

Characteristics of Your School

This is a relatively straightforward section of the form; drawing on the data already provided by the school or inserted by Ofsted in Sections B and C. There are three main purposes of this section.

To briefly introduce:

- the school's main features including ethos and purpose;
- the context in which the school works, drawing attention to its unique features;
- any special status and or extended services.

NRwS: Improving Performance through School Self-Evaluation p15

1a. Main characteristics of the learners

The necessity here is to make certain that any assertion made can be supported by evidence and that that evidence is referred to within the box.

1b. Distinctive aims and features of the school

This section provides you with an opportunity to express what you believe to be the ethos and purpose of the school. Listing your intentions without describing the underlying principles and values that underpin these actions is not enough. Whatever you do say in this section must have a resonance throughout the rest of the document.

1c. Context or other issues acting as aids or barriers to raising performance

The danger in this section is the temptation to focus upon those factors acting as potential or actual barriers to learning, and whilst these have to be acknowledged it is also important to note those factors that aid progress or have the potential to do so. The aim must be not to give the impression of an excuse culture existing within a school.

In this section you could include references to:

- attainment on entry highlighting specific areas of strength or weakness
- levels of need, including vulnerable groups, and the implications for provision in meeting these needs.

1d. Additional Characteristics of your School

An opportunity to describe what you believe to be unique or unusual features of your school, but it is imperative that it is related to learners' outcomes.

1e. Main priorities that reflect the context within which you work

Ofsted's intention is to assess whether a school knows itself well and prioritised appropriately in the light of its strengths and weaknesses and unique context. This section allows you to draw this together and, like section 1b, it should be reflected in other relevant sections of the SEF.