



Education Directors Network

Date:	23 rd January 2026
Chair:	Sarah Daly (Portsmouth)
Attendees:	Elizabeth Funge (ESCC), Matthew Rixson (Surrey), Kim Wilson (Oxfordshire), Claire Hayes (W Sussex), Georgina Clarke-Green (BHCC), Donna Tandy (Southampton), Nathan Caine (Portsmouth), Olly May (Bracknell), Clive Haines (RBWM), Chris Owen.
In attendance:	Lee Selby (Ofsted)
Apologies:	Marie Denny (MKC), Brian Grady (Reading), Natalie Smith (Hants), Ming Zhang (Wokingham), Clodagh Freeston (Southampton), Christine McInnes (Kent), Julia Katherine (Surrey), Neil Goddard (W Berks).

Notes

Actions

- There is a 'response to questions' note following the launch of LGSC Ombudsman's practitioners guide which CO will circulate.
- Sarah is presenting a briefing about engagement with DfE Regions over RISE to the DCS Steering Group on 30th Jan, which will also have Dame Kate Dethridge and Tim Coulson in attendance. She will report back.
- Item on s19 data reporting in LAs for March meeting; Chris to contact two or three LAs to share practice. Plus updates on s19 and recoupment proposals.
- Edited proposal for a joint 'in principle' statement for S19 and SEND will be shared for discussion with SEND strategic leads.
- Chris will pass topics to cover on RISE to Paul Schofield in preparation for the meeting on Feb 27th 10am with DfE on universal RISE.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Notes from Nov were agreed as accurate.

Matters arising:

- No-one from SE put themselves forward for the LGCSO consultative forum and LGSCO stated that nominations are now closed.
- A written update about the QA of non-school AP T&F group was circulated with the agenda, following the group's first meeting.
- The latest Targeted RISE 'rules of engagement' from Hampshire have been circulated and posted on the SESLIP website.

2. Ofsted's new schools inspection framework roll-out

Lee Selby was welcomed and gave an update of progress and learning from the early roll-out of the new schools inspection framework. There have been 90 full inspections in the SE up to today's date and there has been the full range of grades given to schools as a result; only about 25% of these schools have received the same grade across all evaluation areas and a third of schools have at least one area that is graded as 'needs attention'.

Key point included:

- Reminder that 'expected' is a 'high bar'. A school should have a 'secure fit' of provision for all aspects set out in the description for that area.
- Ofsted has received feedback that the process is more collaborative and leaders report feeling more involved, especially via the nominee role. This role's purpose is to 'oil the wheels' of the practical steps throughout the inspection. They also seek to ensure there is a 'responsible body' named contact, in particular if there are concerns about leader wellbeing at the school.



- Communication with parents about the report cards and grades is an ongoing challenge. Lee signposted to their videos for parents that he encourages schools to post and make available to parents. Recognition there is more than this required for parents to sufficiently understand the new inspections.
- Reminder that 'self-evaluation' is seen as a verb not a noun and inspectors will not spend time reading long self-evaluation documents.
- Trust inspection: probably from Sept 2027, with early development starting this year. Also Ofsted are in regular dialogue with the RISE leaders in the SE.
- Lee was keen to emphasise that Ofsted will try to offer a speaker for events for groups of school and trust leaders, best option is on a Thu or Fri. Use the 'request a speaker' function on their website.

Comments:

Discussion about the use by inspectors of 'national average' comparators, and the extent context is taken on board. This has provided particular challenges around certain evaluative areas, especially 'behaviour & attendance'. Lee highlighted the importance of the school's IDSR, but that it is not 'the be-all and end-all'.

3. DfE RISE update from LAs and themes for Feb meeting

Chris and Sarah have drafted a briefing note with some concerns for the DCS steering group and will be presenting it to DCSs on Fri 30th. By serendipitous coincident, that meeting will be joined by Dame Kate Dethridge and Tim Coulson, so an ideal opportunity for a strategic discussion about RISE, targeted and universal. Chris will circulate the paper.

Chris has had positive meetings with two reps who sit on the DfE's national RISE Operational Group: Amanda Corcoran (Manchester) who is the only LA person on the group, and Tony Wilson, from Oxford Diocesan Board who is a 'sort of' South-east rep. Both are keen to establish two-way communication with SESLIP with their role on the Operations Group; this was positively received by Education Directors.

There is still a mixed experience with the implementation of targeted RISE. One or two LAs reporting positive experiences with targeted schools; whilst others have experience of confused and frustrating coordination / initiation.

Chris confirmed there is a one-off meeting scheduled for the Education Directors with Paul Schofield and Catherine Turton on 10am 27th Feb. The request is to have a focus on universal RISE and hopefully to be joined by someone from the universal RISE team. The following questions / topics were proposed for Chris to raise with DfE colleagues:

- There is strong consensus that lack of clarity about accountability and transparency are a key concern, for both targeted and universal RISE. This includes about transparency of RISE relationships with MATs and their academies, especially when a trust leader is a RISE adviser.
- Strategic roll-out of universal RISE is experienced by LAs and schools as piecemeal and join-up is weak. This has been a somewhat destabilising effect for schools.
- A clear demand: notification to DCSs before any school or academy in their area is to be named for targeted RISE. This enables supportive lines of communication can be set up.
- How to improve the dialogue with LAs about initiatives and for these to be discussed with sufficient lead-in time to facilitate collaboration.
- A request for more transparency about selection criteria and processes for some of the national drivers, such as hub schools.

Chris will summarise and brief DfE South-east of the above.

4. DfE SEND Capital – changes in offer from Dept

At least 10 SE LAs had been in the pipeline for at least one specialist free school. In the middle of Dec there was an update and the result for most was an offer of either continued funding towards commissioning of a free school, delayed to at least 2030, or even, for some, to 2035; or smaller capital allocations for the next three years focused on SEN units / resource provision.



All LAs directly affected have had to enter into a significant consultation including with members to agree their response. Responses should be finalised during Feb. For some this has a strongly political angle too.

5. Dashboard and LA use of s19 data and s19 recoupment

Question posed to the group: how are s19 data reported and monitored in your LA at director level? The reason for the question: from the partial responses to the dashboard request for s19 data (8 LAs submitted), 100% response is only realistic when there is top-level reporting within all LAs.

It apparent that not all SE LAs have both arrangements for collating the data and for reporting. With reference to recoupment of s19 costs from schools, several Berkshire LAs have moved ahead with arrangements with their schools already. Acknowledged that, in order to make a case to DCSs, region-wide data about scale and pressures would be necessary.

Actions: To move forward Chris will contact two or three LAs (B&H, E Sussex and Medway possibly) to ask to share approaches at March meeting.

AOB

Discussion about a letter from UKLFI making allegations about a school governor. Network members highlight that these are popping up.

For a future meetings:

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Agenda Items for Next meeting:

- Collating and reporting s19 data.
- Focus on local strategies in response to GLD targets.
- Maybe: reflections on Schools and SEND White Paper.
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Next Meetings:

Future meetings: 13th Mar, 8th May, 3rd July)

