

[OFSTED] Text of letter to local authorities

[Date]

Dear [Name]

Children who are not receiving education at school

Ofsted are undertaking a survey during the autumn term to look at children who are not currently receiving education at school. The survey will have a particular focus on those who are educated at home, those who are persistently absent from school and those who go missing from the education system. We are aware that there are particular responsibilities and powers given to local authorities to monitor and evaluate the provision which children receive.

Having looked at a range of existing data, we have identified fifteen local authorities as part of a representative sample which would like to visit and your authority is part of that selection. It is our intention to undertake fieldwork in two phases. In phase one we will need to have discussions with relevant officers and those others the local authority works with in dealing with the children mentioned above. Phase two will involve face-to-face discussions with children and young people who are educated at home and other young people who various reasons do not attend school, as well as the families of those young people. Not all authorities visited during phase one will be part of phase two.

You may be aware that Ofsted has just finished a significant reorganisation and that until the beginning of this term we did not have the staffing for this survey agreed and programmed. I realise the lead in time for our visit is very short and apologise for that.

[Name] and [Name] would initially like to visit your authority on [Date]. During this day we would like to explore the following issues:

- does the local authority experience any barriers within current legalisation or procedures in terms of identifying who is home educated, safeguarding children who are not at school, or otherwise linked to these areas?
- how does the local authority know who has and has not started school at the age of five?
- how does the local authority identify who is educated at home?
- who is educated at home? Are there any patterns or groups, for example from any particular schools or areas?

- how does the local authority carry out its role with regard to the home education of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for example the monitoring of provision for children with statements of special educational needs children?
- does the local authority serve Notices to parents for not providing a suitable education at home?
- how does the local authority identify who is 'missing' from education (including working with the independent sector)?
- which children within the local authority are missing / not receiving a suitable education? Are there any patterns or groups?
- how aware is the local authority of the 'Revised statutory guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving a suitable education' (January 2009) and to what extent has this influenced their practice?
- how does the local authority work with other agencies in order to safeguard these groups?

It would be particularly helpful if, during the visit, inspectors could have some time to look at relevant documentation, in particular:

- the local authority's policy for elective home education
- any advice to parents on home education written by the local authority (this might be web-based)
- any documentation about the local authority's monitoring of home education (for example records of home visits, records of any action taken if the education is not deemed to be appropriate)
- statements special educational needs for children who are educated at home
- the local authority's submission to the Badman review of elective home education, should the local authority choose to share it with Ofsted
- any data about the outcomes for home educated young people, and for those missing from school – for example has the local authority done any analysis of the percentages of those pupils not in education, employment or training (NEETs) who were persistently absent from school?
- any relevant evidence of work with schools related to persistent absence and children who are missing from education.

We will also need to hold a series of meetings with local authority officers during the course of the day. Clearly, you would know who would be the best people for us to meet in your authority. However, we would be grateful if you would include a brief meeting if possible with the Director of Children's Services or their deputy, officers with the operational leads for home education and for children who are missing from education, the principal education welfare officer and the leader of the children's social care team. It would also be very useful for inspectors to be able to meet with the appropriate staff from the youth offending team, truancy watch team and police liaison with schools, the leader of the traveller education service and a

member of Connexions, depending on what you are able to arrange. We include a suggested structure for the day.

Day 1:

- 9.30am - arrive
- Initial discussion with Director of Children's Services (both inspectors)
- Examine documentation (both inspectors)
- Inspector 1: meetings related to home education
- Inspector 2: meetings related to children who are missing from education
- End of day team meeting (both inspectors)
- Discussion with local authority about phase two possibilities

HMI will telephone you during this week to confirm arrangements for the visit. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

[Name]

Her Majesty's Inspector