Area SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities) Inspections

We're having an Area SEND Inspection!

On Monday 23 November 2026, we were notified that an Area SEND Inspection from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) is underway in Cheshire East. The inspection lasts for three weeks and Inspectors will be on site from **Monday 7 December for 5 days**. This guide provides information on what to expect over the 3 week inspection period.

What is an Area SEND Inspection?

The main purpose of the inspection is for Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to:

- evaluate the effectiveness of the local area partnership's arrangements for children and young people with SEND
- where appropriate, recommend what the local area partnership should do to improve the arrangements

Inspectors will review how **effectively we work together as a partnership** in our local area of Cheshire East to improve the **experiences** and **outcomes** of children and young people with SEND. Our 'local area partnership' includes everyone in **education, health and care** involved in the strategic planning, commissioning, management, delivery and evaluation of arrangements for children and young people with SEND in Cheshire East.

What will the inspection cover?

The inspection will evaluate arrangements across **education, health and care** for all children and young people with SEND **aged 0 to 25**, including those who have an **Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan** and those who receive **Special Educational Needs (SEN) support**. The inspection will also evaluate the local authority's commissioning and oversight of **alternative provision** for all children and young people who attend alternative provision (not only those with SEND).

During the inspection, inspectors will **meet with different individuals and groups**, and **visit providers such as early years settings, schools, alternative provision, colleges and specialist services (including those in health and social care)** to gather evidence.

Inspectors will judge the impact of our SEND arrangements through the **experiences** and **outcomes** of children and young people, including the extent to which:

- children and young people's needs are identified accurately and assessed in a timely and effective way
- children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support
- children and young people receive the right help at the right time
- children and young people are well prepared for their next steps, and achieve strong outcomes
- children and young people are valued, visible and included in their communities

The inspectors will be looking to see what **impact** our work has had on **children and young people's day to day experiences and their outcomes.** We need to show how our work has **made a difference** to children and young people and their families.

Inspectors will also evaluate how **we work together** as a partnership to plan, evaluate and develop the SEND system, including the extent to which:

- leaders are ambitious for children and young people with SEND
- leaders actively engage and work with children, young people and families
- leaders have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in Cheshire East
- leaders commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people, including commissioning arrangements for children and young people in alternative provision
- leaders evaluate services and make improvements
- leaders create an environment in which effective practice and multi-agency working can flourish

What will happen during the inspection?

The inspection will last for **3 weeks** in total. Following inspectors contacting us on a Monday morning to announce the inspection, we then have two weeks (ten working days) before the inspectors arrive on site here in Cheshire East.

The inspection team will be led by an Inspector from Ofsted, and will include Children's Services Inspectors from the CQC, and education and social care inspectors from Ofsted.

Week 1

- We will meet with inspectors to discuss inspection arrangements and the focus of the inspection
- We will circulate information on **4 surveys from inspectors**, including: 1 for children and young people with SEND, 2 for parents and carers (including an easy read version), and 1 for practitioners. The surveys will go live on the day we are notified of the inspection and will remain live for 6 working days from this day.
- We will share **case lists and information to support the inspection** with inspectors, and inspectors will carry out planning and pre-inspection analysis
- Inspectors will **select around 6 cases to track in detail**, and we will share detailed information on these cases with inspectors by the end of the week

Week 2

- We will organise the timetable and arrangements for this week and the following onsite week, including visits to settings
- Inspectors will review the information that we shared with them in week 1 and carry out pre-inspection analysis
- Inspectors **may meet virtually** with representatives from different groups over this week, such as professionals, parents/carers and children/young people.
- Inspectors may carry out **virtual 'tracking meetings'** with some of the children and young people **from the selected cases**, along with meeting their parents/carers and holding multi-agency discussions with the education, health and care professionals that support them.

Week 3

- Inspectors will **carry out inspection meetings and activity here in Cheshire East**. This will include meeting representatives across education, health and care services and carrying out any remaining tracking meetings with children and young people from the selected cases, along with their parents/carers and supporting professionals.
- Inspectors will also **visit a number of providers and services across education, health and care**, and **sample individual cases**, in order to review the experiences of a wider group of children and young people. Inspectors will evaluate children and young people's experiences and outcomes by reviewing documents and talking to practitioners and representative groups.

Inspectors may also contact families whose records have been sampled during this week to seek their views.

Findings of the inspection

On the final day of the inspection, inspectors will meet with senior leaders and inform them of their findings. At this point the findings cannot be shared as they may still change. Following the inspection, Ofsted and CQC will set out their findings in a letter that will be published on the Ofsted and CQC websites. The letter will describe:

- the inspection outcome
- what it is like to be a child or young person with SEND in Cheshire East
- what we are doing well and what needs to be improved
- recommendations for improvements that we should act on, including any priority actions
- the likely type and timing of the next inspection activity around SEND in Cheshire East

Want to know more?

For more information, please see the online 'Area SEND inspections: framework and handbook' published by Ofsted and CQC.

Ofsted and CQC have also created online guides for parents, carers, children and young people about inspections of local services for children and young people with SEND .

For more information on local SEND services and arrangements, and how we have been developing our services, please see:

- Our **Local Offer for SEND** at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/localoffer
- our **'SENDing you the news'** newsletter at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/sendingyouthenews

Key Contacts

SEND Inspection Support Team
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