

E - Letter

I am writing to let you know that, with very great regret, we have decided to wind down Investors in Families during this term.

Over the summer, the Directors have been looking at ways of sustaining the initiative but, unfortunately, we have not been able to come up with a model that will allow the scheme to continue in the longer term.

There are a number of contributory factors that have led to this decision, which I am sure you will appreciate:

1. IIF was designed to take forward the Every Child Matters agenda and was specifically tailored to complement the work of schools and other settings in delivering the five outcomes. The inspection framework, for both schools and local authorities, was also based on the five outcomes, which meant that having the IIF accreditation was one piece of evidence that could be used as part of the inspection process. The new approach to the core business of schools and other settings, as reflected in draft Ofsted framework, has meant that, while the importance of working with families has not diminished, there is no longer the direct cross-over between the inspection process and IIF.
2. IIF was also developed essentially in partnership with local authorities, working through the local authority to co-ordinate the assessment process and liaise with schools. Unfortunately, particularly in the very difficult financial climate, a number of authorities have withdrawn from the scheme, as they are unable to commit the central staff time needed to ensure its success. Excellent work has been done, often through those staff supporting extended services, many of whom are no longer in post, particularly with the removal of ring-fenced funding.
3. The emphasis on school autonomy and the rate of conversion to academy status, which has already reached the tipping point, certainly for secondary schools, in many areas, indicates that the pattern of schools will be much more fragmented in the future.

In the light of these very significant changes, we have been trying to develop a new framework and a new way of working, to see if there is a sustainable model using independent teams of assessors who could work with settings in a defined area. However, we have reluctantly come to the conclusion that such a model would significantly increase the costs of the scheme, which would have to be charged directly to each setting, as would the costs of the local co-ordinator and assessors.

In the new climate and given the pressures on the budgets of schools and other settings, the Directors of IIF have, very reluctantly, come to the conclusion that it would not be possible to develop a sustainable model at the current time. The only option, therefore is to wind the scheme down over the next few months.

Malcolm Peckham will continue to deal with reports from assessors for schools and other settings that are working towards the award in the usual way, but, in light of this letter, it will not be possible for schools and settings to begin the process.

It would assist us considerably if you could let us know how many settings are in the pipeline, so that we can arrange for their accreditation in due course. Malcolm will be in touch with you shortly in respect of schools and settings that have begun the process.

Most of the annual fees paid by local authorities/clusters cover the period up to December 2011. We will not be making any charges after that date, other than the usual fee for accreditation and plaques.

I am sure you will understand how disappointed the Directors and staff of IIF are in having to make this decision, given how committed we are to the importance of working with families to improve outcomes for children and young people. Over the past five years we have, however, raised the profile of family involvement in schools and other settings and we are aware of how many settings with the award have embedded working with families in everything they do.

Many thanks for your support,

Chris Waterman

Executive Director

Investors in Families