

Role of the School and Link Adviser in Partnership

The main purpose of the SEF Toolkit (and especially Section 3) is to provide schools with a useful tool to help with regular self-analysis and development planning. It assists the school and adviser to work in partnership to identify where improvement is needed and to form a view about aspects of the school which are under development. The Toolkit can be used to make overall judgements but can also be replicated at all levels by those involved in the self evaluation process, for example by subject departments/ key stage leaders. These record with examples of hard evidence provides the detail which underpins the summation of the school's analysis on the SEF form.

If the SEF is a fair and accurate analysis of the school, then not only does it provide leaders and managers with a strong basis for improvement, it virtually amounts to their own inspection report with which Link Advisers and external partners are likely to agree. Link Advisers will write a commentary for each aspect of the SEF which records an external perspective of the school's evaluation processes, outcomes and capacity to improve. To do this effectively they need to have access to the detail described above. This commentary can form part of the school's evidence base during inspection. In schools identified for pilot inspections LEA judgements have generally been welcomed as reliable evidence by HMI. The commentary will also allow the LEA to build a database about school effectiveness and provide opportunities to share good practice.

The SEF is intended to provide a record of the school's self evaluation. It does not prescribe how the school will carry it out. Currently there are few examples of completed SEF's available on the OFSTED website. In the Toolkit we have tried to support schools and advisers to make appropriate judgements and direct them towards evidence which could be seen as "telling". The school improvement partner (SIP) role mirrors that of the role undertaken by Link Advisers. They will need to make contributions of different types to the various elements of a school's development, in all cases reviewing the school's own work but making a more active contribution to some elements. An essential role of the adviser and SIP will be to ensure that self evaluation takes place and that it is based on up-to-date, accurate information and evidence that is revealing, collected and carefully analysed and interpreted intelligently.

The pattern of Link Adviser visits may have to change in order to best meet individual school needs. Link Adviser validation of school's activities can play a key role in supporting their judgements. Discussions and activities to support validation should be organised so that they best fit into the school's normal monitoring cycle. For example, if in secondary schools data arrives too late for analysis and discussion in the autumn term this can be carried over to the spring term in order for the information to be used more profitably. The exact timing of visits should be agreed between the school and the adviser.