School Improvement Partners

Primary *and* **Secondary** *National Strategies*

School Improvement Partner reports

Advice and guidance on the writing and quality assurance of School Improvement Partner reports

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children, schools and families**

School Improvement Partner reports

Contents

Section A:
The purpose of the SIP report guidance

The purpose of providing guidance on the writing and quality assurance of School Improvement Partner (SIP) reports is to ensure that the SIP programme has the maximum impact on schools, contributing to their effectiveness and raising the achievement of all learners. This guidance is intended to provide clarity about the quality standards expected in SIP reports and the processes which need to be put in place by SIP managers and Regional SIP Co-ordinators. This is to provide quality assurance and quality control in the reports in order to ensure that:

■ there is consistency in report writing within and across local authorities (LAs);

■ quality standards are consistently met.

The guidance in this document draws together the information already published in:

■ *The SIP Brief;*

■ *The SIP Quality Management Framework;*

■ *The National Guidance on SIP reports;*

■ *The School Improvement Partner Programme: Advice and Guidance for Local Authorities.*

Current versions of the above documents can be accessed through the SIP Web Portal www.sipsweb.org.uk

Sections B and C of this document identify the roles and responsibilities that SIP managers and Regional SIP Co-ordinators have in providing induction, training, and support for SIPs, and quality management in the production of SIP reports.

The National Strategies have, through a working party of LA SIP managers and SIPs, developed a national framework for SIP reports to provide:

■ general guidance and principles for writing reports;

■ a structural approach to aligning the annual report to the visit reports;

■ more detailed guidance on information to be included in the report.

Sections D and E of this document introduce the national framework and exemplify its use in SIP report writing.

Section F focuses on good practice in LA support for SIPs and quality management in the production of SIP reports.

An annotated report template and a secondary SIP report exemplar are provided in the appendices.

Section B:
Principles and general guidance

1.   Audience and purpose

The SIP reports should provide the headteacher, governors and LA with a clear view of:

■   the strengths of the school;

■   the quality of the school's self-evaluation;

■   the priorities for school improvement;

■   the school's intended actions, with timescales, to address these priorities;

■   an evaluation of the impact of the school's improvement actions, including the effectiveness of any external support purchased by the school, or provided by the local authority;

■   the school's statutory and other targets, and progress towards them;

■   progress since the last meetings and actions agreed for the next;

■   the school's categorisation within the LA's Schools Causing Concern (SCC) policy.

Additionally, SIP reports may form a part of the evidence base that a school will present to Ofsted during an inspection. Indeed it is increasingly likely that schools will be asked for their SIP's reports by Ofsted during their time on site.

The table below summarises the range of audiences and purposes for which the report is intended and thereby the importance of achieving the quality standards for writing, in terms of clarity, evaluation, accuracy and sensitivity.

For whom is the report written?	For what purpose?
Headteacher and SIP after each visit	To form a record of the visit and to remind both parties of actions to be taken. To provide written evidence of agreed evaluations, priorities, actions, support and challenge provided. To form the starting point for the next visit.
Governors (possibly after each visit but certainly annually)	To provide a professional and independent view on the school's progress and areas for development, quality of self-evaluation and actions planned.
LA, school improvement and National Strategies support teams (after each visit)	SIP reports form the key information that an LA has about its schools. The LA will use them to: ■ determine how to allocate support and intervention to its schools; ■ alert the LA to causes for concern to be addressed in its schools; ■ inform the LA's discussions with local managing inspectors.
OfSTED inspection teams	Reports should be made available to Ofsted teams as part of the inspection.
Wider publication	SIP reports are confidential and are not published. Under certain circumstances their release under the Freedom of Information Act may be prevented. However, it is recommended that SIPs should always bear in mind that reports may be made available more widely.

Overall, a SIP report should provide a clear record of the school's improvement journey, the support it has had along the way, and the impact it has made.

2. Quality standards

The SIP Quality Management Framework provides clear quality standards for SIP reports, which are summarised below.

SIP reports:

- avoid duplicating the school's self-evaluation form (SEF) or an inspection report;

- are:

  – timely;
  – accurate and precise, identifying the school's response to all issues emerging from the data;
  – informative;
  – evaluative;
  – concise.

- identify key strengths, priorities and strategies for improvement;

- provide a judgement on the robustness of the school self-evaluation (SSE), including the strength of the school's evidence base, and only provide judgements beyond this where the SIP has direct evidence;

- form an agenda for action for the school, noting progress since the last meeting and agreed action before the next;

- record the school's targets and progress towards achieving them;

- are direct yet sensitive, and add value to the school's improvement processes and impact upon outcomes for children.

3. Quality assurance

The SIP Quality Management Framework also identifies LA practices that quality assure the production of SIP reports.

- LA report templates provide guidance suitable for producing the required outcomes as outlined in *The SIP Brief*.

- LA performance management procedures identify areas of weakness in SIPs' report writing and inform the planning of appropriate provision of continuing professional development (CPD).

- LA induction provides first-level training on report requirements.

- CPD in report writing is provided by the LA in conjunction with the National Strategies.

The following sections in this document provide more detailed guidance on quality management, and on effective SIP report writing using the national reporting framework, and report template to promote a consistent and quality-assured approach to the reporting process.

Section C:
Roles and responsibilities in the quality management of SIP reports

1.   The role of the SIP manager

The SIP manager's role in leading and managing the SIP programme is central to its effectiveness. The quality and impact of SIP reports are highly dependent upon a clear understanding of the SIP role by all stakeholders, and upon the alignment of the SIP programme to the LA support and intervention functions for school improvement. The evidence collected from across LAs confirms that good practice in the production and quality assurance of SIP reports is embedded within effective systems and procedures for the management of the whole SIP programme, within an effective school improvement strategy, and where the SIP manager is committed to the programme within the spirit and intent of the *New Relationship with Schools*.

Whilst the role and tasks of the SIP manager are outlined in detail in the *Advice and Guidance for Local Authorities* document, the effectiveness with which those responsibilities are discharged will impact upon the success of the SIP programme and consequently the quality of the reports. It is the SIP manager's responsibility to ensure that the programme has an impact on raising attainment. This includes acting upon recommendations made in SIP reports and ensuring that the programme is aligned to the National Strategies support. As part of their responsibilities, the SIP manager supports and quality-assures SIP reports so that they accurately inform all stakeholders about school performance, progress and improvement priorities. Specific responsibilities for ensuring the quality of the SIP reports are outlined below.

The SIP manager is responsible for the quality assurance and quality control of SIP reports as set out in *The SIP Advice and Guidance for Local Authorities* and detailed in *The SIP Quality Management Framework*.

The SIP manager is responsible for the SIP's induction, professional development and support, which will include giving guidance about what is expected in the SIP report and the provision of a named contact to answer any queries and provide advice. As part of this process the SIP manager should:

■ provide templates with guidance suitable for producing the required outcomes, including guidelines and prompts;

■ have performance management procedures in place to monitor reports and to identify areas of weakness in SIPs' report writing;

■ provide SIPs with feedback about the quality of their report writing;

■ provide induction training on report requirements;

■ provide CPD in report writing;

■ seek feedback from headteachers about their perceptions of the process and the quality that they are experiencing;

■ make explicit the LA's expectation about how the report should be written and delivered to governors.

2.   The role of the Regional SIP Co-ordinator

The National Strategies Regional SIP Co-ordinators are responsible for working with LAs in each region to ensure a robust and high-impact SIP programme in every LA. As part of this process they will:

■ monitor SIP reports by evaluating a sample of school improvement partners' reports, including triangulation with school data, to ensure that relevant issues are being addressed by SIPs;

■ additionally evaluate reports that:

– relate to complaints about a school or an LA;

– relate to schools that are causing concern to Ofsted or the LA;

– the LA or SIP believes should be brought to the SIPCo's attention.

■ provide feedback to LAs and SIP managers from the monitoring of SIP reports.

Section D: The national SIP report framework

1. Introduction

The national report framework developed by the National Strategies, in partnership with LAs as part of *The National Guidance on SIP Reports*, enables a SIP to build up the annual report from the reports completed following SIP visits during the school year.

The framework has the following distinctive features.

- It **builds throughout the year into the annual report for governors**. There is no need for an additional report – indeed the production of such **an additional report could be regarded as undesirable**.

- It reflects the **role of the SIP** in *The SIP Brief* and the *New Relationship with Schools*.

- It **focuses upon the school's self-evaluation** rather than asking SIPs to make independent judgements about the school.

- It provides an **ongoing record of the SIP's engagement with the school** – showing clearly what has already been discussed, actions and progress and what is yet to come.

- It is **flexible** in that it does not impose a particular order on the cycle of SIP engagement with the school, and enables it to follow its own agenda with the SIP.

- It **avoids checklists**.

2. Using the report framework

Figure 1, on page 9, shows a representation of the whole menu of sections available in the report framework and indicates how some of these are selected for use by the SIP, in this case, for a spring term visit. During this visit the SIP will be looking at self-evaluation and improvement planning as a key focus, and verifying that standards and attainment have been fully dealt with during the autumn. Any remarks on standards for this visit are expected to come up as a result of the discussion of action points from the previous meeting. Similarly there is a range of other sections left out for this visit. Other visits would include some sections not covered by this visit and leave out some of those included here. During the course of the year each section would be completed on one or possibly more than one visit.

Figure 2, on page 10, shows how the SIP annual report to governors may be created by pasting together the relevant sections from all the visits during the year. Having done this, the SIP will need to fill in the section labelled 9b 'Progress towards achieving the agreed priorities', which will be an overview of the progress the school has made during the year.

Appendix 1 provides a suggested template for SIP reports aligned to the report framework described above, with annotated summary guidance.

Appendix 2 provides exemplars of a completed SIP visit report and subsequent governors' annual report in the secondary phase.

The next section examines each section of the reporting framework, and the associated report proforma, and provides guidance and examples of report writing following the principles outlined earlier.
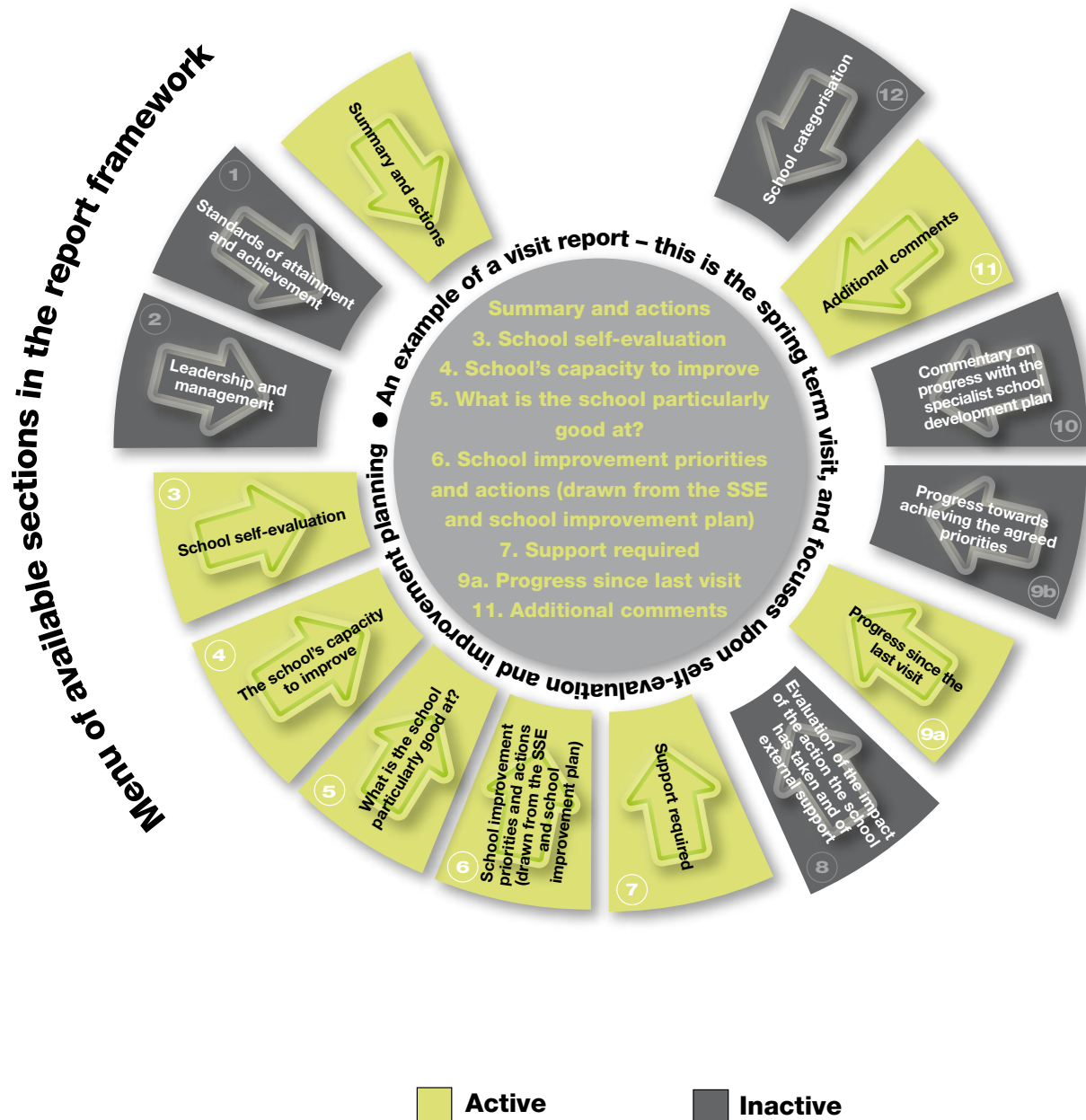
Figure 1: Creating an individual visit report

Menu of available sections in the report framework

1. Standards of attainment and achievement
2. Leadership and management
3. School self-evaluation
4. The school's capacity to improve
5. What is the school particularly good at?
6. School improvement priorities and actions (drawn from the SSE and school improvement plan)
7. Support required
8. Evaluation of the impact of the action the school has taken and of external support
9a. Progress since the last visit
9b. Progress towards achieving the agreed priorities
10. Commentary on progress with the specialist school development plan
11. Additional comments
12. School categorisation

An example of a visit report – this is the spring term visit, and focuses upon self-evaluation and improvement planning

Summary and actions
3. School self-evaluation
4. School's capacity to improve
5. What is the school particularly good at?
6. School improvement priorities and actions (drawn from the SSE and school improvement plan)
7. Support required
9a. Progress since last visit
11. Additional comments

Active   Inactive

Figure 2: Creating the annual report to governors

Menu of available sections in the report framework

At the end of the year the SIP can choose the relevant sections to place into the annual report to governors

1. Standards of attainment and achievement
2. Leadership and management
3. School self-evaluation
4. School's capacity to improve
5. What is the school particularly good at?
6. School improvement priorities and actions (drawn from the SSE and school improvement plan)
7. Support required
8. Evaluation of the impact of the action the school has taken and of external support
9b. Progress towards achieving the agreed priorities
10. Commentary on progress with the specialist school development plan
12. School categorisation

- Summary and actions
- 1 Standards of attainment and achievement
- 2 Leadership and management
- 3 School self-evaluation
- 4 The school's capacity to improve
- 5 What is the school particularly good at?
- 6 School improvement priorities and actions (drawn from the SSE and school improvement plan)
- 7 Support required
- 8 Evaluation of the impact of the action the school has taken and of external support
- 9a Progress since the last visit
- 9b Progress towards achieving the agreed priorities
- 10 Commentary on progress with the specialist school development plan
- 11 Additional comments
- 12 School categorisation

Active **Inactive**

Section E:
Guidance on writing a SIP report

This section follows the report framework in *The National Guidance on SIP Reports*, and provides guidance and examples from SIP reports for each section of the report framework.

Section 1 – Standards of attainment and achievement

The SIP should provide an objective view of the school's performance data by considering its most recent national test results, trends over time and data on other pupil achievement and well-being. The SIP should record the agreed evaluation of standards in the school, divided by key stage and other groupings in the school. For example:

■ boys;

■ girls;

■ pupils of different abilities;

■ different ethic minority groups;

■ vulnerable children, such as those with special educational needs (SEN) or looked after children.

Where practice is good this is underpinned by rich and detailed data provided by the school and LA. A SIP should analyse what this data says about the performance and ambition of he school.

The SIP's commentary on this data should be placed in the context of the SSE, and should not be a lengthy report on performance that reproduces the school's SEF. Reporting should be by exception, as when the SIP reaches a different conclusion to the school, or where as a result of discussion the school and the SIP reach a new, shared understanding of interpretation of the data. The SIP should refer to data about the attainment and achievement of the pupils to whom the school may not have referred in the SEF, such as any groups that are performing particularly well, or who appear to be underperforming. It is this analysis of performance that is important in this section. Points should be brief, based on evidence, to the point, evaluative and not wordy or descriptive.

The SIP should use this section to comment upon how well the school is addressing the range of outcomes identified in *Every Child Matters* (ECM), including attendance and, if the LA requires it, levels of exclusions.

Examples

Secondary

The school accurately assesses Key Stage 4 standards as good and progress as satisfactory. Standards overall, including the 5+ A*–C measure, are in line with national averages and are improving, and standards in English are significantly above the national average. However, the progress pupils make from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 is significantly below average. Generally the progress in both English and mathematics is in line with the national average.

The school rightly notes that there is little gender difference in the achievement in mathematics and science and that boys' achievement in English is improving at a greater rate than is the case with boys nationally. However, the school must consider why some of the most able pupils in Year 9 do not go on to achieve the highest grades, and why many pupils who gain a level 5 in mathematics and science in Year 9 do not go on to get a grade C at GCSE.

Commentary

In this example the SIP places the standards analysis within the school self-evaluation, but draws attention to the achievement of groups of students, including the significant under achievement of some groups of students, which the school has not highlighted.

Primary

Comprehensive analysis of SAT results is carried out using the QCA Diagnostic Analysis and the school's own Tracking Progress analysis (based on point scores yearly). The assessment coordinator has significantly increased the use of PAT with good effect. Staff are more focused on using assessment and tracking to determine groups and intervention in Year 2. The impact of this can be seen in the results, which are significantly higher than national averages. There is no significant difference between performance in the three subjects. The performance of boys and girls is similar at L2+, but girls performed more highly at L2b+ in reading and writing, as did boys in mathematics. At L3, girls performed more highly in all subjects.

Commentary

This example refers to the evidence by which the school has arrived at its judgements of standards, and to the impact of improved assessment and tracking on the school standards. It also draws attention to the attainment of different groups of students in different subjects. Note that there is no need to list results here or repeat verbatim what is provided in the school's SEF.

Section 2 – Leadership and management

The SIP should record his/her evaluation of leadership and management in the school. This evaluation should highlight any issues relating to the different levels of leadership and management, specifically the headteacher, the governors, other senior managers and middle management. The SIP should ensure the school's data and evidence can support their judgement. If the SIP and the school do not agree on the judgement, the SIP should record this and the reason for the disparity.

Examples

1. *The SIP noted that under the 'Leadership and management' section of the school's SEF, the section 'Leadership by governors' emphasised the availability and congenial support offered by governors, but also noted that no clear evidence was cited to indicate that the governing body is contributing to setting the strategic direction of the school and fulfilling its role as a 'critical friend'. The SIP advised that the governing body should complete a review and assessment of its effectiveness on an annual basis and put in place a training programme for governors.*

2. *The school's self-evaluation accurately grades leadership and management as good. The leadership team and governors recognise that for the school to become outstanding, they will need to ensure that pupils progress by at least two levels in Key Stage 2, and have implemented strategies to bring this about. All staff are now very committed to improving overall teaching and learning, and assessment for learning.*

Commentary

In both examples the SIP refers to the school's evaluation of leadership and management, but should then go on to confirm or challenge the accuracy of the judgements made on the basis of the evidence provided by the school. Note that in example 1 the SIP can find no evidence of the way in which the governors discharge some of their key leadership duties, and goes on to offer advice on making progress. In the second example the SIP confirms the school's grade and provides some evidence to support the judgement.

On a question of style, a more appropriate tone may be achieved if the SIP referred to him or herself neither in the first nor the third person, rather using the objective form 'It was noted that'.

Section 3 – School self-evaluation (SSE)

The SIP should assess the accuracy and robustness of the school's self-evaluation. This should include the effectiveness of leadership and management, the quality of teaching and learning, and the efficacy of the school's policies and core systems for pupil assessment and tracking, curriculum development, performance management, CPD and behaviour management. This is a critical area of the report and provides the opportunity to draw out any issues arising from the school's self-evaluation. In particular the SIP should draw attention to any areas where the evidence base for the SSE does not support the conclusions reached by the school. It should consider:

■ whether the SSE has regard to the five ECM outcomes;
■ whether there is evidence of pupil, parental and community satisfaction with the school;
■ how well the school is tailoring its curriculum and teaching to meet the particular needs of individual pupils.

If the SIP and school disagree on any of the grades the school has decided upon in its SEF, then this should be recorded here.

It is important to recognise that SIPs do not reach their own judgements on areas of the school's activity in the manner an Ofsted inspector would. Rather, their role is to examine the evidence and comment upon whether or not the school's own view is supported by a robust approach to gathering, interpreting and evaluating evidence. Where the SIP and the school have been unable to agree on the school's judgement because there is insufficient evidence to support that judgement or because the evidence does not support the judgement, this should be recorded.

Examples

1. *The supported school review by the LA confirmed most aspects of the school's self-evaluation. However, although the school's own lesson observations show that over 60% of the teaching is good or better, this was not supported by the school's review nor by the children's comments that work in Years 3 and 4 was too easy and that they never did anything new in ICT. The levels of achievement also point to weaker teaching than the school's judgements suggest. Consequently it was agreed that a more accurate grade for teaching would be satisfactory, but that the SEF narrative should record that there are good features of teaching in the Foundation Stage, in the core subjects in Years 1 and 2, and in mathematics and science in the upper juniors.*

2. *The school's own data indicates that 75% of the lessons were good or better. This seems to be inconsistent with students' outcomes (which were 'satisfactory') and the school's overall judgement on the quality of teaching (which is also 'satisfactory'). Where such discrepancies exist, the school needs to evaluate the reasons for them, and to review the impact and effectiveness of its intervention strategies.*

3. *In relation to pupil performance and target-setting, the school is very thorough in its self-evaluation. It knows exactly where it is, and is aware of what it needs to do to improve. It identifies clear actions for achieving this. The school's procedures to collate evidence to support its judgements are robust and well established, and includes a systematic use of data at both school and subject level to track pupil progress, and comprehensive monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment. According to this evidence the current quality of school self-evaluation is good.*

Commentary

In these examples the SIPs either support or challenge aspects of the school's self-evaluation, based on the evidence provided. In example 1, a supported school review has confirmed some of the school self-review but not the judgement on teaching and learning, and evidence for this is cited. Note that after discussion the school has agreed to change its judgement, indicating that the SIP has helped it to improve in this area.

Example 2 refers to contradictory evidence relating to the quality of teaching and learning, indicating that the evidence provided conflicts with school's judgement and needs to be reviewed. However, in example 3 the school has adequate evidence to support its judgement on pupil performance and the targets set. Note the comment according to this evidence' the SIP considers the school's self-evaluation to be good. It is beyond a SIP's role to seek to validate the evidence presented. However, if the SIP believes there is insufficient evidence, or the school is unable to be convincing about the accuracy of the evidence, then such deficiencies should be clearly identified.

Section 4 – The school's capacity to improve

In this section the SIP should reach a view about the school's capacity to improve, drawing upon the evaluations in the sections above on leadership and management and school self-evaluation, in combination with the headings included in this section.

Record of improvement. The SIP should assess the improvement in standards and achievement over recent years, and the impact of any school improvement activity that the school has undertaken. Are the leadership team and governing body choosing and effectively implementing high-impact, sustainable strategies for school improvement?

Improvement planning. The SIP should assess the quality of the school's development planning, including whether:

- the number and scope of priorities are appropriate and relevant to the school's development needs;
- it is rooted in the SSE;
- the school's plan expresses the strategies the school is actually using;
- the plan sets out a realistic approach to meeting its priorities and is deliverable;
- it is focused on tackling underperformance and other areas of weakness;
- it is based on clear outcomes, with milestone targets attached to specific dates and clear accountabilities;
- it identifies the external support the school needs;
- it is monitored and evaluated.

Overall capacity to improve. The SIP reaches a view based on the quality of leadership and management, the school's record of improvement and the quality of its planning for improvement, linked to its self-evaluation.

Examples

1. *The school's capacity to improve is good. This is a good and improving school. The restructured leadership team has demonstrated clearly its ability to plan and implement changes, which have led to improved student progress and standards of attainment. These include the implementation of more rigorous subject self-review systems, more effective lesson evaluation and support, and a pupil tracking system that is now used effectively at subject and classroom level. There is increased capacity evident at both individual and collective levels within the leadership team and within the group of middle leaders.*

2. *The school's capacity to improve is now satisfactory. The senior leadership team's (SLT) redrafting of section 5 of the SEF shows a more accurate view of the school's provision linked to targets within the school improvement plan to address the issues identified. However, although some progress is being made towards achieving the priorities agreed last term, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is still not sufficiently robust to provide evidence of improved quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 2. There is further work to be done especially within the lower juniors, which will also impact on boys' underachievement. The governors are aware of these issues and have plans to provide additional resources in the new financial year.*

Commentary

In both examples the SIPs make a judgement on the school's capacity to improve, followed by a reference to the supporting evidence. In example 1 this is based on the leadership team's record of planning and implementing improvement and an increased leadership capacity at different levels in the school. In example 2 the SIP identifies improvements to self-assessment, planning, and evidence of progress to support the judgement, and also identifies areas that remain issues for improvement.

Section 5 – What is the school particularly good at?

The SIP should determine whether there is sufficient evidence to support the school's evaluation of its strength's and record the strengths only where there is evidence to corroborate this evaluation. Are there aspects of practice that could be shared with others beyond the school so as to contribute to raising attainment and achievement more widely? These should be recorded here.

Examples

1. The school's strengths are in

   - The development of a broader curriculum including a focus on creativity. The school is seeking to build on the good practice established in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 by introducing an enriched curriculum into the junior years. The impact on standards will be analysed over the coming 18 months.

   - The pastoral support for all pupils.

2. It was agreed that the school has the following main strengths

   - Strong attention to the views of learners and the developing student voice.

   - Good and improving processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

   - Good and improving achievement at Key Stage 3 and A level.

   - Improved standards in mathematics.

   - Improved performance at GCSE 1A*-G and 5A*-G indicating inclusive approach.

   - Successful establishment of new school.

   - Strong and positive ethos established.

   - Leadership sets clear direction and high expectations.

Commentary

Neither of these are good practice examples but they are commonly used. Example 1 cites the development of a broader curriculum but is unable to provide evidence of impact for a further 18 months. In example 2 all of these may not be strengths, as in outstanding practice to be shared with others. Some of the 'strengths' are not strengths *per se*, as in 'improved standards in mathematics', but may have been achieved through a strength, such as strong leadership in mathematics. In reporting, the SIP should be clear as to what level of strength the report is referring to. There are essentially two levels of strength: the first refers to those areas of the school's work that are strongest (that is a relative judgement within the school), and the second to those elements that are truly outstanding and worthy of sharing beyond the school (that is an absolute judgement).

Section 6 – School improvement priorities and actions (drawn from the SSE and school improvement plan)

From the SSE, the school will have identified its priorities for further improvement. As a result of the discussion with the SIP these are then agreed. The SIP should determine with the school whether the right priorities have been identified, based on an assessment of the progress of different groups and the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Too many priorities will impact on the school's capacity to deliver sustained improvement. For specialist schools there is evidence that objectives and targets in the school's community work are the result of consultation and research. The SIP should record these priorities along with an indication of the school's intended actions.

Examples

Secondary

1. *Improve teachers' planning so that lessons are precisely focused on what pupils are going to learn, activities are more challenging, and pupils are better engaged and actively involved in assessing their own progress.*

2. *Improve leadership and management by strengthening the procedures for evaluating the work of the school to increase consistency across all subjects and teachers.*

3. *Ensure an appropriate religious education course is delivered in Years 10 to 11 so that the curriculum meets its statutory requirements.*

Primary

1. *The quality of teaching in all subjects. The role of the subject leaders will be reviewed and developed in order to support improvement in teaching.*

2. *Improvement in science through a focus on increasing pupils' science vocabulary, more practical experiments and displaying work. A science week is to be held in March.*

3. *Improvement in mathematics through embedding tracking and target-setting, and by the subject coordinator working closely with class teachers to identify which pupils are not making sufficient progress, and planning for their next steps.*

Commentary

In both examples the priorities are very clearly set out and set alongside the agreed actions to be taken by the schools to ensure improvement in these areas. Note that there are few key priorities. If a school sets out too many key priorities the SIP should help the school to narrow the focus of its priorities by choosing just those that will have the greatest impact.

Section 7 – Support required

The SIP should record here the external support the school will require in order to meet its priorities. Such support may be paid for by the school or provided by the LA. In the latter case the SIP is not in a position to commit the LA, so the wording should suggest it is support that is needed, requested or recommended. The SIP can support the school in identifying the external support that is needed.

Examples

Primary	Commentary
1. *Support from the LA science consultant through a joint book scrutiny and a review of end of Key Stage science test results.* 2. *Support from the LA Mathematics and Intensifying Support Programme (ISP) consultant with the use of ISP techniques to support accurate tracking and target-setting and therefore raising expectations for achievement across writing, mathematics and science.*	This primary example sets out two clearly identified areas of support relating to monitoring, tracking and target-setting, identifies who might provide it and suggests how the support might bring about improvement. However, this may be read as committing the authority to providing it. This section would be stronger if it identified support that the school might purchase if the LA were not in a position to provide the requested support.
Secondary *The school requires the following forms of external support, in particular* 1. *Additional adviser/consultant time to support school self-evaluation, particularly lesson observations.* 2. *A high level of Secondary National Strategy (SNS) consultancy support (with a critical edge).* 3. *Support re management/use of data.* 4. *Support for the head of technology to enable him to develop a more appropriate and challenging Key Stage 3 curriculum. For this the specialist technology college has been identified as a valuable source of support, and the head of the technology faculty there has already agreed to an initial meeting with a view to setting up a programme of support.*	**Commentary** This secondary example is less effective. It is not clear for which subjects the SNS consultancy support is required, or from whom the data management support may be received and for what purpose. Expected support outcomes would be useful. However, the final example of support for the secondary school does involve the identification of support from an external source, which the SIP has helped to broker.

Section 8 – Evaluation of the impact of the action the school has taken and of external support

The SIP should record here the shared evaluation of the impact of the measures the school has taken to improve, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of any external support that the school has purchased, or that the LA has provided for the school. Where it is particularly effective, attention should be drawn to the features of effective practice. Where it is not effective, the reasons for this lack of effectiveness should be identified.

Examples

1. *The acting headteacher stated that a training programme for subject co-ordinators had made a positive impact on their understanding of data and their lesson evaluation judgements. She reported that they too had made an increased contribution to the self-review process, for example by providing regular opportunities to observe teaching and monitor learning assessed against Ofsted criteria.*

2. *It was reported that the use of a consultant to undertake joint lesson observations with the SLT had supported increased accuracy in lesson evaluation and the delivery of feedback to help teachers to improve. As a result lesson evaluation is more secure, feedback is more effective and the quality of satisfactory teaching has increased from 88% to 91%, and good teaching from 35% to 50%.*

3. *The school has paid for two foundation teachers to attend a university training course for early years development. However, despite the considerable cost of this course, no evaluation has taken place of any impact gained in the foundation years. It is suggested a review of any improvements to the curriculum be evaluated and a programme of work scrutiny and lesson observation be put into place by the SLT to evaluate any improvement on pupil's outcomes and teacher development.*

Commentary

Examples 1 and 2 state the nature of the external support and the impact the support has had on leadership, school self-evaluation, and in example 2, on improved teaching and learning. Even better would be the identification of support from which, over a period of time, the school could identify improved student attainment. Example 3 identifies how the school has failed to evaluate the impact of the allocation of considerable resources into training foundation teachers in order to improve early years education. The SIP recommends a way forward.

Section 9a – Progress since the last visit

The SIP should use this space to record progress on the action points agreed at the last visit. This space would only be used for individual meetings; the space 9b should be used for the annual report.

Examples

Priority 1: Improvements in the use of Assessment for learning are beginning to impact on the quality of teaching through a better match of tasks to children's individual abilities.

Priority 2: The school has updated its SEF following a more rigorous analysis of validated data.

Priority 3: Mid-year internal assessments show boys have again made less progress than the girls in writing in every year group. A review of the strategy to improve boys' writing is currently underway. It is hoped to identify ways to improve the delivery of the strategy during next term.

Commentary

Progress made against each priority is stated very simply with some supporting evidence. A comment might indicate further progress to be made on these priorities. In priority 3 the boys' writing strategy has failed to make an impact and the SIP notes that, as a result, this strategy is being reviewed.

Section 9b – Progress towards achieving the agreed priorities

This section would only be used in the annual report to governors. The SIP should use this space for an overall evaluation of the school's progress, throughout the whole annual school improvement cycle, towards meeting its stated priorities.

Example

Attainment: The school's monitoring data suggests that, as a result of a range of well-targeted interventions, most pupils will meet their 2007 targets. This includes a more rapid response to pupil progress tracking to ensure that an extended mentoring programme successfully targets students in danger of under achievement, the introduction of coursework catch-up sessions and after-school lessons for students in need of additional support.

Attendance: The school's attendance rates are 3% higher than at the same time last year. Unauthorised absence has significantly reduced.

Exclusions: The school has significantly reduced fixed-term exclusions. There have been 54 exclusions so far this school year involving 35 pupils, as compared to 96 involving 65 pupils at the same time last year. The use of internal exclusion has increased but there are indications overall of improved behaviour at both key stages.

Teaching and learning: Monitoring by senior and middle leaders shows teaching and learning to have improved across the school. Latest figures show that good or better teaching has increased from 50% to 62%, excellent teaching from 6% to 10% and unsatisfactory teaching to have reduced from 5% to 2%. The use of appropriate learning objectives (72% to 98%) and plenaries (65% to 90%) has increased throughout the school.

Commentary

This example identifies progress made in four key areas of the school improvement plan and provides evidence of the extent of the progress. This progress includes the progress pupils are making towards their attainment targets.

Section 10 – Commentary on progress with the specialist school development plan

For specialist schools only, the SIP should record any issues emerging from the specialist school development plan. Is the school making progress against the targets on its specialist school development plan?

Example	Commentary
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the specialist school brief has been reviewed, and changes put into place. *The planning to ensure that all Key Stage 4 students will be studying an art subject by September 2008 is well underway. However, current indicative grades from mock results and estimates suggest the school will fall short of GCSE targets of 52% A* to C success at GCSE in 2007.*	This is a poor comment from the SIP as they comment only briefly on the progress to meet targets in the specialist school plan and there is no comment upon the school's community plan whatsoever. It provides a poor evidence base for review of the school's effectiveness as a specialist school. It would be more effective if the SIP used this section of the report to draw attention to any relevant sections in the report as a whole and then expanded upon those elements that are not well covered elsewhere.

Statutory and other targets

The SIP should record here whether the statutory and other school targets for the next two years are based on aspirational expectations of what individual pupils might achieve. The SIP should take into account the data on prior attainment and whether these expectations are realistic and sufficiently challenging. The SIP should record if he or she agrees with the school's target.

Examples

1. *School leaders were prepared to agree very challenging targets based on FFT column D (performance in line with students in the top 25% of schools nationally). The SIP advised that, in the case of Key Stage 3 targets, this is appropriate, at least for mathematics and science. The English target agreed was set 1% above the FFT column D estimate. Based on prior attainment and recent trends in school performance, these targets are both realistic and challenging.*

2. *The headteacher and the assessment coordinator showed clear evidence of progress so far with the pupils concerned. Tracking has been very thorough. At level 4+, targets are realistic and very challenging. This is similar at level 5 in mathematics. However, the target for English at level 5 remains low. There is evidence that level 5 pupils' writing is not progressing as fast as hoped.*

3. *If achieved, the targets set for 2008 would represent an improvement over time compared with actual results in 2006. The targets for 2008 in mathematics and science are just below the FFT 'B' targets – i.e. the progress to be expected of similar pupils in similar schools. Nevertheless these targets are insufficiently challenging and the senior staff are currently considering revisions in line with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) guidelines. A further meeting has been arranged to finalise these targets.*

Commentary

Examples 1 and 2 identify the process by which the targets have been agreed and set, based on their internal tracking, the FFT estimates or both. The SIPs comment upon the level of challenge and realism of the school targets.

Example 3, however, does not indicate by what process, or on what evidence, the school has set its targets, and it has set targets below those achieved by similar schools. However, the SIP has clearly challenged the school on these targets and asked it to reconsider, as this is reflected in the comments.

Summary points

The summary points should be clear, concise and brief, summarising the main evaluative outcomes and agreed actions, not lengthy repetition of sections of the report. The points should enable a governor, senior school leader or LA officer to see, at a glance, what were the main issues and action points arising from the meeting.

Guidance summary

Appendix 1 provides the national SIP report template with summary guidance annotated to each section.

Section F: Good practice in the quality management of SIP reports

Evidence of good practice in the production and quality assurance of SIP reports has been collected from across a range of LAs and regions.

In LAs where report writing practice is good and improving

- The structure of visits and the role of the SIP, as distinct from other LA school improvement support, is clear to all stakeholders, and this is reflected in the reports.

- There has been a move away from the termly fixed agenda for a school improvement visit to allow the school some flexibility to determine its own priorities; this is reflected in the reports. Each visit considers the key focus of self-evaluation, priorities, actions to achieve the priorities and evaluation of impact of actions taken to date.

- The SIP moderates the school's self-evaluation by focusing on the school's evidence for arriving at judgements, and comments in reports on its accuracy in the light of this evidence. The SIP is not expected to validate the school's judgement in the way that Ofsted does.

- LA support services, in particular those related to schools causing concern and those from within the LA's National Strategy team, are aligned to the SIP programme and informed by SIP reports.

- There is a clear and efficient management structure for the writing, quality assurance and quality control of reports.

- Reports are written in an appropriate tone and register, which acknowledges that their audience includes governors who do not have an educational background.

In addition, effective LAs provide their SIPs with

- School and LA data and contextual information for their schools.

- A copy of the quality standards for SIP reports.

- Guidance for writing SIP reports, including:

  - clear expectations about the expected style and format of reports;

  - a template to complete the termly and annual report;

  - examples of model reports;

  - clear expectations about what the LA expects in terms of the written annual report and attendance at any meetings to discuss the report verbally with governors (although such attendance is not a required part of *The SIP Brief*).

■ A contact name and number to whom they can refer for advice through a line management structure which supports and quality-assures the SIP reports. For secondary SIPs this is often the SIP manager who oversees the programme. Primary SIPs may be divided into network teams, each with a leader who reports back to the SIP manager. Lines of accountability are always clear.

Good practice is found where the SIP manager

■ Ensures that all reports are reviewed and feedback provided to SIPs.

■ Ensures that all SIP reports dealing with school performance and targets are triangulated with the school data, to ensure that there is a *prima facie* accuracy in the report and that issues in the data are addressed in the report.

■ Ensures that all statutory targets set by schools and communicated via the SIP report are referenced to the DCSF guidance, and that where such targets fall short of the guidance the SIP has indicated why this is, the extent of challenge provided and ultimately whether or not the SIP agrees that the targets set are appropriately ambitious.

■ Is swift to identify and to address common weaknesses in the writing of SIP reports, including a lack of rigour and clarity in identifying areas for improvement and action.

■ Has held a moderation meeting to discuss reports in relation to good practice.

■ Provides additional guidance, prompts and examples where needed.

■ Acts upon issues raised and supports needs identified in SIP reports.

In LAs where quality management is less satisfactory

■ School improvement programmes are not informed by the SIP report.

■ Templates provided do not reflect *The SIP Brief* and may focus on monitoring compliance and the use of checklist-type questions.

■ SIPs are insufficiently rigorous, or clear, in challenging and reporting the areas for improvement in their schools.

■ Reports simply repeat the school's SEF.

■ Reports seem to ape an Ofsted inspection.

■ SIPs seek to provide judgements on areas such as teaching and learning where they have no direct evidence from which to reach such a judgement.

■ There is too much descriptive writing and a lack of evaluation.

■ Anecdotes, rather than evidence, are used to support points.

■ There is insufficient challenge for some headteachers.

■ There is a lack of clarity and conciseness in the key points, priorities and actions.

■ There is poor linkage between identified priorities and the brokerage of support.

Section G: Appendices

Appendix 1

School report template with annotated guidance

School Improvement Partners | **Primary** and **Secondary** National Strategies

SIP report for Anyshire County Council

School		Date	
Visit	1 2 3 4 5 6	Length of visit	

SIP	Main focus	
Circulation		

Summary of visit outcomes and actions
1.   2.   3.

Agreed actions	Who	By when
1. 2. 3.		

Next visit

1. Standards of attainment and achievement

The SIP should record the agreed evaluation of standards in the school. This should be divided by Key Stage and draw attention to any groups that are performing particularly well, or that appear to be under performing. The SIP should use this section to comment on attendance and, if the LA requires it, upon levels of exclusions.

2. Leadership and management

The SIP should record the agreed evaluation of leadership and management in the school. This evaluation should highlight any issues relating to the different levels of leadership and management, specifically the headteacher, the governors, other senior managers and middle management.

SEF data

Section		Grade
3	How well do learners achieve?	*Pre-*
4	Personal development and well-being	*populate*
5a	Quality of teaching and learning	*with*
5b	Quality of the curriculum and other activities	*SEF*
5c	Quality of care guidance and support for learners	*grades*
6	Effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management	
7a	Overall effectiveness	
7b	Capacity to make further improvement	
7c	Improvement since the last inspection	
7d	Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form (where relevant)	

3. School self-evaluation

This is a critical area of the report and provides the opportunity to draw out any issues arising from the school's self-evaluation. In particular the SIP should draw attention to any areas where the evidence base for the SSE does not support the conclusions reached by the school. Does the SSE have regard to the five ECM outcomes? If the SIP and school disagree on any of the grades the school has decided upon in its SEF then this should be recorded here.

Note: It is important to recognise that the SIP does not reach his/her own judgements on areas of the school's activity in the manner an Ofsted inspector would, rather the role is to examine the evidence and comment upon whether or not the school's own view is supported by a robust approach to gathering, interpreting and evaluating evidence.

4. The school's capacity to improve

In this section the SIP should reach a view about the school's capacity to improve, drawing upon the evaluations in the sections above on leadership and management and school self-evaluation, in combination with the headings included in this section.

Record of improvement – improvement in standards and achievement over recent years and the impact of any school improvement activity that the school has undertaken. Are the leadership team and governing body choosing, and effectively implementing, high-impact, sustainable strategies for school improvement?

Improvement planning – does the school's plan express the strategies the school is actually using? Is it rooted in the SSE? Are the number and scope of priorities appropriate? Does the plan set out a realistic approach to meeting these priorities? Is the school's plan deliverable? Is it focused on tackling underperformance and other areas of weakness? Is it monitored and evaluated?

Overall capacity to improve

5. What is the school particularly good at?

Emerging from the discussion on the SSE, the SIP and school should agree areas of particularly strong practice. They should also agree whether it is practice of such quality as to be worthy of further dissemination, and if so whether or not the school is willing for it to be shared locally and/or nationally.

6. School improvement priorities and actions (drawn from the SSE and school improvement plan)

From the SSE, the school will have identified its priorities for further improvement. As a result of the discussion with the SIP these are then agreed. The SIP should record these priorities along with an indication of the school's intended actions.

Note: For the annual report this section would refer the reader to section 9b with a comment such as 'See section 9b for progress towards achieving the agreed priorities'.

Priorities	Actions
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

7. Support required

The SIP should record here the external support the school will require in order to meet its priorities. If there are any requests for support from the LA, then these should be made clear in this section.

8. Evaluation of the impact of the action the school has taken and of external support

The SIP should record here an evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of actions taken by the school to address its priorities. This should include an evaluation of any external support that the school has purchased, or that the LA has provided for the school. Where it is particularly effective, attention should be drawn to the features of effective practice. Where it is not effective, the reasons for this lack of effectiveness should be identified.

9a. Progress since the last visit

The SIP should use this space to record progress on the action points agreed at the last visit. This space would only be used for individual meetings. The space 9b should be used for the annual report.

9b. Progress towards achieving the agreed priorities

This section would only be used, and become section 9, in the annual report to governors. The SIP should use this space for an overall evaluation of the school's progress, throughout the whole annual school improvement cycle, towards meeting its stated priorities.

10. Commentary on progress with the specialist school development plan

For specialist schools only, the SIP should record any issues emerging from the specialist school development plan. Ofsted may make use of this section of the report when determining its recommendation on re-designation.

11. Additional comments

The SIP should use this space to record any issues the school or SIP wishes recorded that have not fitted elsewhere on the report form. In addition it can be used if there are any issues the LA wishes to raise with the school via the SIP.

12. School categorisation

The SIP should record here the school categorisation according to the LA's policy. This should include any specific evidence that has led to the school categorisation.

Statutory and other targets

Target (to be amended as appropriate)	Progress to 2008 target	2008 target	Progress to 2009 target	2009 target	Comment (record any disagreement in this section)
5+ A*–C					
5+ A*–C incl. English and mathematics					
KS3 English L5+					
KS3 mathematics L5+					
KS3 science L5+					
KS2 English L4+					
KS2 mathematics L4+					
Attendance					

Appendix 2

SIP secondary school report exemplar

Introduction

This section contains two SIP reports for an 11–16 comprehensive school.

1. A SIP visit report for a meeting in the autumn term where the agenda was 2006 performance, targets and priorities, and the school added in its consideration of section 4 of the SEF.

2. The annual report to governors for the school. Some of the sections in this report are the same as those in the first visit report, some have been added to, and some come from other visit reports during the course of the year.

It is worth noting that section 3 is used in both the visit report and the governors' annual report. However, there is a difference between the two as it has been added to on subsequent visits.

The school

The school has been graded as outstanding in three successive inspection reports. It is well regarded by the community and has a history of doing very well.

The previous headteacher retired and the new headteacher started in September 2006.

The school community is largely prosperous and has high expectations of the school.

School Improvement Partners | **Primary** *and* **Secondary** *National Strategies*

SIP report for Anyshire County Council

School	Any school		Date	3 Nov
Visit	**1 <u>2</u> 3 4 5 6**		**Length of visit**	2 hours

SIP	A N Other	Main focus	1. Review of 2006 results 2. Agree draft statutory targets for 2008 3. Discussion of improvement priorities

Circulation	LA SIP manager Headteacher Governing body

Summary of visit (outcomes and actions)

1. Self-evaluation of attainment and achievement good overall but need to revisit declining CVA in some areas.

2. Personal development and well-being section of the SEF reviewed, recommend reviewing practice in other outstanding schools to take a view on own grade of 2 rather than 1.

3. School improvement plan priorities reviewed and confirmed as being appropriate in light of this year's results.

4. Agreed draft statutory targets for 2008 all in line with DCSF guidance.

Agreed actions	Who	By when
1. Meet with each HoD to review progress on scheme of work.	1. Headteacher.	1. Next SIP visit.
2. Ensure network issues are sorted out to enable use of assessment manager.	2. Network manager and supplier.	2. Next SIP visit.
3. Review the evidence for section 4 of the SEF and increase to grade 1 if justified in comparison with other schools.	3. Deputy headteacher (student services).	3. Spring term SIP visit.
4. Provide draft review and objectives to headteacher and governors for performance management.	4. SIP.	4. 17 November.

Next meeting will be on 4 December. At that time we will:

1. discuss progress against your priorities;

2. carry out your performance management with governors.

1.   Standards of attainment and achievement

The school evaluates itself as good for attainment and achievement at both Key Stage 3 and GCSE. The SEF is suitably self-critical about improvement in most areas and recognises, for example, that boys are underachieving. However, there are declining trends in some CVA measures which are an early indicator of action that is required.

At Key Stage 3:

■ relative attainment is significantly above average across subjects overall and individually;

■ CVA is significantly above average for 'all subjects' and science;

■ CVA is as expected in English and mathematics;

■ CVA has declined in English and remained static for mathematics since 2004.

At GCSE:

■ relative attainment has been consistently significantly above national standards for the last three years;

■ CVA for English has been significantly below the national average for the last two years and has declined since 2004 when it was in line with the national figure;

■ CVA for 'all subjects' is in line with the national average where as it has been significantly above for the previous two years – this shows a decline in performance over this period;

■ CVA in mathematics shows the same pattern as for all subjects.

The performance of ethnic minority students and those with SEN is accurately noted as being in line with that of similar pupils elsewhere.

The school has an outstanding record of achievement and attainment, the latter of which remains strong. However, the early indications of declining performance here should be taken seriously.

SEF data		
Section		Grade
3	How well do learners achieve?	2
4	Personal development and well-being	2
5a	Quality of teaching and learning	2
5b	Quality of the curriculum and other activities	2
5c	Quality of care guidance and support for learners	2
6	Effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management	2
7a	Overall effectiveness	2
7b	Capacity to make further improvement	2
7c	Improvement since the last inspection	2
7d	Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form (where relevant)	n/a

3.   School self-evaluation

Section 4. The good range of evidence of the impact of measures the school has taken in this section makes this a clear grade 2. Indeed, it is possible that the school has erred on the side of caution. We discussed some neighbouring schools that have already achieved grade 1 in their inspections to which this school believes it compares very favourably. In the light of this the school will review its overall judgement in this area.

6.   School improvement priorities and actions (drawn from the SSE and school improvement plan)

The priorities listed below have been identified through the school's self-evaluation, and agreed as being appropriate for this stage of the school's improvement journey.

Priorities	Actions
1. Teaching and learning	a. Improve differentiation to make learning more accessible, particularly in English and mathematics. b. Use assessment data to raise expectations of pupils and teachers. c. Refresh lesson observation skills of middle managers to ensure more accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. To be concluded by June this year. d. Moderate lesson observations using external consultant
2. Develop the curriculum to make it more engaging for all learners.	a. Curriculum working party, including pupils, governors and staff, to report in July. Curriculum review complete by December.
3. Manage student behaviour positively.	a. Review classroom rules as whole-school activity. b. Introduce social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme in September.

7.   Support required

Under the LA's National Strategies policy the school does not qualify for any consultant support. Neither is the school one of concern to the LA, so it does not receive any funding for additional support.

Therefore the school will:

1. buy in three days of an HMI consultant they have used before for lesson observation training (days in March, May and June);

2. negotiate with the LA to purchase some of the behaviour and atendance (B&A) consultant time in order to train staff using the SEAL materials (try and arrange for July);

3. buy in a trainer to train all staff on the use of the assessment manager software (March).

12. School categorisation

The school is effective and requires no additional support from the LA.

Statutory and other targets

Target (to be amended as appropriate)	Progress to 2008 target	2008 target	Progress to 2009 target	2009 target	Comment (record any disagreement in this section)
5+ A*–C	65%	75%		76%	Targets set at FFT D for 2008 and 2009. These targets are challenging, but realistic given the distance the school has to travel.
5+ A*–C incl. English and mathematics	54%	67%		72%	There is a bigger gap between current performance and target in this indicator. Hence the 2008 target is below FFT D. The 2009 target is at FFT D, and the school has some robust mechanisms in place now in English and mathematics and can thus be optimistic about this target.
KS3 English L5+	81%	92%		93%	Targets at FFT D.
KS3 mathematics L5+	81%	93%		94%	Targets at FFT D.
KS3 science L5+	86%	93%		94%	Targets at FFT D.
Attendance	94.1%	95%		96%	

There are no looked after children in the school.

**School
Improvement
Partners**

Primary *and*
Secondary
National Strategies

SIP annual report for Anyshire County Council

School	Any school
Annual report to governors	

SIP	A N Other

Circulation	LA SIP manager Headteacher Governing body

1. Standards of attainment and achievement

The school evaluates itself as good for attainment and achievement at both Key Stage 3 and GCSE. The SEF is suitably self-critical about improvement in most areas and recognises, for example, that boys are underachieving. However, there are declining trends in some CVA measures which are an early indicator of action that is required.

At Key Stage 3:

- relative attainment is significantly above average across subjects overall and individually;

- CVA is significantly above average for all subjects and science;

- CVA is as expected in English and mathematics;

- CVA has declined in English and remained static for mathematics since 2004.

At GCSE:

- relative attainment has been consistently significantly above national standards for the last three years;

- CVA for English has been significantly below the national average for the last two years and has declined since it was in line with the national figure in 2004;

- CVA for all subjects is in line with the national average whereas it has been significantly above for the previous two years – this shows a decline in performance over this period;

- CVA in mathematics shows the same pattern as for all subjects.

The performance of ethnic minority students and those with SEN is accurately noted as being in line with that of similar pupils elsewhere.

The school has an outstanding record of achievement and attainment, the latter of which remains strong. However, the early indications of declining performance here should be taken seriously.

2.   Leadership and management

The headteacher took up post in September 2006, and has undertaken a range of activities across the school that have led her to form a clear and accurate picture of most of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. There remains, however, some important work to be done on evaluating teaching and learning. Some of the more difficult actions have been taken already, including a restructuring of responsibilities in the leadership team.

The SEF indicates a good level of leadership and management throughout the school, but also indicates that where there are inconsistencies in monitoring and evaluation it is as a result of inconsistent application of procedures and policies. Although this points to weaker practice it is clear from discussions with the headteacher, that such weaknesses are dealt with robustly. It would be useful if the school's SEF made this process clear. If this were done, and suitable evidence cited in support, then the overall judgement the school has reached would be justifiable. At present it is overgenerous.

Overall, though, there is good evidence of the strengths and weaknesses in leadership and management throughout the school; therefore, with the adjustment referred to above, the school's evaluation judgement of 'good' seems to represent a fair balance of these.

SEF data		
Section		Grade
3	How well do learners achieve?	2
4	Personal development and well-being	2
5a	Quality of teaching and learning	2
5b	Quality of the curriculum and other activities	2
5c	Quality of care guidance and support for learners	2
6	Effectiveness and efficiency of leadership and management	2
7a	Overall effectiveness	2
7b	Capacity to make further improvement	2
7c	Improvement since the last inspection	2
7d	Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form (where relevant)	n/a

3. School self-evaluation

Section 4. The good range of evidence of the impact of measures the school has taken in this section makes this a clear grade 2. Indeed, it is possible the school has erred on the side of caution. We discussed some neighbouring schools that have already achieved grade 1 in their inspections to which this school believes it compares very favourably. In the light of this the school will review its overall judgement in this area.

Section 5a. The school is confident in its judgement of the quality of teaching and learning. However, the quality and extent of lesson observations does not provide sufficient evidence to be sure that this is the correct grade. Although the SLT have been trained in making judgements, as have the longer serving heads of department, there are a number of newer staff who need to be brought up to this standard. In order to award itself this grade the school needs to ensure that it has:

- a full and robust evidence base; that is
- gathered across the whole range of the work of the school; that has been
- carried out by staff who are confident in observing lessons, making judgements and giving feedback; and
- have moderated their lesson observations against others.

All the other areas of the self-evaluation have good evidence to support the judgement being made.

4. The school's capacity to improve

Record of improvement – performance at the school has plateaued in recent years, with a significant dip in CVA performance in some critical areas in 2006.

Improvement planning – the school's improvement plan draws well on the school's self-evaluation and sets out an appropriate and achievable agenda for action. In some areas the timescales are ambitious and it may be worth considering splitting some of the actions down further so that the scale of the task becomes more evident.

Overall capacity to improve – the new headteacher has clearly seized the school and made a rapid evaluation of the reasons for the current decline in CVA. She has taken some robust action which should have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the school.

The school evaluates itself as having good capacity to improve, given the swift action and the perspicacity of the improvement plan. If the school achieves the upturn in results it is expecting for this year, this will be an accurate self-evaluation. If not, then the school should consider changing this judgement to grade 3.

5. What is the school particularly good at?

The school is a language college and its work with primary feeders on language outreach work is very good, having been recognised as a centre of excellence by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT).

The work the school has done on pupil voice is also particularly noteworthy. Engagement with pupils and their families through surveys, questionnaires, focus groups and the school council is clearly a very strong driver on the school's improvement actions. This has resulted in an increasingly positive community helping the school to achieve its aim to be successful and contributing members of a global society. This second strength has not received the attention that the first one has, but in many ways is something that other schools could learn more from.

6. School improvement priorities and actions (drawn from the SSE and school improvement plan)

See section 9 for progress towards achieving the agreed priorities.

7. Support required

Under the LA's National Strategies policy the school does not qualify for any consultant support. Neither is the school one of concern to the LA, so it does not receive any funding for additional support.

Therefore the school will:

1. buy in three days of an HMI consultant they have used before for lesson observation training (days in March, May and June);

2. negotiate with the LA to purchase some of the B&A consultant time in order to train staff using the SEAL materials (try and arrange for July);

3. buy in a trainer to train all staff on the use of the assessment manager software (March).

8. Evaluation of the impact of the action the school has taken and of external support

The headteacher arranged a brief meeting with the heads of department who had been trained by the consultant to discuss the impact of their training with us. There were some administrative difficulties with the arrangements internally which lessened the effectiveness of the training sessions. These need to be resolved if, and when, this exercise is repeated. From the evidence of the observation notes and the discussion around feedback, this has been a successful activity that will produce the desired impact on classroom practice.

Unfortunately it was not possible for the LA to release any of the B&A consultant's time to work with the school this year, so one of the deputy heads who has taken part in an LA training session, and who has worked through the materials, took a training session at the beginning of the new academic year.

There have been a number of issues with the wireless network, meaning that staff have been unable to make as fruitful use of the assessment manager as they may have wished. Nevertheless the assessment software training session went well, with staff reporting that they now feel confident in the use of the software. The school has, in addition, discussed data at a number of staff meetings and has started feeding this through to pupils to help them to understand their potential. The result of this is that pupils have in most cases set themselves higher targets than the data would suggest, with positive impact upon both their own aspirations and those of their teachers. The network problems should be sorted out by the next visit, so an update can be discussed then.

9. Progress towards achieving the agreed priorities

Priorities	Progress

1. Teaching and learning
 	
   a. Improve differentiation to make learning more accessible.
 	
   b. Use assessment data to raise expectations of pupils and teachers.
 	
   c. Refresh lesson observation skills of middle managers to ensure more accurate evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. To be concluded by June this year.
	The priority areas of English and mathematics have made good progress, clearly identifying the weaknesses in schemes of work for lower-attaining pupils in all year groups, and making good progress towards rectifying these weaknesses. The smaller departments have found the schedule set more challenging and there has been some slippage. The school has made effective use of good practice in the science department to provide leading practice examples to the rest of the school.

2. Develop the curriculum to make it more engaging for all learners a. Curriculum working party, including pupils, governors and staff, to report in July. Curriculum review complete by December.	The curriculum working party has been an excellent example of how various stakeholders can work together on school improvement, and is further evidence of the outstanding practice in this area of the school's work. The proposed new curriculum makes good use of the new flexibilities in the National Curriculum and also contains some innovative practice in 14–19.

3. Manage student behaviour positively
 	
   a. Review classroom rules as whole-school activity.
 	
   b. Introduce SEAL programme in September.
	The classroom rules review has been successfully concluded and now the new agreed rules are on display in all classrooms. Walking around the school confirms the evidence presented for the impact of the new behaviour management approaches. The management task of ensuring consistent application remains.
	
	SEAL remains an activity for the new academic year as indicated above; however, the lead deputy is clearly well advanced with his plan.

11. Additional comments

This has been a very good year for the school. There were some emerging issues around achievement and behaviour in the school that the new headteacher rapidly identified upon taking up post last September. These have been acted upon and good progress is being made. Overall, the SEF is an accurate document. However, there are a couple of areas where the school should revisit the evidence base, in particular that related to the section on pupils' achievement and that relating to teaching and learning.

12. School categorisation

The school is effective and requires no additional support from the LA.

Statutory and other targets

Target (to be amended as appropriate)	Progress to 2008 target (Jun 2007)	2008 target	Progress to 2009 target	2009 target	Comment (record any disagreement in this section)
5+ A*–C	65%	75%		76%	Targets set at FFT D for 2008 and 2009. These targets are challenging, but realistic given the distance the school has to travel.
5+ A*–C incl. English and mathematics	54%	67%		72%	There is a bigger gap between current performance and target in this indicator. Hence the 2008 target is below FFT D. The 2009 target is at FFT D, and the school has some robust mechanisms in place now in English and mathematics and can thus be optimistic about this target.
KS3 English L5+	81%	92%		93%	Targets at FFT D.
KS3 maths L5+	81%	93%		94%	Targets at FFT D.
KS3 science L5+	86%	93%		94%	Targets at FFT D.
Attendance	94.1% (final)	95%		96%	

There are no looked after children in the school.

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