

The dreaded call: a school governor's guide to preparing for, surviving and (hopefully) aceing an Ofsted inspection

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St Luke's Church of England Primary School, Glossop

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New Mills School and Sixth Form

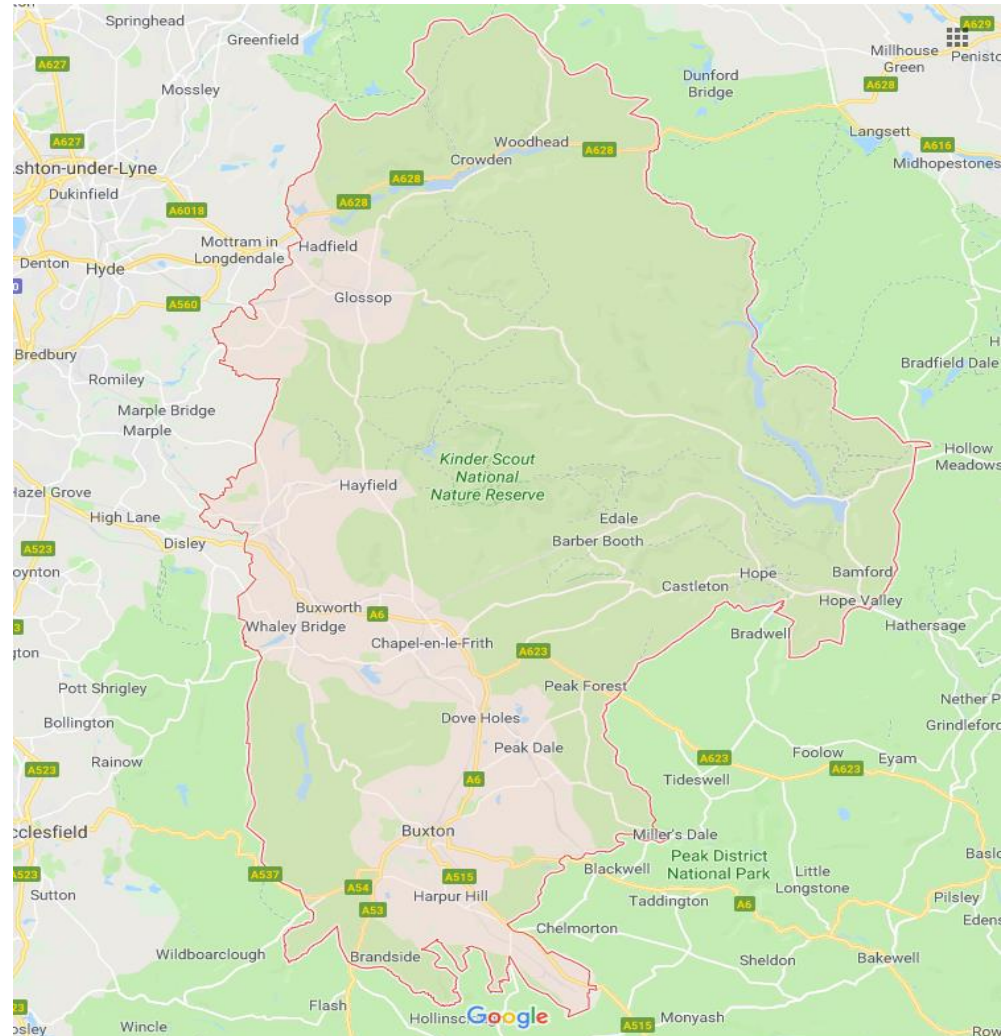
About us

- By day, we both work in the Student Recruitment and Widening Participation Team, Directorate for the Student Experience
- We both live in High Peak, a beautiful area of Derbyshire nestled between Manchester and the Peak District

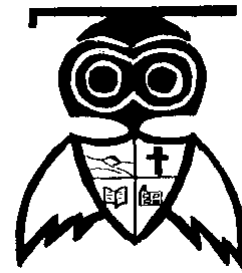


About High Peak

- High Peak is a borough council within Derbyshire
- Several small centres of population, but mostly moorland, hills and sheep!
- Population 90,000; area 200 sq miles (compared to Withington – similar population, area of 7 sq miles!)
- Not very diverse - 97% White (Withington 77%)
- EU referendum result: 50.5% Leave (Withington: 75.1% Remain)



About our Schools



St Luke's Church of England Primary School, Glossop

- Voluntary controlled Primary School
- Approx. 184 pupils on roll, smaller than the average-sized primary school
- Very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage
- Pupil Premium and SEN numbers below the national average

Ofsted inspections:

- January 2012 – Requires Improvement ('Good' for Behaviour and safety of pupils)
- June 2014 – Requires Improvement ('Good' for Behaviour and safety of pupils and Leadership and management)
- May 2016 – Good ('Good' in every measure with Early years provision 'Outstanding')



About our Schools



Saint Mary's Catholic Primary School, Glossop

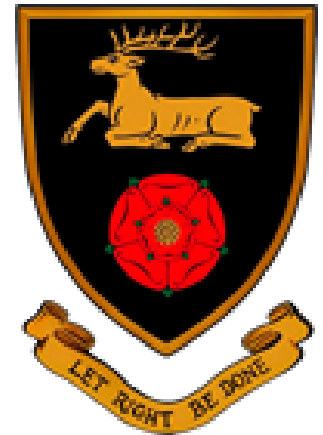
- Voluntary controlled Primary School
- Approx. 195 pupils on roll, smaller than the average-sized primary school
- Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds/English as addition language lower than national average
- SEN numbers higher than national average
- Pupil Premium numbers in line with national average

Ofsted inspections:

- March 2011 – Good
- March 2014 – Good ('Outstanding' for Behaviour and safety of pupils)
- January 2018 – Inadequate (placed in special measures)



About our Schools



New Mills School and Sixth Form

- 11-18 school, but sixth form closing at the end of this year
- 542 pupils on roll
- Mixed comprehensive intake, mainly from New Mills and surrounding villages

Ofsted inspections:

- January 2014 – Inadequate (placed in special measures)
- June 2015 – Requires Improvement ('Good' for leadership and management)
- September 2017 – Good ('Good' in every measure)



Getting 'Ofsted ready'

- Important not to do actions solely for Ofsted's benefit

Have a clear rationale – 'why are we doing this?'. If the answer is 'because Ofsted expects it' – time to rethink?

- Talk to your Headteacher

Communication is vital but at the same time governing boards should ensure that preparing for an inspection does not generate extra workload

- Know what to expect

Familiarity with the inspection handbook will help governing boards know what to expect

- Build on previous inspections

Inspectors will want to see that the governing board and school leaders have addressed the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection

Getting 'Ofsted ready'

- Know where you are and where you're going

A school's self-evaluation should be a key part of your evidence.

You should be confident that the self-evaluation is robust and accurate and be able to talk about it

Ensure you have clarity on the Schools vision, ethos and strategic direction. If you are equipped to explain these, and how they relate to the self-evaluation, this will give the inspector a clear picture of how decisions are made and the rationale behind the school's approach

- Know your governing board, be clear about your role

Awareness of your strengths and weaknesses

Have you carried a skills audit? Are you reviewing your board's performance internally every year?

What are you doing to develop your effectiveness?

Be clear about the boundary between strategic governance and operational school leadership

- Consider who will meet inspectors and what documentation inspectors will expect to see

How we prepared – Felicity

- We knew an inspection was due within a certain window
- As governors, we formed an 'Ofsted SWAT team' – a group of governors who were committed to preparing together and being there on the day
- We met separately outside of main meetings to prepare
- We treated it like exam revision. We tested each other by working through questions from the inspection framework (more on that later...) and pushing ourselves on the areas where we felt least knowledgeable

How we prepared – Heidi

- As governors, we formed an 'Ofsted Group' – a group of governors who were committed to preparing together and being there on the day. Which later became a Strategic & Development Committee (post Ofsted)
- We met separately outside of main meetings to prepare
- Created an 'Ofsted Master Folder' - including the vision and strategy, SIP, minutes of governing board meetings, and the outcome of skills audits, evidence of learning walks.
- Had a lead for each type of question area and we plugged gaps in our knowledge at these meetings.
- Held regular meetings with Headteacher to help to plug the gaps – ensure a joined up approach.

The inspection framework

- Inspection questions will be framed around the 'Governance' section of the 'School inspection handbook'. If you can answer each of those questions, you are an effective governing body. It really is as simple as that!
- <https://tinyurl.com/qepvp8t>

Governance

153. Inspectors will seek evidence of the impact of those responsible for governance. This includes maintained school governors, proprietors or academy trustees. In a multi-academy trust this may include members of the local governing board⁵⁴ at school level, as well as the trustees.
154. Where a children's centre is managed directly by the school's governing body, inspectors will consider the impact of any judgements about the children's centre or the services and activities offered through or by the centre, in judging leadership and management.
155. Inspectors will consider whether governors:
 - work effectively with leaders to communicate the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school and develop a culture of ambition

⁵⁴ In a multi-academy trust, this could include meeting with a local governing board where relevant responsibilities are devolved in accordance with the scheme of delegation.

- provide a balance of challenge and support to leaders, understanding the strengths and areas needing improvement at the school
- provide support for an effective headteacher or are hindering school improvement because of a lack of understanding of the issues facing the school
- performance manage the headteacher rigorously
- understand the impact of teaching, learning and assessment on the progress of pupils currently in the school

Getting 'Ofsted ready'- Checklist

The following checklist is a list of statutory documentation and information required for an Ofsted inspection. These should be reviewed on an annual bases by the Governing Board.

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy highlighting nominated governor
- Health and Safety Policy including risk and fire assessments and arrangements for committee meetings
- Pupil Premium Grant spending plan with evaluation of impact
- Headteacher performance management records
- Staff performance management records
- Admissions Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Local offer including education, health and care plans, and naming a responsible member of staff
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Academies only – written scheme of delegation
- Other policies reviewed by the board or committee and their review dates

On the day

- If a School was previously at least Good and the data indicates provision is still Good, the inspection is likely to last one day, approximately every three years.
- Otherwise, an inspection is likely to last two days.
- The Headteacher will receive a call by around midday the day before, indicating that an inspection will take place the following day.
- Once the inspectors arrive, they will request to (at the very least) speak with the Chair of Governors by phone, but ideally to meet with as many governors as can be there.
- At the end of the inspection, inspectors give the 'judgement' in person to the Head, SLT and as many governors as wish.

On the day

- The meeting itself lasted around an hour
- It was less intimidating, and more constructive, than we had anticipated
- Examples of questions:
 - “How do you know that what the School is telling you is right, without a professional background in education yourself?”
 - “How do you ensure that Pupil Premium funds are used effectively?”
 - “How do you know whether effective safeguarding measures are in place?”



On the day (most recent – Jan 2018)

- The meeting itself lasted around an hour and fifteen minutes. Not going to lie it was harder than any job interview
- It was obvious that the inspectors had made their minds up ... it was up to us to prove them wrong ... not an easy task with poor data
- Examples of questions:
 - “How would you rate this school?”
 - “How do you assess the quality of teaching and learning at this school?”
 - “You receive money in school for disadvantaged children. What can you tell me about how effectively you have used that money?”
 - “As a governing body and School, how do you support British values?”
 - “How do you meet your statutory obligations to keep children safe? Can you give any examples, as to how you keep your children safe?”



Activity

Areas Ofsted will consider when
inspecting governance

How can you show you as governors are
compliant?

The aftermath...



- A feeling of grief
- High levels of emotions (seeing colleagues/head teacher upset at the outcome meeting)
- The long wait for the report
- Low staff morale
- Telling the parents/ Parents post Ofsted meeting
- The challenges of becoming an academy and the implications

The aftermath...



- A time to celebrate the hard work of running a good/outstanding school
- Increased admission figures
- Advertising the achievement
 - to feeder schools
 - local media – press and via social media
- A close knit team evolves to become stronger

BUT DON'T BE COMPLACENT ...

Next Steps ...

- Think about your Ofsted team ... who will meet the inspectors
- Sort out the quick wins
- Important areas – safeguarding, pupil premium, sports premium, SEND
- Data ... if the data is poor – can you explain why, and the interventions the school have put in place to close the gap?

<https://www.nga.org.uk>

<https://www.theschoolbus.net>