



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



**Bedfordshire, Luton
and Milton Keynes**
Integrated Care Board



Local Area SEND Inspection

Quick Reference Guide

September 2024

Background

The Local Area SEND inspection is an inspection of the services jointly provided by education, health and social care services. The inspection is undertaken by inspectors from Care Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted.

The aim is to hold the Local Area to account, by reviewing how the Local Area meets their responsibilities for children and young people aged 0-25 who have additional needs and disabilities.

When was Bedford Borough's last inspection and what was the outcome?

In March 2020, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC), conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Bedford Borough to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

The inspectors identified that **“the local area had made sufficient progress”** in addressing the areas of significant weakness detailed in the written statement of action issued on 19 March 2018.

You can access the inspection report here: [50150537](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspections/50150537) (ofsted.gov.uk).

Has the inspection process / framework changed since the last inspection?

Yes. In the summer of 2022, Ofsted and CQC undertook a consultation on the Local Area SEND inspection framework with proposed changes that focus more on the impact that the local area partnership is having on the lives of children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.

The inspection now includes inspecting the local authority's commissioning and oversight of Alternative Provision and there is a greater focus on the role of health and social care as part of the partnership.

The new framework and handbook were published on 29 November, and can be found here: [Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/area-send-inspections-framework-and-handbook) (www.gov.uk).

What local services will be inspected?

The inspection is a “Local Area” inspection – it covers all services provided by the local authority (LA) (including Public Health) and the Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB) for children and young people with SEND.

Inspectors will visit a range of early years, education, health providers and specialist services within the local area. Although Ofsted Inspectors will visit early years and education settings, they are not directly inspected as individual institutions.

These visits will focus on the contribution of education settings to the provision of support to children and young people with additional needs, as part of the overall partnership arrangements.

What will inspectors be looking at?

The inspection will evaluate a local area's effectiveness in commissioning and delivering services to children and young people with SEND.

Inspectors will look for evidence of how children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities (or both):

- Are identified,
- How their needs are assessed and met, and
- How they are supported to move on to their next stage of education, the world of work and wider preparation for adulthood.

The inspections will be carried out in line with the inspection framework and handbook.

The inspections are carried out under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. The inspectors will also look at the way in which local areas are meeting their duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The inspection is based on the view that local area partnership leaders have a realistic view on how effective they are in meeting their duties and responsibilities in relation to SEND. The inspectors want to see evidence that all partners know the areas of strengths and weakness, together with the actions to address these and to improve.

Announcing the inspection

The lead inspector will formally announce the inspection by telephoning the LA and ICB to notify them of the start of the 3-week inspection.

Inspectors will work with the Local Area Nominated Officer (LANO) and the Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB) representative to agree arrangements for the 3-week inspection period. The Chair of the Parent and Carer Forum will also be contacted to inform them of the inspection.



During an inspection

The inspection process lasts for 3 weeks, and the following activities are carried out in each week.

Activities in Week 1

- Inspectors notify the local leaders of the inspection 10 working days before the fieldwork begins. This will usually be on a Monday.
- Inspectors request information to support the inspection.
- Inspectors and local leaders hold a set-up discussion.
- The local area partnership distributes surveys for children and young people with SEND, parents and carers, and practitioners.
- The local area partnership shares information to support the inspection.
- Inspectors select individual children and young people, and ask the local area partnership to set up tracking meetings.
- Inspectors carry out planning and preinspection analysis.



Activities in Week 2

- Inspectors work with the local area partnership to agree an inspection timetable.
- Inspectors hold tracking meetings.
- Inspectors carry out pre-inspection analysis and review the information sent.
- Inspectors may meet virtually with local leaders, staff, representative groups and stakeholders.



Activities in Week 3

- On-site evidence gathering.
- Inspection findings fed back to the local area partnership.

Where will the inspection take place?

Inspectors will be based on-site during week 3 at an agreed location in Bedford Borough Council.

There will also be visits to education, health and social care settings including schools, health providers and alternative provision settings.

Who will the inspectors want to meet with?

Inspectors will visit and discuss the area's SEND processes and experiences with a wide range of people including:

- Children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers.
- Elected members and senior leaders across the partnership.
- Practitioners and professionals from health, education and social care.
- Education, health and care providers.

How can you support us and share your views?

Surveys



At the beginning of the inspection in week 1, surveys (questionnaires) will be sent out to parents, carers, schools and services. It is an opportunity for you to share your feedback based on your lived experiences.

We encourage you to complete the questionnaires as soon, and as fully, as possible to ensure your views are captured and your voice helps to shape the future experiences of children and young people with SEND, and their families, within our local area.

Case Tracking



In week 2 or 3, you may be contacted as part of the inspectors' case tracking activities.

If this is likely, a member from the Local Area team (Education, Health, Care or Local Authority) will contact you in advance to discuss this with you, and ensure you are happy to be involved.

Focus Groups



In week 2 or 3, you may be invited to take part in a group discussion with inspectors, on a specific topic or theme for which you will have some lived experience of.

These are voluntary and a member from the Local Area team (Education, Health, Care or Local Authority) will contact you in advance to discuss this with you, and ensure you are happy to be involved.

Judgement: how will inspectors report their findings?

At the end of the inspection, the inspection team will evaluate all the evidence gathered.

Ofsted and the CQC will write a joint inspection outcome letter. The letter will explain the main findings and make recommendations for improvement. It will also highlight any strengths that inspectors identify to help other services and areas develop and improve.

These letters will be published on the Ofsted website and on the CQC website.

What are the possible outcomes from the inspection?

There are 3 possible full inspection outcomes, leading to different subsequent inspection activity:

Outcome 1



The local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.

Outcome 2



The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.

Outcome 3



There are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.

How long after the inspection will we know the outcome?

The lead inspector is responsible for writing the report, with contributions from the full inspection team across education, health and care. In most circumstances, the local area will receive the final report approximately 2 months after the inspection has concluded.

How will the outcome be shared across the local area?

Once the local area has received its final report, relevant recipients of the report are required to publish it on their organisation's website.

This report will be circulated appropriately to colleagues across the partnership, including the Parent Carer Forum.





Children's Services

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