Inspecting the effectiveness of partnerships

Briefing for section 5 inspection

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| This briefing provides information about schools’ partnerships.  |

Age group: All

Published: September 2013

Reference no: 090203

# Introduction

1. This briefing provides information about schools’ partnerships. It should be read in conjunction with *The framework for school inspection[[1]](#footnote-1)* and the *School inspection handbook.[[2]](#footnote-2)*
2. Schools are involved in many different and often complex partnership arrangements and may ascribe some of their improvements to this work. Any partnership activity evaluated as part of the judgement on leadership and management should have discernable outcomes in relation to the key judgements. Schools may suggest their partnership work is an important means of overcoming barriers to learning, tackling more challenging behaviour and safety issues and a means of extending the curriculum.

## Schools and partnerships

1. The school may be investing a great deal of staff time and other resources in partnership activity and this investment should be helping to improve outcomes for pupils. Many schools will invest a high level of staff time and effort in the early stages of partnership work in developing and planning future activities.
2. Most partnership activity is likely to bring benefits for the pupils but schools should be wary of spurious partnership arrangements which have no discernable impact on improving outcomes, or on improving the quality of provision and leadership and management.
3. Some partnership activity will have a direct and positive impact on pupils’ outcomes. Examples of this might be: improvements in pupils’ cultural and social development through a partnership with a school in a less well developed country; improvements in the attendance and behaviour of potentially vulnerable pupils through alternative provision, resulting from a behaviour partnership with other schools and the education welfare service; improvements in the attendance and progress of traveller children through effective distance learning; and, family support provided in partnership with the traveller education service.
4. Other partnership activity may help to improve outcomes indirectly by developing aspects of provision and leadership and management, which then improve outcomes. Examples might be: a cluster of schools working together to improve the quality of middle management through shared professional development arrangements; extending the curriculum choices through a diploma consortium; working with a number of external agencies to improve the quality, care and support for potentially vulnerable pupils.
5. Where pupils regularly attend another institution for some of their provision, schools should ensure that effective procedures for safeguarding are in place. If pupils are taught in other institutions, the school should know how well those pupils are achieving.
6. Many schools will be involved in partnership activity where they are supporting the work of one or more partner schools. This work is not relevant to the inspection unless the school being inspected can demonstrate some benefits, for example in improving aspects of leadership and management and teaching.
7. Annex 1 provides further possible sources of evidence from partnership working which may contribute to the key judgements and overall effectiveness.

## Annex 1: Examples of evidence which contributes to other judgements as well as those for the effectiveness of partnership activity

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| Sources and types of evidence related to partnerships. These contribute to all of the key judgements and how well the school promotes the pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development  |
| Embedded improvements in achievement, teaching and aspects of leadership and management a result of a partnership with a successful academy or school.*Evidence: rising standards of attainment; specific improvements in teaching such as questioning, use of assessment and marking; more sharply focused self-evaluation leading to more rapid improvements in outcomes.* |
| Improvements in attainment, progress, attendance, behaviour for groups and individuals taught off site on courses provided through a 14–19 diploma consortium. *Evidence: attendance and progress records of pupils taught offsite made available by the school; discussion with pupils and, separately, staff, about safeguarding in offsite provision; fixed term exclusions data; school disciplinary records; written comments in pupils’ and parents’ questionnaires.* |
| Consistent and high quality use of assessment to support learning as a result of an ongoing partnership, in which the school plays a major role, between a cluster of schools or academies or with the local authority focusing on professional development. *Evidence: focused lesson observation, scrutiny of pupils work and teacher records*. |
| Case studies of potentially vulnerable pupils whose achievement and behaviour have improved as result of interventions by key partners such as mentors from the business community, the educational welfare service or members of community groups supporting reading.*Evidence: scrutiny of pupils’ records with key staff including input from external partners; discussion with potentially vulnerable pupils; observation of lessons including potentially vulnerable pupils to assess the impact of provision on, for example, learning and behaviour.* |
| Improved attendance and progress of pupils who participate in a family learning programme, set up through the school’s extended service provision, which supports parents and children from a disadvantaged section of the local community to develop literacy skills.*Evidence: discussion with pupils and parents; scrutiny of the school’s monitoring records.* |
| Improved test results in mathematics as a result of regular teaching by a secondary mathematics specialist and further support for primary teachers from the mathematics specialist school.*Evidence: test results; scrutiny of pupils’ work; discussion with teaching staff.* |
| Cluster arrangements enhance the curriculum by enabling specialist teaching for physical education and French to take place during class teachers’ PPA time. Pupils enjoy the different activities.*Evidence: lesson observation; discussion with pupils.* |
| An independent – state school partnership enables pupils to develop leadership and teamwork skills through group projects focusing on issues in the local community.*Evidence: discussions with pupils; lesson observations.* |

1. *The framework for school inspection* (120100), Ofsted, 2013; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120100](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120100). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *School inspection handbook* (120101), Ofsted, 2013; [www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120101](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/120101). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)