaders to identify what support is needed to generate improvement. Where performance is low, SIPs will have to sign off improvement plans and the use of the School Development Grant.”

The DCSF understands that these changes represent a considerable challenge. We would like to consult with you and would welcome your contribution.

From April 2011, the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children’s Services (National College) will become responsible for running the SIP programme. The DCSF and the National College are therefore holding a joint consultation on the reforms of the School Improvement Partner (SIP) model, from January 11th to April 9th 2010. This consultation seeks the views of stakeholders on the implementation of the DCSF’s vision for the role of SIPs as set out in the White Paper *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system*.

Why we are enhancing the SIP model

An independent evaluation by York Consulting [New Relationship with Schools, Evaluation Report] identified the current SIP programme as a key achievement which has contributed to school improvement. This is supported by surveys of headteachers carried out by the National Strategies which found that 90% of headteachers think the SIP programme is more effective than the previous system. In addition 90% of headteachers felt that there is a positive effect of SIPs on their performance management. There are

clear strengths of the current programme. In particular SIPs have been judged to be effective at challenging schools on self evaluation on attainment and progress. Where Quality Assurance and Performance Management of the SIP programme are done effectively, the LAs lead and manage a consistent and high impact service.

However, in order to meet the needs of 21st century schools, the SIP programme must adapt and evolve. SIPs have not previously been well positioned enough to allow them to fully cover all ECM outcomes and the wider role of brokerage. The changes that we intend to implement will enable SIPs to cover these, while also ensuring better consistency of SIP implementation and practice.

We have been able to learn a great deal from the experience of using London Challenge Advisers; then City Challenge Advisers; then National Challenge Advisers. The success of these roles has demonstrated that there is room for further development of the SIP model and that there is scope to reflect recent practice. There is now, for instance, a clear desire for more SIP time for many schools and a clearer differentiation of their time. A number of headteachers feel that the SIP role should be enhanced to allow them to challenge them more.

So we need a new model which builds on the successes so far and better meets the needs of the 21st century school. We aim to protect the strengths of the current model but improve areas where potential improvements have been identified including brokerage, coverage of all ECM outcomes, and more SIP time and differentiation of that time. The enhancement of the SIP model will align it to the new system as envisaged in the White Paper. The enhanced SIP model will help bring about a new approach to school improvement and place greater emphasis on self-improving schools.

The enhanced SIP model

SIPs will take on greater responsibility for reading and understanding the issues facing individual schools, diagnosing the challenges and needs around school improvement; working with schools to develop solutions; and coaching and supporting school leaders to implement those solutions, brokering support from outside.

The enhanced responsibilities of SIPs as the programme moves forward will be:

- Supporting schools to improve all ECM outcomes for children rather than a narrow focus on educational attainment alone. This will strengthen and widen the remit of SIPs, so that they provide a more holistic service to schools and improve the well-being of pupils at the school, as well as standards at the school.
- Signing off school improvement plans for weaker performers, making receipt of part of schools' funding contingent upon this. This will allow greater leverage over weaker performers to ensure the right decisions are being made to ensure school improvement. It will help ensure that school improvement plans are ambitious and realistic.
- Acting as the main agent on performance challenge between schools and their local authority. Local authorities must observe the principle of the 'single conversation' by ending the duplicatory practice of maintaining link advisers for schools alongside SIPs, where this still occurs.
- Making recommendations about specialist schools' designation and re-designation. Following on from the Specialist Schools Re-Designation Pilot in the Autumn 2009 term, responsibility for making recommendations about schools' specialist status will be devolved to SIPs nationally.
- Brokering school improvement support. SIPs will work with schools to identify what improvement support they need; and will broker schools' access to school-to-school and other support arrangements, drawing on a national offer of assured providers of paid for improvement programmes, supplemented by free draw-down school improvement products via the web. This will lead to a brokerage offer which will allow schools and SIPs to focus on a common school improvement agenda when reflecting on a school's support needs.

In order to carry out this broader role effectively, all SIPs will need to have high quality analytical, problem solving and interpersonal skills and experience, which will have been acquired through successful headship or senior LA experience. The success of the SIP programme will be based on the principle of having the right SIP for the right school. This will be achieved by matching SIPs with certain experience to schools in need of that experience, e.g. inner-city multicultural schools may benefit from a SIP who has been through that experience themselves.

We will give SIPs the full level of support that they require in order to carry out the enhanced role. We would not expect SIPs to take on the enhanced responsibilities without reforming the rest of the SIP model significantly to ensure that they are fully able to do so. We will make the following changes to support SIPs:

- We will reform national training to provide high quality Continuing Professional Development (CPD) that is nationally recognised and aligned with current programmes.
- We will increase SIP days using a risk-based approach so that high risk schools receive more SIP days proportionate to their need to secure school improvement. Subject to the outcome of the spending review, we will increase SIP days on a sliding scale with more SIP days for all schools and for the very lowest performing schools a level of support comparable to that provided by National Challenge Advisers. This will allow more days to help provide support and challenge to the schools with the greatest needs. The approach will also take account of risk for vulnerable groups of children and young people, including those with SEN and disabilities.
- We will differentiate SIPs for different school types. We will make it easier for LAs to match SIPs to schools according to need. All SIPs will demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities and to raising aspirations for underachieving groups.
- We will ensure the SIP role is recognised as being high skill, important, value adding, well supported, and career enhancing.

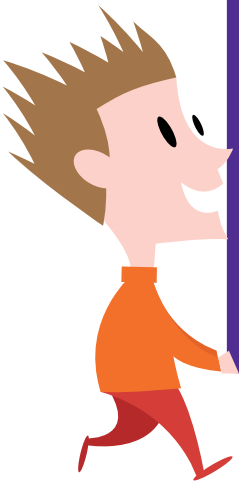
Case Study

Leicestershire - Brokering Support

Leicestershire is a large local authority with 287 schools and colleges, ranging from small village primaries with 50 or fewer pupils, to large community colleges with almost 2000 students.

The LA has been working to ensure that SIPs are fully able to identify the range of support that the school should seek and potential sources of this support. A web based system has been set up for SIPs and headteachers, which allows them to search for providers of support. The system is sub-divided into categories such as Leadership and Management; Teaching and Learning etc. The web address is www.leics.gov.uk/sips-brokerage.

SIPs have a simplified, hardcopy version of all the providers which they take on their visits to schools enabling them to signpost headteachers to appropriate support. Quality Assurance procedures within this system are in place. A provider is only entered onto the system if they have two recommendations from schools.



Case Study

Torbay - Brokering Support

Another smaller authority, Torbay, is working on ensuring that SIPs are fully aware of the support that can be brokered on the wider ECM agenda. SIPs will be able, in their discussion with headteachers, to use an electronic based resource. The resource will have hyperlinks to key officer details within the whole Children's Services Directorate, explaining their services and support they are able to offer schools.



Quality will be right at the heart of the role of the School Improvement Partner's work. This will need to be reflected in:

- A revised SIP person specification
 - A revised selection and accreditation process. We intend to develop a core, SIP accreditation programme incorporating the new approach to brokering and support and challenge on:
 - The wider outcomes of Every Child Matters for all children and young people
 - The progress and attainment of vulnerable groups, including learners working below age-related expectations
 - The accreditation and re- accreditation of new and existing SIPs to reflect the new role.
 - A licence to practise so that SIPs are reassessed to ensure their work is of a high enough standard.
 - A national register which will list which SIPs are best suited to working with particular types of school.
- School governors and headteachers having a greater involvement in the selection of their SIP.
 - The brokerage of support to schools, and the identification of quality assured providers of School Improvement support.
 - A new approach to the quality assurance and performance management of SIPs, which will be linked strongly to the outcomes of the school in which they are SIPs.

“Schools are central in helping to achieve this vision by ensuring an excellent experience and good outcomes for every child.”



Case Study

Lancashire - "Deep understanding" of SIPs

The LA is very large, with 82 secondary schools. There are two schools in an OfSTED category, 12 schools receiving support from the National Challenge and 27 schools in the Gaining Ground programme.

The identification of levels of support for schools is underpinned by a well developed system for monitoring their performance, tracking their progress and challenging them about their targets. The system draws on a wide range of telling data about attainment and progress to which a RAG system is applied. These arrangements are linked to the development plan for the whole service and to the performance objectives for SIPs and other LA staff, emphasising accountability and highlighting impact.

The SIP manager has established an excellent system for gathering and using intelligence from SIP reports. For example, following the identification of need last year, on this term's visit, SIPs have been provided with a comprehensive set of prompts and associated CPD about the quality of school tracking systems. The template for the SIP report has been revised to include both this and a section on predictions so that the LA is well placed to monitor the progress that schools are making.



Case Study

Stockport - CPD arrangements

Stockport is top quartile for attainment and progress in all subjects at KS2. There are no schools in an OfSTED category and few below floor.

CPD for their primary SIPs is a particular strength. Effective use of a blend of CPD activities for SIPs, includes whole team training and workshops, individual CPD to address PM objectives and access to web-based learning modules.

There is clear evidence of impact on outcomes and appreciation by schools of highly skilled SIPs with the ability to work with them, challenging their data, and drilling down to pupil level information. They have the ability to model successful learning walks and are able to accurately validate the school's self evaluation. CPD has also ensured each has a thorough understanding of programmes of support such as Improving Schools Programme (ISP), Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP), Every Child a Reader (ECaR).

This forward-looking LA is now extending their internal development model in which adults are learning and leaders seek to understand the nature of the learning. A recent 'day-away' for the team involved reflection at a higher level and an investigation into building on existing strengths towards sustainable improvements. It aims to develop and co-construct with schools a type of CPD which engages adult learners and supports leaders of learning.



Case Study

Coventry – Quality Assurance of SIPs

The LA serves a large urban area in the Midlands. There are presently no secondary schools in an Ofsted category (indeed the LA has not had a secondary school in a category for the past 6 years), there are presently 5 schools receiving support from the National Challenge (all of which rose above the floor target in 2009) and the LA has no schools that meet the criteria for the Gaining Ground programme.

The LA's programme for SIP and NCA development is outstanding. There is a clear and well documented quality assurance and performance management process and the LA regularly (twice yearly) seeks feedback from headteachers and governors on the performance of deployed SIPs and NCAs. The LA reviews the quality of SIP and NCA reports each term and provides regular (twice yearly) oral and written feedback to all deployed SIPs and NCAs on the quality of their reports. The LA has a published programme for paired visits (yearly) for all of its deployed SIPs and NCAs. Annual reviews are undertaken by a nominated officer (LA SIP manager or area lead) to ensure quality and to show evidence of impact from CPD and PM on the quality of provision in schools and on the achievement and progress of pupils.

Case Study

Hampshire - Performance Management of SIPs

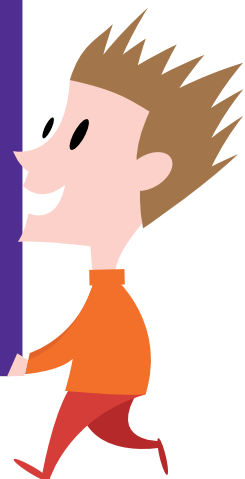
In this large LA, a well-constructed performance management policy for SIPs helps to ensure consistency and continued high standards of challenge and support across all schools.

Prior to the performance management meeting, independent evidence on the effectiveness of the work of each SIP is collated. Headteachers and Governors in up to one third of the schools covered by each SIP are contacted to provide feedback to a standard format on their perceptions of the SIP's effectiveness across various key aspects of the role. The aim is for every school to be contacted for formal feedback on the performance of their SIP within a three year cycle.

Information is also collated from the performance of each school covered, the quality assurance of the SIP's reports and observations drawn from the regular programme of shadowing SIP visits.

In addition, SIPs' own honest self-appraisal is encouraged by requiring them to rate the effectiveness of their own performance against the set of criteria drawn from the National Strategies Quality Standards. This process also helps SIPs draw out for themselves areas where they need further advice, support or training.

Careful collation of evidence from all sources plus the SIP's self-evaluation supports an agreed final assessment of performance against the relevant national Quality Standards and the formulation of a plan to address any weaknesses and also any training or development needs arising.



Local Authority roles and responsibilities

The emphasis of the model will be on schools self-improving supported by SIPs who are managed and supported by LAs.

LAs will continue to be responsible for commissioning, deploying and contracting with individual SIPs within the DCSF policy guidelines. They should match SIPs to schools, differentiated in inverse proportion to need, and reflecting each school's particular challenges. The SIP will be the main channel for LA communication about school improvement with the school, and they will need to work with other LA input such as Early Years Consultants.

LAs will need to provide SIPs with data across the ECM outcomes, provide training for SIPs about the local context, agenda and challenges, and set targets for maintained schools through SIPs. They should also provide improved guidance as to how all support will be commissioned, including that of wider services. LAs will be responsible for performance managing and quality assuring SIPs.

Co-ordination with other system leadership roles

There is the possibility of co-ordinating and aligning the training, CPD, designation/accreditation arrangements for SIPs to bring them in line with other system leadership roles. There are an increasing number of "system leadership" roles that are being undertaken by headteachers. These include roles such as National Leaders of Education, Local Leaders of Education, and the new role of Professional Partners – who from April 2010 will act as mentors for newly appointed heads. The National College is working to ensure that there is clarity around these roles and how the selection, training and CPD arrangement for each role can be planned and delivered coherently as a number of individuals will be undertaking multiple system leadership roles.

Partnership working

LAs should ensure that, wherever possible, Federations and Trusts or other school partnerships will have the same SIP in order that decisions can be made in the context of the partnership rather than just the individual school. This will allow partnership working to be properly appraised.

Specialist School Status

From spring 2010, SIPs will be responsible for making recommendations about specialist school status, which will cut out red tape and ensure a well-informed local decision.

The Specialist Schools Re-Designation Pilot is a small, targeted pilot exercise carried out during the Autumn 2009 term prior to devolving responsibility for taking decisions about schools' specialist status to SIPs nationally. The participating local authorities are Cambridgeshire, Coventry, Dorset, Newcastle and Redbridge. The pilot seeks to trial the new arrangements and national benchmarks for re-designation and to set out how LAs, schools and SIPs will work together to designate and re-designate specialist schools in their areas.

School Report Card and Framework for Excellence:

The School Report Card (short annual document showing headline performance information about a school) and Framework for Excellence (performance assessment tool for further education colleges and post-16 education and training providers who receive funding from the Learning and Skills Council) will be central to the work of SIPs. Together they are intended to be the single sources of data about a school pre and post 16 that SIPs will use. It is therefore vital to ensure that they reflect the information that would be most useful for SIPs to effectively carry out the enhanced role.

School Report Cards will change the way that schools' performance is reported and give more information on what schools do to support children's wider needs and progress, as well as their attainment and results. The School Report Card will show SIPs and others how schools contribute to the wider aims in Every Child Matters. It will allow SIPs to make fairer comparisons between the performance of schools with different intakes and challenges. The School Report Card will be introduced from Autumn 2011 following a consultation process to develop the detail, and as part of that consultation, we will want to explore how we can ensure that the School Report Card is of greatest value to SIPs. The link to the SRC prospectus is:

<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00664-2009>

The Framework for Excellence (FfE) will provide SIPs and others with the 16-19 provider level performance data for all post 16 institutions from 2010/11 onwards. It is a score card SIPs will use formed from a standard set of performance indicators that are agreed across the sector as giving a balanced picture of performance for post 16 education and training providers. Performance Indicators will include: Qualification Success Rates; Level 2 and Level 3 threshold indicators; Value added at level 3; Learner views; and Learner Destinations.

More information about Framework for Excellence can be found at:

<http://ffe.lsc.gov.uk/ffe/>

Non-Maintained Special Schools (NMSS)

NMSS are independent schools run by charities or charitable trusts and operate on a not for profit basis. There are currently 75 NMSSs spread throughout the country. All pupils will have statements of SEN, unless placed in the school for the purpose of assessing their SEN.

A trial of SIPs for NMSS has recently been concluded. The Evaluation Report from the NMSS SIP Pilot recommends the extension of the SIP programme to schools in the NMSS

sector, which would provide positive benefits for the sector as a whole. The NMSS SIP Pilot has determined that to implement an effective SIP process for the NMSS sector SIPs will need to be appointed that are independent of a LA. SIPs will still need to meet the same standards for accreditation and re-accreditation required for a LA SIP.

Benefits of the enhanced SIP model

This enhanced SIP model will:

- ensure a tailored and proportionate approach to encourage school self-improvement
- focus on the wider outcomes for children, not just achievement
- focus on the school's challenges based on a deep understanding of the school
- challenge and support the development of solutions and broker appropriate support from an improved understanding of the support available to schools locally and nationally
- challenge and support, then approve school improvement plans in underperforming schools

“This consultation is your chance to help shape the design of the new model.”



Consultation Questions

Enhanced SIP model:

- Are there any roles and responsibilities that you feel a SIP should have in addition to the revised roles and responsibilities?
- What do you think are the main benefits of the enhanced SIP programme? Please comment
- What do you think are the main challenges of the enhanced SIP programme? Please comment

Accreditation:

- Do you think that SIPs working with the most challenging schools need to be accredited to higher standards?
- Should there be any flexibility in the accreditation criteria of SIPs for candidates who are exceptionally strong in particular areas?
- Do you think that a large proportion of secondary SIPs should have headship experience?

License to Practice and SIP terms:

- How long should a licence to practise last, to ensure SIPs are assessed frequently enough to ensure quality but not too frequently that it disrupts their work?
- It is suggested in the White Paper that SIP terms could be reduced from 5 to 3 years; do you think 3 years is long enough for SIPs to build a productive relationship with a headteacher and their school?

Matching SIPs to school categories they are best suited to:

- Should a SIP be able to overlap into different categories or should they be matched and remain in a strictly defined category? Please comment.
- Given that SIPs will be matched to the school categories they are most suited to, should a change in school category mean a change in SIP?

- Should SIPs matched to outstanding schools have more SIP days than outstanding schools receive at the moment (as is intended with all other schools)?

Support for SIPs:

- Is there any additional support that you think SIPs will need in order to fulfil the revised roles and responsibilities in addition to the support that has been outlined?
- Should SIPs be given any additional support and training to enable them to focus on helping schools make better use of resources?

Continuous professional development (CPD):

- Do you think that SIP training should be differentiated to match the category of school the SIP will be supporting? If your answer is yes, do you think that SIPs supporting the most challenging schools should receive more training?
- Given that National College will provide initial CPD for SIPs, should SIPs receive ongoing CPD about the local context, issues, and priorities from the local authority?
- The schools within a partnership may belong to different categories. How could a SIP be supported by CPD to serve the schools' different needs effectively?
- Do you support the proposals to co-ordinate and align the training, CPD, designation/accreditation arrangements for SIPs to bring them in line with the arrangements for other system leadership roles? If so, how could this be achieved?

SIP Quality assurance:

- In addition to the measures set out to ensure SIP quality such as re-accreditation, better performance management etc, are there any other measures which should be taken? Please comment.
- Should it be the responsibility of local authorities to ensure that headteachers and Governors be asked systematically to feed back on the quality of the SIP and their support?

Brokering effective support:

- How can we ensure that SIPs are effective in brokering school improvement support? What additional support do you think SIPs will need to fulfil the specific brokering role?
- What core provision would you want to see in a national offer of support from assured providers?
- Would a central repository of school-to-school and other support, such as an e-Directory, help the identification and access to improvement support?
- How easy is it for SIPs to draw locally on effective school-to-school support and other support provision in order to offer meaningful brokerage to schools? How could this be improved?

Local authorities:

- What is your opinion on SIPs being the main agent on performance challenge between schools and local authorities, i.e. having a gatekeeping role meaning an end to the duplicatory practice of sending in link advisers?
- What could be done to encourage local authorities to respect the gatekeeping role and ensure that all communications go through the SIP?

Governing Body:

- How would you see the SIP working alongside the governing body? How should SIPs report to governors and how often?
- Should there be any changes made to the role of the SIP in advising the Governing Body with regard to the performance management of the headteacher?

School Report Card (SRC) and Framework for Excellence:

- Taking into account the revised SIP roles and responsibilities, what indicators on the SRC would be most useful for the SIP to work effectively? For example?
- Should the SRC provide an opportunity for SIPs to provide a qualitative description of the school, to balance the quantitative data on the SRC? If so, should this be written by the SIP; or written by the school and agreed with the SIP?
- Taking into account the revised SIP roles and responsibilities, what indicators on the Framework for Excellence would be most useful for the SIP to work effectively? For example?

Non Maintained Special Schools (NMSS):

- Would it would be beneficial to extend the School Improvement Partner arrangements to schools in the NMSS sector? If yes should these arrangements mirror, although not necessarily be the same as, those for schools in the maintained sector?
- Should SIPs for schools in the NMSS sector have some specific knowledge and understanding of the sector which goes above and beyond that of other SIPs?
- Should SIP reports for NMSSs be made available to placing local authorities as well as to the DCSF as the approving and monitoring body for NMSSs?

If you would like to respond to this consultation, please visit www.nationalcollege.org.uk/sipsconsultation-questionnaire

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