

Action-planning and self-evaluation

Introductory notes

Guidance issued jointly by Ofsted and the Department for Children, Schools and Families states that schools should ask themselves two essential questions:

- How well are we doing?
- How can we do better?

These questions are relevant to compliance with equalities legislation as to all other aspects of a school's life and work.

This paper sets out specific questions schools may wish to ask themselves in relation to equalities legislation. For convenience, the questions are grouped under the seven headings in Ofsted's self-evaluation form (SEF).

The questions in this paper are not all equally relevant in any one school. They are not, that is to say, a score-sheet or tick-list, to be read and considered everywhere point-by-point. Rather, they are offered as a prompts for governing bodies and senior leadership teams as they draw up action plans in the light of national legislation.

It is expected that from 2011 onwards schools will have a duty to identify certain 'equality objectives', as the term will be. A paper such as this will assist them to select the objectives they particularly wish to pursue.

SEF section 1: Characteristics of the school

Ofsted's guidance on the SEF recommends that later sections of the form should be completed before the first section, particularly those which are concerned with achievement and standards, and with personal development and well-being. For someone reading the SEF, however, it is the opening section on the school's characteristics which sets the scene.

1. What is the composition of the school population, broken down by ethnicity, gender and year group?
2. Are we confident that the quality of this data is reliable, or could it be improved?
3. What disabilities and special educational needs do current members of the current school population have?
4. Are we confident the quality of this data about disabilities is reliable, or could it be improved?
5. What is the composition of the teaching, administrative and support staff, broken down by ethnicity, gender and grade level?
6. Are we confident the quality of this data about the composition of the staff is reliable, or could it be improved?

Ofsted expects the opening section of the SEF to conclude with a list of the school's main priorities for development. With regard to issues of equality and diversity, these are likely to be known as objectives.

Nationally, though of course not necessarily in any one school, the key objectives, challenges and priorities relating to equality include those which are listed below.

National objectives and priorities for development: disability

- Ensuring that disabled people are more actively involved in the design, development, review and delivery of policies that affect them
- ensuring that a range of programmes (including work-related and work-based) is available and suitable for disabled learners, in order that they may progress and achieve
- increasing the meaningful participation of disabled people in higher and further education
- developing information, advice and guidance (IAG) for disabled people, including those with learning difficulties, so that they are fully aware of learning, career and work opportunities, and of funding and assistance available to them
- addressing low levels of awareness and understanding of disability issues amongst the general public and amongst employers, employees and providers of skills training, and in this connection promoting wider understanding of the distinction between disability and impairment and of the social model of disability.

National objectives and priorities for development: ethnicity

- Reducing and removing inequalities in success rates between different communities by raising the attainment and improving rates of progression in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2 and GCSE for certain communities, particularly those of African-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Gypsy, Pakistani, Roma, Somali, Traveller or Turkish heritage
- improving the induction and integration and thus attainment and progression of newly-arrived pupils and in particular those for whom English is an additional language
- reducing the disproportionate number of school exclusions among African-Caribbean pupils
- addressing low take-up of childcare (including early education), especially by African, Bangladeshi, Gypsy, Pakistani, Roma and Traveller families, and the resulting impact of this on lower than average achievement by members of these communities in the Foundation Stage at age 5
- promoting community cohesion through teaching children and young people to value diversity and understand and respect others; creating a common sense of belonging; developing the skills of participation and responsible action; eliminating variations in outcomes for different communities; and providing means for children and their families to interact with people from backgrounds different from their own
- ensuring that issues of religious identity, faith, values and affiliation are taken into account in ethnicity equality policies and projects.

National objectives and priorities for development: gender

- Tackling gender stereotyping and segregation in education through information, advice and guidance (IAG) in relation to subject choices and careers, and through ensuring that work experience and work-related learning give both girls and boys an opportunity to expand their horizons by trying out non-traditional work.
- increasing the number of girls studying science in both academic and vocational education, thus helping to address the skills shortage in science and engineering.
- In this and other ways addressing the under-representation of women in science (including computer science), engineering, construction and technology (SECT), as learners, teachers, researchers and practitioners, and on SECT-related public bodies.
- ensuring that health-focused programmes have due regard for gender differences in areas such as sexual health, mental health and obesity
- raising attainment levels in literacy for boys, in particular those who are in low socio-economic status categories
- challenging and reducing sexual harassment of girls, and the attitudes towards relationships and conflict resolution that underlie such harassment

SEF section 2: Views of learners, their parents and carers, and other stakeholders

7. What measures have we taken to consult and involve disabled people, and the parents and carers of disabled learners, in the development of policies to promote disability equality?
8. What measures have we taken to consult and involve pupils from a range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, and their parents and carers, to promote ethnicity equality?
9. What measures have we taken to consult and involve both girls and boys, and both women and men, in the development of policies to promote gender equality?
10. What are the principal messages we have received from such consultations and involvement?

SEF section 3: Achievement and standards

11. What information do we have, broken down by both gender and ethnicity, on achievement at the end of Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4?
12. At what stages and in which specific school subjects are there unequal outcomes relating to ethnicity and gender?
13. What are our plans for reducing unequal outcomes?

SEF section 4: Personal development and well-being

14. Do we have a written code of practice which clearly outlines specific procedures to be followed for recording and dealing with prejudice-related bullying, as also with other kinds of abuse and bullying, on the school premises, and on journeys to and from school?
15. Is there shared understanding amongst staff – including support and administrative staff as well as teachers, and temporary staff as well as permanent – of ways in which prejudice-related bullying is *both* similar to *and* different from other kinds of bullying?

16. Do we train lunchtime staff and learning mentors to identify prejudice-related bullying and to follow school policy and procedures on anti-bullying?
17. Does a senior member of staff have responsibility for ensuring that incidents of prejudice-related bullying are appropriately dealt with and recorded?
18. Do we take practical steps to ensure we are aware of pupils' experiences of bullying, for example through anonymous surveys and reporting, and through focus group discussions?
19. Do pupils consider that the school has a history of taking prejudice-related incidents seriously and following them up?
20. Has a user-friendly leaflet been provided for pupils and their parents on what to do if they experience prejudice-related hostility against them?
21. Ofsted states that responses to prejudice-related bullying should be 'swift, proportionate, discreet, influential and effective'. Do pupils agree this is how our own school operates?
22. Are pupils involved in mediating in disputes and peer mentoring, and as buddies and befrienders?
23. Are statistics on bullying at our school provided in age-appropriate language to pupils, for example at assemblies and meetings of the School Council?
24. Do parents know who to contact if they are worried about bullying?
25. Do we work with parents and other people in the local community to address tensions beyond the school gates that may be played out within school?
26. Are parents confident that any report they make to the school about bullying will be received sympathetically and supportively, and dealt with swiftly and effectively?
27. Do we provide information about sources of advice, support and assistance such as Parentline Plus?

SEF section 5: The quality of provision

Ofsted expects each of the sub-sections – teaching and learning, the curriculum, care, guidance and support – to show how the school's provision contributes to its good outcomes, or is aimed at improving weaker outcomes.

28. Do we have staff consensus on key principles and ideas that should be taught in all subjects.
29. Have we identified positive activities dealing with disability, ethnicity and gender that can be undertaken in each curriculum subject or area, and at each key stage?
30. Have we audited curriculum materials in current use, and added to them as necessary in order to ensure that they reflect the achievements and experience of women as well as men, of disabled people, and of Britain as a culturally diverse society?
31. Have we reviewed, expanded and improved our citizenship and PSHEE programmes to ensure they reflect issues in the national equalities agenda?
32. Have we given sustained attention to the concept of gender-inclusive teaching, as for example described and discussed on the Standards Site at <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research/themes/gender/>?

33. Do we ensure liaison with other schools on curricular issues, as also across departments and areas in each separate school?
34. Do we make good use of positive role models, for example poets, storytellers and artists?
35. Do we have exchanges or contacts with schools in other countries or other areas of Britain?
36. Do we organise from time to time a multicultural or international day, or a 'diversity day'?
37. Do we make good use of drama, role-play, creative writing, music and art in our teaching about equalities?

SEF section 6: Leadership and management

38. Has our policy statement on equalities been thoroughly discussed by, and is it kept under review by, pupils and parents as well as by staff?
39. Do the minutes of meetings of the governing body reflect serious commitment to implementing the spirit and letter of equalities legislation?
40. Do we use data on attainment, broken down by both ethnicity and gender, to review the school's progress over time and make comparisons with other schools, and to identify areas for improvement and development?
41. Do we give a high profile to rights and responsibilities by, for example, promoting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UNICEF programme on Rights Respecting Schools?
42. Does the general ethos of the school, as seen in displays, assemblies and curriculum materials, reflect and affirm diversity of language, culture, sexuality, religion and appearance? Does it challenge gender stereotypes? Are there positive images of disabled people?
43. Is the school involved from time to time in national projects such as *Kick Racism Out Of Football*, *Inter Faith Week*, *One World Week*, *Black History Month*, *Anti-Bullying Week* and *Refugee Week*?
44. Have we reviewed opportunities in the national curriculum to teach about various kinds of intolerance and prejudice, and justice, fairness, the rule of law and non-discrimination?
45. Do we ensure there are references to equality and cultural diversity issues in the school's programmes and plans for induction and staff training, both of teaching staff and support staff, and also for the governing body?
46. Do we consider the methods and content of staff training on equality and diversity issues, and how such training is appropriately evaluated?
47. Do the quality and robustness of our school's self-evaluation, and the ways in which senior managers demonstrate that they understand and tackle improvement priorities, provide persuasive evidence that we take very seriously our responsibilities to comply with both the spirit and the letter of equalities legislation?

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SEF section 7: Overall effectiveness and efficiency

Ofsted and the DCSF indicate that the final section should draw together the SEF as a whole. The section should provide a statement about the overall effectiveness of the school and should not simply provide a list of what was stated earlier. 'If schools' leaders and managers are clear about the progress pupils make in their learning and personal development,' they say, they will find it easy to make clear links between this and the other sections.'

It is suggested schools might wish to set out this section as a commentary which starts by stating "We are a good school because..."

Source: This paper is adapted slightly from a section of *Holding Together: equalities, difference and cohesion, a resource for school improvement planning*, published for Derbyshire Education Authority by Trentham Books in summer 2009.