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Children, Schools and Families Committee

School Accountability

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Oral and written evidence

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The Children, Schools and Families Committee

The Children, Schools and Families Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Children, Schools and Families and its associated public bodies.

Membership at time Report agreed

Mr Barry Sheerman MP *(Labour, Huddersfield)* (Chairman)
Annette Brooke MP *(Liberal Democrat, Mid Dorset & Poole North)*
Ms Karen Buck MP *(Labour, Regent's Park & Kensington North)*
Mr Douglas Carswell MP *(Conservative, Harwich)*
Mr David Chaytor MP *(Labour, Bury North)*
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Mr Edward Timpson MP *(Conservative, Crewe & Nantwich)*
Derek Twigg MP *(Labour, Halton)*
Lynda Waltho MP (*Labour, Stourbridge*)

The following members were also members of the Committee during the inquiry.

Mr John Heppell MP *(Labour, Nottingham East)*
Mr Andy Slaughter MP *(Labour, Ealing, Acton and Shepherd's Bush)*

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/csf/

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Kenneth Fox (Clerk), Anne-Marie Griffiths (Second Clerk), Emma Wisby (Committee Specialist), Judith Boyce (Committee Specialist), Jenny Nelson (Senior Committee Assistant), Kathryn Smith (Committee Assistant), Sharon Silcox (Committee Support Assistant), and Brendan Greene (Office Support Assistant).

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Witnesses

List of written evidence

List of unprinted written evidence

The following memoranda have been reported to the House, but to save printing costs they have not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Parliamentary Archives, and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to The Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW (tel. 020 7219 3074). Opening hours are from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays.

Christopher Jolly, Jolly Learning Ltd

Mathematics in Education and Industry (MEI)

Alan Quinn

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

New Visions for Education Group

Professor Stephen Gorard, University of Birmingham

Letters from Pete Crockett to Christine Gilbert, HMCI

Oral evidence

Taken before the Children, Schools and Families Committee

on Monday 16 March 2009

Members present

Mr Barry Sheerman (Chairman)

Annette Brooke	Mr Andrew Pelling
Mr David Chaytor	Mr Edward Timpson
Mr John Heppell	Derek Twigg
Paul Holmes	

Memorandum submitted by the General Teaching Council for England (GTCE)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

— The GTCE's work on accountability in teaching suggests the importance of a number of key themes for consideration:

  — accountability needs to make a stronger contribution to practice improvement;

  — the concept of professional accountability to the public interest needs to be strengthened;

  — as schools build further capacity and provide opportunities for children and young people, and their parents to be more active partners in learning, there may be more scope for schools to pursue locally determined outcomes, and

  — there needs to be some rebalancing of the different spheres of accountability.

— The proposal that satisfactory schools are inspected every three years is reasonable. The GTCE does not support unannounced inspections.

— The more adept schools are at self-evaluation, the greater case they will make for setting their own priorities on the basis of sound evidence and the perspectives of their stakeholders.

— The Government should give schools greater responsibility for accounting to parents via the school profile (and its successors) on individual and collective pupil progress.

— School self-evaluation could have a stronger focus on well-being, and tackling inequalities. The proposed changes to the relationship between children's trusts, children and young people's plans and schools provide an impetus for a clearer focus at the *local* level on school's contribution to wider shared goals for children and young people.

— The limitations of contextual value added (CVA) scores need to be recognised if they are not to have an unfairly negative impact on schools working with some of the most disadvantaged children and young people.

— It is unlikely that a single tool can meet the necessarily diverse accountability needs of all stakeholders. However, the GTCE supports the focus in the School Report Card on the school's contribution to narrowing achievement gaps and the desire to encapsulate schools' impact on learning and wider outcomes for children and young people.

INTRODUCTION

1. The General Teaching Council for England (GTCE) is the independent professional body for the teaching profession. Its main duties are to register and regulate the teaching profession and to advise the Secretary of State on a range of issues that concern teachers, teaching and learning. The Council acts in the public interest to contribute to raising standards of teaching and learning and the standing of the teaching profession.

2. Through its register of teachers, its code of conduct and practice and its responsibilities for safeguarding competence and conduct, the Council is itself a player in the accountability framework.

3. The Select Committee's focus is the accountability of schools. The GTCE has contributed to the public debate about school accountability, has submitted advice in this area to the Secretary of State and gave written and oral evidence to a previous Select Committee inquiry on the related subject of assessment. We draw on this material to answer some of the key questions of this inquiry. The primary focus of this evidence document is accountability for teaching, for teachers' and schools' contributions to wider outcomes for children and young people, and on the relationships between "account-givers" and service users in education.

GTCE Work on Accountability in Teaching

4. The GTCE is currently undertaking a project on the future of accountability. It is drawing on research and testimony about the existing framework, evidence from other professions, and developments in local accountability for children's services, as well as material associated with the Government's wider agenda for the reform of public services. We will keep the Select Committee informed of its outcomes. We expect our initial thinking to have been developed by the end of 2009 after a broad consultation with service users (children and young people and parents), teachers and wider stakeholders.

5. On the basis of work undertaken to date, the following themes are emerging as issues that the Council will wish to explore and which the Select Committee may wish to consider.

5.1 The public interest requires an effective framework of accountability but meeting accountability requirements inevitably places demands on resources. It is desirable therefore that accountability should make a stronger contribution to practice improvement, as well as to scrutiny. This might be achieved if scrutiny of teaching practice—whether via external school inspection or other means—became less of a sporadic, stand alone intervention. A continuing relationship between teachers/schools and an external source of challenge and support and which focuses on improvement might achieve this rebalancing. There is a parallel here with the need to ensure that assessment is primarily concerned with supporting pupil learning rather than passing judgements on schools.

5.2 Teachers need greater clarity about their role in a time of change. To this end the GTCE is consulting on a revised code of conduct and practice which is intended to be more widely used and understood not only by teachers but also by children and young people, parents and other stakeholders in teaching. It will set out the expectations that the public can legitimately have of teachers and that teachers have of themselves. In this way the concept of professional accountability to the public interest can be strengthened. The GTCE is also looking at options for active registration (sometimes referred to in other professions as revalidation, continuing registration or licence to practise) as a possible means by which the currency of teachers' good standing and professional development can be assured and outcomes for pupils enhanced.

5.3 Parental engagement has a positive impact on children's educational outcomes, and pupils benefit from opportunities to shape their own learning. Schools are already developing their capacity to provide opportunities for children and young people, and their parents to be more active partners in learning. Accountability may need to reflect this change in emphasis, with more scope for schools to pursue locally determined outcomes and to give an account of variance through self evaluation or by other means. Ownership and engagement of users in services is likely to be stronger if their views about what matters in the provision of services are reflected in the accountability framework. The GTCE welcomes recent developments in school accountability such as proportionate inspection, the use of contextual value added (CVA) data, and the use of school self-evaluation as a starting point for external evaluation. We will look at whether it is feasible or desirable for accountability to be more responsive to specific local circumstances.

5.4 There is a case for rebalancing the different spheres of accountability. The emphasis on institutional accountability at the school level is at variance with the Government's vision for 21st century schools that work towards shared outcomes in partnerships. Schools need to be held to account for their "core business" and for their collaborative contribution to children's well-being—but not in a way that implies that they are responsible for outcomes beyond their control. As the relationship between schools and children's trusts and of schools to the formulation of the children and young people's plan becomes stronger, this may provide the means by which schools can give an account of their contribution to wider outcomes within their locality.

GTCE Survey of Teachers 2009

6. The GTCE has commissioned a survey seeking teachers' views on the current systems that hold teachers and schools to account. The survey will explore teachers' opinions on the purpose of accountability; what they feel most accountable for; how effective the current systems for accountability are; and how a reformed system might look. The GTCE is happy to share the outcomes of this work with the Select Committee in July 2009.

7. In addition, the GTCE has commissioned some qualitative research on related themes with teachers across the country. The focus of these discussions will be teachers' day-to-day experience of accountability; their perspectives on the balance between local and national level accountability; their views on the impact that current systems have on both teaching standards and pupil learning; and their ideas for reforming the system.

8. The groups will also explore teachers' perceptions of "professional accountability" and the relationship between professional development and being a registered teacher. Teachers will discuss the implications and potential benefits for pupil learning of introducing a requirement for teachers to "re-validate" their skills and expertise as part of their professional registration.

The Select Committee's Inquiry Questions

Inspection

Proportionate inspection

9. The Council has consistently supported the proportionate approach to inspection developed since 2004 as part of the wider *New Relationship with Schools* (NRwS) framework. It is more effective and more cost-effective than what preceded it. The proportionate inspection model depends crucially on the ability to place schools into categories. The proposed clarification from Ofsted on grading criteria for all categories is critical to better public understanding of inspection judgments. For grade 3 schools, it is vital to have clarity about their performance and what the capacity to improve actually means for them.

Frequency of inspections

10. The GTCE supports the proposition that good and outstanding schools should be subject to less frequent inspection so that Ofsted can focus resources on the inspection of schools deemed less than satisfactory, including those in special measures or with a notice to improve.

11. The proposal that satisfactory schools are inspected every three years is reasonable. Ofsted could usefully do more to clarify its perspectives on "satisfactory" schools as head teachers report continuing perceptions of sub-divisions within the category. Schools would also welcome transparency about which "satisfactory" schools will receive a follow up visit. School improvement partners are well placed to contribute evidence about schools at risk of falling below the "satisfactory" category.

Notice of inspections

12. The GTCE does not support unannounced inspections and cautions that if Ofsted goes ahead with this proposition careful impact assessment will be essential.

Training of inspectors

13. The GTCE's recent advice on the implementation of the race equality duty says that schools need more support to promote equality and meet the equality duties. It advocates mandatory training and development for all Ofsted inspectors on inspecting race equality. This should be refreshed on a regular basis, and clearer guidance provided to head teachers and governors on the expected evidence and areas of questioning during inspection.

School self-evaluation

14. The Council's 2004 policy advice to the Secretary of State on school self-evaluation (SSE) recommended that for the majority of schools, institutional improvement should, over time, rely less on external inspections and more on self-evaluative processes which could be quality assured with a lighter external touch than the Section 10 inspection framework. The Council welcomes the developments that have taken place in this direction.

15. The GTCE welcomes Ofsted's acknowledgement that schools have "*increasing confidence in the ways in which (they) use performance data to establish their priorities and evaluate their progress*". This is a finding of the 2006 NFER evaluation of Section 5 inspections, commissioned by Ofsted, in which participants identified an improvement in school self-evaluation and the role of the self-evaluation framework in contributing to that improvement. It is confirmed by HMCI in her annual report (2007–08). The 2008 York Consulting evaluation report on the New Relationship with Schools (NRwS) commissioned by the DCSF found that where it is done well, school self-evaluation has led to more focused accountability for improvement in performance among middle managers and teaching staff.

16. The same evaluation also reports that the self evaluation form (SEF) is still often completed in a descriptive rather than an evaluative way. Schools may benefit from greater exposure, in an appropriate form, to some of the work on results—or outcomes-based accountability that is now being widely used in local authorities. It is thought to have focused attention on outcomes as distinct from inputs and activities, and on user perspectives of success.

17. The more adept schools are at self-evaluation, the greater case they will make for setting their own priorities on the basis of sound evidence and the perspectives of their stakeholders. This will need to be reflected in school accountability and more generally in the ways in which local and national government and agencies offer support and challenge to schools.

National Tests

18. The GTCE welcomes the removal of Key Stage 3 testing and hopes that it will lead to further reforms to the assessment system, because of the impact on children's learning, well being and their access to a broad and balanced curriculum.

19. As part of the school's accountability to its stakeholders, parents and pupils should be entitled to be fully and regularly informed about progress and attainment, with information being wider than a report of levels and grades. Information must be provided in a timely way so that it can be used as the basis for any improvement strategy.

20. As part of the New Relationship with Schools (NRwS), the GTCE believes that the Government should give schools with greater responsibility for accounting to parents via the school profile (and its successors) on individual and collective pupil progress. This would include assessment information and draw on school self-evaluation and inspection findings. The GTCE is committed to this school-derived model of accountability and believes that it will be of more value to parents than the de-contextualised and incomplete comparisons between schools that are published in performance tables.

21. The increased investment in assessment for learning, the use of an increasing range of assessment tests/tasks by teachers, and the development of moderation processes in schools would provide the means for teachers to develop a relationship with parents based on a richer and better informed dialogue.

Schools' contribution to wider well-being among children and young people

22. The GTCE welcomes Government recognition of the role of effective teaching and learning in influencing ECM outcomes, such as increasing resilience, raising expectations and reducing disaffection among children and young people. It also welcomes the acknowledgement[1] that schools cannot be held singularly accountable for outcomes over which they have limited or only indirect influence; for example child obesity or teenage pregnancy rates.

23. The GTCE is concerned that the well-being indicators proposed will make it difficult to factor out other influences in order to evaluate the contribution of the school. As it stands, it is not clear that the indicators could adequately capture the multiplicity of factors affecting outcomes. National benchmarking based on these indicators would therefore serve little positive purpose and could lead to invalid comparisons between schools. An over-reliance on what is quantifiable could devalue the more nuanced and insightful analysis based on qualitative data that many schools currently undertake via the School Evaluation Form (SEF).

24. The GTCE commends two approaches to the Select Committee. First, school self-evaluation could have a stronger focus on well-being, and tackling inequalities. In this regard it should be for schools to determine which data they need to collect as well as the use to which they put it. Ofsted's role would be to judge whether data is being put to effective use by each school. Second, the proposed changes to the relationship between children's trusts, children and young people's plans and schools provide an impetus for a clearer focus at the *local* level on schools' contribution to wider shared goals for children and young people.

The school's contextual value added scores

25. CVA data are widely regarded as preferable to raw data but their limitations need to be recognised. Otherwise they can have an unfairly negative impact on schools working with some of the most disadvantaged children and young people, such as highly mobile populations and others with disrupted school attendance.

The School Report Card

26. The GTCE has responded to the DCSF/Ofsted consultation on the school report card proposal and its response is appended for the Committee's information.

27. In brief, the Council doubts that a single tool can meet the necessarily diverse accountability needs of stakeholders such as parents, inspectors and local and national government. There are matters for which schools should be publicly accountable that are of little interest to parents, and it is important that the areas in which parents are interested are not reported in such a way as to give an over-simplistic or partial picture.

28. There is a contradiction between the vision set out in the DCSF document *21st century schools,* which sees schools as pivotal to early intervention; acting as a hub for communities and involved in diverse networks and partnerships to realise wider outcomes for children and young people, and the notion of a school report card that might or might not provide a description of partnerships in which the school is involved.

29. Notwithstanding these concerns, the Council welcomed some features of the report card proposals, including:

— The inclusion of parents' and pupils' views—which the GTCE believes should be separately reported.

— The focus on the school's contribution to narrowing achievement gaps.

[1] DCSF/Ofsted: Indicators of a school's contribution to well-being consultation.

— The notion of parental access to more up to date information on a school than sporadic inspection can provide.

— The desire better to encapsulate the school impact on learning and wider outcomes for children and young people.

30. The GTCE would be disappointed if the School Report Card was used to compare schools in a proxy league table with the primary focus on attainment at the expense of wider outcomes. The use of an overall grade, representing a summative assessment of the school's performance, could be misleading.

Conclusion

31. The Select Committee's focus on accountability is welcome. It is important to acknowledge the significant changes in accountability that have already been made, at the same time as the Committee asks searching questions about the fitness for purpose of the current accountability framework. Notwithstanding the emphasis placed on schools, the GTCE encourages the Committee to give some attention more particularly to the accountability of teachers and for teaching. The GTCE further hopes that the Committee's work will help develop thinking on appropriate forms of collective accountability of schools and others for wider outcomes for children and young people.

Appendices

1. A note on evidence collected by the GTCE on parents' perspectives on school *accountability* to parents and school *responsiveness* to parents.

2. GTCE response to the DCSF/OFSTED consultation—a school report card.[2]

APPENDIX 1

A NOTE ON EVIDENCE COLLECTED BY THE GTC ON PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL *ACCOUNTABILITY* TO PARENTS AND SCHOOL *RESPONSIVENESS* TO PARENTS

[A] Parents' Aspirations of Engagement with Schools

1. Parents in a study commissioned by the GTC[3] said that they wanted communication with their child's school, particularly to alert them when problems may be arising. They were critical of the information they received, saying that test results were inadequately explained and that end of term reports contained too many generic phrases.

2. There was, in parents' opinion, no substitute for face to face dialogue with their child's teacher, and written progress reports provided they were personalised to the child were also popular.

3. Primary school teachers were thought to be in a much better position to provide rounded information compared with secondary school teachers, essentially because of the amount of contact time that a teacher had with any one child at primary school.

4. Parents wanted more than the end of key stage tests are able to offer. As well as information on their child's academic abilities parents were keen to have a holistic picture of their child's progress that took into account the physical, social and creative aspects of development.

5. Parents recognised the need for a national benchmark against which individual pupil and teacher performance could be judged, but they did not consider that Ofsted reports and national league tables gave them the information they need to make a judgement about the quality of teaching at their child's school. The most recent survey of parental views on assessment for accountability purposes by the NAHT[4] found that 75% of parents surveyed thought league table status was not a real measure of the education provided for their children and over 70% wanted league tables abolished. More than 90% thought that teacher assessment should be used instead.

6. Parents in the GTC study wanted specific information about their child's development including that which:

— Reflected the school as a whole, not just its academic performance;

— Provided an assessment of the quality of teaching in their child's school;

[2] Not printed.
[3] BMRB Report: *GTC Parental Engagement—Pupil Assessment*.
[4] NAHT Parental Survey February 2009.

— Took into account any factors that might affect the school's performance, such as the use of supply teachers, and

— Was set in a localised context, drawing on similar assessments of local comparator schools and reflected the school's relationship with the local community.

[B] School Responsiveness to Parents' Needs in Supporting their Children's Learning

1. In January 2008 the GTC commissioned a report on *Engaging Parents in their Children's Learning*.[5] It was a qualitative research study involving 72 parents' attending six workshops.

2. The report found that, while many parents think it is important to be involved in their child's learning, they often do not think they have the range of knowledge and skills needed to engage fully with their child's education.

3. In a separate survey the GTC[6] found that teachers strongly agreed that parents have a positive impact on pupil achievement and thought that teachers should work in partnership with parents. However a significant minority of teachers reported that they had limited experience of engaging parents in some of the ways that teachers value most, for instance in enabling parents to learn about learning.

4. Although many parents spoke about the importance of supporting their child's learning there were mixed opinions about how they wanted to, or could be, engaged.

> *"Well, to be honest, I think it is for me to bring up my children correctly but it is for the school to teach them the things they need to know. Not me."*

5. The majority were happy to be involved by helping with homework and attending parents' evenings but they felt there was a range of barriers preventing them from being fully engaged. These include practical issues such as time constraint, possible negative reactions from their child (particularly secondary school pupils) and concerns about having the skills to support their child.

6. Parents and carers felt that schools expected them to support their child's learning and though schools assumed they would know how to do this, although this was not necessarily the case.

> *"I have never been told by my daughter's school what they expect from me. I've never been given a list or a brief. I don't know if anybody else has."*

7. Many parents and carers from all social backgrounds found it difficult to understand some of their children's school work. Parents and carers of primary school children, for instance, found methods to teach maths unfamiliar, while parents and carers of secondary school pupils felt it was difficult to keep up with their child's learning.

> *"I have fights because I tell him, 'No, it's this way' and he'll go 'But we don't learn it like that, we learn it like this' and I'm like 'Well I can't help you then because I don't know how to do it that way.'"*

8. Parents and carers were interested in the idea of sessions run by teachers that would help them understand the curriculum, teaching methods and how children learn.

> *"Her form teacher just chose small groups of parents to go through everything that they're learning. It was videos and explaining the way that they teach now, as opposed to the way they used to."*

9. Whilst the majority of teachers thought that parents and carers supporting their child's learning would have a positive effect of that child's achievement, some teachers had no experience of certain ways of engaging parents in their children's learning. For instance, although many teachers said they valued "learning to learn" skills, one in five teachers said they had no experience of providing opportunities for parents to learn about learning. Over a third of teacher respondents said they had no experience of supporting parents in improving their own subject knowledge.

10. More primary school teachers than secondary school teachers were positive about how to support parents in children's learning. More secondary school teachers than primary had no experience of supporting parents and carers. Parents and carers with children at primary school thought that the relationship they had with school benefited from "open door" policies and more opportunities to speak to teachers, whereas once a child was at secondary school contact with teachers was reduced to formal times of consultation.

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[5] BMRB: *Engaging Parents in their Children's Learning: January 2008*.
[6] GTC Annual Survey of Teachers 2007.

Memorandum submitted by the National Association of Head Teachers

1. NAHT welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee Inquiry into School Accountability.

2. The written evidence provides a broad overview of our position on the main topics of the Inquiry and we would welcome the opportunity to expand upon all of these points in oral evidence sessions.

3. Accountability

3.1 NAHT believes that it is right in principle that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance.

3.2 Schools should be accountable to parents, pupils and local communities and should be able to demonstrate to Government that they are providing the best possible education to their pupils.

3.3 Schools should not be held accountable for those factors that affect children's well-being, but over which they have little or no control.

4. Inspection

4.1 NAHT believes that an independent inspectorate is an appropriate mechanism for holding schools to account; however, we question whether the current inspection system is entirely fit for purpose.

4.2 We are concerned that Ofsted's independence is being compromised by pressure from Government and that inspections are overly focused on attainment data and arbitrary government targets.

4.3 The impact of the inspection process on individual schools is as variable as the quality of the individual inspection teams.

4.4 When Inspectors arrive with well-informed questions and open minds, take the time to scrutinize and discuss a range of evidence and make a genuine effort to engage with the context the school is operating in, the process can be very beneficial and contribute to improvements in school performance. In these circumstances the Inspection Team are often able to provide insightful recommendations and/or suggestions that are welcomed by school leaders and teachers alike.

4.5 However, when Inspectors arrive with data-based decisions already made and are unwilling or unable (due to time constraints) to engage with school-based data, with little or no knowledge or understanding of the sector they are inspecting yet an arrogant or high-handed demeanor, unsurprisingly the process becomes less useful.

4.6 Sadly, everyone working in the school community is aware of the variability in quality of Inspection Teams and this awareness has a detrimental impact on the overall impact of the inspection process as a whole.

4.7 The knowledge that inspection outcomes now depend as much on the quality of the inspection team as the quality of the school makes it increasingly risky for school leaders to be innovative and/or creative.

4.8 The entire school community's confidence is diminished by a poor inspection experience as is the esteem with which the inspectorate is regarded.

5. Qualifications and Training

5.1 NAHT has concerns that many inspectors lack both the qualifications and the breadth of experience required for a post of such significance.

5.2 We regularly receive expressions of concern from schools where an inspector has demonstrated by their questions or responses that they have no understanding of a particular sector—or indeed of the regulations that surround it.

6. Inspection Reports

6.1 It is appropriate for inspection reports to be placed in the public domain. However, the timetable for publication is currently too short to allow disputes regarding the accuracy or interpretation of inspection data to be adequately resolved. It may also in some circumstances be appropriate for some sections of inspection reports to remain confidential, whilst other sections are in the public domain.

7. Frequency and Length of Inspection

7.1 It is not possible to answer this question without first considering other relevant factors including the role of self evaluation and the aims and purpose of the inspection.

7.2 If self-evaluation is sufficiently robust and sufficiently valued by the inspectorate, then many inspections will become effectively moderation procedures with recommendations.

7.3 The length and depth of these moderation exercises will depend largely on the context of the particular school and the complexity of the data in question.

7.4 However, if self evaluation is not trusted by the inspectorate and they seek to "re-examine" every aspect of a school's performance, then clearly a greater amount of time is required for that to be done thoroughly.

7.5 Whilst NAHT believes that some aspects of inspection could be flexible in response to the type of school ie number of inspectors, frequency or length of inspection, the nature of the inspection itself should not vary depending on the performance of the school.

8. Notice of Inspection

8.1 NAHT is opposed to no-notice inspections.

8.2 The Pre-Inspection Briefing is a useful tool for schools as it identifies those issues that the inspectors will want to pursue and ensure that up-to-date evidence and/or information on those given topics is immediately available in an appropriate format for inspectors.

8.3 No notice or too-short notice prevents this from happening and so either impedes the process or places schools with particularly complex issues at a disadvantage.

8.4 NAHT believes that the headteacher should be present for the inspection of their school. No notice inspections reduce either the likelihood of the head being present or the ability of headteachers to participate in activities that take them away from the school site.

8.5 In considering the amount of notice that may be appropriate, again that depends on the nature of the inspection as outlined above.

9. Self Assessment, National Tests and CVA

9.1 School self-evaluation is of enormous value in an inspection context and should be given significant weight in the inspection report.

9.2 Massive amounts of time and energy are invested in the production of school SEFs and it is extremely disheartening for school leaders when that information is ignored or dismissed.

9.3 NAHT position on the use of national test results is well known to the Committee and so we will not re-rehearse the arguments here. Suffice to say that any data used in an inspection must be viewed in context.

9.4 As stated in our response to the Focus on Improvement Consultation. CVA and RAISEonline do not tell the full story about a school's achievements, and should not be treated as though they do. After all, if a national average is established, some schools will, inevitably, be below it and some above. That in itself tells you very little about the quality of provision in an individual school.

9.5 The contribution of CVA and RAISEonline data to inspections is limited by factors such as the complexity of the data and difficulties schools have in checking its validity, as well as recognised variations in the difficulty of different subjects at GCSE.

10. "Underperforming" Schools and Ofsted Categories

10.1 Current systems claiming to identify "underperforming" schools are based on arbitrary targets and floor-levels and are inadequate in recognising the hard work of staff and students or the broader achievements made by students within those schools.

10.2 The placing of a school in a category has no impact whatsoever in supporting improved performance, indeed it hinders school progress by diminishing the regard and/or respect that pupils and parents have for the school.

10.3 The additional support that accompanies being put into a category is what can make a difference to the school, but that could be put into place without the humiliation and scape-goating of school leaders that accompanies categorisation.

11. School Improvement Partners

11.1 School experience of School Improvement Partners has been as variable as their experience of Inspection Teams.

11.2 Some indeed act as a critical friend, supporting School Leaders in driving through useful improvement measures.

11.3 Others unfortunately take the role of proxy inspectors for the Local Authority, placing unnecessary stress on School Leaders and conducting their work in an atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust.

12. Complaints Procedure

12.1 Members of NAHT find the procedure for complaints about inspections woefully inadequate.

12.2 Many members are of the firm belief that there is simply "no point" complaining as, having already been through a negative experience there is nothing to be gained from the process.

12.3 When they do make formal complaints about their experiences, the response is usually reduced to a simple assertion that as the investigator was not present they cannot make a judgment.

13. School Report Card

13.1 The School Report Card has the potential to highlight to parents and other stakeholders a breadth of information that is not easily available in one place at the present time.

13.2 However, its legitimacy and potential usefulness will be completely undermined if a decision is made to provide one universal grade for each school.

13.3 The Report Card will need to be seen alongside the SEF and the School Development Plan in order for it to have any usefulness in setting prioritized outcomes for the school and whilst it may add information to the Ofsted Inspection it can only sit alongside Ofsted reports as part of the information landscape.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents 14,000 members of the leadership teams of maintained and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. This places the association in a unique position to see this initiative from the viewpoint of the leaders of both secondary schools and colleges.

2. ASCL welcomes the Committee's inquiry into school accountability, an issue in which the association has long had an interest and on which it has published a number of papers. Of particular interest are the most recent ASCL paper on *Strengthening intelligent accountability* and the association's response on recent proposals for a "school report card". These are attached.[7] They and the earlier papers can be found on the ASCL web site www.ascl.org.uk

3. It is clearly right that schools are held to account for their use of public funds and, even more importantly, their contribution to the lives of the young people whom they help to educate. Therefore nothing written here or in the other ASCL documents referred to should be taken as an attempt to avoid such accountability—the association is strongly of the view that there should be such accountability.

4. However, it is clear that the present system is seriously flawed to the extent of not being fit to effectively and fairly hold schools and their leaders to account. It has grown haphazardly over generations and now needs to be rethought systematically and replaced with a properly designed system of a limited number of elements carefully selected not to be burdensome but that more accurately reflect the performance of schools and those who work in them.

5. The accountability system has become less trusting of schools and teachers, though surveys consistently show headteachers and schools as amongst the most trusted individuals and institutions in society.

6. This has led to an ever expanding system of accountability that, though it does not deliver is hugely expensive. This cost is especially damaging in its, often ignored, opportunity cost: it uses a great deal of the time and energy of school leaders and teachers that would be much better devoted to the education of young people.

7. Part of the reason for this overburden is that schools are held accountable in too many different ways to too many different "masters". The education system is and should be primarily accountable to and for the young people in its care. When we are considering children, especially younger children, that accountability is effectively to their parents. There is also clearly a need to be accountable to society for public funds being used to good effect. But this is ramified by many different agencies of central and local government, so that headteachers, as prime leaders of schools, find themselves effectively accountable to children and parents as individuals, those groups collectively, to the governing body, to the local authority, to members and officers of the local authority, to school improvement partners (SIPs), to advisers appointed by National Strategies or the National Challenge, to Ofsted, to the Children's Commissioner, to Children's Trusts, to the Learning and Skills Council, to the press, to partnerships set up to address behaviour, diplomas or other locally agreed issues, and to many more. Further, most of these accountabilities are themselves multiples.

8. These accountabilities often conflict, looking for different priorities and demanding incompatible behaviours. For example, different plans and different targets have to be agreed with different bodies.

[7] Not printed.

9. A favourite phrase of recent years has been "challenge and support", but much of the support is not actually helpful, and amounts to extra accountability lines. This is often the result of a mismatch between power and responsibility, when those advising schools have an expectation that their advice will be followed, and may be able to punish if it is not, but have no responsibility for its implementation or outcome.

10. In the 1970s it became accepted wisdom that schools were not accountable, and that there was too little information available about them outside their walls. This may have been true, but the subsequent tendencies for "naming and shaming", for the publication of misleading "league tables", for accountability systems to become more intrusive, and for them to distort educational practice, has been very damaging.

11. Following the 2003 ASCL publication on school accountability, and a Cabinet Office report on bureaucracy in schools, the then Schools Minister, David Miliband, introduced in 2004 a "new relationship with schools" as a more coherent accountability system for schools. It covered Ofsted inspections, school self-evaluation, a "single conversation" with a school improvement partner (SIP), and a school profile for parents. Performance tables were retained alongside. Since then Ofsted inspections have been linked better to self-evaluation, but league tables have become more comprehensive, the school profile is rarely used by parents, and the single conversation has suffered from the top-down target setting culture of the DCSF and its agency the National Strategies.

12. A balanced scorecard can only sensibly be introduced as the main accountability measure if performance tables and the school profile are abolished, and if the role of the SIP returns to what was originally intended—support from and challenge by an informed, credible peer professional.

13. School self-evaluation is undermined by the present system, as the self evaluation form has been imposed on schools and has been increasingly subverted to provide extra accountability. Self-improvement has been obstructed by a fixation on categorising schools as failing in various ways, leading to a culture of fear which stifles creativity and leads instead to mere compliance.

14. The emphasis has been upon schools as institutions to be corrected or rewarded rather than upon the need to do right by all the millions of individual young people who attend them. So a great deal too much effort is spent on deciding which schools belong in various categories of failure, and which should be awarded various prizes and plaudits. (Sometimes the same schools of course.)

15. Though the present Government has emphasised partnership the accountability system is predicated on, and encourages, competition between schools at a destructive level, since it is wholly based on the performance of the individual school.

16. Too little account is taken of progress, improvement or performance over time; so that teachers and their leaders can find that they are only as good as their most recent results. This has led to an increasing number of school leaders being dismissed, often in ways more redolent of the football club than the classroom, contributing to the sense of threat and compliance culture mentioned in paragraph 13 above.

17. A particular fault of the current situation is that it systematically rewards those with the easier job and disadvantages those working in the most difficult circumstances. Ofsted inspections, leagues tables and just about every other part of the system seem to be designed to give maximum discouragement to those working in deprived areas and with children receiving little support from home. It is possible for the latter group to avoid actual penalty, and even to be rewarded, but much more difficult. This in turn exacerbates the difficulties that such schools often have in recruiting first-class staff at all levels.

18. There is an obsession in the current accountability regime with numerical performance indicators and targets based on them. There may be a place for such approaches, but there is at present little room for anything else. And the use to which the figures and targets is put reflects a managerialism drawn from, but generally long abandoned by, private industry.

19. The numerical performance indicators (PIs) used are not well chosen, creating perverse incentives. For example the widely used and reported measure "Percentage of 16 year olds gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C, including English and maths", has the effect of concentrating attention on those students who are close to that boundary and diverting it away from those well above or below that level, whose needs may be as great or greater.

20. This is compounded when an arbitrary threshold level is chosen (for example the 30% level of the above indicator for the National Challenge last year).

21. Too many of the measures used are norm-referenced, on the other hand, effectively putting schools into a rank order. This frequently leads to outrage that as many as a quarter of schools are in the bottom quartile, and half of them are below the median! This would amuse the numerate if it did not sadden, and if it did not do so much damage.

22. It is sensible to set targets based on an analysis of previous performance rather than plucking them out of the air, as happened with the 30% mentioned above or the absurd target that every child must make two national curriculum levels of progress per key stage.

23. However, such measures and targets should then be baselined in a particular year so that progress can be seen from year to year. The contextualised value-added (CVA) measure, for example, is a valiant effort to overcome some of the weaknesses of other measures by taking account of each student's actual progress in context. It is the most sophisticated measure of school performance but still has weaknesses, one of which is that it is re-calculated on a normative basis each year. So it is possible to improve performance, but still see a drop in the CVA measure because the improvement was not as great as that achieved by similar students elsewhere.

24. The obsession with numerical indicators has largely driven out other means of assessing performance. One that remains is inspection, but this too has been undermined as Ofsted inspectors often seem to rely almost entirely on what the numbers have told them before they visit the school.

25. To a large extent the statistical instruments of the accountability system are used without full understanding. An example is in paragraph 21 above. There is also a tendency to believe that a statistical instrument tells the whole story, when such can only ever be proxies, and to base far too much on variations so small as to be well within confidence intervals.

26. It is politically difficult to move away from some of these measures. The retention of the school league tables and the overblown testing regime in particular seemed to have become a test of political machismo. Yet when the KS3 tests were abolished in 2008 there was relatively little adverse comment and a good deal of praise for the decision.

27. It is worth contrasting public perception of the education system (which is that it is poor) with the attitude of parents and children to their school (which is that it is good). The factors mentioned above have led to a sense that there is a crisis in the school system, that it is generally performing very badly, despite direct experience of it that is almost always good.

28. This entirely unwanted outcome has been achieved at great cost, by an accountability system that is not only flawed but greatly overblown. At every turn there are pressures to add yet more to it, but those who demand that schools should report every instance of bullying for example, or every instance however slight of any use of force, never indicate what it is that schools should stop doing instead. These are important matters, but there is simply no need for an extra and elaborate accountability system in these areas.

29. The possibility of sampling and of other types of research that would not involve every school in the country in new reporting, new data collections and new lines of accountability seems to have been forgotten, presumably because the massive cost of the more simple-minded system does not have to be borne by those asking for it.

30. The proposed "school report card" (or as ASCL would rather have it "balanced scorecard") is an attempt to address some of the weaknesses of the present system by drawing different indicators together to offset one perverse incentive against another and to limit accountability measures to a single list. As such it is welcome, but ASCL is not convinced that it will not simply be added to the existing system rather than replacing it, or that it will not also grow without limit as every interest group adds its particular favoured element.

31. The association's considered response to the school report card proposal sets out very clearly the traps into which the initiative should not fall. It is attached.

32. The school report card for 11–16 schooling will need to sit alongside the Learning and Skills Council's *Framework for Excellence*, which is a similar set of indicators appropriate to post-16 education and that should apply to school sixth forms as well as colleges and other post-16 providers.

33. The present inquiry is into school accountability, but it is worth noting at this point that the accountability system for colleges, whilst different from that for schools, shares many of the same faults.

Summary

34. The accountability system for schools is immensely more expensive than it needs to be, and produces little value.

35. It is fixated on certain numerical performance indicators and targets that are poorly understood by those who use them, and are frequently misused.

36. It is overdue for a complete redesign on principles of intelligent accountability.

37. I hope that this is of value to your inquiry, ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ATL believes that:

— Accountability is a duty on all public servants but especially those entrusted with the education of future generations.

— Accountability must be balanced against professional autonomy.

— The current system gives undue weight to central government, particularly through national test data and Ofsted inspection.

— This leads to a narrowing of the curriculum and mitigates against professional reflection, innovation and creativity.

— Schools are also accountable to parents, the governing body and the local community.

— The accountability system must rebalance these interests.

— It is no longer appropriate to hold schools to account purely on an individual basis for the achievement or the well-being of their pupils.

Ofsted

— Ofsted should no longer carry out section 5 school inspections.

— Self-evaluation should drive school improvement, with the SEF validated locally.

— While there continues to Ofsted inspection of individual schools, inspectors should have good knowledge and understanding of the phases that they inspect, particularly in the early years, preferably based on recent classroom experience

— No notice inspection does not support schools to improve.

Performance reporting

— Checking the level of performance nationally should be carried out by sample testing.

— National testing should be abolished prior to the end of compulsory education, as part of a comprehensive review of the National Curriculum and assessment systems.

— Test data at individual school level, whether raw scores or contextual value added, lack reliability. Their publication in performance tables influences school and teacher behaviour negatively.

School report card

— the school report card will replicate the problems of the current accountability system. Individual grades will be allocated based on accumulation of flawed data, but will be reported as if they offer meaningful information and comparison.

— Ofsted's publication of a "health-check" is subject to the same concern.

— We do not believe that the proposal to collect well-being indicators is sound.

ATL—the education union

1. ATL, as a leading education union, recognises the link between education policy and our members' conditions of employment. Our evidence-based policy making enables us to campaign and negotiate from a position of strength. We champion good practice and achieve better working lives for our members.

2. We help our members, as their careers develop, through first-rate research, advice, information and legal support. Our 160,000 members—teachers, lecturers, headteachers and support staff—are empowered to get active locally and nationally. We are affiliated to the TUC, and work with government and employers by lobbying and through social partnership.

ATL policy

3. ATL believes that teachers as professionals must be recognised for their knowledge, expertise and judgement, at the level of the individual pupil and in articulating the role of education in increasing social justice. Within light national parameters, development of the education system should take place at a local level: the curriculum should be developed in partnership with local stakeholders; assessment should be carried out through local professional networks. Schools are increasingly encouraged to work collaboratively to offer excellent teaching and learning, and to support pupils' well-being, across a local area. Accountability mechanisms should be developed so that there is a proper balance of accountability to national government and the local community, which supports collaboration rather than competition.

Accountability

4. While we welcome the Select Committee's inquiry, as part of the series of inquiries into the underpinnings of the school education system, our response is tempered by our understanding of the position of the Minister of State for Schools and Learners. In conversation through social partnership, we understand that he will not move from his position that there will be a single grade for each school, published on the Report Card, and that schools will continue to be held individually accountable. We believe that if this decision has already been taken it closes down any debate about the purposes and means of the accountability system.

5. The current accountability system is based on frequent high-stakes testing, including an ever-increasing number of targets with league tables and a residual fear of Ofsted adding heavy pressure to drive compliance with government initiatives and the National Strategies.

6. This system encourages an insular approach, ensuring that each individual school does what it can to climb the league tables. Professional accountability implies commitment to evaluate and improve, it does not require a juggernaut of data collection and detailed comparison of schools.

7. We enclose with this submission ATL's position statement, *New accountability for schools*, published in 2007.[8] In summary, ATL believes that:

- Accountability is a duty on all public servants but especially those entrusted with the education of future generations.
- Accountability must be balanced against professional autonomy.
- The current system gives undue weight to central government, through national test data, Ofsted inspection and the GTC.
- Schools are also accountable to parents, the governing body and the local community.
- The accountability system must rebalance these interests, through:
  - Ending national testing prior to the end of compulsory education.
  - Developing a system of sample-testing in order to check levels of performance nationally.
  - Placing a duty on local inspectors/advisers to report to the local authority their evaluation of the School Evaluation Form (SEF).
  - Revising the duties of Ofsted, so that Ofsted no longer carries out Section 5 inspections of schools, but focuses instead on thematic inspections which are useful for national system development, and possibly on monitoring national achievement through the sample testing.
  - Developing the role of the School Improvement Partner (SIP).
  - Supporting informal accountability to parents through good parent/school relationships.

8. The accountability system must develop in tandem with an increased focus on partnerships and collaborations, whether between schools, between schools and other education providers (particularly early years and 14–19), and between schools and other children's services.

Ofsted

9. ATL believes that Ofsted should no longer carry out section 5 school inspections. Self-evaluation should drive school improvement, with the SEF validated locally. Local authorities should deploy staff who can evaluate the SEF and validate it against their own ongoing knowledge of the school. This would combine both support and challenge into a single role, as well as convey the accountability of the school to the local authority.

10. While we believe that Ofsted inspection has improved since the introduction of the school self-evaluation form (SEF) and shorter notice inspection, our members still report huge workload implications from the perceived need to be "inspection-ready", and from some inappropriate use of Ofsted gradings for lesson observations by headteachers. Ofsted continues to have a reputation for punitive rather than supportive inspection which limits the capacity of many schools to innovate and be creative.

11. Our members continue to express concerns about the training of Ofsted inspectors, their recent classroom experience and their knowledge and understanding of the phases that they inspect, particularly in the early years.

12. While there continues to be Ofsted inspection of individual schools, we believe that no-notice inspection is entirely inappropriate, and we have a number of concerns about the publication of "health-checks" and other interim non-inspection reports of schools, because of their reliance on school-level data which we believe to be unreliable. This data is already reported in different ways and used for too many different purposes.

[8] Not printed.

Performance reporting

13. National performance in particular subjects or aspects of subjects, as deemed important, can be measured and reported through sample testing.

14. Evidence shows that it is the reporting of data at individual school level through the "performance tables", rather than the existence of tests *per se*, that limits the curriculum and puts pressure on children and teachers. A school's performance in the tables, within a system which encourages crude parent choice, and which can trigger major interventions such as National Challenge, puts enormous pressure on schools to focus on limited aspects of the curriculum, and test performance rather than real learning.

15. It is often the case that only schools with an already good standing in the tables feel it possible to innovate and teach creatively, while those who are lower down feel the need to focus more intensively on test outcomes. Doing "more of the same" is unlikely to benefit many of these pupils.

School report card

16. We believe that the school report card will replicate the problems of the current accountability system. From research on assessment for learning in the classroom, we know that where grades are allocated individual comments on the context are unlikely to be heeded. We are concerned that the grade will be allocated based on the accumulation of already flawed data. Although all the measures are problematic, we believe it vital to avoid an overall score, particularly if readers are to engage with deeper information about the school.

17. The intention to include measures of "attainment" and "pupil progress" in the Report Card are contentious because of doubts about the reliability and validity of reporting test performance on a school-by-school basis. The data on the second two areas, "wider outcomes" and "narrowing gaps" is unlikely to be any more reliable. While we welcome acknowledgement that schools are about more than academic performance, we do not believe that the proposal to collect data on well-being is sound. The intention for indicators to be outcome focused is contentious as some of those outcomes will be beyond the sole control of the school. We are concerned that the inclusion of "parents' and pupils' views" emphasises the parent/carer as the user of a service rather than as an active participant in its delivery and chances of success.

18. Responsibility for children's well-being cannot be placed on schools alone, but must instead be shared across local areas and services. The Report Card which is based at school-level may well recognise different aspects of pupil achievement beyond the narrowly academic but it does not address the issue of this shared responsibility, despite an emphasis in the vision on partnerships, particularly on multi-agency working.

Conclusion

19. If we are to meet the needs of all children, then we must move away from the assumption that accountability should be measured school-by-individual-school.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the National Union of Teachers (NUT)

1. The NUT welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Select Committee's call for evidence. Annex 1 contains the NUT's response to DCSF's proposals for a School Report Card.[9] Annex 2 summarises the latest NUT survey of its members on Ofsted inspections. Annex 3 summarises the NUT's proposals for an alternative to the current school inspection arrangements.[10]

2. The Government in England has failed consistently to adopt a coherent approach to school accountability. Current systems for evaluation, from individual pupils to the education service at a national level, are extraordinarily muddled. There is no clear rationale of why various systems of summative evaluation and accountability exist. Consequently, schools experience over-lapping forms of high stakes evaluation systems, including institutional profiles based on test results and Ofsted judgements, which are often in contradiction with each other. These over-lapping systems of accountability are made worse by Government national targets for test results and examination results and by the publication on an annual basis of school performance tables.

3. Recently, the Government asserted within its Making Good Progress consultation that the, *"framework of tests, targets and performance tables have helped drive up standards in the past decade"*. There is no evidence that such a framework has achieved this objective. Indeed, the same document contains the DCSF's view that, *"The rate of progress …. has slowed in the past few years"*. The reality is that national school accountability mechanisms based on test results have damaged the record of Government on education, giving the impression of failure, not success.

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[9] Not printed.
[10] Not printed. See Ev 16–17, "The NUT's Proposals".

4. It is vital that the Government initiates an independent review of its school accountability arrangements. Accountability for the effective functioning of the education service is a legitimate requirement of both local communities and government. Parents have the right to expect fair and accurate systems of accountability. The accountability system in England is permeated, however, by a lack of trust. The Government's assertion, in its recent document, *Making Good Progress*, that, *"most schools now regard an externally validated testing regime as an important accountability measure"*, is completely without basis in fact. Teacher initiative and creativity is undermined by uncertainties created by multiple and often conflicting lines of accountability.

5. The Government should therefore review the measures it has in place for school accountability. Such a review would cover the current inspection arrangements, national targets and school performance tables. Its focus would be on achieving public accountability of schools whilst removing the warping and distorting effects of current high stakes accountability measures.

The Current Inspection Arrangements—A Flawed System

6. External inspection can help identify areas of a school's work which needs improvement. Such evaluation, however, is at its most effective when school communities understand its purpose and relevance. Overwhelming evidence from research and practice demonstrates that evaluation by schools themselves must also be at the centre of school inspection and support. To quote the Scottish HMCI, "Unless schools know themselves, they cannot benefit from inspection".

7. The greatest flaw in the current statutory inspection arrangements is structural in nature. It is a system based entirely on securing accountability accompanied by punitive measures for those schools which have been found to fail. This system of policing schools has led to the alienation of teachers from the process of quality assurance and evaluation. The arrangements have failed to channel teachers' expertise, experience and their commitment to the evaluative process. Ofsted has contributed to a culture of compliance under which schools and teachers prepare for evaluation out of fear rather than commitment and enthusiasm.

8. Where the outcomes of the inspection are positive there is a sense that the school breathes a collective sigh of relief and continues, much as before. The drivers for improvement continue, as before the inspection, to be those linked more closely to school development planning and review than to inspection. It is where the outcomes of the inspection result in failure that the destructive nature of the system is more evident.

9. It is not the Ofsted inspection framework itself which is at fault but the method of its application. There is a lack of balance between internal and external school evaluation in its use. This failure to achieve balance has led teachers to view evaluation as a regular event external to the life of the school. Teachers view section 5 inspections as a process to be planned for and lived through but essentially destabilising to the normal rhythms of life and certainly not to be embraced as integral to the continuing and effective existence of the school as a community.

10. At the core of the inspection process are "high stakes" judgements and about teaching quality, which are based on snap-shots of evidence. That those judgements are based on a small number of lesson observations is viewed by teachers as unfair; unfair because they take no account of all the external factors which influence the quality of lessons. Such factors include the composition and attitude of classes at any one time, the inevitable stress of scrutiny and even the state of each teacher's health.

11. In addition, lessons observed by Ofsted inspectors are necessarily atypical; the quality of which are influenced by whether teachers can rise to the occasion to give demonstration lessons. Inspectors, by the nature of their responsibilities, are in no position to evaluate the quality of teaching taking place in normal circumstances. This is a classic case of observation modifying what is being observed.

12. In 1999 NUT commissioned research conducted by the NFER into the effects of special measures on teachers and schools. The NFER research provided evidence of the significant human costs associated with so-called "failing" schools. NFER found that the public focus on failure present schools under special measures with additional and often intractable problems as parent and pupils lose confidence in their schools. Schools under special measures lose good staff when they need to retain them. Recruitment becomes nearly impossible.

13. The Government may seek to take comfort from the finding that many schools under special measures improve. The findings make it clear, however, that it is the additional resources and support to these schools which bring about these improvements. As NFER found the stigma and consequences of being labelled "special measures" creates additional hurdles for schools. The main message from the research is that the human cost of improvement is unacceptably high leading teachers and head teachers in those schools to conclude, "there must be a better way".

Role of the School Evaluation

14. There does not yet exist in England and Wales a system which brings internal and external school evaluation together in a coherent and systematic way, drawing on the strengths of both and integrating evaluation into systems for supporting teaching and learning. Yet developments in other countries, including Australia, Canada, Finland, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Scotland, have shown that it is possible to move towards such a coherent system.

15. In 1995, the NUT commissioned Professor John MacBeath of the University of Strathclyde to investigate whether a practical self-evaluation model could work in England and Wales. The subsequent report *Schools Speak for Themselves*, published in January 1996, concluded that school self-evaluation was vital, both for the systematic gathering of information about life and learning in schools for the purposes of school improvement and for any national evaluation system of schools.

16. Few could have predicted the impact of *Schools Speak for Themselves*. For teachers, the message that the mechanisms for evaluation were in their own hands has been liberating. This message was not only liberating for schools but for local authorities. A follow up study *Schools Must Speak for Themselves* commissioned from John MacBeath and published in 1999, found that local education authorities had used *Schools Speak for Themselves* to provide advice and professional development to schools on self evaluation. Schools which responded to the survey also commented positively on the way in which they had used the procedures and methods within *Schools Speak for Themselves* to inform their work.

17. Apart from providing practical support at school and local education authority level, both studies' proposals have direct policy implications for the current inspection arrangements. They identified four key priorities which should inform inspection, evaluation and support. They are set out below:

— Self-evaluation should be central in any national approach to school improvement.

— Accountability and self-improvement should be seen as two strands of the one inter-related strategy.

— Provision of time and resources have to feature as a key issue in school improvement.

— School inspection should continue to be a feature of the drive towards school improvement, but as part of a collaborative strategy with schools and local authorities".

18. In short, self-evaluation must be at the heart of school review, inspection, school development planning and the provision of external support. Successful external evaluation is contingent on successful self-evaluation. A positive consequence of self-evaluation is high motivation and, consequently, morale.

19. The introduction of self-evaluation within the Ofsted inspection framework has been a mixed blessing. The experience of many schools suggests that inspectors have tended to focus on the weaknesses rather than the strengths which have been identified in schools' own evaluation work.

20. Self-evaluation, as conceived by Ofsted, has provided schools with the criteria and methodology to apply in their evaluating and reporting on themselves. By imposing the requirement on schools to complete the Ofsted self-evaluation form at least annually, there is a real danger that self-evaluation has become, in effect, self-inspection. Thus schools have taken on the role previously held by Ofsted inspectors.

21. Such an approach is a long way from the model which has captured the imaginations of teachers and local authorities. As a result of its work with John MacBeath, the NUT believes that a school which takes time to think through its own priorities and values and which tests the fulfilment of these in practice will, as a consequence, be a better school.

22. Whilst appearing to adopt self evaluation, as advocated by the Union, Ofsted are using this in a negative and punitive way. The reduction in the notification period to inspect schools is breathtakingly naïve in its belief that this will reduce stress and bureaucracy. Schools have to remain in constant readiness for inspection, and teachers perpetually working in the shadow of Ofsted, never knowing when the inspectors will appear.

23. The NUT's model for a future evaluation/inspection framework is based on the principles above.

The NUT's Proposals

Inspection: The Principles

— Internal and external evaluation should be coherent, systematic and integrated.

— External evaluation should evaluate each school's definitions of its own successes, performance and development plan, and the effectiveness of its self-evaluation procedures.

— A common framework for internal and external evaluation, including its criteria, should be developed in full consultation with teachers and their organisations. This framework can thus be used for the purposes of checking the effectiveness of each school's self-evaluation arrangements.

— The role of external evaluators or inspectors would be to assess the self-evaluation procedures developed and used by schools themselves.

— In evaluating the work of schools' external evaluation/inspection should take account of the circumstances of and specific factors affecting each school.

— All those involved in external evaluations/inspections should have appropriate training, qualifications and experience.

— A holistic approach to evaluation should be adopted involving a coherent approach to the evaluation of teachers, schools as institutions, local authorities and the education service nationally.

Accountability and Schools

— There are no school performance tables or national targets linked to test results in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. The next Government should abolish both tables and targets.

— The data available from summative assessment and examination results should feed into school evaluation reports as they do in current inspection reports. To meet the country's need for a summative picture of the effectiveness of the education service it should re-establish the Assessment of Performance Unit. This Unit would be able to summarise data and ask questions through studies based on sampling. Such a unit would operate independently with an advisory board involving teacher and support staff unions, the TUC, the CBI, government and relevant agencies. It would respond to requests for national evidence on standards within schools and colleges.

— The terms, "special measures" and "notice of improvement" should be replaced by the term "schools in need of additional support". Such support may involve external support. If external evaluation identifies problems in a school then the local authority should be required to provide support including advisers and seconded teachers based in the school. There should be no "one size fits all" deadline for improvement.

— An independent Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) should be re-established which replaces Ofsted and would be responsible for evaluating schools. The HMI would be independent of government, not as a non-ministerial government department, but as a stand-alone independent, publicly funded body. The HMI Annual Report would be presented to Parliament, via the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee, on an annual basis.

— External school evaluation should be conducted by HMI possibly accompanied by a small number of trained advisers who would advise HMIs drawn from teachers, advisers, parents and school communities.

— Instead of a School Improvement Partner, each school should be able to appoint a critical friend whose job it would be to provide advice to the head teacher and staff and seek to secure additional support where necessary. Appointments would be made solely by the school. Critical friend posts would be funded by local authorities through specific grants allocated by government.

— HMI would evaluate the procedures put in place by schools to assess their strengths and their plans for improvement. The HMI would examine the processes and procedures schools have in place for gathering information on levels of pupil achievement, on the personal and social development of pupils and on the views of the school community. The HMI evaluation schedule would be flexible enough to respond to school evaluation models which have been developed or adapted by schools themselves to reflect their curriculum range and activities.

— HMI evaluations should be flexible enough to cover both individual schools and collaborative arrangements between schools including federations.

— School profiles would be determined by each school's own evaluation. A single profile would cover each school's public description of its offer and achievements. Unlike the proposals for the School Report Card, the profile would reflect the school's own evaluation and HMI commentary and not be summarised by a single letter or grade.

— Open and public accountability for schools should be predicated on an evaluation system which results in fair and accurate judgements. A new system of school evaluation would have integrally an open and separate appeals procedure with respect to an HMI evaluation where schools which disagree both with the procedure or content of that evaluation can appeal. The results of appeals should lead to judgements which can be maintained, modified or overturned.

— There should be one single form of institutional evaluation; school self-evaluation. Institutional evaluations should be developmental, not punitive. Punitive inspection does not strengthen schools; it makes them fragile. Assessment of the curriculum should be focused on supporting learning, not on carrying out a task for which it is inherently unsuited; that of being a proxy for the evaluation of schools.

— The proposals which the NUT has set out above provide a framework for a new system of accountability for schools and, indeed, colleges. It is one which supports, not undermines, schools and contributes to the quality of the education service.

February 2009

Annex 2

A SUMMARY OF THE NUT'S MOST RECENT SURVEY OF THE VIEWS OF NUT MEMBERS ABOUT SECTION 5 OFSTED INSPECTIONS

1. Although aspects of the current inspection arrangements are supported by teachers, such as the reduced amount of notice of inspection and the reduction in the amount of time spent in schools by inspectors, the negative impact which they perceive inspection to have on themselves, their colleagues and their school outweighs any benefits inspection might bring.

2. A constant theme throughout respondents' written comments was the stress, pressure and additional workload which were associated with inspection. This was in contrast to the findings of the NUT's survey in 2006 and in many areas reflected the findings of its 2004 survey, before major changes to the inspection framework, which were supposed to address these issues, had been introduced.

3. Respondents' written comments rarely gave just one example of additional workload—many were in fact a catalogue of tasks which they had undertaken, which they often explained as necessary because they wanted their school to do well in the inspection. The high stakes consequences of not doing so well were clearly upper most in the minds of many respondents, particularly those who reported working all weekend or late into the night at school prior to the inspection commencing.

4. This is also likely to be the reason why so many respondents reported working on classroom displays which they felt would meet inspectors' approval or, indeed, undertaking cleaning activities in their school. The "fresh paint" syndrome, which has been used to jokingly describe the lengths to which schools go to make a good first impression on inspectors, would certainly appear to have some substance behind it. This finding also raises the issue that teachers are choosing or being directed to ignore the provisions of the National Agreement on Workload. Whilst inspection is so critical for the future of schools and their staff, however, it is unlikely that any guidance from Ofsted alone would tackle this problem—the issue appears more rooted in the punitive outcomes associated with inspection.

5. The two most frequently mentioned drivers of workload, lesson planning and paperwork, are well known to Ofsted and have featured regularly in previous NUT surveys on inspection. What has emerged from this survey, however, is that this problem is no longer confined to primary schools but has spread to all phases of education. It is clear that Ofsted's existing guidance, that particular formats for lesson plans or certain forms of documentation are not required by inspectors, has not had an effect or has been forgotten. The NUT would recommend that Ofsted consider up-dating and re-launching its guidance on this issue in an attempt to tackle rising levels of pre-inspection workload.

6. Increased workload, together with the pressure of knowing that the school could be deemed to be failing, with all of the monitoring and uncertainty that this now entails, are almost certainly the key factors in the heightened levels of stress reported by respondents. A particularly disturbing finding was that comparatively younger or newer members of the profession were more likely to say they had been highly stressed by the inspection than in previous surveys.

7. This has serious implications for their future retention and the NUT believes that, together with the on-going evidence of the impact of inspection on head teachers' and other members of the Leadership Group's recruitment and retention, this by itself provides a strong rationale for reform of school inspection arrangements.

8. An additional rationale is the evidence provided by this survey that inspection is increasingly seen as disruptive to the life and work of schools, particularly as it does not fit with the natural yearly cycles of school development and planning work and is perceived by many respondents to actually detract from their school's "real" work. There was also increased evidence in this year's survey that teachers' professional development and other activities had been disrupted by the inspection, partly because teachers felt they must concentrate all their efforts on the inspection for the good of the school as a corporate body, rather than undertake work which could be more directly beneficial to teaching and learning.

9. As has been the case with previous NUT surveys, the quality of the inspection team was key to respondents' perceptions about the inspection process in general and the inspection outcome in particular, with respondents still believing that the outcome of the inspection could be determined very much by the composition of individual inspection teams. The relevance of inspectors' experience and knowledge for undertaking inspections of the Foundation Stage, SEN provision and special schools were again highlighted as particular causes of concern.

10. Concern was also expressed about the practice of assigning only one inspector to some inspections, which respondents felt could exacerbate the issue referred to above of lack of appropriate experience about particular types of provision but could also impact detrimentally on standard inspection processes.

11. There was a much greater level of polarisation than in the previous surveys, however, with far fewer respondents expressing neutral views on teams. Approval rating of HMI inspectors, however, continued to be relatively high judging by written comments. This indicates that little progress has been made in improving quality assurance to ensure consistency of inspectors' approaches to behaviour during an inspection itself.

12. A number of respondents described positive experiences of inspection teams or individual inspectors as "surprising" or revealing a "human" side to Ofsted, particularly where they felt the school's or their own circumstances had been taken into account. It is disappointing that this should be still seen as an aberration for the usual standard of inspection teams, rather than the norm and that opportunities for inspectors to show some compassion or understanding for school staff were missed.

13. Overall ratings concerned with the level of professional dialogue and the supportiveness of the inspection visit did, however, decline slightly compared to 2006, which again may be attributed to dissatisfaction with the inspection arrangements as a whole rather than a sudden decline in the quality of individual inspection teams, however inconsistent this might be.

14. Respondents' views on the current inspection arrangements were complex. On one hand, there was an increased level of support for the view that inspection reports were generally accurate and fair, but the perception that inspection failed to assess or capture accurately the value added by schools also increased.

15. This appeared to be linked to the very strong feeling that test and examination results were used far too much as indicators of school quality, with approaching two thirds of all the written comments made alluding to this in one way or another.

16. The main arguments used were that pupil performance data was being used exclusively by inspectors because of the reduced amount of time in school; that this was deeply unfair and inaccurate for small schools, special schools and those serving the most disadvantaged communities; that inspectors arrived in school with pre-conceived ideas because of the focus on data and were often unwilling to consider any alternative evidence the school might have to offer; and that crude links between these data and the inspection grades meant that provision, particularly quality of teaching, would be marked down in order to match the overall grade dictated by the data.

17. This does not bode well for one of the proposals made by Ofsted for revisions to the inspection framework from September 2009. In addition, respondents expressed mixed views about several of Ofsted's other proposals, in particular the continuing focus on the core subjects only during full inspections, which saw a considerable increase in the number of respondents who now oppose this, and the introduction of no notice inspections, which appeared to be deeply unpopular.

18. There was much stronger support, however, for the proposal to increase the period inspectors spent observing teaching, with respondents suggesting between 20 minutes as a full lesson as the optimal observation period which would enable inspectors to gain an accurate picture of the quality of teaching.

19. Respondents typically favoured the retention of the current arrangements in this respect, with between two and five days being seen as the optimal notice period, although many said this did not actually reduce stress and preparation as the inspection "window" for a particular school could be deduced up to two years in advance. Respondents also preferred the current three year inspection cycle and there was some support for a six year cycle, but for all schools, not just for high performing schools as Ofsted had proposed. The idea of yearly inspections for some "satisfactory" schools failed to gain a single supporter amongst respondents to this survey.

20.There was also a fair level of concern about the trend towards shortening inspection visits to just one day, the so-called "light touch" inspections. Although many respondents welcomed the reduction in the length of the visit they were also concerned that it did not give sufficient time for inspectors to genuinely get a feel for their school or to investigate the story behind the data. A number pointed out that it had enabled the school to "hide" various aspects of provision or conceal weaknesses, which were not in the long run in the best interests of the school. This might indicate a need for the survey of staff which was suggested by Ofsted in its proposals for the 2009 inspection framework.

21. Respondents remained unsatisfied, however, with the Ofsted inspection regime as currently formulated, as they continued to believe that this was separate from support for school improvement. The majority of respondents still believe that inspections do not stimulate support or help from external sources or help their individual school improve. A number questioned why, given that inspection appeared now to simply validate their school's own self evaluating as set out in the SEF, both processes should continue. Others proposed alternative accountability systems which they thought would have a more direct impact on school improvement.

22. Respondents to this survey, as in previous NUT research, clearly supported the view that it is the structural nature of the inspection system which is now in urgent need of reform and the "tinkering round the edges", or proposed revisions to the inspection framework in 2009, will do nothing to address existing problems. Until inspections are de-coupled form their potentially punitive consequences and given a more developmental and supportive function, they will continue to drive up pressure and stress in schools.

Witnesses: **Keith Bartley**, Chief Executive, GTCE, **Mick Brookes**, General Secretary, NAHT, **Dr John Dunford**, General Secretary, ASCL, **Martin Johnson**, Deputy General Secretary, ATL, **Christine Blower**, Acting General Secretary, NUT, and **John Bangs**, Assistant Secretary, Education, Equality and Professional Development, NUT, gave evidence.

Chairman: I welcome Christine Blower, John Dunford, Martin Johnson, Mick Brookes and Keith Bartley to our session today. As I said outside, this is a very important beginning of a new inquiry, which is one of the three that we have set ourselves to do this year—testing and assessment, the national curriculum and accountability. It really is a pleasure that you have responded to our request. I know that Christine has some difficulties today, so we are pleased that she has come to the first part of the session. After that, she will suddenly change places with John Bangs to allow her to get her train. That was by mutual consent, and we are very pleased to accommodate her.

Christine Blower: Thank you.

Q1 Chairman: The rest of you have to stay the whole time, and if Mick Brookes does not behave, we will keep him on after school. I am not going to ask you

for long statements because we have your CVs, but if you could say whether we should get rid of an inspection system, make one fundamental change to it or what you resent most about it. Give us a starter, Christine.

Christine Blower: My starter is that, at the moment, what we have is a system that is very low in trust and very high in accountability. We could of course ask to move to a system that is low in accountability and high in trust, but what we think is important is a system that is high in accountability and high in trust. Therefore, we should like to see the accent move from the existing Ofsted arrangements to a system in which school self-evaluation is meaningful and owned by the people in the establishment—the teachers—and is also meaningful to parents and students.

Dr Dunford: That was very good, Christine.

Christine Blower: That is the bar.

Chairman: Christine, you have astonished them all by your succinctness.

Dr Dunford: If we are pursuing, as I hope we are, a system of what I call intelligent accountability—accountability that drives behaviour in schools that improves the education of children—we have to look at accountability in the round. There are so many different aspects to accountability at the moment. The Secretary of State says that he wants to bring in a report card. If he does that, it has to be in the context of everything else. If the report card comes in, several other things have to go. I have some suggestions, but perhaps they can come later.

Chairman: Can we come back to those in a bit.

Martin Johnson: My plea in these opening remarks is that the Committee does not get bogged down in the detail of the various mechanisms that comprise our accountability framework. It is vital that the Committee maintain a focus on the big picture and how all the mechanisms fit together. The position of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers is that of course teachers and schools need to be accountable, but at the moment we have too many overlapping mechanisms, which together are unbalanced. They reflect a system with power located in two places: overwhelmingly in central government and then at school level. The Government have found it necessary to reinvent new, improved local authorities. Crucially, they now have duties with regard to school improvement. For us, the logic is obvious. We need less accountability to Whitehall and more to county hall. We need to put local communities back in the driving seat and schools back under local democratic control. We need better integration of inspection and support. Since Parliament has located the latter with local authorities, it should locate the former there, too. Let me have a word, if I may, about accountability to parents. Parents are transient. Communities have permanence. Parents are overwhelmingly less concerned about a school than they are about their child in a school. We must try to ensure that parents can feel happy about their relationship with the school, while recognising that that accountability relationship is largely informal. Finally, to repeat what someone else has said, the kind of accountability mechanisms that we need might depend a lot on how we answer the following questions: what is the condition of public servants in our schools, and ought we to start from a presumption of trust or do they need the continued application of a large hammer?

Mick Brookes: Let me make three points. First, accountability systems have to be manageable, and there is such a stream of accountabilities for schools. Take local authorities for instance: there are not just school improvement partners and local authority school improvement teams—health and safety, human resources and all those things are coming to schools. There is a dimension between larger schools—I am not talking about secondary—that have a team behind them and can manage some of that, and smaller schools where there is the head. Every second that the head is taken away from that role of leading children and their curriculum and well-being is a second wasted. Secondly, accountability systems have to be fair and based on data that are based on the school's context. We have had quite a lot of debate about that. I agree entirely with John's coining of the phrase "intelligent accountability", but there must also be emotional intelligence. If the outcome of accountability is that we call schools silly names such as "coasting", that is not emotionally intelligent. I do not think that having a large letter on the front of the report card is emotionally intelligent either. It simply undermines morale in those places. That is not a good way of raising the standard of children's education.

Keith Bartley: Our General Teaching Council's primary interest and purpose is to support improvements in teaching and learning in the public interest. In the context of this inquiry, we wish to examine how the accountability arrangements govern the work of schools and how the practice of teachers can be developed so that they support real improvements in practice. That is not in any way to dismiss the important function of scrutiny. Education is a major public service affecting the life chances of every child and young person, and it must therefore be held to public account. We believe that true accountability should do more. It should support improvements in practice, and it should give parents and pupils a very clear account of how schools and teachers support children's learning. We believe that there is real value in the school self-evaluation process, and that school improvement partners are making a genuine contribution to helping schools to reflect on their progress and their improvement plans. Inspection is also important, but one-off, episodic inspections can have only limited impact. If accountability is to serve the important purpose of scrutiny and make a positive impact on practice, a more sustained process of dialogue and external support and challenge is needed. Schools have many requirements on them to give an account of their work, and those requirements need to be both intelligent and proportionate. I welcome the signal given last week, by the Prime Minister, that public services will have

greater freedoms to make decisions appropriate to their local context, and less central prescription. That might just create the space that teachers and head teachers need to be able to give a more meaningful account of their work to their most important stakeholders—the children, their parents and the community that they serve. If teachers can give a better, richer account of their work to pupils, parents and their peers, that will strengthen professional accountability for teaching and learning, and serve the public interest very directly.

Chairman: Thank you for that—you were all pretty brief. I am not going to ask a second question. I'm going to hold my questions in reserve. Derek, will you open the batting.

Q2 Derek Twigg: Good afternoon. I have a simple question: what should schools be accountable for, and what should they not be accountable for?

Dr Dunford: Schools spend public money, and it is right that they are held accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness—those are two different things—of the way that they spend that public money. Therefore it is right that schools are held to account for their examination results, for children's attendance and for how they spend the money and whether they have a good, well-managed budget. Then we get into the really difficult area that might come under the general title of children's well-being, which is the wider development of children. We accept a responsibility to encourage the wider development of the children. We are not just exam factories. Perhaps it would be helpful if we could work with the government, as a profession, to devise adequate measures whereby that wider role of the school could be part of the accountability system. What we must not do, particularly in that area, is simply hold people to account for what is measurable, because then we get into real difficulties.

Christine Blower: I do not think we are going to differ much on this. One of the significant difficulties that we in the National Union of Teachers see is that there are different accountability systems and they are therefore muddled, because you are using different types of accountability to draw different sorts of conclusion. So, I would agree with John that schools are essentially accountable for all the money that goes into them, but most importantly they are also responsible for all the children and young people and the whole community that is engaged with them. Clearly, we have to account for what a child experiences in schools—not just the results that they can demonstrably get, but, in a narrative sense, the fact that we have developed as much of their potential as we possibly can, given the time that we have with them. We absolutely have to be able to say that we can account for those kinds of things. Tiger Woods was described two years ago as the world's best golfer and the following year he was described as the most improved golfer. Those things are not inconsistent. You could be the best school one year and actually be the most improved the next. That is the kind of thing we are looking at. We are saying, "You really want to achieve the absolute most you can with what you've got." Some of that can be done by exam results, but a lot of it cannot. One of the problems with the report card, if it were distilled into a single letter or number, is that there is no narrative about what that means for the school in a particular area. When I give talks and ask people to evaluate them, I never look at what they have done by way of one to five—from "most boring" to "most interesting". I read the narrative comments, because there you can find out what you did well and how you could do it better if you did not do it particularly well in the first place. Schools are accountable for everything, but there have to be proper systems of accountability, which disentangle the things, one from the other, so that you are not trying to measure something by using a system that is unreasonable to achieve that result.

Martin Johnson: I am largely in agreement. I would just like to add one small point. The question of what are the desired outcomes of schooling or education is highly contentious. It is a matter of philosophical debate, which, by its nature, is eternal. Only a totalitarian society would try to determine a definitive answer to that question. So, there is, in principle, some difficulty about describing comprehensively what we think the outcomes ought to be and, therefore, for what schools ought to be accountable.

Mick Brookes: I absolutely agree with everything that my colleagues have said about the necessity for public bodies to be publicly accountable. I do not have a problem with that at all, but we have to try to find a system of accountability that does not spawn huge bureaucracy. Let me give you a quick example of that: financial management in schools. Nobody at all that I know has a problem with schools—of course—being accountable for the money they spend. Indeed, the standards described by that scheme are admirable, but when it gets into the operational aspects and into the hands of some local authority and other accountants, files full of evidence need to be produced showing that you are doing it. It seems to be an accountability under which you are guilty unless you can prove yourselves innocent. I think that is the wrong way round. There should be greater trust, as has already been said, in the professionals who are being held to account and, in a sense, because they are professionals, we should be taking their word for it.

Keith Bartley: I will not go over ground previously covered. I should like to return to my opening thesis that accountability should support improvements in practice. If that is accepted, it follows that accountability mechanisms governing schools must be fit for that purpose. There is no doubt that accountability is made more complex by our wider aspirations for children and young people, which are derived from the Every Child Matters framework and outcomes. That framework implies accountability in multiple directions, but for different practices and occupations within a school and beyond. It also implies that there should be accountability for outcomes that are harder to measure—for example, pupil well-being. It is a

challenging framework of accountability. I want to give one small example of the kind of tensions that a teacher can experience between the different elements of our current accountability framework. The high-stakes accountability of published tests and exam results can lead to schools targeting resources on specific pupils within schools—I am talking about grade boundaries—and that can actually legislate against the ethical commitments of many schools and teachers to promoting equality for all. Some real tensions exist within our current framework.

Chairman: Derek, you can carry on, but I warn our witnesses that I am not going to call each one for each question, because if I do we will be here all day. I will take a couple of responses to each question, so they should indicate fast if they want to speak—it is like "University Challenge"—and I will take the first two. Is there anyone here who was not a trade union leader when we first invited them—apart from you, Keith?

Q3 Derek Twigg: From what you have previously publicly stated and what you have said in some of the opening statements today, you like being accountable to parents, but are not keen on being accountable to Ofsted and are even less keen on being accountable to the government. That is a bit of a provocative statement in a sense, but my point is this: to what extent should you be accountable to government—Ofsted—because you seemed to suggest in your comments that inspections should take place at local authority level and that schools should be more involved in self-assessment? Forgive me if I have got your views on that wrong, but I wonder what you feel in terms of where you should be and how you can be accountable to government within the sort of scope we have just outlined.

Chairman: That is to John, is it?

Derek Twigg: John and Martin.

Dr Dunford: First, I do not agree with what my colleague Martin Johnson said about shifting accountability from central government to local government so that there would be 150 different kinds of accountability. I do not think that that would be progress at all. We will probably find that, in a sense, schools have ownership of the accountability system to parents, and that they decide what kind of surveys they are going to do—pretty well all of them now do surveys. Accountability systems where you have some ownership of how things are done can be effective as they feed into school improvement. What schools find difficult with the Ofsted and central government stuff, of course, is that, inevitably, it is being done to them and they do not have ownership of it, but the problem is not whether it should be done. I think everyone would accept that central government allocate the taxes and that we have to be responsible to them for what we do. Ofsted is one arm of that accountability. I do not have a problem with that at all, but there is some problem with the methodology.

Q4 Derek Twigg: What form should that accountability take?

Dr Dunford: We could go into that in some detail. Regular Ofsted inspections are a perfectly acceptable form of external accountability provided that that links up with a school's self-evaluation. We want quality assurance.

Christine Blower: Yes.

Dr Dunford: Quality assurance combines internal self-evaluation with external checks. Okay, Ofsted is the body that does the external checks, but that is a proper system of quality assurance, and that is what we should be seeking.

Martin Johnson: I was referring to the balance of accountabilities. Of course schools need to be accountable to government—after all, the government are the ultimate paymaster—but the question is who needs to know what. Where I differ with my colleague is that I do not think that a national agency is best placed to do what we might call school improvement activity because it is difficult for a national agency to understand local context and to be sufficiently present in a school to understand what is going on in that school. Ofsted often says that it takes snapshots, but what we want is an agency that is capable of acquiring continuous knowledge and understanding. From there, I agree with what John was saying. The national government need to know about system performance, so we need Ofsted, or an agency doing the same job, to collate the findings of local inspection and to seek trends. One thing that Ofsted does, which I think almost everybody welcomes, is its thematic investigations, which are generally high quality. Ofsted needs to paint the national picture for the government, which is a slightly different function. The same thing goes, for example, for pupil attainment. National government need data that you can provide through a sample test; locally, much more knowledge is needed.

Christine Blower: On the need for accountability nationally, we urge the Government to re-establish the assessment and performance unit, because there is scope for ensuring that the system does the things that the taxpayer might reasonably expect it to do. That could be done through the APU, through sampling and so on. You might venture the view that to test every single rising 11-year-old is a cruel and unusual punishment if you are just trying to find out whether there are particular trends in reading, writing and mathematics, and we agree that there is a specific way of doing that. It is absolutely true that schools must be accountable, and they should be externally inspected, but I concur with the view that the way to do so is through rigorous and robust self-evaluation that is not a tick-box—the self-evaluation form, or SEF—but is all the things that John MacBeath, who was then at Strathclyde, did for and with the NUT. That was about rigorously looking and engaging with the whole school community, saying, "This is a picture of what the school is doing and some ideas about the weaknesses and where we should go." That should then be moderated by an external agency, which we could call Ofsted if you really want to.

Chairman: Do you want to come back, Derek?
Derek Twigg: No.
Chairman: John?

Q5 Mr Heppell: I am starting to get a picture—well, I think I had a picture anyway of people's views from the written comments.
Chairman: Not prejudice, John?
Mr Heppell: No. I have a slight worry. I wonder whether there is an objection to the external evaluation—external exams, if you like—or to the way that performance is reported. You mentioned that one letter—one star—was not a way to report it. What are the views on that? How does the way that performance is reported affect schools?
Mick Brookes: The Ofsted framework is a pretty good shot at describing what a good school looks like when it is working well, but we are concerned about the framework's operation, and how it is used and, sometimes, misrepresented. Let me reference it again: at a school where everything is going extremely well but there is a problem with boys' writing, the mechanistic way in which the framework works says, "If boys' writing is a problem, therefore leadership and management can't be very good either," is a set of nonsense when everything else in the school is going well. There is a specific problem, but one blip should not describe the whole process. You are quite right: it is about the way a decent framework operates. I know we are going to talk about quality assurance later, so I shall save that until then.
Keith Bartley: I wanted to respond directly to your question about what we measure and hold schools accountable for. Our advice to this Committee, in its previous inquiry, was very much that the high-stakes testing system—when one set of tests is used for so many different purposes—causes the real problem. We need to find a way of broadening the things that are measured and how they are measured, but not, in any sense, to move away from reporting them. I want to make that very clear.

Q6 Mr Heppell: I see a difference between what the Government say and what comes from you. When the Government talk about putting stuff down to the community, part of it goes to local authorities, and extra responsibilities are being given to them, but I think that the Government's aim is to get down to communities and parents. Part of the worry for me is that Martin is quite dismissive about parents. Someone said—I have forgotten who it was, and I might have read it—that parents come and go, but schools are important for us, for parents and for their individual children. What do you do to ensure that parents are involved in the process if you do not have the sort of system that we have now?
Christine Blower: The point is that we are saying not that there should be no external inspection, but that the system that we have will not necessarily result in teachers finding it a satisfactory experience, or provide the best information to parents. When we sampled the views of our members, most of them responded that Ofsted judgments were fair but, equally, they are concerned that those judgments are now extremely data driven and do not give a well-rounded picture of what the establishment is doing. If parents are interested in a school in the round, they are interested not only in what the GCSE results are, but in all the other things that the school can do. With much shorter inspections—I would not for a moment claim that our members want to spend a lot of time being observed—it is absolutely the case that people sometimes believe that there is no sense of what the whole school does, because some departments or people are not seen. If I were a parent looking for a school for my child, I would want a much more narrative understanding of what this or that school does. We do not believe that the current Ofsted arrangements manage to do that.

Q7 Mr Heppell: Is Ofsted supposed to do that? Are there not other mechanisms for parents to get that broader stuff? Every school must do a profile, and if I were looking for a school for my children now, I would probably visit it and ask to see what information it could give me. My experience is that schools often do that. They sell their big picture rather than just their results. Is there really such a problem?
Dr Dunford: Surveying parents' views is not a problem, because schools have made huge strides in self-evaluation in the past three or four years, and parent surveys are part of that self-evaluation. Many schools use commercial companies to run the surveys for them, so they are efficient, and the schools receive a lot of cross-referenced feedback and can benchmark parents' views of the school—there are many similar questions—against parents' views of other schools so that they know how well they are doing with the parents. The extent to which pupil surveys have increased in the past two years is significant. About three years ago, we had a big increase in parent surveys as part of self-evaluation, and there has been a similar increase in pupil surveys in the past year or two. Schools are carrying out surveys because they want to, and they use the information as part of their self-evaluation. As Christine says, that is fed into the self-evaluation form, which is then fed into the Ofsted system. That is the best way of getting views. We may not do that with every parent every year, but we do a sample at least, so you get a run of views, rather than just the spot check that Ofsted has. You can say, "Here are the parent views over the past three years," and that is very powerful.
Mick Brookes: There is a separation between individual parents and schools being held to account for individual pupils' progress. The answer for parents is, "For goodness' sake, go in and see." Schools' information streams and the opportunities for parents to find out how their children and young people are getting on are much improved. The other issue is how to know how well a school is doing. There are results to be seen, but part of that is the

parental community view. There is an interesting split: in individual schools, more than 90% of parents—even according to Ofsted—believe that their school is doing a jolly good job, but when it comes to the general public, that drops to about 54%. I go back to fairness and ensuring that we have a system that describes what schools are doing well, but in a simple way.

Keith Bartley: Can I bring in some evidence from parents that comes from research that we have done and that has been replicated elsewhere. There is the issue of choosing a school and finding out about schools to make that choice, but there is also a sense of engagement, and that is the point that Mick was just starting to raise. Schools that are the most effective in engaging parents with what their children are learning, and know how that learning can be supported, are the schools in which parents have the clearest understanding of what is going on in the school. That, therefore, delivers a form of accountability that certainly, for me, matches that sense of which one promotes improved practice and improved outcomes for children.

Q8 Mr Heppell: One final thing relates to the CVA measures and the value-addeds. You were saying before, "How do you know if a school is doing well?" From the layman's point of view, I would say that that is where it starts. If it starts with a very bad intake, you would not expect it to improve by too much. How important are those measures in terms of assessment generally, and for parents to try to evaluate them?

Mick Brookes: Tracking pupil progress is obviously important throughout the system. We are saying that if you are going to track pupil progress, it should be by the same sort of scheme at the end of foundation, at early primary, at late primary and in secondary. Therefore, tracking pupil progress is very important. CVA is a good idea in itself, but it does not work, for example because high-fliers coming in at year 7 are unable to make anything more than flat progress in terms of CVA scores. The same is true of children with special educational needs; if they are coming into a school that is below average, there is a very good reason for that. This notion of two-level progress is a good scheme, but the way in which it is being used does not properly follow the concept.

Q9 Chairman: Martin, you were named in a question. Do you want to come back?

Martin Johnson: Let me go back to the previous point about parents. I am sorry that I did not make myself clear in my earlier remarks. I subscribe to what was said, particularly by Keith and others. The point I was trying to make was that parents are much more interested in their own child than they are in the school as an institution. For reasons that have been explained, the relationship between the parent, the child and the school is vital in terms of the child's progress, but that has to be through informal mechanisms. For example, in the case of younger children, it can be through conversations between the teacher and the parent or carer who is picking up the child at the end of the day. That is accountability.

Dr Dunford: We do not want to see contextual value added being given a bad reputation because it is not used in the right way. We regard CVA as being better than value added, and value added being better than raw results, as a way of judging the performance of a school. None the less, the formula changes every year. There are all sorts of things about it. It is norm referenced, which means that your exam results can get better, but your CVA score can go down. You might lose two pupils from a particular ethnic minority and that causes your results to go down. It is a black box that most people do not understand. Your score moves and you do not really understand why. What CVA can do—with any statistic you have to take confidence intervals into account—is tell you that those schools in which the whole confidence interval is above 1,000 are significantly better than average schools. The ones that fall entirely below 1,000 are significantly worse than other schools. What you cannot do is use CVA scores to put schools in order and say that, necessarily, 1,002 is better than 1,001, because that is not the case.

Chairman: Derek, a quick one?

Derek Twigg: Got to go.

Q10 Chairman: No disrespect to you, but they are both on a statutory instrument Committee. They are going, but they say that they will come back, so make a note of when they come back. Ofsted developed the Tellus surveys. How effective and useful have they been?

Dr Dunford: They are voluntary, fortunately, because if they were compulsory, we would be very worried about them.

Q11 Chairman: Why?

Dr Dunford: The nature of some of the questions can be a problem. If you ask a question about bullying without defining what you are talking about, you get some very peculiar answers. We would not be happy about the extension of the Tellus survey.

Chairman: Do you agree, Christine?

Christine Blower: I think it might be useful for the schools to be using them but, as John says, we have more than enough to do without making compulsory things that are currently voluntary. Schools are presumably using them where they find them useful.

Chairman: Excuse me. We are having a slight problem with yet another member of the Committee who is serving on another committee. He is only going out for five minutes. Sorry Christine, could you repeat that?

Christine Blower: I am concurring, pretty much, with John, in the sense that we certainly would not want them made compulsory given that schools have very large numbers of things to do at the moment. If schools are finding them useful, I am sure they are using them. There is no big lobby from the NUT to make them anything other than what they are.

Dr Dunford: I might just add that, on the whole, schools do not use them. Ofsted does the survey, uses them and produces a picture of whatever is in the local authority area, but individual schools do not, on the whole, use the information very much.

Q12 Chairman: Christine, you are going to change over soon, aren't you? What do you think would happen if Ofsted was magically disappeared? Would school standards plummet?
Christine Blower: No.

Q13 Chairman: What would happen?
Christine Blower: I started teaching in 1973, and we have never not had inspection. People will tell you that education used to be a secret garden and that no one knew what was going on, but I do not think that was ever really true in the schools that were really interested in their communities. I think that what would happen is that there would be rather fewer stressed teachers. One of our findings from the survey is, unfortunately, that newer and younger teachers find Ofsted even more stressful than some of their colleagues who have been around for longer. That is counter-intuitive, as one would have expected that they would have been used to the idea. I suspect that if we did not have Ofsted, but did have an inspection system that looked at making sure that they properly evaluated school self-evaluation, we would be decoupling school improvement from the very punitive aspect of Ofsted, and we would therefore have schools that were certainly happier places to work in, and that had more ownership of their own development. At the moment, much of what is done has to be done, as opposed to people buying into it, so I think that school self-evaluation is definitely what we would want to be looking at.

Q14 Chairman: So you do not want to abolish Ofsted, but are you thinking of a golden age? Would you go back to HMI and all that?
Christine Blower: I think it is important to have an inspector of schools, yes, and I think that it is important that there is an inspectorate that can publicly give an account of what is going on in schools, but that has to be a proper and genuine account that is based on the experience of colleagues in schools. One of our big problems with Ofsted is that it is separated from the support for school improvement. Going back to what was said at the beginning, if we are talking about accountability that builds on the best that schools are doing and that improves things for schools, you need a system of inspecting schools that does that, not a system where, as soon as they come in, people's feeling is, "They're looking to see whether we're going to go into a category." That is a great concern among a lot of teachers.

Q15 Chairman: Christine, when we had the previous Ofsted Chief Inspector, who is now the Permanent Secretary, he used to say, "School improvement is nothing to do with us; we go in, we inspect, we make our report and then we walk away." But the present Chief Inspector says that she is into school improvement, and that Ofsted should be concerned with it. Which do you prefer?
Christine Blower: I certainly think that it is important that what goes on in schools is about making sure that schools improve. Whether they improve from being very good or satisfactory, it is important that they improve. Whatever system of accountability you have, it has to be clear for what you are accounting, and how that accountability is going to mean that you are now going to do things that improve your practice and the outcomes for the children and young people. So, absolutely, Ofsted should have responsibility for talking about how everything being done in the school that is good could be done better, and how everything that needs improvement could be improved, rather than simply saying, "This needs to improve. Thank you and goodbye; we'll see you again in three years."

Q16 Chairman: A lot of money is involved. Is Ofsted a good use of taxpayers' money?
Christine Blower: One of the things that we find when we talk to our members is that, generally speaking, however stressful they find the Ofsted experience and however much they do not really want it to happen, they do, in large part, agree with the outcomes for their school. That is more likely to be the case if they are getting something halfway decent than if they are put on special measures, but in general terms they do. That is what you would expect. You would hope that schools were sufficiently reflective that, when an outside agency came in to look at them, it would find the same things that schools find for themselves. That would be much more widespread and positively felt if the engagement were about looking at what schools were saying about themselves, with proper engagement about that, and talking about school improvement, rather than this ongoing fear that something could be going wrong. Of course, we are all absolutely well aware that the fact of observing something changes its nature, so there may be a sense in which the shorter inspections are not doing the full job that you would want done, but to do that full job, you would have to be doing it on a basis that was much more collaborative and much more about seeking improvement than finding fault.
Chairman: I will come back to those broader questions and put them to rest of you guys a little later. Thank you, Christine.
Christine Blower: Thank you very much, Chair. I apologise for having to leave.
Chairman: We now welcome John Bangs to the hot seat. Annette is going to lead us in the next set of questions.

Q17 Annette Brooke: I think we have reached the point at which everybody accepts that an inspectorate or a system of inspection is desirable, so my questions are how can we make it effective and how can we improve it. First, could we make Ofsted more independent, and if so, how? I shall ask John first, because he has made a comment on that.

Dr Dunford: There are two specific ways in which I would like to see that happen. First, the Ofsted complaint procedure should be independent of Ofsted, so it should even have a further degree of independence. In relation to Ofsted's independence, the most important thing that happened when it moved out of the Department and became—in inverted commas—"more independent" from it, was that the Department lost the professional voice within it, and its policy making has been much the worse as a result of that since 1994. Prior to that, staff inspectors were always involved in policy-making discussions in the Department. Ofsted needs to be independent in another sense, because it needs to stand between the Government and the profession. I come back to a point that was being made earlier: it is as important for Ofsted to report on the effectiveness of the system and the Government's policies as it is for it to report on the effectiveness of the individual schools. We have moved from HMI, which did most of its work on the effectiveness of the system and very little on the effectiveness of individual schools—they only came about once every 20 years—to a system where it has shifted too much the other way and is now focused entirely on the effectiveness of the individual schools, and you hear Ofsted say very little about the overall effectiveness of the assessment system, or whatever it may be. We need to move to a position in the middle, where Ofsted reports without fear or favour on both those things equally.

John Bangs: I was listening carefully to Christine's reply—

Dr Dunford: She's your boss.

John Bangs: I know. That's why I was listening carefully. The current Chief Inspector tries to be as independent as possible. It is the scope and range of what she evaluates that has been trimmed and that really worries me. There are three studies that Ofsted should have been conducting, but has not been doing. A study on the school improvement partners is currently being carried out by York Consulting and Making Good Progress is being evaluated by PricewaterhouseCoopers, as was the academies programme. All those high stakes government initiatives are not evaluated by Ofsted. I find that extraordinary. We have this kind of Delphic conversation when the teacher organisations meet the Chief Inspector, about why we would have to ask someone else that and all the rest of it. I think it is for the Committee to ask questions about why Ofsted does not take on those key government initiatives. As I said, the Chief Inspector tries her best. The institution is a non-ministerial government department accountable to the Crown. I do not think that you can go much further than that, but what ought to be embedded is reporting to Parliament. You have an informal arrangement, Chairman, but as the Chief Inspector is accountable to the Crown, it should be formalised such that the conduit and accountability are through Parliament, through the Select Committee. The arrangement should be formal as well as informal.

Chairman: A good point. Mick?

Mick Brookes: I agree that this Chief Inspector is far more interested in how Ofsted can make a difference in schools, and how the inspection team can leave the school with an agenda for improvement, rather than condemnation, and I welcome that. We will get on to that. I do not think that there ever was a golden age. There has to be an inspection system, and the key thing that I would like to see is quality assurance in respect of the people who do the work. A complaint was made about the behaviour of an Ofsted inspection which we think was contrary to the code of conduct, and the response to the head teacher was, "I was not there, therefore I cannot tell", which, quite frankly, was a ridiculous response. We wrote back and asked, "Are you tracking that inspector across a number of schools to find out whether there are similar complaints, as we have done?" The current quality assurance of teams that inspect schools is not good enough. Having said that, there are some extremely good teams out there as well, and it would be wrong to condemn all of them because of the behaviour and actions of a few.

Q18 Annette Brooke: One of my other questions, apart from establishing whether inspection should be independent, was about quality. What do you think could be done to address the problem of variability between teams?

Keith Bartley: I would like to go back slightly to reinforce the importance of independence, because it starts to link across to your question about variability. It is vitally important that we have independent, authoritative, secure and robust voices offering commentary on the effectiveness of both national policy and its local translation into practice. That is very important indeed, and I would say that coming from independent public corporation, wouldn't I? However, there is more to it than that. The whole notion of variability could in part be addressed if Ofsted were to bring schools more closely into the improvement process. It is already starting to experiment with that. For example, school leaders could become more a part of the inspection teams, and better understand the means by which inspection judgments are arrived at, particularly drawing on the link between school self-evaluation, its inevitably truncated form of expression in the national service framework and the outcomes and inspection. The improvement circle and, therefore, one of the issues around variability would be better addressed by bringing schools more closely into the system.

Q19 Annette Brooke: Dr Dunford, I am interested in how we can improve quality.

Chairman: Hang on. Martin has been more patient, so Martin and then John.

Martin Johnson: You are very kind, Chairman. Thank you. I am a bit heretical on this independence question. I think that Ofsted is too independent. Its strapline is something like, "Ofsted—never apologise, never explain". I know that this Committee tries very hard to hold Ofsted to account,

but it is not accountable enough. On variability and quality control, Ofsted itself has been working very hard on quality control for at least a decade, and probably longer, but has not cracked it. That suggests to me that the problem is not very amenable to solution, and I think that there are all kinds of reasons why that is almost inevitably true. It would not matter that there was some variability in judgment if it were not for the fact that we have a national reporting system with very high stakes. Quite honestly, we are now in the situation where schools describe themselves as "'outstanding' (Ofsted)" or "'good' (Ofsted)" as if that were a description of their school. That is how schools behave these days and it is frankly ludicrous, because that is no better at describing the complexities of the strengths and weaknesses of a school than a single grade on a report card. I am sorry to return to my hobby horse, but if inspections were more local and the stakes were lower, the variability would not matter so much.

Dr Dunford: Specifically on Annette's question, there is room for variability between inspections, but not for variability between standards of inspection—if you understand what I mean. According to the state of the school, the nature of the inspection might vary. If you have an extremely good school with rigorous self-evaluation, you require a different kind of visit from the inspector than that required by a school that is in real difficulty and not doing very well. Some of that variability is being built into the system and we are hearing—and it sounds good—that the new inspection framework coming in next September will involve more of an inspection with the leadership of the school and that, at the end, it will determine recommendations that are much more rounded and connected to the kind of support that is needed for the school to move forward, which was the point that Christine was making. At the moment, we do not have any kind of a coherent interrelationship between external inspection and support. Indeed, we do not have any kind of coherent system of school support at the moment and we desperately need it. If a school is judged by Ofsted to be in trouble, dozens of different bodies come piling in to "support" the school, and that feels like more pressure, not support.

Q20 Annette Brooke: May I throw another question into the pot, and perhaps people who have not answered the other question can pick it up as well. Given that we have identified some variability that is perhaps not desirable, should there be an appeal against Ofsted's judgments? If so, what form could that take?

John Bangs: I will pay a compliment to Ofsted actually—I know, it sounds extraordinary. We fought for and achieved the establishment of a hotline. I do not think that it is well used, but it should be. There is an element of psychology at play, and we try to persuade colleagues to understand that it does not go against you if you phone up and complain about an inspection team. I would be interested to know what Dr Dunford thinks about this, but having worked with Ofsted all these years, my hunch is that it tries to operate as neutrally as possible in such a situation. However, to take Martin's point, the matter is so high-stake that what you correlate in terms of those high stakes is that you will be punished if you complain, which is unfortunate. There is also an independent adjudicator who adjudicates whether or not the process has taken place. The mechanisms are there, but the high-stakes nature of the system intimidates head teachers from using them when they should use them more. We always get a result from Ofsted. If we complain, we get a decent and substantive reply. Whether or not we like the reply is another matter, but it is actually explored. To use Martin's point, the high-stakes nature does intimidate individual heads from pursuing the matter as much as they might.

Q21 Chairman: In any other field, John—or both Johns—in relation to a question like this you would be saying, "Well, the quality of inspection, the quality of teaching or the quality of most things depends on the quality of the staff and how they are recruited and trained." Are staff recruited and trained well? How you become an inspector is a bit murky, is it not?

Dr Dunford: They have improved over the years. There is no question but that a lot of bad inspectors have been weeded out. I have to say that any cases taken up with Ofsted by our union are looked into in detail and we get a good report back. That happened once we got over the point that Mick Brookes made about people saying, "Well, we weren't there, so we can't judge what happened because A says one thing and B says another." We have largely managed to get over that. I come back to the point that I made at the beginning: at the end of the day, if you have an adjudicator, that person should not be employed by Ofsted; they should be independent of Ofsted. That degree of independence is necessary.

Q22 Chairman: But Keith, you've been an inspector.

Keith Bartley: I've been in HMI, yes.

Chairman: So, is it training, quality? Is it good enough?

Keith Bartley: I was reflecting on that question, because there are two elements to it. One is the extent to which inspection teams are trained. I was a registered inspector before I became an HMI, and that was from the very early days of Ofsted.

Chairman: I wondered why you were sitting on your own at the end.

Keith Bartley: I will confess now a degree of culpability, because we were also responsible for some of the very early training materials for inspectors. But no, I differentiate between the two direct experiences that I have; one was of setting up a massive national group of registered and trained inspectors. The demands were such that quality assuring that product after initial and very intensive training was difficult to do. That has been caught up with a bit now, but from my own experience of being at HMI, it was profoundly the most challenging and

professionally rewarding experience of my life. For six months, I was taken completely out of anything I knew about in the education system.

Q23 Chairman: So, the training. If it is by HMI or by someone hired by an agency—because they are, aren't they?—you're all happy with the quality of inspectors that you get? The quality's all right?
Dr Dunford: We would much rather have a system in which HMI was always leading the teams.
Chairman: Aha!
Dr Dunford: There is a higher proportion of HMI-led teams than there used to be in the early days of Ofsted, but we would rather have a system—because we believe it would be more consistent—whereby all teams were led by HMI.
Martin Johnson: I'm sorry to be sordid, but you grilled Ofsted recently about its finances and, I believe, it revealed that because of the need to cut its budgets, it was going to try to remove downwards the costs of an inspection team when they come up for re-tender. Frankly, you get what you pay for.
Chairman: Point well taken. You realise that we are doing the training of teachers just started, so you've got to be back pretty damn quickly on the training of teachers. I hope you're going to say more about the training of teachers than you're saying about the training of inspectors. I've been giving Annette a break because she's not too well today. She has a lot of questions.

Q24 Annette Brooke: I have one more question. This comes back to something the Chief Inspector said I had got all wrong, so perhaps I can ask the same question of you. Do Ofsted teams frequently come with almost a pre-determination of the outcome of their reports, in that they have collected the statistical data? Isn't that what the schools are going to be judged on primarily?
Chairman: Let's start with Mick. You can refer back to the last question. You were frustrated about not being able to answer.
Mick Brookes: Thank you. That was one point I was going to make. The complaints that we get in are twofold. There are fewer complaints about the behaviour of the inspector; the complaint that we get most frequently is that the school's context was ignored. The external data are used to judge the school, and whatever else is going on in the school is ignored. Some of that is about the length of inspection, but some of it again is about the attitude of the inspector. With some, you feel as though the inspection report has been written before they get anywhere near the school. That is really frustrating. There are schools that are really struggling to bring education to those areas where it has not been deemed to be a great thing to have, but they have plenty of other things going on as well as simply standards. It is a standards-driven inspection process, but this is not a simple process. It involves looking at the school—for instance, its work in the community, creativity and arts. All those things make up a good school, not just standards. The standards-driven process needs to change.
John Bangs: May I pick up two issues. First, the training issue. If you have the responsibility for evaluating a school, you should have the responsibility for being based in that school and working with teachers, having given that advice. That is part of the training. The trouble with Ofsted inspectors is that they parachute in and disappear again. That model did, in my experience, work very well in the Inner London Education Authority. Inspectors based in the schools team targeted schools that were in trouble and worked with them internally. They gave advice, came in and followed through. That would be good practice and good training.

Q25 Chairman: For how long?
John Bangs: Six months to a year, Chair. Martin will remember it very well, since he and I worked together in ILEA. On the issue of the data, they inform everything. As Mick said, they prejudge the judgments that are made. That is a real and crying shame. The current Permanent Secretary at the Department for Children, Schools and Families, David Bell, was the first chief education officer to pick up and run with genuine school self-evaluation. After we had published *Schools Speak for Themselves*, which was the initial model document on self-evaluation back in 1995, he got all the teachers together in Newcastle and held a conference about how we can be courageous and ask pupils, parents and members of the community about the strength and weaknesses of schools. What we have now is a data-drive, high-stakes system. In fact, we have done continuous studies on where self-evaluation should have gone. What suffered is a portrait and a picture of the school climate, for example—teachers feeling confident, parents feeling confident and children feeling confident enough to contribute to the debate on school climate and where the pinch points are in terms of anxieties and bullying. Everything is data-driven down on the results, and the comparisons are made on a fairly arid form. The self-evaluation model has been warped by its high stakes nature. I absolutely agree with Mick on that.

Q26 Paul Holmes: I well remember when I was a teacher the long preparation time before an Ofsted inspection. Teachers and heads were not happy with that. Ofsted then moved to short notice for inspections, and teachers and heads were not happy with that. I then remember Ofsted saying that it wanted to move to no notice for inspections, and teachers and heads were not happy with that. What do we do about the length of notice?
Chairman: You are all keen on that, but Mick was first on the buzzer.
Mick Brookes: The unannounced inspections are a nonsense. As for going out to say to parents, "Do you want them?", parents might say conceptually, "Yes, we do," because any school should be able to be inspected at any time. But the operational aspects of that get in the way, particularly with heads of small schools who have a class to teach, so the

inspection would be about the quality of the supply teacher. I do not think that the operational aspects or the logistics of the measure have been properly thought through. It is a bit like going to see your doctor and seeing how well you are, but my preferred view would be that the next inspection is organised by the team that does the current inspection, so a school that is doing well would be told that it does not need to be seen for whatever length of time, while a school that is experiencing difficulties is told that it had better be seen a bit sooner. That would be a highly professional way of going on. The concept of unannounced inspections, apart from being operationally difficult, could be called "catch you out" inspections, but I do not think that that is possible. If an inspection looks at, for instance, the quality of children's work, even if you had six months, the current two days or the time that there was to do that, you will not improve the quality of the work, certainly over two days, on a short or long-term basis. Likewise, as for behaviour, it is my view that we cannot suddenly get children to behave well in two days. In fact, the ones who will behave badly will be even more likely to behave badly when an audience is there. I do not think you can change the fundamental basis of a school, but you can drive towards your desired outcomes for your next inspection. I think that should be a place of partnership—for the school to say, "Look, we've got this work to do before the next inspection, and we want to work on that with our school improvement partner."

Keith Bartley: It is important to distinguish between purposes and inspection. If one of the primary functions of inspection is to assist with improving practice and to help a school develop, unannounced inspections are unlikely to serve that purpose well, because it is about a degree of engagement prior to and subsequent to the inspection itself. However, if the purpose of the inspection is to do with protecting children, there is a strong case to be made for unannounced inspections, so we have to distinguish clearly between the purposes.

Q27 Paul Holmes: When you say protecting children, are you talking about children's residential schools?

Keith Bartley: Not necessarily. For example, in early years or child care settings, at the moment, if a complaint is made, Ofsted has the power, and exercises it, to make unannounced visits. I would hate the Committee to take away an assumption that unannounced inspections, per se, were being rejected, because it is about the purpose.

Q28 Paul Holmes: So, you would distinguish between one area of Ofsted inspections and mainstream school inspections?

Keith Bartley: Yes.

Chairman: Are all three of you going to answer? Let us start with Dr Dunford.

Dr Dunford: I have only one sentence to say really. If Ofsted inspection is part of a quality assurance process, then no-notice inspections do not have a place. If it is simply about catching people out, then that is what you do. I support what has been said about serious child protection issues, for which they may well have to go in unannounced, but not for school improvement purposes.

Q29 Chairman: John, do you think it is worrying that Ofsted does both types of inspection?

John Bangs: Yes.

Q30 Chairman: I asked the Chief Inspector about that when she gave evidence on I guess what could be described as whole the dreadful Baby P tragedy. I asked whether one of the problems was that an inspection system that was fitted for one system was being applied to another. Do you think there is a problem with that, and that what is appropriate in one sector is deeply inappropriate in another?

Dr Dunford: I think you are right, Chairman. It may well be that there are different styles of inspection for different purposes, and Ofsted has clearly had a very big learning curve, with the whole children's services inspection issues and safeguarding issues of the last 18 months or so, since it took on responsibility for all those things. It is perfectly possible that the right kind of inspection for that may be quite different to the right kind of inspection for school improvement.

John Bangs: If inspection is supposed to be an iterative process, as they say in fashionable parlance, and it should be, since it should be part of a conversation and dialogue about improvement—if the inspector says, "I want to test you on this one," and you say, "Well, okay, I want to test you on your premises," and then there is a conversation about it—then Martin's model is nearer. I am not arguing for a local inspection, but for a more localised approach to a national framework. We have argued that there should be teams that are more locally based, not necessarily inspecting their own authority's schools, but inspecting other authority's schools, within a national framework for quality assurance of those evaluators. On the question about the two to five days, you will see a summary of our latest survey in our submission, and the one thing that members felt was fair about the current inspection model and unfair about the future model was the two to five days. Although they did not like the high-stakes nature of inspections, they thought that two to five days was about as good as it got in terms of balance, and they cannot understand why the Chief Inspector is now dallying with the idea. All that we can get, or that I can get from conversations—I have to try to find these mythical parents who are pressing the Chief Inspector and the Government very hard for no-notice inspections—is that it is part of the political agenda which says, "We are now the Government that listens to parents." I do not see any evidence of that, but it is part of a political move. It is fair to say that we expect that evidence to be gathered in those two to five days. There may be pressure, but that is a short amount of time and there is not the same pre-inspection tension.

Q31 Paul Holmes: Can I go back to how you complain about Ofsted, which you have talked about. John Bangs mentioned the hotline that has been established but is not used enough. Over the years, I have been contacted by teachers, head teachers and deputy head teachers from around the country who have grievances because they feel that their career has been ended by an Ofsted inspection. They feel that they have no redress as an individual, as opposed to that which a school has as an institution. Is that so? What can we do about it?

John Bangs: The difficulty comes with small departments in schools or with small schools because it is possible to identify individuals. That is the nature of the high-stakes inspection. You can be fingered quite unfairly in a report as an individual rather than the contribution that you make to the institution. Thank goodness Ofsted got rid of the little notes that inspectors gave to the head teacher about the performance of the individual. The only way to get away from the identification of individuals is through a different form of inspection using the self-evaluative model, under which inspectors challenge the school on its self-evaluation report on a more conversational or iterative basis. I do not think that you will be able to get away from the high-stakes model of identifying individuals in small schools because of the nature of the model.

Q32 Chairman: So you do not think that it is part of any inspection to point out that a teacher is struggling in their role?

John Bangs: I do not think that there is a role in the current inspection system or any future inspection system to do that. It is important to have an effective performance management system. Christine raised this earlier and I would like to take up what she said. I am involved in international work with teacher organisations in other countries. Many teacher organisations do not understand the term "assessment", but do understand the term "evaluation". They often remark that the evaluations of the pupil, the teacher, the school and the system are muddled up in this country. As my colleagues have said, you have to be clear about what you want evaluation for. You need a system to evaluate the progress of individual pupils and a system of evaluation that leads to professional development for teachers, such as a performance management system. The different purposes must not be mixed up.

Q33 Chairman: Should we not have got that clear early on? One criticism of the GTC is that it does not clear enough poor teachers out of the profession compared with systems in other countries, which seem to be able to identify weak teachers and persuade them by whatever means that it is not the right occupation for them. The GTC hardly ever relieves the profession of very many teachers at all.

Keith Bartley: My colleagues are involved in research into what incentives and disincentives there are in the current system for referring or not referring teachers to capability procedures. Your question misses one point that distinguishes the system in England: each year we set out to train a much larger number of teachers than those who choose to go into the classroom and stay there. There is a sense in which our training gives trainees the opportunity to consider whether this is the right job for them. I am convinced that a number decide during the training that it is not. Other selection and deselection processes are at work beyond teachers being referred to us through competency procedures. I want to make it clear that my powers do not extend to going out and finding them. We are actually at the point at which a referral has to be made to us by an employer.

Chairman: I do not want you to get upset. That was by way of making sure you were still awake. I promise you that we will come back to that.

Dr Dunford: A quick point. You cannot create a system which relies on Ofsted to identify weak teachers. They only come every three, four or five years, or whatever.

Chairman: John, I merely threw that in, honestly, to wake you up a little bit.

Dr Dunford: To wake me up? I am as alert as I have been for several days.

Q34 Mr Timpson: One of the common threads that seems to be coming through from pretty much all of you is that the self-evaluation framework that we have at the moment is not playing the part that it should be playing in the process of school accountability. So, bringing together all the different threads that you have been talking about on self-evaluation, can you say what role you believe it should be playing in school accountability and the inspection process?

Mick Brookes: A major role and one that operates—I think we opened up with this—within the parameters of trust, where the people doing the self-evaluation are trusted to make those judgments. Tim Brighouse was talking at the ASCL conference the other day about high trust and low accountability. I do not think that that is right, actually. We want a system that operates in high trust, but the high accountability has to come from the schools themselves. Making sure that the rigour is there and ensuring that they are performing in the way that is correct for the children in those contexts comes from the school itself. Again, you have to move away from a system in which you are guilty unless you can prove yourself innocent. It has to be done under systems that are also accredited. I should like to get on to the role of the school improvement partner, which is not fit for purpose any more. Certainly, assisting the leadership of the school in that assessment is important, particularly when there may only be two or three other people in that school. So clustering arrangements must be considered, as must ensuring, for instance, that you have a chartered assessor available to make sure that children's work is being assessed at the right levels. Where there are difficulties with teacher performance in the classroom, there must be support for heads—not only the teachers in the classroom—who have to tackle those difficult problems.

Martin Johnson: Chair, your last remarks showed up very much how the drive for school improvement is often conflated with the drive for school accountability. Those things need to be separated. Notwithstanding, as has already been said this afternoon, the addition to Ofsted's statutory remit of a duty to work on improvement, that is still not how it works in practice—and neither can it. The way to embed school improvement in our schools is not through accountability mechanisms, but through growing the culture of a school as a learning institution and a reflective one. Two things that have been mentioned recently are key to that. One is a form of self-evaluation owned by the whole staff that is not a bureaucratic exercise conducted for a high-stakes external observer—I say that again because it is so important—but that is integral to whole-school staff reflection on itself, coupled with performance management, which was recently introduced into the discussion. Regrettably, too few of our schools still have a performance management process that is embedded into their everyday work. I am a great sponsor of performance management, not least because I spent many happy hours helping to develop the new arrangements with colleagues here. ATL believes strongly in performance management as a tool to improve teacher effectiveness and, therefore, pupil outcomes, but you might say that performance management should be inspected, and I am not clear that it is.

Q35 Chairman: Martin, you just said that we have not got much left, but you now want to inspect it. Is that not making you rather vulnerable?

Martin Johnson: What I am saying is that if what we are all about is better teaching and learning, accountability is not as important as some of the other things.

Dr Dunford: In 2004, we had from the Minister for School Standards a properly thought out new relationship with schools, which had self-evaluation at the centre, driven by the same sort of data that would drive the work of a school improvement partner. I disagree with Mick that that is not fit for purpose, because the role of supporting and challenging heads is fit for purpose, but the problem is that it has become far too top-down, because heads are told what to do and given lots of targets and so on. There is school self-evaluation, a school improvement partner and Ofsted. That is a strong three-legged stool of school accountability. The school self-evaluation feeds into the Ofsted process through the self-evaluation form—the so-called SEF. That works well, and I hope that the relationship will become even stronger. Between the Ofsted visits, it is the job of the school improvement partner to monitor the progress of the self-evaluation in supporting and challenging the head. That is working well, and I think the huge strides forward that schools have made in the past five years on self-evaluation, encouraged greatly by the people sitting at this table, particularly the NUT, which has always been strong on school self-evaluation, have been an important driver for school improvement.

Q36 Chairman: You do not have to say anything now, do you John?

John Bangs: I feel I ought to—there is a brand here. There are two models of school improvement. One is the delivery model, which characterises "deliverology", which we are all aware of, and one is creating the conditions for change. The model that we have promoted since the mid 1990s—I remember sitting with Dr Dunford at the annual lecture by the previous Chief Inspector when he lambasted us for our commitment to self-evaluation—is the one about creating the conditions for change. My problem with the current self-evaluation form and the inspector's model is that, actually, it is a cheap substitute for inspectors coming in themselves and spending longer. We once had a fascinating conversation with the former Chief Inspector, who had just become the Permanent Secretary, about what came first—the chicken or the egg—in terms of whether self-evaluation was a convenient way of coping with the fact that Ofsted's budget had been cut, or whether it was it a glint in the eye prior to the budget cut. We did not get a satisfactory answer. The issue is how to get to the guts of what the school community values and knows is working, and then, in terms of the external check on self-evaluation, how you can test that out so that you prove that you know that it is working. Currently, we do not have a system that gets to the guts of the effectiveness of the school overall. It is very results dominated and tick-list based. I say that because I go back to a wonderful thing that a bunch of year 2 and 3 youngsters said about what they thought a good teacher ought to be. This goes back to our original work in the '90s, and I do not have any information that contradicts this. They were clear about what good teachers are: "They are very clever, they do not shout, they help you every day, they are not bossy, they have faith in you, they are funny, they are patient, they are good at their work, they tell you clearly what to do, they help you with your mistakes, they mark your work, they help you to read, they help you with spelling, and they have courage."

Chairman: That is Paul Holmes!

John Bangs: It is a lovely description. Why should you not be interrogating a school on whether or not those attitudes are there? Teachers are committed to that, pupils are committed to that and parents are committed to that, but that voice does not appear in the current self-evaluation model. Why? It is because it is skewed into an incredibly data-based, comparative approach instead of how it describes the nature of the school in the community. Finally, on SIPs, I agree with Mick. I have to say, John, that this is one area in which I disagree with you. Conceptually, the school improvement partner is flawed. You are supposed to have a critical friend. You cannot have a critical friend if that critical friend keeps on going back to the local authority to snitch on you. I have to say that that is not my definition of a critical friend.

Mick Brookes: Can I just pick that up. We have just passed notes, John. There is a big difference here between the school improvement partners in the

secondary sector and the school improvement partners across sectors, particularly in the primary sector. In the secondary sector, it is peer support, by and large, because SIPs usually come from the education or school leadership community. In the primary sector, it is not like that. It has recycled some local authority inspectors who have taken it up. There may be a variation in quality there. The person should be a management and leadership supporter rather than someone who has done the things that John has just said.

Chairman: Edward, you have got them sparkling here.

Q37 Mr Timpson: Maybe I should just keep quiet. Let me touch again on SEF forms. I went to a school in my constituency recently and spoke to the head teacher. She was very concerned with the form on two fronts. First, it was far too rigid and did not offer the opportunity to express what her school was about, particularly as it was needing to improve from its previous inspection. Secondly, the strengths and the weaknesses of the school, which she readily accepted, were somehow lost in the process, both in terms of filling in the form and of looking at improvement within the school. How would you go about sharpening that tool, or should we get rid of it all together and start again on where we go with the self-evaluation model?

Mick Brookes: Self-evaluation—and written self-evaluation—is at the heart of self-improvement. I was very pleased when Christine Gilbert came to the Social Partnership and reminded us that the SEF is not a statutory instrument. One of the things that we are saying to people is that your SEF is not something that you write for inspectors, but something that you write for your school, and it informs your school improvement programme. Therefore, it has to be a tool that picks up the very things that you are talking about. If the rigid framework and the online version of that does not fit, we are saying very clearly to our members, "You need to take ownership of this document, and it needs to say those things that you want to say about your school provided that it acknowledges that where there are areas of weakness, you will address them in your plan."

Keith Bartley: I was going to offer some principles around what excessive accountability might look like if it has been commissioned, which helps to get at what my good practice in the SEF will be. We were given four things to think about. One was that excessive accountability imposes high demands on office holders under conditions of limited time and energy. Actually, I think that you get plenty of time and opportunity to revisit a SEF. Again, excessive accountability contains mutually contradictory evaluation criteria, and some of the restrictiveness around the SEF starts to go towards that territory. It contains performance standards that extend beyond established good practice and that invite subversive behaviour and goal displacement. It is that latter area in which the restrictive nature of the SEF takes schools towards unintended conclusions or an inability to set out their own store in the language that they would use.

Q38 Mr Timpson: Earlier, you touched on having a commercial operation coming in and doing the self-assessment process. I have two questions about that. How much does it cost a school to do that, and is it deemed to have more credibility by going down that route?

Dr Dunford: The cost depends on the size of the school. We can give you the figures; I do not have them in my head, but the cost is substantial—a few thousand pounds in a secondary school. But I think that the schools like it because somebody else is processing all the forms—you are not having to go through them—and because you get a lot more information out of it as the stuff is analysed against the performance of other schools in similar surveys. So, by using the commercial companies, you are getting more information with less work on your part, while still having a say in the design of the questionnaire.

John Bangs: I want to upend that a bit. All our experience from our professional development programme is that teachers take to learning how to do research like a duck to water. We work closely with Cambridge University on a project called "Learning Circles". Teachers put up their own research projects and they are tested and evaluated by the Cambridge tutor to see whether they stand up in research terms. The teachers then produce their 60-point contribution to their masters with the research results at the end. I do not have a problem with anyone outside conducting it, so long as you are in charge of the research. There is a strong argument, as part of self-evaluation, for teachers themselves—as part of the teaching and learning process—not to have additional research bolted on, which you have to do to be able to say, "These results are right because this is an entirely independent commercial company," and to guard against accusations that you are somehow bending the research because you are doing it. It says something about the system that you feel you have to do that. We have done this work over years and I am in favour of self-evaluation that is about teachers being confident in using their own evaluative and research models that are rigorous and accurate and also involve trust in the system, about knowing that those results will be treated in a developmental way, and about looking at how we can build on what we have found out, rather than viewing things in a punitive way: x, y and z are failing.

Chairman: Edward, do you have one more quick question or are you done?

Mr Timpson: I am done.

Q39 Chairman: We have two sections to cover quickly. The first, on school management, is being led by David—Andrew and David will do these together. First, I have a quick question. Does

anybody else know where self-assessment is so heavily leant on? Is there self-assessment in police forces and the health service? Is it contagious?
Dr Dunford: I hope that it is, because it is the profession acting as professionals to self-evaluate. If that evaluation can be something that is not just done by the head teacher to the staff, but can go down—as John Bangs says—into the root of people's work in the classroom so that you are constantly evaluating what you do yourself, in addition to the institution constantly evaluating what it does, you have real quality assurance.

Q40 Chairman: I recognise that it is well used in commercial organisations as a management development tool, but do you know if it is replicated in parallel sectors in the education sector?
Dr Dunford: Elsewhere in the education sector, colleges certainly have a very strong self-review process.
Martin Johnson: I just want to observe that the whole top-down ethos of the public sector in recent years militates against that kind of approach.
Chairman: But we are using it here.
Martin Johnson: That is because schools continue to resist top-down impositions.

Q41 Chairman: Self-evaluation was not the schools' idea, it was Ofsted's, was it not?
Dr Dunford: No, it comes from him.
John Bangs: Yes, it was John and I—it is our fault.

Q42 Chairman: I can see the "Wanted" posters. You are saying that this was not a plot to save money, but that you successfully lobbied to have a measure of self-evaluation—
John Bangs: May I expand on that and give a bit of history. The reaction to Ofsted in 1992 was so strong—at Crook Primary School, which had the first Ofsted inspection, the press were on girders looking into the school with their television cameras—that we commissioned Professor John MacBeath, who was then at Strathclyde University, and his team to see whether the Scottish model of school development and self-evaluation could be used in England. That was the purpose of the research. His findings were that, yes, it could. That captured the imagination of the then Chief Education Officer for Newcastle, who then, I believe, carried that. Separately and independently, you were coming to the same conclusions, John—but John can tell his own story.
Dr Dunford: That is right—as part of looking at the new inspection process and thinking about quality assurance. The way that Ofsted came in at the beginning, it was about quality control. Industry had moved way beyond quality control, and was very much into quality assurance. We felt that in education it was the bringing together of self-evaluation and external inspection that gave quality assurance.
John Bangs: Your question, Chair, is absolutely spot on. There are models in the private sector, particularly promoted by Deming and a range of management consultants, that are about owning the product that you are producing. That is absolutely behind self-evaluation.
Keith Bartley: It is important to differentiate between the SEF and school self-evaluation. The SEF is a very restricted form of school self-evaluation. Those schools that have the cultures, practices and processes in-built and well established around self-evaluation are probably those schools that will have the greatest capacity to respond to the outcomes of an inspection or, indeed, to the evidence that they present in a SEF. I think that we need to see it in its place, rather than assume that it is the process.
Chairman: Thanks for that. Let us move on. Sorry to hold you up.

Q43 Mr Chaytor: Picking up Keith's point, in terms of the processes other than ticking the boxes on the form, what is best practice in the process of self-evaluation?
Keith Bartley: Do you mean in preparation for inspection, or more generally in terms of school improvement?
Mr Chaytor: Both really. You are making the point that SEF alone is not enough. In the case of a successful school, there is likely to be a sound and solid process. My question is how do we know? How do we evidence the process? What kind of processes are generally considered to be good practice?
Keith Bartley: For a start, the features of good practice are about schools in which all of the staff are encouraged to be part of that reflective process. In other words, the school's model of organisational development and, indeed, the store by which it sets teachers' professional learning and continuing professional development are very much focused on an examination of practice, a reflection on why practice may be as it is or how it could be changed or improved, and then some consequent planning on that. If those features are evident within a school's self-evaluation processes, they should manifest themselves in improved outcomes for children, which is vitally important, but they are discernible and inspectable features of a school as well.

Q44 Mr Chaytor: And the form itself—is the form fit for purpose? Or does it need further refinement?
Keith Bartley: I want to defer to my colleagues, who will be closer to that, because I have neither inspected nor completed one.
Chairman: Mick, you have been quiet for a moment.
Mick Brookes: It is a reasonable framework, which is why we are saying that schools need to take it and shake it down, so that it fits their context, rather than it being a one-size-fits-all document. Schools that do that and own it in that way have it as a working tool in a school, rather than as a document that gets done and put on a shelf.

Q45 Mr Chaytor: Do you have an input? Do the teachers associations or the head teachers have input into amending the form year on year, or is it a given and that is it?

Dr Dunford: I think you should ask the Chief Inspector about how the form is constructed. The one really good thing that I would say is that the Chief Inspector acts as a gatekeeper against the Department for Education adding bits and pieces every two minutes to the SEF. It is only changed once a year, thank heavens. The schools for which I have the greatest admiration are the ones that have the courage not to complete a SEF. There are schools that are "outstanding", but do not complete a SEF and have very rigorous self-evaluation processes.

Q46 Mr Chaytor: How do we know?
Dr Dunford: Because in that situation, inspectors have to look at the self-evaluation. They do not just look at the SEF or the box-ticking exercise, they have to look at the self-evaluation. The SEF is not self-evaluation, it is simply a summary, in a sort of tick-box way, of the real self-evaluation that has taken place. That comes back to the point that Keith and I made earlier, which John alluded to, that the best kind of self-evaluation involves all the staff. The inspectors coming in can recognise that. When they are talking to an individual teacher of mathematics—not even the head—they will recognise that self-evaluation culture in the school.

Q47 Mr Chaytor: There could be a particularly skilful teacher of mathematics who is good at talking self-evaluation language. I spoke at a conference not too far from here, which was set up by an organisation specifically to train head teachers how to fill in their SEF correctly and get a good score with Ofsted. These things are not difficult to do with a bit of training. I am interested in all this stuff about process. Where is this document? How do we know whether over the last year—or the last three or five years—the school has been actively implementing a self-evaluation process?
Dr Dunford: Because the best inspectors go behind the SEF to look at the processes of self-evaluation that have led to it. In secondary schools, for example, they talk to the head teacher about the evaluation discussions that take place every year with heads of department. They then go and talk to the heads of departments about that, so they see both sides.
Martin Johnson: I do not have a lot to add, except to David's last remarks. This is the whole point about the accountability problem. Where there are high stakes mechanisms, you get negative kinds of reactions. John is talking about the exceptions that prove the rule. For too many schools, it is an exercise in form filling and compliance. For the last quarter of an hour we have been arguing for embedding a culture of improvement, partly through self-evaluation but not only that. You will not get that in a high-stakes inspection regime.
Mick Brookes: It is not only the high stakes, it is also the mechanical nature of it. If the mechanical nature of Ofsted means that someone can tick the boxes and get the right answers, we can play the game as well as anybody. Until we have moved from that to a values-based inspection system where the context of the school is what matters, there will be people playing the game rather than owning their own material to move the school forward.
John Bangs: I think David has asked a really good question. The fact of the matter is that if you have an "outstanding", or even a "good", from Ofsted, you have permission to do anything. You can try out a set of individual instruments constructed within your school community—which is what true self-evaluation is about—that are fit for purpose and stand up to external interrogation about their validity. Those can be tried out because self-evaluation is essentially a creative activity. You are finding out information that you can use, so that you can improve on what you are doing internally within the school, using the instruments that are fit for purpose. I have seen some fantastic self-evaluation on a European basis; for instance, not written self-evaluation, but youngsters taking photographs of the things that they like and do not like. It could be films, or small video streaming, or whatever, actually saying what we like, what we don't and what we think we can do to improve. The fact is that there are a small number of schools with that confidence. At the other end, there is the picture of the head teacher with the moon in the sky, up against their computer late at night, buffing up their self-evaluation form because the end of the 3-year cycle is coming up and they know that they have to do it. There could not be two more stark extremes. Martin put it very well: it is about getting to the guts of how you embed a culture with a rigorous sense of how you can improve, knowing that you own it, knowing that you can improve it, and feeling professionally empowered to do so, but without the kind of high-stakes culture that says that someone else who does not know the process that you have go through is not going to come in and hammer you, using a delivery system that is entirely conformist in approach rather than encouraging innovation at school level.
Chairman: A quick one from you, Keith. Then we do need to move on.
Keith Bartley: I want to make two quick points. First, the study conducted by York Consulting showed real evidence of the high correlation between the best SEFs and the best practice in schools and supporting self-evaluation. It is proven that there is a correlation. The other point that I would like to make goes back almost to where we started. If we have an accountability framework that is focused on the impact of schools' work on children and young people, then schools' self-evaluation provides an opportunity to reflect upon that broader sense of the outcomes—the differences—that the school is capable of making for each child and young person. You cannot do that in a restricted format.

Q48 Mr Chaytor: Does the role of self-evaluation and the SEF have a particular weighting in the total inspection process? How does it fit in? How is it integrated into the rest of the inspection?
Dr Dunford: Again, I think that you come back to the proportionality inspections, and the point that John made. It is different looking at a SEF in a

school that is good or outstanding, where all the trends are going in the right direction, to a school where things are badly. I think that is the only way I can answer that question.

Q49 Mr Chaytor: Before we leave the SEF and Ofsted, what about the cost? Martin touched earlier upon that question. Do we spend too much on inspections?
Dr Dunford: Perhaps we would ask the question—
Mr Chaytor: We are asking the questions.
Dr Dunford: Perhaps we would answer that question by raising the question of what is the cost of all of this put together, when you include the opportunity cost of the time taken when the moon is in the sky, and filling in the SEF, when you are filling in the school profile—which we have not mentioned; as part of the accountability system, it is completely useless—and when you are involved in numerous discussions, with people coming in asking you about your targets and so on. I think it is not just about the cost of Ofsted; it is about the cost of all of those things.

Q50 Mr Chaytor: Five minutes ago, you were putting the case for good self-evaluation processes, saying this is integral to the culture and management of the school, it takes time, and it involves the head teachers talking to the classroom teachers. You cannot suddenly say, "Hang on, there's a cost to that."
Dr Dunford: No; we would probably all say that it is money well spent. Particularly if it is done well, that is money well spent. If that money is well spent, perhaps we should put more resources into that, in order to spend less on the extended inspection coming along and validating it.

Q51 Mr Chaytor: The specific question that follows is, do we spend too much on Ofsted?
Dr Dunford: We probably spend too much on Ofsted investigating individual schools and not enough on Ofsted investigating how the system is going as a whole, which was a point that we made earlier.

Q52 Chairman: Why should Ofsted be responsible for all schools? Why should it not take a few schools?
Dr Dunford: How do you mean?
Chairman: Why don't we have a much trimmed down Ofsted that has only a few schools—many fewer schools?
Dr Dunford: You could have a system that did that if, for example, you relied more upon school improvement partners, who are having a regular support and challenge conversation with the head teacher. You could also use Ofsted less if there was a much better relationship between inspection and school support, which we talked about earlier, and you focused more resources on the support aspect rather than on the inspection aspect and all that goes with it.

Q53 Chairman: I asked that because, as I listened to the Laming inquiry discussions last week, the one question that was left unasked was the fact that what Laming recommends is enormously expensive in resource implications. If that is true, somewhere there is going to be a shift of spend from schools across to other children's services. I am just wondering whether inspection might be an alternative.
Dr Dunford: We would magnanimously give up some—
Chairman: I thought you might say that. Sorry, I cut across and someone was very frustrated about not getting in there—Martin.
Martin Johnson: I just want to emphasise what I think John was getting round to. I would be very surprised if this Committee did not look at the costs of all the agencies involved in both inspection and improvement work. If you look at Ofsted, the National Strategies, the Specialist Schools Trust, the SIPs and local authority improvement teams, they are all doing overlapping work. Maybe it is for you to recommend how that is rationalised—I have given my take on that—but it certainly needs rationalisation and savings would accrue.

Q54 Mr Chaytor: Each of your organisations has submitted a written statement to the Committee, and one of them has called for big cuts in budgets either to Ofsted or any of the other agencies that were referred to, Martin.
Mick Brookes: Without a shadow of doubt—I have said this to whoever would listen—when it comes to a choice between front-line services and everybody who purports to support schools, we would be voting for front-line services. If that meant putting a greater emphasis on trusts in schools properly to self-evaluate, with light-touch approval accreditation of that, we would vote for it.
Martin Johnson: We specifically said in our evidence that we believe that Ofsted should no longer carry out section 5 school inspections. There is a saving there.

Q55 Mr Chaytor: We have touched on the question of SIPs. No one seems to be dissenting that SIPs have been a useful innovation. There may be a difference of view in the approach. Do you think they will be there for ever or is it temporary?
Chairman: Are you all right?
John Bangs: I was trying—
Dr Dunford: To get the first word in.
John Bangs: The idea that an individual school improvement partner can be this Olympian character through which advice can go two ways, data can pass two ways—that they can be the person who provides the judgment about the individual school to the local authority—I find extraordinary. I think that SIPs betray, to a certain extent, a lack of trust in the school. Conceptually, school improvement partners are wrong. Actually, if you talk to head teachers, they often talk with fond memory of the original external advisers who used to come in, because those external advisers, albeit they

were employed by CEA, actually were there to provide the—to use the parlance—challenge and support to the individual head teacher alone. Often, those head teachers who have been a long time in the business will remember that fondly. Probably one of the best aspects of the old school—the pre-appraisal scheme in the mid-'90s—was the fact that head teachers and chairs of governors used to be involved in school appraisal, and that actually seemed to work relatively well too. It comes back to the issue about what we spend our money on. The balance between external evaluation and money for school improvement through professional development and the identification of individual professional development is entirely skewed. There is far too little spent on the outcomes of an appraisal or a performance management evaluation compared with the enormous weight of external inspection, whether at local authority or national level. I know we are coming to the end. We have argued in our submission, and have consistently argued for the past 10 to 15 years, since Ofsted came in, that there ought to be an independent review of the accountability system as it actually bears down on schools. We ought to have had a national debate about the nature of the accountability system. We did not have one. It was simply imposed, if colleagues remember, back in '92. It was a deal done between the Conservative party, which thought it was going to lose the election, and Labour about getting a Bill through Parliament. There was no debate at the time. Essentially, we have a rushed and truncated model of a top-down inspection system that has gone through various iterations since, but nowhere have we sorted out how you actually evaluate the institution as a whole. That seems to me the key issue.

Q56 Mr Chaytor: Just one more, before we move on—the question of other initiatives, such as National Challenge. There was a little furore when the failing schools were originally identified. Has that settled down and does anyone now deny that the National Challenge programme is targeting resources where they are most needed?

Martin Johnson: We've got a thing about the National Challenge. It's lucky Mary Bousted is not here, otherwise you would have a 10-minute barrage. The fact is that the challenge in particular, but some of the other agencies as well, has a not dissimilar effect on many schools—not the very self-confident ones that have the "outstanding" badge—as an Ofsted inspection. They create the impression, perhaps inadvertently—if you talk to the national strategies people, they declare that of course it is not their intention and not what they do—that, as perceived in too many schools, National Challenge is another example of the imposed conformity. They say they give advice, which they do, but it is perceived as a demand for a rigid answer on why a subject might be taught. There is a situation where the QCA has been trying to free up the curriculum to quite a lot of support—we await what is suggested for Key Stage 2 to see whether it mirrors Key Stage 3—on the one hand, but the assessment regime is under a lot of pressure as well. You still have these agencies saying that is the way to do it—as perceived by schools.

Chairman: A quick one from you, John, because we have to get to this last section on schools.

Dr Dunford: National Challenge is a huge £400 million project that was introduced with no project planning. You have local authorities told to create improvement plans over the summer holidays. We had National Challenge advisers not appointed until November—and they are the key people in this. We have had the funding only in the last week or two getting into some of the schools. There is also some very questionable targeting of the resources in that £400 million—into some school reorganisations, but also into simply improving the results of Year 11 in the next two years, not on deep school improvement. I have huge questions around National Challenge.

Chairman: A quick bite from Mick and then we move on.

Mick Brookes: It is an example of how accountability is being misused, sitting in the Department saying, "Oh woe! All these schools have been described as failing schools. That is not what we intended." But it was clearly going to happen. When you have accountability based on a very narrow spectrum of results, you will get those things. The concept that you can have a good school working in a very tough environment moving forward—maybe not as fast as other people would like—has not been understood by politicians.

Chairman: School improvements. Andrew, would you open on that?

Q57 Mr Pelling: I really wanted to deal with the school report card. I apologise for arriving late; I stayed for the statement in the Chamber. I also apologise for the fact that I have come to the conclusion that this debate about school accountability has become so confused over the years that I would like to return to the idea of some accountability to the local community and through local education authorities. Having declared my prejudice, do you think the school report card has a legitimate and useful place in terms of accountability for schools? I know that there was consternation about some of the proposals. How could the proposals be adjusted to make them better suited?

Dr Dunford: We had a debate about this at the weekend, which you may have read about in the press. We are not keen on the whole school performance coming down to a single grade. However, in principle, a school report card could represent more intelligent accountability. That depends on the detail; the devil really is in the detail. How do you measure improvement and progress? What wider achievements of the school will be brought in? We must have a discussion over the next couple of years about what those elements will be, how they will be combined and how they will be graded. In principle, replacing league tables with a more sophisticated report card that has been well thought through—with the input of the profession,

parents and other stakeholders—could be useful. We have set out 10 principles, which I could send to you, about what a report card should look like. I will mention just one of them. A good school serving a challenging area should have the same chance of getting a good grade as a good school serving a more favoured area. We will judge all the proposals on the report card against that principle and the others that we have set out.

John Bangs: To follow on from John, there is the germ of a good idea in the school report card. It could be a rich definition of the school's evaluation checked by an external evaluator. Currently, the school report card is another damn thing. It comes on top of the Ofsted inspection result. The consultation document does not resolve the question it poses itself: what do you do if you have decided, given all the data, that you have an "outstanding" and Ofsted comes up with another judgment? The Government refuse to pose report cards as a substitute for or alternative to school performance tables. This proposal suffers from the greatest sin of all, which is cherry-picking a system from one country and dropping it in elsewhere. It genuinely is cherry-picking because the New York report card is used by individual schools as a way of arguing for better funding. That is not part of the consultation. The United Federation of Teachers agrees with the school report card in New York because it is a vehicle for negotiations with New York City about extra funding for schools. I do not see that here. The idea of a model or framework for describing in a sensitive way the strengths and weaknesses of a school so that it is understandable for the whole community is good. However, you must get rid of the baggage, such as the overlapping accountability systems that Martin mentioned.

Mick Brookes: If the report card leads to a wiser way of describing and narrating a school's progress and what it is doing for the community, we would support it. However, there is a reductionist theory about trying to get something very simple for parents. As John said at his conference, there are answers to every complex question that are simple and wrong.

Martin Johnson: I want to chuck in something very unpopular. The notion that we can divide our schools into four categories is absolutely bizarre. We are being consulted on whether we would prefer to use A to D or 1 to 4. It is unfortunate from the point of view of policy making that the larger the study, the more it becomes seen as the fact that schools differ in their effectiveness hardly at all. That is the opposite of an assumption that is made throughout policy making, but it is the case. I did not manage to get this into our CVA discussion, but CVA figures only confirm that. Although there are some outriders, the vast bulk of schools' scores vary little, when allowing for statistical issues. The idea of the score card and actually dividing schools into sheep and goats is fundamentally flawed. I know that my words will go out there into the ether and be disregarded. In a way, it is counter-intuitive—it just happens to be the case.

Q58 Chairman: Do you also mean that good teaching doesn't do any good?

Martin Johnson: There is quite a significant classroom effect—a teacher effect—but there is very little school effect. That is a very significant difference—or should be—for education policy. The importance of the teacher in the classroom is becoming more understood but it is still submerged in terms of policy making. I am not saying anything of which you are not fully aware but, to recap, a school is a very complex organisation. The idea that you can summarise, even in a few pages, as John aspires to, what it is like and likely to be for a range of learners, is just a myth. As for reducing it to a single digit or letter—that is a joke.

Q59 Mr Pelling: So Martin is saying that past education policy has been too obsessed with the idea of school organisation or effectiveness, and that politicians should concentrate on a classroom, pedagogical level.

Martin Johnson: Absolutely.

Q60 Mr Pelling: In terms of the school report card, is it a possibility for schools or teachers or the community to grab back what some witnesses have described as the centralisation of power, despite the pretence otherwise that education policy is about devolution of power? If used properly, could it be used as a means of strengthening accountability to the community and working with the community?

Dr Dunford: Yes it could, provided, as John Bangs says, it fits properly with the rest of the accountability system. We see what we can get rid of, as I mentioned earlier, and we actually design it so that it complements other parts of the accountability system. In particular, if the report card says what needs to be said about the data, we can have a quite different kind of Ofsted inspection.

Q61 Mr Chaytor: Picking up on Martin's point, we hear from time to time from different witnesses about the narrow differences between achievements in schools. Surely that is a powerful argument for the school report card, because the consequence of introducing a report card that makes a judgment on a broader range of indicators would be precisely to deliver a set of results which, for most schools, would probably be good. You would get far less differentiation than you do now, when judgments are essentially made by league tables dominated by one single raw statistic.

John Bangs: Exactly.

Mr Chaytor: You have put up a very good argument for the report card as I see it.

John Bangs: Yes, only if you get rid of all the other junk that compromises it.

Keith Bartley: I think schools would have far more ownership of the report card if the consultative process that has been launched genuinely engaged them and gave them some opportunity to have the kind of debate that your questions are prompting.

But we have to see it in the context—no one has mentioned this—of the two significant conclusions reached by the House of Lords Merits Committee's report last week. It argued for less government reliance on regulation in order to leave greater room for the professionalism of practitioners to deliver against the outcomes for improving education. That was part of your question just now. Shouldn't our focus be on what we do to improve the actual practice of teaching in our classrooms? As Martin said, everything tells us that is what actually makes the greatest difference for children. The House of Lords Committee report stated: "We call on the Department to shift its primary focus away from the regulation of processes through statutory instruments, towards establishing accountability for the delivery of key outcomes." Engaging schools in how that can be measured and presented could be a rich way forward.

Q62 Mr Chaytor: On the question of the single descriptor, which some of you have objected to, what makes a school different from a hospital, a primary care trust, a local authority or a police authority, all of which are now allocated single descriptors, whether 1 to 5, A to E, excellent to poor? Why is a school different?

Dr Dunford: I don't find the single descriptor useful in any of those respects. If I want to go into a hospital for a knee operation, I want to know what the hospital is like for knee operations.

Mr Chaytor: But you can find that out as well.

Dr Dunford: That's good. Similarly, if I'm going to stay in a hotel, I do not particularly want to know that it is a three-star hotel. I want to know what the facilities and rooms are like, and so on, which points to separate grades for different aspects of school performance, and not to a single, overall grade, which, incidentally, the colleges have at the moment under Framework for Excellence, and I understand are looking at getting rid of.

Q63 Mr Chaytor: But the two are not mutually exclusive. The concept of the report card is to provide an overall, broad assessment, and to include much more information as well. So if you want to know about knee or ankle operations, or performance in year 11 or year 7, CVA, raw stats, progress, well-being, it's all there, surely.

Dr Dunford: That would be good, and I think we should encourage parents and other people interested in these things to look behind the single grade, but the single grade would be an obstruction to them looking to the other information.

John Bangs: We have to understand where the single grade comes from. It comes from the Government's approach to public sector reform. It is a flight from complexity. It is about giving Ministers simple solutions to complex problems, but, as John said, those are often wrong solutions. A single grade does not drive up motivation for institutional improvement. What it does is tell the best people in the institution to leave, especially if it is a really bad grade, because it can't differentiate between those who are effective in the institution and those who are not. It is a crude blunderbuss approach that can lead to the best people leaving the institution. Perhaps this is a holy grail, but it is achievable: the key issue is to have a simple summary of the effectiveness of the institution, looking at the key concerns and issues, without having a single grade bracketed into four separate tiers that actually has the effect of demoralising individual people who are really making a difference in the institution.

Q64 Mr Chaytor: Just one very final point. John, do you not think that there is a supreme paradox here? In contrast with hospitals, PCTs, police authorities or local authorities, schools are giving single grades to their pupils every day of the week, every week of the year. How can you object to the public allocating a single grade to the school when the purpose of the school's existence is to allocate a single grade to pupils?

Martin Johnson: The short answer to the question is that it is not very good practice.

Q65 Mr Chaytor: But I have yet to hear a teachers association or anybody within the system argue that we should completely abandon terminal grades or GCSEs.

Martin Johnson: We do.

John Bangs: What David has opened up is a huge debate about the distinction between the evaluation of the pupil, the evaluation of the teacher, the evaluation of the institution and the evaluation of the system. How you actually evaluate the pupil is essentially diagnostic. You are identifying a point to which you believe the child should move next through whatever mechanism you use. To extrapolate that up and say that is the way to evaluate a complex institution is exactly the mistake that the current Government and previous Governments have made. You cannot use one particular set of objectives for a pupil and then use that system—for example, national curriculum tests—as a way of evaluating the institution. What happens is that you strip out very much that is good, and what you have is a single result that, as I say, often demoralises people who have made a real difference, because they are not recognised within that single letter or number. An issue that the Committee ought to address is simply how you look at institutions and provide a 360° picture of the institution that is separate from how you look at the performance of the individual pupil or teacher.

Dr Dunford: Can I add another gloss to that. In a system where institutions are being encouraged to work in partnership with other institutions, the whole focus, which we have been discussing for two hours, of accountability of the single institution has to be looked at if it is going to drive us more towards partnership working and towards system

improvement and lack of polarisation, whereas the accountability driver, at the moment, is all towards competition between schools and beating them in the league tables.

Q66 Chairman: If there is any area that we have not looked at in enough detail, from where I am sitting, it is systemic change and systemic evaluation. Mick?
Mick Brookes: It depends on the purpose as well. If the purpose of giving a single grade is either to praise or demean, I think that is not working. As to how parents know how to choose the school for their child, that is a real question, and the answer is that most do not, because they will simply opt for the school that is nearest to them. If they do, the best way of doing that is to ask the parent and pupil population, "What is your school like?" Some schools will not be getting those enormous numbers of GCSEs at A to C, but are nevertheless very good schools and are heading in the right direction. It is about having a school which is appropriate for the child.
Chairman: Keith, do you want to answer?
Keith Bartley: Not on that thanks.
Chairman: This has been a most informative session for us. It has gone on a little, but you have all been on sparkling form. I remember the first time I asked the unions to come in on a regular basis to talk to the Committee, and there seems to have been something of a change since then—you seem quite collegiate today. It is very refreshing. This is a very important inquiry, and I am glad that you have contributed so freely and frankly. Can you stay with this inquiry. If you look at what has been said today and think of things that you should have said or of other things that you would like to communicate to us, let us know, because it will only be a good inquiry if you help us as much as you can. Thanks again, and I hope that you like our national curriculum report that will come out shortly.

Wednesday 1 April 2009

Members present

Mr Barry Sheerman (Chairman)

Annette Brooke	Fiona Mactaggart
Mr David Chaytor	Mr Andy Slaughter
Mrs Sharon Hodgson	Mr Graham Stuart
Paul Holmes	Derek Twigg

Memorandum submitted by the Local Government Association

INTRODUCTION

1. For the purposes of this submission, the LGA has focused its responses on the Inquiry's questions as follows:

— Is it right in principle that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance?

— Is the current accountability system of inspection and performance reporting for schools broadly fit for purpose?

— How should schools be held accountable for their performance in the context of increasing collaboration in education provision?

2. In addition to this general document, the LGA submits three other documents[1] that have a bearing on the Inquiry's remit, namely:

— LGA submission to the Ofsted consultation on the School Inspection Framework from September 2009.

— LGA submission to the recent Government consultations on 21st Century Schools and the School Report Card.

— Research commissioned by LGA from National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on the local authority role in school improvement.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

Is it right in principle that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance?

3. Schools are clearly a core element of universal public services, which stand at the heart of communities. They educate children, increasingly host extended services for children and their families, provide space for community activities in many cases, have close links with local community and faith groups and employers and often provide a neutral venue for public meetings and community discussions among a host of other roles. Schools are very much regarded by parents and the wider community as institutions which work very much at the local level, integral to their everyday lives.

4. If our primary interest is in the outcomes for these local children and young people, local parents, local community services and local employers, then as the outcomes are about them and for them, so accountabilities must be to them.

5. With regard to the quality of provision and performance, Ofsted inspects schools based on national datasets and standardised criteria. Local authorities have a remit to monitor schools' performance in their area and where Ofsted indicates there is poor performance or where the local authority is concerned that performance is not what it might be, the school is accountable to the inspectorate and local authority for devising and implementing improvement plans.

6. Schools are funded via the DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) from central government and this may be topped up by further local authority finance. For financial purposes and value for money, accountability can be traced from the school to local and central government.

7. While schools have duties and responsibilities to Ofsted, local and central government to maintain certain standards of provision and to run effectively with the resources they are given, the true accountability for what is actually delivered is to those local people who are in receipt of provision, eg day-to-day teaching and development of children.

8. Schools are public institutions funded by public money providing outcomes for the public, so they should be publicly accountable. To that end, it is right that the school governing body along with the headteacher are accountable to the local people that the school serves in the first instance, measured against locally and nationally agreed standards of performance.

[1] Not printed.

9. Governing bodies of schools ideally contribute the following:
   - supporting and challenging the headteacher and acting as a critical friend;
   - being involved in financial management, monitoring plans;
   - undertaking a scrutiny role, carrying out operational tasks;
   - representing community and parental interest, and
   - ensuring the accountability of the governing body and collaborating with other institutions.

10. LGA considers that there is no particular reason to believe (from Ofsted or elsewhere) that governance in schools and colleges is fundamentally broken. However, local authorities have been concerned for many years about the capacity for a governing body to be thrown off course by a single maverick governor. Much time can be spent dealing with this. We suggest that there should be a national governor code of conduct and that there should be the ability for a governor of any sort to be potentially liable to a vote of no confidence requiring resignation, with a local authority appeal process.

11. Further, despite the immensely valuable contribution of many governors, who it should always be remembered are volunteers, school governance has provided growing concern to some Lead Members for Children's Services. The concerns are based around quality and capability as much as accountability. These concerns are more likely to be with regard to primary schools than secondary. The training for, and the understanding of, responsibilities especially in regard to safeguarding, SEN, and employment are just a few of the critical areas. Despite many local authorities providing the opportunities for training, the level of take up is often minimal. School governors are not required to undertake training, nor are chairs of governing bodies. There is a range of providers and a national programme, as well as local authority support.

12. Further, the loose definition around categories of governors has allowed the potential for manipulation of appointments to create difficult situations in some areas. College governing bodies are almost wholly fit for purpose.

Is the current accountability system of inspection and performance reporting for schools broadly fit for purpose?

13. As stated, inspection and performance are a sub-element of accountability, ensuring that schools deliver what is commonly agreed is adequate or better provision. This is a regulatory framework for standards and effectiveness rather than accountability per se. Accountability must be to local people involved with accessing education or delivery of activities from schools.

14. LGA believes the overall rationale of inspection and performance is quite right. However, the current situation can be fragmented, inconsistent and not necessarily designed to support school improvement on an ongoing basis. Governor Mark, the voluntary quality mark for governance, notes that from September 2003 the School Inspection Framework for Schools has included criteria for the inspection of governance. However, short notice inspections may have a side effect where the "process has the potential to exclude the governing body from active engagement with the inspection team and thereby make judgements on the quality of governance very difficult". It goes on to note that it is therefore "vital that the governing body are also able to evidence their own process of self-evaluation and assess their contribution towards and impact upon school improvement".[2] Another recent study on governance concluded that:

> Given the governing body's responsibilities, the inspection of their work and their involvement in the inspection process are limited.[3]

15. Effective governing bodies:
   - have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities;
   - share a common vision of what the school is trying to achieve;
   - are well attended;
   - have good communication;
   - work to clearly structured agenda;
   - are effectively chaired;
   - have meetings where members feel able to speak their minds, and
   - are supplied with good quality, relevant information.

16. Many, however, can feel:
   - overloaded—governing bodies are responsible for too much;
   - overcomplicated—their work is very complex, difficult and demanding, and
   - overlooked—what governing bodies are responsible for goes largely unnoticed.[4]

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[2] *Governor Mark: Quality Mark for Governance*, GLM governance, leadership and management, p2—see: http://www.ncogs.org.uk/emie/content.asp?id_content=1244&id_category=920&level=&spass=true&spass_id=&spass_user=

[3] *Governing our Schools: The School Governance Study,* Business in the Community/University of Bath, October 2008, p62—see: http://www.ncogs.org.uk/emie/content.asp?id_content=1244&id_category=920&level=&spass=true&spass_id=&spass_user=

[4] Ibid. p61

17. In addition to somewhat ambiguous definitions at times of their real responsibilities in regulations and guidance, the School Governance Study also noted inherent tensions that governing bodies have to contend with when discharging their functions, notably:

— support versus challenge;

— representation versus skill;

— operational versus strategic, and

— organising versus scrutiny.[5]

18. Overall, LGA believes that performance management requires relatively simple but robust systems throughout the maintained sector, based on self-evaluations against standardised data, ratified by the local authority, and checked by inspection; with standardised reporting to constituencies through the school report card or similar. The complexity and analysis around performance management can be an area not well understood by governing bodies.

19. Schools face Ofsted inspections and local authority assessment through School Improvement Partners (SIPs) and receive support both locally through the local authority and from central government programmes, notably National Strategies (including National Challenge). Given the need for local accountability, it is sometimes not clear how local requirements and context is adequately addressed. Contextual value added—though sometimes controversial in methodology—is extremely important in underpinning local accountability and improvement planning. It demonstrates that national references and data can have a respect for local circumstances and needs so that problems can be challenged in the most relevant and tailored way and that local people can understand that.

20. There remains ongoing anecdotal evidence about the inconsistency of inspection judgements and this again can demonstrate the need for local accountability as necessary alongside inspection, not only to face up to difficult problems and make stark decisions, but also in enabling relationships to weather storms and get improvement back on track. In many cases, this is a key local authority function, combining local understanding, expertise and challenge. National bodies may come in and deliver verdicts or support over a short timescale or a narrow scope. Local accountability is required because improvement actually happens best at the frontline with local professionals supported by those with local understanding.

How should schools be held accountable for their performance in the context of increasing collaboration in education provision?

21. School governance must strike a careful balance between enabling the autonomy of the school to function efficiently and effectively day-to-day and also providing a point of accountability. For the last twenty years, local authorities, for example, have had far less day-to-day management over schools. Autonomy is to be welcomed as it can improve efficiency and innovation at the frontline of learning. This is more problematic where not everything is working as it should or where co-operation between schools and other schools or between schools and other services would help improve outcomes for young people. The local authority has duties for the more general planning of learning locally.

22. Academies, CTCs and CCTAs clearly hold a particular degree of autonomy through their funding arrangements directly with the Secretary of State. Nevertheless, the outcomes of local children and young people are best served where Academies, other local schools and local authorities work well together and very many do. Notwithstanding the autonomy of institutions, the local authority has duties both under the Education Acts (most recently the Education and Inspections Act 2006) to ensure the educational fulfilment of all children and young people in its area, as well as duties to ensure the well-being of children, including education and achievement, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004. The local authority may use legitimate methods of scrutiny, eg of outcomes' data, performance of partnerships etc., to help hold individual institutions to account or to raise concerns. The LGA has welcomed the provision in the current Apprencticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill (clause 184(2)(a)) which extends the Children Act's 'duty to co-operate' to other educational institutions, including Academies. This will mean that these institutions can both input more effectively to the Children and Young People's Commissioning Plan and be built into the wider accountabilities of the Children's Trust Board for outcomes to young people.

23. The 14–19 curriculum is becoming more unified, and the diversity characteristic of the 16–19 phase will increasingly apply from 14–19. Many schools are already commissioning 14-16 provision from colleges and training providers, often through consortium arrangements.

24. This diversity of provision provides opportunities for local authorities and providers to secure and commission effective, high quality and flexible provision to meet learners' needs, and poses challenges around such areas as performance management, accountability, and funding allocations.

25. Local authority commissioners of 16–19 education provision need to know that the provision being commissioned is of the highest quality possible. Commissioners need to be assured that providers or institutions are committed to continual development and improvement, and that where quality of provision is less than adequate, rapid steps will be taken to make improvements, if necessary, by externally imposed action.

[5] Ibid. p63

26. The key agency for driving improvement is the institution or provider itself, supported as appropriate by other providers working in local delivery consortia. Support and challenge are also delivered by the sponsoring agency; where this is not effective, the sponsoring agency will have duties to secure improvement. For schools, the sponsoring agency is the local authority, with support and challenge delivered through the local authority school improvement service, which may be internal or externally contracted, and through school improvement partners. For academies, the proposal is that the YPLA provides the service. For sixth form colleges, the sponsoring agency will be the local authority, with support and challenge delivered through the local authority school improvement service, which may be internal or externally contracted, and through school improvement partners. For GFE colleges, the SFA will be the sponsoring agency and with local authorities and the YPLA to identify underperformance, commissioning the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) as necessary.

27. Independent and third sector providers are responsible for their own improvement and are subject to a range of contractual provisions should the quality of their work not be appropriate.

28. Proposals for the future performance management for 16–19 education are disparate and complex. They include the School Report Card, the Data Dashboard, a variety of Ofsted inspection frameworks, the Framework for Excellence, Comprehensive Area Assessments, Self-Regulation, and Performance Tables, together with potential intervention by a variety of sponsoring bodies. Unless these are brought together into a single integrated system there is likely to be both public and professional confusion and inefficient use of resources.

29. It is necessary that all those institutions or providers engaged in delivering education and training outcomes for young people are credited, or otherwise, when those outcomes are, or are not, delivered. Institutional inspection alone cannot identify these. A wider assessment of the overall performance of local providers is necessary through the local 14–19 Area Partnership and the effectiveness of its commissioning strategy. Have the outcomes the Partnership has set been appropriate and suitably met and if not why not?

March 2009

Witness: **Councillor Les Lawrence**, Chair of the Children and Young People's Board, Local Government Association, gave evidence.

Chairman: We welcome Councillor Les Lawrence. He is not an unfamiliar figure in this Committee. It is a pleasure to see him here again in these—for us—rather acoustically challenging circumstances. We will all have to shout a bit.
Cllr Lawrence: Is it because it is 1 April?

Q67 Chairman: I wish that there was a sensible reason. I did not know this for years, but you have to queue up at 6.45 am to book a room, and Jenny, a member of our wonderful staff, has been doing that for a very long time with none of us knowing about it. Les, you know what the inquiry is about. When this Committee was formed, we took it very seriously that we would look at some of the main planks of educational reform over the past 20 years. We looked at testing and assessment. Did you come in for that one? Was it the last time you were here?
Cllr Lawrence: Yes, I did.

Q68 Chairman: It was a long time ago when we did testing and assessment. Some people thought that we wrote quite a good report on that, and you know what has happened since then. Our report on the National Curriculum comes out tomorrow so poor old President Obama will probably not get a look-in in the newspaper columns. This is the third of the sittings on accountability, Ofsted and all that. In parallel with that, we shall also be looking at the training of teachers. We have looked at some of the pretty fundamental aspects of schooling, and we are getting into the meat of that today. Do you want to say anything to get us started or do you want to go straight into questions?
Cllr Lawrence: Let's dive straight in.

Q69 Chairman: What is the Local Government Association's view on the Government's policies at the moment? Are you co-operating with the Government's policies or do you take Eric Pickles's line that non-co-operation is probably a good way forward—certainly for Conservative authorities?
Cllr Lawrence: The broad thrust of the Every Child Matters agenda—the emphasis on attainment, the concepts around school improvement, giving local authorities the strategic role in determining the nature of educational provision within the local authority and the role of being the champion for the child and the young person within the school context, as well as the wider service context—is one that local authorities are very keen not only to carry out, but further develop. When I appeared before the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill Committee, we at the LGA were able to say that we were very supportive of the changing emphasis on and strengthening role of local authorities in the 16–19 arena because that fits into the overall 0–19 responsibility for the delivery of children's services in all its elements. In that sense, there is a broad welcome, especially for the recognition of the role of local government. That is not to say that there have not been significant areas where we have had robust discussions with the Government and when at times we felt that there was an overly strong sense of direction, or what some of my colleagues called the centralised control of localised planning. That relationship is evolving. In regard to some of my colleagues, I have to say that the law of the land is

the law of the land. Legislation is in place. Local authorities have a duty to implement that legislation, but we take great pride in actually taking the legislation, moulding and adapting it, and using flexibilities to best serve those whom we have been elected to serve within our localities. If any local authority acted ultra vires, it would soon be called to account. In the constitutional context, that particular pivotal role in the relationship between central and local government is sometimes not fully appreciated by those in the House who, quite properly, have a specific role to fulfil.

Q70 Chairman: I am not trying to make a party political point. The chronology of the development of the National Curriculum, which we have just finished looking at, has been pretty cross-party over 20 years with the centralisation of the control of the curriculum. We get used to those parameters being as they are. It is quite remarkable. I was talking to people from Bury this week, who said that the Bury view is to take Eric Pickles's recommendations—for example, there should be no co-operation with a programme of Building Schools for the Future. Is that just the idiosyncratic behaviour of one council, or is it the advice from the LGA?
Cllr Lawrence: The advice from the LGA is that the Building Schools for the Future programme gives local authorities a pivotal role not only in improving the facilities that our children and young people will learn in, but in being innovative and looking at each of the learning environments they are creating. We should be creating not bog-standard comprehensives—to use a terrible phrase used by a certain person—but environments within which youngsters can learn in different ways. They should be very flexible alternative environments. They should be provided in such a way that over the next 20 to 25 years they can be adapted to suit the changing types of learning that will be promoted by the teaching profession and the technologies that will support the delivery of that education. They should support the nature of the curriculum as it adapts to meet the changing needs of the wider society. You cannot just use the same traditional methodology. Pedagogical change will drive the nature of the learning environment. Young people will have to become more flexible because over their lifetimes and careers they will face a series of different challenges and changes. You therefore want to try to create young people who are not only good at inculcating, adapting, analysing and utilising information and knowledge, but are themselves capable of being flexible and adaptable.
Chairman: I have totally misled you, Councillor Lawrence. For *Hansard*, it was Dudley, not Bury. Let us get down to the main point of this meeting. David is going to lead on the accountability regime.

Q71 Mr Chaytor: What should schools be accountable for?
Cllr Lawrence: They should be accountable for ensuring, in conjunction with the local authority, that each young person fulfils their potential. That may sound very simple, but they must look at the capability of each young person and, within the constructs of the National Curriculum, seek as far as possible to develop the learning environment for that young person to enable them to be encouraged, supported and challenged and to fulfil the potential that exists within each and every young person. Obviously, they must then monitor that through the various mechanisms at the various key stages and ultimately with the public examinations at 16.

Q72 Mr Chaytor: What about financial accountability?
Cllr Lawrence: Yes, the money that is passported through the direct schools grant down to each school via each local authority's agreed formula has to be the basis on which the school is managed not only financially, but in terms of the overall resources that are available. That can be done in conjunction with the governing body and the local authority in partnership. The local authority provides the oversight and the financial support to enable the school to manage on a day-by-day basis and must do so without interfering in that day-to-day operation.

Q73 Mr Chaytor: You have said in terms of accountability for both development of potential and the use of finance that the school has joint responsibility with the local authority. Should the school be responsible to the local authority? If not, to whom should the school be responsible?
Cllr Lawrence: You will find that local authorities tend to look at the family of schools within their jurisdiction as a partnership and, yes, leave them to operate on a day-to-day basis. They allow the head teachers, with the governing body, to oversee that day-to-day operation, but it is still a partnership, because although they have the autonomy to work in that way, they cannot do all that is required—diplomas are a classic example—on their own. Therefore, they need to be in partnership with the local authority. However, you could equally argue, quite properly, that schools are accountable to the parents and the young people themselves for that which is provided to the young people and for how they report to, engage with and enable the parents to participate as well. But it all has to be done on a partnership basis. It is not people operating in silos, or being part of, or separate from: it has to be a partnership, otherwise success cannot be achieved to its fullest extent.

Q74 Mr Chaytor: That sounds a little bit like blurring responsibilities. If something goes horribly wrong, who is responsible: the head teacher, the chair of governors, or the Director of Children's Services?
Cllr Lawrence: At the end of the day, the local authority is the accountability of last resort. It is for the local authority, by working in partnership, to seek to ensure—using all sorts of performance management techniques that do not interfere, but just provide oversight; a comfort blanket if you like—that the trends of attainment and the processes of financial management of the school are such that you can detect at an early stage if things are going

slightly awry, be it at a particular key stage or throughout the school as a whole. You will then seek to intervene by using SIPs or an advisory service at an early stage. If a school descends into special measures, then certainly many of my lead member colleagues and I feel that that is a failure on behalf of the local authority for not having had the foresight to use the powers that we have to intervene earlier. I agree that there are occasions, however, where something can go very badly wrong, very quickly; for example, if a governing body and its members decide to go off on a particular tack, or there are a whole series of new members and they decide to, shall we say, have an agenda that is not necessarily in the interests of the total school population. That does not happen that often, but when it does the local authority has to take very serious and urgent action, often having recourse to the Secretary of State.

Q75 Mr Chaytor: You have put a lot of emphasis on the local authority's role, understandably, but where does Ofsted fit into all that? Do you think that the existing powers and procedures used by Ofsted are appropriate?
Cllr Lawrence: Ofsted is an important part of ensuring that the accountability framework is working, but more importantly that the levels of attainment are being achieved for all pupils, not just a few. I think that it is quite right for a body that is independent to provide additional challenge, at regular intervals, to ensure that the processes, methodologies and practices are appropriate for the outcomes that are expected.

Q76 Mr Chaytor: From the local authority's point of view, are you satisfied with the current Ofsted inspection framework and, for example, the frequency of inspections?
Cllr Lawrence: On the frequency and the framework, there are concerns within local authorities about the consistency and the quality of inspections. Perhaps, in part, there are those who still hark back to the days of the HMI where there was a recognised respect, integrity and quality, although the inspections often took a very long time. But these days there are concerns about the quality and capability of some of the inspection teams. Also, with the more snap inspections, there are concerns about the extent to which they fully engage governing bodies. There are certainly concerns within some governing bodies that the degree to which they are allowed to participate and be engaged is not as great as it could be.

Q77 Mr Chaytor: You have not mentioned at all the role of central government, but it is they who legislated for Ofsted and the testing regime, and to reduce the National Curriculum. What is the school's responsibility to central government, in terms of accountability?
Cllr Lawrence: The school's accountability to central government is, in a sense, vested in the local authority, ensuring that together they are meeting the legislative framework and the standards that are expected—through the various national indicators and other statutory targets. Quite rightly, if that is not being achieved—collectively or individually—then government have every right to call to account individual schools or local authorities, or both.

Q78 Mr Chaytor: Finally, as a representative of local authorities, are you satisfied with the current accountability regime that the Government have imposed, particularly in respect of testing?
Cllr Lawrence: I will give you a politician's answer and say yes and no. Sometimes I think that there is an unfortunate misunderstanding of the time scale between setting a policy and its implementation on the ground in a school or across the local authority, and seeing the proper outcome from that policy being enacted. There is a tendency, at times, for it to be rushed. In rushing, you do not necessarily allow that policy to be fully implemented to the extent that would bring about the total outcome that is being sought. Without appearing to be unkind, sometimes the life cycle of Ministers itself hinders the full implementation of policies, whereas the life cycles of elected Members and school processes are such that they have a life of their own. Sometimes governments of whatever party—this tendency has been there for the last 20 or 30 years—try to get an outcome that can be utilised in a way that is not always to the benefit of policy implementation on the ground.

Q79 Mr Chaytor: Perhaps I could ask one final question. If you had the power to change one aspect of the current accountability system, what would it be?
Cllr Lawrence: I am not sure that there is any one particular aspect that I would want to change, other than to ask whether we could have a break from initiatives. I know that it is difficult, because a Secretary of State, of whatever power, might come in and say, "We are going to have a moratorium on legislation and initiatives for three years. We are going to bed down, ensure that everything that is in place is working and then subtly adjust those areas that aren't." The trouble is that in a very short space of time the media would be on everybody's back, challenging why nothing was happening in this or that area. But if I had the chance, I would ask for a moratorium on legislation and initiatives for about three years.

Q80 Mr Stuart: To what extent do you think that choice has a role to play in challenging under-performance?
Cllr Lawrence: The first thing to say is that we have to be very careful around the use of the word "choice". The LGA and all the political parties in it have been very strong in seeking to get clarification on that. If you are talking about, for example, parents exercising a preference as to where they would like their child to go to school, be it primary or secondary, it is only a preference, because it is not a choice in the strict sense of the word. You are given

options, but as for making a specific choice to place your child in a school—which, technically, exists in the independent sector—in the state sector it is exercising a preference. The exercise of that preference can indeed—you are right—be a mechanism for providing a challenge to the school in one sense. But equally there are schools that actively encourage parents to participate in the life of the school, which itself becomes a challenge. Parents who are concerned about the outcomes for their children provide not only a challenge but additional support to schools to ensure that the education being delivered to the young people is in a form and to a standard that they feel is appropriate, so it is a partnership again at that level. If parents feel that they are not getting the right education for their child, either they can appeal to the local authority or, in extremis, they can go direct to Ofsted and ask it to intervene. It is an interesting area for debate, but I think that if you tried to exercise strict choice you would bring instability into the school system, which would be to the detriment of the overall provision of education.

Q81 Mr Stuart: It would seem to be the opinion of both the main political parties that that instability would not have the effect that you mentioned, but in fact would help to challenge deep-seated under-performance in certain places. For example, the Conservatives are looking more towards the Swedish model of freer schools—basically taking this Government's reforms further and making them less diluted. Does the LGA reject the idea that greater freedom to set up new schools would provide the ultimate accountability of allowing parents to go to new institutions?
Cllr Lawrence: The LGA's position has always been that the diversity of types of education within each local authority is to a large extent one of the strategic roles of local authorities, which is why you have still got some local authorities such as Kent which have grammar schools. You have got authorities such as my own where we have not only grammar schools, but single-sex schools and faith schools, and in a sense you are providing a wider degree of preference for parents to find an education most suited to what they believe are the needs of their offspring. Some authorities have gone for a single type of school within their local authority. I think that that type of diversity and flexibility across local authorities itself provides a challenge. If you look at the Swedish system you see that there is now quite a lot of debate as to whether the free school system has caused a degree of dissent and division within the communities themselves. As I understand it, looking at recent debates in Sweden, they are beginning to wonder whether they need to go in the opposite direction, having been through the experiment—it has taken them about 20 years to create 900 of these schools, separate from the other more traditional schools. Even that takes a long time to evolve, and I do not think it is something that you could achieve overnight even if you had legislation.

Q82 Mr Stuart: What do you think of the provision in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill to make academies accountable to the new Young People's Learning Agency as opposed to local authorities?
Cllr Lawrence: The LGA's position is that—I will not quite describe it as ambivalent—it does not really worry us to any extent.

Q83 Mr Stuart: What do you see as the rationale for the very complex set of performance management processes that have been put in place for the 16–19 age group in particular?
Cllr Lawrence: We have some concern at the plethora of bodies: the YPLA, the SFA and the NAS, to name but three. We think that is a slight overkill. We worry that there is a danger of what we call—not mission creep, but you know what I am getting at. It is a mechanism for exercising greater centralised control than is necessary to exercise the new powers for the commissioning of 16–19 provision. We also have some concern at the apparent intention to dictate the size of the YPLA. We understand that it is going to comprise around 500 people, and we still have not worked out within our mechanisms exactly what each of those people is likely to do. Therefore, the larger it is, the more it will seek to find something to do.

Q84 Mr Stuart: The LGA has talked about having a harmonised accountability system and a desire—rather than for competition and choice—for what seems to be the idea of a need for greater collaboration between providers within this harmonised accountability system. Could you explain a bit more about that thinking?
Cllr Lawrence: At the end of the day, if you take it from the outcome, what we want is quality provision that allows each young person to find the most appropriate route to develop potential after the statutory school system. Therefore, we need to be able to ensure that what is being provided, being commissioned, is of high quality at each and every stage. That means that not every institution is going to be able to do it. What you are doing is commissioning on the basis of need not on the basis of demand. What tends to happen at the moment—and there is good evidence both real and anecdotal—is that you can have a lot of colleges each competing for the same pool, trying to provide the same thing, the same type of course. At the end of the day, the quality is not always the same in each and every institution. Whereas if you challenge each of the institutions to be the best, then those that are the best will be the ones commissioned to provide. Those that are not quite up to the mark will have to look at another niche area and develop that skill.

Q85 Mr Stuart: That rationale will be familiar to anyone listening to—I don't mean yourself as a bureaucrat—bureaucrats through all time who have thought that central planning and control and a rational division of responsibilities from them is the right way to go. We get astonishing quality through

our supermarkets without an arm of the state intervening and telling Waitrose to concentrate on these things and Tesco on something else.

Cllr Lawrence: Supermarkets have a freedom that colleges do not. They can target different groups of people based on their ability to pay. So you will have the "basics" and you will have the "finest"—I am not saying Tesco is the best, I am just using it as an example—and then people can mix and match. We cannot afford to have a 16–19 system that is predicated on the basis of a student's ability to be funded at different levels. They have all got to be funded to get the best quality outcome and we have to use the colleges, work-based learning or the third sector to provide an education, combined sometimes with training or employment, to ensure that that young person continues to fulfil their potential and gain the skills that will benefit not only them but wider society, be it the private, public or third sector.

Q86 Mr Stuart: Could you talk us through the information that local authorities rely on to assess their skills. To what extent is it Ofsted-determined or contextual value-added? Can you comment on the quality of that? Do you feel there is a commonality in the way that local authorities use the data?

Cllr Lawrence: In the statutory sector local authorities now have a database of information that enables them to track attainment very successfully, not only on an age, ethnicity and gender basis but on a collective basis, school by school, locality by locality. That certainly is being used to provide differentiated support to different parts of local authorities. If you take some of the inner areas of our cities, you will find young people who at three, four, five and six have little or no skill in English. Therefore you can target support. Equally, with working-class white boys or black Afro-Caribbean boys and Bangladeshi boys, you can target those groups with support to raise their levels of attainment. It is perhaps a sign of the times that girls outperform boys at all ages, irrespective of ethnicity. Whether there is some hidden aspect there, I am not sure. But because of that, you are able to see, first, where schools are not achieving to the extent that they should be and, secondly, what support is necessary to support improving levels of attainment. Thirdly, you have a mechanism to show to communities, and especially to parents, how schools attain and how they are succeeding with their young people.

Q87 Mr Stuart: That all sounds marvellous, yet the number of NEETs we have after the doubling of education expenditure over the last 12 years is the same as it was 12 or 13 years ago. The number of children who leave primary school unable to read and write properly and the number who leave at 16 without five good GCSEs are deeply depressing figures. From what you have just said one might consider that local authorities were intervening early and were able to track the individual pupil to tackle the under-performance of white working-class boys for instance, but there is no evidence that it is being tackled.

Cllr Lawrence: If you look at the rates of improvement in many local authorities over the last four to five years, you begin to see that data being used very successfully. Yes, it has taken a long time. Do not forget that those who are NEETs now started their school careers many years back. The point that I was making to David Chaytor is that we have had this constant change, dare I say it, ever since the Baker curriculum reforms. Much of that was very good but the curriculum was being prescribed to the nth degree from the centre. We have moved a long way back to giving a lot more flexibility in terms of the curriculum construct now. Therefore we are having to operate in this constant state of change. A period of stability would be very helpful to enable us to bring about the type of improvements that we are beginning to achieve now, simply because we have the data to hand and the powers to intervene. I think that over the next three to five years that will bring about the type of standards that we all want for our children and young people. Yes, you are quite right. Local authorities have not been as good as they should have been over the last decade in challenging and seeking to raise the levels of attainment of young people.

Chairman: Your answer suggests it was over the last two decades. You mentioned Lord Baker as the starting point.

Cllr Lawrence: I sometimes forget how long I have been involved in local government.

Q88 Paul Holmes: I was interested in your comment that the debate in Sweden has now moved on from the glowing view that free schools have been an unbridled success. Are you aware that the Swedish national educational agency's analysis of free schools showed that it was only the middle class who made use of them effectively, and that they had led to an increase in racial and social segregation in the areas where they were set up?

Cllr Lawrence: That is the evidence that the LGA has begun to gather. Some important benefits arise from involving communities more in the life of a school and the direction in which the school is going. There is an opportunity for local authorities to utilise some of that to encourage and embed schools within the communities in many parts of the country. In some areas the level of aspiration within communities acts as a barrier to young people further attaining. Pupils are only in the school environment for a certain period of their life. A school can only take the level of aspiration in a young person so far, because once they go back into the community—the home—there is a depressing effect on that aspiration level. Therefore, if you can engage communities within the life of the school such that you had adult learning going on alongside the young person's learning—actually using the school as a community resource in a wider context—you can then begin to develop the aspiration of the community as a whole. If you do that, the teachers and the teams in the classroom can raise the aspiration levels of the young people further. In that

sense, there is a benefit that comes out of the Swedish model, but it has to be adapted to the English culture and way of life.

Q89 ***Paul Holmes:*** I quite understand involving, for example, adults in school or having adult education classes, which I have seen in lots of state schools in this country, but why does that have to be part of a free school movement?
Cllr Lawrence: It does not. In many local authorities, it has been utilised because it has had some interesting benefits. For example, adults beginning to learn themselves means that they have been able to engage with their young children at home, discussing what the young people are learning and therefore what is consistent with their homework. Actually sitting around the table and having interaction within the family has itself been of benefit. That has helped to reduce misbehaviour, truancy and all sorts of by-products. So, yes, it does not necessarily come out of the free school movement, but the evidence shows that the more you can engage communities in the life of the school there is consequent benefit.

Q90 ***Paul Holmes:*** Last question. In your experience, and you could write to us about this rather than telling us now, are you aware of any hard evidence from Sweden of the free schools actually challenging and changing the curriculum in mainstream schools? When I was in Sweden, visiting both free and state schools, no one could provide any evidence. There were some people who made the assertion, "The free schools have made things change," but no one could actually provide one single piece of evidence to that effect.
Cllr Lawrence: We shall certainly write to you on that. My colleague behind will take a note and we shall get back to the Committee fairly quickly.[1]
Chairman: More work on the Swedish model. Fiona.

Q91 Fiona Mactaggart: I am interested in school improvement and in how local authorities see their responsibilities and deliver them. For example, the evidence from the NFER is that, at local authority level, this is done in a more collaborative and less exigent way than perhaps at national government level. Is that a deliberate strategy? Perhaps you could tell us about that.
Cllr Lawrence: It is a deliberate strategy. I know it is repeating the same message, but the family of schools is the partnership with the local authority. At the end of the day what you do not want is a whole series of institutions working in different ways, to the detriment of each other in some cases, and to the detriment of communities. What we want is to raise all the schools to a level such that each community has a good school within it, both primary and secondary, because we believe that is fundamental to the development and cohesion of communities. That is the first thing. Secondly, we also want schools to help and assist each other. That is one of the things that you will find in the NFER document—one of the things that we encourage is high-flying, successful schools to assist schools that are perhaps struggling at a particular time, with a particular cohort of pupils or a particular subject area. Certainly in maths, English and some of the sciences, we need schools to collaborate, to share what are fairly scarce resources. Equally, when a school takes on a new head, the local authority likes to support that person into their post, and to use mentoring from long-standing heads with that new head, to enable their start to be as successful and as smooth as possible. So that is using a whole series of different methodologies to bring about the partnering and collaboration that Graham was seeking.

Q92 Fiona Mactaggart: How do you know if they are working?
Cllr Lawrence: That has to be done by monitoring the outcomes at various stages. There are the key stages and ongoing assessments that take place within schools. The relationships with the advisory teams, with the SIPs, is important in providing feedback and in challenging governing bodies to ensure that they fulfil their function of checking on what is happening within the school. There are a number of different strands.

Q93 Fiona Mactaggart: You talk about your role in challenging governing bodies. One of the things that I am interested in is the way that National Challenge is being received at local level. I wondered if you would say what your view is of National Challenge, and whether it has helped improve those schools that are not achieving five A–C grades, including English and maths, or whether it has hurt them.
Cllr Lawrence: In terms of what is happening on the ground, there is now general recognition that the methodology and the way it is being implemented is assisting significantly in turning round a number of schools. The issue was that a lot of time and energy had to be diverted to deal with the fallout from the way that the measure was presented and announced, and then the unfortunate appearance in the national press. Many of the schools that were within the categories deemed to require National Challenge had a high contextual value added and were often dealing with youngsters that many other schools were not able to deal with. They felt that they were being categorised not wholly in recognition of what they were doing, so that the word "failing" immediately became the kitemark of the school. The issue was presented as being one of English and maths, but if you look at the figures, a lot of those schools were already either high performers in English or in maths. There were not that many schools that were underachieving in both. The presentation of the intent was not effective, but on the ground a collaborative and beneficial outcome is being achieved. You will see a significant number of schools within the National Challenge going above

[1] *Note by witness:* The LGA is continuing to undertake work on the Swedish model and is looking at the empirical data which accompanies the system. There are significant differences in political opinion within local government as to the possibility and ramifications of introducing the Swedish model in England which must be taken into account as discussions continue.

the 30% barrier this coming year. The other aspect, which we have raised with the Government and are still worried about, is the degree of sustainability. It is all very well to target a particular age group—those who will take GCSEs this year—but we must ensure that the improvements, additional resources and emphasis on that year group are translated right down the school to those who joined year 7 in September last year. Sustainability is one of the fundamental outcomes that must be achieved. We have serious concerns that that emphasis, support and ongoing challenge will not remain once the immediate impact has occurred.

Chairman: That sparked you off. I will come back to Fiona. Graham?

Q94 Mr Stuart: You talked about the pressure that was put on these schools through the accountability arrangements and National Challenge. Do you have any concerns about the distorting impact that kind of pressure can have on schools? I am thinking about the possibility of pupils being directed towards what could be perceived as easier courses. There is a proliferation of people doing media studies. There is an increasing contrast between the types of courses that are being taken in independent schools, which are often chosen for their rigour, and those that are chosen in many schools that are struggling desperately to meet standards, tick the boxes and get over that 30% target. Although it looks like improvement, could we be undermining the quality of education that the children are receiving?

Cllr Lawrence: Not if we continue the concentration on English, maths and some aspects of science. As long as it is within those narrow bounds, that diversion will not occur. But I re-emphasise that we are worried about the sustainability, because it is no good concentrating on just one or two year groups; once achieved, you have to embed it into the culture of the school and the delivery of education, such that it becomes a matter of normal practice within that school. That is what the National Challenge advisers have been tasked with ensuring. As well as working with the leadership of schools, they are also now ensuring that the government bodies are brought in and that those bodies understand what is happening and take up the accountability reins. Furthermore, as local authorities are now fully engaged, have to report collectively and are responsible for the National Challenge advisers, I think we have a chance to ensure the sustainability and to ensure that we are not diverted towards inappropriate courses. However, we still need to emphasise the importance of the vocational strands, because not all young people are skilled and able to do the academic ones. If the vocational strands have rigour and robustness built into them, they will be just as challenging and will help fulfil potential.

Q95 Fiona Mactaggart: I think the frustration was that in some schools the sustainable model was one in which the children did not achieve as much as they were capable of, which is what, in a way, created the National Challenge. I understand your concern that this is a good policy badly communicated—if I am summarising you correctly. I am interested in the balance between central government and local government in terms of accountability. Central government seem to use their challenge and warning powers, whereas local government seems to emphasise collaboration and partnership. Maybe local government is more able to deliver that, while central government are more able to deliver the stick thing. If I have characterised that correctly—correct me if I have not—is the balance correct between, on the one hand, the relative role of local government as the kind of partnership creator, supporter and chivvier and, on the other hand, the role of national government as the alert, warning and challenge institution? Do you think there is sufficient understanding between central government and local government of their different roles and of what the other is doing?

Cllr Lawrence: The answer to the latter question is no, I do not, which in part is as much the fault of local government as it is of central government, in that we perhaps do not ensure that the communications between us are as clear, concise and precise as they should be. That is something that we in the LGA are seeking to address, not only with the current ministerial team, but also with all the political party Front Benches. I agree that things are badly communicated. Going back to my response to David, what worries me is that the time scales within which central government operate do not always fully take into account the time that it takes to actually deliver and implement a policy initiative that has been announced. If you think about it, the full extent of any policy change within education takes the full 10-year cycle to actually show the ultimate benefits. The National Challenge is in part trying to change the culture of low expectation, which in some cases can be very easily embedded within certain environments. When you seek to change a culture, it requires a step change in terms of the challenge of getting people to refocus and, if necessary, move on and bring in people who will bring about change. Then, in conjunction with staff, the nature of the work that the young people are engaged in changes, such that they begin to achieve in a fairly short space of time. That is happening in some National Challenge schools. I think that the recognition many schools have undertaken of what they need to achieve will bring about the change, but it has to be sustainable. The other strand is that National Challenge brings with it additional resources. The trouble is that once National Challenge ends, those resources will no longer be there and we will have to make certain—as local authorities that have to carry on—that that support and change stay, albeit not within the same financial framework as during the concentrated period of the National Challenge.

Q96 Fiona Mactaggart: Have there been any innovations at local authority level in recent years that have been designed to improve accountability to parents?

Cllr Lawrence: It is difficult to give specific examples because so many local authorities do it in different ways. There is no single identifiable strand across all local authorities. It often depends on the nature of the communities in which those schools exist. For example, in one or two very rural authorities the school has become the total centre of the community. It is used for just about anything and everything besides learning, and is used during the holiday periods and in the evenings as a community resource. You will find that in the inner areas of some of our major urban centres schools are used very much to enhance and develop social cohesion because that engages the community in the purposes of education and helps to raise its aspirations. It is very differentiated; there is no single strand as regards a method of engaging parents.

Q97 Chairman: Councillor Lawrence, coming back to the overview of what you think has worked and what has not worked over a period of time, all the areas that we have been looking at—testing, assessment, National Curriculum and now accountability—are mechanisms to improve standards. Which do you think has been most successful?

Cllr Lawrence: There has been an acceptance over the past two decades that schools need a degree of autonomy to operate in recognition of the communities that they serve. If you try to control too centrally, either at local or national level, schools tend to try to operate to a common denominator, whereas I think that you will find that most schools have their own little subtleties in the way in which they operate, which is designed to bring the best out of the young people they are seeking to serve. I also think that the way in which the teaching profession has been remodelled has been one of the major changes that have brought about an improvement in attainment over the past three to five years. That is because recognition of the professional competence of the teaching work force, with the teacher at the centre of a team in the classroom, has enabled a lot more individual, personalised work to take place with pupils, in a way that recognises the individuality of each pupil, moving away from what I often used to call the "block teaching method"—you taught to the norm. It has also enabled the whole emphasis to be not only to assist those at the bottom end who need a lot of help but to stretch and challenge those who are in the gifted and talented groups. That has been one of the most pivotal changes over the past five years, I believe, in terms of turning round and moving us towards vastly raised attainment levels.

Q98 Chairman: But, reading between the lines of your answers, I take it that you like the scaled-down and less intrusive Ofsted inspection system, compared to the regime that Chris Woodhead ran?

Cllr Lawrence: We would certainly like consistency within what Ofsted does. We also think that there is a place for what I call the snap inspection, because one of the regime's drawbacks, prior to the subtle changes that have occurred recently in Ofsted, was the length of time schools had to prepare and get all the paperwork in place and get everything looking almost perfect. Many of us in local government feel that the odd snap inspection, with 24 hours' notice, is also a good way of providing insight into what is actually happening at a point in time. I will go back to the point that we need consistency, because if you do not have consistency, you will lose integrity; the inspection process will not be respected and people will always question the judgments that come out. If we can get that back into Ofsted, I think we will have the independent body with the quality we require.

Q99 Chairman: Coming back to 16–19, in both your written evidence and in what you have said today, you have expressed unhappiness with the complexity of 16–19 accountability. You complain about that, but when you gave evidence on the school report idea, which after all is a simplification system to put everything in one transparent document, you seemed to want to have your cake and eat it. On one hand you are complaining about too much complexity in 16–19, but on the other you are resistant to the school report coming along, which some of us think will simplify the whole process. How do you square those two views?

Cllr Lawrence: I will have to go away and think of an appropriate answer.

Q100 Chairman: You do not want to tell me more than that. Tell me a little bit more about why you do not like school report cards.

Cllr Lawrence: It is the extent to which the cards' outcomes are likely to be utilised, and I think that, again, that does not recognise the diversity of types of education you will find in different authorities. It is almost trying to impose one centralised system, albeit a simple one, right across the board, but it does not have the flexibility to recognise the different types of schools and the different types of communities they serve.

Chairman: Councillor Lawrence, we are coming to the end of the session, but Annette wants to ask a further question.

Q101 Annette Brooke: If we are to have a new model for local authorities, which I am very much in favour of, are the current systems for their assessment adequate? I can give an example of an authority that has its pupil referral unit languishing in special measures, two special educational needs schools in special measures and two schools in the National Challenge, and that is in an affluent part of the country, with schools thriving in the affluent parts of the constituencies. How can a local authority get away with that and be given four stars and goodness knows what? Surely there is not enough accountability for local authorities?

Cllr Lawrence: The new Comprehensive Area Assessment system, I think, is designed to try to make the inspector framework more relevant and more appropriate to a point in time. The annual performance assessment, for example, came out last

December. It covered the period from 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008, so it was reporting on a period that was distant in time. If you take the attainment levels that APAs refer to, you will see that was in the summer of 2007. Other attainment levels were already published for 2008, so in a sense the credibility of that part of the inspection regime was very much called into question. Equally, the overall local authority judgment was also very distant in terms of time. Certainly, with a CAA, the Audit Commission want to apply it in such a way that it is more relevant to the performance of an authority at the time you are reporting. Within that—and I think this is where we can improve on the point you are raising—Ofsted is developing a methodology to do much more of what I call snap inspections of children's services, that is, not only the non-educational, but also the educational part.

Chairman: That's the rub.

Cllr Lawrence: I think that will bring about a greater degree of rigour and challenge, and will make local authorities much more subject to their own oversight internally and will stop them from allowing things to drift and to get into the kind of situation that you have referred to. We have not fully developed the other part, which is the scrutiny function within local Government. If the scrutiny function in local Government was really working, that type of situation would clearly come into the public arena. I have to say that executive members are sometimes afraid of scrutiny, but I like it and I know quite a number of colleagues who like it. We really need to develop that area over the next few years, because if we do not, we will not be able to hold our heads up and say that we are really doing the job that I was trying to convince Graham that we have started to do.

Q102 Annette Brooke: I will just ask a supplementary question. What role will the LGA play in making sure that there is far more training on scrutiny for opposition members right across children's services, not only in child protection but also in schools?

Cllr Lawrence: We are very closely working with the Improvement and Development Agency and we have a series of what we call "things to know", "things to check" and "things to do" lists. Those are not only for lead members, but also for scrutiny Chairs. The three group officers of the LGA are working collectively to ensure that our database of opposition members is also enjoined within the discussions, because, at the end of the day, we recognise that you need both political as well as professional challenge within the system, therefore, succession planning is absolutely essential. That does not only mean lead members within a party; we also have to recognise, quite properly, that parties change control within local government and those who come in must be fully skilled and capable of bringing about seamless change, such that most services can move on without detriment.

Chairman: Councillor Lawrence, thank you very much for your evidence this morning. We have learned a lot. We hope to maintain our communication with you over the course of the inquiry. If you think of things that you should have told the Committee, but we did not ask the relevant question to get the information, please let us know. Thank you very much for spending your time with us today.

Cllr Lawrence: Thank you for the rigour and the courtesy, Chair.

Chairman: Councillor Lawrence, if you would like to stay with us for the next three witnesses, you would be welcome.

Witnesses: **Councillor Les Lawrence**, Chair of the Children and Young People's Board, Local Government Association; and School Improvement Partners: **Lorraine Cooper**, Acting Head, School Performance for Primary Schools, Warwickshire County Council; **Declan McCauley,** Head Teacher, St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School, Great Wyrley, Staffordshire; and **Lynda Jones**, Adviser, Warwickshire County Council, gave evidence.

Chairman: Can I welcome our three new witnesses who have been good enough to brave the rigours of G20 London to be with us. They are Lorraine Cooper, Lynda Jones and Declan McCauley. Thank you very much for helping us with this inquiry. I think that you got a feel for the range of questions that we ask from the session with Councillor Lawrence. We are very keen to understand more about School Improvement Partnerships and Partners. That is what we will spend the next hour asking about. We are always happy for our witnesses to say a couple of things to open up the session, if they want to, or they can choose to go straight into questions. We have your CVs here, so we know where you are coming from. However, if there is anything that you want to add before we start on questions, please do so.

Lorraine Cooper: No.

Lynda Jones: No.

Declan McCauley: No.

Q103 Chairman: You are terribly well-behaved and good students. I will start the questions. You have been listening to the evidence and the three of you have a great deal of experience in terms of accountability and inspection. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the system that we have at the moment? What would you say that you would defend, if not quite to the death but none the less strongly, about the accountability system we have at the moment? Lorraine?

Lorraine Cooper: I think that the model of accountability that we have at the moment is broad. It covers a range of areas. By and large, I think that it

gives very useful information across the board about what is going on in terms of schools and pupils' learning. I think that the breadth that this model offers is one of its strengths, in that we have databased information at great depth now. That is very helpful. We have Ofsted inspections coming in and then we have what SIPs do, in terms of the interface with schools. All of that provides information that is extremely useful. Sometimes, I think that the reliability of the model is its weakness. That is where we have to be very careful sometimes, because however good the system is it is only as good as the reliability it can produce. On occasions with schools we have problems, as we had this year over the testing systems and the problems that they created for schools; we are only just getting those problems reported now. Sometimes we have inconsistencies in the way that Ofsted inspections may be carried out. Admittedly, those inconsistencies occur much less frequently now, in my experience.

Q104 Chairman: It is the quality of the inspectors?
Lorraine Cooper: Occasionally you can have a situation where that proves to be problematic. However, I think there have been growing strengths in the relationship between the people who work at the interface with schools at local authority level and Ofsted inspections. There is a much better dialogue, in terms of sharing information, which is helpful from the point of view of schools. I think that there are a number of strengths. The breadth of the model is one. However, we need to be sure about the reliability right the way through the system.

Q105 Chairman: Lynda, what is your view about the strengths and weaknesses of the model of accountability? Is there anything that you really worry about, or anything that concerns you, about the overall strengths of the accountability system at the moment?
Lynda Jones: I just want to add something to my colleague's point, which is about a strength in the accountability systems that have been developed over the last few years. The increase in data, which gives us a huge variety of ways of looking at performance, together with schools themselves becoming more accountable through the self-evaluation form and Ofsted, has meant that there has been a developing partnership between local authorities, SIPs and schools and governors. In turn, that has meant that the partnership has improved. I would like to add that as a strength of the system.

Q106 Chairman: Some people are very critical of self-assessment. They see it as diluting or weakening the inspection, by putting so much onus on self-assessment. I see that Lorraine is shaking her head at that point. Lynda, what do you think?
Lynda Jones: I think that it is about the validity and reliability of the judgments that are being made, really, and the evidence that is used to support those judgments, whether they are being made by the school judging its own performance or by those coming and making judgments themselves. That is the key point, I think.

Q107 Chairman: The original idea I had of SIPs were that they would all have to be heads. You were a deputy head. Do you think that SIPs should be heads? I know that you had another role as well.
Lynda Jones: I probably still have a personal interest because I have not been a head teacher, although I have gone through the NPQH—National Professional Qualification for Headship—process, and I have been a deputy head for seven years. I believe that my experience as a school improvement adviser in two authorities and my experience in schools over 31 years brings a different perspective, and I am able to learn from head teacher colleagues who are part of the SIP process.
Chairman: Declan.
Declan McCauley: Certainly, looking from a school's perspective—we talked about self-evaluation—schools are much better placed now to know what is going on in school and how it impacts on school improvement. A lot of that has come about through the accountability processes which are in place with the local authorities, and that then goes on to inform Ofsted inspections. Schools are well placed in that respect. Also, regarding the amount of school improvement that we have seen, looking at pure statistics—thinking of where I am based—my school is a completely different school within the past 13 years. Children who are there make much more progress now than they did many years ago. That is down to the involvement of the local authority and the accountability that is placed on schools.
Chairman: Thank you. Now that we have warmed you up, I will hand you over to Annette.

Q108 Annette Brooke: I specifically wanted to ask about School Improvement Partners. They seem to have rather mixed reviews: some evaluations show how positive they are, but there is a lot of scepticism around, I would suggest, about them. My first question is: how well trained do you feel that you are for this job? Were you prepared for the task ahead with the training that was given? I do not mind who starts first.
Chairman: Lorraine?
Lorraine Cooper: I think that—
Chairman: Don't let these two heads bully you, Lynda. We will stand up for you.
Lorraine Cooper: I think it varies enormously, because people come to the role from very different perspectives. You have a range of people coming with a lot of different background experience. How far the training that they were provided with met their need might depend on their starting point. One of the problems was—it became slicker over time—that it was a fairly time-constrained process, with a set number of activities that had to happen. For some people, who had been involved in a school improvement context over a long period of time, they found that it did not stretch their thinking very much. For other people, who may not have had that

background, it may have done a lot more. I think it depended on where people came from, because there is a massive breadth in the group of people who are now performing as SIPs.

Q109 Annette Brooke: So is the training standard?
Lorraine Cooper: It is standard. First, there is a testing process to make sure that you can do the basic data analysis type activities. Then there is a face-to-face training, which is a two-day residential, and that involves a range of different activities, including conversations that are observed, and feedback is given on the way that you might deal with addressing challenging situations. By its very nature, an awful lot of the learning happens on the job, and at that interface with other people doing the same job over a longer of time. Initial training starts you off, but whether it could ever turn you out as a fully fledged, all-singing and all-dancing SIP, I am not sure—it would depend where you started from.
Chairman: Lynda, do you agree with all that?
Lynda Jones: It is worth adding that there is a locally provided continuing professional development programme too, which updates as far as the national agenda is concerned, but also gives the particular local flavour. That is carried out in conjunction with school improvement professionals, so there is the development of a team, if you like—you have an evolving team who have a series of skills, knowledge and understanding. It becomes, therefore, increasingly bespoke, in relation not only to people's needs but to local needs and the changing national perspective. On my needs as a school improvement professional, I think I was pretty clued up by many of the imperatives that were to be facilitated through the SIP programme, but I wasn't particularly au fait with working with head teachers in this context. For example, this afternoon I was due to go on an induction visit, where I would shadow a head teacher colleague who was working in that role, but I can't do it because I'm here. That is just to give you some idea of how we manage the programme locally, so that we can identify people's needs and plan to meet them through the activities that we plan.
Declan McCauley: I felt that the training was very rigorous and stressful for many people. The pressure was on to achieve; they didn't want to go to the training and not get through it. So there was an awful lot of rigour attached to it, and the use of the data and the focus on challenging schools certainly came through. I came to it from a slightly different starting point, having been a head teacher for quite a few years and having worked for my local authority, which asked me to take on a couple of schools in a different role before SIPs came in. But the training heightened my awareness of exactly how to work with refined data, and now it is a case of translating that into working within the local authority in Warwickshire. I am fortunate, because I work in another authority, so I have its perspective. My school is in Staffordshire and I work as a SIP in Birmingham, so it gives me a breadth. It is interesting to see how it all works.

Q110Annette Brooke: That is interesting. Lynda and Lorraine, do you just work as a SIP within one authority?
Lorraine Cooper: Yes.

Q111 Annette Brooke: Next question. I would really like to know from each of you, are you a critical friend or somebody who tells tales to the local authorities?
Chairman: She means a local authority snitch. Which is it? I shall start with you, Lynda. Which are you? Or are you neither?
Lynda Jones: I feel somewhat ambivalent, because I am employed by the LA for my substantive post and I am a critical friend when I am being a SIP. It informs my work as a school improvement professional in Warwickshire, because it enables me to get inside a school and to appreciate how it might be for them when you talk about bringing in changes. But I am a critical friend when I am being a SIP.
Annette Brooke: Any other comments?
Declan McCauley: We are both. We are that conduit between the local authority and the school. You have to be that critical friend, because the information flows through you—both ends—and that is really important.
Lorraine Cooper: The critical friend element is about the trust that you build up with the school in which you work in whatever role—whether as a local authority person or not. You're a critical friend because of the trusting relationship that you build up, which allows you to ask the questions that will challenge and move things forward. My experience at the interface is that I do not often have to worry about that. Schools have never seemed to object to being asked the critical questions, provided they are delivered professionally and appropriately. I have never found that to be a conflict—any more than there seems, generally, to be too much of a conflict about them not wanting the local authority to know certain things. There is generally a good and trusting working relationship between the schools and the local authority I work in, so schools generally are very happy for there to be a triangulated discussion, and they do not seem alarmed by it. They have plenty of opportunity to feed back to us through the SIPs appraisal processes that we use, and that seems to be the message: it is not a problem to them.
Chairman: Annette, I'll come back to you. I want to bring Andy in.

Q112 Mr Slaughter: My limited experience of SIPs suggests that, in some ways, the schools that need them most are less good at using them. That may be a fairly obvious thing to say, because a school that is already performing—
Chairman: I was hoping you would shout a bit. The acoustics in here are horrible, Andy.
Mr Slaughter: I'll try.
Chairman: Or lean forward into your mic.
Mr Slaughter: If a school is doing well, it is probably less defensive and is probably quite interested in somebody coming in and filling in the gaps, and things like that, and it is probably better organised.

Is your experience that, actually, you may be topping up already good schools, rather than addressing problems in schools that have more to do?

Lorraine Cooper: I think you are absolutely right to say that there is a massive differentiation between what schools need and how you might work with them. However, one of the major benefits of the SIP programme—this has been reported back to me by schools—has been that good schools previously felt that they lacked the opportunity to have a robust debate with other professionals in that sort of context, on a one-to-one basis, about their school. They may have had such a debate about broad educational issues, but about their school they missed it. So I believe that the SIP programme can be equally as effective in moving good schools to outstanding and outstanding schools to be really creative in their thinking and allowing them to see how they might help in supporting others. I agree with your comment that, clearly, if schools are struggling, they will often struggle in respect of how to use the support as well. You need a different approach with those sorts of schools.

Q113 Mr Slaughter: With struggling or coasting schools, how much is there a whistleblowing role for SIPs? Councillor Lawrence was saying, quite rightly, that if a school is going into special measures that is probably the fault of the local authority for not spotting it, but not always, because sometimes these things can happen quite quickly, after an ill-advised head appointment or if a governing body is suddenly thrown into disarray. Do you think there is a whistleblowing or supporting role for SIPs in that process?

Lorraine Cooper: Yes, I suppose I struggle slightly with the notion of whistleblowing. Maybe that is where I would have a problem. I see it as a professional relationship, part of which is professional honesty. If there is a problem, it needs to be brought to the attention of whoever can do something about it.

Q114 Chairman: Did you say you saw yourself as a whistleblower or not as one?

Lorraine Cooper: No, I have a problem with the term "whistleblower", because it is about a professional relationship.

Q115 Chairman: I was quite stunned, though, by Councillor Lawrence's saying that if we are going to sharpen up our act in the local authority world, the driver—I think this is what you said, Councillor Lawrence—is how much sharper we have to be in the bit of children's services that deals with child protection. You would have to be a whistleblower if your job was in that area, because a child might die or be in terrible misery. In a sense the whistleblower bit should not be underestimated, should it?

Lorraine Cooper: If you mean by "whistleblower", bringing to the attention of those people who have a responsibility and an opportunity to do something about putting something wrong right, that is fine. I see that as part of that professional triangulation; that is what those roles are about between the local authority, the school, the governing body and the external bodies of accountability, like Ofsted. Together, we have that role. It is really important that that happens.

Q116 Mr Slaughter: SIPs seem to work well where they are accepted and where there is a creative structure for them to go into, but I am talking about another example. What I meant by the whistleblower role would apply in the case of a school that is quickly getting into trouble and deep water and where the local authority may not have picked that up. If the SIP is on the ground and sees that, and the school is not responding, do you not think it is important that the SIP blows the whistle, for want of a better term?

Lorraine Cooper: Essential. Yes, it is essential that they do.

Chairman: Declan, what do you think?

Declan McCauley: I agree, definitely. If you are in a school, working as a SIP, the last thing you want to be doing is saying, "Okay, this is absolutely fine" and not feeding back that there are major issues. If you see something, it has to be fed back, because at the end of the day, the SIP is the person responsible. They are the conduit. A single conversation takes place through the SIP, who passes information both ways. If you see something that is wrong, you have to tell someone about it.

Q117 Mr Slaughter: The other scenario that we have examples of is where it is pretty clear to people involved with a school that something is going on over a period of time that the local authority ought to know about. It might be that the school does not have a permanent head or that it is struggling just above going into special measures. For whatever reason, the people who are responsible are not reacting. What does a SIP do in those circumstances?

Lynda Jones: You must go back to the honesty and transparency underpinning all this. You would not say one thing to a head teacher and another to the LA. The reports that the SIPs write make it very clear what the judgments are. We need to remember that they have only a five-day allocation with that school. If schools have an immediate concern, the SIP might not be the person who is best placed to pick that up. If a school is vulnerable, the SIP will not be the only LA representative likely to visit the school. LA personnel will visit the school on a more regular and frequent basis. The SIP's judgment would not be a sole judgement in that case.

Q118 Mr Slaughter: Do you see SIPs as a permanent part of the framework for school monitoring and improvement or are they a bolt-on extra that has some advantages for some schools?

Lynda Jones: We have put the initiative in place in Warwickshire with a view to it being an enduring mechanism. The strength of the work of SIPs relies on the relationships that are developed. Anything that causes discontinuity obviously breaks that. Schools say to us, "We do not want changes in SIPs. We see this as an enduring relationship." That is the spirit in which we have gone into it. We have talked

about National Challenge schools. It might be worth mentioning that one aspect of those schools is that the National Challenge adviser has taken over this role with up to 20 days allocated to those schools. That led to some dysfunction because the team had to be rearranged so that the best people were in the best places to support those schools. That is another element of the SIP programme. SIPs are matched to schools and are not arbitrarily told, "You can go there and you can go there." Some SIPs are better at supporting schools in respect of particular needs. In summary, we do see it as enduring. The quality of the relationships is built up over time. Heads have said to us, "Don't change these about. You have just got to understand our context, which we need you to do. We don't want it to change." There has been some change brought about by National Challenge, and the SIP within the National Challenge adviser role has a key part to play in bringing about improvement in National Challenge schools.

Chairman: May I call in Derek and then come back to Andy and Annette?

Q119 Derek Twigg: First, it is great that people like you take the time to do the work you are doing. We have talked about process and about some individual examples. The big question is what are the three key pieces of evidence that justify SIPs?

Chairman: Declan, it is your turn to lead.

Declan McCauley: That's lovely—give me the difficult question. In all honesty, it is the working relationship that a SIP brings to a school. They bring a level of challenge and accountability. You have a face-to-face discussion with the SIP sitting there with the data and you have to account for exactly how the school is doing and what you are going to do about it. Also, SIPs bring a level of experience to the process, which does not necessarily come from within the local authority, but might come from a number of schools.

Q120 Derek Twigg: If you don't mind me interrupting, that is again about process. What is the evidence that you are making a real difference on the ground?

Declan McCauley: The evidence would be the feedback that we receive from the schools. We are quite closely quality assured. There is a performance management process in place. We also report back to governors so, again, feedback is the main thing.

Q121 Chairman: Is it feedback or just a warm feeling? Councillor Lawrence was very strong about the impact of classroom assistants, but early research shows that classroom assistants do not seem to make much difference.

Declan McCauley: From my perspective of looking after three schools in Warwickshire, my performance management process included questionnaires being sent out to head teachers—totally confidential—and returned to a senior line manager of mine at the local authority, as well as an on-site visit when I was monitored working with the school, face-to-face discussion with the line manager, looking at what schools actually thought about what I was bringing to the process, discussing that and setting me targets for this academic year.

Lorraine Cooper: As for the evidence, the local authority monitors the outcomes very closely over a period of time. I would monitor, for instance, the outcomes of Ofsted inspections and whether they match or do not match the views of SIPs, and whether we have a problem—a differential view, and so on. We would look at the data from schools to see whether the targets set are appropriate and at an appropriate level or whether they are not, and whether the right level of challenge is going in. We use a raft of evaluation tools to begin to gather evidence about whether SIPs are having an appropriate impact. It is fairly early days. In primary, we have only had them for 18 months. When they came in, it was a big change for personnel getting to know schools. We are certainly building up those sorts of processes all the time to try to get the evaluative evidence. We are held very heavily to account by visits from those in the national strategy who talk to us about the evidence of impact and outcomes for schools.

Q122 Derek Twigg: I thought that there was such support among head teachers for the process—that it was making a difference—that people would be queuing up to take the jobs, but I think that we are actually short of them.

Lorraine Cooper: Yes.

Q123 Derek Twigg: Is it not the case that some head teachers are refusing to have SIPs? Have you had any evidence that local authorities are accepting it or is that not the case?

Lorraine Cooper: It is certainly not the case in my experience.

Derek Twigg: So there is no instance of a head teacher refusing to have a SIP?

Lorraine Cooper: No.

Q124 Derek Twigg: Basically, there is not actual evidence at the moment. You are getting more of a feeling and feedback. You said earlier in your first contribution that one of the concerns about school improvement is the robustness and accuracy of data. This probably feeds into that.

Lorraine Cooper: It does. You will not have that evidence in five minutes. Schools do not work like that. They do not change like that. It is a case of gathering evidence over time, but we do rigorous analysis of our data to make sure that we are beginning to get some evidence of where the impact is and where it might not be. But recruitment is certainly a major factor.

Lynda Jones: It is fair to say that the LA would consider the performance of each of its schools. That is the main way in which we work out how schools are doing. SIPs add to that and are part of it, but they are not the sole contributor.

Q125 Derek Twigg: I have just one final question. I am sure that people talk about report cards, but from your experience as both a teacher and a deputy

head teacher, and also of SIPs, what single most important factor—or one or two important factors—do you believe helps school improvement?

Lynda Jones: Perhaps I can mention the strengthening role of governance. One advantage of the SIP programme has been to bring more cohesion to the role of governors and accountability by strengthening the role between head teacher appraisal and the review of the progress relating to the data. Enabling governors to be effective—I have seen throughout my teaching career—can be problematic, possibly, and this is a real means by which you can add cohesion to that. So, it is probably not the most significant feature, but a point that I would like to make in relation to school improvement, the School Improvement Partner, and the ways in which the School Improvement Partner works relating to governance and accountability.

Derek Twigg: It speaks into accountability as well.

Chairman: Can we move on quickly. Declan, Lorraine, and then I want to come back to Andy for a very quick question, because I know that he has got to leave.

Declan McCauley: It comes down to the accountability issue at the end of the day. Within a school, you are accountable for how well the students are doing. To have someone from outside coming in, asking us difficult questions in the kind of relationship that Lorraine has spoken about, that is what it comes down to—the pressure is on you to perform.

Lorraine Cooper: I would add that there is no doubt in my mind that outstanding schools have outstanding leaders. I am not just talking about head teachers; I am talking about leaders through the layers. Therefore, a major role for anybody working at the interface of school improvement has to be about how you grow and develop outstanding leaders, because although some people seem to get it almost by osmosis as they go through their professional career, not all do. Some need greater support and input to develop those leadership skills in a way that means that the school can become outstanding, because it has that sort of outstanding leadership. That is a very major role for SIPs, which is perhaps why there was an emphasis on people who had leadership experience undertaking that role.

Chairman: Andy, I said that I would call you again.

Q126 Mr Slaughter: Is there a preference for SIPs being working head teachers? There may be some cross-fertilisation, with benefits for the SIP—as well as the school they are going into—and perhaps a greater degree of practicality than one may get with someone appointed directly by the local authority. If the SIP is a member of the LEA staff, it is more like another level of inspection and you lose something that is special about the SIP process. If that were right, do you agree with the NUT suggestion, which is that the school should appoint the SIP—they already pay for the SIP—rather than the LEA?

Declan McCauley: Certainly, from talking to the head teachers who I work with as a SIP, they feel that having someone who is a serving head teacher is very valuable to them in their role, because they recognise that I face the same issues and concerns as them on a day-to-day basis. I understand where they are coming from as head teachers. The rigour that you get by changing SIP every three years is important; it is important that the relationship does not become cosy. To manage that, as a school, would be very difficult. The difficulty lies, from where I am coming from, in there not being enough head teachers out there who would go forward to SIPs. There are many reasons for that, not least having to leave their own school for five days for each school where you are a SIP. That is a large amount of time and you have to have structures in place in your school to enable you to do that, and in many schools that is not the case.

Lorraine Cooper: We asked for some feedback from head teachers on this very question about how they see the different roles that are there. There has not been a strong body of evidence coming back from head teachers which says that they feel disadvantaged if they do not have a head teacher as a SIP. In fact, there has been quite a body of evidence—and I can only speak within our authority, obviously, at the moment—that says that for a fairly large percentage of schools, they were very happy to have continued with the person who they perceived as being a local authority employee. They have not seen that as a problem. There may be some differences here and, of course, all members of the primary School Improvement Service in our authority were also head teachers, so there was an understanding of that leadership level of working within a school. While we may not be doing that on a day-to-day basis, and do not have the clarity that Declan would have about what letter happens to fall on the desk that day—I do not deny that those sorts of things are a very valuable aspect of a school's work—I think the nature of our work means that we have to keep up to speed with most of the other things that are going on that head teachers are considering. So I do not particularly see that as a major disadvantage, and feedback from schools certainly does not suggest that they think it is either.

Q127 Mr Slaughter: You do not think there is a danger of a local authority agenda being imposed on a school, which you would not get if you had another head teacher there?

Lorraine Cooper: I think that for all SIPs, to some extent, there is a local authority perspective on the agenda, but we have been quite careful to manage our process in a way in which there are certain things that will need to be looked at during the course of the annual cycle of being a SIP at the interface of the school. That is about validating whether or not the school is performing in the way that it should, and about advising on things like the school's performance category, so that we know the level of support that it might need and so on. We have tried very hard to leave a significant part of the agenda to the school at the interface with its SIP, so it decides what the agenda is at that level. It has also been a very deliberate move on our part to avoid a situation where SIPs become a conduit for local authority messages. That is not to say that the context for the local authority is not important; in our initial

briefing at the beginning of the year before target setting, we say, "Here are the strengths and weaknesses coming out of our local authority data and these are the sorts of things you might want to check with your schools. If we have a weakness in this area, you need to see whether that is a weakness in the school that you are working in." But I do not think that we put too much on to SIPs in terms of saying, "You must pursue this local authority agenda." We try to keep a balance.

Q128 Mrs Hodgson: May I get you to tease out and paint a picture of how SIPs work in practice in terms of the time spent in school? Is it an ongoing process of so many hours a week? Is it an intensive, week-long process? I understand that some SIPs are head teachers and some work for local authorities, so it is almost like a second job. Will you explain how it all works in reality?

Chairman: Does anyone who becomes a SIP suddenly find that their school is falling to pieces while they are away? Sorry, I am sure that that never happens. Lynda, would you like to lead on that one?

Lynda Jones: There is a standard allocation of days for each school and a standard modus operandi, if you like, so there is a five-day allocation for each school with the expectation that as soon as the data is available, there will be a discussion with the head teacher. We have not mentioned the rest of the senior leadership team, but, going back to Lorraine's point about leadership in schools, it is very much the role of the SIP to seek to develop leadership capacity, so they will go through the data at that time to produce a data report, which will obviously be quite a complex affair. Governors will also be there, and the report will enable everybody to have a shared understanding of what the school's strengths and areas of development are. Those areas of development come at the end of the report, and are a shared view that will be reflected in the school's development plan, and informed by the self-evaluation form. Although it may appear that you are dropping in and doing a report following the analysis, it is actually much more coherent than that. We will also follow the performance management of the head teacher that term. The SIPs support that, and, while the governors actually do it, it is the SIP, as the professional person allocated to the school, who will perform that. Clearly, that will be done within the report's context and the imperatives for improvement that will have been identified by it. There will then follow a programme that will be discussed with the school and that is responsive to its needs. We very much want to do that, so they will use your time on possibly a consultancy basis and say, "This is my judgment; I have identified this in the SIP." When trust has been established, they will say, "This is a weaker area; could you go and have a look at it for me?" Yesterday, for example, in my SIP work I was looking at teaching in the sixth form. It was driven by judgments about data, and I was there to support teachers' self-evaluation, which they will feed into their self-evaluation form for Ofsted. That would be an activity in the second term. It is a cycle, as Lorraine says, and in the third term there would be oral feedback to the governors on the work that has progressed that year and how it relates to school improvement.

Q129 Mrs Hodgson: I am trying to get an understanding of the time commitment. I understand the process and the whys, but how much time are we talking about—an hour or two hours a week?

Lorraine Cooper: There is a five-day allocation of SIP work per school.

Mrs Hodgson: Per year.

Lorraine Cooper: Per year. In some local authorities, I believe that that allocation may be differentiated slightly so that good schools get slightly less time and other schools slightly more. In Warwickshire, we have a five-day standard allocation for our schools, and there is an expectation that the SIPs will spend the majority of that time in school—at the interface with the school. But they will spend an hour or two on preparation and on analysis of information and data that come through, and an hour writing up a report at the end of the day on which they do the work. So, it is nothing like as extensive as half an hour or an hour in the school every week. I am responsible for three SIP schools and probably get into them twice a term. I have that sort of level of contact. It is not weekly, by any means. One of the issues is that very many SIPs, particularly the external consultant SIPs and head teachers, are not always able to give more time than that, even if it is needed, because they are employed in other work as well. That can be an issue—it is one of the constraints. It means that the local authority School Improvement Service working absolutely hand in glove with the SIP is essential, because if a school really fell into trouble, it might well be that their SIP would not be the person who could instantly respond by putting considerably more time in. So, we have to look at how that can be managed at local authority level. Generally, that sort of increased level of work might have to come from within the School Improvement Service as opposed to from just the SIP.

Q130 Mrs Hodgson: Just one more point of clarity. You mentioned that you are the SIP for two or three schools. What is the norm? Is it one SIP per school? What is the average number of schools that a SIP covers?

Lorraine Cooper: It varies between the primary and secondary sectors, which is what Lynda has just pointed out. I believe that in secondary in Warwickshire no SIP has more than three schools. In primary, purely because of the numbers game, we have some SIPs with 16 schools. So, it can be anywhere along the spectrum from three to 16. It really depends on how much time they give—how many days they are contracted to provide the service for. Head teachers generally will not take more than three schools. That would be the maximum for a head teacher SIP.

Q131 Chairman: So, someone who did 16 would be, say, a retired head.

Lorraine Cooper: No, people who did that many might be fully employed local authority people or privately employed consultants. At the head teacher end of the spectrum there tend to be fewer schools per SIP.

Q132 Chairman: Following on from Sharon, what happens when the National Challenge advisers come in? Are they basically the same people putting more time in?
Lynda Jones: It depends on whether the local authority has appropriate SIPs to take on the National Challenge adviser role. We were able to use two of our existing SIPs, who had that experience.

Q133 Chairman: Do they have to be differently or better qualified?
Lynda Jones: Yes, they are known as super-SIPs, so they have to go through an additional accreditation process. We were able to use two of our existing SIPs to become National Challenge advisers.

Q134 Chairman: Could any of you be super-SIPs?
Lynda Jones: If you wanted to.

Q135 Chairman: But you would have to do another qualification?
Lynda Jones: You would have to be accredited, yes.

Q136 Chairman: This all sounds interesting. What do you think about this, Les? Have you been more or less convinced about the role of SIPs by what you have heard?
Cllr Lawrence: I think that local government per se has become more convinced of the SIP process as it has bedded in and been shown to be a valuable support structure to many head teachers, especially new head teachers. Also, it is a sounding board, whereby head teachers can seek to gain assistance and independent advice on issues that they feel need to be addressed in their schools. Suffice to say that when the SIPs system first started, we thought that it was a way of creating cosy relationships between individual schools and different head teachers. However, as I said, that view has totally changed and we see SIPs as an invaluable part of the accountability framework.
Chairman: Les, you astound me by just how open-minded you are, and how willing you are to change your mind on things. I am really encouraged by what you have been saying today. To wind up, we will have a couple of questions each from both Paul and Annette, who have been very patient.

Q137 Annette Brooke: I have just one question, but it is quite a complex question. We were talking earlier with Les about the collaborative approach and the fact that local authorities do not often serve notices. Then there is the proposed change in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill that will enable moves to be taken in the case of coasting schools, for example. Now, what I really want to know is how does the SIP work with the School Improvement Service? Lynda mentioned the fact that, when a school is causing some concern at whatever level, there would be more than one person coming into the school. How does that process work? Is it collaboration, or is it a case of actually pushing for the school to be put into some more formal notice—let us put it that way—when problems are obviously being picked up?
Lorraine Cooper: The process that operates within Warwickshire is very clear. If a SIP is in a school and starts to pick up on the fact that there are significant problems that are going to need higher-level support and intervention, it has the capacity to contact us and to say, "We believe that the school is at risk and we think that it needs a full review to see what is happening". That full review would be conducted and it would look in depth at the sorts of issues that the SIP has raised and it would have all the records of visit, because they all come back into the local authority and every single one of them is read every time that they come in. So we are gathering that evidence from schools anyway, on an ongoing basis.

Q138 Annette Brooke: I am sorry to cut across you; I apologise. Is that a risk of going into special measures, or is it more all-embracing, to pick up the coasting school too?
Lorraine Cooper: It is all-embracing. We do not just pick up those schools that we think might go into special measures. We have different categories that we allocate to schools, and those categories are allocated by the SIPs to a set of criteria that they are given. The SIPs do everything from allocating a category of "outstanding" right the way through the spectrum, so that if a school is coasting we would pick that up from the data. We would also expect the SIP to have picked that up from the data. We would then expect that problem to be reported back in the category that the school is allocated on the record of visit that is sent back to the local authority. If there is concern, we would look at that as a table-top exercise. If we get those alerts back from SIPs, we will look at the situation, look at the evidence base, gather our internal evidence in addition to the evidence that the SIP is providing, and at that point we would put together, with the school, a plan to bring about the changes that need to happen. So, if the school is designated as being in a category of concern by the SIP, in conjunction with the school and governing body, that will automatically bring into play some quite rigorous systems. There is a system to support the school, by providing whatever might be needed in terms of training, development and assistance, but there is also a very clear system of accountability, where there are time frames attached, governors and head teachers of schools would meet regularly with us, at least on a termly basis if not a half-termly basis, and we have what we call a review and intervention meeting, where we measure the progress that the school has made towards the success criteria that were agreed at the beginning for improvement. If that improvement does not happen—and we hope that it is done along the way—we must look and ask what are the factors sitting behind that. Is it that the local authority support is not working? What other factors are impacting on that? Are there problems with the

leadership? If that is found to be the case, we would—and do—take rigorous action.There is a strong process, and the SIP is central to that. They are the person who knows the school well and will alert us to any issues at the beginning.

Q139 Annette Brooke: So the SIP could be the person or instrument through which the pack of cards comes tumbling down, in the case of a head resigning, special measures and so on?
Lorraine Cooper: Yes.

Q140 Paul Holmes: I have two questions on recruitment that come from a completely different perspective. The Government hoped that there would be a much larger percentage of SIPs who were head teachers. In practice, that has not worked out. Why is that? Why is it so hard to get head teachers to do that role?
Declan McCauley: That is something I touched on earlier. If someone is a head teacher, it means going out of their school to work as a SIP. They cannot do that if they do not have total faith and trust in the team that they are leaving behind—ie the deputy head teacher—to run the school effectively while they are out. Not all schools have that, so that is one issue. Not all head teachers want to take on the SIP role. When the role came in initially—I am talking not from Warwickshire but from Staffordshire—head teachers there were very wary of this new process involving people who were trained outside the local authority. What was the impact going to be? Who were they and what did they want? There was a lot of negativity, and heads did not want to take up that kind of position.

Q141 Paul Holmes: Is that changing now that it has bedded in? You spoke about going and seeing what happened in two different authorities with the schools you went to.
Chairman: Councillor Lawrence changed his mind. Did your colleagues change their minds?
Paul Holmes: It could be an important part of a head teacher's professional development and future promotion prospects if they have done this sort of thing. Is there a beneficial improvement now, or is it still a problem recruiting heads?
Declan McCauley: Now that head teachers are seeing how the process works, I know of some who have gone off, in the recent past, undertaken the accreditation process and become SIPs. Whether they go on to take up any appointments is a different matter, but they have undergone the accreditation process.
Chairman: Is that your shared experience Lynda?
Lynda Jones: We mentioned the accreditation process earlier and how onerous it is. The stakes are really high because, as Declan was saying, people know that you are going for it so what if you are turned down? What does that say? It certainly seems to say something about your powers of analysis, because that is a key part of being a SIP. That is one thing that may predispose people not to do it. It also takes a lot of time. The online part of it took me 15 hours to complete, and that was just to get through to the next stage and the face-to-face training. I know of one head teacher who opened it up, a crisis happened, and he was not able to complete it with a proper amount of time to consider issues. As a consequence, his accreditation was not successful. It could be that the accreditation process deters people. In Warwickshire, we now have fewer serving head teachers as primary SIPs because they found that they had to withdraw, as they needed to be in their own schools. What we have described is a rigid process. There is a series of things that we must do at particular times of the year and that might not be the right time. For example, the autumn term is particularly heavy and, I imagine, that is a very heavy time for a head teacher too. That is another aspect.
Lorraine Cooper: Many head teachers tell me that they do not want the role because their job as a head teacher takes 200% of their time. They cannot get their heads around how they could deal with somebody else's problems as well as their own. That is the most common feedback that I get. Clearly, there are some who enjoy the role and feel that they can offer a lot and that it offers something to them. You will always get that in a group of people. Generally, however, we are not seeing an increase and if anything, I would say that I am seeing a decrease in the numbers of people who are available. There may be a number on the SIP register, but when you contact those people because you are looking to appoint, a very high percentage of them are not available for work. I have just been through the process.

Q142 Chairman: Do they get paid extra for the SIPs job?
Lorraine Cooper: They do, yes; they get paid to do it.

Q143 ***Paul Holmes:*** I think that Lorraine's point about the 200% input into being a head leads to the next question. There is a shortage of people applying to be primary school heads and a lesser shortage, but still a shortage, for secondary. Does the existence of SIPs improve, or otherwise, that situation? Do people applying to be head think, "Good, I'll have a SIP, who is very supportive and helpful", or do they think, "I've got the local government snitch, an inspector, so I'm not going to apply for that job. It's just not worth it any more." Is it helpful or not?
Declan McCauley: I personally do not see that that has any impact. If you were going for a headship, that would not even come into your mind.

Q144 ***Paul Holmes:*** But why are so few people applying to be heads these days? They always quote pressures from the Government, league tables, Ofsted—surely the SIPs are just another part of that pressure?
Declan McCauley: It is pressures from above, isn't? It is the initiatives—as Councillor Lawrence said earlier, it is taking time for initiatives to bed down—and not having more landing on your table. It is the pressure of managing your school. Some people do not even want to do an NPQH—they say that that is too onerous. There are many, many factors.

Lorraine Cooper: There are a number of factors. There is no doubt at all that when heads talk to you about why there are the issues around the recruitment of heads—why they do not move on to second headships, why they decide to retire early, whatever those things might be—a lot of them express the view that they do not feel that they are able to do the job as well as they want to, because of the volume of initiatives that fall on their desk. They constantly feel that they are battling the next new thing, instead of being able to do a good job on the rest. There is a little bit of an element—for some head teachers, maybe not all—of feeling pushed further away from the learning and teaching by all the other things, by the breadth of their job, which is growing and growing. Some people will say, "That is not why I came into it. It is not what I want to do. I am about learning and teaching, about children, and I don't want to have to be bothered about some of the other things." There are some developments that will help that and will be very valuable, I am sure, as we get more development of people like business managers around ranges of school sites. However, the job has become very broad—the extended agenda for schools is pushing some people to the point where they feel that they can either be a head or they can live, as part of a family life. They are not sure that they want to forfeit the one for the other. There is a balance that needs to be struck.

Q145 ***Paul Holmes:*** This is a totally different question. Since the Education Act 1988, league tables, Ofsted, key stage tests and everything, Governments have argued that this is the only way to hold schools to account and to make sure that they do not just do their own thing, with nobody knowing what is going on. If you had had a system of SIPs, for example, in the '70s, would that have meant that William Tyndale could never have happened?
Lynda Jones: You would not have had the data then. Data are the lynchpin of the judgments that the SIP makes, because the data are robust and look at all aspects of performance. It is about standards and achievement, and Every Child Matters. Increasingly, the data will shine a light for you on what is going on in the school. Increasingly, as teacher assessments become more valid and robust, you will get that on a continuous basis too. In the '70s you would not have had that—the judgments would have been made by straws in the wind.

Q146 ***Paul Holmes:*** In Canada, Sweden or New Zealand, for example, it is very much based on the internal school assessment of pupils. In New Zealand, it is a 3% national sample at random, rather than a 1% key stage test, so you could get the robust data through SIPs and then go and talk to the local schools without having the framework of league tables—or could you?
Lynda Jones: At the moment, you have not got the valid and reliable teacher assessments. You will have, when reforms have come through and the teachers are properly supported in making those judgments. My personal view is that, yes, that would be a good vision for the future.

Lorraine Cooper: It is definitely the way that we need to go. The profession has changed phenomenally in that time. I came into it in the mid '70s and, I have to say, it is not the same profession now at all. It is held much more accountable and it is much tighter. Its systems and processes of understanding itself and whether it is producing the goods are much better than they were. I think that standards have definitely risen as a result. Schools now are much more robust and rigorous places and much more focused on whether outcomes for pupils are as they should be. My personal view is that if we had the systems and processes in place then that have brought about that development—it has been a journey and has not happened because of one or two things, but because of a series of things coming together over a fairly lengthy period—it would have been much more difficult to have a William Tyndale situation. It needs to continue to develop because it does not stand still, which is the beauty of education. It is a process of change and we need to adapt systems as the process moves on.
Chairman: I want to squeeze in two last questions. Derek and then Annette.

Q147 Derek Twigg: Do you think that we have got SIPs today because of the accountability that we have in the system? LEAs have accountability to ensure that education overall is very good, whereas most head teachers are only really concerned about what has happened in their school, for whatever reason. Therefore, why do you not work collaboratively anyway and help each other?
Chairman: Declan, would you like to take that?
Declan McCauley: That collaboration is there, but you still have to have the level of accountability.

Q148 Derek Twigg: Let me just, very briefly, give an example from four or five years ago in my constituency. We now have a different set of heads, but some of the previous heads would not talk to each other. I believe that is not uncommon. I accept that collaboration does take place, but there are too many areas where it does not. What is the answer?
Declan McCauley: I do not know what the answer is.
Chairman: Lynda has the answer.
Lynda Jones: No, I do not have the answer to that question. At the moment, the accountability regime does not take into account the partnership premium. We would like it to because that would impact on a number of arenas, for example the 14-to-19 arena. At the moment, SIP accountability is just with the school, so as accountability changes to suit circumstances, the partnership premium ought to be considered.
Lorraine Cooper: I believe that it is growing. It is happening. Increasingly, schools are aware that they cannot possibly deliver on the broad agenda if they stand as independent, single units, and they are looking outwards much more. If you said to me, what is the difference between what might be coming with the new framework of accountability compared with the old one, it might be that we have persuaded schools over some period to be quite inward looking in terms of their standards, their quality and whether

they get their pupils, but that is turning now and is moving outwards more. We are beginning to say that it is about the provision for children across a locality and about how schools can work together to provide it. I think that heads are beginning to engage more in that debate now, but it is a big cultural change and it is not going to happen overnight. We are working on it and I have a sense from the headship group I work with that people have accepted that agenda and are beginning to look much more to what they could do better with colleagues than they could do on their own in terms of provision.

Chairman: Do you agree with that Les?

Cllr Lawrence: In Derek's case, I would suggest that the fault is partly with the local authority.

Derek Twigg: That has gone. It is historical. It is not the case now.

Cllr Lawrence: To deliver the post-14 diploma requirements, schools will have to collaborate, because no one school can deliver all diplomas. The local authority should be significantly and regularly engaging all its heads in a single conversation or groups of single conversations to ensure that they, first, understand each others' accountability in regard to provision at secondary level, but equally, understand how they can begin to share resources. I go back to the point that I made earlier on English, maths, science and languages: because there is a scarcity of skilled teachers within those areas, we find, in lots of authorities, that schools are now sharing teachers across schools to get the best out of the skills that are available.

Q149 Derek Twigg: So why do we need SIPs?

Cllr Lawrence: To me the SIP is a fundamental part of the individual challenge that enhances relationships and confidence in the heads themselves and enables them often to build up their leadership teams to be much more effective. It ultimately allows the head the freedom to go on and do other things which can be not only to their professional development but to the development and benefit of their school.

Chairman: Annette.

Q150 Annette Brooke: This is a very brief question and I am not intending to undermine rigour when I ask it. Hearing about all your analysis I have to confess that I am the softie on this Committee and I want children to be happy at school. Could you tell us about some of the other dimensions you are involved in?

Lorraine Cooper: The agenda is broad and children enjoying as well as achieving is very important. The well-being aspects of their experience at school, their growth as people in school and their ability to be adaptable to changing circumstances, which is the world they are going out to work in, are equally important. A large part of the work of the SIPs will be around those agendas—the Every Child Matters agenda—all five areas are equally important. People talk about accountability through data because it is the easy one to measure and get a handle on. Some of the others are harder to get a handle on but they are no less important. If they are not there, it will not matter how hard you push on the other side, it is not going to come to fruition and will not bring about the changes you want. Certainly, the agenda that the SIP has at the interface with schools will be broad and will cover those aspects. Quite a lot of the work when you are in schools may be looking at the outcomes of pupil surveys and questionnaires; it might involve discussions with pupils to find out their views on what they are receiving and how they feel about school. There is a whole raft of things that happen that can give that further information. Schools are undertaking more of that all the time, so when there is a SIP validating their judgments and their data, they will provide you with that sort of evidence and say, "Here is what the children have said." You can then have conversations to validate that. Yes, the enjoy part is important: looking at learning outside the classroom, the extended agenda and the availability of that for children is a very important part of the role.

Chairman: Lynda, take no notice of Annette. We all on this Committee want children to enjoy.

Annette Brooke: I thought you told me off last time.

Chairman: Lynda, do you want to comment on children enjoying?

Lynda Jones: I do not have anything to add to what Lorraine has just said.

Chairman: Declan?

Declan McCauley: I agree because it is a much broader package. It is not just about statistics and data. There is much more breadth and the SIP has a role to play.

Chairman: This has been a really good session. We have learned a lot. I hope you enjoyed it. You have given us a great deal of information. Thank you very much for your attendance. Susan, this is your last Committee attendance in your present role and you are moving to a different Committee. We wish you well.

Wednesday 22 April 2009

Members present

Mr Barry Sheerman (Chairman)

Annette Brooke	Andrew Pelling
Mr David Chaytor	Mr Graham Stuart
Mr John Heppell	Mr Edward Timpson
Paul Holmes	Derek Twigg
Fiona Mactaggart	

Memorandum submitted by Edexcel Ltd

SUMMARY POINTS

- Edexcel believes that publicly funded schools should be publicly accountable for their contribution to the wellbeing, progress and achievements of all their young people.
- The overriding purpose of all accountability processes should be the enhancement of all young people's wellbeing, progress and achievement.
- Accountability should be according to standards and criteria which accord schools a level playing field, enabling fair comparison of like with like.
- The proposed School Report Card offers the opportunity for real progress in consolidating the reporting of differentiated school performance to communities, both national and local.
- Edexcel looks forward to supporting government initiatives in developing accountability mechanisms.

INTRODUCTION: EDEXCEL LTD

Edexcel, a Pearson company, is the UK's largest awarding body offering academic and vocational qualifications and testing to schools, colleges, employers and other places of learning in the UK and internationally. In 2008 Edexcel marked 8.2 million exam scripts in over 85 countries, with 4.3 million marked onscreen using the groundbreaking "ePen" technology. Edexcel's general qualifications taken internationally include GCSEs, GCE AS and A Levels, IGCSEs and O Levels. Edexcel's vocational qualifications include NVQs and BTECs from Entry Level to Higher National Diplomas. Edexcel's entire vocational portfolio received over one million registrations across 45 countries in 2008. www.edexcel.com.

Accountability

Is it right in principle that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance?

1.1 Absolutely.

What should be the fundamental purposes of an accountability system for schools and, in particular:

To whom should schools be accountable?

1.2 Publicly funded schools should be accountable to the young people who are their immediate client group, parents/carers, governors, taxpayers, employers, local and central government.

For what should they be held accountable?

1.3 Schools should be held accountable for the wellbeing, progress and achievement of all their young people, as elaborated below.

How should they be held to account?

1.4 Schools should be held accountable for the wellbeing, progress and achievement of all their young people, to standards comparable with those of our major competitor nations through accessible public reporting. "Wellbeing, progress and achievement" should be defined according to standards upon which there is a social consensus, which are stable, long-term, differentiated and internally consistent. The use of undifferentiated standards like the 30% GCSE grade A*–C criterion of the "National Challenge", has had damaging consequences for pupil intake, parental engagement, staff recruitment/retention, governor authority/accountability and local authority joint area review action plans. (This is because the benchmark does not take account of the value added by schools, contradicts published Ofsted judgments and results in a focus of resources on sub-threshold achievers to the detriment of other learners). Public accountability should therefore be according to performance indicators which take due account of selection, per capita funding and socio-economic advantage/disadvantage, so that schools may be compared with one another on a "level playing field".

1.5 Schools should be accountable for the wellbeing, progress and achievement of all their young people as reflected by an appropriate blend of quantitative data, pupil and parent satisfaction surveys and professional assessment of the quality of their services, taking account of locally specific circumstances, all gathered into a single easily-understandable and available report. This is preferable to the disparate range of reporting information presently available, which is also inaccessible to certain sections of the community. The School Report Card has the potential to meet these requirements.

What should be the consequences?

1.6 The consequences of the accountability process should be sustained and evidenced improvements in the provision of education and care for all young people, according to criteria which meet the above standards, within a "reasonable" time-frame such as one year. The consequences should not be a flight from allegedly "underperforming" schools of able learners, affluent parents, skilled and experienced practitioners, committed governors, and engaged employers. (These have all been unintended consequences of present accountability arrangements, arising from negative publicity). A responsibly managed accountability process impacts young people's experiences beneficially, eg by developing rather than undermining the recruitment and retention, confidence and expertise of the practitioners central to young people's lives in school.

How do other countries hold their schools accountable for their performance and against what criteria?

1.7 No comment.

Is the current accountability system of inspection and performance reporting for schools broadly fit for purpose?

1.8 No. The current system is fragmented with schools accountable to Ofsted, local authorities and central government, local communities and public opinion. Ofsted reports may not consistently feature CVA so that raw achievement data fails to take account of disadvantage, funding differences and the incidence of selection among neighbouring schools. Light touch attention for high-performing schools can reinforce funding advantage and encourage "coasting" while close scrutiny of low-achieving schools can reinforce funding disadvantage and undermine professional confidence, leading to a counter-productive flight of skilled and experienced practitioners.

1.9 Moreover "league tables" reflecting achievement and attainment scores fail to differentiate between schools according to their intake, resourcing and value added. These tend to increase the demand for places at schools which are thought to be "high-performing" and away from those which are perceived as "low-performing", in raw terms only, with damaging consequences for learners, communities and social cohesion.

1.10 Furthermore the application nationwide of arbitrary benchmarks such as "National Challenge" has led to the reporting of performance at variance with judgments made by Ofsted and local authorities and raises questions as to whether there exists, in fact, a coherent accountability "system".

How should schools be held accountable for their performance in the context of increasing collaboration in education provision?

1.11 The encouragement of open competition between schools over many years has impeded the growth of trust and collaboration at a local level. Collaboration in provision is yet to be translated into collaboration over outcomes, not least because colleges are central to such partnerships for learners aged 16 and under, but are not included in current proposals. A workable model illustrating the contribution of collaborative providers towards the shared achievements of learners has yet to be published for consultation. There is no easy answer to this question given the climate of competition between schools which has arisen.

1.12 Moreover the integrated nature of 14–19 learning is not reflected in the proposal to apply the Card only to schools and across the 11–16 secondary phase. There is broad agreement in the learning community that 14–19 is an integrated phase and that colleges (both GFE and Sixth Form) play a central role in local 14–19 partnerships. A unified 14–19 reporting mechanism is therefore required which is fully inclusive.

School report card

What might a school report card usefully provide that is not covered by the current performance reporting system?

2.1 The School Report Card may usefully consolidate into one easily understandable compilation, a wide variety of information relating to children's attainment, welfare and progress which is currently found in many different contexts. The US model illustrates the application of value added data as an approach to "narrowing the gap".

Are there any issues which the school report card should avoid or seek to inhibit?

2.2 The Card is likely to reflect a blend of both quantitative and qualitative information; eg assessment metrics alongside parent satisfaction ratings. The allocation of weightings to these various components will require detailed consultation as there are likely to be highly contrasting stakeholder perspectives at both national and local levels. The challenge facing those who populate the Card template will be to weave

together both objective and subjective information into a single coherent narrative in order to provide a final grade which commands credibility and is seen to be just. This will need to be underpinned by appropriate and responsible explanatory comment. The process of consolidation and distillation to four sides of A4 carries the danger of some simplification and could easily provoke public and media over-reaction to a single summative grade, as has been the case in the US. It is likely to form the basis of substantial public discussion and should encourage responsible ownership of outcomes.

Is the school report card potentially a sound basis for:

informing parents;

2.3 Yes, providing the Card is made available in a wide variety of community languages, and with appropriate explanation.

providing a set of prioritised outcomes for schools;

2.4 Yes, but only as a contribution towards school action plans.

providing a starting point for Ofsted inspection;

2.5 Yes, insofar as it will contain information routinely collected through Ofsted desk-research. The Card may play a useful role in contributing to Ofsted Risk Assessments.

providing a management tool for government?

2.6 No. The Card will however provide information which managers may wish to take into account when planning strategically.

Could the school report card appropriately replace some Ofsted reporting?

2.7 Yes. Consolidation of the current system means the Card should contain key Ofsted report messages.

2.8 In summary, Edexcel believes the School Report Card offers many opportunities to support the quality of all children's learning and care if sensitively and carefully developed and applied. Edexcel looks forward to working closely with Government in this new phase of reporting publicly the results of the efforts of all children, parents/carers, educators and local authorities alike, in an inclusive and carefully considered long-term implementation plan.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by Cambridge Assessment

A Better Accountability

Should Ofqual be allocated responsibility for performance (achievement and attainment) table ratings and equivalences?

About Cambridge Assessment

Cambridge Assessment is a department of the University of Cambridge, and a not-for-profit organisation. Established in 1858, we are experts in assessment and are Europe's largest assessment agency. Cambridge Assessment incorporates three exam boards—which develop and deliver qualifications and tests for learners of all ages across the full range of subjects—and the largest research capability of its kind in the world.

In the UK OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is one of the UK's leading and most respected regulated awarding bodies with over 13,000 schools, colleges, workplaces and other institutions using its qualifications.

The qualifications offered by CIE (University of Cambridge International Examinations) are recognised by universities, education providers and employers in 150 countries. CIE qualifications are created with an international audience in mind, making them interesting, valuable and relevant for students around the world.

Cambridge ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) exams are the world's leading certificates for English language learners. They are recognised and supported by universities, employers, government agencies, immigration authorities and professional bodies in many countries. Over two million people in 135 countries sit them every year.

The use of qualifications data for achievement attainment purposes

Cambridge Assessment's awarding bodies design and award qualifications for the purposes of recognising the achievement of individual students. It does not believe that using the data provided for these purposes are very useful for the purposes of measuring schools, as performance tables do.

However, even an imperfect measure may be improved by bringing the calculations involved in its creation into the public domain. Proper publication of the criteria, with the opportunity for popular, academic and statistical debate, would shine a light on this very grey area with its huge impact on schools and colleges. Its removal from the DCSF to the new regulator would also remove yet another area of suspicion from public debate, thereby increasing public confidence.

Accumulating evidence of serious issues

There is accumulating evidence of serious structural problems within current arrangements for compiling and managing performance tables—recently renamed achievement attainment tables:

- qualifications which are deemed to be equivalent but which clearly have different societal status and currency for progression;
- schools optimising performance table position by migrating to qualifications of lesser educational merit or currency for progression—in which students are likely to gain a higher grade than notionally equivalent qualifications of higher educational merit or currency for progression;
- a divide opening up between the independent school sector and the state sector due to the independent schools' continuing adoption of qualifications not recognised in performance tables, but which are highly regarded for progression purposes;
- implicit suppression of qualifications which are "different" from those already recognised in performance tables at specific levels, reducing the capacity of the education and training system to respond to the needs of learners—particularly those less engaged with learning—and to changing societal and economic requirements;
    - An important example of this is the two-decade controversy over the failure to separate English Language and English Literature. Although it is vital for school children to engage with the study of English Literature, the combination of Language and Literature into a single examination has compromised adults' access to GCSE English. In the 1970s over 20,000 adults per annum accessed level 2 English Language through open centres—since they desired a vital labour market qualification which would also materially help them in their lives and work. The inclusion of Literature and the move to coursework impacted severely and adversely on this. This is a serious failing of the system—the needs of adults who wish to obtain Level 2 qualifications which are regarded as essential in the labour market have not been met. This has social and economic consequences as well as impact on individuals.
    - Alongside this, the more recent divisive debate over IGCSE has led to undermining of public confidence and international confidence in the standing of UK qualifications. There has also been a tendency for vocational qualifications to be forced into alignment with academic qualifications, thus reducing their utility (and uptake) amongst the learners for which they were originally designed.
- anomalies in funding arrangements due to funding being linked to notional "size" and "level" (as determined by the rules for locating qualifications within performance tables, rather than the genuine, specific resource requirements of the awards and their related learning programmes; and
- extended, inefficient processes for approval of qualifications due to the complexities of meeting the increasingly detailed and complex requirements for locating new qualifications within the existing suites of recognised awards.

Current arrangements for rating qualifications for inclusion in performance tables

Since the late 1990s, a complex process has underpinned the rating of qualifications for performance tables—a process of which few are aware. It contains substantial elements of judgement; these are not subject to coherent regulation or scrutiny.

A team in DCSF compiles performance tables. These tables are based on a flow of data from schools. These data are conditioned by ratings for qualifications which are allocated by a very small team in QCA. The decisions of this team are crucial, since they determine which qualification is equivalent to another—the "rating" of the qualification in the performance tables. They award this on the advice of officers in QCA and DCSF, on the basis of "fit" and avoidance of anomalies. They do not undertake extensive empirical work on the consequences of ratings or institutional behaviour in the light of the performance tables—they are heavily driven by the "internal logic" of previous decisions and allocations.

Significant judgements are made in regard of the equivalence of contrasting grade structures within different qualifications (eg one qualification being rated Pass Merit Distinction; another having eight grades A*–G; another with five grades; etc). Such decisions are of great consequence in terms of the standing of

different qualifications. The DCSF is wholly dependent on the work of this team. If their work is not completed to schedule, the performance tables cannot be compiled. This work currently done in QCA will pass to QCDA.

The concerns in respect of this are: the lack of transparency in the process; the fragility of arrangements and complex dependencies between DCSF and QCDA; the tendency for the process to be driven by internal logic rather than an understanding and analysis of its consequences for learners and schools.

Focusing on the appropriate "unit of interest", in order to improve learner attainment

Performance tables are driven by an assumption that to improve individual pupil learning, the school is the correct level at which to measure performance and to apply incentives and pressure for improvement. At a recent Cambridge/Nuffield/NFER seminar, the view of leading analysts was that classroom interaction—the level of the teacher rather than the school—is the critical level in the system on which to focus.

Performance tables impact principally on school-level behaviours, which include "game playing" in terms of qualifications choice. It is not at all clear that performance tables have impacted beneficially on interaction in the classroom, indeed there is evidence that more superficial learning approaches have been adopted in a misguided attempt to maximise examination performance.

It is vital to note that the accountability process which once focused principally on the quality of teaching—formal inspection—has now been deflected towards school-level performance as expressed through attainment of qualifications and through national assessment results. In particular, in order to focus on the quality of educational provision we would suggest that inspection needs to be re-oriented towards classroom level observation and review and to pupil-teacher interaction.

Unnecessary pressure on standards

Awarding Bodies are acutely conscious of the full range of pressures which place upwards or downwards pressure on examination standards, and use a range of mechanisms for standards maintenance and monitoring. Performance tables exert a strong downwards pull on the system—schools actively "game play" in order to find the easiest route to higher qualifications outcomes. It results in wasted time and resource, at all levels of the system, in respect of standards monitoring and maintenance.

The current approach to assuming that all subjects are—and should be—at the same level of demand compounds the problem (this is not an assumption which is made in Australia, where the HE admissions process weights different subjects differently). Reducing or removing the downward pressure that emanates from performance tables would be highly desirable, both from a technical point of view and in terms of general public confidence in examinations.

Control of the ratings and equivalences

We suggest that the control of the ratings and equivalences processes (which lie at the heart of performance tables) be allocated to Ofqual. The impact of performance tables—in terms of the full range of artefacts and unintended consequences, as well as the desirable outcomes—require far more attention than it is given at present. Ofqual could undertake this work and, at the same time, institute more sensitive approaches to issues such as differences in demand between subjects.

Far greater sophistication and transparency is necessary in respect of performance tables, alongside recognition that focusing on school performance may be the correct approach (as we outline above).

Cambridge Assessment believes that when data is to be used in the public arena it should be done so in as transparent a way as possible.

March 2009

Memorandum submitted by City and Guilds

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE CITY & GUILDS SUBMISSION

1. City & Guilds response to the inquiry is from a vocational qualifications standpoint.

2. City & Guilds believe the proposals demonstrate the potential to maintain quality whilst providing a flexible and fit for purpose system.

3. The shift from a deficit model of inspection to one of continuous improvement is imperative if the schools system is to compare favourably internationally and to gain the confidence of learners, parents and politicians that real value is being added.

4. Greater accountability, responsibility for and ownership of inspections results and all that they entail at school level is fundamental to embedding a continuous improvement agenda. This will, however, require access to accurate and robust data sets and the ability to work with such material for benchmarking purposes and to develop improvement strategies.

5. Inspections cycles should be based on risk.

6. Clarification of measurement criteria is essential.

7. A consistent approach to notice periods is essential.

8. The ability to implement unannounced visits should be retained, as long as such inspections are justified and applied consistently.

9. Health checks provide valuable intermediate feedback on performance and progress. The hiatus between inspection visit and health check submission needs to be tightly governed to ensure the system of trust that it is predicated on is sustainable.

10. All inspection related evidence (including reports and health checks) should be in the public domain, thereby supporting the sharing of key data and information. The shared use of information, data and intelligence, informing all relevant stakeholders, including awarding organisations, will better ensure collective responsibility to adding value.

1. Introduction

1.1 I am the Director of Assessment & Quality at City & Guilds. I have worked in the vocational education system for over 20 years. My career focus has been on the efficacy of assessment, how individuals learn, and strategies for retention and achievement; underpinning all of this has been the role of inspection in assuring quality delivery and outputs.

1.2 It must be made clear at the outset that City & Guilds is a vocational awarding organisation that has as its primary focus the assessment and certification of vocational knowledge and skills. Our market is generally 16 + and the average age of our candidature is around 30. We do, however have significant domain expertise in 14–19 arena and are fully engaged with Diplomas, strengthening our involvement with young people and the systems that support their development.

1.3 We have over 500 qualifications on offer and deliver to around 7,000 centres in the UK. A centre can be anything from a FTSE 100 employer, to a College of Further Education, a Sixth Form college, a private training provider, small employers, youth offending institutions or, as indicated above, schools.

1.4 We issue around 1.5 million certificates a year. We believe that about one in five adults within the UK hold a City & Guilds certificate.

1.5 Throughout our 130 year history a primary driver has been ensuring the quality of the provision and the associated output. Inspection in myriad forms has played a central role in this. Equally it has provided clear evidence toward the continued maintenance of our approval to operate as an awarding organisation.

1.6 The information provided to Ofsted for inspections purposes does not meet the requirements currently placed upon City & Guilds by the Regulator (Ofqual). This information is, however, valuable in providing us with performance data, details of financial health, graded judgements in each area of learning, performance information and feedback on its capacity to improve from its own perspective. Equipped with this information we are better able to agree an appropriate level of support and monitoring from City & Guilds.

1.7 With regard to the interests of the Select Committee we seek to offer some general observations on the principles and purposes of accountability and inspection and would welcome the opportunity to provide oral evidence on the 22 April.

2. Factual Information

2.1 *Accountability*

2.1.1 In response to calls for reduced bureaucracy, acknowledgement of the professionalism within the sector and the reliance of trust that the proposals outline, a reciprocal requirement on schools will be greater accountability, responsibility and ownership of inspection results, (retention and) achievement data, quality of provision and capability to improve. If communicated carefully, referencing and recognising the professionalism that exists within the system, this can, and should, be seen as a positive step forward. It is not, however, without impact and it should be anticipated that there will remain a certain level of nervousness as a result. One would expect that this tension would be less than is evident in the current inspection regime.

2.1.2 The proposals identifying greater accountability on senior management within schools are a natural and appropriate progression. There will be a need to help schools evolve in their practice so that they can manage the requirements this places on them. Although there is evidence of an increased confidence in using performance data it is necessary to see this evolve further still to the point where schools that are data rich continue to use that evidence to benchmark their own performance within and across schools and to set out their own improvement journey.

2.1.3 The management of a system thus defined, with regulators liaising with stakeholders to build an accurate picture based on local intelligence, demonstrates added value and generates both public confidence and value in the inspection service improvement agenda but also in school accountability. The next step in this agenda would be to not only share inspection results and health checks but to share improvement plans

and most importantly outcomes that are generated by the schools themselves, thereby creating a virtuous circle of improvement by sharing best practice. In an attempt to manage any associated bureaucratic impact on schools, Ofsted could add value here by adopting a philosophy of sharing best practice and publishing this evidence, thereby minimising the demands placed on schools.

2.1.4 Holding such data at a school level with the ability to drill down to specific areas of concern ensures that individual schools adopt accountability for their data and the performance it attests to. Of equal importance is that it ensures that learners and their parents are better informed and can take meaningful decisions about the schools they engage with. This in turn will give clear messages to and about the school, the resources on offer and service provided.

2.1.5 In so doing it must be recognised that the general qualifications process remains a highly competitive one and a learner's success depends heavily upon the school they attend and the resources that school is able to secure. In this sense it is not a "fair" system. It will not be "fair" until all learners are able to access equivalent resources delivered to a common standard. While the same criticism can be made of vocational qualifications the system has embedded procedures to reduce the variability.

2.1.6 National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are regulated by Ofqual. The NVQ is a performance-based qualification underpinned by specific occupational standards. The current NVQ Code of Practice details agreed principles and practice for the quality assurance of qualifications and units and clearly articulates the responsibilities of awarding organisations and centres. This provides the basis upon which the regulator monitors the performance of awarding organisations.

2.1.7 Assessment within an NVQ is underpinned by strategies prepared by awarding organisations and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and accredited by Ofqual. These strategies clearly spell out the requirements for external quality control, where assessment should/should not take place and specific requirements for those assessing and quality assuring. Coursework is evidenced through a portfolio, a physical or electronic document that maps the learner's progress of performance/skills demonstration through the various units of the award. A locally based, occupationally competent assessor who has the opportunity to ask questions, challenge and reconfirm the performance carefully monitors and confirms the learner's achievements.

2.1.8 All occupationally competent assessors must also hold a nationally approved assessors qualification to ensure consistency of practice. Every centre delivering an NVQ must meet regulated approval criteria. Each centre is regularly visited by a representative of the awarding organisation, who will also hold a nationally approved qualification, to ensure that the centre is maintaining the occupational competence standards in its assessment practices. The proposed inspection regime must aspire and work to support the same end point—greater confidence in the system and the results.

2.1.9 The management of this system through regulation provides a reassuring degree of independence that we believe is valued by the consumer. Greater accountability is brought to bear as an awarding organisation's reputation depends upon their ability to deliver and market forces exert continued pressure on the system to ensure high levels of quality assurance.

2.1.10 The benefit of this system is that ownership and accountability resides with the awarding organisation and the centre itself rather than with what could easily be perceived as a bureaucratic government department. Further, awarding organisations have the ability, expertise and relative freedom to refine their approach to maintaining quality standards so that they can respond to the varied needs of myriad customers (centres).

2.2 *Inspection*

2.2.1 Inspection systems per se, the current school systems included, have a tendency toward a deficit model focusing on issues of non-compliance even when with regard to learners outcomes. As such, the shift toward an improvement agenda that places onus on the school to demonstrate their professionalism and ability to make improvements is a welcome departure. City & Guilds agrees that the inspection should take more account of continuous improvement and would like to see development plans to support this.

2.2.2 The inclusion of recommendations that focus on areas where improvements are needed are a fundamental part of any inspection agenda, particularly where that system seeks to bring about improvement. As such we would continue to support the call that improvement requirements as identified through inspection have a corresponding action/development plan which also gives due attention to capacity to improve.

2.2.3 City & Guilds welcomes Ofsted's proposals that future inspection activity should be proportionate to risk, using the full range of indicators available to the school and the inspectorate and we made a formal response to the recent consultation which put forward these proposals. The ability to tailor indicators of risk to specific needs and criteria would bring in the required flexibility and go some way to recognising that all centres are not uniformed.

2.2.4 The proposed inspection cycles, be they six (6) or three (3) years, supported by health checks enable "right touch" methodology to be applied and should be supported. Six (6) years is, however a long time in the life of a school/centre. Although a provider may have demonstrated to Ofsted that they have fulfilled

the requirements to achieve the grade of outstanding or good, a change of key personnel with responsibility for quality assurance may have a dramatic impact on the provider's ability to continue to operate to the same standard.

2.2.5 Anecdotal evidence suggests that although a provider has been awarded an outstanding or good grade, it does not make them immune to allegations of suspected malpractice, which through investigation may be substantiated. As such, further consideration must also be given to the remote nature of the health checks and their timeliness/frequency in juxtaposition to the system of trust that such an arms length relationship demands. This is particularly important when it ultimately influences the level of inspection that is to follow.

2.2.6 Transparency is of utmost importance in any inspection regime; it enables data to be shared across stakeholders, for information to be submitted once and used many times and equally impacts on levels of accountability. It allows informed decisions to be taken based on local intelligence and helps engender the relationship of trust that any remote assessment relies.

2.2.7 The information provided by centres is only as good as the centre's ability to produce it accurately. Some centres may seek to present evidence in a particular light, taking advantage of the trust the system imbues to them. In recognition of this, the publication of health checks would be a positive step providing performance and standards information to both current and prospective learners and their parents. Incumbent on the publication of the health checks is a reciprocal demand on the inspection system: it is imperative that health checks are rigorous and factually correct before entering the public domain.

2.2.8 Clarification of the measurement criteria is essential. It will, however, have a direct impact on the associated inspection cycle. Discrimination across a particular grade (ie satisfactory) will require tight action planning and clear measures agreed. This in turn has the potential to lead to twin-banding within a single grade.

2.2.9 A consistent approach to notice periods is essential. The ability to implement unannounced visits should be retained, as long as such inspections are justified and again applied consistently.

2.2.10 By adopting the stance outlined in the proposals and enumerated above Ofsted have the opportunity to add real value to schools in support of their learner outcomes. As the system matures there should be a reciprocal expectation that comparisons internationally will see a significant improvement thereby generating greater learner, parental and political confidence in the system.

Dr Vikki Smith
Director of Assessment and Quality

April 2009

Witnesses: **Jerry Jarvis**, Managing Director, Edexcel, **Simon Lebus**, Group Chief Executive, Cambridge Assessment, and **Dr Vikki Smith**, Director of Assessment and Quality, City & Guilds, gave evidence.

Q151 Chairman: Could we have the next set of witnesses. I am sorry that you have had a slight delay. May I welcome Jerry Jarvis, Simon Lebus and Dr Vikki Smith to our proceedings. I am sorry that we are going to have a shorter session than we planned. You know exactly why, because you were sitting there listening earlier. We usually give people a chance to say something about accountability and the inspection system and how you view it. You are in a very powerful but privileged position in your organisations. Can I start from the left, Jerry, Simon, Vikki, if you do not mind me using your first names? Do you want to say something to get us started Jerry, or do you want to go straight into questions? It is up to you.
Jerry Jarvis: I have not prepared anything in advance. I am very comfortable to take the questions as they are.

Q152 Chairman: Why did you come here?
Jerry Jarvis: I came here, first, because I was invited. I am head of one of the principal examination boards in the country. We have a huge responsibility. We have just gone through a very important set of evidence in the previous session. It is very important that people like me are held to account and make as big a contribution as we can to the well-being of the system. I am here out of duty.

Q153 Chairman: Thank you very much, Jerry. I just say to all the witnesses that if you feel that anything asked by members of this Committee touches on a commercially sensitive area we understand that you might not be able to answer. One of you mentioned to me that there are some sensitivities in one particular area. Just make that clear in terms of your response. Simon?
Simon Lebus: I am the group chief executive of Cambridge Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge, which owns the exam boards OCR, Cambridge International Exams and Cambridge ESOL. We operate in 150 countries throughout the world, as well as in the UK, so have a very good perspective on the situation internationally. I am here, likewise, because I was asked—inevitably out of interest in your previous session—but also because I think the whole issue of accountability, and the use to which exams are put in terms of their application as an accountability measure, is critical. In terms of the overall system and the wash-back effect on educational exams that

arise from their use as a measure of accountability, there are a number of impacts that are of concern and need reflection.

Dr Smith: I am Vikki Smith, director of assessment and quality at City & Guilds. Again, we were invited to submit evidence, and we were pleased to be invited. For us, it signals a potential blurring of historical boundaries that tend to see a separate vocational qualification. I hope that the issue to be discussed will be how we move to a more holistic picture and better sharing of data that is of use and more accessible. Also, City & Guilds has made a very firm commitment to diplomas. If the market leads how diplomas develop and they become more vocational, as we believe they should, that will be core to us, and we will need to look at different ways of managing that accountability, because the diplomas will demand that. We are very pleased to be here.

Chairman: Good. Let's get into the questions. Graham.

Q154 Mr Stuart: In your view, what aspects of provisions should a school be accountable for, and to whom?

Chairman: Who wants to take that? Jerry?

Jerry Jarvis: I would almost prefer to answer that as someone from the street, if you like, rather than as head of an exam board. I believe that they have a responsibility to prepare students for higher education, but also to prepare for broader issues, such as the ability to take a place in society, to be ready for work and perhaps to develop those characteristics that engender achievement in people—to celebrate and develop things that people are good at. Part of the reason for this today, I guess, is that the achievement of academic qualifications clearly dominates, so I think that it would be advantageous if we could broaden the scope of that accountability away from the narrow focus on academic qualifications.

Q155 Mr Stuart: It is a very broad question. I think when we did our testing and assessment report, there were 23 purposes of examinations and accountability that we came up with. I was trying to get your point of view, less as ordinary citizens, but more as experts in this area. What accountability can examinations provide, and what are the areas where examinations cannot provide that, and it would be better provided using some other method, such as sampling? Would one of you deal with that broad issue?

Simon Lebus: I think, in a sense, the other name for exams is qualifications, and they are about the qualifications that individuals need to succeed in the various routes that they choose to pursue with their career and their life—that is their primary purpose and function. I think that a lot of the difficulty arises when multiple functions are then heaped on top of that. Clearly, parents, teachers, taxpayers and citizens all have an interest in seeing how well schools equip children to be successful in life, and exams have become a form of proxy for that. That, in itself, is not necessarily damaging. What is damaging is the apparatus that is put in behind that. Once that comes to be done in a systematic and mechanical way, all sorts of distorting factors come into play: various artificial equivalences, a whole philosophy of credentialism and an approach to the design of qualifications, all of which interfere with that primary, educational purpose. I do not think that it is an illegitimate thing for a variety of interested parties to be looking at qualifications and results to evaluate how well an institution is succeeding in its task of equipping learners for their later life. I think the difficulty arises when a whole edifice of construction is built on that using rather elaborate and artificial equivalences and measures.

Q156 Mr Stuart: Is there room for greater teacher assessment in place of the formal examinations that you provide?

Simon Lebus: There is no question that there is room for greater teacher assessment. I think the difficulty, as ever, is the question of public trust. There have been various debates about coursework and the extent to which people are schooled in coursework so that they can do very well in it, and then how that compares to written qualifications. There is nothing educationally wrong with teacher assessment at all. The question is how ready people are to trust that. Also, just thinking from an international perspective, and looking at what has happened in qualifications over the last 10 years, we live in a global economy. People are increasingly mobile. Qualifications are a form of currency and a support for them in their mobility and their careers, and they need to be trusted. I think it is a case that where systems have very large elements of teacher assessment, degrees of trust tend to be slightly reduced.

Q157 Mr Stuart: At primary level, for instance, do you have a view on the fact that there could be more teacher assessment and, in terms of schools accountability, that we would be better using alternative methods such as sampling? If the teachers are not contributing to their own assessment, so to speak, through the assessment of pupils, then that distortion will be removed and there would be less teaching to the test, and hopefully the assessments provided to secondary schools would be more useful than they currently are with a supposedly independent external examination. Do you agree with that?

Jerry Jarvis: Ken repeatedly made the case for onscreen marking. We have virtually 100% onscreen marking running at the moment, and I provide a complete breakdown and analysis of every teacher's own performance in delivering the curriculum that they are required to deliver. It is, however, the case that probably less than 10% of those teachers actually use that analytical information sensibly and sincerely. Part of it is because of the way that we come about it. We expect a great deal of our teachers—we expect them to be the sorts of individuals who can inspire and lead and give us values. Certainly teachers did that for me when I was young. But we also need them to be accomplished

managers of processes as well, because we have huge examination processes going on. The current system, as Simon is alluding to, clearly separates the role of an awarding organisation such as mine so that there is clearly regular separation from the delivery of the process, almost to the exclusion of a teacher unless it is to do with coursework and so on. But I will hark back to the technology again: you can blend the two if you use the technology intelligently. Continuous personalised assessment is a key issue of learning and yet we separate that from the formal process that we engage in, and the technology could actually blend those to great effect. As I say, we expect a great deal of our teachers. We expect them to be able to do both. Let me risk an analogy. If you were running an art gallery in which the material was hung by artists who were really committed to the purpose of their art and so on, you would not necessarily ask one of them to run the art gallery and take the money at the door. But we do expect our learning institutions to do both of those things that I have talked about, and we separate the way in which we measure those things to a huge extent.

Q158 Mr Stuart: Can I move on to contextual value added. There seems to be more and more criticism that it gives no more accurate an assessment of a school's performance than conventional league tables. What views do you have on CVA?
Simon Lebus: I think the issue to some extent is that it becomes very confusing. The more measures that are introduced the less clear the picture. There is a sense that one set of measures is introduced that does not necessarily give people the information they feel they want, or does not necessarily give the result, so another set of measures is introduced, and then a third set of measures is introduced. If you take something like CVA you can have the peculiarity of a school that performed very well on the CVA but not very well on the five to eight A*–C at GCSE. What conclusion do you draw from that? It is difficult to know what conclusion can be drawn from it as a taxpayer, a member of an LEA, a parent or a teacher. All those different groups will draw different conclusions. I do not think that there is anything wrong with CVA as such, but it is not clear that it adds a lot of value in terms of clarifying the position and enhancing understanding. That is simply a function of the replication of measures, not necessarily that measure itself.

Q159 Annette Brooke: I should particularly like to ask Cambridge Assessment about its comments regarding "perverse incentives" for schools to choose easier qualifications as an outcome from the performance tables, and the game playing. First, has this intensified over recent years? I recall that in the past schools played examination boards, but perhaps now we are talking about subjects as well.
Simon Lebus: League tables are a relatively recent phenomenon—they are only 15 years old. With the passage of time, institutions that are judged in performance terms by those league tables become more sophisticated at how they play the game. More and more judgment of school performance is based on performance in league tables, to the extent that schools have become very sophisticated. However, whether they have become more sophisticated over the last two or three years I could not say. Once the incentives are put up and the equivalences are created—so that one GNVQ is equivalent to four GCSEs or whatever, and there is a five-GCSE threshold—we set in train a pattern of behaviour that is bound to arise from using the results for accountability in that way. Whether that has intensified over the last two or three years I am not sure.

Q160 Annette Brooke: We have mentioned in the Committee an IT qualification that possibly led to four GCSEs and did not take up a great number of hours per week. I do not know whether anybody has any comments on that—a situation where a multiple number of points, as it were, go into the performance tables, but they perhaps come from an area that does not necessarily take up a high proportion of teaching time.
Simon Lebus: In a sense, that is a good illustration of the absurdity of the whole construct. IT, and the mastery of IT, is a skill; it is something you either can or cannot do, and there are various features and bits of that skill that you acquire. A lot of the other subjects that are tested in general qualifications are knowledge-based or have to do with understanding. The difficulty arises when people try to create these equivalences, which is what distorts the behaviour. A number of IT qualifications perform valuable functions, but they are essentially skills-based. Trying to create an artificial parity with general academic qualifications inevitably leads to those sorts of distortions. Where incentives are attached to that, it may well direct the behaviour of institutions that are being judged, as they are used for accountability purposes.

Q161 Annette Brooke: I have a general question. Cambridge Assessment makes the point that it would like Ofqual to look at this. That would seem to follow on from its recent report on the science GCSE, for example. Is that a general view? Would Ofqual give you all more credibility if it was looking genuinely at the equivalence of the different subjects?
Jerry Jarvis: Absolutely. It is in our interests for public confidence to be raised. We desperately need Ofqual to become a respected and effective institution. It is important that parents and students can turn to Ofqual for confidence in the examination outcomes and the standards set, and not on issues such as equivalence and so on. It is in all of our interests that Ofqual performs that role.
Chairman: Vikki, do you want to come in on this?
Dr Smith: I am a little curious. I agree with the separation of the different things that can be acquired in terms of skills and knowledge. Those need to be demonstrated differently and will be valued depending on where that takes you. There is difficulty in drawing equivalence across different types of acquisition. That said, there is a difficulty—I guess—in drawing equivalence from the IT agenda to English, to Maths and to French and so on.

However, throughout the discussion, I would not want to see greater weight given to knowledge as opposed to skill, because that would actually disadvantage a great number of individuals in the school system. I do not think that that is where we are going, but I wanted to put that on record.

Q162 Annette Brooke: Thank you for that; I think it was a very important comment. Finally, I would like to ask about the qualifications that are currently excluded from the performance tables and what impact that is having. That could apply to vocational qualifications that are excluded, and obviously at the back of my mind are the IGCSEs. What should Ofqual and QCDA be doing about those?

Dr Smith: Absolutely, I think that it will serve to reinforce the divisions that have certainly existed since I have been working in education. Linking back to league tables and what counts—we have heard mention of teaching to the test and so on—there will be a funnelling of students to the detriment of UK plc, because we will be sending individual pupils through particular streams of education rather than looking to everything that is available. I think it will have quite a drastic impact.

Simon Lebus: The problem at the moment is that the league tables are owned by the DCSF and while that is the case, there are inevitably suspicions and unease about how they are compiled. I think that giving them to Ofqual, as part of the confidence objective in the legislation that is going through the House, would be an important and valuable reform. If one takes things such as the IGCSE and pre-U and the fact that they are not included in the tables, I think it leads to some manifestly strange results, inasmuch as high achieving schools appear outside the league tables or at the bottom of the league tables, because they are not taking the qualifications that the tables include, which are clearly directly comparable qualifications, so there is an issue. Having recently been through the process of getting IGCSE and now the pre-U approved, I think that there is also an issue of new qualifications being made to fit design straitjackets, so that they can easily be slotted into the appropriate spot in the league table. You have a washback effect in terms of the design of the qualifications that is unhelpful. I think that the current system does not work very well: it is vague, imprecise and gives peculiar results that are not felt to be fair by a number of schools that are taking part. I think it is time for it to be reformed.

Jerry Jarvis: I am not 100% in agreement with everything so far. Let me take us another step back. I guess that our education system at 14 to 19 is dominated by progression to higher education. We have a fixation on academic qualifications. Arguably, that is part of the reason why many industries believe that kids can come through that formal education process not fit to work, so they have to acquire the so-called softer skills that we continue to talk about. If you take IT, for example, I might argue that you can go through a vocationally based programme and acquire learning in a different way so that it can be applied in a different way and not necessarily limited entirely to skills, although there is certainly a movement in that direction. There is an issue, of course, about the way that we produce equivalence in order to have those points scored. There is no question about it: vocational qualifications contribute enormously to that. The vast majority of existing vocational qualifications count. In fact, looking at the BTEC qualifications that are used at the moment for example, they have such a dominating contributing effect that if they did not exist, the proportion of five A*s to C equivalence would drop between something like 8 and 12%, but whether they have value and worth is a very different argument from whether they affect the tables. The fact is that the tables affect us in many ways; they affect house prices, they affect the entire drive from many schools and learning institutions, and are the single measure being used. There are some considerable disadvantages in trying to bring all these different facets of education together in a single measure of success. It goes far beyond simply the league table figures.

Chairman: Let us move on to inspection with Edward.

Q163 Mr Timpson: Recently, I was at a secondary school in my constituency that had just had its Ofsted inspection, and the biggest gripe to me was that the process involved hardly any observation of interaction between teacher and pupil. Is that something that you think is deficient in the inspection process as it currently stands? If so, how do we rectify it? I know that Cambridge Assessment has put forward that proposal.

Simon Lebus: Our sense is that the current inspection process is extremely bureaucratic and a lot of it relies on verification of certain processes and arrangements. So there is very much a tendency to look at processes and evidence of processes being carried out, and less of a focus on teaching. I suppose in a sense that part of that is also reflected in the whole issue of the use of exam results as a mechanism of accountability. I think that drives some of the emphasis to a school-level focus rather than an individual teacher-level focus. If one looks at internationally successful systems, as, for example, in Singapore, where we are involved very heavily in the exam system, and in Finland, where we are not, the emphasis is very heavily on teaching—the quality of teaching and teachers' interaction with pupils. It is not clear to me—I would not claim huge expertise in this—that the current inspection system is very good at focusing on expertise and the quality of pedagogy, and that enough attention is paid to the observation of that.

Dr Smith: I would agree—more from a personal perspective as a school governor than with my City & Guilds hat on.

Jerry Jarvis: I provide a complete personal analysis of the performance of every student during every examination, and we can track that during the learning process. It is not used well in schools. The relationship, however, between teacher and pupil is absolutely critical, as I said when I opened my remarks. The relationship between teacher and pupil

at a formative age is absolutely transformational. I believe that we have to be able to value both of those relationships. We need our teachers to be tremendous managers, great users of information and inspired individuals, but also leaders in thought for kids. The one thing I would say about the issue of Ofsted's inspections is that arguably there are too many different agencies interested in the accountability, and that perhaps we should be looking at trying to draw out some sort of commonality in the way in which we value the learning that is going on in our country.

Q164 Chairman: Could we push you a bit on "not used well"? It was a sort of throwaway comment. In what sense, not well used?
Jerry Jarvis: One of the things that Ken Boston did when he came to this country was to open the door and allow technology to be introduced and developed. Every one of the awarding bodies has gone down that road, to one extent or another. So for every examination, and between examinations, I can provide a complete personal breakdown of how every student is actually doing in their understanding—

Q165 Chairman: Do Simon's lot do that as well?
Simon Lebus: Yes. We do not do it quite as extensively, but we have started trialling it in a couple of subjects at GCSE.

Q166 Chairman: Can the AQA do it?
Simon Lebus: I cannot comment on that.
Jerry Jarvis: The AQA does it in a range of examinations, but again to a lesser extent. I also go to the extent of offering that analysis to students personally, but I give schools the opportunity to block that information. I guess that less than 10% of students get that information directly. I cannot interfere in the learning process—it would be wrong for me to do so—but those schools that get it right, which use the analytical information well, are schools that perform very well as institutions against the measures that we currently use. Again, they are being professional managers of analytical data, but I never want to take away the other part of the thing that is really important when we value institutions, which is the personal relationship—we must get closer to what actually makes a difference in a classroom.

Q167 Mr Timpson: Bearing in mind what you have told us, what faith do you have in the proposals for the new inspection regime for this September in terms of addressing the interaction of the pupil-teacher relationship and the personalised information on each child and tracking them through the school? Is the new system going to address those problems?
Simon Lebus: I am not sure that I am sufficiently expert on the arrangements coming into place in September, but I think the general thrust is a rather less bureaucratic approach to inspection, which is a positive thing. Returning to what Jerry has said, I think that the issue relates to data on individual learner performance in terms of the technology that is available. One of the reasons we have been slightly slower in adopting that technology, which relates to the item-level data that Dr Boston talked about earlier—the capability to generate a lot of such data now exists through the use of onscreen marking technology—is that one can end up in a trap involving overly mechanical marking schemes that tend to make the learning experience less enjoyable and fruitful. One has to be very aware of that hazard. I know that you are going to visit New York to look at its system of a balanced scorecard, but generating huge quantities of data can become highly complex, because you end up with a lot of different measures that are set off against each other. It is then very difficult to come to a judgment and hold institutions properly to account because you are looking at too wide a range of measures. I think that is a hazard that needs to be watched quite carefully when the new arrangements come into place.

Q168 Chairman: Do you share those concerns, Jerry?
Jerry Jarvis: No, for a whole series of reasons. The onscreen assessment regimes are no different from those on paper; it is just that they are far more accurate and efficient. Secondly, the availability of information enables teachers to teach better. Those teachers who use that analytical data well actually have more time for personal interaction; they do not batch deliver information to students as a group, but are able to take students at their own pace and time. We can actually see that happening. I return to the issue of management. I think that we are quite often disingenuous to academic institutions in many ways. Let me use that risky analogy again: if an art gallery has evolved over time into something quite important that people love to visit and so on, there is no point in pulling in a load of management consultants to bring all the artists into a room and say, "You have to manage the way in which people look at the pictures better and think of intuitive ways of increasing the funding for the institution." I am an engineer and I get excited about making things faster, higher, more efficient and so on, and I guess that teachers do not start by saying, "My role is to get as many kids to be able to answer as many questions as possible." There is a higher ideal here, and I think that we need to make the appreciation of the management part of an institution's role much closer to being a core part. We are actually asking people who set out to be teachers to be something else as well, but we are not preparing them for it. We can see it in the fact that there is evidence that the tools are being provided, but they are not being used well. That is not a slight against teachers and teacher institutions; we are actually setting expectations that are not right. If we set up another series of measures on schools without thinking about what it feels like to be a teacher and to have those requirements, they are not liable to work.
Chairman: All the sections, as we go through them, are a little bit truncated today, for the reasons you know. We are now moving on to school improvement and I am asking Paul to begin on that.

Q169 Paul Holmes: You've got a school that Ofsted has inspected and it says "This is a really good school; great teachers, strong leadership team. They are doing a really good job." It might be so good that it could be asked to be a mentor to failing schools; then, come August, the GCSE results are published and they are below 30% five A to C grades, so it is now a National Challenge school and has failed, and is nationally named, shamed and condemned. There seems to be a dysfunction on a massive scale on how to measure schools. Do you have any comments on that?

Dr Smith: For me it relates back to Jerry's earlier answer and whether the schools are actually using the data that is available to them to look at how they are performing and what their school improvement might look like, versus the running of the school. It is the dichotomy between the teaching and the management of the system itself.

Jerry Jarvis: Because of the way I collect information on students and pupils I can see two schools in the same street, with the same catchment areas, with the same free school meals, that are dramatically different in their performance in academic qualifications, but also dramatically different in the well-being and health of the students who are actually at those schools. I can see it happening. You all have seen so-called failing schools turned around. It is about the management process. It is about the fact that we need to be able to give those gifted teachers—the people who can inspire and who have those personalities—the framework that they are able to succeed in. They are teaching the same syllabus and they all have the same degrees; all over the place in our education system we have some wonderful teachers and wonderful leaders, but as you said it is not scaling. I suspect it is not scaling because we are failing to understand the management and structural issues that underpin the ability of good teachers to perform.

Q170 Paul Holmes: Edexcel's submission is very critical of the effect of the raw use of league tables and the distorting effect it has on schools and the deterrent effect it has on parents wanting to go to certain schools or staff wanting to work in certain schools. You say, for example: "The use of undifferentiated standards like the 30% . . . A* to C criterion of the 'National Challenge' has had damaging consequences for pupil intake, parental engagement, staff recruitment, governor authority/accountability" and so on. You go on, through the submission, to be very critical of the whole process. What could we do instead that allows a better way of assessing whether schools are succeeding or failing, and holding them accountable?

Simon Lebus: I think there needs to be a complex measure. One of the things that we have said is that there is a much greater role for inspection if it is done properly. I come back to the sort of comments we were making earlier about observation of teachers and teacher interaction with learners. That is, if you like, the fundamental building block. I think part of the problem is that a lot of the system emphasis is at school level and it does not necessarily capture some of the quality and complexity of those interactions at classroom and teacher level. I would like to see a much greater use of a more teacher and teaching process-centred inspection regime replacing some of the current focus on the end-of-process outputs represented by terminal examinations.

Q171 Paul Holmes: Edexcel says in its submission that "'league tables' reflecting achievement and attainment scores fail to differentiate between schools according to their intake, resourcing and value added", and therefore tend to increase the competitive pressure for kids to go to one school rather than another; and that if you look at schools as low performing simply in raw exam terms it "has damaging consequences for learners, communities and social cohesion." You talk elsewhere about the problem that setting schools up as competing units has had a very negative effect over the years. What does that mean for league tables? If you have a league table it is going to be used for those purposes, so should we have league tables of exam results or not?

Jerry Jarvis: Yes, we should. I guess that I could join the ranks of others who might speculate one way or another. I think that we should hold our learning institutions to account for the excellence of the learning that is given. It is critical to all our futures. There is no question about that. I would argue from a personal standpoint that we should focus on those subjects and qualifications for which there is a critical national interest. However, we must keep league tables in some form or another. We must ensure that they are measuring those issues that are important for us. However, it can never be the single measure against which we hold learning institutions to account. Unfortunately, that is what they have become. I could not sit here and give you a trite answer, or start the debate on how we might set up something. Twenty-five years ago, industry recognised that commercial companies simply defined by profitability, particularly short-term profit, were institutions in danger of not understanding their customers and of losing their way. They introduced a five-part measure to try to bring into their boards other measures of achievement. Bonuses were paid on how well we treated our staff rather than just on how much profit we made. Those sorts of balanced scorecards have been used in the past. However, places such as New York, for example, have done that and the answers are actually too complicated for most people to understand. All I can suggest is that there is a real need for us—all of the players—to sit down with our sleeves up and try to find a way to establish accountability in learning institutions in a better and more holistic way.

Q172 Paul Holmes: You represent three of the major awarding bodies in the country, and you obviously operate partly around the world as well. Have you looked at other systems? Vikki, you have worked in various countries. You say that we must have league tables, but many countries do not. In a number of

countries, they are actually illegal, so why must we have them? What is your experience of other countries?

Dr Smith: My experience elsewhere has been, as it is now, post-compulsory, where league tables tend to be less prevalent. I am not sure whether I would want to make parallels in the school agenda.

Simon Lebus: We have a lot of experience, for example, in Singapore, where we work actively with the Singapore exam authority. We are very aware of what goes on in the school system there. They are very geared around exam results. Data are made publicly available. That is one of several measures by which schools are judged. In response to your question, "Should there be league tables?", I think that public information about qualification success should be public, but I do not think that it should necessarily be made public or presented in the format of league tables. That returns to the point about who owns league tables. At the moment, they are owned by the DCSF, so they are designed to meet a certain accountability agenda. Giving Ofqual responsibility for, and ownership of, those tables would result in a much greater challenge for some of the equivalences introduced. The data would be used in a more contextually sensitive and sensible way and we would not necessarily have the attempt to conflate all the results. The data should be public. It should clearly be a matter of public record. People, parents of pupils and institutions are entitled to know how well they have done. However, I think that because the different types of qualifications and learning experience get conflated, it becomes very difficult to make proper judgement. Also, if you think of dispersed qualifications like diplomas, where there is multi-institutional responsibility, how do you make judgements? Who is going to own the diploma result when it is eventually certificated? You are back to this thing that the accountability measure is distorting the shape of the educational experience or the shape of the qualification.

Chairman: We are going on to the school report card.

Q173 Mr Heppell: I have three quick questions. I see Edexcel has an awful lot in its written submission about my first question, so you might want to stand back on some of this, but the other two people have not mentioned report cards at all. What do you think should be in the report card? What should be represented in there? Should it take account of the specific circumstances in the school—for instance, should there be value added in a report card?

Dr Smith: The agenda for City & Guilds is really about how we can risk-manage centres, whether colleges, training providers and employers. Increasingly we are engaging with schools as a result of the diploma. I do not know exactly what needs to be in the school report card yet. My plea would be for the transparency, the openness and the availability of that detail, so that awarding bodies can better risk manage the centres that they are working with and support them on an improvement journey, where appropriate.

Simon Lebus: Quality of planning, quality of leadership, quality of teaching, strategic management—there are a variety of measures that, if one is trying to assess an institution, need to be taken into account, beyond solely the outcome of the pupils' exam results.

Q174 Chairman: If you are operating in 150 countries, have you been to America to see how they do it?

Simon Lebus: Curiously enough, North America is one of the few places where we do not operate very effectively. We do not have many centres in North America. I think that part of the issue here is that there is so much change in the system and people are always trying to measure the effect of change—in a lot of the countries where we operate, there is not this constant cycling through of change and, as a result, there is much less preoccupation with end of school exam results, because they are not looking all the time to observe differences. What they are interested in is long-term management of improvement of the school system.

Jerry Jarvis: We did have a great deal to say. I think that the value-added argument about circumstances is a very interesting one. For anyone who goes into a psychology course, one of the first things they learn is a Hawthorne experiment, where you reduce the lighting and find that people work even faster. The reason that people are responding to all the changes is that someone is taking a personal interest in them, so they respond to the personal interest.

Chairman: I thought you were an engineer.

Jerry Jarvis: I was an engineer—very astute of you. One of the dangers is that we make excuses. If we are going to make some sort of success, we need to think about the language. Let me go back to what I said to start with. We could simply make some sort of statement—again, this is where Ofqual's role can be pivotal—about how well a school prepares pupils for higher education. How well does it prepare them to be citizens and to take their place in work? How well were those kids inspired? How much did they love and enjoy their time at school and how much fulfilment did they get out from it? If we could use language that a lay person could absorb and say, "Yes, that actually makes some sort of sense", I could separate those three values quite quickly. At the moment we disguise what is actually going on in a lot of very inaccessible information and we do not actually think back to how it feels to receive it.

Q175 Mr Heppell: In some respects, I think that there is a bit of a problem, because you want to get all the details on the report card, but in your evidence you talk about the dangers of oversimplification. You are taking objective and subjective stuff, putting it together and trying to have a value that is then judged by people and seen to be a just one. I honestly cannot see how anyone is able to do that and make it work. Does anyone think they can?

Jerry Jarvis: We shall never make it work perfectly. It is going to be about the balance, but I firmly believe that learning institutions and awarding bodies should be held to account, positively and with

real numbers that have some sort of value. We need to have the method to hold institutions to account. We shall have to struggle along together to find the least bad way of doing that.

Q176 Mr Heppell: This is a very specific question. What about the Government's proposal to restrict the school report card to 11 to 16-year-olds, rather than 11 to 19-year-olds? What do people think about that? Is that a good thing or a bad thing?
Dr Smith: How realistic is that with the advent of the diploma, which bridges 14 to 19? That would be my question in return.
Mr Heppell: Sorry, I am not getting that.
Dr Smith: If you are restricting it to 11 to 16, but the diploma coming into the schools is working from 14 to 19, how realistic is that proposition?
Simon Lebus: My sense is that it is likely to be an evolving experiment, to the extent that it is likely eventually to encompass the whole of the school cohort. There is merit in looking early on at how to achieve that. As we have already alluded to, it is highly complex and it needs quite a long time to get levels of trust established. Therefore, aiming for the whole school cohort to begin with would probably be a useful thing to do.
Jerry Jarvis: I would measure things. In principle, I would go for complete coverage.
Chairman: Last section—diplomas and 14 to 19 provision. David first, and Graham will come in after.

Q177 Mr Chaytor: Sorry Jerry, I missed your last comment there.
Chairman: You were speaking very softly. I do not know if that is a psychological experiment for the Committee, but your voice is right down. John was close but we were all straining to hear.
Jerry Jarvis: My very last comment?
Mr Chaytor: It was your very last comment that I missed, which is relevant.
Jerry Jarvis: I apologise; I have done my very best to sound English, but my accent is still there a little bit. What I said was that, in principle, the idea of establishing measurements of performance is something that I would endorse, so I would be in favour of taking a report card all the way through.

Q178 Mr Chaytor: All the way through. In your written submission, you refer to a unified 14 to 19 reporting mechanism, so I am interested to hear what each of the three witnesses understands by that. Do you think that the introduction of the diplomas inevitably means the end of league tables as we know them?
Simon Lebus: At the moment, the estimate is that 12,000 people are taking diplomas in this first year and, of course, they will not all certificate at the end of this year. I think that it is far too early to think that the new level or the new type of working and cross-institutional working represented by diplomas heralds the end of old-style league tables. To be honest, I think that if league tables are killed off eventually, it will not be as a result of the diploma, because take-up of it will be far too slow, so, no, I do not see it radically challenging the current league table arrangements.

Q179 Mr Chaytor: By 2014, or whenever we have the full range of diplomas, you think that league tables will have changed but not because of the impact of diplomas.
Simon Lebus: The current big issue is that people do not feel that league tables are fair and we have a saying that people have to feel that exam results are fair. People do not feel that league table results are fair. Every summer, when the results are published, we have exactly the situation that Paul Holmes has described, that schools have high contextual value added but actually they have terrible results. There is not the trust or confidence in the system, although that will evolve. As I have already said, there is obviously the opportunity now to look at the institutional arrangements in relation to DCSF and Ofqual, but that alone will not deal with it; it is also about the design and the approach. I think that league tables will change by 2014, but I do not think that change will be diploma-led, as it were. I think it will reflect a number of other dissatisfactions with current arrangements.
Chairman: Jerry is nodding. Vikki, do you agree?
Dr Smith: I agree.

Q180 Mr Chaytor: Can I ask Vikki specifically how can your qualifications be better reflected in the current accountability arrangements? Although the majority of your qualifications will be held by adults, there will be a sizeable minority of 16 to 19-year-olds who are sitting those qualifications.
Dr Smith: I think that something like 41% of our qualifications are taken by those under 19, so it is a sizeable number. We are in constant dialogue with Ofqual about raising the profile and the issues associated with vocational qualifications, because there is a tendency to focus on general qualifications and traditional schooling. The diploma may well start to impact on that, but only if it can evolve in a manner—as I would hope was its original intent—that offered something more than an academic qualification, which clearly it should not be. To go back to your earlier question, I do not think that the diploma will be the catalyst to change the league tables; the league tables will need to change if they are to reflect the diploma fully, if you think about the collaboration and all the different parties that will be involved. The current league tables will not reflect that element.

Q181 Mr Chaytor: But is there an easy way to reflect the contribution to the diploma as a whole by individual institutions—individual schools and colleges? Is there a way of doing that?
Simon Lebus: I think that it would be a virtually impossible task and I think that even to try would be misplaced. There are quite enough issues, in terms of the management of the introduction of diplomas, without getting into the creation of accountability mechanisms at this stage.

Jerry Jarvis: Technically, the assessed components of the diploma already have league table points so they will fit in and figure in league table attainment.

Q182 Mr Stuart: You just mentioned the difficulties or challenges with introducing diplomas. Do any of you have concerns about the timing of phase 4 diplomas? In particular, are you happy with the timing for the introduction of the design and production of diplomas in languages, international communication, humanities and social sciences?
Simon Lebus: It was interesting to listen to Dr Boston talking about change programmes and some of the risks associated with change programmes. That has certainly been borne out by our experience of the development of the first phase of diplomas. The low levels of take-up and the institutional learning that is going on are functions of their having been over-hurried—they happened too fast. With the development of phase 4 diplomas, in a sense we are back to where we were with phase 1 diplomas. The diploma development bodies have been taking a long time to decide what should be in those diplomas. The content of diplomas is not handed over to the awarding bodies for assessment design until that process is finished, whereas our preference was for it all to happen in parallel. We have written to the Secretary of State to say that we feel that the humanities and languages diplomas need to be delayed in the way that the science diploma has been delayed, for precisely those reasons. We think that the programme is becoming too compressed. At present, I understand that the decision is that only the introduction of the phase 4 science diploma will be delayed. We are uncomfortable about some of the risks associated with what is now becoming a rather compressed timetable.
Jerry Jarvis: Yes, we share that view. We think that phase 4 should go back a year. We have written to that extent. We need to learn from the initial introduction far more steadily before phase 4 diplomas come through. We are being put under quite tremendous pressure to develop those in a short space of time.

Q183 Chairman: How happy and confident are you about the development of diplomas at this stage overall?
Simon Lebus: Clearly we hope that the current low levels of take-up will not persist. We hope that the programme will increase. It is having quite a shaky start. To some extent that is a result of the fact that the arrangements were put together very hurriedly. I do not think that it has been given the opportunity to develop organically as a qualification. Our experience in the non-regulated sector and from operating externally overseas is that qualifications take quite a long time to pick up currency. The stated desire that they should be the qualification of choice by 2013 will simply not happen. The sort of pressures that we are under in the development of the phase 4 diplomas in humanities and languages and the decision not to defer their introduction will aggravate that difficulty.
Jerry Jarvis: I think that Simon has articulated the whole thing very well. If you questioned yourselves, when would you see yourself advising your son or granddaughter to take a diploma rather than an A-level with the confidence that it is a better qualification? Qualifications have to develop a brand. They have to get out there in the real world and people have to learn how to value them. The notion that by 2013 everyone will understand and embrace the diploma, perhaps to the exclusion of existing provision, feels very ambitious.
Dr Smith: I completely agree. The question from a City & Guilds perspective would be about the appropriateness of the actual subjects of phase 4 diplomas and whether those are the right areas. I completely agree with a delay so that we can see how those in existence are operating and help to support them and help them to get traction and value.

Q184 Mr Stuart: This is fairly serious evidence from the three of you. You are suggesting not only that Ministers have betrayed the central vocational purpose of diplomas, but that they are bungling their introduction and ignoring the united advice of examination bodies. Is that what is happening?
Jerry Jarvis: It's one view, isn't it? If only my life was really simple, then I could say, "Yes, it takes 15 weeks to do that and I have 15 weeks, thank you." On balance, we would like more time. We will deliver what we are required to deliver to the best professional extent we can, and there are imperatives for introducing change and not taking for ever to do it. I feel that I could do with more time, and that view is shared across the awarding body community quite strongly, but we are not saying that we are about to fail or throw our cards up in the air. We will do what we have to do, but we just feel that we should be taking this more steadily. We all share the view that the diploma is a critically important qualification. Coming on the back of all the analysis that has been done on world economics, there is a real need to develop technicians and professional people within this country that is second to none. Money is being put on the diploma, so it has to work. I can empathise with the anxiety about bringing in the diploma, but we just feel that it is too fast.
Simon Lebus: Pursuing the metaphor that Dr Boston used earlier when he talked about programmes being permanently on an amber light, it seems to me that the pace at which this has been driven, despite the advice, means that you do have a programme that is permanently on an amber light. When you are introducing a new qualification, you need to have that programme on a green light most of the time, because otherwise the risk of failure is greatly multiplied. Introducing a new qualification is always a high-risk business, so to the extent that extra risk can be avoided by managing the programme more deliberately, that is highly desirable, but it is not happening at present.

Q185 Paul Holmes: I was fascinated listening to Simon and Jerry and by Jerry's comment on whether you would advise your son or daughter to do a diploma at the moment. When I was a head of sixth

form at one of the first institutions to introduce advanced GNVQs, exactly the same things were being said. GNVQs are now dead, dying and being replaced by diplomas, so in 10 years' time will we be reinventing the wheel and replacing diplomas with a new qualification of choice?

Jerry Jarvis: It is up to us to make this a success, and we talked endlessly today about bringing all the institutions that have a role to play together in some sort of cohesive way, but it really is important. Ken Boston said that qualifications have to "earn their spurs". We really do have to get this brand. The thing that really keeps me awake at night is that we will go too fast and damage the existing provision, which is world-class in this country. Someone asked why some countries do not have league tables, and I reckon that many countries are very envious of the fact that we have league tables. Vocational provision in this country is absolutely second to none, right through the learning line. We absolutely have to make this work to the very best of our ability. The argument for us is that it will take a lot longer than current expectations suggest. If it is good enough, it will earn its spurs and take its place, and maybe the day will come when we all say to our children, "For God's sake, do not do old-fashioned A-levels, but do this modern qualification that everyone values." But it has got to get there.

Simon Lebus: I would agree with that. It seems to me to be a fantasy to assume that it will be a qualification of choice by 2013. That simply will not happen.

Q186 Mr Stuart: What does failure look like? We know that with the SATs it was late delivery, and you have said that that heightens the risk, but what does failure look like for diplomas?

Simon Lebus: Failure looks exactly like what Paul Holmes has just described—that in 10 years' time no one will have heard of them and someone presenting themselves for a job will say that they have a diploma and the employer will ask what it is.

Q187 Mr Stuart: So there will be a quiet failure of take-up and of building the brand, rather than a spectacular failure, as occurred with the SATs.

Dr Smith: I completely agree.

Jerry Jarvis: Yes, I absolutely agree. It is also an extremely complicated qualification with multiple inputs, so we will have to avoid the implementation issues as we get into the position where it establishes.

Q188 Chairman: Are the two Departments involved in this working harmoniously on the diploma?

Jerry Jarvis: I meet on many occasions with the Department, and all the agencies involved in it. There is a real sense of purpose right now, as we run up to the very first awards, for a full diploma coming through.

Q189 Chairman: So the reports of friction between DIUS and the DCSF over diplomas are nonsense?

Jerry Jarvis: I am not in a position to report on that.

Chairman: You have not heard then? Have you heard anything like that, Jerry?

Jerry Jarvis: I have heard lots and lots of things that would be inappropriate here.

Simon Lebus: I have not observed this. Like Jerry, I have heard things, but I have not observed them.

Chairman: What diplomats. Vikki?

Dr Smith: I am absolutely not close enough to it. So I would not have observed it.

Chairman: I should have confessed that I am a fellow of City & Guilds, should I not? I might have been softer on the questioning with you. Thank you very much for your attendance. You know, as well as I do—we all do—that you were pushed and squeezed. We value your experience and knowledge greatly in terms of this inquiry. Will you stay with us? Due to the shortened nature of this session, we did not squeeze you enough for information. Can we squeeze you more informally later? Will you remain in contact with us, because we want to make this a very good report? Thank you very much for your attendance.

Wednesday 29 April 2009

Members present

Mr Barry Sheerman (Chairman)

Annette Brooke	Mr Andy Slaughter
Mr David Chaytor	Mr Graham Stuart
Mr John Heppell	Mr Edward Timpson
Fiona Mactaggart	

Witnesses: **Anna Fazackerley**, Policy Exchange, **Professor John MacBeath**, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge and **Anastasia de Waal**, Civitas, gave evidence.

Q190 Chairman: Can I welcome Professor John MacBeath, Anastasia de Waal—her name is hidden from me but I know her well—and Anna Fazackerley, also well known to the Committee in terms of her contribution in this area. We are in this rather different environment, the Ramsay MacDonald room. We were just commenting on the fact that it would make a good school essay to compare Harold Wilson with Ramsay MacDonald—the Harold Wilson room being the one that we normally sit in. We are not asking you to answer that question. We usually get started by saying that we are doing an inquiry into school accountability. It is a part of the way that we are looking at the three major reforms affecting the education and school sector, going back 20 years. You know that we have done testing and assessment and the national curriculum, and now this is the third of them. We want to make this a good inquiry. If we do not get good evidence and we do not listen, we do not produce a good report. We want your help, so let's get started. We will use first names because it aids us with the problem of lords, knights and professors and cuts it down. Is that all right—no titles? John, is everything all right with accountability? Should we leave well alone and write a report that says, "Fine. Touch a little here, touch a little there, but basically everything is all right"?

Professor MacBeath: You could theoretically write a report like that, but no. I will not go as far as saying it is all wrong. One of the things that I worry about is the terminology and the co-option of language that we are now faced with. I do a lot of work with a lot of other countries, and when we talk about accountability in an international forum with, say, the Italians or the French, they do not understand, or they do not have a word for that notion. Trying to explain it actually gets quite difficult. You have to explain something about the politics and history of what has happened in the UK. I was going to say in England but I think that the same thing is true in Scotland where I also do a lot of work. Some people are quite mystified by the extent to which the situation is so top-down in England, particularly, and the extent to which, as the Dutch have said, there is a lack of reciprocity. That is where I would put my emphasis on accountability. Of course, accountability is something that we need and aspire to, and we want to do it well, but there is a lack of reciprocity in the system between schools and government, or between schools and local authorities. I know we will come to things like school improvement partners and so on. But do schools evaluate Ofsted? Do schools evaluate government? Do schools evaluate the pressures that are on them, which are very much top-down pressures. It is that pressure-down, accountability-up that I think we have got wrong and needs to be addressed.

Q191 Chairman: Thank you for that, John. We shall probe that a little further later, especially that reciprocity argument. Anastasia, is all well, or should there be some changes?

Anastasia de Waal: There need to be some drastic changes. Criticism of the two main forms of accountability that we have at the moment—testing and the inspectorate—tends to say, "Well, let's just do away with both of them." I do not think that that is the solution at all. Testing has a place and it can be effective—it can be beneficial for teachers and for pupils, as well as a good accountability mechanism. An inspectorate is vital, and I think that a good inspectorate, which looks thoroughly at schools, provision and where there are strengths and weaknesses, and which works on a progress route as well as an identifying and judging route, is incredibly important. I would say that, rather than getting rid of either, we need to overhaul them, to the extent of probably renaming Ofsted and definitely renaming SATs. It would need to be more than an exercise in rebranding. The problem at the moment is not with either testing, inspection or even the system of inspection per se, but with their role. What is happening at the moment is that the role of accountability is not working—it sounds a little trite, but I suppose we should be thinking more along the lines of being accountable as teachers and schools to children. What I have found is happening with the accountability system at the moment is that teachers and schools feel much more accountable to national targets and government pressures. Because of the pressures sometimes to create improvement when there has not necessarily been organic improvement, accountability has had a distorting effect rather than a beneficial one. That is the key problem at the moment: what is happening with these accountability methods, rather than with the accountability methods per se.

Chairman: Thank you for that.

Anna Fazackerley: To take a slightly different angle, although I agree with quite a lot of the points that have already been made, if we bear it in mind that we might well in this country be moving towards more of a market in education—certainly that is something that Policy Exchange would advocate and has advocated strongly—then accountability

becomes more and more important. While we believe in the importance of markets, we think that a market in education cannot function properly without some real accountability. The holy grail, which all countries are or should be questing after when it comes to accountability, is to achieve the difficult balance between allowing schools the freedom to innovate and also having some proper oversight. In this country, we do not think that we have it right. We would not say that we have the accountability bit right, but we also think that we are trying to control things too much from Whitehall. Looking at Sweden as an interesting example—we are hearing lots about the fact that we are supposed to be following the Swedish model now—one thing that people are perhaps less aware of is that, although Sweden has been very successful at introducing a truly demand-led system, which is exciting and has lots of benefits that we can learn from, the problem is that schools are simply not sufficiently accountable. It is a problem that they are beginning to be aware of. John mentioned the language issue, and Sweden is one of the countries that does not have a word for accountability. There are big gaps there, which I can talk to you about in a little more detail, if you like. To pick up on Anastasia's final point, I would agree that, yes, of course we have to be accountable to children, but for us accountability is about information being provided to parents. An accountability system that works is a system that has the right information available easily to parents—information that they understand. We think that a lot of the information that is out there at the moment is pretty incomprehensible as well as perhaps being misleading.

Chairman: Good. That gets us started. Let us get into further questioning.

Q192 Annette Brooke: I want to start with what Anna has just touched on. It is not a usual starting point for me, looking at market forces and to what extent accountability can come into the framework with market forces. We often talk about people choosing between supermarkets or products and, clearly, if a product fails then changes take place. To what extent can we apply a market model? I ask you also to consider—given that there will be limitations with market failure—what sort of framework should we be building around a market model to make it work that way?

Chairman: Do you want to start with Anna or do you want all the panel to answer?

Annette Brooke: All the panel.

Chairman: Let us change the order. Anastasia, you start please.

Anastasia de Waal: I am not a big advocate of a market in schooling because I think parents and children want a local school. One reason we have turned to a market system or market ideas is that there are not enough good schools. It is a lack. School choice in that sense is portrayed in a positive way but if you need choice, it is probably—and we are not talking about specialisms but basics in primary school—because you need to look to find a satisfactory school. In that respect, I am not going to try to sell a market system to you because I am not an advocate. Civitas has produced a book, *Swedish Lessons*, about how good a Swedish system would be, but I am not necessarily an advocate of that. It is interesting that the Conservative government have said, "We will turn to a market system."

Chairman: Conservative government?

Anastasia de Waal: Sorry, a prospective Conservative government have said that they would want to implement a Swedish-based or market-based system, which to me suggests that they would not, as a government, be able to run schools. My bottom line is, if government cannot run a state school system, then it is going to be very difficult to run any other public services. Looking at other countries and other examples, that is not a huge task to ask. In some ways it is a cop-out.

Chairman: John?

Professor MacBeath: The notion of a market system is highly problematic. We currently have something in between a demand-led, kind of quasi-market system and that is one of the problems—that we are trying to run a quasi-market. We know from data over the past decade or more that the gap created by informed parent choice—parents who have the background and the wherewithal to make the choice—has not narrowed at all. It is partly parental choice that allows a school not far from here to be drained off by Westminster school, for example, where there is huge demand and a very informed supply line. All our work with schools in disadvantaged areas looks at how much they suffer from a quasi-market system, partly due to parents lacking information or the right kind of information to make the right choice. We have a problem at the moment with a market system that is working to the detriment of the most disadvantaged. In some Utopian world we might have a demand-led system. That would be very nice in theory, but how do we get there from where we are now? I think we have to address what Jonathan Kozol called "the savage inequalities" in the current system.

Anna Fazackerley: You are right that there is not enough information, so considering the idea of a market now is quite alarming. I hope that one of the things we are going to do today is work through the sort of information that we ought to be providing to parents to get them to a point where they can make an informed choice about schools. At the moment, obviously, schools are terrified of failing and that failure is generally driven by league table performance and, as the Committee knows well, there are real problems with national assessment tests such as SATs. Those are areas we might want to touch on in a little more detail. I will refer back to the Swedish system, because I think it is useful to look at evidence rather than just talk about the theory of markets and whether we like or dislike them. One of the problems in Sweden at the moment is that, while there is obviously an exciting variety of schools, the Government are thinking about toughening up the inspection system and about introducing more regular national assessment so that the inspectors have something a bit more real to work with. But

right now, if parents want to find out more about schools and the quality of schools, pretty much the only way that they can do that is by going to a recruitment fair, which is obviously extremely unfair and means that if you have a big marketing budget or sexy sounding courses that do not actually have very much merit, you can attract business. So one of the things that I would like to discuss in a little more detail with the Committee is the idea of a record card, which is something that Policy Exchange has suggested.

Chairman: We will come to that later.

Anna Fazackerley: Well, I hope that that would provide a wealth of information for parents, and that it would be the sort of information that would allow people to make an informed choice, rather than simply being led by perhaps misleading assessment data and league tables, which as we know are compiled by newspapers that want to sell themselves.

Q193 Annette Brooke: I am quite annoyed that I am getting stuck with the market side, but never mind. If I could just follow on from that, Anna, you referred to the information that parents would need; could you expand on that? And John, you referred to the crucial issue, as far as I am concerned, of inequalities. Would it ever be possible to empower all parents, even with the information that Anna is going to suggest they should have, to follow through with those choices?

Chairman: Anna has just had a bite, so let's go to John and then back to the other point.

Professor MacBeath: This is a big, big issue—can you provide the kind of information to parents that helps them make an informed, rational choice about the welfare of their children? This is a bit ironic, because the day before yesterday I gave evidence to the Scottish Government on a report we have just done for them. One of the things they said was, "We would like you to take some of the very strong language about what is happening in deprived and disadvantaged neighbourhoods out of the report." One of the quotes from a head teacher was, "These children crawl out of hell to come to school in the morning, and a granny says to me, 'Don't listen to their mother; she's better off out of this life.'" That is at the extreme end, and is the kind of thing that the press will make hay with, but I should add that it is not a purely Scottish thing either. Where we work with schools in very disadvantaged areas, the big challenge is getting to parents in those fractured, disadvantaged and alienated communities, which we have written an awful lot about. That is the challenge for schools, and the schools that are at the leading edge of trying to address it have sought all kinds of ways to bridge their relationship with parents through inter-agency work, for example with community workers. For one of the schools in our research project, 50% of the staff were actually parents, local community people, social workers and others who were helping to be the vicars or the advocates for parents with the school. So it is not just a case of how we get to the parents, but of how we get to the people who act as advocates and supporters for parents to make the bridge between some of the arcane things about school that totally baffle parents. Many parents just do not want to go through the school gate again, because it brings back the memory the horrible experience that they had at school. They attend a parents' evening and sit on a little seat at their child's desk while the teacher sits behind his or her desk. As Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot has written in her book *The Essential Conversation*, schools are saturated with immaturity, and parents often find that coming in is just too redolent of all the things that they went through. I am of course talking about the parents who left school early, who were the low achievers and so on. Other parents know the conversation, the language, the ritual, and how to deal with that. That is unless, of course, you are a professor of education, because when you want to go to your child's school, they say, "Don't you dare go up there because I know what you will say to them!" So there is a little bit at that end as well, but parents are an incredibly important—hugely important—and complex aspect of this whole area of accountability.

Chairman: Annette, who do you want next?

Q194 Annette Brooke: I want Anna to comment just briefly on what information she thought should be made available.

Anna Fazackerley: We can supply some more serious detail on this if that would be helpful, but just as a starting point I would say that a good accountability system has to include an indication of progress over time, rather than just a snapshot of performance in a given year. I think that that is something that parents really care about and it then means that schools cannot coast—there would be an incentive, even for schools that are doing very well, to keep improving. I think that parents ought to want to see performance indicators beyond academic results in national assessment tests. It is important to make it easy for parents to compare schools with similar sorts of students clearly. At the moment, I do not think that it automatically happens that you can make a fair comparison of schools—by comparing schools with similarly difficult student populations, for example.

Q195 Annette Brooke: Can I just tease out—clearly we have different indications of parents needing some accountability—which bits of the school, or which part of a school's work, you think the school should be accountable for in the parent set-up? Apart from some accountability to parents, what other accountability routes do we need, given the sort of situation that John described?

Anastasia de Waal: There needs to be a much more holistic approach to accountability. At the moment it is very heavily focused at primary level on SATs results, which look at only literacy, numeracy and science—literacy and numeracy are eclipsing science to quite an extent. There also needs to be an emphasis on the other subjects that are being neglected. One of the issues with inspection is that parents think that inspection, as a form of checking up on schools, is giving an alternative to the SATs results that they see. However, because of the heavy

reliance on data—and results in particular—Ofsted is actually duplicating a lot of what SATs are already telling parents, and that is very problematic. We would like Ofsted to be looking at other elements as well as the academic subjects, which might be provision of extra-curricular activities and sporting activities, or pastoral care and things such as school trips—a lot of things which, in many ways, have become very much sidelined with an emphasis on accountability with literacy, numeracy and test scores. I also think that particular interest, from a parental perspective, is on teaching quality, which is something else that an inspection system could look at much more thoroughly. It could look at not just how children progress in class—I think that that is the main priority for parents, because levels do not mean anything to them in many ways, and it is progress that actually illustrates how their child is getting on—but whether children enjoy their class and whether they are particularly interested in a particular subject. We might see those sorts of elements as woolly now, but they have very much been lost in this contracted focus on what is quantifiable. One of the dangers—one of the really knotty areas—about accountability is that we seem to be able to try to be accountable only with quantifiable elements. That is very problematic, because clearly, when looking at a whole school, many of the things that are going to have an incredibly beneficial impact on learning, never mind on the wider development of a child, will be very difficult to quantify. Arguably, things such as the report card might address that, but I think that there is a danger with what is going to happen to the role of accountability. Are we going to try to quantify everything so that it fits on this neat report card, and is that going to skew broader measures of how well a school is doing? There are an awful lot of schools, particularly in inner-city areas, in which schooling has probably an even bigger impact on children's life chances than in some of the leafy suburbs. We are hearing from quite a lot of frustrated teachers who put a huge amount of effort into creating a very rich learning experience, but find that that does not necessarily equate to very high SATs results. They are getting penalised for that, and then they probably have to take the option of narrowing their approach and focusing on results, to the detriment of the school experience.

Professor MacBeath: I cannot disagree with any of that, except the ambiguity about levels. You said that parents do not understand levels; that is true for some, but others talk about them, saying, "Well, my child is a Level 2," or, "My child is a Level 4." I am never quite sure which level is better because Scotland has it the other way round. Libby, at the Institute of Education in London, has written about the detrimental effect of the whole notion of levels that label a child as a 2 or a 4. In our ESRC study, *Learning how to Learn*, we looked in depth at a number of case studies of schools and found head teachers who could say, "I can go into any class in this school and I can ask any child what level they are at, and any child can say to me, 'I'm a Level 2,' or, 'I'm a Level 3.'" That is how they define themselves. I think that this tyranny of numbers runs through the whole of the system, from classroom assessment to school accountability, local authorities and government. I agree entirely with Anastasia about the marginalisation of all the other things—drama, music and art—that can be far more life-enhancing than some of the core curriculum. The Government say, "Okay, we recognise that these things are important, therefore let's find ways of quantifying them," but some things defy quantification. For example, with the five Every Child Matters outcomes, which I have a problem with right away, their view was, "Well, if we want these to have equal status with the core curriculum—maths and literacy, numeracy and English—we need to find ways of putting numbers on them." At the level of language, the notion of outcomes has been so corrupted that to justify things such as excellence and enjoyment, we talk about them as outcomes. Are they? Are these five Every Child Matters outcomes absolutely crucial aspects of children's life and learning? Are they outcomes, or are they something much deeper than that? Because we have the language of outcomes and the language of quantification, the big challenge is to go back seriously and look again at the other qualitative aspects of children's life and learning for which we have to be accountable. I will talk about Hong Kong, because I have been working there now for 10 years. They are worried there about this performative and accountability pressure on narrowly defined outcomes, so they have just brought in something called "other learning experiences"—OLE—meaning that 15% of children's time in secondary schools has to be spent on other learning experiences. I am going next month to Hong Kong to start the evaluation of how these things become embedded and are given as much status as the core curriculum. I do not like the term "other learning experiences" because I think that they are vital learning experiences. They are the things that Anastasia refers to, which tend to get marginalised when we go for the so-called core curriculum.

Q196 Annette Brooke: You have touched on lots of the points that I was going to raise. I think that you have all indicated that the current system is punitive, and that there is perhaps not enough support and challenge in it. We will put the school report cards on one side for now, but do you have any alternative models of accountability that could involve more support and challenge?

Chairman: There is a section of our discussion on school report cards, so bear that in mind. Otherwise, members of my Committee will sulk that their questions have been taken from them. Apart from on school report cards, do you want to respond, Anna?

Anna Fazackerley: To pull in one more international model, I would say that there are some interesting examples from Canada in Ontario and Alberta. They are absolutely clear that they are not interested in the big stick approach to accountability. Accountability is very important to them, but for them, it is all about helping schools to improve and

having conversations with them about how they can do that. We are probably far too much in the direction of the stick, and we ought to be thinking more about working with schools to improve them. We would like Ofsted not to inspect everybody—we do not think that there is such a need. However, if we are going to bring Ofsted in to inspect the schools that are not coming up to scratch on report cards, for example, it ought to be involved much more in an ongoing process of improvement. Key to that is the point that Anastasia just raised—I do not think we can over-emphasise it—that we have to concentrate on the actual quality of teaching. It is something that Ofsted is not very good at looking at, as we all know.

Q197 Chairman: I thought that Anastasia said that we have to concentrate on the quality of learning, because she wanted it to be much more child-centred.
Anna Fazackerley: I think that she also commented on the importance of the quality of the teaching. I would be very surprised if Anastasia did not agree with that. I think that that has been clearly proven to be right.

Q198 Chairman: I am just trying to get the emphasis. What was your emphasis?
Anastasia de Waal: Well, I think they go hand in hand. An emphasis on learning means that the teachers have to be responsive to the pupils.
Chairman: So I misinterpreted that.
Anna Fazackerley: Simply, I think that if a school is perceived to be weak, one of the things that we ought to be looking at is what is going on in the classroom.

Q199 Mr Slaughter: Let us carry on from where we are—you are allowed to mention report cards. We are talking about methods of accountability. I find that these discussions just go around in circles all the time, because everybody you ask has a different opinion. I wonder if that was how the system was developed over the last 15 to 20 years—that we keep bolting extra things on, or saying, "Well, that does not give the picture, so perhaps we will do that as well." Perhaps the report card is a refinement of that, where you are now trying to pull everything together in a way that is digestible, but not open to the criticism that you are only measuring one item. Looking at that, and including the report card, you may start off by saying—I think somebody said this—"We should look not at mechanisms, but at what we are trying to test." But we do have to have mechanisms, because that is the practicality of how the system is going to work. What is your faith in the system for doing this, and do you think that the report card is achieving that?
Chairman: Let's start with John and move across. There is a lot of material to get through, so could all of you be quite punchy with your replies.
Professor MacBeath: The language of report cards immediately sends shivers down my spine—too many things are redolent of my own school experience. I would like it to have a different kind of name, if that is going to be the case. To address the question of which model, I have advocated for a long time a very strong, rigorous school self-evaluation, complemented by an external review—I am not necessarily talking about an inspection—that looks at how rigorous the school self-evaluation is and how it takes into account things such as the quality of learning, teaching, and the culture and ethos of the school in the long term. All the things that we have talked about are part of school self-evaluation. I know that other people have talked about this in previous Committee reports but, in lauding the fact that Ofsted have moved to a system of self-evaluation, it is still not what I mean when I talk about something that is deeply imbedded in the day-to-day work of teachers and young people. It is not an event that happens once a year when you fill out something called a self-evaluation form, and it is not something that happens when the inspectors arrive, but it breathes through the whole culture of the school, and people—the students and pupils themselves—have the tools to look constantly at the quality of their learning and are sophisticated enough to do so because they understand how to account for it. I would put the quality of learning before the quality of teaching, with our ex-chief inspector's remark in mind. In his book, he writes, "Teachers teach and children learn. It is as simple as that", but it is not as simple as that. It is far more complex, because the bulk of children's learning is out of school. I think that part of the issue for self-evaluation and accountability is looking at the learning that takes place in and out of school. Chairman, I am aware of the time constraints, but may I add a quick plea for the work going on with the Children's University, which will be launched in the House of Lords in June? Children who take part in out-of-school activities—the kind of activities that Anastasia has been talking about—are absolutely vital to feeding back into what happens in the classroom, so we cannot have an accountability or self-evaluation system that does not look at learning in school and outside it—with the family and in the neighbourhood, community and so on.
Anastasia de Waal: As I have already said, I do not think that we need to overhaul the principles of the system, so we do not need to replace an inspection system or replace testing. I think that we could have much less testing, in the sense that we could just have testing at the end of primary school. One set of tests at primary school is definitely sufficient. John mentioned the problem of things being an event, and I think that is the big issue at the moment. There is huge pressure around inspection and testing. They should be by the by processes that check out the quality of the school and the levels of the pupils. A lot of criticism about testing has talked about the pressures and difficulties that it creates for children and the terrible stress that they are under. I do not think that testing is actually problematic per se for children. Children quite like a test; it is quite exciting to be able to show what you know. The problem is that schools are being coerced into trying to demonstrate progress that they have not been able to make, and in many cases that is perfectly legitimate. They may be doing a fantastic job but, because of circumstances, they are not reaching the benchmark.

One of the problems at the moment, and why that is happening, is because of the terribly standardised approach to children and the teaching situation. We are only talking about homogenous entities. We tried to address that a bit with things such as contextual value added but it has not really had an impact, and I think that the same applies to inspection—it is about very rigid and narrow criteria. If you are doing fantastic things that do not fall within that remit, quite frankly, Ofsted does not have time now to look at them. A lot of inspectors feel very frustrated that they cannot look at the great things that schools are doing; they just need to look at their criteria. The important thing is that testing actually tests what the pupils know, and it needs to be done in a randomised way. To do that we need to sever national testing, accountability and how the Government are doing in education policy from school-level accountability. How Johnny at Key Stage 2 in class 6 performs in his SATs test is different from how the Government's education policy is doing. The problem at the moment is that they are inextricable, which is leading to all the distortions. The same applies to inspection. There is a lot of emphasis on getting schools to a certain inspection level so that the local authority can make sure that it is hitting its target and we can say that schools in this country are doing better than before. But that is not beneficial to schools, and it is one of the reasons why there is a climate whereby people feel that teachers do not want to be accountable, do not want to be told when there are weaknesses and do not want to improve. I disagree with that. They do, but the problem is that the interventions are not actually helpful in the long term. They are short-term interventions, which will help them reach a superficial level. That will get a better result, but not necessarily improve learning and teaching.

Anna Fazackerley: We would like a system with a report card. In fact, the report card was our idea last March.

Q200 Chairman: This is interesting. You are speaking for your organisation—for your think tank—rather than as an individual?

Anna Fazackerley: I am happy to do both.

Chairman: It is actually useful when you say "we", not "I". That was not a criticism.

Anna Fazackerley: To be clear, Policy Exchange is very much behind the idea of the report card, which was our recommendation. We are pleased that the Government have taken that on board, but I wish to highlight our few concerns. Given that we are short of time, Chairman, perhaps I can send you a note with the six suggested measures of accountability that we have recommended for our report card.

Chairman: That would be very useful.

Anna Fazackerley: For now, let me just say that the importance of the report card is that it measures progress over time and looks at performance indicators beyond just the results in national assessments. Let me point to some of our concerns about the direction in which the Government are moving. Obviously, the report card is still a bit up in the air so, for example, we do not know what weightings different criteria will have, which will be quite a big issue. We are concerned that attainment seems likely to include SATs and GCSEs, and the Committee is well aware of the problems if that is the case. We are also worried that there may be some unfairness, in that some measures will be tilted by the amounts of funding that different schools get. For example, the wider outcomes measure that the Government are suggesting is likely to include extra activities outside school and, as the Committee will know, funding really varies across the system for that sort of thing. The report card does not mention drop-out rates or absences, and we want both of them to be included because they matter and parents care about both issues. Finally, we envisage a system in which schools are not inspected automatically. If they performed badly on the report card, Ofsted would inspect them but, if they did not perform badly, they would not be inspected unless parents complained—as is the case now. That provides much more of an incentive for schools to do well. At the moment, Ofsted will be included as an element of the report card, but we do not think that that is necessary. It should not happen.

Mr Slaughter: Have I got more time?

Chairman: You have more time, but I want you to get through the questions on the inspectorate.

Q201 Mr Slaughter: Okay, I shall be brief. My preferred answer is B. Self-evaluation and an external review of that sounds a bit like the trouble with the banking system. The report card does sound complicated. Surely testing and inspection are concepts that people, including parents and legislators, understand. Yes, there are problems with the current systems, which you have identified very well. Would it not be better to try to resolve those problems and improve those systems rather than just move on again, simply because everyone is not going to be happy? This is the problem that we get into all the time—there are lots of critics—and I feel quite sorry for any government here, because they are trying to get it right, to address both the individuals and the departments concerned. Are you not just looking for a whole new elaborate system to put in place, which will simply mean that we shall have more years of uncertainty?

Chairman: Anna, what do you make of that?

Anna Fazackerley: Briefly, yes, I agree that everything has to be simple. If a report card was complicated, it would have failed, so parents have got to be able to understand it. Secondly, I also agree that we should not be throwing everything out and starting again. A lot of the things that the Government are trying to do at the moment, such as contextual value added and looking at progress over time, are along the right lines. A report card would simply be refining that process and making sure that it was a little bit clearer. If you take CVA as an example, the average parent looking at a league table in a newspaper, do you really think that you would understand what on earth CVA meant, even if there were an asterisk saying "contextual value added"?

Would that mean anything to you at all? I think not. So, you are right, we need to clarify these things, which is what I am suggesting we should do.

Professor MacBeath: Can I come in on self-evaluation as a soft option. Absolutely not. If the banking system had a rigorous process of self-evaluation and external review, it would never have got into the mess that it is in. I think that the notion of self-evaluation is widely misunderstood. Self-evaluation is an evidence-based, highly rigorous internal approach, which takes parents, students and teachers—all the stakeholders—as well as the evidence base for how well our school is doing. The external review says, "Look, you have identified these kinds of things, the strengths in your school, and you have also identified weaknesses or areas of development, and we need to know how you are going to address those." If I can have a short plea for Hong Kong, because I have been working there for a long time and evaluating its system. What the government in Hong Kong have been very receptive to is evidence from research. When I have said, "You've got to get rid of this numbering system, one to four", they did it. When I said, "You've got to stop putting things on the web, because it is demotivating", they did it. I said, "What you need is a system of proportional review", which we have been talking about, and they are implementing it. It is rather scary actually that that government is listening to what researchers say on the basis of evidence, because when I did a report on Ofsted here a number of years ago, it went straight in the bin and never saw the light of day.

Q202 Chairman: I think you might be extrapolating from one particular experience, John.

Professor MacBeath: But I think that we need not the sort of mechanistic self-evaluation that a lot of people are seeing in terms of the self-evaluation form and so on, and that very ritualistic approach, but something that is intrinsic—embedded—to what good schools have to do. They have to be evidence-based and they have to be challenging, supportive and open to an external eye-view on how well they are evaluating themselves.

Q203 Chairman: John, you are the proponent of self-evaluation. Anna, I am going to characterise you as the proponent of simple school report cards. I am not sure about you, Anastasia—yet—but that is not a negative comment. Implicit in all this is the failure of the inspection system, which we shall go into in some detail in the next section. But, to finish here, are the two compatible? Is your self-evaluation compatible with the report card system, John?

Professor MacBeath: Well, self-evaluation is a form of sophisticated report card, in a way. I would not argue against report cards, apart from the language, if they are in-depth enough and give a genuine qualitative, and quantitative, profile of the strengths and areas for development within a school. The danger is when you reduce things, the reductionist approach being simplification—we give a set of numbers, with schools being given this single label, "outstandingly good" and so on—which I have real problems with, because most schools are curate's eggs and are much more complex than that. Profiling of a school I am totally in favour of, but I would worry that the report card just gets too simplistic.

Anna Fazackerley: I would argue that self-evaluation would be a natural consequence of introducing report cards because you would be evaluating performance and progress over time. As a result there would be a continual pressure on schools to improve. They would have to be looking at their own processes and evaluating them themselves, because parents simply will not accept a lack of improvement over time, if that is made clear.

Q204 Chairman: Anastasia, do you see a happy synthesis between these two?

Anastasia de Waal: My point—and this is why it is probably slightly confusing—is in the middle, literally. I feel very strongly that we are constantly looking to have a revolution because we have problems. We do not need more change. We know where the problems are—it's dull, it's mundane. We need to sort those dull and mundane problems out rather than come up with new initiatives. That is one of the reasons why I think we need to just keep testing, but change the problems, sort out the issues. It is the same with inspection, and it is also the same with the fundamental element, which is the structure of schools. That is why I do not think we need to turn to a market system, because schools do not have enough autonomy—let's give schools autonomy. I guess that is why I find it slightly frustrating about all these new ideas, because they constantly move on from the problems, and all we have is the next stage and new problems. It means that we never consolidate and use the knowledge that we have from experience, because we have already dropped it.

Chairman: Thank you. John.

Q205 Mr Heppell: I am wondering what you see is the value of inspection. Since 1992 it has always been fairly controversial. I understand that some research shows that where there is higher or lower than average achievement, inspection actually means a slight improvement in the school's GCSE results, but there is also lots of research that shows there is often a negative effect. I know that in 2004 a report by the Institute of Education and Ofsted said that "inspection is neither a catalyst for instant improvement in GCSE results nor a significant inhibitor", which suggests that it does not really make it better or worse. Do we really need an independent inspection regime if that is the case? Do we need them? Why do we do it if there is no benefit at the end of it?

Chairman: Anastasia, that is for you. You were saying that it just needs to be sharpened up and improved.

Anastasia de Waal: I think that there is a huge difference between an inspectorate that is successful and the current inspection regime. I think that we have seen Ofsted address many of the issues. They have moved away from a very standardised approach to what is acceptable, so if you stray from

what the diktat is at the time, it is not acceptable. Part of the reason for that is because they are now very heavily focused on results. In a way, it does not really matter how you achieve those results. If your results are okay, Ofsted will back off. A big contributor to that has been the need to cut costs. The need to cut costs means that the inspection system is very much more desk-based now, which has led to a lot of people feeling that judgements are made before the inspections.

Q206 Chairman: Hang on. Do you mean that poor old Ofsted is being slashed and cut—its budget cut? It is a massive budget.

Anastasia de Waal: Well, it has a massive budget and a massive remit, but now that inspectors have very little time in schools, it is very difficult for them to be able to gauge what the school provision is like at all—hence their understandable reliance on what they feel is the only reliable data that they have, which are test and exam results. Never mind the principle of whether test and exam results that are reliable give you an accurate picture of what a school is like. We have an awful lot of evidence that the results are not reliable. So, in fact, what Ofsted is doing is building an awful lot of its judgements on not sound data, which is clearly highly problematic. Why I am talking about the budget cuts is that I think that an effective system of inspection would be thorough, and thoroughness involves professionalism, and professionalism and time are going to be expensive. I think that the last thing we want to do is scrimp when it comes to inspection, because inspection is ultimately the best way that we can gauge what schools are like. I think that what needs to fundamentally change is the role of the inspection, which has much too much emphasis on crisis management at the moment. Going into schools and identifying things—particularly with the move to a more proportionate system of inspection, which is about schools that seem to be failing on the basis of test results—is not looking at all at the rest of the provision. That is very difficult. The independent sector's system is much more peer-based, so you have practising head teachers. It is by no means perfect, but there are good lessons to be learnt from it; it is much longer, and is expensive and thorough. They do not just look at academic performance, and they definitely do not just look at a limited range of subjects when it comes to academic performance. The reports are much lengthier too, so an awful lot more information is given. I think that inspection can be very valuable, and that one of the reasons why schools currently feel so antagonised by inspection is that they feel that it does not come in to help them or to identify weaknesses, but that it comes in to tell them why their results are not good enough if that is the case, and if their results are good enough, it tells them what they already know, particularly in relation to the self-evaluation form. I think that an awful lot of schools would like to see an inspectorate also working on improvement, because what is the point—again, this comes back to budgets—of having a group of people come in to identify the problems and then go away? Why then get a local authority group and more money spent on trying to identify solutions?

Chairman: Okay. John?

Mr Heppell: Does anyone else want to add anything?

Chairman: Anna? I am going to start rationing you all.

Anna Fazackerley: Well, I agree with Anastasia that Ofsted has become too focused on auditing, but I disagree that it is now thinking solely about results. One of the problems with inspections is that Ofsted is motivated by looking at processes rather than outcomes, which I think it should be focusing on more. I think that there is room for inspection and that we need it, but, as I have already said, I do not think that we need regular inspections across the board; we need inspections for schools that are shown to be performing less well. As we have already discussed, I agree with Anastasia that Ofsted ought to be involved in the improvement process for those schools, rather than simply outsourcing it to local authorities to outsource to somebody else to sort out.

Q207 Chairman: Can I push you on the emphasis on processes rather than outcomes? I often hear that, but do not really understand what it means. Give me an example of what processes, rather than outcomes, they are obsessed with.

Anna Fazackerley: If you look at Ofsted reports, you will see a big section on leadership and management, but there is not enough about what is actually happening in classrooms; it is all about the style of how you are assessing your leadership. I think that it is just not driven enough by actual performance.

Q208 Chairman: But Anastasia's point would be that the outcomes are the wrong ones, because they rely on the test data.

Anna Fazackerley: Yes, that is one of the problems; inspectors have already decided what they are going to look at when they go into schools based on pre-obtained data, which is performance data that can obviously be misleading. The data will also have been submitted by the schools themselves on their assessment processes, so our argument is that the inspectors already have a very pre-conceived remit.

Q209 Chairman: Is it really pre-conceived? I have seen an inspector sit in a car reminding themselves not just of the test outcomes of Key Stage tests, but also of the number of free school meals and SEN. They have a range of data, but they would not be doing their job if they did not do that, would they?

Anna Fazackerley: Of course, you want them to have data, but as I said earlier, what I would want them to do more than anything else is sit in classrooms for longer and spend more time looking at the teaching that is actually happening. If I were a parent, that would be what I cared about more than anything else.

Chairman: Okay. John wanted all of you to come in.

Professor MacBeath: There is an old joke: "I'm an inspector, and I'm here to help you." This morning, I told an Australian colleague why I was coming to

the House of Commons, and he said, "Of course, in Australia we got rid of inspection." I said, "Well, actually, you didn't—you didn't get rid of a quality assurance system, but you got rid of something that people didn't like, called inspection, and all the connotations that has. But what you did put in place was a system of more self-evaluation and external review. But you didn't drop the hard edge that you need from an external viewpoint to come in and look at the quality of what the school is doing." I think that we need something, but it is not necessarily in the current mode. Some of the things that I found most interesting internationally are, for example, in Rhode Island in the US, where school staff will be trained and developed in how to review another school, and those school staff will go, on a reciprocal basis, to another school, spend a week there, and have really challenging conversations with the staff in that other school. Now, that is almost, in a sense, a cost-free system. Obviously, you need cover and so on, but it does not involve the huge machinery of Ofsted. It benefits the school that is doing the review, because it begins to understand much more about what are the criteria you look for and what is the evidence you look for. It also benefits the school that is being reviewed, because it is a much more collegial kind of atmosphere, and you get a conversation where people are willing to expose their weaknesses, not to hide them in a cupboard and sweep everything under the carpet before the inspectors come in. As we know, there is lots of research about this here with Ofsted: plant the daffodils, paint the coal and tell the children, "If you know the right answer, put up your right hand; if you don't, put up your left hand," etc. So I think that there are alternative models out there that we should be looking at.

Q210 Mr Heppell: Just following on from that, Anastasia was saying that you would not want the inspectors to become involved in finding the—I think that the word was—solutions. Before 1992, the inspector would effectively just go and find out what was wrong with the schools, and had nothing to do with putting it right; they just reported to the Secretary of State. Local inspectorates working for local education authorities were seen as something different. They went in, and when there was a problem, they talked through the solution as well. One of the things that people found frustrating, not now, but just a few years ago, was the inspectors coming in, telling them something was wrong, and when you said, "Yes, but how do we deal with that?" the reply was, "Well, that is your problem." I can remember heads telling me that "We have this problem. I don't know how to deal with it, but I keep getting a bad score off Ofsted every time. I ask them what I should do about it, and there is no answer." That seems mad as well, but I wonder what the role should be for the Ofsted inspection. Should it be to just identify, or to put it right? The putting-it-right bit sometimes causes controversy as well. When a school gets designated as a bad, failing school and we give them all sorts of advice, that is seen as something very negative. Should we have split roles for the thing? Should we see that Ofsted goes in and identifies the problem, and it is up to the local authority, the governors and the parents to sort out what that problem is? Is the balance right now?
Anna Fazackerley: I think that there definitely ought to be more post-inspection support, and I do not think that the balance is right now. I agree with you that it is a pretty poor state of affairs if a school actively wants some advice on how to put things right and is being quite open about those problems, but there is no advice forthcoming.

Q211 Mr Heppell: But do you say that Ofsted should be doing it?
Anna Fazackerley: Yes, I do.

Q212 Chairman: Can I add to John's question. I have just seen some of the figures for how much you pay a SIP—a school improvement partner. Very often, they are £1,000 a day to go into a school—£1,000 a day, I'm told. We have the national strategy people coming in—that's Capita, isn't it? They come in to help National Challenge schools at enormous fees as well. In a sense, can we put the question in the context of, "Yes, Ofsted comes in, does its stuff and then walks away."? Is that because of the Department's policy—that SIPs and the National Challenge people in some schools come in to put it right? Explain that to us. Is that the thinking? Does it work? The question is—John is quite right—what should they do, but in the context of, "Come on, there are other players here!"
Professor MacBeath: That has been an ongoing issue back and forward: should inspections, should Ofsted help to improve schools or should it simply conduct an evaluation and then leave it to others? I put that question to David Bell when he was chief of Ofsted—he is now Permanent Secretary. I said, "What about your strapline 'Improvement through inspection'?" He said, "Frankly, we don't." He said that inspection does not improve schools; on occasions, it is a very good catalyst and can help schools to rethink, but that is not the function of inspection. I tend to agree. Once you have had an inspection, there are other people—local authorities, school improvement partners, critical friends or even universities—that schools can then work with over time to address those issues. I do not think that you can do both the accountability and the improvement within one body, such as Ofsted.

Q213 Chairman: Who introduced inspection in its present form?
Professor MacBeath: Ofsted was under the Thatcher Government.
Chairman: Was it Ken Baker? I can't remember.
Professor MacBeath: It was 1992.
Anastasia de Waal: Yes, Major.

Q214 Chairman: He thought it was going to improve schools, didn't he? They didn't bring it in for the sake of it. He brought it in to improve schools and standards, didn't he?
Professor MacBeath: Obviously, he did, but the evidence says, "Well, you got that one wrong."

Chairman: So, that's your answer, John, that he got it wrong.
Mr Heppell: I am not that sure I've got it right.
Chairman: Do you want to come back on that?

Q215 Mr Heppell: There is a difficulty with somebody doing an inspection that is supposed to find all the answers. I can understand the frustration of heads and so on. I wonder whether we should not be much clearer in saying that we need to draw a line and let people know the rules, to whom they should go for advice and who is supposed to put the problem right. At the moment, I just don't know. That is the difficulty, and I suspect that many people in teaching and education don't know who is supposed to provide the solutions.
Anastasia de Waal: One issue at the moment with inspection being only about judgements is that it shows that it is all about accountability; it is not about improving schools. It is a tremendous amount of money to spend just on accountability when surely the point of this game is improving learning, children's lives and school provision in this country. As I mentioned before, it is woefully inefficient to have a bunch of people coming in and identifying the problems—people who you hope would be professionals, well equipped to identify issues and presumably have the solutions. Frankly, if they don't have the solutions, I don't think they are equipped—

Q216 Chairman: But, Anastasia, you are avoiding my plea to put this in the context of the Government saying, "This is the state of this school." If it is bad, which we will know because it has had its inspection, in come SIPs—at £1,000 a day some of them, I understand—and in come the National Challenge advisers, in comes Capita, and I doubt it does it free or low cost.
Anastasia de Waal: Unnecessary. Let's get Ofsted to tell us what the problems are in the school. It is superfluous. We do not need somebody trailing teachers for six weeks. It is not that we are asking Ofsted or the new inspectorate to stay in school. We are asking them to identify how they make progress. We know anecdotally that a lot of HMIs are preferred because they do just that. They do not just say, "Here is the wreck of the school that I have created for you. Goodbye." They actually come up with solutions.

Q217 Chairman: So this is the "golden age" argument. There was a golden age when we used to have HMIs and everything was all right.
Anastasia de Waal: No. This is HMIs now. As you say, the remit before was not about improving; it was just about inspecting. It is HMIs, the argument seems to be, because they are very well qualified professionals. There is definitely a preference at the moment for your inspector to be an HMI. Were Ofsted to be about improvement as well as identifying problems, it would not be seen as the major disruption it is today. It is not seen to be constructive or beneficial. Were it something that was going to help, I think that teachers would feel a lot less antagonised by it.
Anna Fazackerley: I would just say that the expensive advisers are not working. They are not providing their money's worth, and so a system in which Ofsted is at least part of the improvement process has to be better than that.

Q218 Mr Stuart: Does the inspection regime sufficiently identify poor practice, and does that lead to action? John says that what we need is tough, high-quality self-evaluation. You then have the external review, both to see whether that self-evaluation is tough and effective and, just as importantly I would have thought, to find out whether they have done anything about it. What is your analysis of that?
Professor MacBeath: I didn't understand the last bit of the question.

Q219 Mr Stuart: I asked whether the regime identifies poor practice. There seems to me to be two levels in evaluating the school. One is about leadership, the ethos and the rich learning experience, and the planning for that, and the second is about the individual staff members who are in front of a class. In a great school, you can get a really rubbish teacher for the sixth form. I remember getting a rubbish teacher in my sixth form. They completely turned me off the subject for two years and I didn't follow that subject into university because of them. So, there are two levels: you have the institution and its structures, but you also have poor practice, and if you are going to have a proper system of accountability you need to be identifying poor practice. Where I am going is towards extirpating it, which I don't think happens, but I want to know your opinion on that.
Professor MacBeath: I guess that part of the ambiguity in the understanding is what we are defining as core practice. But I absolutely take your point about "rubbish" teachers. I think that that is a real issue and that is why this is very difficult. However, good, rigorous school self-evaluation does not single out individual teachers; it says, "We have an issue in this school with some of our staff who are not effective enough. We have to address that issue, and this is how we are trying to address it". We may have to think about how we send those individuals to the departure lounge, or invest the time for them to be counselled out because they are damaging the lives of children. I have seen good self-evaluation; it can do that, and the external review then comes in and says, "Well, you've identified a really difficult issue here and how you are going to handle it. In what ways can you get external support for that?" Getting rid of poor teachers is one of the biggest problems that schools have, but it can be addressed through that process of self-evaluation.

Q220 Chairman: I see that Anna is nodding, but when we went to Ontario, we saw that one of their problems is that they can't get rid of anyone. You seemed to see that as an exemplar, with 100% one-union control.

Anna Fazackerley: No, I don't think that I am on record saying that Ontario is perfection. I was simply saying that there are good and bad things that we can learn from all systems. They have at least sorted out the report card—

Chairman: Okay. We have recently been to Ontario, and so we learned some interesting things.

Q221 Mr Stuart: Do we need an accountability system that leads to the dismissal and removal entirely from the education system of more teachers who are not up to scratch? I am the chairman of governors of a failing school, and we turned it around. We got those individuals into the departure lounge and got them out, but they were not removed from the profession; they went somewhere else to ruin the educational opportunities of another bunch of kids. We have a system of accountability that does not have the courage to identify someone who is probably a fantastic human being but is just not very good at teaching and inspiring kids. It seems to me that we do not have a system that gets rid of them. Am I wrong?

Anna Fazackerley: I think that you are right. I don't think that we have a system that gets rid of them, and I am not sure whether we have a system that spots them either. That is a big problem, and it is something that we have already highlighted today. It is very important.

Q222 Mr Stuart: How is that possible, when we spend so much money? There are all these people crawling all over schools, coming in from every angle and appearing from every new acronym. In that school that was failing—a little primary school with eight classrooms—you could not believe the panoply of people who piled in to advise, help and consult us. All we needed to do was to remove the teachers who were rubbish, help the ones who were not doing well enough but could, and congratulate and support the ones who were doing a good job. Once we had done that, the school turned around.

Chairman: Graham, perhaps you could marry that to the question that came up on Monday. You couldn't come on Monday, I know, but we were talking about licence to practise: should there be for teachers a licence to practise that is renewable? Fiona was pushing the witnesses on Monday about that. I don't know if you see a problem. Do you want to come back to that, Graham?

Mr Stuart: Anna answered; do Anastasia and John agree that despite this huge system we are not identifying poor practice and removing it from the system altogether, or doing enough to support people who need to be supported to come up to the levels that they can achieve?

Anastasia de Waal: Personally I think that there is a staggering lack of emphasis on actual teaching and teachers, and partly that is because of results, because we know that you can produce pretty good results without being a good teacher, but partly there is not nearly enough—this is just on an inspection level—emphasis on classroom observation. Now, thankfully, that is coming back a bit more, but the mere idea that it was going to be completely sidelined is extraordinary, when clearly that is the big impact. In a climate with so much about management-speak and management style, it has almost come to the point where we see teachers as technicians; we do not see them as professionals or as having a big impact themselves. It is all about the leadership and management structure. Clearly that is not the case, and it is one of the big reasons why the status of teaching suffers enormously. The criteria for entry into teaching are very low, and I think that also has a detrimental effect. So I think we are not identifying poor teaching because we are not particularly interested in teaching at the moment, which is very worrying and a huge problem.

Chairman: John, do you agree with that?

Professor MacBeath: I do. I am kind of attracted to the renewable licence, actually. Certainly in some countries—Germany, for example—head teachers get voted on for a couple of years and if they don't like them after that they have to move on or return to the classroom, or whatever. There is something in that. Of course, we have a probation system at the moment, but maybe the probation system is not good enough for that. We are addressing a really knotty and very critical problem here in terms of ineffective or incompetent teachers and how a system deals with them—how it gets the knowledge. I would say that to some extent Ofsted does that already. Certainly a former chief inspector was very good about talking about the numbers and saying that we had 25,000 incompetent teachers in this country; there was all that sabre-rattling, and unfortunately that had a big backlash from unions and everyone else. I think that the NUT—I know you have taken evidence already from the NUT—would be supportive of this if they could address that history of the way we have dealt with teachers who are not up to scratch. I don't have an easy answer to that one, but I do recognise that it is a big problem.

Q223 Mr Stuart: Yes, a former chief inspector did come out with that quite a lot, and, as you said, it led to a bit of a backlash. Perhaps it was overstated—I don't think that the facts were overstated, but perhaps the style wasn't right. Do you have any data on how many people are removed from the system each year as a result of being found to be incapable of being improved through capability, or whatever it is?

Anna Fazackerley: I am sure that something came out quite recently from the DCSF; I can find out.

Q224 Mr Stuart: Listening to Anna and John's evidence it seems that both the main party Front Benches are in pursuit of what John says would be great in a perfect world, where you have informed parents taking a close interest and able to exercise choice, and a true demand-led education system; but John was suggesting that it was simply impractical. I just wanted to ask you, Anna, really, why you are so convinced that choice and parental information can take us to that nirvana. The more you talked about the report card, the more I just thought, "This isn't going to work." We want it to be simple, yet it must be comprehensive. It must be both in-depth and yet

easy for a parent, even one who is not that keen or that educated themselves, to follow. All we would be doing is altering it every six months or every year to make it longer or shorter.

Anna Fazackerley: I disagree that introducing different, new indicators—information either that parents want or that we think they should want—has to be complicated.

Q225 Mr Stuart: You use phrases such as, "ought to want to see performance indicators", which perfectly illustrates how you are straining to create a world which doesn't exist and isn't going to exist. However, you have this concept and you think it ought to exist. John agrees that it ought to exist, but I am not convinced that you can make it happen.

Chairman: Give Anna the chance to answer.

Anna Fazackerley: As a Committee, you have identified that the national assessment testing is not working; you are very worried about it. That is pretty much the only information that is available to parents at the moment, unless they want to look up an Ofsted report. I am just saying, from a very simple starting point, that I don't think that is very fair. I don't think that is satisfactory. You are probably right that not every parent is going to want to look up information about a school, but that does not mean that we should not bother to provide accurate information. If you make it very clear to schools, teachers and parents exactly what schools will be judged on, then surely that will drive performance. I add that I do not actually think that the report card is going to be complicated. Some aspects of the system at the moment, such as CVA measurements, are confusing. That is a bit jargony and I don't think many people would know what that means, but a report card done properly does not need to be at all difficult. It just brings in some things that parents are likely to care about, as well as some of the issues that we are looking at, at the moment. As I have said, I will send you a list of all of the things that we want to look at. I could read them out to you now.

Q226 Mr Stuart: Have you created and market-tested the perfect report card? When you have, and shown it to 20 schools and all the parents and they say it is great, perfect and exactly what they want, then I will back down a lot of the time.

Anna Fazackerley: I doubt very much that you will back down and I am very much enjoying your robust questioning. What we have done is look at two existing report cards: one in Alberta, which was introduced in 2004 and is working very well, and one in New York. They are quite different; they look at different criteria. We have looked at bits that are working and evidence that they are working, so we have got a serious evidence base behind this. Just to take one small example, one thing that is quite nice about the New York system is that they have extra credit for schools that are improving the very weakest students. That is a pretty good idea. I doubt very much, even with your professed allergy to report cards, that you would think that that was a bad or a nasty idea. This is not about making things more complicated, it is about trying to make things simpler, actually, and about providing more information for parents.

Chairman: We have got to end it there. David, over to you.

Q227 Mr Chaytor: I want to ask John a question about self-evaluation. You are very critical about the tick-box approach, because you say that it should be a continuing process of reflection. How does anyone know that this continuing process of reflection is taking place without some written record? Do you see my point? We need some evidence. What form should that evidence be presented in?

Professor MacBeath: We currently have the evidence reported in the SEF, the self-evaluation form. That is one way of telling the school's story, the narrative; it is their version of a report card, if you like. But it has been made very clear in Ofsted guidance and reiterated by Christine Gilbert, chief of Ofsted, that we do not require schools to use the SEF. In fact, David Bell used to say that we would much rather that schools were telling their story in a much richer way and not relying on a SEF form, because it actually constrains the way schools report. A school in Sheffield, a primary school, has made a wonderful DVD with the children and the secondary school—people working together to produce a DVD that brilliantly tells the story of the quality of learning, the school culture and leadership. I have shown it at a number of conferences. It is a brilliant example that goes so much further than a SEF can with tick boxes and so on. When the school has genuine ownership of self-evaluation, it thinks much more creatively and visually, with photographs, video and written accounts from children, which give a rich profile of what the school is about.

Q228 Mr Chaytor: So if a school ditches the SEF form and produces a DVD, a report or a portfolio, it is not going to be in any way—

Professor MacBeath: No, and Ofsted are very happy.

Q229 Mr Chaytor: A question to Anastasia and Anna: on the broader issue of school improvement, is that the right focus or should we be more concerned with system improvement?

Anastasia de Waal: I think that it is about addressing the weaknesses in the current system, rather than shaking up the system and coming up with a new one. We know where there are clear problems. One of the key issues, and why school choice is appealing for many, is the lack of autonomy that teachers and schools have. They have a lot of financial autonomy, which in a way is the worst of both worlds, but not enough pedagogical autonomy. One of the big issues that we are seeing now and, I feel, one big reason why the achievement gap has not been impacted on as it might have been is that teachers cannot respond sufficiently to the needs of the pupils in front of them because the approach is much too standardised. I think that that is the key issue. Another issue is the one that I mentioned of teacher quality. That has a lot to do with entry requirements into teaching. Obviously testing is another big one. In other words,

they are issues that, at the moment, are really crippling the system, but that does not mean that the system has to change; it means addressing those inherent distortions.

Anna Fazackerley: I would agree wholeheartedly and simply say that we are always trying to change the system and to do everything with the system as a whole, rather than looking at things on an individual school basis. It has to be about improving schools, but implicit within that is improvement of the system.

Q230 Mr Chaytor: And what should be the key criterion for deciding that a school needs a school improvement programme?

Anna Fazackerley: I would say a poor performance on the report card. If you got low scores in the different areas, you would need an inspection. There should be an additional criterion that if parents complained, as is the case now, you would be inspected. Finally, both of us would like a system of randomised inspections as well—inspectors coming in and performing spot checks on schools. The inspected school should not have any nasty follow-up from that inspection; it is simply a useful way of getting a glimpse of how the system as a whole is working. I would like to see that.

Anastasia de Waal: And I would say issues identified by holistic inspections—not within the current process, but when inspections were carried out in schools and things like teacher turnover or performance in relation to a much bigger picture were identified. This is not necessarily about test performance but about whether pupils are progressing and achieving. It could also be about things such as facilities. I think that it is very narrowly based on the curriculum at the moment. We also need to look at whether there is enough playground space and that kind of thing. That could well be impinging on the quality of school provision, so it needs to be holistic.

Chairman: I have to call a halt here, but only because we have another session. I implore you to keep in touch with us. We are only as good as the information that we get in the Committee. Will you go away, think about what we asked you, and whether we asked you the wrong questions and should have given you more stimulating ones? Come back to us and say, "You should have asked this because we believe this." Please help us to make this a good report. We are very open to all of your views. Thank you. I have delayed a little because that was a very interesting session and I also knew that one of our witnesses for the second session was delayed.

Memorandum submitted by the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations

1. The National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations

1.1 The National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations (NCPTA), a registered charity, advances education by promoting partnerships between home and school through support for Parent, Parent Teacher, Friends and other Home-School Associations. The organisation has more than 13,000 individual associations currently in membership across England, Wales and Northern Ireland which corresponds to the involvement of more than seven million parents and teachers.

2. Parental Views

2.1 The views of parents included in this submission are taken from a survey of more than 2,000 parents conducted by NCPTA in April 2009. Full details of the survey and how it was conducted are attached in Annex 1.

3. Summary

3.1 Parents do want schools to be held accountable for their performance. This is demonstrated by parents wanting to know how well each school performs (96%) and the number that place a value on Ofsted Inspections (78%). However, parents feel that how schools are held accountable needs to change: there is clear demand for a wider range of measures to be used (96%) and for no-notice inspections (61%). Given the school report card seeks to provide information about school performance based on a wider range of measures this appears to be a good fit with parental preferences. However, there is a need to remember that parents do place a value on test and exam results as an important measure of a school's performance (78%) and there is a clear preference for these to published or made publicly available (76%). This should not be lost in this wider discussion of school accountability.

4. Accountability

4.1 *Is it right in principle that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance?*

Yes—the overwhelming majority of parents (96%) agree that it is important for them to know how well each school performs.

4.2 *What should be the fundamental purposes of an accountability system for schools and, in particular:*

— *to whom should schools be accountable;*

Obviously, schools need to be accountable to parents. However, parents are very aware that they usually act as individuals within the education sector and therefore have little authority or power to affect change within schools. Parents therefore look to other agencies with greater authority to hold schools accountable whether this be the local authority, Ofsted or central government.

— *for what should they be held accountable;*

Typically, parents will have a balanced view of what schools should be held accountable for. Many will very eloquently express their desire that their children do well academically but know that this is often predicated on the child's wellbeing. The majority of parents (76%) do agree that the performance of each school in tests and exams should be published or made publicly available but there is even greater demand (96%) for schools to be assessed on a wider range of measures. The Every Child Matters outcomes appear well supported and therefore could provide the basis for a wider set of measures with which parents may be happy to hold schools accountable.

— *how should they be held to account; and*

Anecdotally, parents typically favour a system of accountability which is independent and not purely based on self assessment.

— *what should be the consequences?*

We would expect that parents would want schools where standards have been shown to be inadequate to receive assistance and intervention to improve. Whilst potentially problematic, parents are likely to favour the use of sanctions where this is necessary and even appropriate changes in personnel.

4.3 *How do other countries hold their schools accountable for their performance and against what criteria?*

This is outside NCPTA's remit.

4.4 *Is the current accountability system of inspection and performance reporting for schools broadly fit for purpose?*

Parents do appear broadly supportive of the current accountability system of inspection and performance reporting. There is clear demand for test and exam results to be published or made publicly available (76%) and Ofsted inspections are valued by the majority of parents (78%). However, as seen in our parent survey there is demand from parents to further improve the system through the use of a wider range of measures by which to assess performance and the introduction of no-notice inspections.

4.5 *How should schools be held accountable for their performance in the context of increasing collaboration in education provision?*

Whilst complex, parents are likely to expect that all parties to any collaboration be held accountable for the resulting performance and that this would need to be clearly established in any agreement underpinning the formation of the partnership.

5. Inspection

5.1 *Is an independent inspectorate an appropriate mechanism for holding schools to account?*

Yes—Ofsted inspections are clearly valued by the majority of parents (78%).

5.2 *What is the impact of inspections on school performance, including confidence, creativity and innovation?*

This will be completely dependent upon the experience of individual schools. Whilst some may have found this a negative experience there will be those that will have gained from the inspections process leading to improved performance.

5.3 *Are inspectors appropriately qualified and trained to carry out inspections, particularly in the light of the need to report against Every Child Matters outcomes?*

Parents would rightly expect that inspectors are qualified and trained to carry out inspections including against the Every Child Matters outcomes. Where this isn't the case parents would expect that this would be addressed appropriately through training and continuing professional development.

5.4 *Is it appropriate for inspection reports to be placed in the public domainn?*

Yes: the majority of parents (78%) agree that they value Ofsted inspections.

5.5 *How often should inspections be carried out and how long and detailed should these inspections be?*

Parents are likely to understand the need to make best use of Ofsted's finite resources and therefore will at least be supportive of changes to the inspections' framework which enable a focus on improvement.

However, this is likely to be countered by concern at the length of time between formal inspections for schools judged good or outstanding: for some children this six year period will represent the entire time they spend at either a primary or secondary school.

Parents will want to be assured that there are sufficient safeguards in place to trigger an appropriate and timely response by Ofsted if a school's performance begins to weaken. Parents will expect Ofsted to be unceasing in its efforts to militate against any school judged outstanding or good becoming complacent during the intervening six years.

NCPTA has noted the list of key indicators and the discussion of other factors which will be used to determine inspection dates. It will be important for Ofsted to explain to parents how it is envisaged the process of triggering an inspection during the six year interval will work. Parents will expect that Ofsted will continue to improve its practice to decrease the number of situations where a previously outstanding or good school's performance weakens within an appropriate period of time.

NCPTA welcomes the opportunity for parents themselves to express their concerns. It is right that parents are one of the means by which those schools that will not have an inspection for six years can be monitored.

5.6 *How much notice, if any, should a school receive of an upcoming inspection?*

Parents have clearly expressed the view that schools should receive no notice of upcoming inspections (61%).

5.7 *In the context of an inspection, what is the value of:*

— *the school's self-assessment;*

With the length of time between Ofsted inspections increasing, the ability of schools to be self-critical becomes of greater importance. Inspections need to judge the degree to which the self-assessment form is accurate and a good basis for self-improvement between formal inspections.

— *the results of national tests;*

Parents value national test results: 78% agree that they are one important measure of a school's performance. Parents are increasingly aware that national test results have real meaning for their children: not obtaining Level 4 in the Key Stage 2 SATs makes it difficult for any child to function independently at secondary school, whilst public examinations in year 11 are the stepping stones to employment or further education.

— *the school's contextual value added score; and*

Parents clearly value being able to contextualise school performance and compare like schools (valued by 90% of parents). Whether or not the current contextual value added score is the best way to make this information available to parents is open to debate: we would assume that there is some concern about the complexity of how this is calculated and reported.

— *how much weight should be attached to these elements in the inspection report?*

There is obviously value attached to test and exam results with many parents wanting to know that whatever the context of the school their children will be able to achieve. However, given the even higher value placed by parents on a wider range of measures to be used for school performance (96% agree the need for a wider range of measures as opposed to 78% agreeing test and exam results are an important measure of a schools' performance), it appears that the weight attached to test and exam results needs to be balanced against other measures. Parents are likely to hold the view that, unless a school is able to support all a child's needs, then they are unlikely to be able to excel in their educational attainment.

5.8 *In an inspection, how should emphasis be balanced between educational attainment and other aspects of a school's provision, such as the Every Child Matters outcomes?*

As already noted, parents seem to be expressing a clear demand for school performance to be assessed based on a balance between educational attainment and other aspects of a school's provision, such as the Every Child Matters outcomes. Parents are likely to hold the view that, unless a school is able to support all a child's needs then, they are unlikely to be able to excel in their education attainment.

5.9 *Should inspections be tailored to the current performance levels of the specific school being inspected and, if so, to what extent?*

Whatever the context of the school, parents will want their children to be able to achieve. Therefore, great care needs to be taken in tailoring inspections to the current performance levels of the specific school and cannot in any way prevent the push for school improvement over time. However, this may be beneficial as part of a more frequent inspections regime for those classified as "causing concern" where this is being used to actively support improvement.

5.10 *Has the introduction of a light-touch inspection regime for higher-performing schools been appropriate?*

Obviously, this may cause some concern at the length of time between formal inspections for schools judged good or outstanding. Parents will want to be assured that there are sufficient safeguards in place to trigger an appropriate and timely response by Ofsted if a schools' performance begins to weaken. Parents will expect Ofsted to be unceasing in its efforts to militate against any school judged outstanding or good becoming complacent between inspections.

5.11 *What are the mechanisms for identifying schools which are underperforming and are those mechanisms adequate?*

It is important that parents retain the ability to complain to Ofsted where there are concerns that a school is not providing good enough education, where pupils are not achieving as much as they should or their different needs are not being addressed. In this way parents themselves will have an important role to play in helping to identify schools that are underperforming. However, we would suggest that parents still aren't sufficiently aware that they can complain to Ofsted. In part we feel that this is because there is fear about the level of vexatious complaints that may be forthcoming from parents. NCPTA would be concerned if this were to continue to limit awareness amongst parents of their ability to actively monitor school performance.

5.12 *How effective has the classification of "school causing concern" (special measures or improvement notice) been in supporting improved performance in the schools concerned?*

Parents are likely to assume that the classification of "school causing concern" has been beneficial in supporting school improvement. Giving schools public notice of the need for improvement would be assumed to be a catalyst for change as well as the basis for leveraging additional support through Ofsted and local authorities.

5.13 *Have School Improvement Partners been of benefit to schools?*

Again, parents are likely to assume that leveraging in additional expert support will be of benefit to schools.

5.14 *Is the current procedure for complaints about inspections adequate?*

NCPTA would question whether there is general awareness amongst parents that they can make complaints about inspections.

6. Performance Reporting (other than the Ofsted Inspection Report)

6.1 *What aspects of a school's performance should be measured and how?*

Whilst parents do value test and exam results as a measure of a school's performance (78%) there is demand from parents for performance to be assessed using a wider range of measures (96%). This seems to demonstrate the need for a more balanced approach. The NCPTA would like to recommend the Every Child Matters outcomes as offering one solution which is likely to get the support of parents.

6.2 *How should these performance measurements be reported and by whom?*

Parents show a marked preference for performance to be assessed using a wider set of measures and for this information to be publicly available. Having given this considerable thought we feel that performance information needs to be published nationally. If only made available locally or regionally, parents are likely to face difficulties in obtaining information about relevant schools especially where they live on the boundaries of different local authority areas or are moving some distance. The NCPTA also believes that parents will tend to favour performance information which has been independently obtained and verified rather than being based on self-assessment.

6.3 *To whom should this information be made available?*

Parents have shown a clear preference for schools being held publicly accountable. Performance information should therefore be made available to the general public.

6.4 *What is the effect of the current system of public performance reporting on a school's performance, including confidence, creativity and innovation?*

It is evident that this can be demoralising. However, parents are likely to feel that this should be the basis for schools attracting additional help and support to achieve school improvement. Given their preference for public accountability, parents are likely to be alarmed if discomfort caused by the league tables is used to justify not making this information publicly available. Parents have also shown that they favour being able to compare like schools. This tends towards needing to improve the quality of contextual value added information made available through the league tables.

6.5 *What is the impact on schools of league tables published by the press?*

This is obviously a key means for parents to hold schools publicly accountable.

6.6 *How useful is this information to stakeholders, particularly parents?*

Parents have shown that they value knowing how well each school performs (96%) and do agree that test and exam results are an important measure of a school's performance (78%).

7. School Report Card

7.1 *What might a school report card usefully provide that is not covered by the current performance reporting system?*

A school report card could report a school's performance using a wider range of measures for which there is a clear preference by parents. As already recommended parents are likely to welcome reporting against the Every Child Matters outcomes.

7.2 *Are there any issues which the school report card should avoid or seek to inhibit?*

There has obviously been debate about whether or not the school report card should feature an overall score. Parents have shown a preference for having an overall score as well as individual scores for each of the measures used to assess performance (preferred by 56% of parents). Without an overall score parents are likely to be prohibited from readily comparing schools with each other for which they have again shown a preference.

7.3 *Is the school report card potentially a sound basis for:*

— *informing parents;*

Yes, given parents have shown a marked preference for school performance to be reported against a wider set for measures.

— *providing a set of prioritised outcomes for schools;*

It is hoped that the report card system would lend itself to providing a set of prioritised outcomes for schools. However, this will depend upon there being agreement that the wider set of measures used are appropriate.

— *providing a starting point for Ofsted inspection; and*

Whist the school report card might provide a starting point, it is likely that parents will expect Ofsted to use a more extensive and detailed range of information for assessing school performance.

— *providing a management tool for government?*

Again, it is likely that parents would expect this information to be useful as a management tool for government but for this to be complemented by other sources of information about the school including Ofsted reports.

7.4 *Could the school report card appropriately replace some Ofsted reporting?*

NCPTA feels it unlikely that parents would support the school report card replacing Ofsted reporting. Whilst the report card can provide summative information against a range of measures, it is unlikely that parents will feel that this is an adequate substitute for an inspection of a school.

April 2009

Annex 1

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY: PARENTAL VIEWS

SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

Introduction

In preparation for this submission and appearing before the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee on 29 April 2009 the NCPTA conducted an online survey in order to gain further insight into the current views of parents on school accountability.

Method

An email was sent to 15,735 NCPTA members (all those for whom a personal email address is held) inviting them to participate and with an embedded link taking them directly to the online survey conducted using a leading online software tool (SurveyMonkey). All were prompted to respond in a personal capacity in their role as parents and not as a PTA representative or on behalf of their PTA.

No form of inducement was offered to gain responses. Whether or not a response was received from a representative of any member association will not be recorded.

Great care was taken to carefully construct both the questions and available responses to the quantitative questions to allow all views to be reflected and to in no way lead the respondents. Both the questions and responses are provided below.

Multiple responses were blocked by limiting to one the number of responses that could be sent from any IP address.

Whilst it might have been beneficial to have asked a wider range of questions, it was deliberately decided to keep the number of questions as low as possible in order to extract the maximum number of responses in the time available for the survey.

Responses

The invitation email inviting participation was emailed out on 3 April 2009 and the survey was closed to any further responses on 20 April 2009, giving respondents just over two weeks to participate. This period covered the school Easter Holidays and therefore wasn't ideal in terms of increasing the number of responses. However, a total of 2,226 responses were received, giving a response rate of 15%.

Summary

Overwhelmingly, the majority of parents agree that it is important for parents to know how well each school performs (96%). Parents are also keen to be able to compare one school against another (87%) and specifically want to be able to compare the performance of like schools (90%).

Parents also agree that test and exam results are one important measure of a school's performance (78%) and that these should be published or made publicly available (75%). However, parents want test and exam results to be part of a wider range of information used to assess school performance (96%). In terms of how parents want this information made available to them they show a preference for individual scores for each measure used as well as an overall score summarising the school's performance (56%).

The survey found that Ofsted inspections are valued by the majority of parents (78%) but they would like to move from schools being given two days notice of inspections as currently happens to their having no notice (61%).

Parents were asked specifically if they agree or disagree with plans by teachers and head teachers to boycott the public exams held at the end of primary school (Key Stage 2 SATS) in order to get them withdrawn. Parents are almost equally divided between those that support the boycott and those that disagree with it. There is also a large number that neither agree nor disagree. The NCPTA would therefore suggest that there is no clear parental view and that none of the protagonists in the dispute should claim to have the support of parents.

DETAIL OF RESPONSES

1. *How far do you agree or disagree that it is important parents should know how well each school performs?*

	Response Percent	*Response Count*
Agree a lot	**79.0%**	**1,759**
Agree a little	17.0%	379
Neither agree nor disagree	2.4%	53
Disagree a little	1.0%	23
Disagree a lot	0.5%	12

2. *How far do you agree or disagree that parents should be able to compare one school's performance against another?*

	Response Percent	*Response Count*
Agree a lot	**56.2%**	**1,252**
Agree a little	31.0%	691
Neither agree nor disagree	6.2%	138
Disagree a little	4.0%	89
Disagree a lot	2.5%	56

3. *How far do you agree or disagree that it would be useful for parents to be able to compare one school with another in like circumstances? For example, located in comparable areas and with children from similar circumstances?*

	Response Percent	*Response Count*
Agree a lot	**65.2%**	**1,452**
Agree a little	24.8%	551
Neither agree nor disagree	5.9%	132
Disagree a little	2.5%	56
Disagree a lot	1.6%	35

4. *How far would you agree or disagree that test and exams results are one important measure of a school's performance?*

	Response Percent	*Response Count*
Agree a lot	32.7%	727
Agree a little	**44.9%**	**1,000**
Neither agree nor disagree	6.5%	145
Disagree a little	9.7%	215
Disagree a lot	6.2%	137

5. *How far do you agree or disagree that the performance of each school in tests and exams should be published or made publicly available?*

	Response Percent	*Response Count*
Agree a lot	**41.2%**	**916**
Agree a little	34.8%	774
Neither agree nor disagree	10.2%	228
Disagree a little	8.4%	186
Disagree a lot	5.5%	122

6. *How far do you agree or disagree that it would be beneficial to have a wider range of information than just exam results reported about the performance of each school? This might include information on behaviour at the school, the health of pupils, how many go onto employment or further education and parental satisfaction surveys.*

	Response Percent	*Response Count*
Agree a lot	**84.3%**	**1,877**
Agree a little	11.5%	256
Neither agree nor disagree	2.0%	45
Disagree a little	1.1%	25
Disagree a lot	1.0%	23

7. *If a wider range of measures is used to assess school performance how should this information be summarised for your use?*

	Response Percent	*Response Count*
In one overall score	1.6%	36
Individual scores for each measure used to assess performance	38.5%	856
Both an overall score and individual scores for each measure used to assess performance	**56.2%**	**1,252**
Don't know	3.7%	82

8. *How far do you agree or disagree that Ofsted Inspections are of value to parents?*

	Response Percent	*Response Count*
Agree a lot	36.7%	818
Agree a little	**40.9%**	**911**
Neither agree nor disagree	8.3%	185
Disagree a little	8.4%	187
Disagree a lot	5.6%	125

9. *How much notice do you feel schools should be given of an Ofsted Inspection?*

	Response Percent	*Response Count*
More than two days	13.5%	300
Two days	22.6%	503
No notice	**61.6%**	**1,364**
Don't know	2.7%	59

10. *How far do you agree or disagree that it is appropriate for teachers and head teachers to boycott the public exams held at the end of primary school (Key Stage 2) in order to get them withdrawn?*

	Response Percent	*Response Count*
Agree a lot	**23.7%**	**527**
Agree a little	17.1%	381
Neither agree nor disagree	22.8%	507
Disagree a little	14.7%	327
Disagree a lot	21.7%	484

Memorandum submitted by the National Governors' Association

1. The National Governors' Association (NGA) is the national membership body for school governors. NGA has several categories of membership comprising individual governors, school governing bodies and independent local associations of school governing bodies. NGA seeks to represent the interests of all school governors and governing bodies in all phases and types of school. The NGA was formed in 2006 from the merger of the National Governors' Council and the National Association of School Governors.

Accountability

2. NGA is firmly of the view that schools should be held publicly to account for their performance. School accountability is fully devolved to school level, with schools being autonomous institutions. Few other countries devolve school accountability to individual school level.

3. The accountable body for schools is the governing body (GB). The NGA and the two headteacher professional associations are comfortable with this, as expressed in the joint document agreed in 2008 which says:

> "The governing body expects to be able to monitor the work of the school and to hold the headteacher to account for the performance of the school."

What Governing Bodies Should Expect From School Leaders and What School Leaders Should Expect From Governing Bodies (ASCL, NGA & NAHT, 2008)

4. The GB holds the school to account by setting the vision, values and aims for the school. It sets the strategic direction the school should take, agrees the policy framework in which the school operates, and appoints and performance manages the headteacher who is tasked with delivering the vision. The performance management process is overseen by the School Improvement Partner (SIP), who provides the detailed, professional consultancy necessary as data is interrogated to ensure that the agreed progress

towards delivering the vision is being made. However, should the GB wish to challenge the HT's performance, the Local Authority (LA) has to be involved, as it is the LA that carries out any investigation into capability or conduct.

5. However, in reality, schools feel that they are subject to multiple accountabilities. These include:

(a) Ofsted—who deliver a judgement on school effectiveness approximately every three years. It is not clear whether Ofsted report their findings to GB, who is then tasked with ensuring that findings are addressed, or whether Ofsted reports to the school leadership team, and then the leadership team assure the GB that the findings are being addressed. Either way, the involvement of the GB needs to be clarified so that the GB can effectively hold the school to account against the Ofsted judgment. Moreover, Ofsted makes a judgement on the effectiveness of the GB, but this is often based on minimal evidence. If the finding is unsatisfactory, the LA is empowered to intervene, but often this does not happen.

(b) DCSF—through programmes such as National Challenge and Gaining Ground where School Improvement Partners (SIPs) report directly to the DCSF on progress.

(c) SIPs—who validate the school's self evaluation process. NGA is aware of a great variety in SIP standards and practice, and even wider variation on the SIP's interaction with the GB. NGA is of the view that whenever the SIP has a concern about school effectiveness, the SIP should report, in person, to the full GB. Too often the SIP reports are withheld, edited, or dismissed by the head who may try and influence the chair of governors view. There is much anecdotal evidence that the relationship between the head and the chair can become too mutually supportive, which is why it is imperative that issues must be shared with the full GB. Advice from LAs to SIPs about what information should be shared with the GB is also inconsistent. The NGA would like to see clear unequivocal advice from the DCSF to LAs, SIPs, heads and GBs about what information must be shared with the GB.

(d) The Local Authority—who keep a check on standards and, as the funding authority, monitor school finances. The NGA has much anecdotal evidence that LAs have very different approaches to the role of the GB when standards issues become apparent. In some, they quickly decide that the head should leave, and they more or less insist that the GB agrees with their assessment of the situation, and comply by agreeing whatever deal is proposed. In others, the HR department holds sway, and endemic risk aversion leads to the head being overly supported, leaving the GB increasingly frustrated at ever being able to move their school forward. Likewise, the introduction of the Financial Management Standard in Schools was designed to standardise school financial monitoring procedures, but implementation varies considerably across LAs, with some LAs introducing excessive monitoring procedures.

6. NGA is of the view that clarifying the accountability framework would remove the ambiguity that has resulted in the above. If Ofsted, DCSF, SIPs and the LA all recognised that the GB is the accountable body, then:

(a) Ofsted would expect the GB to ensure that its judgements are addressed, and that LA would take seriously their responsibility to ensure good governance.

(b) The DCSF would expect the GB to ensure that progress is being made against the national strategies imposed upon their school.

(c) The SIP would report any slippage to the GB and advise on strategies to get the school back on track. The SIP would also advise the LA where the GB was losing focus and the LA could respond accordingly.

(d) The LA would involve the GB at the beginning of any conversation about school effectiveness, and listen to the GB's concerns. If the GB is not hearing the message, the LA would address the strength of the GB—not go beyond it. If the LA is not hearing the message from the GB, the GB should have recourse to another body that will progress its concerns.

7. Schools should be held accountable for their core business which is learning and teaching. Schools are also accountable for other matters such as wellbeing, but this is in the context of raising the standard of learning and teaching.

8. Schools should be held to account as described in paragraph 2.

9. The consequences of a school not raising standards should be for the senior leadership team (both operational and strategic) to be held properly to account. If they are incapable of managing the school as agreed, they should be removed and new leaders appointed.

10. The NGA is largely of the view that the inspection framework is fit for purpose, though there is much anecdotal evidence that the standard of inspection is variable, and that the current framework is too paper and data based.

11. The NGA is concerned that the current inspection framework does not easily translate across collaborative working models; although we are hopeful that the new framework will address these issues.

INSPECTION

12. The NGA believes that an independent inspectorate is an appropriate mechanism for ensuring that schools are effective, and a recent TES/NGA survey indicated that governors have considerable trust in the process. However there have been some perverse inspection outcomes which have damaged confidence and credibility. Less secure heads appear to find the process limits creativity and innovation.

13. NGA has some anecdotal evidence of inspectors working outside of their preferred phase and that some seem to struggle with the ECM agenda. Members are happy with outcomes being made public—indeed expect that they should be.

14. The current timescale for inspections is satisfactory, although the originally proposed six years for high performing schools seems a long time. We understand that following the Ofsted consultation, this may be reduced to five to ensure that all schools are inspected at least once during a pupil's progress through the school. The NGA also understands that Ofsted will be risk assessing the timescales for inspection on a regular basis. While some members expressed some concern about the concept of no notice inspections during the formal consultation, we understand that these have been largely well-received during the on-going pilot process.

15. School self evaluation is becoming more embedded but there still seems to be issues with evidencing judgements, and schools need to spend less time setting out what they have done and more time evaluating impact. The role of the SIP is vital to GBs who need the professional input for validating judgements. GBs can also be less than realistic about the impact of unexpected results and CVA (Contextual Value Added) scores which fail to improve, offering reasons which stray into the realm of excuses. In general, GBs understand the link between effective learning and teaching and improving outcomes which more often happen in the context of a curriculum tailored to the needs of the children in the school. However, some can lack the confidence to insist that regular updates on the quality of teaching are made available, and to challenge the head on the appropriateness of the curriculum. Most understand that the ECM outcomes should underpin the whole of school life which, along with an appropriate curriculum and sound teaching, are the recipe for successful learning.

16. The problem with tailoring inspections to the current performance level of the school is that there needs to be room for flexibility if the team discover all is not as expected. The NGA is pleased that "light touch" inspections will be discarded under the new framework as we are concerned that such inspections do not give sufficient time to address issues such as how much a high performing school has achieved success through favourable location and admissions.

17. Underperformance is currently identified through raw scores not being high enough, CVA being inadequate, progress falling short of expectations, and other compliance issues not being adhered to (eg safeguarding). NGA would prefer to see CVA and progress being the key identifiers for underperformance. NGA recognises the value of compliance but would be interested in compliance being monitored by other means so that Ofsted could spend more time on issues directly related to learning.

18. The classification of "schools causing concern" (special measures or improvement notice) has been of increasing success in supporting improved performance as schools, and LAs, understand more about what it takes to improve performance. Unfortunately achieving long term secure improvement can still be an issue. The NGA has a concern that too often quick fixes are sought, and that the introduction of robust learning and teaching policies, behaviour management policies and, most importantly, performance management processes which manage staff against these key policies, are not seen as the starting point for turn around.

19. Where SIPs are operating effectively they have been of great benefit and their independence is hugely valuable.

20. The current Ofsted complaints' procedure is slow, cumbersome and defensive. This is of particular concern in an inspection framework which seeks to publish early verdicts on schools' performance.

PERFORMANCE REPORTING (OTHER THAN THE OFSTED INSPECTION REPORT)

21. The reporting of school performance is a vexed issue. Governors are largely against the current system of league tables and to date are not supportive of any single measure that defines a school's performance. However, there is recognition that it is not possible to return to a place where there is no reporting, and so there is support for a balanced report card—as long as it measures more than attainment. Governors need to know how the school's performance fits with local and national performance, and accept that this information should be available to parents. The School Profile has been a failure and parents do not use it to judge school performance. As long as the league tables exist, parents will use this measure alongside other published information about the school—primarily the prospectus and, increasingly, the school's website. Many parents seem to understand that a whole range of issues need to be taken into account when looking at school performance. Parents and governors who access the DCSF site are usually surprised at how much information is published about school performance.

22. Publication of league tables has, undoubtedly, focused attention on school performance and most accept that this has been an effective strategy. The move towards CVA as a measure is largely welcomed as a more meaningful measure although some say it is too complex for the whole range of parents to understand. Others claim that CVA data is flawed. The NGA would like to see progress measures being used.

School Report Card

23. The school report card could provide a range of measures, contextualised, and set against the most recent Ofsted judgement and SIP judgements. Only issues which could lead to the identification of specific staff or pupils should be avoided.

24. The school report card could be a sound basis for informing parents about a range of issues alongside the easily measurable outcomes, as well as describing the school's priorities which would provide a new openness of purpose. It could also contribute to Ofsted's risk assessment process.

25. If the school report card also acted as a compliance document then government could use it as a policy driver.

26. If the school report card was used to report compliance, then this would remove this aspect of the Ofsted process—except that the compliance would need to be checked from time to time. The other problem with using the school report card to replace some of the Ofsted reporting would be the danger of over complicating, and therefore lengthening, the report card which would defeat its purpose.

March 2009

Memorandum submitted by the Advisory Centre for Education

Summary

Accountability: ACE believes that *all* schools need to be more broadly, publicly accountable for the service they provide and answerable not only for educational attainment, but also for the way in which they deal with broader issues such as poor behaviour, bullying, discrimination and special educational needs, as well as for the level of communication that exists with parents; how they deal with parental concerns and complaints and their level of regulatory compliance. By *all* schools we include Academies and City Technology Colleges. ACE strongly believes that no real accountability can be claimed to exist until these schools have been brought fully within the ambit of national education law.

Inspection: ACE is of the view that regular independent, physical inspections of schools are vital for providing accountability and improving standards. We believe that Ofsted inspections should not be reduced, either because of previous good Ofsted reports or because any new system (such as the Report Card system recently consulted on by the DCSF) purports to provide a similar service, as in our view, no system which relies on reported data can match physical inspection. However, we believe that Ofsted's inspection system would be improved if *no prior notice* were given of inspections.

Report Cards: ACE broadly welcomes the new Report Card initiative, but is of the view that it will only work well if (i) the right categories of performance are used and (ii) the full data on which the statistics are based are made available to parents on the same website. In terms of (i), ACE advocates two additional categories: "parental complaints" and "regulatory compliance". Further, ACE is not in favour of schools being given one overarching score on the Report Cards, as we believe this could be misleading.

About ACE

The Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) is a national charity which advises parents, carers, governors, local authorities and others on education law and practice in the state sector for children of compulsory school age. We run a free telephone advice service and a free texting service and are thus in daily contact with people experiencing a variety of educational issues.

ACE also delivers training on education law issues (eg school admissions, exclusions, special educational needs, disability and attendance issues) to local authority officers, school head teachers, governors and staff, voluntary sector advisers, admission and exclusion appeal panel members and clerks, and lawyers.

We regularly respond to DCSF consultations (both formal and informal), and have meetings with DCSF civil servants and ministers to discuss policy and legal issues. The statutory exclusions guidance *(Improving Behaviour and Attendance: Guidance on Exclusion from Schools and Pupil Referral Units, Sept 08 (00573-2008DOM-EN))* states in paragraph 89f that schools/PRUs should advise parents/carers of ACE's contact details when their child is excluded if they wish to receive independent advice. We have recently contributed both written and oral evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Merits of Statutory

Instruments for their investigation into the effectiveness of statutory instruments in education law. We also recently made a written submission to the DCSF in response to a consultation paper (*A New Way of Handling Parents' Complaints about school issues)* which covered issues of school accountability.

Response to Consultation Questions

We have based what follows on some of the questions listed by the Committee on its website.

1. Accountability

1.1 *Broadening accountability*

Certain key areas of concern to parents come up on our telephone advice service time and time again and we believe schools should be held accountable for all of them. School accountability should not just cover educational attainment, but the way in which schools deliver their services and the overall experience had by children who attend them. The areas of concern that we have identified by talking to parents are:

(a) Child-focused issues

Schools should be held to account about how they *view* the following issues (in terms of the policies they adopt) and what they *do* about them (ie how their policies on these issues are implemented and how effective they are), by making it obligatory for schools to publish the following kinds of data about the issues and to keep it updated:

(i) *Behavioural issues*

- the school discipline policy and its implementation (reasons for detentions, rewards and sanctions etc);
- numbers and types of exclusions, including repeat exclusions and exclusion among vulnerable groups in the school, such as children with SEN and looked after children;
- number of permanent exclusions challenged before an Independent Appeal Panel; and
- whether Day 6 provision was made in relevant cases.

(ii) *Bullying*

- the school anti-bullying policy and what steps they take to integrate the policy into school life (anti-bullying discussions with pupils etc); and
- numbers of incidents reported, how swiftly and well they were resolved and whether resolution has been permanent.

(iii) *Discrimination*

- how they meet their various equality duties;
- details of any steps taken to prevent pupils with disabilities being treated less favourably; and
- any racist incidents and what was done about them etc.

(iv) *Poor attendance*

- data on authorised and unauthorised absences and the school's response to these.

(v) *Special Educational needs*

- the school SEN policy, its implementation and effectiveness;
- how many children are on the SEN register;
- how delegated funding is distributed;
- whether the needs of children with Statements are being met (with personal details anonymised); and
- outcomes of any consultation with LAs on SEN provision.

(vi) *Pastoral support and support for vulnerable children*

- the availability of pastoral support schemes such as mentors, counselling, buddy schemes and their effectiveness;
- the school's child protection policy, its implementation and effectiveness;
- whether vulnerable groups are integrated well (eg Looked After Children, Traveller children); and
- whether the school ensures that any children with special entitlements (eg to free school meals) are receiving them.

(b) Communication, compliance and management

Schools should also be held accountable for how well they:

(i) *Communicate with parents*

— based on surveys of parent's views; and

— including any steps taken to develop or strengthen community links.

(ii) *Deal with complaints*

— ie made to the school and governors and their nature, including surveys of parental satisfaction with the process (though not outcome).

(iii) *Manage*

— their budgets, including a full financial statement;

— compliance with financial best practice;

— make staffing arrangements; and

— ensure fair charging policies.

(iv) *Comply*

— with the whole range of their legal obligations (see 3.1(b) below); and

— and ensure the 5 *Every Child Matters* outcomes are reflected in each possible aspect of the school's policies and procedures.

1.2 *Academies*

There is a worrying deficit of public accountability at the moment in certain types of schools, namely Academies and City Technology Colleges. We believe that remedying that by bringing these institutions under the ambit of all aspects of education law as it applies to the state system should be the first priority of government in any serious attempt to improve the accountability of schools.

2. Inspection

2.1 *General*

It is vital that there should continue to be an independent inspectorate which inspects regularly and thoroughly and that all inspections should continue to be made public. The kind of information contained in Ofsted reports is very important for parents, for example, in identifying schools that are appropriate for their children.

2.2 *No reduction in inspections*

ACE has concerns about the practice of reducing the number of inspections based on past performance, as schools can change very quickly, as a result, for example, of turnover of staff. Neither are we in favour of reducing physical inspections on the basis that the Report Card data indicates a school is doing well. We believe that Ofsted inspections should be carried out with the same regularity for all schools within the state system and should be made in the same depth in all cases. The value of independent physical inspection cannot be under-estimated.

2.3 *No advance notice*

The current system makes it far too easy for schools to give a good impression on the day of an inspection. ACE believes this could be remedied if schools were given no warning at all of inspections. It is very easy for schools to prepare for inspections if they know the date of them. Parents tell us of schools which prepare the lessons with the children and simply repeat them when Ofsted are there and ones which ask parents of children with special educational needs, particularly those with ASD or ADHD, to keep their children at home during an inspection. This can give a false impression and undermine the inspection process. These problems would be avoided if Ofsted arrived unannounced.

3. School Report Card

We are concerned that although the Report Card system, as envisaged in the recent Report Card Consultation, may seem to provide wider accountability, in practice there are certain difficulties with it that may impede its functioning. These are:

3.1 *Additional performance categories*

The proposed Report Card does not cover two essential areas. We believe there should be performance categories for:

(a) Parental complaints

ACE is of the view that the number of complaints made to a school or about one is crucial to ascertaining a school's overall performance. Statistics relating to the number and broad substance of complaints would highlight any areas where parents have felt aggrieved. This feeds into another of the Government's stated desires—to improve the complaints system by making it mandatory to have a complaints procedure and to improve and open the channels of communication between parents and schools. (See DCSF Consultation on: *A New Way of Handling Parents' Complaints about school issues*, 2008) Parents should be asked about how the complaint was handled and whether the process was fair (though not its factual detail or its outcome).

(b) Regulatory compliance

ACE believes that a key factor in improving the accountability of schools is to evaluate to what extent schools are in compliance with their legal obligations in all areas that impact on schools. Crucially, their compliance with, for example (but without limitation):

(i) the law on exclusions (notably, as contained in the *Guidance on Improving Behaviour and Attendance*);

(ii) attendance (*inter alia,* as contained in the *Keeping Pupil Registers* and the *Absence and Attendance* Codes);

(iii) special educational needs (in particular, the *SEN Code of Practice*);

(iv) data protection and freedom of information law as it applies to schools (in particular the *Education (Pupil Information) Regulations*);

(v) law and good practice surrounding tackling bullying;

(vi) anti-discrimination law (for example, the *Disability Discrimination Act 2005*);

(vii) health and safety law; and

(viii) "safeguarding" obligations (notably under the *Children Act 2004*) and their obligations and good practice in relation to the *Every Child Matters* agenda.

Much of ACE's day-to-day work centres around compliance issues and we regard this as an essential factor in school accountability and one that is currently given far less emphasis than we believe is necessary.

3.2 *Depth of data*

As we understand it, the proposed Report Card will simply be a one-page online document. We are concerned that such a "flat" document will not provide sufficient information to parents and we propose that all the data upon which the front page is based should be available to parents by clicking through to underlying pages. In this way, parents will have the facility to drill down to a greater depth and find out about particular areas of interest to them.

For example, a parent may have a particularly sensitive child and may be looking for a school that has a good anti-bullying policy and takes positive steps to tackle bullying. The proposed one-page document would not give the parent any indication at all about this, but if the data on which, for example the performance category of "wider outcomes", was based could be accessed by clicking on that category, that parent could find out exactly what he or she needs to know.

This *depth of data* would, we believe, provide real value for parents, many of whom could not possibly be satisfied by the headline figure(s) provided on the front page alone. This is particularly important now that school governors are no longer required to produce an annual report for parents and that the Report Card consultation has suggested the phasing out of the School Profile.

3.3 *One overall score*

We do not agree that schools should be given one overall score on the Report Card, as amalgamating unrelated types of evaluation may give a misleading impression. One overall score seems to us to be too blunt an instrument to describe the complexity of any school.

March 2009

Witnesses: **David Butler**, Chief Executive, National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations, **Clare Collins**, National Governors Association, and **Deborah Ishihara**, Advisory Centre for Education, gave evidence.

Q231 Chairman: I welcome Deborah Ishihara and Clare Collins to our deliberations. David Butler will join us imminently. You heard my introduction when I said that we are very grateful for your help in the inquiry. You represent two sectors that are most important to us. I hope that you will bear with us in the sense that we are trying to cram a quart into a pint pot, so we are going to bombard you with questions. We are looking at the accountability of the education system. We are where we are. You heard what the other people said in the previous session. Do we need change, Deborah?
Deborah Ishihara: Do we need change to what is presented to parents? Yes, in that sense, we do. In our view, there is not enough emphasis on compliance. Education attainment seems to be the main criterion at the moment. That doesn't give enough information to parents. We get calls every day about all sorts of other issues, such as bullying, exclusions, SEN and so forth. We hear from parents that they need more information of different sorts. What they are really interested in is whether their children will be happy at a school and whether they will be supported at a school. The information that they have to hand doesn't really address some of those issues.
Clare Collins: Do we need change?

Q232 Chairman: Are we happy with the system as it is?
Clare Collins: No, we need an incremental change. We need to strengthen it. I represent school governing bodies. It is absolutely crucial that we clarify the role of the governing body as an accountable body for schools. If we do that and strengthen governance, we will strengthen accountability, and that will be a good thing for schools.

Q233 Chairman: It is interesting that, in the previous evidence session, they hardly mentioned governing bodies.
Clare Collins: It is not just interesting, it is quite worrying. Not only did they not mention governing bodies very much—
Chairman: Welcome, David Butler.
David Butler: Thank you, Chairman.
Clare Collins: Doing my homework, as I obviously did for this, I read the other submissions. There was a huge number of pages of dense text, with no mention of the governing body.
Chairman: Thank you for that. David, are you getting your breath?
David Butler: I am, yes. I have just run up from Black Rod's. Thank you very much, Chairman.

Q234 Chairman: Do we need an inquiry? Do we need to write a report on this or is everything in the garden lovely?
David Butler: No. Several things could be said about this. I welcome the opportunity to present evidence to the Committee. We have sent in a written submission. I only finished it last night at the office, but you may have got it this morning.
Chairman: David, we have got it. Don't worry about it—don't repeat it.
David Butler: Fine. I am really happy to take any questions on it or any additional questions that you might have.
Chairman: That is what we have got you here for.

Q235 Mr Stuart: Governing bodies are supposed to hold the head teacher to account for the school's performance, so should we have all the multiple layers of other levels of accountability? Is that confusing the situation and stopping a more effective accountable system that is based on governors?
Clare Collins: We agree that we have multiple accountability, but it needs clarifying. We have other aspects of the system. If it was made clear that they fed their information to the governing body, that would bring a focus to the role of the governing body, which would mean that you could streamline accountability and make it more effective. Listening to the last submissions was very interesting. Ofsted and the school improvement partners programme role are vital in looking at different levels of information, with people coming in with different expertise. That builds a picture so that you can ascertain whether the school is providing a good basis for the children's learning and whether they are making progress.

Q236 Mr Stuart: Deborah, is a good and effective governing body regarded as a peculiar bonus, rather than as something that can be taken for granted? Are all these other structures in place because no one relies on governing bodies to do their job?
Deborah Ishihara: I would not say no one relies on governing bodies. It is very useful when you have a good, independent check and balance on the school through the governing body. That does not always happen, but we advise parents daily that if they have a problem with the school, they can go and talk to the school, but if that has no effect, they can go to the governing body and ask it to act as a check and balance on what has happened. We strongly support

the role of governors in terms of accountability. In our submission, if we talk about schools, we are really talking about the governing body and its role as a check and balance on the school, and we very much support governing bodies.

Q237 Mr Stuart: Do you think that governing bodies are effective, David? In particular, do they fulfil their role of putting out tentacles into the local community, genuinely grounding the school and making every school a community school? Are they working?

David Butler: In the main, governing bodies are working. Clearly, like anything else, you have examples of really excellent practice, but you also have examples of practice that is not so excellent. In regard to the line of questioning that we are having at the moment, I would say that our research, which was probably submitted to you just this morning, suggests that parents are interested in public accountability. There is also evidence from our research that they would like to see some, let us say, cross-comparators—in other words, some form of national basis on which they can examine schools and make sure that things are accountable. That would predicate in favour of something that is beyond the governing body. The governing body can do an excellent job locally, but if you want to go beyond that, you may need something else.

Q238 Mr Stuart: In practical terms, what can governing bodies do to improve school performance? Clare?

Chairman: Clare, can you reposition yourself slightly in front of the microphone, because your voice is not coming over quite so strongly. Remember, those microphones were used by Gladstone.

Clare Collins: Sorry, are we talking about what governing bodies can do to hold schools to account?

Mr Stuart: To improve school performance.

Clare Collins: In terms of improving school performance, the governing body is there to challenge, focus and use the information that is available to it. It is there to influence and, in terms of putting out tentacles into the community, it can perhaps broker support between the school and the local authority or whatever to make sure that the school has what it needs to do the job that it is supposed to be doing.

Q239 Mr Stuart: With the previous panel, I described two levels of accountability. One was about the institution—the school—and involved leadership, the ethos and planning for a rich learning experience. There is also the individual teaching quality. Is the governing body equally effective at ensuring that we have a high-quality institution and at challenging poor teaching so that we have high-quality teaching?

Clare Collins: There are about three levels to that question. First, in terms of understanding what happens with the institution, the governing body has what it needs, with everything else that is coming in. Governing bodies should get reports regularly—at least termly—on the quality of teaching in the school. What the governing body does in response to that to make sure that the school follows through is problematic, and there are real issues about responding to poor teaching and about what is out there to help you deal with that. Risk-averse local authority HR departments can make things difficult, and that is extremely frustrating for governing bodies when they are sitting there saying, "This teacher is still performing poorly. We are still looking at yet another intervention. We want something to happen."

Q240 Mr Stuart: Leaving aside the institutional level, we need excellent teachers, and we need to remove those who are below an acceptable standard. Do you think that governing bodies are effective in trying to ensure both those things? Do they need additional powers? What would help them to be able to challenge risk-averse local authorities and get the powers to take action?

David Butler: Governing bodies are already an effective tool at a school level and also, to a degree, at a community level as well. Remember that part of the responsibility for some schools now moves into the area of extended services. If you look at governors being, let us call them, the board of the school, they are the people who are ultimately responsible for the strategic vision. It is their job to ensure that what is in place will actually deliver what parents want, if you like, from my perspective, which is an effective piece of teaching and learning for the children at that school. Yes, they can do that, and yes, they have the powers to do that, but as Clare has already cited, there are instances where sometimes local authorities may not be quite on stream with the governing body, which just makes it a little bit more difficult for them to perform their role. I suspect that the powers are there, and it is not a question of saying that we should give them additional powers.

Chairman: Fiona wants to come in on this point.

Fiona Mactaggart: No, I wanted to come in on the point about governing bodies generally as soon as Graham is finished.

Q241 Mr Stuart: Deborah, can I follow up on that, particularly focusing on being able to tackle teaching underperformance?

Deborah Ishihara: That is very difficult. From what we hear on the telephone lines, if a parent has an issue with a teacher because of things that are going on in the classroom, that is almost our most difficult question: how to get at the school to address that without completely destroying the relationship between the parent and child and the school. From our perspective, what we need to see is the ability of governors to act independently, as I have said before, as a check and balance on the school. Very often they can do so, but there are occasions when they can't. For instance, with exclusions, I have heard of governors who make the decision to exclude a child along with the head. In which case, when parents want to go and make representations to the governors about the exclusion, and they worked together with the head in coming to that decision, it is not a proper independent process. I have also

heard on the lines about cases where the governors are completely circumvented. I heard of one case a few weeks ago where a year 11 pupil had been excluded for allegedly kicking another boy, but his father said that he had reason to believe that his son had not done it. He was excluded for an indefinite period until a meeting could be held. Then, when the meeting was held, they said, "You can come back to school for one hour a week, indefinitely," which was not exactly an education. The parent said, "I want to complain to the governors about this," and the head said, "No, you can't. I'm a governor, and I've made my decision." I was completely horrified by that.

Chairman: Can you repeat that?

Deborah Ishihara: "No, you can't complain to the governors. I'm a governor, and I've made my decision." The head was on the governing body, which is fine—the head can be on the governing body—but not saying, "I'm the governor, and I've made my decision." As I said, I was horrified by that. I have to say that at ACE, we hear about poor practice day in, day out, so we come out with a skewed vision of the world. I know that there is a lot of good practice out there, but equally, we do come across things that need to be addressed.

Q242 Mr Stuart: The requirement to produce an annual report was phased out, and many governing bodies seized the opportunity not to produce one. If governing bodies do not publish their views on the performance of the school and share them with the parents, is it any surprise that they are perceived, not least by Ofsted, as being less important in the overall accountability system?

David Butler: If I may be so bold, that is perhaps a red herring. I think that there were a number of reasons why annual governing reports disappeared. I dare to suggest that part of the reason why they disappeared was the considerable lack of interest from parents who wanted to attend a particular annual meeting. I have served my time as governor and gone along to such meetings to find that the governing body outnumbered the parents. Let us not lose sight of the fact that parents want good information and accountability. We must find what is effective today rather than say we should simply bring back the annual reports for governors. That is one tool, but perhaps it is not the most appropriate one. There are other things that we could do today and we should concentrate on that.

Q243 Mr Stuart: Such as?

David Butler: We have heard hints that a school report card should be introduced. Our research that we put before you last night shows that there is substantial parental favour for that report card.

Q244 Mr Stuart: But that doesn't empower governors, does it? It seems to further sideline external people who come in.

David Butler: I don't think so because it becomes part of the overall accountability process. It would not be fair for us to look at single segments of accountability; there are many things that we can look at. Ofsted is one, as are governors' impact, school report cards, exam results and so on.

Clare Collins: I want to clarify that what we seized on was the discontinued requirement to have an annual meeting. There were a lot of governing bodies in schools that were very happy to carry on producing a report of some sort. It was long and unwieldy, and most of us are in favour of the school report card as a replacement for that. Much of the stuff that has been reported on by the Government's reports is reported on elsewhere.

Chairman: Deborah, respond to Graham and then I shall move on to Fiona.

Deborah Ishihara: Not having an annual report by the governors is a bit of a shame because they produced a lot of very good stuff. In our written submission, we looked back at what governors were supposed to produce and thought that it was very good and included some of those things. I am not sure whether the report card will replace all that, but we are clear that a lot more detail needs to be produced for parents.

Q245 Chairman: Are you based in Cambridge?

Deborah Ishihara: No.

Chairman: Where is your base?

Deborah Ishihara: Islington.

Clare Collins: One of the things that fell out when the annual report died was any financial reporting.

Mr Stuart: It was killed—it didn't die.

Clare Collins: That is a personal view. It is a shame that there isn't a public report every year on the school's finances.

Q246 Fiona Mactaggart: In your submission, you used ACE's experience in representing children and parents in dispute with schools to suggest that some of the reports will not include things that are important to parents and schools. If we had a report card, it would not necessarily include those things.

Deborah Ishihara: We wanted to add two categories—parental complaints and regulatory compliance. We think that those two things will work together well. If you are talking about accountability, you can talk about educational attainment, but that is only one aspect of it. From our perspective, it is about regulatory compliance, but that is difficult to pin down. It is easy to say to schools, "We will produce something that explains how you are complying with the law." However, you also need a parental complaints section in which you can see if there are any discrepancies. For example, a school will say—as sometimes happens on our phone lines—"There is no bullying issue here. We have no bullying in our schools." If something such as that is expressed in a report card on the part of the school and yet there are several complaints about bullying from parents, then you have something you can use to say, "There is clearly a discrepancy here." Ofsted could use that and make a comment in its reports about regulatory compliance. It is difficult to get a handle on the issue, but that would be one way of doing it.

Q247 Fiona Mactaggart: I was struck by what you were saying in response to Graham, which is that you tend to see the hard end. Because you represent people when they are in dispute with a school, you tend to see the system when it is in failure. I am concerned that, at present, we do not have sensible enough mechanisms to deal with those schools that, for example, turn too quickly to exclusion or expulsion, or where the governors are in the pocket of the head teacher and always back that decision. I don't know about the case that you were talking about, but I can think of a school in my constituency where it is quite probable that the whole governing body would say, "Oh yes, our head teacher is absolutely right and that child can happily be educated for an hour a week." One of the things that I have found—this is a school that is very successful in its results—is that is it difficult to find any mechanism that can hold that school to account about that issue. It educates the children—it educates fine— but guess what? The children that the head teacher doesn't like—it sometimes feels like—get picked on, excluded, and the whole thing is silenced. I am interested—not just for the general report of the Committee—in how we could have a better system of accountability about things like that.

Deborah Ishihara: I think that you have hit on a very good point here. The better that schools do in educational attainment, sometimes the worse they are doing in these other factors. A rebalancing is needed here. It is very easy for schools, say with something like SEN, to concentrate on getting good educational attainment and therefore be less happy to deal with children who don't fit that mould or who are vulnerable in some way. So you get very skewed emphasis in schools, which means that in some ways the better a school is doing is perhaps, for some children, the worse it is doing. That is the kind of information that it is very difficult for parents to get at, which is why I think you need a whole range of factors to be made clear, and to be put in one place as well, which is why the report card would be good—via the report card, you could access all this information. What you find is that most parents are happy to have a few fairly simple overall marks to do with the school, but other parents, who have a child with SEN or is vulnerable in some way, would need something much more detailed. Exclusions are a very good example; they are often linked to SEN. The other day we had a case in which a boy with SEN was officially excluded for three days, which was all fine—he had a proper letter etc—but at a reintegration meeting he was then told that he could only come in from now on in the mornings, between 9 am and 11.30 am. There was nothing in writing and no end point was set. It is not just a matter of how proper exclusions are done; it is how we get a lot of informal—therefore, illegal—exclusions. It would be very difficult to hold a school to account for that. As I said, we think that you can possibly do it by making a public statement about what you do in a range of circumstances: how you comply with the law, which is asking the school by implication to state publicly that what it says is true, but also to have some other checks and balances in the system, including the governors, but also parental complaints. So, you can get in there in some way.

Q248 Fiona Mactaggart: Does the school have a duty to record and report to governors all parental complaints?

Clare Collins: Yes.

Q249 Fiona Mactaggart: Do all schools do it?

Clare Collins: It is formal complaints.

Q250 Fiona Mactaggart: Does a parent know what a formal complaint is?

Deborah Ishihara: Not necessarily.

Clare Collins: And governing bodies don't. It is one of the difficult jobs that a chair of governors often has to do, which is to make the decision that a complaint goes formal—you are almost looking for the worst to be put in front of you, for the parents to say, "I am making a formal complaint." A lot of parents don't know. You give them the complaints procedure—every school has to have a complaints policy—and point out to them, which is what I do as a chair of governors, that this is the process and ask at what point each side would want to make the complaint formal. I would then set up the process to make it happen, and my clerk would make the process happen. However, what you are looking at is actually a quite sophisticated level of process and of judgement-making. I started this evidence session by saying that strengthening governance means that you need to have better training for governing bodies and for chairs of governing bodies who are having to make such tricky decisions. It is important that the decisions are right.

Chairman: Do you want briefly to give me an answer on that one, David?

David Butler: I am conscious that this echoes some of the points that we put in our own submission about the accessibility of the complaints processes generally. Our submission makes some comments in relation to the Ofsted complaints process, for example, but it applies here as well. It is difficult sometimes for parents to access, understand and know the process. I am struck by what Clare is saying. Where good governance works, it can help parents to understand the process, but that is only when you have very good chairs of governors and very good systems. One of the factors that could make things more accessible is making the language more straightforward. That would be very helpful.

Chairman: We are hard against time, so I call Edward to take us through to the next session.

Q251 Mr Timpson: David, could I pick you up on the submission to which you just referred. One of the striking findings from your questioning of parents to get their view of the current system of school accountability was that 96% say that they have a greater demand for schools to be assessed on a wider range of measures. That it is extremely high—you don't need me to tell you that. What wider measures

are parents looking for from schools to ensure that the performance of the school that their child attends is at the level that they want it to be?

David Butler: We initially asked them whether they find things like exam and test results helpful as a measure of accountability. The answer was yes, they do, but that was about 75% or 76%. We went on and asked whether they would appreciate a wider range of measures on which they could judge the school, which is what is proposed in the school report card, and there was, if you like, near universal agreement. One debate to have is on what those wider measures should be. Our suggestion in our submission is that a good starting point would be the various factors that we have in the documentation on Every Child Matters, but, as we heard earlier from Deborah, it is possible that we should introduce an additional feature. I do not think that the debate on what should be in the school report card has ended—there is still a lot of debate to be had—but we are seeing that parents are very interested in having that more holistic view, rather than just a single public pronouncement of exam results.

Q252 Mr Timpson: There are two different angles from which parents may be coming at this. First, if their child is already at a school, they want to know how that school is performing as the child goes through it. Secondly, some are looking to send their child to a school and making a choice. What type of information do parents want when they are looking to choose a school, as opposed to when they are looking at the accountability of a school that their child is already at? Is there any differential?

David Butler: I would go back to my point about that wider range of measures. I will give the example of when we were looking at an appropriate secondary school for my son. To a large extent, we put to one side the issues of effective learning and teaching because he presented as someone who ought to do reasonably well, but he had a strong interest in music. We were therefore looking at what music offerings available schools had and at how he could best access them. That was us making a decision for our child. If you have two or three children, you might be looking at two or three different things, because they are not all the same, as we know. You are then looking at what you might call the additional features. How do schools encourage sport, extra-curricular activity or art and drama? How is the child's health and well-being looked after at school? We have got a high level of encouragement and favour for the school report card because it gives those measures.

Deborah Ishihara: We hear every day that it is very individual, actually. Obviously, educational attainment is one aspect. However, you may have a child, for example, who you know is very sensitive and who has had difficulty with bullying in their primary school. Therefore, you want to know what sort of things a secondary school would do to address that problem. Does it have good supervision, or a good, strong anti-bullying policy? What does the school do if there is a problem, and how supportive is it? That is just one example, but there are many different cases where individual parents come to us and say, "How do I find out about this?"

Clare Collins: Absolutely, parents are concerned about attainment levels in school and we hope that they are as concerned with progress levels. Those levels will be the next thing that parents will focus on, as there is more data about it and parents become more familiar with that data. In our experience, however, parents are incredibly concerned about behaviour in school. Certainly, schools get a "name" for behaviour and a "name" for dealing with bullying, or for not dealing with those issues, as the case may be. How decisions are made on those sorts of issues is, I think, quite complicated. We would also say that the profile of the school is important for parents when they are choosing a school. Above all, however, we would say that a lot of parents don't have a choice of school and the school that they need to be good is the one that is down the road. Every child in this country should have the right to go to a good local school.

Q253 Mr Timpson: I want to go back to Deborah's point that each parent is perhaps looking for something individual for their child and they are concerned about what the school has to meet those needs. Given that, how do we go about encapsulating all those separate views and all those different levels of engagement with the education system that parents have?

Deborah Ishihara: That is why we support the principle of having a lot of information available. For instance, if you have a report card, whatever way it is set out you might have a simple front page where there is quite simple data, but parents would need to be able to drill down to what exactly it is that they as individuals are looking for. That is why we suggest that approach.

Chairman: We are getting some good information here.

Q254 Mr Timpson: One of the points that was raised in the previous session was that children learn as much, if not more, outside of school as they do in school. Some schools are very good at engaging children with after-school clubs, school trips and other activities that are generated by the school. How would that sort of information be made readily available to parents in a report card, if a report card is the type of model that you are all advocating? Perhaps I should have asked before if that is the type of model that you are all advocating, but I know that both David and Deborah have spoken about a report card in a positive sense. So, should that type of information about activities outside school be available to parents too?

Clare Collins: It should be quite easy to capture that information; it is already captured in school prospectuses. What is more important is that we don't just capture certain children. There will always be the A team, who will play football after school. What you are looking for is whether or not you are capturing those kids who are the C team. They like to play football, even though they will not represent

the school, and it will do them good to play football and be part of the school, or whatever; football is a simple example. If you can't capture that information, then we might as well all go home.
Chairman: Excellent. I like that.

Q255 Mr Timpson: I would just like to put two more short questions. I know that we all have our individual cases, but from my perspective the relationship that you have with your child's teacher is extremely important. That goes back to Graham's point that you need to have good teachers, because the type of information that they can give you as a parent is much better than anything you can get that is written down on a piece of paper. However, teacher turnover is something that a lot of my constituents complain to me about, in that they have to engage with a new teacher almost on an annual basis and sometimes with two or three teachers within a school year. Is that type of information something that we would want, as a progressive part of the child's education, so that the school's turnover of teachers can be taken into consideration by parents when they are choosing a school?
Deborah Ishihara: I think that we have actually put in as one of the categories in our written submission that staffing arrangements should be reported on.
David Butler: If you have a good school, a good institution, you rely on your leadership team to deliver a good experience for the children who attend it. Teachers will leave; they might progress and go on to another role at another school, and I think that it is important that the leadership team recognises that. There comes a point when we have to be able to trust some aspects of the system, so I am not sure whether we want to micro-manage too much, but I recognise that if you have a school where every teacher seems to stay only for a term, that gives cause for concern. I want to return to the issue of information flow and how we can ensure that we get information to parents, as well as what information they want to base their selection on. This relates to what you have talked about regarding teachers being able to tell parents about their children. I know that there is progress and I am pleased to see it in terms of making more information available electronically, which I wholly support. But I would not like to see—I do not believe that parents would like to see this either—that replace the opportunity for parents to talk to their child's teacher. Previous research, which is not contained in this submission, has told us that what parents value most is the opportunity for a face-to-face discussion with their child's teacher, because that is when they learn about their child.

Q256 Mr Heppell: I think that I agree with your point about parents, but surely the new technology is very valuable. I remember that what really frustrated me in relation to my own children was finding out that things were wrong only when I had a face-to-face meeting at the end of each year, when I would be told about something that had been happening for nine months. I like the idea of being able to tap into something where I can look and see what is happening with behaviour and homework. As parents, we have all had the experience of asking our children, "What homework have you got?" and the answer being, "None." That can go on for weeks.
David Butler: I would absolutely support that, but what I am really saying is please do not make that the only thing available to parents. You are quite right that if you have a good school, a doorway is opening into the information system—most of them now have very good information systems—whereby parents can get answers to questions about whether the homework has been given in, what the homework is for next week, and how a child's attendance and behaviour is. That valuable information should be shared, but please don't remove the opportunity for parents to talk to teachers at the same time.

Q257 Mr Heppell: I think that I accept that, but I don't want people to be dismissive of new technology. There is an idea that parents will somehow not be able to manage it, but everybody of a younger generation texts and uses the internet all the time.
David Butler: I wish to put in one caveat, which is that while I believe the ability of parents to grasp such information has grown enormously, when we start to bring this in, let us please encourage those who are delivering it to ensure that it is accessible and that all parents, particularly those in disadvantaged areas and those whose first language might not be English, can understand it.
Chairman: Okay, we are going to move on.

Q258 Mr Chaytor: Can I ask Clare and David specifically, in terms of the identification of schools for school improvement programmes, do you have any evidence of situations where governors or parents are utterly outraged by the choice of their school? That is to say, is there ever a conflict between the perceptions of governors and parents on the one hand, and the criteria established by Ofsted for school improvement programmes on the other?
Clare Collins: Are you asking whether, if Ofsted puts a school in a category, for example, that surprises people?
Mr Chaytor: Yes.
Clare Collins: Absolutely; there is evidence of that.

Q259 Mr Chaytor: I want to try to assess the scale of the problem. There are always going to be isolated instances where some governor says, "Our school isn't that bad," and so on, but what is the scale of the mismatch between the perception of governors and parents, and the perception of Ofsted?
Clare Collins: I cannot give you hard figures. In my local authority there have been some very nasty surprises in the last couple of years—that should not be happening at this stage of the game—but there is also the other end of the spectrum where the data are so sophisticated that schools that are, in effect, coasting schools are being identified. I think that we have had our first grammar school being put into an Ofsted category, and there has been shock, horror on a lot of faces. I have to say, though, that we have got

to welcome that, because it is not just that the poor schools have got to get better; but that the good schools should be even better.

Q260 Mr Chaytor: But what is your assessment overall of the criteria that Ofsted are using to determine the schools that need to improve?
Clare Collins: Are you asking whether the Ofsted criteria are sound?
Mr Chaytor: Yes.
Clare Collins: There was a survey of governors' views in the *TES* about a month ago. One question was whether they were happy with the Ofsted view of their school, and there was an 85% positive response. So, in essence, the answer is yes.

Q261 Mr Chaytor: Are there ways in which, when a school is identified for a school improvement process, that is either too punitive or too lenient? What are the issues around how you tackle this? Is naming and shaming the right way forward, or is a softly, softly approach more effective?
David Butler: I think that it is, to some extent, the concept of a little bit of shock, horror. We have heard Clare say that she has seen one or two peculiar shocks in her own local authority. I think that even if you take that across all schools, if they are presented with a situation where their school has been deemed to require some form of improvement, you are going to get the inward drawing of breath, because probably they thought everything was fine. If you then look at the other side of that, I believe that parents will welcome the fact that these issues have been identified, because it then opens up a number of doors whereby other measures can be put in to help to return that school to the level of performance that everybody would want. I think that you have got these two stages.
Clare Collins: Naming and shaming is a really tricky issue, but sadly, the shock tactics work. There is an element of, "Oh, my God, we'll put all the resources in and we'll make something happen." The danger is that you will go for quick fixes and not for longer-term sustainable system change. The real issue, though, is that a lot of parents out there know that the school is not great, but they don't have a choice—they don't have a voice either. The least advantaged communities don't have the power, the voice or the mechanisms, while the leafy suburbs will shout and scream until something is done. It is absolutely vital that there is a protective mechanism out there to make sure that things happen for those schools, because these are the children who need the most help.
David Butler: I was just going to add to that. I think that is why we put in our submission the need to ensure that parents understand the point at which they can trigger a concern, for example to Ofsted. We are even suggesting that perhaps Ofsted could do a little bit more to make it clear among parents what that process is so that they can actually voice their opinion. As Clare said, and I believe even Ofsted would agree, if they come in and find something—if they can dig—they often find that parents were aware of this in advance, and that is what we want to try and get to. Can we actually have that earlier intervention, because that is what we want? If you are going to have longer inspection periods, you do not want the thing to fall off the end of a cliff in the middle. You want them to be able to jump in and make sure we can do something and return the effectiveness as soon as possible.
Chairman: An effective empowerment of parents.

Q262 Mr Chaytor: That was my final question really. Is there more that could be done once the process has started to engage parents in the whole school improvement process?
David Butler: The fairly simple answer to that has to be yes, but the way that there is now a trend towards opening to the doors for parents to be able to flag concerns is really effective in its own right. We now have schools wanting to engage with their parent body much more, and our research tells us that there is more and more of that going on. That is to be encouraged and promoted, because they can become partners in that process.
Clare Collins: Again, building on where I opened about strengthening the system, you have now got the school's own self-evaluation, you have the school improvement validating that on at least an annual basis, and you have Ofsted coming in every three years, and that is coupled with shed loads of increasingly good-quality data that identify small groups of children, types of groups and so on. There are fewer and fewer hiding places for schools. Now if that is all captured on the school report card in a meaningful way, and Ofsted propose to risk assess using the school report card data, I think that we are going to get that.

Q263 Fiona Mactaggart: I am still interested in the difference between the presentation of a school and the reality for some of the participants in it. I am anxious that none of the things that we have come up with identify ways through that clearly enough, because a school can be a great school for lots of children, but not for some of the children. How, in an accountability system, can we surface that issue, which is really difficult, but absolutely essential?
Deborah Ishihara: One way that we could do that would be to ask Ofsted, when it comes in, to drill down to a greater depth. If the school has a particular profile and certain sorts of vulnerable children—Travellers, for example—and takes a sample of various groups of children, and then talks to the parents and child and sees how that child's needs are or are not being met by the school, it would use that level of drilled-down data to produce a comment on its reports. That would be one way, instead of headline figures, to try and actually drill-down to a great depth.
Clare Collins: I would like to say that Ofsted is in my primary school at the moment. The pre-inspection briefing report identified a small group of children in the very way that you are talking about. It won't talk to the parents, but it will, I imagine, talk to the children, because they are identified as a group that is perhaps not making the progress that it should be making. A lot of this is down to Ofsted.

David Butler: I am conscious that you have had to compress the session. I merely want to say, before you bring it to a close, that if there are additional questions that the Committee is interested in us addressing—

Chairman: David, I always finish by saying this is a get-to-know-you session and we will continue the relationship until we write the report.

David Butler: I am very happy to do that.

Chairman: One word from Graham before we finish.

Q264 Mr Stuart: Do your groups think that accountability would be improved by academies and, as with the other day's Conservative Front-Bench proposal, primary academies? Do you think freedom from local authority control and greater independence is actually going to improve accountability? Yes or no is all we have time for.

Deborah Ishihara: No, we don't think that is a good idea, unless academies are brought under the same rules of accountability as other maintained schools. They have quite a lot of freedom now to make their own rules now, so it is harder to hold them to account. We often get calls along the lines that indicate poor practice is going on. They are allowed to make their own rules. In theory, that should be fine, because they are accountable to the Secretary of State, but in fact sometimes the rules they make don't take into account the rules of natural justice and fairness. It is much easier if everybody has to follow the same rules.

Chairman: Clare, do you agree with that?

Clare Collins: The National Governors Association has huge issues about the accountability of academies. I am sitting on a transition body for a school that is going from a community school into an academy and it is a complete mystery to me, so no.

David Butler: Deborah is absolutely right. We should have a common system.

Chairman: Well, Andrew Adonis and Michael Gove might disagree with that, but we shall see. Thank you, everyone.

Wednesday 6 May 2009

Members present

Mr Barry Sheerman (Chairman)

Annette Brooke
Mr David Chaytor
Mr John Heppell
Paul Holmes
Fiona Mactaggart
Mr Andy Slaughter
Mr Graham Stuart
Mr Edward Timpson
Derek Twigg

Memorandum submitted by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

SUMMARY

1. Schools have been held to account through inspection for over 150 years, and there continues to be widespread public and professional support for clearly reported evaluations of their performance.

2. Independent inspection, by an external inspectorate that has a clear national perspective and resulting in a published report, in which direct observation of the school at work plays a significant role, has a key part to play in assuring accountability.

3. Good self-evaluation by schools, verified by external and independent inspection, is crucial.

4. Teachers and parents alike agree that school inspection is beneficial and promotes improvement.

5. A very large majority of headteachers say that school inspections are accurate, productive, identify the right issues and provide recommendations that are helpful in moving the school forwards.

6. Inspections rightly focus on the achievement and attainment of learners, although all five *Every Child Matters* outcomes are also evaluated. However, there is an opportunity to further develop the emphasis on these other outcomes, to improve the ways in which schools are held to account for their contribution to them, and how they are reported to stakeholders.

7. There is a need for external inspection because schools are organic, constantly changing organisations, so there is always a small risk of some becoming inadequate. Additionally, inspection has been a significant lever in driving the improvement of schools over the last 20 years and continues to do so as national expectations rise.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Is it right in principle that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance?

8. Maintained schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance. As publicly funded institutions, they are responsible for the outcomes for children and young people, including their standards of attainment, progress, personal development and well-being. Independent providers should also be held accountable for meeting government regulations.

9. School self-evaluation can be a powerful driver for improvement, particularly when aligned with inspection and public accountability.

What should be the fundamental purposes of an accountability system for schools and, in particular:

(a) *to whom should schools be accountable?*

10. Schools should be accountable to users; in particular learners, parents/carers, and the local community, so that leaders can be held responsible for their policies and stakeholders can assess the value of the service. There is a legitimate national interest in the welfare and education of all children, in all schools and settings. Schools should be held to account at local level by the appropriate authority, which is nationally accountable for local outcomes, and also to the taxpayer for making good use of funds provided.

(b) *for what should they be held accountable*

11. Maintained schools should be accountable for the educational and well-being outcomes for the children and young people for whom they are responsible. These are summarised under the five ECM headings:

— being healthy;

— staying safe;

— enjoying and achieving, including attainment;

— making a positive contribution; and

— achieving economic and social well-being, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

12. Schools should be held accountable for the value for money they provide. Independent schools should meet the government's regulations.

(c) *how should they be held to account?*

13. Although there should also be local accountability, external inspection is the key method for holding schools to public account and parents are overwhelmingly in favour of inspection. The September 2008 survey of parents by Ipsos Mori found that only 4% were against inspection whereas 92% were in favour. This exactly mirrors the findings of the 2006 Ipsos Mori survey. Ofsted inspection provides an objective and independent evaluation, by a national body, working to an agreed framework and with no direct interest in the outcomes. Inspection includes evidence from direct observation, and takes into account qualitative and quantitative measures including the views of learners and other users.

(d) *what should be the consequences?*

14. Reports about the quality and standard of the institution should be published. Where there are weaknesses, proportionate intervention should follow and focus on improving the quality and efficiency of services. Public accountability should ensure equality of opportunity for learners and provide assurance that schools meet the needs of individuals and society as a whole. Independent providers that do not meet statutory requirements should also be publicly held to account.

How do other countries hold their schools accountable for their performance and against what criteria?

15. Within Europe models for school accountability fit three broad types. Firstly, in the majority of countries, authorities such as inspectorates are responsible for independently evaluating schools. Inspectorates vary in their degree of independence from government. Inspection systems may be centralised or devolved to local government. The Netherlands approach is similar to that of England, using school self-evaluation and a risk-based approach to inspection. Inspections range from a one day annual assessment to a full inspection according to a set framework, with published reports. The inspectorate may also conduct "quality improvement inspections" where there are concerns about a school's performance or may initiate an inspection in response to external factors such as media reports or complaints.

16. In the second type, for example in Hungary and Norway, schools are accountable mainly to local authorities. In Norway, all schools have to evaluate pupils' results and progress, as well as their learning environments. The Regional Education Offices present to the Ministry annual reports based on statistical data, qualitative reporting and meetings with the education authorities in the municipalities and counties.

17. Other countries remain at the periphery of school inspection. Although schools are not inspected, they may be encouraged to perform self-evaluations, as in Italy.

18. Examination results are also used to hold schools accountable. In Hungary standardised tests, together with inspections, are used to evaluate schools. In Denmark the Danish Evaluation Institute carries out evaluations based on samples of schools. In the United States, under *No Child Left Behind*, there is a federal legislative requirement that schools must meet performance targets and make "adequate yearly progress"—measured by student achievement in tests, although the definition of this progress is decided by individual states.

Is the current accountability system of inspection and performance reporting for schools broadly fit for purpose?

19. We believe that the inspection system is fit for purpose, but as requirements change there is room to make it even better.

20. Ofsted's role in the present system is to inspect and regulate efficiently to promote excellence in schools; in 2007–08, we spent only £46 million on routine school inspection, yet our reports have a high public presence with a daily average of 14,437 viewings of reports on our website.[1] Inspections provide evidence about provision and outcomes in individual institutions. Ofsted also carries out inspections which focus on different aspects of provision; these give a national picture of strengths and weaknesses, for example in subjects and curriculum areas, and inform Ofsted's advice to the Secretary of State. They provide the basis for Ofsted to disseminate findings, including good practice, and to give institutions feedback to promote improvement.

21. Through the post-inspection online survey, the School Inspection Survey (SIS), we know that almost all respondent headteachers are positive about the inspection process. Of 4,229 responses in 2007–08:

— 92% believed judgements about their schools were fair and accurate;

— 96% intended to use the inspection recommendations to move their schools forward;

[1] During the period 1 September to 21 January 2009, 2,079,038 viewings of reports were made at an average of 54 per institution.

— 96% agreed that inspection identified the right issues for improvement; and

— 82% believed the benefits of inspection outweigh the negatives.

22. The outcomes of the SIS are consistent with an external evaluation of school inspection published in 2007 by the NFER.[2] This found that the vast majority (84%) of stakeholders thought the written report helpful in identifying areas for improvement and approximately three-quarters found it accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses. This research provided evidence that the inspection system contributes to improvement, reporting that "the majority of survey respondents (87%) and case-study schools (around two-thirds) reported that action had been initiated on the recommendations. Furthermore, follow-up interviews showed that almost all case-study schools were implementing all or most of their recommendations."

23. The current system has been successful in helping promote improvement; the proportion of good and outstanding schools has increased from 59% in 2005–06 to 64% in 2007–08.

24. In a recent survey of teachers' views, due to be published in February 2009, NFER also found that 85% of teachers thought inspections identified new areas of priority for their schools, while 86% regarded classroom observations as an important and welcome aspect of inspection.

25. Over time, Ofsted has emphasised the importance of self-evaluation as the basis for school improvement and has made it central to the inspection process. In parallel, there has been a clear improvement in the quality of school self-evaluation and the proportion judged good or outstanding has risen from 65% in 2005–06 to 72% in 2007–08.

26. The system also includes performance reporting through the Achievement and Attainment Tables by the DCSF; these provide detailed, annual information about which parents and carers value, although they have become increasingly complex.

How should schools be held accountable for their performance in the context of increasing collaboration in education provision?

27. Schools' partnerships should be taken into account. Ofsted is working with the DCSF to refine ways of evaluating partnerships more securely within the accountability framework, for example by inspecting members of key partnerships at the same time; by carrying out survey inspections to evaluate the effectiveness of specific partnerships such as 14–19 diploma consortia; and by strengthening the evaluation of the impact of partnership work on the achievement and well-being of pupils. Common principles are being developed which will enable inspectors to evaluate the impact of collaborative working in schools, early years' settings and colleges.

Inspection

Is an independent inspectorate an appropriate mechanism for holding schools to account?

28. We believe that it is an important part of the overall accountability framework. Independent inspectorates should be responsible for providing information to users. Only independent national inspectorates can be sufficiently separate from local or national government to comment fearlessly on findings, but they should be appropriately accountable to Parliament.[3] Public confidence requires the inspectorate to be demonstrably independent and they must be economically and contextually free of association with the providers they inspect.

What is the impact of the inspection process on school performance, including confidence, creativity and innovation?

29. Evaluations such as that by NFER (see Q6) indicate that inspections have a significant impact on performance, especially on the weakest schools. The study reported that "Amongst grade 4 schools, 95% reported taking action on Ofsted recommendations." Such schools report rapid improvement and even "satisfactory" schools have frequently responded to the inspection challenge by making improvements to leadership and management, teaching and assessment. Improved outcomes were apparent to the researchers, especially in primary schools. The 2007 NFER report also noted that good schools gained in confidence from the success of their inspection.

30. The main impact of inspection, identified consistently in independent surveys by organisations such as Ipsos Mori and NFER, is improved teaching and leadership and more secure monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress. The NFER teacher voice survey, 2008, showed clearly that 85% of teachers believed inspection had stimulated changes in teaching and learning and 88% believed it had led to new priorities being set. Headteachers also identify teaching as an area in which inspection has significant impact.

[2] NFER is currently engaged in a further evaluation of school inspection; publication is expected in spring 2009.

[3] Note that there are three other "independent" inspectorates which are authorised by DCSF to inspect sectors of independent schools. We have not considered the role of these here.

31. The Ipsos Mori parent survey (2008) showed that 82% of parents also believe that inspection contributes to school improvement, and only 5% are sceptical about its impact.

32. Survey work contributes to national policy and has identified strengths and weaknesses in schools' practice. Recent examples reported on mathematics, food, and pupils' personal, social and health education. The survey report *Curriculum Innovation in Schools*, October 2008, reported that school leaders often had to overcome resistance to curriculum change and an erroneous view that Ofsted "favoured" a specific model of curriculum delivery. In fact inspection judgements are determined much more by schools' impact on outcomes for learners rather than the style of curriculum delivery.

Are inspectors appropriately qualified and trained to carry out inspections, particularly in the light of the need to report against Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes?

33. We believe this is the case because all HMI undergo a rigorous selection and training process. Additional inspectors are also trained and extensively mentored, including supervised participation in "live" inspection and grounding in ECM outcomes and safeguarding. No inspectors may undertake inspection activity without supervision until HMI have declared they fulfil requirements. Every inspector is required to update their training to take account of any new inspection requirements. HMI lead many of the most complex inspections including 75% of secondary schools and 85% of schools causing concern. Inspectors are subject to rigorous performance management assessment and those whose performance is called into doubt are subject to tailored development programmes.

34. The new inspection arrangements for September 2009 contain updated clear, detailed guidance to enable inspectors to evaluate ECM outcomes effectively.

Is it appropriate for inspection reports to be placed in the public domain?

35. It is in the public interest for all school reports to be rapidly and openly published to promote school improvement, enhance parental choice, and to provide public information. Publication is a key element of accountability processes except for when the privacy or security of young people would be compromised. Published reports are very popular with users: there were nearly 2.1 million viewings of reports on the Ofsted website between 1 September 2008 and 21 January 2009, with the reports viewed more than 50 times for 15,989 institutions.

How often should inspections be carried out and how long and detailed should these inspections be?

36. It is important that parents/carers and others have regular information about the effectiveness of schools. Currently, in order to achieve this, schools are normally inspected once in a three-year period. In order to maximise the impact of finite resources, Ofsted is considering whether future inspections should be more targeted at those schools most needing improvement, and is proposing that, from September 2009, the best schools should be inspected once within five years. Ofsted proposes to publish a health check report for the good and outstanding schools whose inspections are deferred so that up-to-date information is available.

37. Inspection needs to involve sufficient first-hand observation to command the confidence of the school and enable inspectors to provide an accurate, rigorous analysis and diagnosis of its effectiveness. However, it should not place more demands on the school than are necessary. Neither should routine inspections be as onerous as they were before 2005. The quality and standard of particular subjects can be evaluated and reported on through Ofsted's thematic surveys.

How much notice, if any, should a school receive of an upcoming inspection?

38. Notice periods should be short. Since September 2005 maintained schools have been notified two working days prior to a planned inspection. Schools are broadly positive about this and a survey of parents (November 2008) indicated that almost all those surveyed believed the current notice was adequate. However, 65% of parents that responded to Ofsted's consultation would welcome an even shorter notice period.

39. Shorter notice periods have been found to reduce the stress of over-preparation. They also ensure inspectors see the "real school" and Ofsted is now piloting unannounced inspections of some maintained schools. Unannounced inspections may already be carried out if HMCI has concerns about the welfare of children.

40. Notice periods for all types of schools should be consistent. Currently, independent school inspectorates give a longer notice period than Ofsted.

In the context of an inspection, what is the value of:

- *— the school's self-assessment;*
- *— the results of national tests; and*
- *— the school's contextual value added scores;*

and how much weight should be attached to these elements in the inspection report?

41. The school's self-assessment engages staff and governors in assessing the quality of school provision and its outcomes. In summarising the school's strengths and areas for development, it is an invaluable starting point for inspection, signposting areas for investigation, and providing a basis for inspectors to evaluate the school's capacity to improve. By focusing on school self-evaluation, inspection has helped schools to understand what they need to do to improve.

42. National test data are valuable in inspection since they provide clear and standardised benchmarks of the standards attained by learners, against which their progress can be measured. Contextual value added (CVA) scores, alongside other data, provide invaluable information about the progress that individual learners make over time. They contribute significantly to evaluating a school's impact on learning when set alongside other more recent evidence. However, test and examination data and CVA information must always be compared with a range of other evidence including direct observation of lessons (and other parts of the school day), school self evaluations and other material, discussions with a wide range of staff and learners, evidence of parents' views and more recent school assessments in order to reach an holistic picture of the school's performance. Schools no longer feel that inspectors are over-reliant on data.[4]

In an inspection, how should emphasis be balanced between educational attainment and other aspects of a school's provision, such as the Every Child Matters outcomes?

43. The current inspection framework for maintained schools distinguishes between "standards of attainment" and the progress that learners make, given their capabilities and starting points. Most emphasis is given to pupils' progress rather than to attainment when judging how well "pupils achieve". The "other" ECM outcomes are considered separately as part of the pupils' personal development.

44. From September 2009, it is proposed that there is a change in the balance between attainment, pupils' progress and the quality of learning, and that attainment receives more emphasis than currently when inspectors judge how well "pupils achieve and enjoy". This judgement remains key in evaluating a school's performance but great importance will be attached to the other ECM outcomes as well. For example, schools will not be judged "good" overall unless pupils' achievement, behaviour, the extent to which they feel safe, and at least one other outcome are good, with none inadequate.

Should inspections be tailored to the current performance levels of the specific school being inspected and, if so, to what extent?

45. Inspection frequency should directly relate to the performance of the school.

46. Ofsted is proposing that from September 2009, the most successful schools should be inspected less frequently than currently. Sophisticated risk assessments which draw for example, on performance measures, previous inspection judgments and parents' and pupils' views, will be used to check that it remains appropriate to defer the inspection of these schools. The risk assessment process will provide an indication of the school's direction of travel—whether it is improving, static or declining.

47. There are no plans to reduce inspection frequency for satisfactory or inadequate schools. Satisfactory schools will continue to receive an institutional inspection after three years and those that show no signs of clear improvement will be scheduled for early inspection. Inadequate schools will continue to receive intensive monitoring.

Has the introduction of a light-touch inspection regime for higher-performing schools been appropriate?

48. Ofsted began the piloting of light touch inspections (named "reduced tariff inspection") in 2006. They were appropriate in reducing the tariff for the best performers, and have been effective. Our next plan, though, is to visit the best schools less frequently; we will devote more inspection time to the observation of teaching and the learning of pupils in order to further promote improvement, especially in schools which have not improved sufficiently. We can do this because we are providing the Health Check.

49. Maintained schools are currently selected for a "light touch" on the basis of a risk assessment. In over 90% of schools which have received a light inspection the final grade justifies the selection. The School Inspection Survey completed by schools after their inspection shows that these inspections are equally valued by school leaders, as standard inspections. In 2007–08, 96% of headteachers were satisfied that their light touch inspection was well managed, that its findings were correct and that it would help their school improve, compared to 93% in standard tariff inspections.

[4] 1,900 inspections were conducted during the last three month period; in all of these, there was only one inspection in which a complaint about the use of data was upheld.

What are the mechanisms for identifying schools which are underperforming and are those mechanisms adequate?

50. Schools which underperform are likely to be judged inadequate during routine section 5 inspections. Inspectors use published inspection guidance, clear criteria and detailed, sophisticated data which inform, but do not dictate, their judgements. Their judgements are made on the basis of a range of evidence, including direct observations in lessons. Most schools in Special Measures recover within two years, but others may be closed or formed into federations.

51. In future, where performance data indicate signs of deterioration, a school may be selected for an early inspection. Additionally, Ofsted has the power to respond to both complaints and local authorities' warning notices by inspecting the schools concerned.

How effective has the classification of "schools causing concern" (special measures or improvement notice) been in supporting improved performance in the schools concerned?

52. Inspection evidence indicates that designating schools in "categories of concern" is often the first step in driving improved outcomes for pupils. It is a "wake up call" that has a positive impact on improving performance, the quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of leadership and management. It also triggers additional support and intervention from other agencies. In due course, sustained improvement means that standards also rise. Ofsted's *Review of the Impact of Inspection (May 2007)* concluded that "those providers judged to be inadequate make the greatest strides in improving provision after inspection."

53. The designation of special measures galvanises necessary changes in leadership. Inspection evidence amply demonstrates that improvements in inadequate schools stem from strong and sustained leadership, which uses the recommendations from inspection and monitoring visits to eradicate the school's weaknesses. During 2007–08 the schools given notice to improve in 2006–07 were re-inspected; of these, nine in 10 had made at least satisfactory progress overall and 40 of these had become good schools. However, a very small minority had declined and were made subject to special measures. Of the 153 schools removed from special measures in 2007–08, 16% were judged to be already good schools.

54. The average length of time that schools spend in special measures has decreased significantly since 1997–98, reflecting the increasingly effective impact that designation and subsequent targeting of support have on transforming inadequate schools.

Have School Improvement Partners been of benefit to schools?

55. The School Improvement Partner (SIP) scheme is being considered as part of a rapid response survey in 2008. Ofsted is also currently undertaking a survey of the effectiveness of the National Strategies and is due to report later in the year.

56. Evidence from current school inspections suggests that SIPs vary in the levels of challenge they offer and the contribution they make to school improvement.

Is the current procedure for complaints about inspections adequate?

57. As part of Ofsted's process of continuous improvement, procedures for handling complaints about inspections have recently been reviewed. As a result, revised procedures to improve complaints' handling will be introduced in September 2009. Complainants have recourse to the Independent Complaints Adjudicator if they are not satisfied with Ofsted's handling of their complaint.

PERFORMANCE REPORTING (other than the Ofsted inspection report)

What aspects of a school's performance should be measured and how?

58. A school's performance influences pupils' academic standards, how much they know and understand, their skills, and the progress they have made. These important aspects can be measured using data from national tests and examinations. It is also necessary to take account of the school's context and the prior attainment of pupils, in order to assess the value added by the school.

59. Pupils' well-being and their personal development are less easy to measure, but nonetheless schools are accountable for their contribution to how well pupils and young people develop. There is little hard data at school level, and Ofsted and the DCSF propose to use information from surveys of pupils and parents as well.

60. Aspects such as the effectiveness of teaching and learning and leadership, as well as compliance with selected statutory requirements and the extent to which the school commands the confidence of its stakeholders, are best measured through inspection. It is important that aspects such as teaching are inspected by an external inspectorate with a national perspective of what constitutes outstanding practice; when coupled with incisive feedback to teachers, this is also a powerful driver for improvement.

How should these performance measurements be reported and by whom?

61. Performance measurements should be reported in ways that maximise their accessibility to all stakeholders. Data relating to academic standards should be published centrally, by the DCSF. This will ensure consistent reporting for all schools, and enable comparison of the school's data against national comparators. If the data are reported in a table or report card, these should be simple in format so that they are easily understood.

62. Some other performance measures, such as parental satisfaction, could helpfully be reported in a standard format by Ofsted or the DCSF. Reporting should be concise, unambiguous and accessible to pupils, parents, schools' staff, other stakeholders, government and the general public.

To whom should this information be made available?

63. Most data on schools' performance should be published and made available to the public. Most is, in any case, available under the Freedom of Information Act.

What is the effect of the current system of public performance reporting (Achievement and Attainment Tables www.dcsf.gov.uk/performancetables/, and the online School Profile schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk) on a school's performance, including confidence, creativity and innovation?

64. Performance tables reflect a narrow although important part of schools' work. Currently, the range of public information on schools' performance can be confusing and in practice, parents may rely more on Ofsted inspection reports than the Achievement and Attainment Tables, because the reports provide a more holistic evaluation of the school.

65. The publication of information about schools' performance through test and examination results, can lead in some cases to teaching to the test and a narrowing of the curriculum in certain year groups. However, inspection evidence shows that the most successful schools avoid this by focusing appropriately on national assessments without reducing breadth in the curriculum.

What is the impact on schools of league tables published by the press?

68. Apart from the information reported above, Ofsted has no evidence for this.

How useful is this information to stakeholders, particularly parents?

69. Ofsted has no data about the usefulness of performance tables to parents though parents have reported the difficulties they have in interpreting these. However, Ofsted's inspection reports are likely to be one of the main sources of information for parents choosing a school.

School Report Card

What might a school report card usefully provide that is not covered by the current performance reporting system?

70. In addition to Ofsted inspection reports, the current performance reporting system includes the Achievement and Attainment Tables, the School Profile, and schools' prospectuses.

71. The Achievement and Attainment Tables are published annually, but the information can appear daunting for users, and gives only a partial picture of a school's performance. Profiles may be updated less frequently.

72. Ofsted inspection reports provide a broader view of a school's effectiveness and an analysis and diagnosis of why a school's performance is as it is; however, most schools are only inspected once every three years and for good and outstanding schools the interval between inspections will soon be increased to five years. The school report card would complement Ofsted inspection reports by providing parents, at more frequent intervals, with a clear, comprehensive and accessible overview of a school's performance in certain areas.

Are there any issues which the school report card should avoid or seek to inhibit?

73. A range of issues raised by the proposed introduction of a school report card are currently subject to consultation by the DCSF and Ofsted. In developing its view of these issues, Ofsted, with the DCSF, will take account of the outcomes of the consultation. Where data are reliable, no areas of a school's responsibilities should be avoided.

Is the school report card potentially a sound basis for:

— *informing parents;*

— *providing a set of prioritised outcomes for schools;*

— *providing a starting point for Ofsted inspection; and*

— *providing a management tool for government?*

74. The school report card, potentially, provides a sound basis for all the above.

75. It will establish a clear and agreed basis for providing information for parents through the published evaluation of schools' performance, in which the relative priority accorded to different outcomes is clearly and consistently defined.

76. The indicators that underpin the school report card will be aligned with the core of the inspection assessment process undertaken by Ofsted to inform the selection of schools for inspection, although the latter is likely to use additional information. As a result, there will often be a clear connection between a school's performance as shown in its report card and the timing of its next inspection.

77. As a management tool for government, the school report card could prove much more effective than the Achievement and Attainment Tables, because it reflects the wider range of outcomes that 21st-century schools should seek to achieve, with the relative priority accorded to each clearly indicated. However, only inspection can provide an holistic evaluation of the school, including the evaluation of teaching and learning based on observation.

Could the school report card appropriately replace some Ofsted reporting?

78. Ofsted has proposed in consultation that schools which are likely, on the basis of its assessment, to be judged good or outstanding when inspected, should have a longer interval between their inspections and receive a "health check report" rather than an inspection three years after their previous visit. We believe that the introduction of the School Report Card will make a separate health check report by Ofsted unnecessary, but it can never replace the direct observation of a school at work. The two approaches are complementary: Ofsted reports do not include tables of data, and the Report Card will not be able to explain why schools are as they are or describe teaching. Inspections draw on much wider evidence including the views of learners, parents and staff as well as the direct observation of lessons and breaktimes; they are able to probe areas for improvement in ways which the simple reporting of data cannot. The report card could not, for example, describe behaviour or a school's work to promote equalities. Only inspection can provide the diagnosis of why a school is like it is which is necessary to plan or sustain improvement.

January 2009

Witnesses: **Christine Gilbert CBE**, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills and **Miriam Rosen**, Director, Education, Ofsted, gave evidence.

Q265 Chairman: Can I welcome the Chief Inspector and Miriam Rosen to our proceedings. This is an important session for us. All our sessions with you, Chief Inspector, are important sessions, but this is rather out of the ordinary as it is not on your annual report or on a specific inquiry. It is just to help us look at the ways in which we in England evaluate schools and hold them to account in terms of what they do for our children. This is a more free-thinking exercise, if you like. We are here to learn, not to push you too hard—you know that we would not do that. We will get started. There is a lot of territory to cover, so I will ask everyone to be quite brief in their questions and answers. Chief Inspector, you know what we are inquiring into—the value of inspection and the quality of accountability that we have. Is there anything that you would like to say before we ask questions?

Christine Gilbert: Just to endorse your opening remarks, we consider this inquiry very important indeed, particularly as we are revising the school inspection framework. We are reviewing it now in the final stages for changes to be introduced from September, so the inquiry is very important to us.

Q266 Chairman: When will you be publishing your plan for change?

Christine Gilbert: The pilots have just got under way, so we think that we will be able to publish the framework towards the end of June. We have had a lot of debate about it up and down the country and presented different things about aspects of it, but we still have a number of key decisions to make. We look forward to the inquiry reporting in time for September.

Q267 Chairman: We will have to try to get the report out as soon as possible. Miriam, I have just been thinking—when did you first start coming in front of this Committee? You are a familiar face.

Miriam Rosen: It was 2004.

Q268 Chairman: So it has been at least five years. You are very welcome again. Can I start the questioning. You, Chief Inspector, are a new broom. You certainly seem—listening to your comments and answers to questions in this Committee—rather different from your predecessor. Why is that?

Christine Gilbert: I don't know if I am different. Certainly I think that nothing stands still and inspections develop. Although I was appointed as Chief Inspector of Schools in October 2006, I was essentially appointed to the bigger job that started in the following April, so we have looked at the fundamentals of inspection in a way that has probably not been necessary for several years.

Q269 Chairman: Your predecessor had a more limited view of the role of Ofsted. Every time I pushed him, saying, "You go into a school, inspect, make a judgement and walk away; you don't do much in terms of the school improvement process," he said, "So be it—that's what we do." You don't take that view, do you?
Christine Gilbert: I took the Education and Inspections Act 2006 really seriously. I was new and the Act created my post and created the new Ofsted. That charged us with three things: regulating and inspecting to secure improvement, which was very different from what was there before; regulating and inspecting to secure the engagement of users, which meant pupils—children and learners, essentially—parents and employers; and ensuring value for money. Those three things were set out very clearly in the Act. They influenced and informed all our planning and thinking at Ofsted.

Q270 Chairman: Wasn't there a larger move? The Prime Minister very much wanted to rationalise the inspection process right across the public services, and one gets the impression that part of that process—pushing a number of inspectorates and roles into one—changed the nature of your role and your job. Has that been for good or ill?
Christine Gilbert: Bringing the four inspectorates together really did make us think hard about the role and function of inspection, and what things could be common and what things were really different. As we have discussed in this Committee before, we do not have, in Ofsted, a whole set of generalists; we still have specialists in a number of areas. So it was an attempt to bring the organisations together to get something more out of inspection than we got before. It really is important, as you said, to go in and report objectively what we see, but if we are just doing that and nothing happens as a result, I would question whether even the reduced amount of money we now spend on Ofsted is well spent. My view is that inspection has to have some impact.

Q271 Chairman: I should have thought that one of the things that would give you sleepless nights is your very grave responsibility for child protection. That is not only a vast area that is very different from what Ofsted was involved in previously, but a dramatic and important area in terms of outcomes, such as the Baby Peter case. Does that not dominate your thinking and lead to you having less time to think about the less dramatic, but certainly important, issue of schools?
Christine Gilbert: You are right to say that the area you have identified is essentially high risk, but I regard school inspection as core and central work and I invest a lot of time in it. I read, as the previous Chief Inspector would have done, every special measures report—that is, generally, four or five a week. I also read every single survey report—that is, or it feels like it is, one or two a weekend. I certainly think that those things are really important. Connections can be made across the areas. I read a report by Miriam's team—it originated from education—on exclusions. You will recall that there was some fuss a few months ago about exclusions of very young children. We couldn't work out what was going on or why, so we did what we call a rapid response report. Reading that report, I could see that connections could be made with what we were doing in our safeguarding inspections. We were able to pick up on that and make sure that the new safeguarding rolling programme inspection, which we will be undertaking next month, will look at what local authorities are doing about exclusions. Are they really fulfilling their statutory responsibilities? Are they providing education for children who are excluded after six days, and those sorts of things? We look at it holistically. It is a big remit but it is also a fascinating one. It is really important for children and their families that we look at things holistically.

Q272 Chairman: As you have grown, have you not become more reliant on what I would call bought-in help? You mentioned in your evidence that inspections have been going for 150 years. Inspectors used to report to the Privy Council because there wasn't a Department, which is why you are Her Majesty's Inspector. As time has gone on and your remit has expanded, you are forced to go to the independent or private sector to buy inspectors. Is that not a concern?
Christine Gilbert: That was the whole basis on which Ofsted was established back in 1992—the number of HMI was reduced. I am not going to go back as far as 1992—
Chairman: You mentioned 150 years, so I was thinking of the workhouse.
Christine Gilbert: I would say that the way that the former Ofsted contracted inspectors from September 2005 is a model of public-private partnership. It was in place when I arrived. We have just gone through a process and the contract that will be introduced from September will be even better. We use a number of contractors, but we use HMI in the inspections in various ways. I think that the model that we have is a good one.

Q273 Chairman: In your evidence you said that you have gone from five contractors to three. Is that right?
Christine Gilbert: Yes.

Q274 Chairman: Who are they?
Christine Gilbert: Serco, Tribal and CfBT. CfBT has something after its name—CfBT something.

Q275 Chairman: And which two have been left out this time?

Christine Gilbert: Prospects did not get a contract, and there are also Cambridge and Nord Anglia. A number of them provided regional services. I think that our submission said that five provided regional services, but there were two that provided services nationally. There was an FE contractor—Nord Anglia, I think—that provided services nationally, and we have brought all of that work in for the three contractors.

Q276 Chairman: And how do you ensure the quality of the providers? When the teaching unions came before us, some of the criticism was about inconsistency, worries about quality and the fact that not all inspections are led by an HMI.
Christine Gilbert: The more complex ones are led by an HMI, and 75 % of secondary school inspections are led by an HMI, but an HMI signs off, as it were, every single inspector we use. They are checked, monitored and shadowed on an inspection, and every report is read by an HMI. Over and above that there are a number of on-site visits, not for every additional inspector, but for some. So it is a fairly intensive process.

Q277 Chairman: Are there any other quality checks on those private inspectors?
Christine Gilbert: Miriam will know more of the detail on that, but we check a number of indicators. Having come fresh to this, I think that one of the benefits is having a number of them, and our regional link with each of them is very important, so the regional directors monitor it very closely. I attended a session at which there was a review of what had happened to the SATs contract and the LSC contract. Usually I come away from such meetings with a list of things we need to do, but actually in the way we had approached those contracts we had done all the things you should do and more, in terms of both the way we had chosen the contractors and the way the contracts operated. Miriam would be happy to give some detail on how she would manage it day in, day out and on a monthly basis.

Q278 Chairman: In a sense, the acid test that you apply in the case of teachers—certainly your predecessor did—is how many bad or inadequate teachers get moved on, out of the profession. It is therefore fair to ask how many inspectors are found not to be up to the job and get moved on.
Christine Gilbert: They probably wouldn't get through the first checking phase for inspectors, but that would be a very small number, in terms of capability and so on.
Miriam Rosen: As far as HMI go, we have extremely rigorous and lengthy selection and training processes, so if someone gets through all of that they really ought to be a successful HMI.

Q279 Chairman: HMI are what percentage of the total inspectorate work force?
Miriam Rosen: We have about 200 HMI working on the schools inspection programme for at least part of their time. The contractors that we use have around 1,000 additional inspectors in total. Some of those are working full time, and some are brought in for some of the time. The contractors themselves manage those inspectors and will assure their quality, but as Christine says, an HMI will sign them off on an inspection to say that they are worthy, fully trained and competent. They have to meet the same competencies as an HMI. The contractors are responsible for the performance management. Ofsted performance-manages the contractors, so we look very carefully at key performance indicators for quality, timeliness and other things that we go through with them on a monthly basis in the regions, where the regional directors manage the contracts, and then it comes through to me on a national basis and I take overall responsibility. I think that they are very tightly managed.
Chairman: Right. I am testing the patience of the rest of the team, so I will hand over to David.

Q280 Mr Chaytor: Chief Inspector, our system is based on independent national inspection, but not all countries adopt that model, so have we anything to learn from systems of inspection run by other countries?
Christine Gilbert: There is an organisation called SICI—I cannot remember its full title—through which we work with other organisations across Europe to look at this. My perception, having come to this fairly recently, is that other countries look to what we are doing and have moved, even in terms of self-evaluation and the use of data, in the way that Ofsted has, but that doesn't mean that we cannot learn from others. One of the early things that we did—about 18 months ago—was to have 24 hours away with the Scottish inspectorate senior management team, to see in some detail whether there were things that we could both learn from the way that we were approaching matters. I regularly meet the other Chief Inspectors from Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, so there are things that we look at and learn from.

Q281 Mr Chaytor: But from your point of view, what are the key advantages of a national inspection system as compared with regional systems, and of systems that are independent of government compared with those that are part of government?
Christine Gilbert: We have not done a formal analysis of that. My feeling is that in this country, national inspection gives just that—a national, objective perspective. Although, as I said, we are charged now with securing improvement, we do not have a personal perspective on the judgements that we make. We have in-house evidence, and in this area we have a rich external source of evidence because we use a number of external companies to look at aspects of what we are doing. Evidence suggests that our work is much valued, but that has not really come through in the previous discussions with the Committee on this. Teachers and head teachers are telling not only us but the NFER and so on how valuable they find the inspection system and how much it supports them and supports improvement.

Q282 Mr Chaytor: What are the key advantages of independence from government? Could you tell us specifically which areas of government policy Ofsted has exercised its independence over most forcefully? Where have you been most critical of a particular government policy over the years, not just during your own term in office?
Christine Gilbert: I think independence is really important. It is often difficult to define it and draw a line, but if we lost our independence we would be seen as having lost our integrity. There is a great deal of public trust in us as a body that is apart from government. Only 4% of parents do not want inspection; there has been a very positive response from parents about inspection. Independence from government is very important, and it is important that we report to Parliament through this Committee. I would guard independence as it is crucial.

Q283 Mr Chaytor: Can you give us an example of the exercise of that independence?
Christine Gilbert: If you look at any of our thematic reports, you will find some comment on national policy and perspective. Some of that is positive and some is critical. I cannot think off the top of my head of one that was entirely negative. For instance, at the moment we are looking at the National Strategies. That report will have a number of positive things to say as well as a number of critical things.

Q284 Mr Chaytor: Are there one or two major issues? Having critical things to say is not necessarily a powerful argument for complete independence. We are looking for a concrete example of where Ofsted has really used the independent position it occupies significantly to shift government policy.
Christine Gilbert: At the most fundamental level, each year I produce an annual report. That used to be a state-of-the-nation report on schools but it now crosses all areas of the remit. Anybody in the Committee who sees the publicity linked to that would see that we make a number of fairly strong criticisms about what is going on. Some of those run for the entire year. I have now said for two years that the number of children going from primary to secondary school who can't read is far too high, and that we are letting down generations of children. A number of things in the annual report are fairly strong criticisms of government and would not be written in that way if we were an outpost of the DCSF.

Q285 Mr Chaytor: If there is a strong case for independence from government, is there not equally a case for an independent appeal system for those schools or local authorities with a grievance against their Ofsted judgement?
Christine Gilbert: We have, as you would expect, an internal process, but we also have an independent complaints adjudicator, who is appointed not by us but by the DCSF. In fact, the adjudicator has changed fairly recently. That is the final stage, but, after that, people could contact an MP and go through the parliamentary ombudsman and so on, so there is a process.

Q286 Chairman: Right. Let's move on. In passing, Chief Inspector, how do you select which schools to inspect?
Christine Gilbert: Can I pass that one to Miriam to talk about in detail?
Miriam Rosen: At the moment, we have to inspect schools roughly within a three-year time scale, so we will bring forward a selection of schools for inspection in any given year, but not so that they can predict exactly when they are going to be inspected. That is quite important, so there is some flexibility. That is done by our schedulers without looking at a particular school and saying, "We want to inspect school X now"—it will just be scheduled once it is in the pot for the year. We are planning to move to a system whereby we have an annual risk assessment for schools. The inspection of schools that are performing well, that have performed well in previous inspections and for which all the indicators look good would be put back, so that they would be inspected once within a five-year period. Schools which were not doing so well would have their inspection earlier.

Q287 Chairman: How do you get a good mix? If you don't get a representative mix, your annual report on what is going on in schools is distorted.
Miriam Rosen: Yes, and what I didn't say is that of the good and outstanding schools or those that we think are likely to be so judged, a fifth will be inspected each year on a random basis. Otherwise, as you say, we would have a biased annual report.

Q288 Chairman: Yes, that is what they say about something else that you will know about, Chief Inspector, wearing a different hat. If health visitors go to severely challenging families only, they have nothing else to judge things by. If they don't go to average families, their world view is distorted. Does that apply to you, too?
Christine Gilbert: It is important to have a really close fix on what "good" looks like. Also, we try to do this in our survey reports because it is important for people to see what other schools, colleges and so on really achieve. We are taking a much more focused look at some of that. I think I sent copies of *Twelve outstanding secondary schools* to each of you. We are doing one on primary schools and one on special schools in the autumn.
Chairman: Let's drill down on the purposes and outcomes of Ofsted inspections.

Q289 Mr Stuart: What do you think is the main purpose of Ofsted?
Christine Gilbert: There are probably three. Going back to what I said to the Chairman, I think it is important that we inspect to secure improvement. Ofsted was established in 1992 as part of the parents charter, and the information that we provide to parents is absolutely fundamental. I am talking about information not only on the school that their

child is at, but on the schools to which they are considering sending them. Thirdly, we have to report to Parliament and the Secretary of State on the state of education in terms of minimal assurance and in terms of how public money is being spent. Essentially, Ofsted is about those three things—I know that they are not clearly distinct from one another.

Q290 Mr Stuart: Is there a danger that because you are inspecting to secure improvement, you will become another stakeholder, and you will want to see apparent standards rising, rather than being an entirely independent evaluator of the system without a stake, necessarily, in how it responds to your information?
Christine Gilbert: That is a real danger, and we talked about it a lot when we established our strategic plan for the new organisation. We could present improvement—it would not be securing improvement—if inspectors took their foot off the pedal and became more generous in their judgements. It goes back to the question about independence. It is really important to be independent; it is important to report frankly and fearlessly about what is being seen in schools; and it is important to have integrity about the judgements being made.

Q291 Mr Stuart: Thank you for that, Chief Inspector. You said last year that you thought standards in schools had stalled. Is that still the case? Is that in the primary sector, the secondary sector or both? Can you give us an idea about when standards stalled, if they still are stalled?
Christine Gilbert: That was part of what I was saying in the point I made earlier about the annual report. That was something that the Government would not have liked us saying. I cannot tell you until we have done the annual review for this year, and we are embarking on beginning production of that report. I was most concerned about the stalling of literacy and numeracy. I was talking about the fact that—certainly for the second year, if not for the third; I have been involved in only three reports—20% of children are still going on to secondary school unable to be fully literate or numerate. That struck me as a real concern. I was persuaded very early on. I was initially very opposed to the national literacy and numeracy strategies, but what I saw in Tower Hamlets, and the way that they were being implemented, absolutely transformed my view of them. In the early days, in areas such as Tower Hamlets, they were transformational. As time has gone on, they have needed refreshing and have needed to take a different approach.

Q292 Mr Stuart: Any new initiative will tend to be pioneered with enthusiasm and tend to make a positive difference. It's the old problem, isn't it? That of "Turn the lights down in the factory and productivity goes up, then turn them back up months later and productivity goes up."
Christine Gilbert: To stick with the Tower Hamlets example, it is not that progress would have been unlearned. Some of the principles of the approach to national literacy and so on are absolutely fundamental and focused on the basics, and children were completely liberated by being able to read and write. That has gone on, but I want it to go on up and down the country. The figure of 20% is just too high, because most of those children will therefore not be motivated when they go to secondary school. Many of them are bright, eager children who have somehow lost their way. So, a focus on literacy, for me, is absolutely paramount.

Q293 Chairman: Where did you get that 20% statistic from, Chief Inspector?
Christine Gilbert: We got it from the Key Stage 2 results.

Q294 Chairman: Last night, Nick Gibb, who used to be a member of this Committee, said it was 40%. If that is true, you might as well resign, mightn't you? If it really is 40%, we have achieved nothing in the 17 years of Ofsted.
Christine Gilbert: The 20% figure is the one that I complained about being the same. Certainly for two years running, we did not seem to have made an impact. We had done a number of things to focus on literacy, and in fact maths and numeracy too, so you will have seen the substantial report that we produced on maths, which has been enormously well received up and down the country. We have a number of dissemination activities related to that. We have a very big report coming out on literacy and so on. We are making judgements and we are using inspection to try and find out more about them, because we are privileged, in many ways, to see things going on in classrooms in schools up and down the country that other people do not see.

Q295 Mr Stuart: In 2006, you said that one in eight secondary schools was judged inadequate and that more than a third were no better than satisfactory. In front of this Committee in February, when asked about how many schools were rated satisfactory now, you said that in the secondary sector it must be about 30%. So, it appears that in three years nothing has improved. Can you tell us why you think that might be? Do you have any thoughts on Government strategies on rooting out inadequate, unsatisfactory schools?
Christine Gilbert: We definitely think that there has been some improvement, and I can send you the figures after the meeting.[1] There has been improvement in that time, but we cannot be content that children and young people are ever attending schools that we think are inadequate. That is what concerns me. Though I think that Ofsted, in many ways, has its greatest impact in schools that are failing, we want to stop them failing and we want to stop them going into that position. One thing we are going to do from September is go back to more schools that are satisfactory. At the moment—we

[1] See Ev 142–43

introduced this about 18 months ago—we go back to about 5% of schools that are satisfactory but have one or two areas that might generate concern. That has gone down very well and has led to real improvement between the time we make the judgement and the time we go back. From September, we are going to go back to more satisfactory schools—those that seem to have a poor capacity to improve—so we think we will be going back to about 40% of satisfactory schools. We think that if we go back and do the monitoring visit, it will be more preventative than waiting for the school to go into special measures.

Q296 Mr Stuart: One of the Government's policies to try to tackle failing schools is the National Challenge programme. Some of those schools were judged outstanding by Ofsted before they were suddenly and peremptorily announced as being in the National Challenge, with all the stigma and opprobrium that came with it. Did you wonder why you were wasting your time when the Government pulled the rug on both your inspectors and the schools?
Christine Gilbert: The Government were looking at straight exam results. We look at test results, but we do not rely entirely on them, so our inspection reports were judgements across a whole range of things. I did go back after the disparity and look at the reports. In those schools we had judged outstanding or good, inspectors felt secure that improvement was happening and the capacity to improve was evident.
Chairman: Graham, have you finished?

Q297 Mr Stuart: I have one more question. In 2007, you said that you had received numerous complaints over a three-month period about inspectors passing judgement on schools without actually sitting in on classes. At the time, you said you were stunned by those disclosures. How many complaints have you received in the past year or two? Are you still receiving them?
Christine Gilbert: I don't remember any letters of complaint, but as I said to the Chairman at the beginning, we have been consulting on new proposals for school inspection—essentially, for evolution from the current system. I have been up and down the country talking at various conferences, and this is a constant refrain—teachers, interestingly, complaining that they have not been seen by Ofsted inspectors. Though I am smiling, we have taken this very seriously and the system that will be introduced from September, although we have not fine-tuned the detail, will put far greater weight on observation of classrooms, teaching and learning.
Mr Stuart: Thank you.

Q298 Chairman: I am going to call Fiona, but before I do, there is a little thing that sparked my interest. The Government employ private contractors to run National Strategies, don't they? Are they the same people you use to get inspectors?
Christine Gilbert: I think they use Capita, don't they? I imagine the point you are going to make is about conflict of interest.

Q299 Chairman: Yes. The whole world is using major contractors—Capita, CfBT, we all know the names. Do any of these interlock?
Christine Gilbert: Not with the National Strategies, although I think there are other issues with the National Strategies. The issue of conflict of interest was a major part of discussion through the contract. We used a process called competitive dialogue. A number of the people bidding for the contracts also provide services. I will give you a specific example: Serco provides services to Walsall and has the contract for the Midlands area. That is right, isn't it Miriam?
Miriam Rosen: Yes.
Christine Gilbert: This was discussed through the awarding of the contracts, and each contractor had to have processes in place—Chinese walls—to avoid that. Various systems are in place, and as we speak, protocols are being worked out. Over and above that, although the focus of the three contractors will be regional, they will also have a national dimension to their work. The services, institutions and settings that we inspect are not neatly located in the regions that Ofsted has chosen to divide up the country into. For example, Serco will not be inspecting Walsall, but one of the other contractors will. Therefore, we have a number of arrangements and protocols in place. I don't know whether you want to add to that, Miriam.
Miriam Rosen: I think that covers it. We will make sure that when a contractor is running services in an area, they don't inspect it.

Q300 Fiona Mactaggart: Talking about conflict of interest, there is an element in which people perceive Ofsted as a judge in its own court when there is a complaint about an Ofsted report. On how many occasions, following a complaint from an inspected school, has Ofsted changed its judgement about that school?
Christine Gilbert: Interestingly, I was just looking at the last complete year, which was 2007–08, in which there were about 300-odd complaints. About 3 or 4% of those would have been upheld, and slightly more partially upheld. Of the 3 to 4% of complaints, about 30 will be upheld in some way or another. Are those figures right, Miriam?
Miriam Rosen: We would have to check those figures.
Christine Gilbert: They are roughly right. I can send you the details.[2] One of the things that I have done as I have talked to schools up and down the country is tell them not to suffer in silence. They are to use the responses that the contractors issue at the end of each inspection, but they are there to complain if they feel that an inspection has been conducted badly or if the judgement is wrong and so on. We use them to learn about what we are doing and to improve.

[2] See Ev 141

Q301 Fiona Mactaggart: Let me give you an example of what the complaint process means in practice for a school in my constituency. In a previous report, it was identified as a very good school. It was then inspected in December, during Eid. In Slough, we have two different mosques. You never quite know when Eid is going to be, because one has it on one day—as you will know from Tower Hamlets—and another has it on another day. The school was slightly disrupted at the time of the inspection, and it felt that that had not been taken into account at all, and that there were areas of assessment that the inspectors had done that were just plain wrong, so it challenged the inspection. We are in May and the inspection was in December. As far as I can work out from talking to the head teacher, we have not got the next bit of the review; it is still happening inside the private company that conducted the inspection. The process seems to be a bit like the way in which the police conducted things before we set up the Independent Police Complaints Commission, which gave an independent element to such investigations. Eventually, we will get to a more independent level, but at the moment the investigation of the report still does not include any element outside the original inspecting body.

Christine Gilbert: The time scales do not seem right to me. It seems as though we are out of time with those, and I will look at that case and write to you separately.[3] There is a process in which the contractor looks at the complaint and it then goes to a second stage. Only about 10% move on to that stage. There are not many complaints, and not many of those handled at the first stage move on to the second stage. We take them seriously. You will have read about the case of a school in Lincolnshire—it was much reported—in which I voided the inspection because of a number of factors. We do take the inspections very seriously. The response that we get from schools is that they are surprised at how seriously we take them. The vast majority—way over 80%—think that our judgements are right and fair.

Q302 Fiona Mactaggart: I am sure that in most cases they are. I do not doubt that, but I am concerned that in the present system—I think that your plans for more classroom observation will improve it—it is possible to get it just wrong. If it is possible to get it just wrong, even if that is for only a small minority of cases, there has to be an independent, transparent process of challenge. You know, Chief Inspector, just as I know, that this is a big secondary school with a confident head teacher who has been in place for a long time. He knows that his school is good, and his local authority knows that his school is good. He has the confidence to challenge. A small primary school will probably just think, "Let's get on with teaching the children rather than complain." There has to be a simple, straightforward way to get something properly examined, rather than this process, which seems to be full of, "Well, there was no one else there, so you have to take my word for it." That is part of the tension going on in this particular dispute, and I imagine it goes on in many.

Christine Gilbert: I don't pick that up. As I said, people write to me, and then the letter is either dealt with informally or goes through the complaints process. I had one yesterday where they are still not agreeing, but we have looked at the thing in great detail and so on. There is a process beyond the initial contractor. This has not even got to that stage.

Q303 Fiona Mactaggart: No, it does not appear to have done so. It went to your officer or whatever, it was sent back to the contractor and the contractor has responded. We have gone through all that. As far as I can work out, the school is now putting its case for the next bit. That seems very laborious, and not very satisfactory, because the school has not had its inspection report published yet. I think that it has had an impact on the self-confidence of a school that the local authority and I rate quite highly. We have secondary modern schools in Slough, and that secondary modern is doing well.

Christine Gilbert: I am surprised that it has not had its report published, because one of the complaints that I get is that we publish the report while the complaint is going on.

Q304 Fiona Mactaggart: Maybe it has been published, but then the school is even more depressed by a report that it thinks is wrong. I suspect that it is wrong, too. I do not think that that is a school that has declined in quality. I have fairly good relations. I used to be a teacher, and I used to educate teachers. I think that I can tell whether schools are sustaining quality, although not in the kind of detail that an inspection ought to be able to. This is one that I feel confident on. I do not think that the process is sufficiently swift, I do not think that it is sufficiently transparent and, above all, I do not think that it is sufficiently independent. Of the three reasons for inspection that you declared, two involve accountability: accountability to parents and accountability to Parliament and Government. We have to expect accountability from you. One of our witnesses suggested that the motto for Ofsted should be "Never apologise, never explain". I am not following that route, but I think that in the minority of cases—I accept that it is only a minority—where there is real reason to challenge inspection findings, there needs to be greater transparency so that we can make sure that "Never apologise, never explain" is not seen as the slogan for Ofsted. I do not think that you have got there yet.

Christine Gilbert: I will look into the case and get back to you.[4]

Q305 Fiona Mactaggart: Will you look at whether you could have an independent adjudication system much earlier on?

Christine Gilbert: We are looking at reviewing complaints for September. What I will do is check what we are proposing to see whether that would

[3] See Ev 141–42

[4] See Ev 141–42

have addressed what seems to have gone wrong with this case. There is an independent complaints adjudicator at the third stage, as I said.

Fiona Mactaggart: But by then, a number of schools have lost the will to live and think that it is not worth pursuing. If you had that independence early on, I believe there would be much greater confidence in what happens in Ofsted.

Q306 Paul Holmes: Can you just explain a bit more about the independent adjudicator who comes in at the third stage? Who are they and where do they come from?

Christine Gilbert: As I say, there was a change in the summer, when the contract came up for renewal. I guess that the thing goes out under ordinary advert and the appointment is made through the DCSF, which interviews and appoints people. We enclose details of the complaints process and at every stage when we write, we explain what the next stage is. Certainly, we have not had much experience of the new adjudicator yet—I have just seen the first coming through—but the previous one looked at cases in enormous detail and had very positive responses about the way that she had gone about things, even when she did not uphold complaints. She used to issue a questionnaire about how complainants thought that she had handled the case, and so on.

Q307 Paul Holmes: How comparable would you say that adjudicator is to the Local Government Ombudsman, a Central Government Ombudsman or the IPCC? Are the adjudicators as independent as those bodies?

Christine Gilbert: They are certainly independent from us and we wouldn't dream of interfering with the process; the previous adjudicator would never have allowed us to do that either. We have the option of accepting or not accepting the recommendations that she made. Actually, when I was chief executive of a council, even when we got something back from the ombudsman, you would be foolish in those cases not to accept the recommendations. I suppose that, because they were published in an annual report, I feel that the Local Government Ombudsman would have had more clout. That is going back to the point that has been made about real independence and being seen to be independent.

Q308 Fiona Mactaggart: And the Local Government Ombudsman has an independent capacity to investigate in some cases, don't they?

Christine Gilbert: They are going to have that capacity; they will have new duties in terms of individual complaints, and so on. However, I have been talking about the independent complaints adjudicator, and it would be at the final stage that, if a complainant was still not happy with the process, they could go through to the Parliamentary Ombudsman. I understand that that is the route, not the Local Government one.

Q309 Paul Holmes: But in terms of clout, for example, the ombudsman on Equitable Life has again really had a go at the Government this morning, saying that they are ignoring her report and criticisms. There is nothing really like that with Ofsted. As someone who taught in Derbyshire for a long time and as an MP in Derbyshire, from time to time I get head teachers or teachers, who come to me from all over Derbyshire, saying, "How do we complain? We cannot complain. Where do we go from here?" They still perceive the process as being very internal and that there is nothing they can do. If Ofsted says, "Well, tough," that is it.

Christine Gilbert: We have really tried to publicise the complaints process. I think that I might have said this before to the Committee, but initially people seemed nervous about complaining, in case it led to another inspection sooner than they would have wanted. I have tried to tell them that that wouldn't happen. So, we have really tried to say that the complaints procedure is here, so please use it. As I say, we actively use the complaints and their outcomes to learn about what we are doing and we feed those lessons into what we are doing.

Chairman: Let us move onwards and upwards. Derek, you wanted to ask about the frequency of notice of inspections, and I will call Andy on this question too.

Q310 Derek Twigg: Good morning to you, Chief Inspector. What hard evidence do you have that inspection of struggling schools leads to real school improvement?

Christine Gilbert: Inspection?

Derek Twigg: That inspection of struggling schools leads to real school improvement.

Christine Gilbert: The evidence of schools being placed in the category of concern is really strong and has been strong for a number of years. If you look at the speed with which schools now go into special measures and come out of special measures, it is quicker than it ever was. In our surveys of head teachers, schools in special measures come absolutely at the top of the list on how effective the support from Ofsted has been. They say that they find the monitoring visits very helpful, not just in keeping the pace of progress going, but in helping them to be sharper about assessment, evaluation and so on. Our evidence shows that, as does the work done by the National Foundation for Educational Research.

Q311 Derek Twigg: So you have figures on the number of struggling schools you have inspected and where they are today, a year or two after the inspection?

Christine Gilbert: Yes, we have that.[5]

Q312 Derek Twigg: I would find it useful to have that—perhaps you could provide it. On the frequency of inspections, would you like to say a few words about your concerns over them being every five years rather than every three? You look at SATs

[5] See Ev 139–41

and GCSE results to see whether there is a decline in the figures. If someone got rid of the Key Stage 2 SATs, how could you determine whether a primary school was getting into trouble, particularly if you had not inspected it for five years? Have you been asked about your views on removing SATs? What are your views?

Christine Gilbert: No, I have not been asked my view specifically. Miriam sits as an assessor on the expert group. My view depends on what would replace Key Stage 2 tests, were they to be removed. The Key Stage 2 results mark the end of an important phase of education. A few minutes ago, Miriam described the system that we will use to select schools from September. Those results are important. A dip in the results, particularly over two years, would start to ring warning bells for us. It would be difficult if there were no SATs results, but it would depend on what replaced them.

Q313 Derek Twigg: So you think that having data on the performance of children at that age is essential in giving an indication of the quality of the school and whether an inspection should be done?

Christine Gilbert: I think that it is important to have that at that stage, yes. I was very relaxed about the removal of Key Stage 3 tests. I am not so relaxed about the removal of Key Stage 2 tests.

Q314 Derek Twigg: Okay. When inspections go from every three years to every five, how can parents be reassured that the school has not got into trouble? For example, a head teacher leaving could affect a school's performance. As a former head teacher, you know that the head is a very important person for the future of the school. What will parents be able to do?

Christine Gilbert: Interestingly, when we began the consultation, it was parents who we were most concerned about. Although there was a very good response to the consultation, parents were not as strongly represented as head teachers, governing bodies and so on. Parents were very nervous. At that stage, we were proposing six years. We have done two things as a result of that. Even before we went out for consultation formally, we picked up the anxiety of parents about six years being far too long. That is why we came up with the notion of having a health check at the three-year stage. That would be a formal Ofsted-endorsed document that referred to the previous inspection result, as Miriam mentioned, and to key sets of data.

Q315 Chairman: Is the health check paper-based or based on a visit?

Christine Gilbert: Generally, it would be paper-based. Some of the information might have been influenced by a survey visit, because we write a very detailed letter to the school that is placed on our website, and often on the school's, about what we are seeing. Essentially, it would have been data. We think that there would be text to accompany that. To some degree, the data would be overtaken by the score card, so initially, when the end of Key Stage 3 and the score card were announced, we thought that we would not be doing it, but the time frame is such that we think we need to do it. Parents were telling us that six years was far too long for their child to go through the school without any inspection, so we came up with that notion and discussed it with a number of parental focus groups, which were positive about it. They still felt that six years was too long, which is when we came up with the proposal to move to five years.

Q316 Derek Twigg: But if there were no test results for 11-year-olds, how would you go about the health check?

Christine Gilbert: We had not done any detailed thinking about that. As I said, we would need some information about what is going on with the school. It would depend a lot on what was replacing test results. I do not think that people are saying, "Nothing at 11," but there seem to be a number of debates about what would replace test results, which would be very serious for us.

Q317 Derek Twigg: My final question is about the no-notice inspections. My local authority has generously offered itself up as one of the first authorities, which has gone down really well with head teachers. On that specific issue, a lot of head teachers have told me basically that they should be there when the no-notice inspection, which is such an important event, is about to take place. They worry that there might be a school trip and that half the school will be away. I am sure that that practicality will come out in the early inspections, but a large number of people being out of the school is a real concern that has been expressed to me by head teachers.

Christine Gilbert: When we consulted on this, one of the reasons why we put no-notice inspections in the consultation document that we issued is that parents, often of looked-after children, were keen to have no-notice inspection. There was a strong reaction against it by head teachers. We piloted it—we have got another half-term of pilots to go—but it is interesting that the head teachers who have experienced it have been generally positive about it. It has not produced insurmountable difficulties, even though there have been some difficulties. Parents have complained about it. They are saying that they did not know the inspection was on and that it was over before they knew about it, and so on. Governors have complained about it because they have not been able to get into the school. We are going to have to evaluate the pros and cons before we come up with a proposal for what we are going to be doing for September.

Q318 Derek Twigg: Is there any early indication at all from the early pilots that no-notice inspections are showing anything different from normal notice inspections?

Christine Gilbert: I don't know that we've got enough numbers in the pilots to give you a proper answer to that. I don't think we have, have we Miriam?

Miriam Rosen: No, I don't think we can make that comparison.

Q319 Chairman: How many have you done?
Miriam Rosen: We did 17 inspections last term that were fully no-notice.

Q320 Derek Twigg: How many do you plan to do this term?
Miriam Rosen: We are still considering the exact numbers for this term.

Q321 Mr Slaughter: Do you think this issue of the time between inspections is important? I would have thought that it is fairly fundamental to determine the role of Ofsted. I suspect that, like the tide going in and out, you will move one way until everyone raises their hands in horror that you are inspecting too infrequently, and then move back the other way until you get to the point where people think you are doing it too frequently, and that things will go on like that by the year or by the decade. Five years seems such a long period of time, and not just for primary schools. If you have an inner-city area with very high pupil and teacher mobility, schools are sometimes quite fragile, and the reputation or the actuality could change or there could be a bad head teacher appointment. Inspecting such schools every five years almost makes Ofsted irrelevant to the process of monitoring whether a school is working.
Christine Gilbert: The approach that we adopted essentially links right back to where we started this morning—to the nature of inspection, bringing different inspectorates together and the notion that inspections should be proportionate. Although we are talking about once in five years, the idea is that that is for schools that were last judged as good or outstanding, and where it looks, from the indicators that we have on them, as if they would still be performing well, we are suggesting a number of hard indicators—tests results, attendance and so on. We also believe that perception is really important, and we want perception survey results from pupils and parents to be taken into account. When I look at a number of schools, parental dissatisfaction with a school—you have outlined some of the reasons, and things do change quickly—often emerges as an indicator before you start to see changes in exam results or test results. We are looking at a number of indicators that will give us a feel for what is going on in the school. Nevertheless, they will never give us the accuracy that full inspection will. We are aware of the dangers. Even in the reduced tariff inspections that we have been doing, which have essentially involved less time—again, we are looking at schools that were good or outstanding last time and at the indicators and so on—the indicators are right in slightly over 90% of those schools, but they are not right in just under 10%. So there will be a margin of error, but in terms of adopting a system of proportionate inspection, we think that the one where we go for five years, rather than the reduced tariff, will be more effective. At the same time, the focus on satisfactory schools is more intense, as I said earlier. If their capacity to improve does not seem secure, we will go back more frequently, and special measures and notice to improve will continue as now. It is just a proportionate approach, and the thinking is that good and outstanding schools do not need inspection to the same degree as satisfactory or failing schools.

Q322 Mr Slaughter: Do you see this as a further withdrawal of the inspectorate from hands-on involvement with schools overall? That seems to be the current trend. As far as parents are concerned, knowing that there is an independent process is the most reassuring thing, because you can get reputation wrong. As you say, reputation can be an early warning sign, but equally there can be reputational lags, with schools having bad reputations that they no longer deserve. Even test results may not be as reassuring to parents as the feeling that somebody with expertise has gone in, looked at the school and given it the okay. Do you feel that you are withdrawing from that process?
Christine Gilbert: We feel that the system that we are establishing will use the voice of parents as a failsafe to bring the inspection forward. The concern is how we hear the voice of parents and how we get them to fill in questionnaires and so on to tell us about the school. If parents begin to understand that they are filling in a questionnaire to express dissatisfaction—I do not mean just a one-year dip, but an emerging trend—they will use the questionnaires more and tell us more, so that will have more validity. Otherwise, it has been hard to see how we could establish a proportionate system of school inspection. It is not right to keep inspecting every school in the same way all the time. The other thing we will do is continuing with our survey inspections. Even now, we will go on a survey inspection if we pick up things that concern us, that could also trigger a fuller inspection of the school.

Q323 Paul Holmes: I want to go back to what you said about Key Stage 2. Head teachers are balloting on boycotting the tests; the teaching profession and many parents have long been opposed to them. You are saying that they are essential to what you do. Have you not evaluated what other countries do? The previous Education Committee went to New Zealand and saw how it tests a random sample of 4 to 5% of the kids in each school each year. Because it is small and random, the schools don't teach to the test—they can't. In Ofsted reports in this country, you have criticised schools for teaching to the test, but New Zealand has a different way of doing it that is less disruptive.
Christine Gilbert: A number of countries have different ways of doing it. Interestingly, a number of countries—I do not know about New Zealand—are moving to the system that we seem to be dismantling. The thing that parents tell me—I hear this really strongly—is that they want to be clear about where their child is at a key phase of education. So, there was no outcry about Key Stage 3. The parents who speak to me—and they spoke to me during our discussions about inspection—feel very strongly that we need some

clarity at 11 about where their child is. They do not want the school and the curriculum distorted. They do not want months and months of preparation for these tests, but they want some clarity at a key phase of education. That is what I have experienced and what I have heard.

Q324 Paul Holmes: But in Ontario, which does very well in the PISA—Programme for International Student Assessment—studies, internal school-based tests are used by local government inspectors and not by a national organisation. They go in and say to schools, "You are not doing well enough." Again, there are no league tables or teaching to the test—it is a whole different system—so there are different and effective ways of doing things.
Christine Gilbert: I did say that it depends on what gets put in its place. At the moment, we are basing a lot on the results from Key Stage 2. They are nothing like all—but they are an important element—of the judgements that we make about which schools we select and whether a school is dipping or improving its performance.
Chairman: Thank you. We are moving on to inspectors.

Q325 Annette Brooke: The Chairman has mentioned the differences between HMI and the regional inspection service providers. I need to take that a bit further, because we heard a number of comments in our previous evidence-taking sessions that expressed concern about inspectors not being experts in the phase of education that they are inspecting. I have asked you about nursery education in the past but it applies equally to primary and secondary. I would also like more detail on special educational needs. Will you expand on what you told us initially just to cover those points?
Christine Gilbert: I do think that HMI are generally well respected, and there is a long tradition of respect for them. They have the quality assurance role that I was talking about earlier, but the additional inspectors are also good inspectors. If they are not, work goes on with a contractor to remove such inspectors and so on. We therefore have fairly secure—I am not saying that they could not be improved—systems of quality assurance. There is a clear requirement for the contractors to provide training. I did not go into detail—Miriam might want to do so—about the ways in which we talk to the contractors. There is a national board and so on and a number of things are organised, so we set requirements for training. For example, when community cohesion was introduced to the framework, it was incumbent on us to train our own inspectors. Also, all the inspectors involved in school inspections were trained. The same is true of HMI. I am not saying that the people who inspect schools inspect only in their particular area. You may well get somebody who was primary-trained involved in a secondary inspection and vice versa. They would have had to want to do that and they would have been trained and supported in doing it. I said earlier that I read special measures reports each week. If I do not look at the front cover, I cannot tell you whether the report has been written by an HMI or by an additional inspector—that is the term that we give to inspectors employed by the contractors. We also have a scheme in which we second heads and some deputies. What I am saying is that an HMI doesn't always write better reports than AIs (Additional Inspector). I would stick by the brand, but I also think that AIs are good inspectors, and our systems would suggest that.
Chairman: Miriam, do you want to come in?
Miriam Rosen: If people are inspecting in two phases, as I think you are suggesting, they will have the necessary expertise and training. We would not put somebody in an area where they were uncomfortable and untrained.

Q326 Annette Brooke: So the teachers' fears are groundless?
Miriam Rosen: If something has gone wrong in a particular instance, of course, there is the complaints system. As Christine says, we take that seriously, but we also try to ensure that the inspectors are deployed in a way that fits their training and expertise. We provide top-up training throughout.
Christine Gilbert: But we also look at the results and evaluate the grades and scores that are given. We had some anxiety a few months ago that non-specialists looking at special needs were making too generous judgements about what they were seeing. We analysed this in some detail and then ran an intensive—I think that it was interactive—training programme devised by Ofsted specialists. Every inspector was to undergo this training. We always look at what we are doing to see if we can improve it. It is the same with community cohesion. We started to look at what is emerging from it and we felt that inspectors—HMI and AIs—could be more specific about some of the things being said, so we introduced additional training for that and so on.

Q327 Annette Brooke: A point has been made to me very strongly by various special educational needs organisations and representatives that they are concerned that shorter, more infrequent inspections could result in a school's special educational needs aspect not being given enough attention. Clearly, the status of special educational needs within a school can change quite dramatically following a change of key members of staff. There is the query about whether you pick up changes when inspecting less frequently. Should not good special educational needs provision be an absolute requirement for getting a good overall grade?
Christine Gilbert: I shall ask Miriam to talk in detail about how special educational needs are looked at in a section 5 inspection. We are about to embark on a very large review of special educational needs, and I think that that will be one of the issues that we look at—how to deal with less frequent inspections and so on. However, we feel that the framework that we have devised gives a central role to the evaluation of special educational needs provision in schools. It requires judgements to be made about those areas. We think, therefore, that we have addressed that in

the proposals for September. However, as I say, our survey will be very large and extensive and will pick up those issues.

Miriam Rosen: I agree that the inspection of special educational needs is very important. We are not proposing to move to shorter inspections, so it is not the case that less time will be devoted to special educational needs. At the moment, we look at provision and pupil progress, which involves looking at the teaching and the way in which pupils are assessed—is progress being properly monitored, are they being properly supported and so on? It is correct that with less frequent inspections they will not be looked at as often, but we are not proposing shorter inspections. At the moment, if pupils with special educational needs do not make good progress, the overall effectiveness of the school cannot be good. Our judgement is about the progress that all pupils make. That will be the same as we move forward into the new system, so you will not get a situation whereby the pupils with special educational needs are being badly served, and their provision is inadequate, but the school is judged "good". That could not happen.

Chairman: John wants to come in on a specific point.

Q328 Mr Heppell: I want to ask something a bit more specific about deaf children. I have read the briefing from the National Deaf Children's Society. You talked about evaluating grades. Deaf children are 42% less likely to get five A grades at GCSE, including English and maths. I should have thought that that evaluation tells you that there is something wrong there in the first place. You talked about the over-generous marks that inspectors have been giving. An NDCS case study of a school in London, in 2008, said: "'Pupils in the PDC (provision for deaf children) progress well because they are supported by highly experienced staff who ensure that pupils enjoy their work and are fully included in school activities.' However: The unit did not have a teacher in charge who was a qualified teacher of the deaf—or who was even a teacher." It went on: "No evidence was provided to substantiate the claim that deaf pupils were progressing well", and the "acoustics in the classrooms were poor and constitute a hostile listening environment." That may be a one-off, but if you currently have four inspectors who have sensory training—I don't know whether that is from the 200, from HMI inspectors or from the lot in general—isn't that a small number to be doing an evaluation of units in which there are deaf children?

Christine Gilbert: We do use additional inspectors from the contractors to help us with different specialisms, and so on. One thing that is going to happen, too, from September—this is in terms of special schools—is that we are increasing what we call the tariff. Essentially, we are spending more inspector days in special schools to look at what is going on, so we do build in specialisms where we can.

Miriam Rosen: We certainly will try to make sure that there are specialists. If there is a particular resource unit in a school, we will try to provide an appropriate specialist. We might not be able to do so all the time, but if there is a unit for deaf children, I would hope that we could provide people who have been specially trained to do that.

Q329 Mr Heppell: Do you have any figures that you could provide later to show how many units for deaf children were not provided with an inspector who had specific skills in sensory impairment—hearing impairment in this particular case? I am worried about this. In some respects, it is not the quantity, or even the quality, of the inspectors that counts; if the inspector does not have that particular knowledge, they are never going to be able to judge what is necessary. I recognise that there might be some occasions when that happens, because you cannot have a specialist on everything, but there seem to be rather a low number for deaf children.

Christine Gilbert: We will look at that and get back to you.[6] May I clarify something though. Was that information read out from an Ofsted report, at the start of your question? If it was, I would also be interested in that.

Chairman: John, what was the origin of your quote?

Q330 Mr Heppell: It was from the NDCS briefing, and the quote was from an Ofsted report. Apparently, the local authority was aware of the inadequacy of the unit because of a tribunal that was going on that was showing up difficulties in the school. An advisory teacher of the deaf for the local authority had reported that there was not appropriate leadership in the unit and so on, so there were problems with the unit, but it got a good report. I think that the implication is that the person who was doing the inspection may have been a good inspector, but did not understand the special requirements of that particular unit. Can I just ask one further thing very briefly on British Sign Language. I know that you answered a letter just last month, so it is rather early to be asking if there is any progress, but if people were going into a unit or a school where British Sign Language was used, would they either be proficient in British Sign Language or have an interpreter? It seems mad that someone would not have an interpreter on such occasions. The answer you have given seems to be, "We are reviewing that and will get back to you on inspection arrangements for September." Have you made any progress with that?

Christine Gilbert: I would need to check that. I will get back to you quickly.[7]

Q331 Chairman: We could do with the full information on that. Miriam, do you know anything about it?

Miriam Rosen: No, we have not finalised our arrangements for September. We are still looking at that.

Q332 Chairman: Chief Inspector, isn't this highlighting the problem? It is all right having Ofsted-lite, if I can use that expression, but it has disturbed me that we now have a language that

[6] See Ev 143–44
[7] See Ev 143–44

includes a reduced tariff and a health check. If I went to see my doctor, I would not want him to do my health check on the internet. In this area, where we are talking about special needs, everyone tells us—certainly when I visit schools—that they particularly need highly qualified, thoughtful inspectors looking at the SEN provision, and then they say that they would like an HMI. Is it better to have many more HMI, or are you just saving money by having only 100 HMI, and lots of other cheap people from the private sector? Is it a cost saving? Otherwise, why do you not just have 300 or 400 HMI and be done with it?

Christine Gilbert: The contractual position is helpful because it gives us great flexibility. It gives us flexibility in this area, too. I do think that we need specialisms to do some things, but I also have to say, about the extract that was read out from that report, that you do not need to be a specialist to know that it sounds very strange to have all the bit at the beginning that is really positive and then to say that there is not a specialist teacher in charge.

Q333 Chairman: Chief Inspector, with great respect, you have not answered the question. Is it a cost saving? Are HMI too expensive?

Christine Gilbert: No, that absolutely is not the reason for doing this. It has given us much more flexibility in the way that we do things. If we were to employ HMI rather than run these contracts, I do not think that we would be able to manage all the school inspections that we do. The additional inspectors are paid a competitive rate, and some of them are even ex-HMI.

Q334 Chairman: But do you see our point? People tell us that they prefer an HMI-led inspection, that they would like HMI rather than the people whom you are hiring from these organisations, so it is only fair to ask you why you don't have more HMI.

Christine Gilbert: We urge the contractors to use head teachers who are then trained as part of the team, and they are good, too. Additional inspectors are good inspectors. They are not second-rate inspectors.

Chairman: All right. We will perhaps have the organisations in front of us to talk about how they are training. Test data: David and Annette. Who is starting? Annette?

Q335 Annette Brooke: First, I thank the Chief Inspector for her letter following up the previous meeting when I asked about the correlation between overall Ofsted grading and schools' actual test results. It was quite interesting. I think that 56% of results corresponded to the satisfactory rating, so although it was not a close correlation, there clearly was a connection. I really want to pursue this a bit further, because it seems to me that we could never get away from the fact that the results of the tests are becoming the main criteria for a school's success or otherwise, whether in parents' eyes or Ofsted's eyes, yet we are not really getting the full picture of the school in the round. I really want to tease this out a bit further and ask what you say to people who have not got a balanced view of what is going on in schools because, whatever you say, they are just looking at the headline result figures. We are not really seeing innovation, a balanced curriculum or creativity—all the things that we really want to see in a school so that we know that it is successful.

Christine Gilbert: We believe that our reports give a much fuller picture of a school—where the school is at, the progress in the school and so on—than just looking at straight test results. You yourself, when you produced your report on testing, recommended that the Ofsted report, for completeness, form part of the profile of things that would be produced and published and so on. We think that our reports give a full coverage. That is not to say that they will pick all of the interesting things going on in a school—that simply could not be replicated in a report. The NFER has done a more longitudinal study of schools and says that, initially, the schools were complaining about an over-reliance on test results and on data. That has absolutely gone. The new system was introduced in September 2005 and gradually, through time, that seems to have eased off and gone. I think that I have said to the Committee before, when I was concerned about people not understanding CVA, that we did a publication for our own inspectors and additional inspectors, but also sent it to all schools, to explain how they use data and so on. So data and test results are important, but they are absolutely far from being the complete picture. We make 30 separate judgements on what we are looking at in schools. Test results are still very important—you do need good results to get jobs or to access the courses that you want to do or should be doing at 16, 18 and so on. I hope that our reports give the broad picture and are not completely data-ridden, which seems to be the gist of what you are saying.

Q336 Annette Brooke: May I follow that up? We were talking to a group of people, who were all SIPs, and their evidence came over for the most part as their greatest contribution being helping head teachers with the data. That brings us full circle back to the data. Who is helping the school improvement? Is this true improvement, if they are concentrating on getting the data in the right form for when you come along? Are we in some sort of vicious circle, do you think?

Christine Gilbert: Until you said what you said at the end there, I thought that the first bit was positive, because helping schools with the data is a real help in terms of the schools understanding where they are and making a really good self-evaluation of their progress and what their needs are. If you look at data properly, you can see all sorts of differences within your school; you are not just comparing yourself with other schools. If the SIPs were doing that, it would be very positive. Just interpreting RAISEonline or CVA for the schools is not a good use of their time. That would not be a sensible thing for them to be doing.

Chairman: Can we move to David pretty quickly? When I said "quickly", it didn't apply to you, David. We have three sections of questions—two and a half

now—to get through before 11.30 am. I have guaranteed the Chief Inspector that we will be finished by then.

Q337 Mr Chaytor: What is the margin of error on the typical SATs Key Stage 2 test result?
Christine Gilbert: I don't think I could say with any confidence.

Q338 Mr Chaytor: Do you accept that there is a margin of error?
Christine Gilbert: I suppose that there must be. Do you know, Miriam?
Miriam Rosen: The data package that we use for RAISEonline highlights statistical significance, so we would only say that there is a difference between, let us say, two schools if it were statistically significant. That is pointed out in the data package.

Q339 Mr Chaytor: So you dismiss out of hand the academics who say that their analysis suggests that 30% of them are wrong.
Miriam Rosen: You are talking about the inputs into the test data.
Mr Chaytor: Yes.
Miriam Rosen: Well, our data package cannot take that into account. What we do, of course, is supplement that with inspections. We do not look just at test results. That is the whole point of the inspector going into lessons and looking at what pupils are doing, talking to them about their work, seeing whether they understand it, doing work scrutiny and looking at pupils' books over the passage of time to see what progress has been made. That is the whole point of the way in which inspectors triangulate their evidence.

Q340 Mr Chaytor: I appreciate that, but test data are still dominant in the minds of parents, teachers and pupils. May I ask you about teacher assessment? What is your overall judgement of the accuracy of teacher assessment? Has that improved in recent years?
Christine Gilbert: We don't assess teachers, we look at teaching. I think that that is closely linked to good self-evaluation. You would expect the school to know where its strengths and weaknesses were and to do something about its weaknesses. That is why the self-evaluation form—or self-evaluation—is so important. In addition to the question about data, schools address issues that you pick up on in their self-evaluations. Often, schools will present inspectors with other data to consider. Inspectors do consider what heads share with them.

Q341 Mr Chaytor: But in the context of your earlier remarks about the importance of objective data at Key Stage 2, Chief Inspector, why are you reluctant to rely on teachers to provide those data? Do you think that they are not sufficiently objective or that their assessment skills are not sufficiently well developed?
Christine Gilbert: Many moons ago, I was an O-level and then a GCSE examiner. With the best will in the world, you need a form of moderation for teacher assessment. That is why I said that it would depend what is put in place of Key Stage 2 tests if they go. I would be nervous about a more bureaucratic system being put in their place. In my view, you could not have teacher assessment without some form of national moderation.

Q342 Mr Chaytor: So something that was less bureaucratic and perhaps less universal, but which had a greater emphasis on teacher assessment with moderation, would be an acceptable solution in your view.
Christine Gilbert: It might well be.

Q343 Mr Chaytor: What else might be? What other alternatives would be acceptable to Ofsted to replace Key Stage 2 tests?
Christine Gilbert: I would want something that gave me some clarity about a child's performance, benchmarked against the national perspective. Quite honestly, parents tell me that that is what they want. They just want some clarity at the key phases. From listening to the debate at the weekend, I do not think that anybody is arguing about GCSEs at 16. I think that 11 is a key phase and that some information is necessary. I think it absolutely wrong to distort the time spent in school with teaching to those tests. Reducing that is a laudable aim, but there must be some clarity about children's performance.

Q344 Chairman: The Department has told this Committee that schools can still administer the tests and that it will still supply the tests, even at Key Stage 3, if schools want to do them. What is wrong with this range of tests being set nationally, run by schools and marked locally? That is not very bureaucratic is it?
Christine Gilbert: It depends what moderation there is. When I was a history examiner, I spent many hours in meetings trying to establish what different grades were, and so on. Some of those meetings were on Saturdays, I have to say. But those days have gone. The time spent out of school on some form of moderation depends on the level. I am sure alternatives could be found, but something at 11 is important. Some clarity is needed about what it is, but it should be nothing too complicated.

Q345 Mr Chaytor: In terms of the importance of the key stages, the Key Stage 3 tests have been done away with, with no controversy whatsoever. But is not Key Stage 3 arguably as important as Key Stage 2—and probably more important than Key Stage 4, in the context of the establishment of the diplomas and the extension of the participation age to 18? Has the age of 16 become almost irrelevant? The age of 14 will be the key point at which the curriculum diversifies.
Christine Gilbert: I think the Chairman said in passing that most schools were going to continue with Key Stage 3 tests. My impression was that a lot of them were going to carry on with them this year. I do not have any substantial evidence to back that up, other than anecdotes heard on my visits round

the country. But schools will put in place systems for assessing pupils and their progress—good schools have them in place now—not just once a year, but regularly. That is one of the things that has happened over the last few years. Schools have got ever better at doing that. So schools will have in place systems to tell them how children are making progress; they will not just be waiting from 11 to 16.

Q346 Mr Chaytor: Again, in terms of the importance of the key stage, as a parent, although my children are long out of school, I understand the importance of parents having accurate information. But surely that applies every year. There is no point suddenly getting a grade for your kid at 11, if it comes as a complete shock because you did not know what was happening at 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. So is there not a powerful argument for having better assessment and information for parents in each year the child is in school, rather than a single, big-bang, high-stakes test result that labels the child at one particular stage?
Christine Gilbert: I can completely support parents having regular information in the way that you have described. It is helpful to have a national check on that. Teachers are assessing children and they sometimes are surprised by the external results. Sometimes there is a drift upwards with marks. When I was a director of education years ago, when the Key Stage 1 teacher assessment was introduced, the results went down, because the teachers were tougher than the external ones. It is important to establish some national feel for what is going on. But what you are saying about regular information is crucial to parents.

Q347 Chairman: I want to turn to Edward now, but before I do I want to ask whether you have a lot to do with the school improvement partners.
Christine Gilbert: We do not have much to do with them. We are currently doing a survey, which will be—

Q348 Chairman: But you have a lot of knowledge of the field, Chief Inspector. Are these SIPs, which we have heard in this Committee can cost us up to £1,000 a day, supplied by the same people from whom you get your inspectors? Are the school improvement partners coming from the same source?
Christine Gilbert: My understanding is that they are employed by local authorities.

Q349 Chairman: Where do the local authorities get them from? Where do they come from?
Christine Gilbert: I think they get them from different places. A number of serving head teachers are SIPs.

Q350 Chairman: They do it on a school-to-school basis—they don't go to CfBT?
Christine Gilbert: They might well do. I really don't know.

Chairman: If you don't know, Chief Inspector, that is fine. I'm not trying to build up a conspiracy theory, I'm just trying to track where we get this expertise from. It always seems to be leading in one or two directions.

Q351 Mr Timpson: Chief Inspector, earlier you touched on self-evaluation in the inspection process and how it helps inform the inspection from the outset, being a good base and good grounding from which to move up. But you also said that the self-evaluation form is important and then corrected yourself—qualified it, should I say—and said that self-evaluation is important. I accept that that may have been a slip of the tongue, but is that not one of the problems with the current emphasis on the self-evaluation formula? Although it is only guidance, and it is not mandatory, there is a fear among a lot of schools that are often nervous about an Ofsted inspection, so they are reluctant to go outside the self-evaluation formula and look at other forms of self-evaluation which ultimately might not only portray the school in a more correct light, but make it feel that it is more engaged in the process.
Christine Gilbert: It was a deliberate correction. I had realised what I had said. The form itself is not a process of self-evaluation. The form is the outcome of the process of self-evaluation. There are two things. First, heads are positive about its impact. About 95% fill it in and, as I have said, they do not have to do so. I think that it would be a brave decision not to fill it in, and about 95% do. Schools have got outstanding without having filled it in. Actually, the external evaluations tell us that more than 90% of heads think that it is a really valuable thing to have done. We have had various things. A survey by York Consulting also said that heads were really positive about it. At the same time, head teachers complain to me about the size of the form when I have been talking to people at conferences. They say that it has got so big and unwieldy that they are finding it difficult. We have therefore been piloting a much shorter form— section A, the first part of the form—to encourage greater focus on evaluation rather than just pouring everything in. It is not so much the form that is important, but it helps the debate and gives the inspector something concrete to talk to the school about to see if it is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. The process would have been gone through, such as the engagement of governors, the engagement of staff and the engagement of key partners, children and so on.

Q352 Mr Timpson: I will come on to the engagement of governors and parents in a moment. Will the self-evaluation review that you are now undertaking form part of the new inspection regime in September? Can we expect to see a streamlined self-evaluation form?
Christine Gilbert: Yes. We have streamlined it and the pilot schools tell us that it is infinitely better. The pilot schools have been very positive indeed. I have not read anything that was negative about the evaluations that have been made so far.

Q353 Chairman: Are you sure, Miriam? Were you nodding?
Miriam Rosen: Yes, the heads are enthusiastic about the new streamline SEF. Instead of having lots of prompts that are integral to it, there will be a help button and guidance notes that they can look at to help them fill it in. It will not appear to be such a big and intimidating form, and that has gone down very well.
Christine Gilbert: We are just about to put the draft on the web. As I have been talking about it up and down the country, I can see the anxiety and concerns of the heads. Although they think that the current one is too long, they are also nervous about moving to a new one in September, so we are just about to put a draft on the web.

Q354 Mr Timpson: Is it the intention that past concerns about the self-evaluation forms preventing meaningful self-evaluation involving and engaging parents, governors and teachers will be addressed by the new form, to give schools more confidence to go through a meaningful self-evaluation rather than just filling in the form?
Christine Gilbert: The criticism about it not being meaningful hasn't been made to me. I don't know if it has been made to Miriam. It has not really emerged.
Chairman: They are all frightened of you, Chief Inspector. They wouldn't dare say something.
Christine Gilbert: I don't think that they are. They do say various things up and down the country. I don't think that they would be nervous. I always say that they don't need to give me their name or the name of the school when making their comment. That would have come through as a complaint. They said that it had got too long and too unwieldy. We don't insist that they complete it all—they don't have to. I don't think that filling in the form is going through a process of self-evaluation. You have to go through the process and then fill in the form after the process. It is all part of going through the process. Heads update the form regularly; they use it as a working document over the course of the year.

Q355 Mr Timpson: I am conscious of the time. Let us move on to the involvement of others in the inspection process and what weight you give to their views. First, let us look at governance. I hope you will confirm in your answer that under the new inspection regime that will come into universal use at the beginning of the school year, the views of governors will be given sufficient weight in the inspection process. The governors must be happy that their views have been given the weight that they deserve.
Christine Gilbert: We are concerned to ensure that governors feel engaged. One of the negative aspects of no-notice inspection has been the difficulty of engaging governors. At the moment, if there are two days' notice, the inspector phones the head and the head is asked to tell the governor—by that I mean the chair of governors or another representative—who might be at work, unavailable and so on. We are thinking hard about that. It is important to us that governors are very involved. We expect the governors as a body to feel engaged in the production of the self-evaluation form, and we would ask about that.

Q356 Mr Timpson: Finally, can I ask about parents. We will all have come across parents who want to be active in the school and have their say about how it is run, the quality of the teaching and so on. However, there are also some parents who, for whatever reason, find it difficult to engage with the school, particularly those who find it generally difficult to engage with teachers and those in positions of responsibility. We now have the section 5 inspection regime and questionnaires for parents to fill in. There is a concern among some that those questionnaires make those people who find it difficult to engage with the school even more likely to disengage. That could be because they have their own problems with literacy, an aversion to forms, or whatever else. Often, they are people who have children with a vulnerability over and above what one would normally expect. Do you accept that proposition? What can be done to ensure that those types of parents get more involved in the inspection process and in providing information?
Christine Gilbert: One of the things that has happened in the pilots has been a number of meetings with focus groups of parents to see how they could be engaged more easily. The percentage of those filling in the forms is still too low. That has been under active discussion during the pilots, but we have not come up with any proposals yet. One of the things that is different is that we will be asking schools about how they engage parents and pupils and what they are doing in that area. One of the first questions I was asked was about what I saw our key purpose as being. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 says that we have to regulate and inspect to ensure that users are engaged in the settings that we are inspecting. We want to ensure that parents are properly engaged in the life of the school—not only on the day of the inspection—and we want to know how the school is doing that. Schools might do that in different areas, contexts and so on. That is a difference in what will be taking place.
Chairman: Graham, a quick question on this before we move on.

Q357 Mr Stuart: You mentioned that test data and parental dissatisfaction act as prompts to go in and inspect a school. What other data do you have at national level to help to identify schools? Please be specific.
Christine Gilbert: Miriam will pick up on points about this. We look specifically at the last inspection grade and at what any surveys that have taken place say about the school. We look at attendance—and I think we mentioned exclusions although I am not sure if that went in. We look at test results, parent and pupil satisfaction and perceptions of what is going on in the school.
Miriam Rosen: We are looking at, for example, whether there has been a change of head teacher, because we know that a change of head teacher is a

factor that can precipitate a school going into special measures. Sometimes it could be that a new head teacher has just taken over and is moving the school up and out, but we are looking at whether we can capture data like that as well.

Q358 Mr Stuart: You have not mentioned local authorities.
Miriam Rosen: Yes, we are in discussion with the Association of Directors of Children's Services about whether it could give an indication of the local authority's view of the school, which could also be an indicator.

Q359 Mr Stuart: You do not formally have plans to ensure that you collect that at the moment.
Miriam Rosen: We can have access to the school improvement partners' report when we go into the school, but we do not at the moment have it in advance of going in. The SIP report should give the local authority's view of the school.
Chairman: It is not a question, but we got the feeling in an earlier evidence session that governors and parents seemed to think they had been rather sidelined. John, we shall have a quick look at school report cards to finish the session.

Q360 Mr Heppell: School report cards seem to be aimed at lots of people—parents, carers, schools, government and Ofsted, all with a different requirement. What is actually the purpose? Who is the school report card for? Is it for people to judge the schools? Give us your view of who it is aimed at.
Christine Gilbert: I do not see it as aimed at Ofsted. I see it as primarily aimed—a number of people would use it—at parents, the public and pupils themselves. I see it as something that more clearly tells you about the key things that are important to the school. The debate, of course, is about what those things are: is there agreement on what those key things are on the report card?

Q361 Mr Heppell: Every time we talk about this we have some people who say, "What we want is something that's quite simple, that parents can look at, where they can see everything." Then you get someone else who talks about how you need more detail about this and that. Someone suggested there should be a web page with a simple bit and something you could click on to get more detailed stuff. Where do you stand? How do you see it? Do you see it as a really detailed statement of the school or something where the school would be wrapped in a number, and that would be about it?
Christine Gilbert: It is important, whether you can dig deep or not, that at first glance it has a real sharpness and clarity and conveys a picture of the school simply and effectively. I think that that is important. In terms of the grade issue, on balance, we think that a single grade might be helpful—that is what Ofsted does now; there are a number of grades in the report, but an overall grade is given as well. One of the things that I would hope for is some simplicity. I think I have said in a previous meeting that one of the things that parents have said to us is that they are completely lost now, when they look at the achievement and attainment tables, and don't follow what is going on. Even people who are really quite engaged in the educational debate cannot get a grip on what it all means. So I think it is really important that it is simple and clear, but I also think that it might well be used for other purposes. I have used the name "health check" and we cannot find an alternative—we hope to find one by September. We would not use our health check if that were to be available to parents, so it could be used for additional purposes.

Q362 Mr Heppell: The Government have suggested that it could be used by Ofsted to decide where it is going to do inspections. That seems fair enough. What about if Ofsted then goes in and it comes up with a completely different view of the school from the one set out in, if you like, the mark or grade, or the way the report card is set out describing the school? Where do we go from there?
Christine Gilbert: I think that that would be inevitable in some instances, because the Ofsted inspection is real time, as it were—you go in and you capture a picture of a school. The data presented in the card is looking backwards and might well be more out of date than the inspection. But the inspections also look at different things.

Q363 Chairman: Are you being asked to help design or inform the school report card?
Christine Gilbert: As I said earlier, Miriam is an assessor on the group, so we will contribute to the design.

Q364 Chairman: So which people are working on the school report card?
Miriam Rosen: Can I just say that there are people from within Ofsted who have been working with the Department to look at what the report card should look like. The Department is in the lead, but we will definitely comment on it.

Q365 Chairman: So the Department has been drawing on your expertise?
Miriam Rosen: Yes.

Q366 Chairman: Who else has it been drawing on? Who else is there?
Miriam Rosen: We have been talking to them bilaterally.

Q367 Chairman: You have not been to a meeting with our friends in CfBT and Capita?
Miriam Rosen: We have been having meetings with the specific people who are working on report cards.

Q368 Chairman: Right, but is there a working group in the Department?
Miriam Rosen: There is a group of people in the Department whose responsibility it is.

Q369 Chairman: But you have not met them?
Miriam Rosen: Yes. I have met them.

Q370 Chairman: So how many did you meet?
Miriam Rosen: The main people we met were the other two or three people.

Q371 Chairman: And they were civil servants in the Department?
Miriam Rosen: Yes.

Q372 Chairman: But you didn't meet anyone else they were consulting with?
Miriam Rosen: When we meet them, we meet them by ourselves. I am not totally aware of who else they are meeting with. But they have drawn on our expertise.

Q373 Chairman: So you are the key people personally, Miriam. Who will write the school report card on the school?
Miriam Rosen: It will be done—I can't tell you the answer to that question.

Q374 Chairman: It's quite important, isn't it? The Chief Inspector has, under John's questioning, said, "You might get an Ofsted report that says this, and a school report that says that." So who is producing the school report card if it is not Ofsted?
Christine Gilbert: I assumed that it was the DCSF, but I have no idea—now you have asked the question, I assume that.

Q375 Chairman: So you think that the DCSF will do it nationally. In the Department, the people will write a school report card on the little primary school in my constituency?
Christine Gilbert: Whether they do it themselves or commission it, I am not sure—
Chairman: Ah, they are going to commission it.
Christine Gilbert: The lead would be from them. I don't think it's being discussed that it would be Ofsted.

Q376 Chairman: Will the local authority be the appropriate people to do it? We are off to have a look at school report cards. This is quite important information, but you don't know.
Christine Gilbert: I just haven't been involved in that discussion. But the Ofsted inspection grade, we think, should be a part of the school report card.
Chairman: Sorry, John. I cut across your questioning.

Q377 Mr Heppell: Just one thing to lead on from that: where do parents fit into this? Have the parents been asked? Is it clear to parents what the school is like, to enable them to assess whether the school is run to the benefit of their child in the first place, or to be able to follow progress, if you like? Have parents, and teachers actually, been involved in the discussions about how the report card should look?
Miriam Rosen: The Department has been talking to a group of stakeholders called the "New Relationship with Schools" group. Teachers are represented at that point, as are parents and governors associations. That is where that discussion has been taking place.
Christine Gilbert: But there is a formal consultation, I think.
Miriam Rosen: There has already been one consultation, and there will be, I think, another one.

Q378 Mr Chaytor: Can I come back to the point about who signs off the report card, particularly if there is a single grade. This brings us back to where we started, because if the Department has the responsibility for allocating the grade, it presumably completely undermines the point about independence from government, which was the first question that I asked in the session. Doesn't this completely sabotage Ofsted's role?
Miriam Rosen: The Government will not be signing off the Ofsted grade—I can assure you of that.

Q379 Mr Chaytor: No, but there is then the possibility of a conflict between the Ofsted grade and the Department's grade. So what does that say?
Chairman: Or you could get rid of Ofsted, David—it would be much cheaper. We would have the report card.
Mr Chaytor: It is hard to understand that there has not been some major debate between Ofsted and the Department on this question of who allocates the final grade on the report card.

Q380 Chairman: You are the major accountability body in this country, are you not? Here is the suggestion that something else will come in to help with accountability and you seem to have been kept in the dark.
Christine Gilbert: I don't think that discussions reached that point. I certainly have not been in discussions at that point. I had seen it as perfectly possible that the grade might be different because Ofsted is looking at things today and getting underneath what some of the data are suggesting. We will be looking at why things are as they are and how things could be improved. We have actually gone through two hours and not talked about that. One of the real virtues of Ofsted is the wisdom and the experience of inspectors and their ability to give clear advice about how you can make progress and so on. I would see that as an absolutely key bit of our role in school inspection.

Q381 Mr Chaytor: But, given the wisdom and experience of inspectors and the importance of Ofsted's independence from government, does it not follow that Ofsted should be arguing very powerfully that it should have the final responsibility for allocating the grade on the report card?
Christine Gilbert: Well, I will think about that one.
Miriam Rosen: I think what we said is that report cards complement Ofsted's inspections.
Mr Chaytor: They could contradict them.
Miriam Rosen: They may well conflict—and Christine has explained that to you—because the report card is looking at data that is essentially looking backwards and the inspection is in real time.

There may have been a change in the teaching in the school and a rapid decline would show up in the inspection grade, but that would not necessarily show up straightaway in the report card.

Q382 Chairman: But Chief Inspector, you can see David's point. Here you are, the chief organ of accountability in the educational sector, and here is this new way of helping with accountability. You would think that you would have been much more intimately involved in the process of designing this new system.
Christine Gilbert: I think there will be time for engagement and comment when the score card has reached a point—
Mr Chaytor: The consultation period has ended. It ended at the beginning of March.
Christine Gilbert: I think there is going to be more discussion about it.

Q383 Chairman: But there is an implied criticism of what we have. The point you made is a good one, Chief Inspector: we have not discussed that very much. Evidence given to the Committee, when we have looked at accountability, says two things. First, Ofsted is very expensive, and there are certain aspects of its behaviour that we don't like. On the other hand, if you look at all the data, we are not sure that Ofsted does what it was originally set up to do 20 years ago, which is to improve standards in schools. That is the debate, isn't it? Isn't it the case that that dissatisfaction is sort of expressing itself through the Department in the idea of having something either as an alternative to or as well as Ofsted: the school report card.
Christine Gilbert: I saw the report card as a way of being clearer, as I said, about the information that we hold in schools. I thought that the real dilemma and debate was about what key things you would put on that card. For me—along with the things that you might traditionally expect—the perception of parents is, for instance, absolutely crucial for getting a picture of what is going on in the school. We had been expecting to do our own—we did initially call it a report card or a health check—but we would not be doing both. It doesn't make sense to do both, so we felt comfortable working with what was emerging, as long as we could have some say in what was emerging. However, on the Chairman's remarks about what we think, it is not just a matter of what we think. In this area of our work—more than early years, social care and the FE sector—we have external surveys done and so on. Those surveys have given astonishingly high figures in relation to what heads and teachers—in the newest one that we have had done we asked teachers—think about inspection. They tell us how much inspection has contributed to improvement and how helpful it has been.

Q384 Chairman: Can we have sight of that?
Christine Gilbert: Absolutely. I would be delighted to send it to you.[8]
Chairman: Chief inspector, it has been a very good session. We have learned a lot and we will go away and ponder more. I hope to see you again soon.

[8] See Ev 138–39

Supplementary memorandum submitted by Ofsted to the Chairman

I was grateful for the opportunity to give evidence to the Select Committee on Wednesday 6 May, as part of your inquiry into School Accountability. At the conclusion of the session, I agreed to send you what evidence we have that school inspection works, and is well received by the providers that we inspect and their users.

We have our own evidence but more importantly, I believe that the external surveys that we have commissioned on the schools sector, will provide valuable evidence for this inquiry. Please find the following reports enclosed:

- The National Foundation for Educational Research's (NFER) report, Impact of Section 5 inspections: maintained schools in England, published May 2007. The NFER has recently completed a similar survey. This will be published in June 2009, and I will ensure that you are sent a copy.
- The National Foundation for Educational Research's Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey on Ofsted inspections, published April 2009. This survey was completed by a sample of over 1330 teachers and was weighted to ensure that it was representative.
- An Ipsos MORI survey of parents views of inspection, published March 2009. Ipsos MORI are also conducting a survey of young peoples' views of inspection and I will send you a copy once this is published. We anticipate publication in July 2009.
- Ofsted also commissions its own School Inspection Surveys, inviting all schools to send their views on the inspection process following their inspection. This programme has been in place for many years. Around two thirds of schools that are inspected complete and return it. These findings, although not fully independent like those above, are overwhelmingly positive. A summary of responses to some of the key questions, covering the period April 2008 to March 2009, is enclosed as Appendix A.

These surveys consistently highlight the positive impact of inspection, as viewed by parents, teachers and other stakeholders in the sector. Table A presents some of the headline findings from these surveys.

Table A

STAKEHOLDERS VIEWS ON OFSTED's INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS

Stakeholder	*Survey findings*
School leaders and other staff (as sampled by NFER)	— 88% were quite or very satisfied with the inspection process. — 95% found the Self-Evaluation Form a helpful vehicle for self-evaluation. — 92% found oral feedback from inspectors useful. — 84% found the Ofsted report helpful in identifying areas for improvement in the school. — Approximately three quarters found the Ofsted report accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses. — 89% viewed Ofsted's recommendations as helpful. 87% took specific actions based upon their recommendations. Amongst inadequate schools, 95% reported taking action on Ofsted recommendations. *Source: NFER Impact of Section 5 inspections: maintained schools in England survey, 2007*
Teachers	— 88% think inspections identified new areas of priority for their schools. — 84% regard classroom observations as an important and welcome aspect of inspection. — 58% felt that inspections had contributed positively to their individual approach to teaching. — 85% felt that inspection had brought changes in teaching and learning activities within their school. *Source: NFER Teacher Voice Omnibus Survey, 2009*
Parents	— 92% are in favour of school inspection, with only 4% against. — 84% of those whose child's school had been inspected said that they found the inspection report helpful. — 82% believe that inspection contributes to school improvement, and only 8% are sceptical about its impact. *Source: Ipsos MORI survey of parents views of inspection, 2009*
Headteachers	— 94% are satisfied with the way their schools were inspected. — 94% are satisfied with the quality of their report. — 96% believe their inspection will move the school forward. — 81% believe the benefits of inspection outweigh the negatives. *Source: Ofsted's ongoing School Inspection Surveys, April 2008 to March 2009*

Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

May 2009

Further supplementary memorandum submitted by Ofsted to Derek Twigg MP

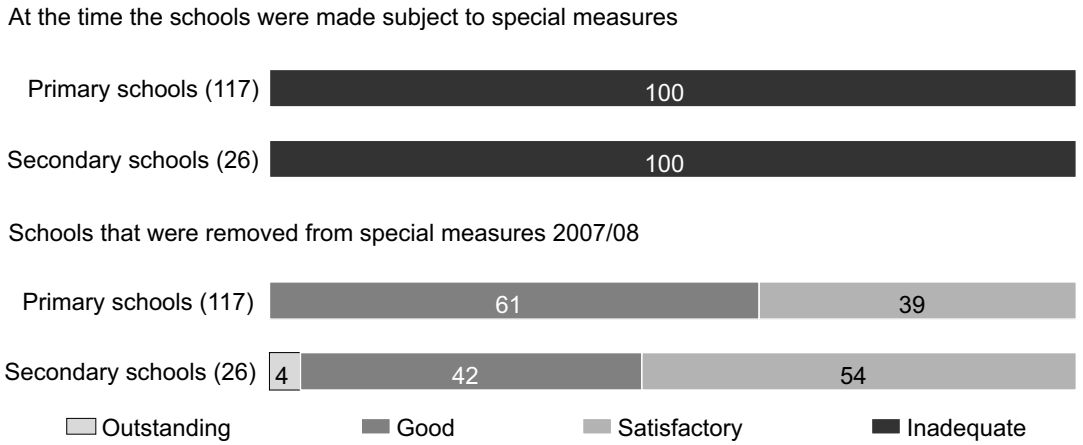
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY—OFSTED's IMPACT ON STRUGGLING SCHOOLS

I was grateful for the opportunity to give evidence to the Select Committee on Wednesday 6 May, as part of your inquiry into School Accountability. During the session, you asked about the number of inadequate schools we have inspected and their subsequent improvement.

In the academic year 2007–08, 153 schools that required special measures on their previous full inspection were re-inspected. Of these, 91% are now satisfactory or better; 75% were judged as satisfactory in their re-inspection and a further 16% were judged as good. Almost all of the remaining schools were given a Notice to Improve because, although they had made good progress in some areas and demonstrated the capacity to improve, important aspects of their work continue to be inadequate. Importantly, leadership and management have improved enough for the schools to be judged as capable of continued improvement without the frequency of termly visits by HMI. The importance of improved leadership and management is shown in the following diagram:

Figure 1

JUDGEMENTS OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS REMOVED FROM SPECIAL MEASURES IN 2007–08



Figures in brackets indicate the number of schools

As you will know, some inadequate schools are given a Notice to Improve rather than being placed into special measures. Six to eight months after inspection, schools given a Notice to Improve receive a monitoring visit, followed by a full inspection 12–16 months after being placed in the category of concern. Most make at least satisfactory progress in the year following their original inspection.

Early in 2008, Ofsted carried out a survey of 44 schools which had been monitored and/or re-inspected in the year 2006–07. This survey found that:

— Schools valued the monitoring visits highly and the prospect of early re-inspection galvanised action to bring about improvements.

— Most schools changed their original priorities to match more closely the areas inspection or monitoring identified as requiring improvement. For example, a few primary schools focused on improving attendance and almost all schools made improving the quality of teaching and learning a central priority.

— This change in focus led to sharper judgements about the quality of teaching and how to improve it, including more refined lesson planning and a more carefully planned programme of professional development. This more rigorous approach also led on occasions to a quicker move to staff capability proceedings where considered necessary.

The result of this can be seen in the inspection outcomes. During 2007–08, 245 schools which had been given a Notice to Improve in 2006–07 were re-inspected. Of these, nine in ten were now at least satisfactory overall and 40 (16%) of these were judged good schools. However, a very small minority had declined and were made subject to special measures. This usually relates to changes of leadership which have not had the impact that was anticipated, and also to situations where leaders have been absent from the school.

Another issue to take into account is the length of time that schools spend in special measures; this varies, but is generally far less than was the case 10 years ago. The time in special measures has continued to decline since the start of the new inspection framework, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

AVERAGE LENGTH OF TIME SPENT IN SPECIAL MEASURES, BASED ON SCHOOLS REMOVED FROM SPECIAL MEASURES IN EACH ACADEMIC YEAR

	Primary schools		*Secondary schools*	
	1997–98	*2007–08*	*1997–98*	*2007–08*
Total number of schools removed (excluding those schools that closed while in a category)	64	120	14	27
Average number of **days** spent in special measures	776	550	903	588

	Primary schools		*Secondary schools*	
	1997–98	*2007–08*	*1997–98*	*2007–08*
Average number of **weeks** spent in special measures	111	79	129	84
Average number of **months** spent in special measures	26	18	30	20

Based on 1 September to 31 August.

As you know, Ofsted also makes monitoring visits to a small proportion of schools which, although satisfactory overall, have some weaknesses; we intend to increase the proportion of schools visited in this way in the new framework for inspecting maintained schools from September 2009. We evaluated the existing process of monitoring visits in 2008 and discussed the procedures in extended interviews with a selection of headteachers in these schools. This work showed that almost all schools regarded a "satisfactory" judgement from Ofsted as a "wake up call", with almost half responding quickly by restructuring their leadership in order to achieve greater impact.

These monitoring visits were favourably received by all schools. They were variously described as very constructive, professional and developmental. A significant strength was the quality of dialogue with the lead inspector. They were seen as particularly helpful if they took place around one full year after the original inspection. Schools indicated that the major catalyst for change remains the inspection judgement (of satisfactory) but that the monitoring visit was helpful in checking progress on the key recommendations. This was especially true in some schools where support from the local authority was felt to be limited after the inspection.

Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

June 2009

Further supplementary memorandum submitted by Ofsted to Fiona Mactaggart MP

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY—OFSTED's PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS ABOUT INSPECTIONS

I was grateful for the opportunity to give evidence to the Select Committee on Wednesday 6 May, as part of your inquiry into School Accountability. During the session, you raised two connected, but separate, queries. The first queried the number of occasions when, following a complaint from an inspected school, Ofsted has changed its inspection judgements. The second specifically concerned a complaint about the inspection of Wexham School in your constituency and how Ofsted processes such complaints.

Ofsted Changing Judgements following Complaints about Inspection

Of the 7,866 maintained school inspections carried out in the academic year 2007–08, Ofsted received 304 complaints about 248 inspections. This represents a complaint in 4% of inspections but, allowing for the fact that some inspections had more than one complaint, only about 3% of inspections led to a complaint.

Of the 278 complaints responded to in the academic year 2007–08 (including those originally received in 2006–07), just over 30% were upheld to some extent. 10 (3.6%) were upheld fully and 75 (27%) were partially upheld. The remaining 69.4% complaints were not upheld.

A complaint can cover several aspects of the inspection process. 158 complaints (24% of all complaints) were about the validity of judgements as an aspect of the complaint. Of these, 19 (12%) were upheld and 139 (88%) were not upheld.

Complaint about Inspection of Wexham School

Following our discussion, I have looked into our handling of the complaint from Wexham School, particularly in relation to the time which elapsed during the different phases of the complaints process.

Wexham School was inspected on 9 and 10 December 2008. Our procedures require that, following the completion of our internal quality assurance process and a factual accuracy check by the school, a final version of the report is sent to the school within three weeks of the end of the inspection. The school is allowed five days to distribute the report to parents and carers and thereafter it is published on the Ofsted website. The report on Wexham School was published on 12 January 2009 and, allowing for the Christmas and New Year public holidays, this was within the required timescale.

The school submitted a formal complaint about the inspection to Prospects Learning Services, our regional inspection provider, on 10 February 2009. Ofsted requires that complaints submitted within 30 calendar days of the publication of the report should be considered and, consequently, Prospects Learning Services undertook an investigation of the complaint. Their response was sent to the school on 5 March 2009, which is within the 20 working day target period set by Ofsted.

Where complainants are not satisfied with the response to their complaint they may submit a request for an internal review by Ofsted within one month of receiving the initial response. Wexham School requested an internal review on the 6 April 2009. This was carried out by Sheila Brown, Regional Director for the South Region on behalf of Peter Duffy, Deputy Director, Corporate Services, and was sent to the school on 7 May 2009. Allowing for the Easter and May Day public holidays, this was within the 20 working days in which we aim to complete internal reviews.

I acknowledge that a considerable period of time passed between the inspection and the completion of the internal review, but the complaint was dealt with within our agreed timescales. It is entirely appropriate that the school wished to consider carefully the framing of its initial complaint and subsequent request for an internal review, but it is clear that this contributed to the time taken.

More generally, I understand your concern that our handling of complaints should be fair, objective and rigorous. These are key elements in the principles which are set out in the Ofsted publication *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* (December 2008). Internal reviews are completed by senior managers in Ofsted and involve careful scrutiny of the way in which complaints have been handled. On the very few occasions when inspections do not meet the high standards which Ofsted expects, we acknowledge this openly and apologise that it has occurred. We are determined to learn from our mistakes and, where necessary, issue further guidance or arrange additional support and training for individual inspectors.

While I am confident that our complaints procedures are rigorous and objective, I agree that it is important that they are subject to independent and external scrutiny. In the hearing on 6 May, I referred to the new Ofsted Adjudicator Service which is provided by the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution, who have substantial experience of dispute resolution in the public sector. A complainant who is dissatisfied with the outcome of an internal review can refer the matter to the adjudication service. The scope of the adjudication covers the behaviour of inspectors, the implementation of inspection procedures, the management of the complaint and the quality of the response. I know from our experience of both the newly appointed and previous adjudicator, that this process is independent and rigorous. The recommendations of adjudicators are occasionally challenging for Ofsted, but they are always considered carefully and, in the great majority of cases, accepted fully and incorporated within our procedures and guidance to inspectors.

While there are many strengths to our handling of complaints, I am determined that we should adapt a more streamlined approach, which avoids the lengthy timescales evident in the Wexham complaint. In 2008 Ofsted commissioned an independent review of its complaints procedures and we are now piloting new arrangements which will be fully implemented later in the year. We are proposing a rapid initial assessment of each complaint, distinguishing clearly between concerns about the conduct of inspectors and the validity of the inspection judgements. Wherever possible we will attempt to resolve the complaint through informal resolution involving direct contact with the complainant. Where this is not possible, it is anticipated that there will be a formal investigation which is similar to what occurs in our present arrangements. However, this will be subject to critical scrutiny by an independent panel of inspectors who will test the conclusions of the investigation against the inspection evidence and the views of the complainant. This independent scrutiny will, in effect, embed the internal review process within the initial investigation and avoid the lengthy timescales experienced in the case of Wexham School.

I am grateful to you for raising these matters and I hope you are reassured by my response to the issues that you have raised. Please do come back to me if you would like further detail about our general approach or, indeed, Wexham School.

Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

June 2009

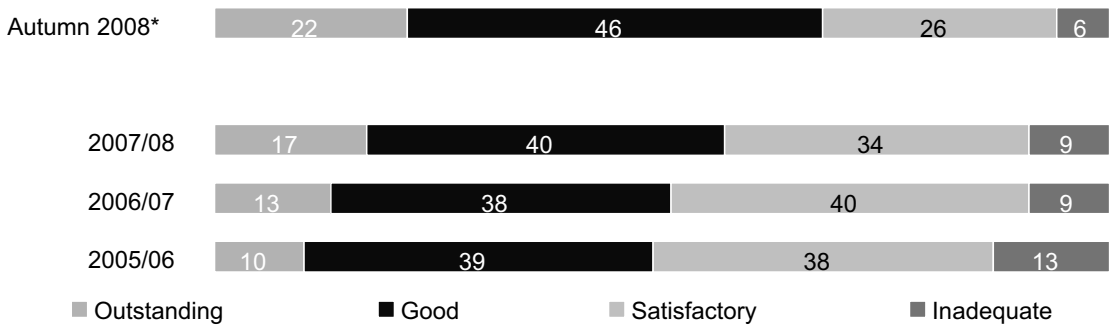
Further supplementary memorandum submitted by Ofsted to Graham Stuart MP

I was grateful for the opportunity to give evidence to the Select Committee on Wednesday 6 May, as part of your inquiry into School Accountability. During the session, you asked me about the proportion of secondary schools judged as satisfactory, and I said that I would provide figures to outline the general trend of improvement over the last three years.

In order to gain an understanding of the improvement of the sector, it is important to look at the proportion of schools that is satisfactory or better. Over the last three years (up to autumn 2008), the proportion of inadequate schools has declined and therefore, the proportion that are satisfactory or better has increased from 87% to 94%. Indeed, the proportion of outstanding schools in the autumn term 2008 was double that in the autumn term 2005.

Although I am cautious about making general statements based on only one term's data, you will see that the chart below shows a general trend of improvement since 2005.

The overall effectiveness of secondary schools (including academies and CTCs) inspected between September 2005 and December 2008 (percentage of schools)



Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.
*This includes 16 inspections of secondary schools as part of piloting of new inspection arrangements from September 2009

It is also the case that, as Ofsted has worked to "raise the bar" with each new inspection framework, what was judged as satisfactory four years ago would not necessarily be judged as satisfactory now. For example, we have added additional inspection requirements since 2005, such as the duty to promote community cohesion and the use of challenging targets to raise standards. As a consequence, what we now require for a school to be judged satisfactory is more demanding than was the case in 2005–06, when the current inspection framework was introduced. Similar proportions should, therefore, be seen as evidence of continued improvement.

You will recall that I also mentioned that we are planning to increase the number of monitoring visits we make to schools that have been judged as satisfactory. This new series of visits was introduced in 2007 and we currently make a return visit to around 5% of schools that have been judged to be satisfactory. The success of these visits, welcomed by schools, means they will be increased from September 2009. Although final plans are yet to be agreed, I anticipate that around 40% of all satisfactory schools will receive such a visit. In this way, Ofsted will be able to ensure that schools which were judged as satisfactory overall continue to be monitored, and to improve.

As I said at the time, I consider the inquiry into School Accountability to be a very important and well-timed opportunity to scrutinise the wider framework of accountability for schools. If there are any aspects of this inquiry on which you would like anything further from Ofsted, please be in touch.

Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

May 2009

Further supplementary memorandum submitted by Ofsted to John Heppell MP

I was grateful for the opportunity to give evidence to the Select Committee on Wednesday 6 May, as part of your inquiry into School Accountability. During the session, you asked me if I would clarify Ofsted's resources for the inspection of children with special educational needs, particularly in the light of the submission from the National Deaf Children Society (NDCS).

As I confirmed at the time, in addition to the four HMI with specific expertise in sensory impairment, our regional inspection providers employ additional inspectors (AI) who have a range of specialisms, who can be deployed when specialist schools are inspected. My full response to Parliamentary Question 265779 (enclosed),[5] quoted in part by the NDCS submission, gives further details about these arrangements.

[5] Not printed.

You were particularly interested in whether inspectors are sufficiently trained for the type of schools they are inspecting. Ofsted requires its contracted inspection providers to provide inspectors who are suitably trained and experienced for each inspection, and every effort is made to inspect special schools with inspectors who have expertise in the appropriate field. At the same time, in line with our current proposals for the inspection of maintained schools from September 2009, we are considering if the number of days an inspector spends in a school needs to be increased for special schools. I expect to be able to make an announcement about this when details of the new school inspection framework are released in June 2009.

I cannot give a precise figure on the number of additional inspectors trained in hearing impairment issues because some of our inspectors work for more than one of our six current contractors. However, I can confidently say that each of our contractors is able to draw on a pool of experienced inspectors, far in excess of the four HMI that you mentioned in your question.

For example, one contractor has 15 inspectors who have had specialist training in hearing impairment, 40 inspectors who have been through their own internal training on hearing impairment, 10 inspectors who have specialist training in visual impairment and five who have British Sign Language skills. Another contractor has 13 inspectors who have specialist training in sensory impairment, deafness or British Sign Language; another has eight; and another reports that they can draw from a pool of 39 specialist inspectors. One contractor has recruited the principal of a specialist school for hearing impaired pupils, so that this inspector can be included on the inspection teams for other specialist hearing impaired schools.

All contractors consider the nature of special schools, or mainstream schools with a Unit, when planning an inspection team. If there is a significant proportion of young people with sensory impairment, contractors should ensure that they have a sensory impairment specialist as part of the team. All schools that are heavily reliant on sign language are allocated a specialist British Sign Language inspector as part of the team. For schools or Units where they think the demand on the inspector to inspect and sign throughout the day will be too great, they bring in a British Sign Language (or other sign language, appropriate to that institution) signer. As part of the planning of inspections, all contractors take great care to ensure that these schools are inspected at a time to suit the specialist inspectors' availability.

I have looked at nine inspections carried out in 2007–08 where there was provision for hearing impairment at the school. I can confirm that six of the teams included inspectors who have specific qualifications for hearing impairment work. In two other cases a non-maintained special school and a community special school were inspected by teams of general SEN specialists. In the last school, a secondary sports college, we did not have any prior information about partial-hearing provision at the school and so were not able to provide a specialist inspector. The school did not raise the matter in pre-inspection discussion. In addition, there was one other school which, in the past, had provision for hearing impaired learners and we scheduled a qualified inspector for this reason. However, at the time of the inspection, the school had no hearing impaired learners.

In the case of the London primary school inspection to which you referred (quoting the NDCS submission), there was a team of three inspectors. One of these was a specialist in Foundation Stage special educational needs and has consultancy experience supporting special schools, including those supporting children with hearing impairment.

You have also passed on a question about the judgement on special educational needs in the new framework being introduced from September. In our current proposals, we are piloting guidance on the framework that makes clear that a school cannot be good overall if pupils with special educational needs do not make at least good progress.

I am grateful to you for raising these matters and I hope you are reassured by my response to the issues that you have raised. I consider the inquiry into School Accountability to be a very important and well-timed opportunity to scrutinise the wider framework of accountability for schools. If there are any aspects of this inquiry on which you would like anything further from Ofsted, please get in touch.

Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

June 2009

Wednesday 8 July 2009

Members present

Mr Barry Sheerman (Chairman)

Annette Brooke	Helen Southworth
Mr David Chaytor	Mr Graham Stuart
Fiona Mactaggart	Mr Edward Timpson
Mr Andy Slaughter	Derek Twigg

Memorandum submitted by the Department for Children, Schools and Families

1. The Department for Children, Schools and Families is pleased to submit this written evidence to the Select Committee for its inquiry into school accountability. As the Select Committee is aware, in December 2008 DCSF launched two consultation documents, on 21st Century Schools and on the School Report Card. Both consultations will run until 3 March 2009, and both raise some important questions about the current school accountability system.

2. We believe that accountability is a positive good, not a necessary evil. We believe that it is fundamentally important that everyone involved in public service, in the expenditure of taxpayers' money and especially in the education of our children and young people should be publicly accountable for the results that they achieve. We believe that an accountability system can be a crucial driver of improvement, both in strengthening incentives on public servants and in providing information to enable them to improve. It is central to any case for sustaining or increasing public investment that the public should be able to see the results of investment so far. We also believe it is vital that schools should be accountable to parents, so that all parents can access clear information in order to compare different schools, to choose the right school for their child and then to track their child's progress.

3. We believe that the current school accountability system plays an effective role in raising standards, enabling schools to drive their own improvement, identifying excellent performance and underperformance, keeping parents informed and ensuring resources are directed to where they are most needed. However, the development of the new School Report Card also offers us an opportunity to consider how we might further improve the accountability framework as a whole. We are currently exploring several aspects of school accountability on which we will offer more detailed proposals in our 21st Century Schools White Paper later this year. In particular, we want to ensure that the school accountability framework gives a rounded picture of each school's overall performance, including the progress of every child, the effectiveness of the school in raising the achievement of the least advantaged and the school's contribution to all five ECM outcomes. We are also considering how to improve accountability for partnership working and to recognise schools' support for the wider community, for example their contribution to the outcomes of children not on their own school roll.

4. As we consider these areas, we will be taking into account the results of our written consultations and also contributions from parents, school leaders, teachers, social partners and a range of other stakeholders at a series of regional and national consultation events we are holding both on 21st Century Schools and on the School Report Card. We also look forward to the Select Committee Inquiry which we will take very seriously as we prepare for the publication of our White Paper later this year.

Section 1

Accountability

Is it right in principle that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance?

What should be the fundamental purposes of an accountability system for schools and, in particular: to whom; for what; how; and what should be the consequences?

5. It is vital that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance as providers of a public service. Schools play an important role in determining children's future life chances, and it is right that they should be accountable to the public for the quality of the services delivered to children and young people, and specifically that individual schools should be accountable to those parents and pupils whom they directly serve. Schools should also be accountable to taxpayers for the significant public investment which is made annually in the school system (over £35 billion in 2008–09). Well-designed accountability systems are a key driver for improving the quality of services, and in the schools system accountability measures are used to identify individual schools' needs and to target resources where they are most needed through the provision of school improvement support eg via the National Strategies. At a system-wide level, accountability structures facilitate the sharing of good practice and shape policy development, for example through government responding to Ofsted's findings relating to national trends.

To whom should schools be accountable?

6. Fundamentally, schools should be accountable to parents, to pupils and to taxpayers. Public reporting of results and inspection by Ofsted, the independent inspectorate, are central elements of the accountability system and local government has a key role as an agent of pupils, parents and taxpayers in performance management and in intervening where necessary. School Improvement Partners play an important role in setting targets and in performance managing head teachers. This local process is then overseen by central government. Academies are directly accountable to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families through contractual commitments in their Funding Agreement.

For what should schools be accountable?

7. Schools should be accountable for the academic attainment of their pupils; their pupils' progression and participation; narrowing gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils; and for their contribution to pupils' wider outcomes. Recent proposals for the School Report Card aim to ensure that schools, parents and the public all have a shared understanding of what schools are expected to deliver. Schools are also accountable for making information available to all their pupils' parents about their policies on behaviour, SEN and admissions. Each LA maintained school is required to publish a prospectus containing information on their policies in these areas, and DCSF is currently reviewing the content and process around the school prospectus in order to further encourage parental engagement with their children's school.

8. In addition to being accountable to parents for making this type of school-level information available, schools are also accountable to individual pupils and parents for the performance and outcomes of each pupil. This includes the statutory requirements on LA maintained schools to report to parents at the end of year. DCSF Ministers committed in January 2008 to introduce more regular reporting online on pupils' attendance, behaviour, SEN, achievement and attainment, and DCSF is also currently reviewing school reporting regulations. Every LA maintained school is also required to have a Home School Agreement, in which commitments are made by the school to parents, and by parents to the school, although parents are not required to sign this document. DCSF is currently reviewing the process and content around home school agreements.

9. In order for schools to be held accountable to the public and to parents, it is important that performance data is publicly available. It should be accessible to everyone, and presented in an understandable format, both for the general public to understand the quality of education provision in their area and to assist parents in making school choices. One of the aims of the School Report Card is to simplify the presentation of performance data and make it more accessible.

How should schools be held to account?

10. The Government set out a framework for school accountability in the New Relationship with Schools (NRwS), as one of eight key school reforms in the Government's Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners in 2004. The principles of the NRwS included:

- Schools themselves being at the heart of the system.
- A greater emphasis on school self-evaluation.
- A shorter and sharper Ofsted inspection regime.
- Schools produce a single school plan, informed by a smaller number of DCSF desired outcomes than previously.
- The introduction of a School Improvement Partner for each school, who holds a "single conversation" with the school about its development priorities, targets and support needs.
- A new School Profile, capturing for parents a balanced assessment of each school's ethos, characteristics, performance and improvement priorities, to replace the Governors' Annual Report.

11. The proposed School Report Card will sit within this existing framework rather than replacing or competing with it. However, we have proposed in our consultation that the School Report Card should replace the School Profile; we will await the outcome of the consultation before making this decision. The 21st Century Schools White Paper will set out our plans for how the various elements of the accountability framework will complement one another.

12. The School Report Card will complement Ofsted inspection reports by providing a more regular assessment of performance, and forming the core of the automated element of inspection assessment used by Ofsted to select schools for inspection. The School Improvement Partner will use the School Report Card alongside self-evaluation to identify and discuss areas of strength and development with school. This discussion will inform the school improvement steps required, which are then agreed and set out in a single School Improvement Plan. Schools with post-16 provision will be held to account for their post-16 provision through the Framework for Excellence, an independent, quantitative assessment of performance in the post-16 phase.

What should be the consequences of school accountability?

13. All schools should be constantly seeking to improve further and taking their own action in response to their own self-evaluation and through discussions with their School Improvement Partner. Local authorities have a role to play in supporting all their schools. Where LA maintained schools' outcomes or inspection reports are not judged to be satisfactory, the LA role includes supporting and challenging the schools, including through the School Improvement Partner, and through other proportionate intervention as appropriate. Where schools need more significant support, it is sometimes appropriate for central government to intervene more directly and work more closely with local authorities to help them support and challenge their schools, for example through the National Challenge programme.

How do other countries hold their schools accountable for their performance and against what criteria?

14. The OECD's *Education at a Glance 2008* (OECD, 2008) reports on evaluation and accountability arrangements in the 30 OECD countries and in six partner countries. The focus is on lower secondary state schools, ie the equivalent of up to Year 9 in English schools.

15. In these countries, the main mechanisms for school accountability are: student performance assessments (analogous to our national curriculum tests); student examinations (analogous to GCSEs); school self-evaluations; and external evaluations or inspections of schools. About half of OECD countries require either self-evaluations and/or inspections by an external body. About two-thirds of OECD countries undertake student examinations and/or assessments at the lower secondary level. In OECD countries, school evaluation and student performance measures are mainly used to provide performance feedback to schools. In general, they have little influence on school financing, rewards or sanctions. The PISA 2006 international report indicates a positive relationship between attainment and public availability of performance data:

> "Students in schools posting their results publicly performed 14.7 score points better than students in schools that did not, and this association remained positive even after the demographic and socio-economic background of students and schools is accounted for". (PISA 2006 international report, p 243)

16. Further evidence on how other countries hold their schools accountable for their performance is available from a recent study on *Accountability and children's outcomes in high-performing education systems* (C Husbands, A Shreeve & N R Jones, EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London, 2008). The study confirms the widespread use of outcome indicators for accountability purposes, although the nature and purposes of these functions varied markedly between systems.

Is the current accountability system of inspection and performance reporting for schools broadly fit for purpose?

How should schools be held accountable for their performance in the context of increasing collaboration in education provision?

17. The principles of school self-evaluation, light-touch Ofsted inspection and the School Improvement Partner, established through the New Relationship with Schools, have been widely welcomed and have supported schools in taking ownership of their own improvement. The accountability system is flexible in allowing central government to shift priorities and respond both to individual school needs and to emerging national policy, for example through the introduction of progression targets and deprivation targets. The current accountability framework does not only take account of hard data, but also of valuable qualitative information through self-evaluation and Ofsted inspection.

18. However, we believe that there is scope to strengthen and sharpen further the accountability system, and we will be setting out our proposals on this in the 21st Century Schools White Paper, including more detailed proposals for the School Report Card. We want to ensure that the accountability system reflects what we expect of the school system, drives ongoing school improvement, and recognises all the achievements a school makes.

19. In the 21st Century Schools consultation document, we set out a number of areas where the accountability framework needs to continue to evolve in order to keep pace with current practice and priorities. We want to enhance accountability where schools are increasingly working in partnership. In the White Paper we will give a clear account of to whom schools are accountable, what they will and will not be held accountable for, how they will be held to account and the consequences of both excellent and poor performance. We want to look at how school are recognised for supporting the wider community, for example their contribution to the outcomes of children not on their own school roll. We are also exploring further the implications of raising the participation age and ensuring schools are held to account for the participation and attainment of all their students, and ensuring there is a coherent and consistent accountability framework.

Section 2

Inspection and School Improvement

Is an independent inspectorate an appropriate mechanism for holding schools to account?

20. Yes, it is an important mechanism. As an independent inspectorate, Ofsted is not the only mechanism for holding schools to account, but it is an important part of the school accountability framework. The introduction of Ofsted in 1992 signalled the replacement of the previous inspection arrangements, which were perceived as too cosy, with a level of independence and objectivity which is valued by schools, parents and others. Ofsted inspection provides external validation and challenge, the value of which is derived from the inspectors' independence. As inspectors work to national frameworks and standards which are publicly available, schools know how they will be judged. Inspection is also an important mechanism for identifying any issues faced by vulnerable or small groups of children, which tend to be lost in aggregate school level data.

What is the impact of the inspection process on school performance, including confidence, creativity and innovation?

21. The impact of inspection is regularly subject to evaluation not just by Ofsted but also externally, for example by the National Foundation for Educational Research and MORI. 96% of headteacher respondents believed that inspection would move the school forward. 81% believe the positives outweigh the negative aspects. This evidence is based on 2,000 responses to the Ofsted School Inspection Survey received in the first half of 2008; these are surveys which every school is invited to complete following inspection.

22. In 2007, an independent external evaluation of the impact of Section 5 inspections, as perceived by schools, was commissioned by Ofsted and carried out by a team at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (*Evaluation of the Impact of Section 5 Inspections*, McCrone, T, Rudd, P, Blenkinsop, S, Wade, P, Rutt, S & Yeshanew, T. NfER, 2007). In this evaluation, 84% of teacher respondents felt that inspections made a positive difference to the school, whilst 88% thought that inspections helped set new priorities for their school.

23. In an Ipsos/MORI poll carried out in September 2008, 92% of parents said they were in favour of school inspection. In HMCI's Annual Report for 2007–08, Ofsted tells us that the schools judged outstanding by Ofsted embrace innovative and creative approaches to teaching, learning and wider pupil development.

Are inspectors appropriately qualified and trained to carry out inspections, particularly in the light of the need to report against Every Child Matters outcomes?

24. The law requires the Chief Inspector to ensure that inspectors have such qualifications, experience and skills as are necessary to secure that she can perform her functions in an effective manner. Those functions include reporting the contribution made by schools to pupil well-being ie the five ECM outcomes. This has been a more challenging area for inspectors, because schools may have less control over some key measures, so that inspectors must make fine judgements as to the contribution of schools. Plans for new school level indicators for well-being should help to address this, and Ofsted will ensure that inspectors have the necessary skills to assess these. The combining of early years inspection with the rest of the school inspection system has also led to the need for additional training for school inspectors, because of the different approach to learning and development and its integration with children's welfare in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

25. The Chief Inspector is required to publish details of the qualifications or experience or both that are to be required of non-HMI inspectors, the standards that these inspectors are to be required to meet and the skills that they are required to demonstrate. All non-HMI inspectors have to be supervised by HMI until they are deemed capable of inspecting to the required standard.

Is it appropriate for inspection reports to be placed in the public domain?

26. Yes. It is very important that there should be full transparency. This builds confidence and ensures that parents, pupils and taxpayers have the information they need. One of the principles of inspection is the importance of gaining a user perspective. This is set out in the 2003 Office of Public Services Reform publication *Inspecting for improvement: developing a customer focused approach*. Seeking the views of pupils and parents but not sharing the findings with them would signal a return to "cosy professionalism". The Ofsted website is one of the most extensively used in the public sector and parents are one of the key users. Ofsted reports inform choice, provide assurance and trigger action or intervention where necessary.

How often should inspections be carried out and how long and detailed should these inspections be?

Has the introduction of a light-touch inspection regime for higher-performing schools been appropriate?

27. Government principles of inspection state that inspection should: contribute to improvement; focus on outcomes; encourage and build on rigorous self-assessment by service leaders, and should be proportionate to risk. Over time inspectors should modify the extent of future inspection according to the quality of performance by the service providers. This principle is central to planned developments for school inspection, which also conform to the other principles.

28. The frequency of inspection should be based in important part on the assessment of risk. Inspection should be targeted more frequently on institutions where there appears to be a risk of underperformance and where it can have most impact. The accountability arrangements need to evolve to reflect the maturity of the school system and the improvements that have been made.

29. Inspections need to be sufficiently detailed to provide secure judgements and to provide useful information for parents, pupils and others, but should avoid placing undue burdens on schools. Lighter-touch inspections have been piloted over recent years, reflecting the principle of proportionality and helping to develop Ofsted's new risk assessment mechanisms.

Should inspections be tailored to the current performance levels of the specific school being inspected and, if so, to what extent?

30. There needs to be some uniformity to enable a national picture but within the system, inspection needs to be flexible enough for inspectors to pursue particular trails to seek out strengths and weaknesses.

How much notice, if any, should a school receive of an upcoming inspection?

31. We have consistently reduced the notice period in order to avoid the build-up of pressure on staff and unnecessary pre-inspection planning, and to enable inspectors to see more easily the normal day-to-day operation of the school. There can be benefits to a short period of notice: it enables parents and other stakeholders to contribute to the inspection event (eg through parental questionnaires and opportunities to speak to inspectors), and also enables schools to give a proper account of themselves. The law is designed for a system based on a period of notice, but it recognises that there is also a place for no-notice inspection within the system, for example where there are serious concerns about a school.

In the context of an inspection, what is the value of:

- *the school's self-assessment;*
- *the results of national tests; and*
- *the school's contextual value added scores;*

and how much weight should be attached to these elements in the inspection report?

In an inspection, how should emphasis be balanced between educational attainment and other aspects of a school's provision, such as the Every Child Matters outcomes?

32. Self-evaluation empowers schools to assess their strengths and weakness and identify priorities for improvement. Self-evaluation evidence is a key indicator for judging provision and leadership. Performance data inform inspection judgements but do not determine judgements in a simplistic way. However, pupils' life chances are to a great extent determined by their attainment in school, so it is important that inspection takes account of this information. Value added data enable account to be taken of the progress of pupils in relation to their starting point, which is important for considering the impact that the school is having.

33. A school's distinctive contribution is in excellent teaching and learning, ensuring that all children achieve. However, it also has a clear role in actively contributing to all aspects of a child's life—health and wellbeing, safety, and developing the wider experiences and skills that characterise a good childhood and set a young person up for success as an adult. This is not just because these outcomes are vital for a good childhood but also because educational attainment and other outcomes are mutually reinforcing and there is evidence to show that this is particularly relevant in the early years. For example, children and young people learn and thrive when they are healthy, safe and engaged; in turn, the evidence shows clearly that educational achievement is the most effective route out of poverty. It is therefore crucial that while maintaining a focus on educational attainment the inspection regime also holds schools accountable for its contribution to pupils' wider outcomes. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile reflects some of these elements (such as social and emotional development) and the well-being indicators which DCSF and Ofsted are developing will also enable schools' contribution to wider outcomes to be better reflected.

What are the mechanisms for identifying schools that are underperforming and are those mechanisms adequate?

34. Ofsted currently inspects maintained schools every three years. Inspectors review previous inspection reports, attainment and progression data and schools' self evaluation forms. In addition, they assess the quality of leadership and management (including governance), teaching and learning, behaviour, pupil development and the curriculum. They seek the views of parents and pupils as part of the inspection.

35. The present Ofsted inspection framework is a key element in the school improvement process and plays an important role in the accountability of schools and local authorities. The shorter, sharper and more frequent inspections introduced in September 2005 have raised the bar on standards and the expectations on schools.

36. The current inspection cycle comes to an end in August 2009 and Ofsted have consulted on proposals to further improve the process (*A Focus on Improvement: Proposals for maintained school inspections from September 2009* (May 2008)). The main proposal is a move to a more flexible cycle in which schools judged "good" and "outstanding" in their previous inspection schools will be inspected at intervals of up to five or six years, with other schools continuing to be inspected at least every three years. However, every school will undergo an annual risk assessment to check on progress made which will determine the timing of the inspection. Those that are coasting, have inconsistent performance or are slipping will be identified quickly and inspected more frequently.

37. DCSF monitors school and local authority performance. It looks at a variety of factors—Ofsted reports, pupil attainment and progression data, school and local authority targets, predictive pupil data and soft intelligence from, for example, colleagues in the National Strategies. This gives us the evidence base to monitor individual schools and authorities and develop new policy programmes eg National Challenge and the Coasting Schools strategy.

38. Local Authorities have a role to play in supporting and challenging all of their schools. The new legal framework introduced in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires local authorities to be more proactive in preventing underperformance and to act more decisively when it occurs. We are challenging and supporting those local authorities with rising numbers of schools causing concern to use more sophisticated risk analysis to identify potential challenges and to prevent these by earlier use of warning notices and their own intervention powers eg applying to the Secretary of State for permission to replace a governing body with an Interim Executive Board.

39. In addition, all Academies are directly supported and challenged by DCSF. This support and challenge is being intensified as part of the National Challenge for the relevant Academies, with the principles and key elements of the National Challenge programme applying to Academies in the same way as to other schools. The majority of Academies are making very good progress, despite starting from a much lower base than other schools.

40. DCSF is also proposing to take a new legislative power to enable the Secretary of State to direct a local authority to consider the use of a formal warning notice when this would be clearly justified by the school's performance. This proposed power is included in the Fourth Session Bill which is currently before Parliament.

41. The system as a whole is stronger at identifying underperformance in the area of standards than in wider well-being, but the development of new well-being indicators should help to address this. The annual Ofsted risk assessment will seek to spot deterioration, and in future there will be more emphasis on the performance of schools in the "satisfactory" category, and inspectors will spend more time in classrooms, assessing the quality of teaching and learning.

How effective has the classification of "schools causing concern" (special measures or improvement notice) been in supporting improved performance in the schools concerned?

42. The Government does not want any school to fail which is why we expect local authorities to take preventative action in relation to such schools. However, when a school is placed in special measures or is required to make significant improvement (by being given "notice to improve"), that judgement is often a catalyst for making the changes that are required to improve the standard of education for the pupils. The quality of the leadership and management and teaching and learning are often key areas. In some instances a school may need to be closed or federated with another school. Others may be replaced by an Academy.

43. Schools are now spending less time in special measures than previously. During the 2007–08 academic year, the average length of time which an individual school spent in the category was 18 months for primary schools and 20 months for secondaries. In 1997–98, the equivalent figures were 23 months for primary and 28 months for secondaries.

44. In addition, Ofsted have published figures which confirm that, of the 1,694 schools placed in special measures between 1 April 1998 and 1 April 2008, only 42 (2.5%) have been placed into the category for a second time. The significant improvement (notice to improve) category has been successful in that over 90% of schools reinspected after 12–15 months have been removed from the category because they were once again providing a standard of education deemed to be at least satisfactory.

Have School Improvement Partners been of benefit to schools?

45. The School Improvement Partner (SIP) was introduced as part of the New Relationship with Schools (NRwS) framework in January 2004, in order to streamline and improve the relationship between the Department, local authorities and schools. As part of the NRwS, a SIP was assigned to each school, to act as a "critical friend"; to conduct a "single conversation" with the school about its development priorities, targets and support needs; and to act as the conduit between central government, the LA and the school.

46. Surveys of head teachers by the National Strategies indicate that 80–90% of heads think that their schools benefit from having SIPs. The same surveys indicate that around 90% of heads feel that SIPs have had a positive effect on their performance management and have resulted in them having sharper and more focused objectives than previously. A similar proportion feel the SIP process is more effective in challenge and support to schools than the previous system.

47. The two-year independent evaluation of the New Relationship with Schools, which reported in summer 2008, concluded that the challenge and support provided through SIPs had supported the development of more evaluative and accountable school structures and culture, as well as the development of challenging but realistic targets.

48. The same report found that 80% of secondary head teachers and 70% of primary head teachers agreed their SIP had been able to provide informed challenge to the school. Most head teachers agreed that reports produced by SIPs were of significant value to their schools. 60% of secondary heads agreed or strongly agreed that their SIP had supported them to raise standards of achievement.

49. Most head teachers also agreed that SIPs had effectively identified their support needs. However, head teachers were less convinced that SIPs had effectively brokered the support to meet these needs. The National Strategies are currently working to make guidance clearer for SIPs so that they are more aware of the practical steps they can take to broker effective support. DCSF will also be exploring further the role of the SIP in the forthcoming White Paper on 21st Century Schools.

Is the current procedure for complaints about inspections adequate?

50. DCSF believes that the current procedure for complaints about inspections is adequate. The proportion of inspections triggering complaints which lead to external adjudication is less than 0.1%. A new adjudication service provider has recently been appointed for Ofsted. Most complaints are raised by schools seeking to overturn judgements made about their own school. Any system which allowed a third party to overturn judgements would undermine the independence of the Chief Inspector.

How are local authority areas assessed and inspected?

51. Arrangements for area level assessment and inspection are on the point of change. From April 2009, local authorities will be assessed and reported on through the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), undertaken by six inspectorates including Ofsted. The inspectorates published their framework for CAA on 10 February. CAA will report each November. It will set out outcomes in the area, including for statutory early years and attainment targets and national indicators. It will assess councils as organisations. It will also assess how the council and its partners together contribute to improvements on priorities in the area, including assessing partnership working for example through Children's Trusts. The CAA report will comment on each ECM outcome.

52. Ofsted will lead on the assessment of outcomes for children at area level, and the performance of the local authority on children's services. Ofsted published a document, on 10 February alongside the CAA framework, outlining how they will do this. Ofsted will produce a quarterly performance profile. This will summarise evidence from institutional inspections, including of schools, and from the National Indicator Set. Ofsted will also carry out annual unannounced visits of child protection services. This evidence, alongside other available material such as the Children and Young People's Plan, will be used to determine an annual performance rating of children's services, which will be reported in the CAA in November.

53. A CAA report may include either red flags, signalling that particular key services or outcomes are not good enough and there is insufficient local capacity for improvement; or green flags, signalling outstanding performance. Inspectorates may decide to trigger an inspection where there is a red flag. So, where appropriate, there may for example be inspection of a local area's education services. There will be a programme of inspecting safeguarding and services—including education services—for looked after children, on a three yearly frequency. Evidence from inspections will be taken into account in the next annual CAA report.

SECTION 3

PERFORMANCE REPORTING (OTHER THAN THE OFSTED INSPECTION REPORT), INCLUDING ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTAINMENT TABLES AND THE SCHOOL REPORT CARD

54. In December 2008, DCSF and Ofsted launched a joint consultation to start an ongoing discussion about the content, design and use of the School Report Card. At this early stage, we are consulting about the general principles that should govern the School Report Card. The consultation will run until 3 March 2009 and seeks the views of parents, carers and pupils; the wider community; headteachers, teachers, other school staff and their representatives; governing bodies; local authorities and other children's services; and other stakeholders.

55. We believe there exists the opportunity to make the school accountability system stronger, sharper and better able to recognise the full range of each school's achievements. To make this possible each school's performance should be reported in a way which is clear, powerful, easily understood and easily used by school governors, parents and the public.

56. Our intention is that the new School Report Card should be the means by which we achieve this. The School Report Card will set out the range of outcomes for which schools will be held to account, show the relative priority given to each outcome, and provide an indication of the degree of challenge faced by each school.

What aspects of a school's performance should be measured and how?

57. The School Report Card consultation document recognises that a range of information on schools' performance is currently available, including the Achievement and Attainment Tables (AATs), Ofsted inspection reports, School Profiles and school prospectuses. However, these information sources do not always give a complete picture of a school's performance. The proposals in the consultation suggest that the current information should be retained but also supplemented to give a broader picture of a school's performance and development, and that there should be a transparent means of showing the relative weight of different measures.

58. The document proposes the following categories (without prejudice) for consultation: attainment; pupil progress; wider outcomes; narrowing the gaps; parents' and pupils' views. In the coming months we will consider which indicators should contribute to the overall categories. These may include existing ones, eg academic outcomes currently included in the AATs, and others which do not currently contribute to AAT categories eg the progress of pupils over the course of each key stage, or the school's degree of success in raising the attainment of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Our intention is that schools with early years provision will be held to account through reflection of Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results in the School Report Card, and that schools with sixth-form provision will be held to account for that provision through the Framework for Excellence.

How should these performance measurements be reported and by whom?

To whom should this information be made available?

59. It is expected that performance measurements will be reported in the School Report Card, which will be jointly owned by the DCSF and Ofsted. The consultation document states that an annual update of the School Report Card, in line with current annual publication of the Achievement and Attainment Tables, would be a viable option. However, it will also be necessary to ensure that the most recent Ofsted results are prominently reflected. The system will be web-based and the information will be publicly available at all times.

What is the effect of the current system of public performance reporting (Achievement and Attainment Tables www.dcsf.gov.uk/performancetables/, and the online School Profile schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk) on a school's performance, including confidence, creativity and innovation?

60. We believe that the current Achievement and Attainment Tables help to focus the debate on standards through the provision of hard information on achievements, thus strengthening the accountability of schools, colleges and local authorities. As described above in paragraph 15, international research (PISA 2006, OECD) showed there was a significant *positive* association between schools where achievement data were public and stronger results.

61. Recent Ofsted Annual Reports have stated that, across schools in England, "in the overwhelming majority of schools, pupils' personal development and well being are at least satisfactory and in most they are good or outstanding"; and that "most schools are responding well to the ECM agenda. Schools ensure that most pupils enjoy their education. There are good opportunities to make a positive contribution to the life of the school and the wider community".

62. However, we also believe that the current arrangements for reporting school performance and holding them to account could be improved. For example, while we do not believe that the existing AAT arrangements inhibit collaboration, they also do not incentivise it. And there is not a full focus on the progress of every child or on tackling disadvantage. The current consultation sets out the range and purpose of the current accountability regimes eg Achievement and Attainment Tables, Ofsted and the School Profile. We believe that there is an opportunity to make the school accountability system stronger, sharper and better able to recognise the full range of each school's achievements. This will only be possible if each school's performance is reported in a way which is clear, powerful, easily understood and easily used by school governors, parents and the public.

What is the impact on schools of league tables published by the press? How useful is this information to stakeholders, particularly parents?

63. Tables published by the press provide a reliable and easily accessible source of comparative information, drawing on data published by government. The Government believes that it is vital to make this data on schools' performance publicly available. If the Government did not publish the data, it would be open to accusations of having something to hide. Under Freedom of Information legislation, the data currently published by the Government would in any case need to be provided to anyone requesting it, and in such circumstances and the press would be likely to publish and interpret the data as they saw fit.

64. Research evidence indicates that parents find the tables useful, but that they use them sensibly and do not view them in isolation as the only measure of a school's performance. A study on *Secondary School Admissions* (Sheffield Hallam University and the National Centre for Social Research; Research Report No. DCSF—RR020, Jan 2008) indicates that tables were not the most influential factor in parents' choices. Parents can, and do, consider a range of information including inspection outcomes, seeking information from other parents, and making use of local intelligence.

65. However, DCSF regularly reviews how we present and explain data, and we continue to explore alternatives. The data currently available is heavily weighted towards academic attainment and while data which places pupil and student attainment and progress into context—in particular, Contextualised Value Added—is published by the Government, it is typically not reported by the press, or given much lower prominence than "raw" attainment scores. In developing School Report Cards, the Government hopes to make sure that accountability arrangements are made sharper and more comprehensive.

What might a school report card usefully provide that is not covered by the current performance reporting system?

66. It is intended that there should be a simple, clear and accessible single source of performance information for all aspects of accountability. The consultation proposes that the School Report Card, with an overall score, should be the means by which we achieve this. It seeks to explore how the report card will complement rather than compete with Ofsted inspection reports and form the core of the process by which Ofsted selects schools for inspection. The School Report Card will underpin a school's dialogue with its School Improvement Partner and its governors. At the same time, the School Report Card will incorporate information currently presented in the Achievement and Attainment Tables, supplement it with other available information to provide a broader picture of each school's performance, and present it in a way that is fair, balanced, comprehensive and easily understood by parents and the general public. The School Report Card will also set out the range of outcomes for which schools will be held to account, show the relative priority given to each outcome, and provide an indication of the degree of challenge faced by each school.

67. To achieve this, in addition to the categories proposed above (attainment; pupil progress; wider outcomes; narrowing the gaps; parents and pupils views) the consultation is proposing the inclusion in the School Report Card of the school's most recent Ofsted report outcomes; direction of travel; involvement in partnership working; and the quality of Early Years Foundation Stage and sixth form provision, as appropriate.

Are there any issues which the school report card should avoid or seek to inhibit?

68. One of the key underlying principles of using a range of indicators for each of a number of categories on the School Report Card is that it should avoid excessive focus on a single performance indicator, eg the 5 A*–C GCSE measure. In addition, we believe that all schools should have the same opportunity to achieve a top "rating" regardless of their individual circumstances. The detailed design work on the School Report Card will take place over a phased pilot period from September 2009 onwards, and careful attention will be paid during this phase to ensuring that the design minimises the possibility of creating perverse incentives.

Is the school report card potentially a sound basis for:

- *informing parents;*
- *providing a set of prioritised outcomes for schools;*
- *providing a starting point for Ofsted inspection; and*
- *providing a management tool for government?*

69. The consultation document on the School Report Card sets out the aims and advantages we envisage for it. Our aims are that:

For parents, it will:

- provide a clearer, more balanced and comprehensive account of each school's performance, which complements Ofsted's inspection reports;
- inform parents' choice of school and improve schools' accountability to parents; and
- provide information in a more easily understandable format, which is accessible to a wider audience.

For schools it will:

- provide a single, clear and prioritised set of outcomes against which schools will be judged by all parts of the system, with predictable consequences for both excellent or poor performance;
- recognise the value of schools' work for all children and across all outcomes (but only hold schools to account for those outcomes they can influence); and
- provide a balanced account of outcomes achieved and the degree of challenge faced by each school.

For Ofsted:

- Ofsted reports and the School Report Card will be complementary;
- the School Report Card will support the school inspection process; and
- School Report Card indicators may form the core of Ofsted's new risk assessment.

For government it will:

- provide a means of achieving the vision for 21st century schools; and
- help to hold schools predictably and consistently to account for what is most important; and incentivise schools in the right way, and remove perverse incentives.

Could the school report card appropriately replace some Ofsted reporting?

70. We believe that the School Report Card should complement rather than compete with Ofsted inspection reports. Ofsted inspections include rich and detailed information which could not adequately be captured through the School Report Card. However, it is proposed that the School Report Card will form the core of the process by which Ofsted selects schools for inspection. As part of the new inspection arrangements to be introduced in September 2009, Ofsted intends to introduce an annual "risk assessment" for every school. Its purpose is to inform (but not determine) the selection of schools for inspection, by assessing the probability that a school, if inspected, would be judged good or outstanding.

71. The consultation explores in principle whether and how the proposed indicators that will underpin the School Report Card should form the core of Ofsted's risk assessment. This would help to ensure that schools whose performance, as shown on their School Report Cards, was excellent might have their inspections deferred; while those whose performance caused concern would be likely to receive an early inspection. As well as performance data, however, Ofsted's risk assessment will also need to take account of further, qualitative information that it would not be appropriate or relevant to include in the School Report Card.

February 2009

Witnesses: **Mr Vernon Coaker**, Minister of State for Schools and Learners and **Jon Coles**, Director General, Schools Directorate, DCSF, gave evidence.

Q385 Chairman: I welcome the Minister, Vernon Coaker, and Jon Coles. You know that this is the final session on our school accountability inquiry. We will be meeting the Secretary of State about the White Paper at a later date, so let us not stray off into the wider fields of the White Paper but keep our eye on the ball of accountability as far as we can. Minister, I understand that you want to make a very brief statement about a different item before we get going on the accountability session.
Mr Coaker: Chairman, that is very helpful. Thank you for very much for allowing me to say something very briefly before we get into accountability, which is obviously extremely important. May I say again that we welcome the inquiry and we look forward to the recommendations that you come forward with. Externally marked tests also play an important role in our accountability system. The expert group on assessment reported that external validation of pupils' performance is vital and that national curriculum tests remain the best way of providing objective information on the performance of each pupil and each school. Last year's failures were unacceptable, and I am pleased to be able to tell the Committee that 99.9% of test results were made available to schools yesterday, as planned. Following this year's successful process, QCA will seek to award a single year contract for test delivery in 2010, which is similar in shape to this year's. We will look to put in place a longer contract from 2011 onwards, which will take more fully into account the recommendations of the expert group. I can confirm that tests will take place as planned in the week commencing 10 May 2010. Having taken account of the QCA's and Ofqual's advice, we will seek to implement the expert group's recommendation on moving the test to mid-June in 2011. Finally, I am aware that following my colleagues' appearance before the Committee on 20 May, when the 2008 national curriculum test problems were discussed, you, Chairman, and Mr Stuart both wrote to the Secretary of State asking for sight of documents relating to our handling of the process last year. A response to each of you is being sent today, which explains that we have decided to publish a wider package of documents relating to the Sutherland inquiry, and those documents will be available on the Department's website later today. May I thank you again, Chairman, for the opportunity to make those few brief remarks.

Q386 Chairman: Minister, you are very welcome. Do you want to say anything in terms of accountability?
Mr Coaker: Not really, Chairman. Let's just get straight into it. Accountability is obviously very important and I am sure that the Committee have a number of questions to ask.

Q387 Chairman: Right. Let's get started. Jon, it is very nice to see you here. I think that it is the first time since you have been in your new role, isn't it?
Jon Coles: No—we were here not so very long ago.
Mr Coaker: We were both here about three weeks ago, Chairman. Did we make that big an impact?
Chairman: I am afraid that the thought of starting an 80-mile walk tomorrow is preying on my mind.
Fiona Mactaggart: Have you asked him for sponsorship yet?

Q388 Chairman: I have already asked him—I am still waiting. Let's start with what is really at the heart of all this. A very short time ago, hardly anyone had heard of school report cards; they have suddenly become, not only a great fashion, but also at the heart of the White Paper and are going to, from what I've read, transform the notion of accountability of schools and the education system. Where does all this come from? Is it all just that someone went to New York and was impressed by the school report card in one city in one country? This Committee has been to look at school report cards in New York and we thought that they were very interesting, but is this all based just on the New York experience?
Mr Coaker: Obviously, we know that the Committee went to New York, and we have looked at what New York has done with respect to report cards and at other examples. I think that you have to put this in a broader context. People wanted to look at something like report cards because they were concerned that what we needed to do was capture everything that a school did. It is not just about academic results. Let me stress this because otherwise you are getting into a bit of a sterile debate: everyone agrees that standards of attainment are crucial in a school and that exam results, SATs results and academic attainment are absolutely fundamental, and we can never take our eye off the importance of that. Alongside that, as you, the Committee and others know, people will say that schools are about much more than that—they are about the development of a child as an individual, how they progress and what the school does in terms of a whole range of other things. The drive was to say, "Is there a way in which we can keep a relentless pressure on standards in schools?" But it was also to try to capture something else about the ethos of a school—what a school is actually about. I think that the report card gives that opportunity. It also tries to give the opportunity to ask whether it is possible to actually measure and judge—in a broader sense—what progress a school is making in those other areas as well.

Q389 Chairman: But there is no doubt that a reading of the White Paper, and of any of the material that has come out on this, would suggest that this is going to profoundly change the relationship of accountability for all the players—local authorities, Ofsted and the school improvement partners. It is very much going to change the whole landscape, isn't it? It's a very fundamental change.
Mr Coaker: It is a huge change, Chairman. It is a radical, reforming change. When people read it and look at it, they will say that this is a real attempt and a real desire on the part of the Government to capture that broader picture of what a school is about, and to actually say that we are going to look

not only at exam standards, but at the well-being of pupils in the school, the perceptions of parents and pupils and the narrowing of the gap in pupil performance. Of course, that will then not only alter how we hold schools accountable, but also the way local authorities and the school improvement partners work with schools. It will change all of those sorts of relationships. As I say, when people read what it is that we are trying to do, they will see that it is a move away from just saying that we should have one indicator which we concentrate on, as important as that is, because it does not always reflect everything else that goes on in a school and does not always reflect the fantastic progress that some schools make in difficult circumstances. What it will also do, Chairman, is to allow us to see where schools seem to be doing well, but actually could do better if they were pushed. I think that sort of contextualisation, that sort of approach, gives us a much more mature way of looking at what schools are actually doing.

Q390 Chairman: Are you really attempting to take people's mind off the other stuff? Is it really throwing dust in the public's eyes?
Mr Coaker: No. Not at all.

Q391 Chairman: Is it a gimmick? You hear people say, "Oh, look at that school report thing, the Ofsted report. They don't look at the SIPs information, they don't look at the—
Mr Coaker: Not at all, Chairman, because alongside—

Q392 Chairman: It's the only really striking thing in the White Paper. It has everything including the kitchen sink, but this is the thing that people have talked about most.
Mr Coaker: It is the thing that has captured people's imagination and quite rightly, because it is, as I say, a reforming document. It is not a gimmick. It is not about throwing dust in people's eyes, but about trying to respond to many of the things that people have said. Of course standards are important, but why not try and capture some of the other things that a school is about as well? Why not try and inform parents about that? Why not try and inform the community about that and hold the school to account for what it does on a whole range of other areas as well as its academic attainment?

Q393 Chairman: What would happen in your constituency and mine, Minister, if a modest school was plodding around "satisfactory"—I take it there will be an A, B, C, D or E, or whatever in terms of their school report card—and on these new criteria that school got a C or a D? What happens to the parents' perception of sending their children to that school?
Mr Coaker: Parents will make an overall judgment, as they do now, about schools. They will look at the report card, because the score has not just come about because of the academic results; it has come about because of a whole range of different things. But, of course, alongside that you will look to see what the reasons are for that—whether the school is improving, what is going on in the school. Of course, it will be a challenge for others—the local authority, the school improvement partner and so on—to actually work with the school to try and build on that. But it is that bigger picture that people will look for. You and I know that some schools, on the face of it, just on raw exam scores, do not appear to be doing particularly well, and yet people still want their children to go there, because they have taken a whole range of things into account. What people want to know from a school is that a school is doing the best for each of the individual children in that school and that each of them can achieve the best that they possibly can.

Q394 Chairman: Jon, Ministers come and go with some regularity. You have been around for quite a long time. When was the eureka moment when someone in the Department suddenly said, "Eureka! It's school report cards." When was it?
Jon Coles: I am not sure I can answer that.

Q395 Chairman: That is very worrying. You do not remember the first time someone said, "Why don't we look at these school report cards?"
Jon Coles: I am not sure I can remember the first time it was discussed. It has been discussed in the Department for some months. We have certainly been discussing it for over a year in the Department.

Q396 Chairman: Was it after someone's trip to America?
Jon Coles: No, it was before anybody went to America that we started talking about it. We are looking at practice all around the place and it is something that has been done not just in New York but in other countries, and in other parts of North America as well. It is true that there are some schools—you referred to this quite rightly—that would be challenged by report cards in a much sharper way than they have ever been challenged before, because there are schools where attainment might look satisfactory but actually pupil's progress is not all that it should be, and not as sharply challenged in the system as it should be. That is a really important thing for parents.

Q397 Chairman: But you are known as the man with the iron fist in the Department. I can remember people saying, "It's that Jon Coles. He believes in evidence-based policy. You won't get anything past him unless it's evidence-based." Come on, Jon. Is this based on evidence?
Jon Coles: I think there is a good evidence base for it.

Q398 Chairman: What evidence?
Jon Coles: We do have international evidence about the effectiveness of this.

Q399 Chairman: No, we don't have evidence. We have been to New York. There is no evidence. They are all arguing about it. Someone told us that you need a PhD to understand some of the school report cards in New York.
Jon Coles: Accountability systems are always controversial but that does not mean that there is not evidence.

Q400 Chairman: You are moving away from the evidence. Where is the evidence?
Jon Coles: I think there is very good evidence in New York that it has challenged performance at the bottom end very effectively, and shifted performance at the bottom end in New York. It has been done in all sorts of other places—in Alberta as well—on quite a different model. It is much less controversial in some of those other places than it is in New York. In New York, where it is a pretty new idea, it is still controversial, although there is good reason to believe that it has had a good effect in tackling performance at the bottom end.

Q401 Chairman: You wrote the White Paper, didn't you?
Jon Coles: Not physically, personally.

Q402 Chairman: No? You claimed to have written a previous White Paper—it is in your CV. You're not claiming this one? It says in your CV that you wrote the 2002 White Paper.
Jon Coles: That is a factually accurate statement, yes.

Q403 Chairman: But you did not write this one?
Jon Coles: I wrote some bits of it, but I didn't mainly write it, no.

Q404 Chairman: You didn't write the famous one on diversity and choice?
Jon Coles: I didn't write that one.
Chairman: Thank you for those opening remarks.

Q405 Fiona Mactaggart: When faced with a lot of research and evidence—OECD and so on—about different accountability systems, why did the Government pick one that was highly centralised in determining what it included, but looked at through schools?
Jon Coles: I am not sure that this is a more centralised system than the one we had before. In fact, it provides information to parents on the basis of nationally validated evidence about performance, so it is possible in this country—in a way that it isn't in many other countries—to compare the performance of schools in similar circumstances on the basis of common data and evidence. The OECD says its studies show that the single biggest driver of school performance is school-based accountability, on the basis of individually taken school-based assessments that are externally set and marked. That is the biggest driver of performance, and the reporting of that is an important factor. In other words, if you want to improve your system, testing people on a universal basis through external tests and marking, and reporting the results of that, is a key driver of performance in the system. If you look at the issues that there are with our existing system of testing, you would say, first, that it focuses on a small range of measures and, secondly, that they are mostly threshold indicators, which therefore apply to particular groups of students far more strongly than to other groups. If you were to develop that system further, you would want to get a set of measures that captures, first, the progress of every single child and holds schools to account for that and, secondly, the breadth of things that schools are expected to do in the system, and not just attainment—although that should be centrally important—but the wider range of things that schools do as well. That is what the report card is attempting to do—to capture very much more sharply and precisely the progress of every child so that for those who have achieved poorly, for example at primary school, secondary schools are still held to account strongly for their progress, and more strongly than is the case at the moment. For those with particular abilities who have achieved highly, schools should be held to account for their progress, performance and success as well—not just that they should get grade C, but that they should go on and get As and A*s. That's what the report card is intending to do.
Chairman: That was a long answer, Jon.
Jon Coles: Sorry.

Q406 Fiona Mactaggart: But if we look at the education system as a whole, what is the biggest problem? Shockingly and depressingly, it is the problem that I made my maiden speech about and which the chief inspector has criticised us for: the appalling number of children still leaving primary school not reading successfully. My view is that every child has a human right to read, and we do not have—and you are not proposing—an accountability mechanism that focuses on the whole system and enabling each child to read effectively. Indeed, with the abandonment of the national strategy, it could be argued that it might be losing part of that.
Mr Coaker: We are not taking our focus off numeracy and literacy in primary schools because, as Fiona was saying—is that okay in this Committee?
Chairman: Yes.
Mr Coaker: Fiona was saying that the importance of numeracy and literacy was absolutely fundamental. As you know, I have said that we will be ending the contract with respect to national strategies in 2011, but that does not mean that we will take the focus off. We are saying that we will now look to schools individually to develop the work that they do on that, although we expect the literacy and numeracy hours and work in the schools to continue. But the money around that will be devolved to them. Our view is that we have made some progress but, as you say, we now need to try to accelerate that and to build on what we see as the success of the national

strategies with respect of numeracy and literacy in the way that it has gone up, and push further to try and tackle that 20% to 25% at the end who are still leaving primary school without the expected level. That was why the booster classes and the extension of the peer one-to-one into year 7 in secondary school were also included in the White Paper to try to build on and tackle that as well.

Jon Coles: Can I just add to that very quickly. If you look at the developments in this White Paper, I think they have the opposite effect to the one you're suggesting. I think that they sharpen the focus on English and maths. In accepting the expert group report conclusion that we should have externally marked and set tests in only English and maths, we are sharpening the focus on those subjects. They remain absolutely essential to the report card measures. The fact that in the White Paper we say that every child who is behind expectations in either English or maths in Key Stage 2—at any stage—will get one-to-one support within the next few years to catch up in those two subjects is the biggest sharpening of focus on getting people up to national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics that we have had since the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies. It is a big attempt to focus attention more sharply on particularly those children who are not meeting national expectations.

Q407 Fiona Mactaggart: Just finally, one of the points that I made about the centrally determined accountability mechanism is that if you speak to parents, they want schools to be a place where their children learn and succeed. They want powerfully for them to come out able to read and participate in society. They also want their children to be happy. I worry about whether we have a clear enough focus on what parents and children want out of schools in this mechanism. Have we listened to them, or have we just decided that we know best?

Mr Coaker: I think that that is exactly the reason for the report card. I think that the parents in your constituency and others will be pleased with the way in which the report card is actually trying to capture some of the points you make about people being happy and safe. Sometimes the problem is that you are then accused of being soft on standards and not caring about them.

Q408 Fiona Mactaggart: Standards are appalling when children are miserable.

Mr Coaker: Absolutely. When young people feel happy, safe, secure and valued for who they are, achievement usually goes up as well. You will have seen the different categories laid out in the report card, including pupil well-being. Parents ask me, "Is my child going to be bullied at the school? Is my child going to be safe there? Is my child going to be looked after and cared for, and what is the pastoral system like?" They ask those questions as well as looking at the academic achievement and how well the school is doing with regard to reading and writing. The only point I am making is to ensure that, in a sense, we are not accused of taking our eye off the ball with regard to standards. Standards of literacy and numeracy, as you have said, Fiona, are absolutely fundamental, but there are other things that go alongside that and will, quite rightly, contribute to the achievement of a school if put right. The report card seeks to allow parents to be able to see whether a school is good in those respects as well as the others.

Chairman: Let us move on. Graham, you may ask questions on the school report card.

Q409 Mr Stuart: Returning to the point Jon made about the right to one-to-one tuition set out in the White Paper, it reminds me of the golden days of the British car industry and of British Leyland and its commitment to quality control. There was a bigger number of people at the end of the line dealing with all the ones that were not constructed properly in the first place, which showed British Leyland's commitment to quality control. The Japanese did not do that. They decided to get it right the first time and have no one at the end of the line because no car got there without being right from the beginning, and anyone could press a button on the conveyor belt to stop the whole process and ensure that it was done right. I find rather worrying the idea that you are not challenging, or doing enough to remove, inadequate teachers and are not focusing enough on getting great teachers in classrooms. When you get a great teacher in a classroom in the most deprived and challenging area, standards are transformed, and if you get someone who cannot do it, you do not. One-to-one tuition is yet another gimmick from a Government who have come up with millions in 12 years, and it does not reassure me that children in the worst affected areas will get the support they need.

Mr Coaker: Nobody disagrees that it is necessary to get a continued emphasis on standards to try to improve everybody within the pre-school, infant and junior phases of primary education, as you rightly point out, Graham. However, if people do not succeed and fall behind, it is important to have a system that supports them to catch up. A number of studies have demonstrated that one-to-one tuition and support is a way of doing that. My experience of talking to teachers, parents and others is that it has actually been exceedingly well-received. Notwithstanding the point you made, which we obviously would all want, nobody would be in a position where they would need that. People have been very pleased by the fact that, when people fall behind, that additional help and support will be provided. Now it will be not only available in years 3 to 6, but extended into year 7.

Q410 Mr Stuart: For the record, I personally do not find that convincing, but we will see. So, true school accountability measures that work will root out the poor and inadequate who are failing children—is that right?

Mr Coaker: It will improve accountability, which improves practice and standards in schools overall and allows parents to see what is going on. Alongside that—as a part of it—improving what

happens in schools is about improving the quality of leadership through the head teacher, which is absolutely fundamental, and also about improving the quality of the teaching that goes on. One of the other things in the document, as you will know, is the licence to teach, which is another way in which we will try to ensure that teachers keep their professional skills up to date. Alongside that will be continuous professional development. As we discussed before, we want to ensure that high-quality teaching is available to everyone in every class.

Q411 Mr Stuart: Accountability should mean that we root out the inadequate, and that is not about box-ticking. There will be some great teachers who will be damned if they are going to go on a course, even though the head nags them, and they might fail to fill the box in. When the guys come along every five years for the licence renewal, the poor and mediocre teacher, who is pretty good and assiduous at sucking up to anyone at the right time, will get a tick in all the boxes. Will this system root out the poor and the inadequate, because we have a system in which poor and inadequate teachers are not removed from our classrooms? Until you do that you have not got an accountability system worth the name.
Mr Coaker: I think that the reforms we have announced will help to ensure that we have high-quality teaching available in every class. Accountability is about that, but it is also about ensuring that all the other things take place and that parents are informed. Then they will bring that pressure to bear themselves on the school to ensure that the quality of education there is as it should be.

Q412 Mr Stuart: So you are saying that parents will be in a position to trigger the removal of inadequate teachers?
Mr Coaker: What I am saying is that parents will be able to hold a school to account. If people have the information about a school, they will make a judgement about that, and ultimately they will make a judgement about whether they want their son or daughter to go there.
Jon Coles: I think you are rightly saying that there is a big implementation issue about the licence to teach. If it is implemented in a way which says that people must go on a certain number of courses every year and fill in the forms and submit a portfolio, which is convincing on paper but says nothing about their teaching practice, it will not work. Therefore the job of implementation is to make sure that this is a real and effective way of making sure that those who are effective in the classroom, whose skills are up to date and who teach well every lesson, every day, are relicensed, and those who fall short of those professional standards are not relicensed. Obviously, making that system work effectively is the key to making it an effective reform, rather than one that is about box-ticking. We are very clear that the job is to make it about the quality of teaching practice and not about the number of courses that somebody has been on.

Q413 Mr Stuart: We know how many teachers have been removed from teaching over the last number of years—practically none. Chris Woodhead famously came out with a figure of 15,000 inadequate teachers at one stage. Do you have any idea of what success would look like in terms of rooting out inadequate teachers?
Mr Coaker: I do not have a figure that I can tell the Committee, but I accept the point that ensuring that we have good, high-quality teaching in every classroom is essential. I think that the licence to teach would help with respect to that.

Q414 Mr Stuart: May I ask you quickly about the report card. However it is constructed, the evidence we heard from New York was that the pressure for change was immense. When Christine Gilbert came here she sounded rather distant from the report card work. The letter from the Secretary of State that I received recently emphasised how close the work is now. The prospectus from Ofsted is 55 pages, and most of it is pretty complex and talks about statistical means and various other things. Is it not true that the thing is going to be in a permanent state of flux as everyone challenges the results and says it does not fairly reflect their school?
Mr Coaker: Let us be clear that that is the starting prospectus. We have a two-year pilot starting this September to take forward the whole proposal. The prospectus sets out some of the ways in which we think we can do it. That is now a matter for consultation, debate and testing in practice so that we can come forward in 2011 with a report card that exactly avoids the sorts of points that Graham quite rightly makes. We get something and there is a continuous state of flux, and that is why we have a two-year pilot.

Q415 Mr Stuart: One last question. Is it your vision that there would be a total score? In New York you could get every school and find out which was top, which was 277th and which one on this year's marking was 586th. Is that how it will be with the report card here?
Mr Coaker: The Secretary of State said when launching the White Paper that while we are going to consult further, he is now convinced that if parents, newspapers and websites are to make fair, clear and easy to understand comparisons between schools, our school report card will need to include a single overall grade. He said that while we need to consult further, it is his view, subject to that, that a single overall grade would be—

Q416 Mr Stuart: I am clear about the grading, but will we be able to see the individual scoring? If all the schools are grade A, you will not be able to differentiate them.
Mr Coaker: Do you mean the individual categories that make up the overall score?
Mr Stuart: In order to come up with A—
Mr Coaker: So, the pupil progress, pupil attainment and pupil well-being—what the scores are for those as well?

Q417 Mr Stuart: The grand total. Literally, you would have the ultimate league table. You would be able to see the top school in the country possibly, and right down to the bottom. You could see every differentiation all the way down.
Mr Coaker: I think our intention is to make as much information available as we can. Certainly, if you look at the information relating to pupil attainment, you will see that there is no difference in terms of the information we have made available. For example, people would still be able to compare, if they wanted to, examination results or SATs results. But the intention is to aggregate all those different categories to give an overall score.

Q418 Chairman: It is a fair point that Graham makes: the press will turn those into league tables in the same way that it has turned exam and test results into league tables.
Mr Coaker: That may well be the case, and it will be up to people to do that or not. But it is important to say that the Government have responded to the exact point that Fiona has made, which I think many of us have heard from our constituents, about schools not just being about exam results. While people understand that exam results and standards are fundamental, they also want to know what a school does in relation to other things. That is what the report card will make available to them.

Q419 Mr Chaytor: This is a serious point: isn't the key to the success of the report card that is replacing the performance tables, the way in which the Government compiles the information on the raw scores? At the moment, the information on the raw scores is there, and any newspaper can lift it and print it. Is it still going to be easily accessible, or is the information on raw scores simply going to be part of each school's report card?
Mr Coaker: It will be part of the report card.

Q420 Mr Chaytor: In which case, it is only the most assiduous newspapers, such as *The Independent*, that will take the trouble to go through the report cards of every school in the country to extract the data and put them in league table format.
Mr Coaker: Yes, but what I am saying is that the information is still available.

Q421 Mr Chaytor: But the Government are not going to make it easy.
Mr Coaker: We are not deliberately trying to make it difficult either. We are trying to say that this is going to be a different way of looking at what a school is about. We are not about trying to hide information, or about pushing it away. I would rather say that the information people can use will still be made available.

Q422 Mr Chaytor: But by and large, you would accept that most newspapers will print things that are easily available? They are less likely to construct league tables based on hard work.
Mr Coaker: It depends. If people want that information, it will be available. As I have said, standards and examination and SATs results are important, but so are other things alongside them.

Q423 Mr Chaytor: Can I ask about the relationship between the report card and the framework for excellence report card, which is also being piloted as of this September. It is conceivable that an individual school may get a very good school report card, but a very weak framework for excellence report card. Is the framework for excellence report card to be used to deal with the long-standing problem of inadequate small sixth forms?
Jon Coles: It is certainly true that an individual school with a sixth form might get strong performance for one of the indicators and be much less strong for the other. That is already the case with Ofsted reports, which can and do differentiate between the quality of a sixth form and the quality of the rest of the school. We are piloting those things together, and the framework for excellence has had a long period of piloting in FE—although it will only be piloted in schools from this September—but as part of the pilot we need to align those two things in a sensible way. But it is certainly true that the framework for excellence may very well identify, in an otherwise good school, a weak sixth form, and lead to action to deal with it if that is the case. Equally, of course, it could find quite the opposite and lead to a better focus of action on the 11 to 16 part of the school. That is absolutely possible.

Q424 Mr Chaytor: The division at 16 is logical in one sense—I see the point of that. But isn't the reality that when the diploma system is fully in place, the real dividing point is 14? If the original diploma model means that students might have to take their diplomas partly at their own school, partly at a neighbouring school and partly at a local college—increasingly from the age of 14 students will be on an apprenticeship scheme that will take them to their local college as well—what are the practical problems of completing the school report card for students who may spend most of their week away from the school at which they are officially registered? How are those students' achievements reflected?
Jon Coles: The starting point for that is that the home institution—the institution with which the pupil is registered—is the one that is held to account for their performance. That is certainly the right model at the moment because you want the home institution to be taking responsibility for making sure that the individual pupil gets the quality of education that is their right. If they are putting on and arranging courses in other institutions for that student, they have a responsibility to make sure that they are not just washing their hands of that child, but that they are making sure that the child is getting a good quality experience. They are still the people who are responsible for making sure that that is the case. That is the right model. On the whole, as things stand at the moment, models of diploma delivery are leading to people being out of their home institution

for one or one and a half days a week. The overwhelming balance of time for almost all students in the country is still with the home institution. Obviously, it could be the case—we don't know this—that the model will evolve further to a point at which people are actually spending the bulk of their time outside their institution. At that point, we would need to think further about whether the accountability system needs to evolve to reflect that change in practice. At the moment, I think we're on the right case.

Mr Coaker: I also think, David, that the alignment of the school report card, the framework for excellence, and the interrelationship to which you allude is something that we are going to have to look at very carefully during the pilot to see how you actually align them. Jon is right in saying that it is the home institution. But you can see it is a challenge. When we talked about initial teacher training last time I was at the Committee a couple of weeks ago, a similar issue arose about the movement of teaching and non-teaching staff between different institutions. The fluidity of the system will raise these sorts of challenge and we will simply have to look at how best to align those two systems in a way that is non-bureaucratic, fair to both institutions and fair to the individual.

Chairman: You can hardly say that without a smile.

Mr Coaker: I am smiling, but you have to start with that aspiration.

Q425 Mr Chaytor: Pursuing the question of possible contradictions, the report card will also include the summary of the most recent Ofsted report. What happens if there is a sharp contrast between the assessment on the report card itself or the rating that goes into the report card, and the judgment of the most recent Ofsted report? Would it be more useful to have a summary of the past two or three Ofsted reports?

Mr Coaker: The summary of the last Ofsted report is the right thing to do because you want the most recent information available to parents. As you know, some schools are changing quite dramatically. Going back a couple of Ofsteds ago may unfairly reflect on the school's improvement, which the most recent Ofsted report would show. Even though the most recent Ofsted report would show it, there will almost be an aspersion cast, because of where the school was a year or two ago. It is important that the latest Ofsted inspection is there—it is an important part of the report card and of the information that should be available to parents when they make their judgment.

Chairman: We are going to drill down on Ofsted.

Jon Coles: May I make one other comment on this, in passing, which is important. The fact that it is going to act as the risk assessment for Ofsted is really important in that context, because if you see a sharp decline in the report card, that would obviously be evidence for Ofsted to say, "We should go and have a look at what's going on in this school." Aligning it as part of that process is quite important.

Q426 Mr Chaytor: Finally, on parental perceptions, how will the system guard against what might be described as the inevitability of schools with active and well-informed bodies of parents and with energetic head teachers mobilising parental perceptions through the report?

Mr Coaker: That is a reasonable point to make but, frankly, it was made when Ofsted went out to get parental information to inform its inspections—people were saying that in some schools, you'll get the school mobilising parents. What happens is that one indication comes in, and you make that judgment against the whole range of other judgments about a school. Clearly, when it comes to parental perception, the way it is done and the way it is looked at is something that needs to be tested in the pilots to ensure that you don't get that skewing of opinion that you might have if it was done in the way that you suggest.

Q427 Chairman: Minister, before we move on, you have to admit that it is going to be a difficult job, once a child gets to 14, to track his or her well-being as he or she goes off to FE college or to diplomas on different sites. It is going to be much easier to do this in terms of a standard secondary and primary career, but it is more difficult when you get to 14 to 19, isn't it?

Mr Coaker: To be fair, that probably is the case, but if something is difficult or challenging, or you wonder how it could be done, the fact is that if it is the right thing to do, you have to press ahead with it. I think it is the right thing to do. It is challenging, as you say; it is more challenging in those circumstances, but none the less, it is something that we should pursue.

Q428 Chairman: Does it seem that the softer end—parental and student satisfaction—becomes more difficult? Will it become more difficult, in terms of the softer data, when you're polling people about what they think of the experience? That will be much more difficult across a number of institutions.

Mr Coaker: Yes, but not impossible, and not something that is not worth doing, notwithstanding the practical problem you raise.

Q429 Mr Timpson: We have touched briefly on the role of Ofsted and where it fits into the chain of accountability, but the prospectus that we've seen appears on the face of it to be a joint publication. It has Ofsted written on it—indeed, even the report card example you have has Ofsted written on it—but it is meant to be an independent regulator. Isn't there a worry that if the Government are going to be deciding the aspects of performance that will be on the report cards and how they are measured, and if that will be informing Ofsted in deciding whether a school under the risk assessment, or its inspection, is underperforming and needs to be inspected, that is compromising the independence of Ofsted?

Mr Coaker: Ofsted is independent—it is important that we put that on the record; and I am sure that Christine Gilbert will go on that independence, as she should. It is not a case of compromising

independence but of trying to work together in order to improve accountability and improve the way that the system works. As I have said, in the production of the prospectus that we have before us, we have worked closely with Ofsted. The inspection regime will stand alongside it and will be a part of it, but will be separate from it.

Q430 Mr Timpson: But it won't be separate, will it, if Ofsted is looking to the school report card to help inform it of its own decision on inspection? Surely, all Ofsted should be doing is relying on its own inspection regime and ignoring what the school report card says, because that is something that the Government have set as a measure of performance. That is something that Ofsted should not be involving itself with.

Mr Coaker: It will be one of the ways in which a risk assessment or something indicates to Ofsted that there may be a problem. There will be other things that it uses, of course, and the inspection that then takes place and the way in which Ofsted operates in looking at a school and coming to a judgement about a school, looking into the processes that take place and the qualitative judgements that it makes, will be completely independent in coming to the conclusions it wants to make about that.

Jon Coles: It is worth adding that Ofsted has produced its own revised version of its inspection process and framework. By doing that, it wanted to have a way of deciding which schools should be inspected on the five-year cycle and which should be inspected more frequently, and to have a way of judging the risks and deciding which of the schools are at risk of going downhill and which we therefore ought to go and have a look at quickly. What Ofsted has said is that assuming we get the design of the report card right, it will use that as the basis of its risk assessment, but that does not mean that it will constrain itself to looking only at the report card as evidence; it might choose to look at other things as well. We have worked very closely with Ofsted, and I think that we have a much better product because we have worked with it and taken its educational advice. This is a joint consultation, which means that Ofsted is saying that it is serving its purposes as well as ours. Clearly, if at any point Christine decided that it was not serving Ofsted's purposes and would not work for it as the basis of its risk assessment, I am sure she would say that she would not use it as the basis of her risk assessment, because that would not be the right thing for her to do.

Q431 Mr Timpson: Could I ask that you take away and consider the fact that some people will view Ofsted's involvement in the creation of this school report card—the ultimate contents of which have been decided by the Government—and Ofsted's reliance on that to inform it of its own independent inspection, as leaving both Ofsted and the Government open to the charge that Ofsted has been taken under the wing of the Government and is simply acting as their poodle in the way that people within government would want it to?

Mr Coaker: We certainly will take that away. The Committee will come forward with its report about accountability, and we will look very carefully at the recommendations that the Committee makes. Obviously, if that is something of concern, it is something that we need to consider as well, because we do not want to compromise the independence of Ofsted—that is not the intention. Our intention is to work with Ofsted to produce a better product.

Q432 Mr Timpson: Just one final question, if I may. Jon, you touched on the new inspection framework that is rolling out in September 2009. One of the changes of emphasis within that is that schools that are already performing well have to be able to demonstrate ongoing improvement in order to maintain their inspection grade. That leaves open the scenario in which you have a high-performing school with a grade 1 that is going to have to try to show improvement, but cannot get any higher. How do you envisage their being able to show that they are significantly improving, to avoid their grade going lower?

Jon Coles: This is a moment when I might pray in aid myself the independence of Ofsted, because obviously it is its inspection framework, not ours. I think that what Ofsted is saying is that every school, no matter how good, ought to be improving and looking for continuous improvement. It is the sort of Japanese production-line model that, no matter how well you are doing, you ought to be looking to improve your processes and continuously improve. It is not saying, "You must be looking to improve your inspection grade", but that "You must look to be improving teaching practice and processes, and your processes of developing staff and monitoring the attainment and progress of children and young people. You must be looking to extend the areas in which you are excellent, and to identify the subject departments that are perhaps slightly weaker than others and look to improve those". There is no doubt that what Ofsted is doing is again raising the bar on the expectation of what is needed in the system, but that push towards continuous improvement is a very positive thing. You are absolutely right that the way in which that is then judged by inspectors, sensitively and taking care to look at the context of the school and at what it is doing, is absolutely crucial in getting that right. What you do not want, of course, is a school that is the most outstanding school in the country but struggles, therefore, to demonstrate that it is improving, and is marked down for that. What you do want is that most outstanding school in the country to be looking always to be stretching and improving itself, to be identifying where it is weaker and to be improving in lots of areas. That is what it is trying to achieve.

Mr Coaker: Briefly, the striving for continuous improvement, even when you are excellent, is what keeps you excellent. Jon was saying, Ofsted is independent in that sense, but I think that that is what they mean—the continuing drive to do even better, even when you are doing exceedingly well, is what keeps you there. You will know, Edward, from

your own constituency, as I do, that some of the best schools, which are right at the top of their game, are still always looking to see what more they can do.

Q433 Chairman: We did see one of the top schools in New York, which could not get above a B in its school report card.
Mr Coaker: That is because of the limiting judgment.

Q434 Helen Southworth: In terms of the opportunities that might be brought in by the school report cards and accountability to local people and pupils' parents, what are you expecting to be able to do in terms of indicating responses for children who find it difficult to achieve in school because of challenging circumstances? That could be because of long-term conditions, or it could be children who go missing or who have challenging family circumstances.
Mr Coaker: One of the things that we are looking at is the whole issue of contextualisation, of trying to look at the context in which schools are prey to some of the more difficult and challenging circumstances that some schools have compared with others. What we are trying to do is to devise a system that allows that to happen in a way that does not reward poor performance or does not have people saying, "Well, what do you expect around here, we can't achieve anything?" There is avoiding that, but also allowing us to devise a system that shows where a school is making sufficient progress despite some of the issues that it has. One of the things we shall do with pupil progress—not with pupil attainment; there will be no contextualisation for that—is that there will be this contextualisation in which we try to look at some of the indicators you have mentioned, some of the issues around poverty and ethnicity, and some of the other issues, to see what impact they have on a school and in what ways the school has made progress despite that. One of the ways that we are looking to do that is to give credits to a school—in terms of taking account of that, credits would add to a school's overall score. Clearly there is a lot of technical detail, which I would not pretend to be able to explain to the Committee. Certainly, the idea of trying to take into account some of those factors will be welcome to many schools that make fundamentally excellent progress in difficult circumstances, and that sometimes feel they are not adequately accepted or acknowledged.

Q435 Helen Southworth: In terms of the particular examples I gave—long-term conditions and children going missing—they can happen irrespective of the challenging circumstances. Will this be an opportunity for Ofsted to inspect the support that schools give for children with long-term conditions, for example?
Mr Coaker: Certainly Ofsted would, or should, look at how a school tackles any of those issues, whether special needs or children with learning difficulties, or how they deal with children not at school—missing or not attending. All those things it would take into account in coming to an overall judgment about a particular school.

Q436 Chairman: You have certainly put an interesting gloss on this, both of you. Some people might say that Ofsted deeply resents this new intrusion on a job that it thought it was doing perfectly well. There is a minor voice coming out of Ofsted, which we picked up, that seems to be sulking a bit about this. This is Ofsted's job—accountability, inspection and telling parents. All these things that you want the school report card to do, Ofsted could say, quite justifiably, "We do that. This is a question mark over our existence. We are going to be peripheralised by this." That is true, isn't it?
Jon Coles: No, I don't think it is. Can I just say that we have produced this report card absolutely jointly with Ofsted.

Q437 Chairman: Well, perhaps you shouldn't have. I thought Ofsted was supposed to be independent. I thought Ofsted should have had the guts and the courage to say, "Look, we don't like this. We think we weren't consulted enough. Where's the evidence base for it?" Why is Ofsted in this cosy relationship? What is the point of having Ofsted? Why do we not get rid of Ofsted if it is so cosy with the Government and doing all these nice little joint policies?
Jon Coles: I think that Ofsted are completely free to say that they do not wish to use the report card in the way they have said they wish to. Where we have worked together with them is on the design of the report card, and their educational advisers are absolutely invaluable in doing this properly. I am sure that if they felt that they resented it and did not want to do it, that is what they would be saying, because they have the independence to say that. Of course, it is absolutely vital in the system that we have an independent inspectorate which can comment independently on schools, on government policy, and so on, and they do that absolutely freely.

Q438 Chairman: They don't, Jon—come on. Sitting where we sit, we do not see that. We see quite a comfortable relationship between Ofsted and the Department. I know it is not popular to talk about rocking the boat, but they do not want to rock the boat, do they? It is hardly Chris Woodhead in charge at the moment, is it?
Mr Coaker: No, but it is somebody who works hard and does challenge us and will challenge us, no doubt, in the annual report.

Q439 Chairman: We have not seen any challenge with this. You have picked this up in a year. A year ago, no one had ever heard of it, then someone scratches his or her head in the Department and we have suddenly got this fashion. You have introduced it and I would imagine that many people in Ofsted were saying, "What on earth is this all about?"
Mr Coaker: We think that the role that Ofsted plays in looking at the process that takes place in schools—observation and a lot of the qualitative work that they have done—is significantly different

to a report card, which is outcome-based and data-based. The way that Ofsted drills down underneath that is of huge importance and significance.

Q440 Chairman: Minister, you can see the point that I am trying to make.
Mr Coaker: Yes, I understand the point.

Q441 Chairman: Where is the grit in all this? Of all the accountabilities that we are going through, where is the bit of accountability that says, "We are separate from the Department; we'll say things that the Department really doesn't want to hear"? I do not see, in the accountability evidence that we have taken, that there is any real grit. It does seem to be very cosy, and if it is cosy it cannot be right, surely.
Mr Coaker: No, it shouldn't be cosy, it isn't cosy and it won't be cosy. It is a partnership which has brought about this. Where we go to in the future will no doubt be a matter for discussion, but it is something that we have worked with Ofsted to develop. This is where we have got to at the present time. We think it is now something we need to go out and pilot, which we will do for two years, and, as I say, we will see how that works. But we believe it is a fundamental reform. As I say, we also respect the work that Ofsted has done and will do.
Chairman: Well, let us see if there is a cosy relationship with local authorities. Derek.

Q442 Derek Twigg: In terms of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill, the Secretary of State is going to take powers to direct local authorities to use their statutory powers. There is also reference made in the White Paper. Do you have a hit list of local education authorities that you are going to do this to?
Mr Coaker: No, we do not have a hit list, but you will have seen in the White Paper that we have taken action with four local authorities: the most serious action was taken with respect to Milton Keynes and the second most serious was obviously Leicester. So we do not have a hit list, but we have schools that we are concerned about, we have national challenge areas and we have a clear remit that says that if we think that, notwithstanding all the efforts that are being made, a local authority is not being as quick and as determined to tackle some of the underachievement in their area as it should be, we will not tolerate that and, if we have to take action, we will.

Q443 Derek Twigg: I think this is an issue with local authorities—the collaborative, sort of personal, informal working relationship, which clearly works well in a lot of authorities, because we have seen significant improvements. Is there a misunderstanding by Government of that approach, and is it really more of a stick rather than carrot approach that the Government prefer? Is there a misunderstanding of some gap between local authorities and government about how this should be best approached?
Mr Coaker: I think the important thing is to have it as a balance. I do not think you should start off with the desire to take over a local authority to intervene. I think you should start out with the desire to work with them and to collaborate to improve standards where they need to be improving. But if at the end of the day, clearly, progress is not being made or it is too slow or there is resistance to change because it is difficult, young people are left with substandard schools. What we are saying in the White Paper is that we are no longer prepared to tolerate that and that unless we get that progress and that collaborative approach, which is about bringing about the change that is necessary, we will intervene.

Q444 Derek Twigg: Do you think that we could give local education authorities more powers?
Mr Coaker: I think they have got significant powers. I think part of the problem is that at the end of the day we need to ensure that they realise that if there is continuous failure, and continuous failure to address that failure, the Government will intervene, because we think it important to do so for the welfare and educational entitlement of those young people.

Q445 Derek Twigg: Whether we talk about report cards or the powers the local authority or Ministers might have, is not the single biggest issue, as always in schools, leadership? If the leadership is wrong or inadequate then the school is most likely to perform poorly. We can put all the structures we want in place and all the changes, but what we have not done is got to the bottom of the problem, which is to have a quick removal of head teachers where schools are failing and they cannot see any improvement. We need to develop a pool of very good potential head teachers, which can be put in place over the years, particularly where schools are poorly performing. That is what they do in the armed forces, for instance. They coach and groom potential leaders. Isn't that what we should be doing, rather than going through all these different systems?
Mr Coaker: I think the leadership provided by the head teacher is fundamental. It is the right point to make. In the short period of time that I have been in post, inadequate leadership has been dealt with in a number of schools in a number of ways. Indeed, the White Paper looks at how we can have more federations of schools where excellent head teachers take on and work with schools that are failing. They can bring their leadership skills and develop leadership abilities in those schools. There is also the National College for School Leadership, which has—I cannot remember what they are called—
Jon Coles: National leaders in education.
Mr Coaker: Yes. They go and share their experience and their ability. You are quite right to say that we cannot tolerate failure. Graham often makes the point about classroom teachers. We simply have to accept that if we have failing head teachers—it is a small number as the vast majority work very well—we should not be afraid of taking the action that is necessary. Increasingly that is being done.

Q446 Annette Brooke: My understanding is that the White Paper gives much more autonomy to schools to make decisions on CPD and school improvement. Is there a tension between your view that local authorities have to be more challenging, and giving these extra powers at school level?
Mr Coaker: I do not think that it is a contradiction or something that should be seen as difficult. We are saying that schools should be the vehicle for school improvement and they need to work with local authorities to do that. Ultimately, schools challenge themselves and schools often individually will bring about that change, but sometimes they will need the support of others to do that and the local authority can help with that. You often need a local authority to help with the overall strategic planning for an area.
Annette Brooke: I wonder whether I could go straight into asking about school improvement partners—

Q447 Chairman: May I stop you just for a second before we finish. Could I keep you on local authorities for a moment and leadership. If part of the accountability is the local authority, surely you want strong leadership in the local authority, not just heads. Some of the evidence that this Committee has seen in Building Schools for the Future shows that the leadership is not there. We found instances under your new system of having a head of children's services where the head of social services is running children's services and does not understand schools. They may be very good at child protection and very good at that side of things, but they are really very poor at leadership on schools. We are detecting a real problem of leadership in terms of Building Schools for the Future and in terms of giving sufficient leadership and help to schools that are struggling.
Mr Coaker: I think the leadership issue, whether it is in local authorities or in schools, as Derek has said, is fundamental. It is not just about leadership with respect to officers—directors of children's services—but sometimes about difficulties with political leadership in local authorities. One of my points about Derek's point is that what we are signalling in the White Paper with the four authorities that we have named is that where the Government need to step in, they will. But what we want to do first of all is encourage strong leadership at a local authority level. We do not want to say, as a first resort, that we are going to step in; we want to say, "Sort it out," but we will take action if necessary.

Q448 Chairman: In some places, it is a triumph of hope over experience, isn't it?
Mr Coaker: I think hope should be time limited, if you understand the point that I am making. You cannot hope for change all of the time; you sometimes have to act.

Q449 Chairman: You haven't done anything dramatic recently, like taking over a local education authority or a children's services department, have you?
Mr Coaker: We have intervened quite strongly in Milton Keynes. I'm not sure that "taking over" is the right phrase, but we have certainly intervened very strongly.

Q450 Chairman: David Blunkett used to do it, didn't he? He took over Leeds and Bradford, and put a new team in Hackney. Are you all becoming a bit too cosy with local authorities?
Mr Coaker: No, certainly not. As I said to you, in the first instance we want to help and support local authorities, but we also signal in the White Paper that we are not frightened to intervene if necessary.
Chairman: We will go on to SIPs.

Q451 Annette Brooke: When we met some SIPs, I do not think that we really got to the bottom of their dual functions to be a critical friend and to be sufficiently challenging. Again, I see tensions between those different roles. How do you actually view the SIPs, and how can they be a really good friend and then tell tales to the local authority?
Mr Coaker: There are always those sorts of tensions in professional relationships—it does not have to be with a SIP and a school. When I was a deputy head, one of the people that I had to discipline was a very good friend of mine. Those sorts of tensions always emerge, but you have to be professional about them. One of the things that we have done, and that you have seen, is say that to overcome some of the problems that may exist with cosiness, instead of five years with a SIP, it will be three years. We are seeking to develop the professionalism, training and support that are given to SIPs. As you know, the National College for School Leadership is responsible for the accreditation, and we will work with it to see how we will develop the role of SIPs and improve their training and accreditation. We will also continue to look at giving SIPs a licence to practise. We will look at how to improve that, and we think that that will help significantly.

Q452 Annette Brooke: I had the impression from some of the SIPs that we were talking about that there was a lot of concentration on getting the data right. It sounded as if they were being taught how to tick the boxes, as I recall. I would like to ask Jon: what is the hard evidence that SIPs have brought about a real improvement? After all, you are rushing into expanding, so you must have some evidence.
Jon Coles: First, I think that your analysis of the issue is basically right, which is to say that too often SIPs are very focused on the data. When they are in the schools, they spend a great deal of their time in the head teacher's office. They spend less time in the school understanding what is going on, reading the school, diagnosing the problems and prescribing what the solutions might be, and then coaching and supporting the leadership of the school to address the problems in the right way, and brokering in the right support to make that happen. That is the role that SIPs can most usefully play. The evidence for saying that that is an effective role comes from the London Challenge and from the City Challenge, because that is the role that the London Challenge

advisers, who have been working with the least effective or the lowest-performing schools in City Challenge areas, have been playing. For example, London has gone from being the region with the largest number of schools below the then floor target to the only region that, in 2006, achieved the floor target entirely within all its schools. I think we have evidence that that role is effective, and therefore, the White Paper says that that is the reform that we will make to the system to develop the role of the SIP, from being too focused too often on the data to being a broader role, which is about reading a school, challenging it and brokering in the right support to shift it. That is the evidence base for it.
Annette Brooke: I think I have some relief there that it might get beyond the data.

Q453 Chairman: Are you sure that it is not just to give jobs to all these people who do not have jobs, now that they are not doing National Strategies?
Mr Coaker: No, absolutely not.

Q454 Chairman: No? But they're all out of work, aren't they?
Mr Coaker: The contracts are until 2011, and then it may be that when schools get their devolved funding down, they may think that these people are very good, and that they should employ them—but that would be a matter for them.

Q455 Chairman: How much are you saving? Was it £100 million?
Jon Coles: The contracts are £100 million.

Q456 Annette Brooke: I see that you are going to increase the number of days of SIP support to 20. How does that sit with recruiting practising head teachers to do this? I think the Government initially saw them as rather important players.
Jon Coles: I want to emphasise that it is up to 20 days, and it will be differentiated according to the performance of the school. The National Challenge advisers, who are working with the lowest-performing schools, are effectively SIPs who are taking on this new role now in the system, and are doing 20 days. But we would expect the number of schools that are not in the lowest-performing category, where the SIP does 20 days, to be quite limited. So it will be differentiated, and the highest-performing schools will get less SIP time than the lowest-performing one. That was the first point. The second point is that National Challenge advisers are doing this anyway. We do have a good proportion of head teachers doing that role for the National Challenge, either current head teachers or very recently retired heads. I absolutely agree that it remains important that we get a good proportion of heads or people with very recent headship experience doing the job. The experience of the National Challenge is that there is still a pool of people with that experience who will do it.
Chairman: Annette, I will call you again in a second. The Minister has got to go. Two quick questions for the Minister.
Mr Coaker: I have a debate at 11 in Westminster Hall.

Q457 Mr Chaytor: If every school is going to have a SIP, are you confident that the pool of potential SIPs is there, particularly given the new accreditation and training procedures?
Mr Coaker: There are more people wanting to do it at the moment than there are places available. I think the issue then is quality and ensuring that we have the right people doing it. That is something that we are going to work closely on with the national college.

Q458 Mr Chaytor: You still have fewer head teachers working as SIPs than originally envisaged?
Mr Coaker: That is the case, but going back to Derek's point, I think good head teachers sharing their practice is something that we want to encourage, and we need to look at ways to increase that number.

Q459 Mr Chaytor: It is the same question about governors. In the White Paper, there is great emphasis on recruiting more governors and providing better training for them, to deal with the problem that many schools are struggling to recruit governors. Surely, if the burden on governors through extra training and more responsibilities has increased, that is less likely to encourage people to want to take up the role.
Mr Coaker: I accept the point to an extent, but I think it is also about ensuring that governors—this is obviously a matter for local recruitment, which is difficult—feel that they are valued, that it is worth while, and that they are making a very real contribution. I read what the National Governors Association said to the Committee Chairman about how governors sometimes feel as though they are tagged on as an afterthought. I think the role of governors is absolutely crucial in schools. Certainly, while I am in this post, I will seek to encourage them, speak about them and praise them, and in that sense, try to change the environment in which people decide whether or not to become a governor.

Q460 Mr Chaytor: Do you think we need fewer but better people?
Mr Coaker: I think that is difficult to say overall. I would hate the idea of professionalisation, although they need to be more professional, if you understand the point.

Q461 Chairman: I think there is a good balance here. Minister, does the Schools Commissioner have anything to do with accountability these days?
Mr Coaker: Certainly, the Schools Commissioner works with us in tackling all of these issues.

Q462 Chairman: Who is the new Schools Commissioner?
Jon Coles: We will be advertising a director job in the directorate shortly.

Q463 Chairman: That is not the Schools Commissioner. The Schools Commissioner left months ago, and you haven't got one. Where is he? I know he went, but where's the new one? You're not going to have one, are you?
Jon Coles: We will make an appointment of a director in the directorate.

Q464 Chairman: That is not the same, Jon. These are weasel words. I have asked consistently what has happened to the role of Schools Commissioner. He is mentioned in primary legislation.
Jon Coles: No, he's not.
Chairman: Yes, he is.
Jon Coles: No.

Q465 Chairman: We will check you on that. Why have a Schools Commissioner up front, an important part of balancing the evidence given to this Committee? It was an important role and you buried it—or buried him.
Jon Coles: He has gone to do a really important job in the system.

Q466 Chairman: We know what has happened to him, but it is very unusual. You couldn't do that with the Chief Inspector, could you? Who else in the firmament of education is at risk and not to be replaced? There has been no explanation to this Committee. I have asked time and time again—what has happened to the Schools Commissioner?
Mr Coaker: Would it be helpful, given that you have asked for an explanation and not had one, if I offered to go back to the Department and find out and write to you?[1]

Q467 Chairman: But I have consistently asked. It is really frustrating that there is a mystery around this. It is like an Agatha Christie story. Who killed him in—
Mr Coaker: If I put on the record that I will write to you on this point, and copy it to members of the Committee, and that I will ensure that that is done quickly and promptly, would that be helpful?

Q468 Chairman: Thank you. Will you check that that role is not mentioned at all in any legislation?
Mr Coaker: I will check the factual point as well.
Chairman: Thank you. You can go now. Jon, you cannot go—we have two more questions for you because you do not have to run to a debate.

Q469 Annette Brooke: Coming back to the data evaluation, which I must admit I was really not impressed with at the time, to what extent are SIPs simply being trained to produce what Ofsted wants to see? Do we have a cosy relationship between Ofsted and SIPs?
Jon Coles: No, I don't think so. I think there is an issue with SIP training at the moment as it is too narrowly focused on data, but I do not think that that is connected to Ofsted and what Ofsted is looking for. We need—and the White Paper says this—to train SIPs much more broadly in school improvement and in reading schools and brokering the right support and so on, but I don't think that that is an Ofsted issue at all.

Q470 Annette Brooke: But presumably, the point of having the SIPs there is to improve the Ofsted grade.
Jon Coles: Yes. It is to improve the school. Absolutely. It provides challenge and support to the leadership of the school to improve it.

Q471 Annette Brooke: I think my concern is that it is game-playing to get a better grade. Perhaps the SIPs role will change something so that you get the highest overall grade on the report card. How are we seeing real changes in behaviour, and not just the data looking better? I am still not convinced.
Jon Coles: Obviously, this is a change that has not been implemented yet, so I cannot prove to you that it is going to be effective. The aim is straightforwardly that there is someone who really knows and understands the school well, knows what is going on, knows the ways in which the pupils are being well served or less well served, and is able to challenge and support the leadership of the school to serve the pupils better. That is the objective. I do not see that as a game-playing exercise at all; I see it as a well-grounded process of trying to improve things for the children and young people in the school. As I say, I cannot prove to you that the reforms are going to work as we have yet to implement them, but that is absolutely the objective of them.

Q472 Chairman: Jon, how long have SIPs been in place? How long have we had them?
Jon Coles: We started piloting them—I will have to confirm this—around 2004, I think.

Q473 Chairman: So we have had time to evaluate whether they add value?
Jon Coles: Yes, and there is a SIP evaluation available.

Q474 Chairman: Who did that?
Jon Coles: I don't know the answer to that off the top of my head, I'm afraid. It is publicly available, and I can certainly make sure that you get it.[2]

Q475 Chairman: But the evaluation was that they do add value, and that is why you are really going into SIPs phase 2?
Jon Coles: There are a number of points of detail where the evaluation suggested that there was room for improvement, but overall, there was a sense that they had added value. We think that this set of reforms potentially makes their impact that much greater.

Q476 Chairman: There is a voice out there, Jon, that says, "For goodness' sake, why do we need a White Paper and more legislation? Why not let it all be?" Not all of the reforms you have introduced over the last 12 years have bedded down, and yet you are

[1] See Ev 213

[2] See Ev 213

bringing on more. Do you sit in the Department in Sanctuary Buildings looking down at the school, the head, the teachers and the students just thinking up wheezes but not really thinking about what impact they will have on the people who have to put them into operation?
Jon Coles: Well, no, we do not. By going through the policy-making process, we are obviously trying to understand the real issues out there that affect children and young people and their educational success and the evidence about what might be effective in improving that and producing well-implemented policies that improve things for children and young people. That is obviously the objective of what we are doing. Some of what we are saying in the White Paper aims to reduce the pressure of centrally driven reform programmes, move to a system based more closely on the needs of individual schools and produce something that is actually more effective in improving things, partly because it is easier to implement for schools, more manageable for them and more focused on their precise needs. That is the objective.

Q477 Chairman: Jon, we said very similar things in our report on the national curriculum, but you gave us a really dusty old reply to that report because we said that the pendulum should swing back to give more power to schools and teachers. That is exactly what we said, but you came back with a very negative response. Why was that, because that does not seem to square with what you are saying this morning or what you said in the White Paper?
Jon Coles: Well, I know that you will be discussing that further shortly and am sorry that you thought our reply was dusty.
Chairman: Negative.
Jon Coles: It was not intended to be. Clearly, what we have done in the White Paper is try to design a system that is more effective in improving things, partly because it is more sensitive to school circumstances. If we are at one on that, so much the better.

Q478 Mr Chaytor: The model report card that Ofsted has produced describes the school by age range, gender and type. The "Anytown" school in "General" borough council is described as a comprehensive. How many types of school will there be for that purpose?
Jon Coles: The report card will treat them all in exactly the same way.

Q479 Mr Chaytor: So all schools will be described as comprehensives?
Jon Coles: No, they will all be accurately described as what they are.

Q480 Mr Chaytor: How many types will the Department list?
Jon Coles: I suppose the main categories will be community school, foundation school, voluntary controlled school, voluntary aided school and academy.

Q481 Mr Chaytor: But here it is defined by its admissions policy, rather than by its legal status.
Jon Coles: I am sorry, but I do not have the details because the Minister has taken the copy of the card I had in front on me, so I will check how that looks on the card. *[Interruption.]* Thank you for giving me your copy, Graham.
Chairman: What a gentleman.
Jon Coles: This is simply the data that would be produced in the tables as they are now, so it would be just as we now identify selective schools, comprehensive schools and other schools.

Q482 Mr Chaytor: So it will be exactly as it is on the card?
Jon Coles: This is just the same as in the achievement and attainment tables.

Q483 Mr Chaytor: So a school that selects 10 % by aptitude in languages, music or maths and science will still be described as comprehensive?
Jon Coles: As in the tables at the moment.
Chairman: You get the last question, Graham, for being such a sterling fellow and giving that information to Jon.
Mr Stuart: Teacher's pet. I shall have to send a note of congratulations to the Chairman more often during meetings, because it is obviously a fruitful course to follow.
Jon Coles: I wonder if that would work for me.

Q484 Mr Stuart: As too often with my questions, this will probably sound more like a statement than a question. Going back to the Chairman's remarks earlier, Ofsted is supposed to be an independent inspector, and the report card is, arguably, a useful tool for accountability—there is some evidence to suggest that—so why couldn't the Department just let it alone? Why couldn't the Department say, "Dear independent inspector, whom we will try not to meet too often because the very act of meeting you will affect you too much and stop your independence happening. Here's an idea. Have you thought of looking at it? Love, respectfully and from far away, the Department"? Instead, you are forcing its logo on here and on the draft document. It utterly looks as though you are trampling all over the central, core function of Ofsted. It says on page 5, "our intention is that the indicators that underpin the school report card will form the core of the process of risk assessment that Ofsted will use to select schools for inspection". Who wrote that?
Jon Coles: That is Ofsted. This is not us forcing Ofsted's logo on to the document; this is genuinely a joint document.

Q485 Mr Stuart: But there is no choice, because you are trampling all over the area of its core competence. What if it did not get on board? When we had Christine Gilbert here, she sounded very distant from it, and I have got a letter back from the Secretary of State protesting again and again how closely we are now working with Ofsted; I thought, "I bet you are." It does not feel very independent.

Jon Coles: I think it is quite important for schools in the system—talking about the impact on schools—to see a single, unified accountability system and that, as far as possible, they are not subject to two totally different accountability processes. Therefore, in looking at how we will move on and get beyond our current achievements and attainment tables, and produce something that is a more effective way of holding people to account using all that data, there seemed, I think, to both us and Ofsted, a benefit in having that as an integrated system where this could work for Ofsted. If at any stage Ofsted takes the view that this report card will not work as the core of its risk assessment process, it will decide not to use it. That is the nature of its independence.

Q486 Mr Stuart: But the Government can trample on anyone's independence if they want to. The only way independence works is if Government resist and recognise the territory that they must not occupy. You have invaded that territory. You say that Ofsted can say, "We are not going to participate," but there you are with your report card which you are driving through—it will look foolish if it does not work with the card, so it has no choice. A body like Ofsted is not going to come here and shout from the rooftops that the Government's doing things to it—it never, ever does; it just suffers in silence while its independence is eroded. That is not because the people there are bad; it's because you are careless of their independence.
Jon Coles: I think we take great care of that independence and do, in the way that we work with Ofsted, seek to make sure always that we respect its independence. Actually, the chief inspector does have the option of saying in public that this is not the right thing to do, or that, although it might be fine for the Department to do it, Ofsted does not wish to take part in it. That is entirely within the gift of the chief inspector, and she does have that level of independence. In working together to design this, we have been seeking to make it the best quality product to hold schools to account in the best quality way.[3]

Q487 Mr Stuart: Why couldn't Ofsted do it by itself? To go back to my original question—I am sorry I have taken so long—why couldn't you just have said, "Ofsted, it's for you to do, and we're staying out of it"? Couldn't Ofsted have done all this without having worked jointly and closely together to develop the school report, and so fulfil its role?
Jon Coles: The current position is, of course, that we produce the achievement and attainment tables. We do that because the data are our data, rather than Ofsted's. Those data are at the heart of the school report card, so if one party was to do it independently, it would probably have to be us, simply producing the school report card. It seemed to us, and it seemed to Ofsted as well, that there would be advantage in making this work for different purposes if possible. That is the basis on which we have done it. I completely recognise that it is absolutely vital that it doesn't look like we are compromising Ofsted's independence.

Q488 Chairman: Jon, if you were sitting doing a report card on the various quangos that exist around the education sector, where would you put, out of 10, the independence of Ofsted?
Jon Coles: Sorry?
Chairman: How independent is Ofsted?
Jon Coles: Completely independent—10 out of 10 independent.

Q489 Chairman: How independent was or is the QCA?
Jon Coles: Significantly less than that. Ofqual is being established to be as independent as Ofsted is, and the QCDA will be much more a delivery agency of government. That is a distinction that has been very specifically made.
Chairman: Thank you for your attendance, Jon. You were all on your own at the end, but we have very much valued your attendance.

[3] See Ev 214

Written evidence

Memorandum submitted by Professor Peter Tymms, Durham University

1. *Summary*

The questions posed by the Inquiry are vital to the future of our educational system, but it is clear that most of them cannot be answered satisfactorily given our present state of knowledge. What follows is a justification of this statement and a suggestion for a way forward.

2. *Background and expertise*

Professor Peter Tymms is an educational researcher based at Durham University where he directs the Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) which works with thousands of schools providing direct feedback to them and their teachers in an attempt to improve the educational system. It runs parallel to the national system of examinations and inspection and has generated a considerable quantity of data. Analyses stemming from the monitoring have provided an independent view of the English and other education systems. Professor Tymms also contributes to and engages in debate outside the UK and is aware of the research carried out into accountability, monitoring and designs for school improvement worldwide.

3. *Responses*

(i) "Under the accountability system, what should be the consequences?"

3.1 That is very clear. We should see an improving educational system in the sense that we should see slow but steady improved attainment levels amongst our pupils. We should see improved behaviour and social orientation. Indeed we should see improvement in all areas for which schools are responsible.

(ii) What is the value of:

- the school's self-assessment;
- the results of national tests; and
- the school's contextual value added scores;

3.2 These questions are hard to answer with any certainty. Whilst there is no shortage of verbal accounts, questionnaire results and inspectors' opinions it is not at all clear where the truth lies. Take, for example, questions about the consequences of schools using national test results and/or contextual value-added scores. To what extent have they made a difference? We simply cannot tell. This is because so many other things are happening simultaneously in our society and in our schools. There have been numerous initiatives: inspections have changed, the nature of the tests has changed, the population of school children has changed and so on. We are seeing changes in the schools but what has caused what? We simply cannot know, and that is a problem that faces us nationally and internationally. There are two very relevant publications. One is from 40 years ago and one very recent. They are:

Campbell, D. T. (1969). Reforms as experiments. *American Psychologist, 24*, 409-429.

Issue number 2 of the *The Psychology of Education Review Volume (2008) 32 issue 2*.

(iii) Is the school report card potentially a sound basis for:

- informing parents;
- providing a set of prioritised outcomes for schools;
- providing a starting point for Ofsted inspection; and
- providing a management tool for government?

3.3 It is fairly easy to survey parents to see what they say they want or to ask Ofsted what they would like, but it is much harder to know the consequences of using such a report card. We can look and see what people say has happened in New York with their report card, but New York does not know for sure what impact it has had, although there are opinions and there are report cards all over the US. Which is best and are there better ways of doing things? An evidence-based assessment is lacking.

3.4 There are, however, clear ways forward and these are outlined in Campbell's paper "Reforms as Experiments" which was referenced above. It would be a major advance to consider his ideas seriously and his suggestions for ways forward. In essence what he says is this: Governments across the world in many areas of policy really do not know what the consequences of their policies will be. They know where they

want to go and they know what people say they want but when we put a policy into place we rarely know its consequences. What we should be doing is to formulate policies from which we learn and explicitly aim to change them in the light of evidence. The best way forward is to try out several different things systematically. When we are thinking about report cards we should have trials with a variety of systems. We need that diversity so that we can learn.

3.5. I have recently been at an invited conference in Germany where they are thinking of setting up national testing and high-accountability systems. I was privileged to be part of an international delegation including people from Sweden, Holland, the United States, the UK, and various Länder in Germany discussing what we know about the way forward. The one thing that was clear was our ignorance and that we need to learn from each other. We need to co-ordinate our efforts, investigate systematically and build a knowledge base so that our educational systems can make the kinds of advances that we all want.

January 2009

Memorandum submitted by Aspect

1. The Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts, the representative body for school advisers, inspectors and other educational improvement and children's services professionals, offers the following comments to assist the Select Committee inquiry.

SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION

2. Our submission may be summarised as follows:

> An effective school accountability system is unavoidable in today's climate of sharpening global economic competition, as part of upskilling the labour force, and should be designed to positively assist capacity-building within schools. The different forms of such accountability—formal inspection, local authority reports and school self-evaluation and performance measures—should be better aligned, to maximize their practical usefulness. Certain lessons may be learned in England from the Scottish model. An independent inspectorate remains an effective mechanism, but cannot by itself secure school improvement in all desirable respects.

Ofsted inspections:

- are conducted by appropriately trained and qualified inspectors;
- should normally be held every four years and include effective classroom observations;
- should be subject to a short period of notice; and
- may be proportionate in scale, but should remain rigorous in nature.

The School Improvement Partner role, as originally conceived, has proved of limited value and the resultant trend is rightly towards greater professionalism in external school monitoring, support and challenge activity. A school report card is a welcome concept, which could assist in measuring progress against all of the Every Child Matters outcomes for children.

Is it right in principle that schools should be held partially accountable for their performance?

3. It is right and inevitable, in the context of today's globalised markets for goods and services, where a highly-skilled workforce is of critical importance to developing a competitive national economy. An effective school system is a key building block in upskilling a national labour force and schools will therefore become more publicly accountable for their performance.

What should be the fundamental purposes of an accountability system for schools, and in particular, to whom should schools be accountable, for what should they be held accountable, how should they be held to account and what should be the consequences?

4. An accountability system should help schools to genuinely build capacity to improve concrete outcomes for children. Schools should be accountable to a range of relevant interests, including children, parents and carers, employers and local communities. This is best achieved principally through local authorities, since they are democratically accountable bodies with unique local identities and relationships.

5. Schools themselves should be held accountable not only for raising pupils' educational standards but for all five Every Child Matters outcomes, to the extent that they can influence these outcomes.

6. The forms of accountability will vary as each principal mechanism offers distinct positive features. However, they should be better aligned in England than has traditionally been the case. Formal Ofsted inspections, local authority reports, and school self-evaluation and performance measures, all have a role to play but can prove more useful if carefully inter-linked.

7. The advantages of a more joined-up accountability system can be identified by reference to Scotland. HMIE in Scotland operate a school inspection model designed to recognise the specific responsibilities which fall on schools and on local authorities to secure improvement. This is a proportionate model, under which the extent of HMIE engagement with schools varies with a school's capacity to ensure improvement.

Each school has a "core inspection", and "follow-through" activity by the local authority is itself proportionate. Core inspections identify the key strengths of a school, and HMIE evaluate the capacity of the school to achieve further improvement—taking account of the quality of leadership, the ability of the school to accurately identify priorities for improvement, and earlier progress.

8. "Follow-through" options are matched to the needs of the individual school, and include:

— The school and LA taking responsibility for planning further improvements and involving parents.

— LA progress report to HMIE on improvement after two years and LA reports to parents.

— HMIE discusses action plan with school and LA and arranges visits and meetings as needed to monitor and advise. Follow-through inspection and report to parents after two years.

— HMIE works with the school and LA to draw up an action plan and agree a detailed programme of activities.

9. Key principles behind this approach are:

— a stronger emphasis on supporting improvement, and developing capacity for further improvement, through core and proportionate follow-through;

— a focus on meeting the needs of all, across a range of national priorities; and

— increased emphasis on actual outcomes.

Is the current accountability system of inspection and performance reporting for schools fit for purpose?

10. It is capable of improvement, as a system. The individual components are broadly fit for purpose, but their combined effectiveness can be enhanced through a linked-up approach.

How should schools be held accountable for their performance in the context of increasing collaboration in education provision?

11. The inspection system should be operated in relation to individual schools, and carefully extended to collaboratives and networks, at this stage in the evolution of collaborative provision.

Is an Independent Inspectorate an appropriate mechanism for holding schools to account?

12. A rigorous inspection system operated by an independent inspectorate is an appropriate mechanism. The strengths and limitations of periodic formal "snapshot" inspections are well known, and the low level of complaints confirms the quality of most inspections.

What is the impact of the inspection process on school performance, including confidence, creativity and innovation?

13. Ofsted has at times commissioned independent research into this issue. An example is the 2007 report by the National Foundation for Educational Research entitled *Evaluation of the Impact of Section 5 Inspections*. 1,500 schools responded to the survey and the report noted that "nearly two-thirds of survey respondents and just over half the case study interviewees considered that the inspection had contributed to school improvement. The main way it had contributed was by confirming, prioritising and clarifying areas for improvement."

The conclusions pointed to a growing confidence in schools' own self-evaluation processes, and, in terms of school performance, noted that "both the qualitative findings and analysis of the schools' outcomes data provide some indication that assessment, monitoring and pupil tracking are the areas where inspection has had the greatest impact."

14. However, it is unlikely that any "snapshot" inspectorial system could by itself advance school-level creativity and innovation. These facets are more likely to be encouraged by external developmental services working consistently with individual schools over time. The Audit Commission's national school survey for 2008 showed 94% of schools rated the effectiveness of their local authority school improvement service in challenging the school to do better as satisfactory or above. The more detailed questions asked, in relation to the local authority's support for the education of looked-after children, promoting sustainable development, delivering the Every Child Matters outcomes and developing extended schools, also generated high levels of satisfaction including changes through innovative and creative approaches.

Are inspectors appropriately qualified and trained to carry out inspections, particularly in the light if the need to report against Every Child Matters outcomes?

15. They are, but the Ofsted inspection system is still evolving. This will involve changes to future inspector training, recruitment and guidance. We acknowledge that Ofsted lays down clear principles for school inspection contractors in relation to inspector quality, selection, competencies, roles, integrity and performance management.

Is it appropriate for inspection reports to be placed in the public domain?

16. Yes. Parents, children, and other interested parties, are fully entitled to examine inspection reports on individual schools.

How often should inspections be carried out and how long and detailed should these inspections be?

17. There is a case for introducing a standard four year period between school inspections, matching the period of office of school governors. However, a school may undergo major change at other times, for example due to the retirement of an effective headteacher, and such a significant development could trigger early re-inspection. With regard to the length and detail of the inspection, a key issue is the availability of time for meaningful classroom observation by inspectors, as the quality of teaching and learning remains central to a school's effectiveness. This is difficult to reconcile with the suggestion in the recent Ofsted consultation over post September 2009 changes that "no inspection will last longer than two days" unless the available size of teams is reviewed.

How much notice, if any, should a school receive of an upcoming inspection?

18. A short period of notice is desirable to assist inspectors in making reliable arrangements to meet a school's senior management team. However, Aspect acknowledges this is not the only factor here and that there is a case for nil notice inspections given a tendency within some schools to over-prepare for inspections.

In the context of an inspection, what is the value of :

— *the school's self-assessment*

19. This is of considerable value, if it is robust and honest. One of the key techniques for ensuring that this is the case is to genuinely involve the whole school, including teaching and non-teaching staff, in the self-evaluation process.

— *the results of national tests*

20. These should be taken into account, and remain of value provided that they are considered within the broader social and economic context of the institution.

— *the school's contextual value added scores*

21. These are of real value in measuring progression within a wider context, although different systems for calculating value added have been used within the education service.

How much weight should be attached to these elements in the inspection report?

22. The school's self-evaluation, provided that it is robust, deserves significant weight. There is some validity to the argument that the present system displays a degree of over-reliance on national test results. A revised inspection report format might reflect the improving overall quality of schools' self-assessment, as Ofsted inspectors are increasingly experienced in accurately identifying the quality of a school's self-evaluation.

In an inspection, how should emphasis be balanced between educational appointment and other aspects of a school's provision, such as the Every Child Matters outcomes?

23. These essentially deserve equal emphasis, since they are closely interlinked. It is often the case that children who underperform in academic terms face other genuine vulnerabilities in their lives. If a longer-term perspective is adopted, improving a child's ability to learn can help him or her to overcome certain vulnerabilities later, and this point could be reflected within a broad balance.

Should inspections be tailored to the current performance levels of the specific school being inspected and, if so, to what extent?

24. A good school can deteriorate quickly if, for example, a key leader falls ill. Nonetheless, a proportionate approach to inspections, inevitably based on the recent overall performance of a school, can be justified to a degree on educational grounds. However, effective classroom observations can take time, and this limits the extent to which inspection of higher-performing schools can be scaled down.

Has the introduction of a light-touch inspection regime for higher-performing schools been appropriate?

25. In overall terms, the S.5 model of lighter-touch inspections has proved appropriate, principally due to improvements in the general quality of school self-evaluation and the growing expertise of inspectors in identifying where self-evaluation remains unreliable.

What are the mechanisms for identifying schools which are underperforming and are those mechanisms adequate?

26. The role of the local authority and its school improvement reports is vital, since there is more frequent contact between the LA and local schools than is the case with Ofsted inspection teams. Appropriate liaison between inspection teams and local authorities should be enhanced.

How effective has the classification of "schools causing concern" (special measures or improvement notice) been in supporting improved performance in the schools concerned?

27. The answer to this rests on the practical availability and quality of the external developmental support deployed to support a school's recovery following such classification. In overall terms, this classification has triggered valuable support and proved effective.

Have School Improvement Partners (SIPs) been of benefit to schools?

28. A two-year national evaluation of the "New Relationship with Schools" project was commissioned by government and published by York Consulting in 2008, which included useful analysis of the SIP role. Key issues included the time commitment required to perform this role and the level of professional skill and knowledge involved. Although DfES had stated that "we believe it is right to give a firm steer to secure a high proportion of secondary headteachers as SIPs. We intend that three quarters of them should be serving or recent secondary headteachers". (*A New Relationship with Schools: Next Steps*, DfES and Ofsted joint publication, 2005), the evaluation revealed a different picture. It noted that "there are differences in the support role played by different SIP types, with full-time local authority employee SIPs more commonly capacity-building, monitoring progress, brokering and managing support than serving headteacher SIPs. A key factor influencing this is that the latter are more constrained than other SIP types to deliver additional resource for schools or to be more flexible to emerging demands" (page79). Departmental data suggests that the proportion of accredited SIPs actually performing the role who are also serving headteachers is significantly below original government targets. The low level of time commitment to the role required of SIPs, and the lack of central funding for adequate skills-based training for these postholders, has not helped. This may explain why the Government has required the new "National Challenge Advisers" to devote significantly more time to work with individual schools.

29. Aspect believes it is important to distinguish between leadership roles based on line management responsibilities and those which rest on external developmental functions sitting outside any such hierarchy. This matters in because these two types of leadership involve different skill sets. The former relies on the skills of effectively exercising managerial authority over others. The latter requires modern "soft" influencing and negotiating skills not supported by managerial authority, which are often related to new forms of knowledge management, innovation, scenario and contingency planning and changes to organisational cultures.

30. Our conclusion, therefore, is that the distinct SIP role, as originally conceived, has not particularly benefited local schools, and that genuinely professional external school improvement roles are necessary.

Is the current procedure for complaints about inspectors adequate?

31. Yes. Formal complaints are properly and consistently recorded and investigated, under a well-established procedure, and follow-up actions taken where deemed appropriate. A broad view is taken over the time available for registering such complaints and the existence of the complaints procedure is notified on the Ofsted website and in relevant publications.

What aspects of a school's performance should be measured and how?

32. Measurements should be provided for academic attainment, the size of gaps between identifiable groups of pupils, pupil progression and those elements of broader outcomes for children under the ECM agenda which a school can influence.

How should these performance measurements be reported and by whom?

33. Measurements relating to key performance areas should be reported, in a regular and user-friendly fashion, by schools and local authorities, so that individual schools, and the broader progress of the schools system within a local area, can be monitored.

To whom should this information be made available?

34. This information should be available to all interested parties and, given, the wide range of concerned interests, should be publicly available.

What is the effect of the current system of public performance reporting (Achievement and Attainment Tables and the online School Profile) on a schools' performance, including confidence, creativity and innovation?

35. Detailed objective research would be required to answer this with accuracy, since current school-level perceptions are sometimes linked to a traditional general resentment of school accountability mechanisms.

What is the impact on schools of league tables published by the press?

36. The varied quality of press reporting can result in negative effects for individual schools. However, much of the regular media coverage is factual.

How useful is this information to stakeholders, particularly parents?

37. League tables in themselves are clearly of limited value, although they do furnish a level of basic information and remain popular with parents.

What might a school report card provide that is not covered by the current performance reporting system?

38. A School Report Card, is potentially valuable, although we need to retain the benefits of external formal inspection within an overall school accountability system. The elements we would wish to see incorporated into such a card include the school's performance with regard to attainment, narrowing "gaps", pupil progress and a range of wider outcomes, since a school's work with other partners in children's lives, is a key factor in general performance. The local context of the school should be described in the introduction to the card and the scores contained in a School Report Card should be easy to interpret, with the proviso that measurements are contextualised. Consistency in the reporting of all features is important, which raises issues of appropriate weightings to individual categories. An overall score is Aspect's preferred methodology, but general guidance on the significance of different types of score is also important.

Are there any issues which the school report card should avoid or seek to inhibit?

39. Reporting parents' and pupils' views can sometimes be too bald, especially where based on unrepresentative samples. This argument is not to under-value parental and pupil feedback as schools should be required to maintain systems for collating parent and pupil views as influences on the SEF and on school development planning.

Is the school report card potentially a sound basis for informing parents providing a set of prioritised outcomes for schools, providing a starting point for Ofsted inspections, and providing a management tool for government?

40. It can potentially contribute to these desirable objectives.

Could the school report card appropriately replace some Ofsted reporting?

41. No, it is important that a comprehensive external inspection system is maintained.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the Audit Commission

SUMMARY

The Audit Commission welcomes the Select Committee's focus on school accountability and is pleased to submit evidence for the Committee's consideration.

This submission addresses the questions posed in the Committee's call for evidence about the areas for which schools should be held accountable and focuses on financial accountability. We have responded to other aspects of accountability in our replies to the recent consultations referred to by the Select Committee and these are attached as appendices:

The Government's proposals for 21st Century schools and School Report Card;[1] and

Ofsted's proposals for a revised school inspection regime.[2]

The education provision for children and young people can be a key determinant of their quality of life and their life chances in adulthood. Around £37.5 billion per annum is spent in schools. It is important to demonstrate that these sums are well spent and that they are delivering optimum value for our children and young people, their carers and families, and taxpayers. The Audit Commission feels that currently, there is not sufficient scrutiny over resource planning, financial management and value for money in schools.

[1] Not printed.
[2] Not printed.

Recommendations

The Commission recommends that:

R1	Councils should have robust, accurate and up to date information about the state of school budgets. They should adopt a formal budget reporting structure to give an accurate and up to date picture of school spending.
R2	The value for money judgement in school inspections should be strengthened.
R3	Training in financial management and resource planning in schools should be provided for governors. This should be mandatory for Chairs and Finance Committee Chairs.
R4	The processes for monitoring, providing challenge and support, and intervening in schools on financial management issues should be closely aligned to those in place covering pupil and school improvement through: appropriate support from advisers and school improvement partners; the inclusion of strategic resource management in the financial management packages offered by councils to their schools; and detailed costing of school development and department/key plans.
R5	Councils' responsibility towards the stewardship of resources held and managed by schools should be clarified.
R6	Internal audit visits to schools should be regular and provide assurance on wider questions of resource management.

Introduction

The Commission's interest in schools' financial accountability

Financial accountability is of particular interest to the Commission because we have a responsibility to ensure that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively to achieve high quality local services for the public. The topic under discussion is highly relevant to our five current strategic objectives, which are:

to raise standards of financial management and financial reporting;

to challenge public bodies to deliver better value for money;

to encourage continual improvement in public services so they meet the changing needs of diverse communities and provide fair access for all;

to promote high standards of governance and accountability; and

to stimulate significant improvement in the quality of data and the use of information by decision makers.

In particular, as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, the Commission will undertake annual Use of Resources assessments of councils. The assessments will be based on three key themes; managing finances, governing the business and managing resources.

Our interest in school funding and the problems faced by local councils in managing school funding prompted our national study *Education Funding* (2004).[3] Concerns over the way in which schools manage their finances led us to develop a school balances tool (2008)[4] by which school surpluses and deficits balances can be compared across local authorities; and a resource pack for schools to help them achieve good value for money from their Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Additional Educational Needs (AEN) funding (2008).[5] It also led to our current national study on value for money in schools, which is due to be published by the summer of 2009.

Detailed Response

Recommendation 1: Councils should have robust, accurate and up to date information about the state of school budgets. They should adopt a formal budget reporting structure to give an accurate and up to date picture of school spending.

School expenditure represents the largest single element of local government expenditure but attracts the least detailed financial scrutiny. Current expenditure in schools is estimated at £37.5 billion in 2007–08.

Councils are actively involved with schools in relation to their performance and improvement. However, the case is not so strong in relation to schools' budgets and their financial position. Councils have very limited up to date knowledge of the state of schools' finances. They have responded to requirements in the past to delegate

[3] Audit Commission—Education Funding 2004http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=960ADD80-D961-11d8-8C73-00105A74CE79
[4] Audit Commission—School Balances tool 2008.
[5] Audit Commission—Resource pack for schools on Value for Money in SEN/AEN 2008.

funding to schools and to support school autonomy. Government restrictions on centrally incurred education expenditure have limited their capacity to fulfil the crucial role of monitoring, challenge, support and intervention in relation to schools' budgets, financial management and value for money.

The absence of up to date, reliable and comprehensive financial information about a large segment of the public sector budget means that councils place great dependence on schools' own reports and forecasts. The ring fencing of money allocated to schools diminishes the incentive for councils to feel they should be involved in school budget issues, even though the sums involved are substantial. As a result, direct involvement with schools by councils is more likely to occur where there is a large budget surplus or where there is a deficit and the school needs to agree a recovery plan.

Councils have distanced themselves, and been expected to do so, from monitoring and challenging schools budgets other than to deal with critical incidents. The budget controversy in 2003 revealed that nowhere in the system is there a secure picture of the state of school finances and the likely impact of any changed funding arrangements on them. Reliable information about how schools' actual spending relates to budget is not available until well after the year end.

Engagement with individual schools is often very limited. Councils appear to be unsure about the extent to which they can and should exercise closer scrutiny and challenge in relation to schools' spending.

Where councils do have more up to date knowledge of spending, it has been as a result of being involved in providing a traded financial service. Frequently this will not cover all schools within a council area.

Recommendation 2: The value for money judgement in school inspections should be strengthened.

The number of schools in deficit during the past eight years has remained fairly constant at around 2000 schools, although this has reduced in 2007–08. It is likely this figure would have been significantly lower if schools had the same monitoring, challenge and support in resource and financial management, where the schools' senior management normally have less expertise, as they receive in the areas of teaching and learning, where senior staff have considerable expertise. Evidence from inspections of the education function of councils is that the link between school improvement support and challenge and the strategic use of resources, budget review and costing of school development plans is not as strong as it should be. The emphasis in school inspections results in limited coverage of resource management and performance, both in respect of revenue and capital funding.

Recommendation 3: Training in financial management and resource planning in schools should be provided for governors. This should be mandatory for Chairs and Finance Committee Chairs.

Governors and headteachers are responsible for very significant budgets. There is a need to continually enhance skills and expertise of key staff and governors. Reported incidents of poor accountability attract wide media attention. The Audit Commission public interest report into Whalley Range High School (October 2005) concluded there had been a significant breakdown in appropriate standards of governance and accountability. The governing body had failed to properly perform its role.

Recommendation 4: The processes for monitoring, providing challenge and support, and intervening in schools on financial management issues should be closely aligned to those in place covering pupil and school improvement through:
appropriate support from advisers and school improvement partners;
the inclusion of strategic resource management in the financial management packages offered by councils to their schools; and
detailed costing of school development and department/key plans.

Written guidance for schools on financial management is generally of good quality, though it is often focused more on processes and procedures than on the quality of resource management. Advice on best value and value for money in schools is usually very limited. Training is similarly limited, and education advisory staff tend to play little part in what there is. This reinforces the division between the financial management and school improvement agenda.

The Audit Commission's annual school survey and evidence from inspections have found that council financial support services are generally well regarded by schools. But this service relates predominantly to day-to-day financial management, not strategic financial planning. The range of services and choice on offer varies, but usually reflects schools' demands. Financial training is similarly well regarded by schools. Training content however usually covers budget management process and how the fair funding formula allocates money to schools. It is not generally targeted at strategic resource management, how to link the budget to the school development plan, or to managing deficits or surpluses.

Recommendation 5: Councils' responsibility towards the stewardship of resources held and managed by schools should be clarified.

Councils have statutory responsibilities to monitor and challenge resource management and financial decision making and they are also best placed to carry out this function. However, in practice, the role is not undertaken consistently and it is not effectively integrated into the wider monitoring and challenge role carried out by school improvement partners or school advisers. The Audit Commission's *Money Matters* report in 2000,[6] the joint report with Ofsted in 2003 on *Resource Management*,[7] and the Audit Commission's *Education Funding Report* in 2004 all highlighted this deficiency. Councils have been under pressure to reduce central costs and to prioritise spending controlled directly by schools. This has affected their ability to prioritise the financial scrutiny of schools. They have interpreted, and been encouraged to interpret, the requirement to provide support and challenge in inverse proportion to success as a reason to withdraw from aspects of budget monitoring. Many have reached the point where their knowledge of school budget management and resource deployment is not secure. There is uncertainty about councils' responsibility towards the stewardship of resources held and managed by schools.

Recommendation 6: Internal audit visits to schools should be regular and provide assurance on wider questions of resource management.

Internal audit does now appear to play a broader and more helpful role than in the past. Schools generally appreciate its activities. Most activity now involves a full financial health check, rather than concentrating wholly on probity. The regularity of visits, and use of risk assessment to determine programmes of work, however varies between councils. The extent to which visits cover and provide assurance on wider questions of resource management is variable.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the Royal Statistical Society (RSS)

Performance Reporting (other than the Ofsted Inspection Report)

1. *Summary*

The Royal Statistical Society's Education Strategy Group is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on schools' performance reporting. The key issues involved are in great measure statistical and tend to be poorly understood by policymakers.

Please see the Report of the Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Working Party on Performance Monitoring in the Public Services *Performance Indicators: Good, Bad and Ugly*[8] along with our comments. The RSS Working Party report sets out the technical issues and limitations of reporting performance indicators in general.

— As statisticians, we are concerned with the need for statistical rigour in performance management: the technical probity of measures and the validity of inferences that they allow us to draw.

— Existing public accountability systems do not take into account the uncertainty built into all systems of judgment from test scores to inspections and self evaluation. This leads to problems of misinformation and miscommunication with all users including the general public (and parents). The use of value-added measures, while an improvement on unadjusted test and exam scores, may also be misleading if over-interpreted and especially if the full uncertainty surrounding them is not clearly displayed and understood.

— We do not support the current system of public reporting of existing league tables via the media. We would prefer to see a "private accountability" system built round the need to support teachers and schools rather than trying to identify failure publicly. Feedback should be supplied to the schools themselves and to the governing authorities with the aim of correcting weaknesses and building on strengths. Any subsequent publication of results should be at the end of such a process of discussion and should recognize the provisional nature of any judgements, the statistical uncertainties and above all the contextual factors which are likely to have influenced the results.

— Our view is that there is a strong need for policy change in relation to performance indicators presented as league tables, including a much stronger role for government in making clear the limitations of the data in league tables. The Royal Statistical Society would, of course, be happy to lend its professional expertise to supporting the development of new policies.

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[6] Audit Commission—Money Matters 2000.
[7] Audit Commission and Ofsted – Resource Management 2003.
[8] Not printed. Report of the RSS Working Party on *Performance Monitoring in the Public Services Performance Indicators: Good, Bad and Ugly*—
http://www.rss.org.uk/pdf/PerformanceMonitoringReport.pdf.
Downloadable from: http://www.rss.org.uk/main.asp?page=1713

2. *What aspects of a school's performance should be measured and how?*

2.1 The avowed purpose of a testing and assessment system is stated as follows[9] (in no order of priority): "to give parents the information they need to compare different schools, choose the right school for their child and then track their child's progress, provide head teachers and teachers with the information they need to assess the progress of every child and their school as a whole, without unnecessary burdens or bureaucracy; and allow the public to hold national and local government and governing bodies to account for the performance of schools." The information needed to meet each of these objectives is different.

2.2 Cogniscent, therefore, that examination results, students' academic progress, and some broader measures of the wider purposes of education (eg preparedness for making a positive contribution to society) need also to be measured, the Royal Statistical Society would like to concentrate its response on the need for statistical rigour in performance management: the technical probity of measures and the validity of inferences that they allow us to draw. We are well aware that there is a debate around the extent to which institutions such as schools should be publicly accountable and we are also aware of the debate that surrounds the side effects or "perverse incentives" that such systems tend to generate. A detailed discussion of these issues can be found in *Performance Indicators: Good, Bad and Ugly*, the RSS Working Party Report on Performance Monitoring in the Public Services.

2.3 All systems of judgement: from test scores (adjusted or not) to inspections, or self evaluation, have uncertainty built in. Despite the wealth of knowledge about the uncertainty of examination results and test scores, and also the evidence from Ofsted and others on the uncertainty that accompanies inspection judgements, existing public accountability systems do not take this into account and this leads to many problems.

2.4 "School performance" is essentially measured using a proxy which is the set of measurements taken on the students attending a school. As is well established, the characteristics of a school and its teachers are only one set among numerous factors affecting student performance such as their social and cultural background, out of school activities, peer groups etc.

2.5 The task for anyone wishing to extract a measure of school contribution to student performance is to find some way of measuring and hence, adjusting for other than school factors. This is the intention behind "value added" measures that statistically adjust for achievement prior to school entry. There is now a large literature on this which advises, for example, the need to take account of previous achievement at more than one prior occasion as well as student mobility among schools.[10]

2.6 The existing literature also makes clear that even when such adjustments are made, there remains considerable uncertainty about any resulting rankings of schools as expressed in wide confidence intervals. This implies that simple rank differences can easily be over-interpreted.

2.7 Whilst the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) website does provide uncertainty estimates for such rankings (or school scores)[11] we believe that the Government should be doing more to insist that uncertainty estimates are conveyed to the general public.

3. *How should these performance measurements be reported and by whom? To whom should this information be made available?*

3.1 The provision, reporting, and the timing of reporting (ie before or after they are discussed within schools) of performance measures, also whether or not they are placed in the public domain, should recognise the purposes to which the measures will be put, ie to provide feedback for the school, to support parental choice or for some other purpose?.

3.2 Recent studies[12] show that the existing presentations are inappropriate for parental choice, and that a more realistic presentation would result in even more uncertainty associated with "value added" rankings to the extent that very few schools could reliably be distinguished one from another.

3.3 It has often been suggested that to not report "raw" test and exam scores, and/or value-added ones, would be to deny the public information to which they have a right. While this might, on initial consideration, seem plausible, a close examination reveals its flaws. As we have pointed out, a full and honest description of the results requires expressions of uncertainty, and these would show that in fact league table rankings have very little discriminatory power.

3.4 All published materials should recognise the provisional nature of any judgements, the statistical uncertainties and above all the factors, such as pupil deprivation, that are needed to place what is happening in context. We believe that a performance ranking should be treated as a screening device that provides preliminary evidence for possible "problems" or outstanding achievement in some institutions that can then be followed up in more detail, eg through an inspection system.

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[9] Report to the Expert Group on Assessment by Mathematics in Education and Industry —http://www.mei.org.uk/files/pdf/Expert_Group_on_Assessment_(MEI_comments).pdf

[10] E.g. see H Goldstein, S Burgess and B McConnell (2007). "Modelling the impact of pupil mobility on school differences in educational achievement." J. Royal Statistical Society, A. 170: 941–954.

[11] It is not clear why the DCSF does not think it necessary to provide uncertainty estimates for "unadjusted" rankings (although we do not, anyway, believe that these should be provided in the context of performance monitoring)

[12] H Goldstein and G Leckie (2008). "School league tables: what can they really tell us?." Significance June 2008: 67–69)

3.5 We support a "private accountability" system. By "private" we mean a system that provides direct feedback to the schools themselves and the governing authority with the aim of correcting weaknesses and building on strengths with publication information being released only at the end of the process of discussion in a form that allows a measure of accountability while providing a report that takes into account different viewpoints and explanations.

3.6 We believe that the requirements of "accountability" can be fully achieved in this way without the need to publicise the league tables themselves. A "private accountability" system[13] would not only lead to more sensitive and more efficient decisions, it would also avoid the (usually deliberate) political distortion of performance reporting and the perverse incentives of the current "name and shame" regime, as described eg in *Performance Indicators: Good, Bad and Ugly*, the RSS Working Party report on Performance Monitoring in the Public Services.

NB. Other educational systems do take a different view about the publishing of league tables. E.g. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland do not do so, nor do some parts of Australia. The information on which such countries have reached those decisions takes into account the research evidence and the kind of arguments that we have outlined above. In our view, it is the English system that is out of line in continuing, until now, to ignore such evidence.

4. *What is the effect of the current system of public performance reporting (Achievement and Attainment Tables www.dcsf.gov.uk/performancetables/, and the online School Profile schoolsfinder.direct.gov.uk) on a school's performance, including confidence, creativity and innovation?*

4.1 A good future starting point would be that reporting on a school's performance and subsequent inspections should be principally aimed at supporting teachers and schools rather than trying to identify failure. Every child needs to attend a good school so a key purpose of the accountability system should be to identify what schools need to improve and what support (if any) they require. As we have said, we believe that this is best achieved through a private accountability system

4.2 From a statistician's perspective, we would like to emphasise the damage that adherence to simple (adjusted or unadjusted) measurements can do within schools. Many (perhaps most) of the misinterpretations stem from a failure on the part of educational managers to understand the variation that lies beneath simple summaries. Measurements that may be useful indicators of trends over time or of the progress of an age cohort can be over-interpreted at the level of the individual pupil or school. The need for confidence intervals or error bounds in reported measurements is key. Seeing a spurious precision in baseline measurements can sometimes result in iniquitous pressure being put on pupils (in target setting) and on teachers (in analysing their examination results). The use of threshold measures, eg 5A*–C (EM) also creates perverse incentives, leading schools to focus their efforts on a small group of students whose result "make the difference".

4.3 Related to this, school inspections rely very heavily on the very same statistics as are used in performance measurement, and these statistics are interpreted by inspectors with, in many cases, very limited statistical expertise. The guidance on interpreting statistics that is given to inspectors is inadequate. Since so much emphasis is placed on the interpretation of statistics, inspection systems should have a competent statistician on every team!

5. *What is the impact on schools of league tables published by the press?*

5.1 Where a school finds itself positioned in a league table can have a huge impact on the ease with which it recruits staff and, of course, on the school's self esteem and "reputation" (certainly moving down a league table can have an immediate effect on perceptions of the school's ability to educate and lead (unfairly) to reduced student numbers as parents opt for other schools).

5.2 Many parents (and teachers) use the published statistics without reference to (or any understanding of) the uncertainty built into the league tables, so there is a pressure on schools to do whatever it takes to make the number bigger. At the very least, the effect is that, in an effort to not miss targets, schools increasingly teach to the test rather than teach for understanding.

6. *How useful is this information to stakeholders, particularly parents?*

6.1 There is a strongly held view by some that parents actually have very little choice as to which school to send their children to in many parts of the country and that they are swayed less by league tables and more by qualitative factors such as pastoral care eg school policy on bullying, extra curricular opportunities and the accessibility of teachers[14]. League tables in their present form and as they are currently reported, lead to misinformation and misunderstanding and are of little practical use in relation to eg school choice.

6.2 What is currently made available is only part of the story and the full story needs to be told if an honest picture is to be presented. If this point were understood well by the public then we do not think that there would be a great deal of support for publishing the tables. We believe that Government has so far failed to

[13] An example of such a "private" accountability system is given by H. Goldstein (2001). "Using pupil performance data for judging schools and teachers: scope and limitations." British Educational Research Journal 27: 433–442.

[14] This has been documented by Kirkland Rowell, the biggest provider of school surveys.

take responsibility to make this issue well understood by the media and the general public and we would welcome a change of policy in this respect. The Royal Statistical Society would, of course, be happy to lend its expertise.

7. *School Report Card*

7.1 We would like to emphasise that the main technical issues that we have discussed above are relevant to any proposed report card ie

(i) Uncertainty. As we have pointed out in connection with reliability of inspection reports, all measures whether made at student, teacher or school level have a component of measurement error. Statisticians study these issues and statistical input in terms of the measurement and presentation of such uncertainty is essential.

(ii) Adjustments. As in the case of value-added measures, it is important to take account of student prior dispositions, well being, behaviour and achievement when using student measurements to make comparisons among schools. Again, statisticians have studied ways of making such adjustments that are efficient and reliable.

(iii) We have already referred to the fact that student performance is used as a proxy for the quality of teaching in school. For measures such as well-being and others on the proposed report card, their proxy nature is even more pronounced. This implies that any attempts to use these for school accountability purposes should be viewed with even more care and indeed scepticism, than test and exam scores.

(iv) We would urge caution over any attempts to combine measures of achievement with those on the report card, into a single indicator at the school level.

(v) If it is decided to go ahead with some form of report card, we consider it essential not only that the above issues are fully addressed but also that a proper pilot study is conducted and evaluated.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales

INTRODUCTION

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) welcomes this inquiry and the opportunity to submit written evidence. We would be pleased to provide any further information that may be of assistance.

ROLE OF THE YJB

The role of the YJB is to oversee the youth justice system in England and Wales. It works to prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people under the age of 18, and to ensure that custody for them is safe, secure, and addresses the causes of their offending behaviour. The statutory responsibilities of the YJB include:

— advising Ministers on the operation of, and standards for, the youth justice system;

— monitoring the performance of the youth justice system;

— purchasing places for, and placing, children and young people remanded or sentenced to custody;

— identifying and promoting effective practice;

— making grants to local authorities and other bodies to support the development of effective practice; and

— commissioning research and publishing information.

While the YJB is responsible for overseeing the performance of youth justice services including multi-agency YOTs and secure estate providers it does not directly manage any of the services.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The YJB supports greater integration of schools into wider children's services and the proposals in the 21st Century Schools agenda to develop a new accountability framework for education providers. We support measures to hold schools and other education providers more accountable for wider inclusion indicators and would welcome this incorporating public concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour.

2. The YJB supports the drive to encourage greater collective responsibility for school exclusion decisions as a positive step towards ensuring schools support work to take the wider needs of children and young people into account. Proposals to develop the current education system to create an environment of good behaviour are welcome and the YJB would support the greater use of restorative justice measures in schools.

3. The YJB welcomes the recognition that schools can play a central role in early intervention and targeted support for children and young people. The YJB supports schools working in partnership to ensure a holistic approach is taken towards addressing needs and the principle of a national framework for early intervention.

4. The drive to improve alternative education provision, in part through involving schools more fully in the local authority accountability structure, is welcome.

5. The YJB welcomes the inclusion of wider "wellbeing" indicators in the new accountability measures, and specifically in the proposed School Report Card. We support greater partnership working to ensure the needs of children and young people are being met.

Integrating Schools into Wider Children's Services

6. The YJB supports the Government's drive to achieve greater integration of schools into wider children's services. Schools can play wide roles in local communities and have a positive impact on a range of childhood and family issues. This includes inclusion factors such as wellbeing, health and safety and the YJB welcomes recent measures to hold schools and other education providers more accountable for these outcomes. For schools to effectively fulfil this role the YJB believes they will need to work in partnership with Children's Trusts, Community Safety Partnerships and other local agencies.

7. The YJB welcomes the measures in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 21st Century Schools agenda to develop a new accountability framework for education providers. We acknowledge and support references to the need for an education system which manages "risks". Within a youth justice perspective "risks" can be interpreted as issues around personal safety, avoidance of victimisation and bullying and risk of anti-social behaviour or offending. The YJB would welcome the incorporation of public concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour within the duties on schools to address wider inclusion indicators and recognition of the vital role that schools can play in helping to reduce risks and anxieties.

8. The YJB supports the Government's drive, as set out in the Back on Track White Paper, to reduce the number of permanent exclusions from schools and the steps that schools will be expected to take to manage behaviour and minimise the risk of exclusion. Engagement with education, training and employment is proven to reduce the risk of offending and reoffending by children and young people. The Back on Track agenda encourages greater collective responsibility for the wider needs of children and young people and the YJB supports this as a positive step. The YJB also supports the proposal in the Government's Youth Crime Action Plan (YCAP) that permanent exclusion from education should automatically trigger the completion of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), highlighting that the young person is "in need" and requiring planned multi-agency interventions. Whilst acknowledging that exclusions can be necessary, it is important that the approach includes assessment and interventions to address factors in young people's lives which lead to problem behaviour.

9. Proposals to develop the current education system to create an environment of good behaviour are welcome and the YJB agrees that School Behaviour Partnerships (SBPs) can play a key role in achieving this. Introduced in 2007, SBPs bring local schools together to share expertise and resources aimed at improving behaviour and tackling persistent absence. As noted in Back on Track, SBPs have already seen success in achieving this. The YJB supports the measures in the current Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and Learning (ASCL) Bill to place SBPs on statutory footing. It is anticipated that this will further encourage schools to assume greater responsibility for the children and young people in their local areas. However the YJB is concerned that lack of clarity in the Bill over how the balance of responsibilities within SBPs will be managed and the expectations on individual schools compared with the collective partnership may lead to confusion.

10. The YJB would welcome greater use of restorative justice (RJ) measures in schools and welcomes the Government's desire to extend RJ principles to pupil referral units (PRUs), as signalled in Back on Track. This would be dependent on local authorities, youth offending teams (YOTs) and police forces providing training support to schools in RJ principles, which is welcome.

11. It is therefore anticipated that the introduction of greater accountability measures, alongside other initiatives, will go some way towards creating a climate where schools are more integrated into other children's services.

12. The YJB welcomes the recognition in 21st Century Schools consultation that schools can have a central role to play in early intervention and targeted support for children and young people, including the potential to prevent problems developing. In addition to other partnership work, the YJB would support schools working closer with YOTs, the police, Children's Trusts and other children's services to ensure a holistic approach towards addressing the needs of children and young people and to embed the prevention agenda into mainstream education. The YJB welcomes the Government's commitment to work with schools and other partners to support children and young people with additional needs. The YJB supports the principle of a national framework for early intervention, with schools playing a central, integrated role.

13. The YJB believes an effective system for early intervention should involve youth justice prevention services as well as wider diversionary programmes such as the DCSF's Think Family projects and Family Intervention programmes.

14. Prevention is a key part of the YJB's work and we have developed, funded and supported a range of interventions which offer examples of existing effective practice. Examples include;

— *Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIPs)*. Introduced in 2000, YIPs work in areas of high crime and deprivation in England and Wales. YIPs work with a core group of young people identified as being at high risk of entering the youth justice system or progressing beyond minor offending behaviour. They offer young people the opportunity to engage in positive activities and change their attitudes towards crime and offending.

— *Youth Inclusion and Support Panels (YISPs)*. Aimed at preventing anti social behaviour and offending, YISPs ensure high risk young people and their families can access mainstream and specialist services at the earliest opportunity. YISPs are multi-agency planning groups that work with the young people and their families to develop agreed intervention plans.

— *Safer School Partnerships (SSPs)*. SSPs are multi-agency partnerships involving the police, schools, local education authorities and councils as well as teachers and parents. Launched in 2002 to address significant behavioural and crime-related issues in and around schools, the wider benefits of SSPs have since been recognised, including promoting community cohesion and an increased quality of life and opportunities for young people, their families and the wider community. The SSP programme is the result of a YJB/Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) proposal to develop a new policing model for schools and is a joint initiative between the YJB, ACPO and DCSF. The YJB welcomed the wider roll out of SSPs signalled in YCAP and looks forward to the publication of the related guidance in Spring 2009.

15. YJB-funded prevention programmes enable YOTs to deliver vital services to approximately 25,000 young people (aged 8–17) each year. We would welcome sharing this expertise as part of the proposed framework to hold schools to account for early intervention and targeted support.

16. The YJB therefore welcomes the 21st Century Schools agenda to develop a system in which schools work with wider children's services to ensure children and young people are effectively supported. In particular we support proposals to ensure greater collective accountability for outcomes for children and young people and the Government's intention to create a national framework to underpin this.

Local Authority Accountability and Improving Alternative Provision

17. The YJB strongly welcomes the agenda set out in Back on Track to hold local authorities to account for outcomes from the alternative provision they commission and deliver, including PRUs. This will be achieved, in part, through involving schools more fully in the accountability structure. In particular, the YJB welcomes the requirement for all PRUs to establish a management committee, requiring substantial involvement by head teachers of local schools. Through increased ownership it is hoped schools will become more aware of and reactive to the needs of children and young people in their community.

18. As part of the Back on Track agenda, the YJB welcomes the focus on improving the standard and quality of alternative provision through modernisation. The YJB supports DCSF in their proposals to work with local authorities and schools to address the needs of young people in alternative provision and we are currently working with partners including Connexions to establish appropriate service levels. The lack of performance data currently available for PRUs is of concern and the YJB welcomes the drive to improve this situation through future publication of data.

Education in Custody

19. The YJB welcomes the Government's agenda, as set out in the Youth Crime Action Plan and Raising Expectations White Paper, to improve education and training for young offenders, including placing new duties on local authorities for the continuing attainment for young people in custody. In particular the YJB welcomes the commitment to develop a National Delivery Framework for education and training in juvenile custody which would require local authorities, custodial establishments and other local partners to work together on this issue.

20. The YJB welcomes the measures to give local authorities responsibility for funding and commissioning custodial education when the Learning and Skills Council relinquishes its responsibilities for the 16 to 19 age group in 2010. However, given the current variety of sources of funding, including funding currently provided by the LSC which may be supplementing any shortfalls in some custodial establishments, YJB is concerned to ensure that the full range of funding sources are reviewed and identified in the transfer to new funding arrangements. The YJB broadly welcomes the creation of the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) which will support local authorities to carry out their new duties. The transition from central to local provision needs to be planned and adequately supported and it is positive that the YPLA will be able to do this.

21. As part of this overall approach, the YJB believes there should be greater requirements on education providers, including schools, to maintain contact with young people during their time in custody. It is important that education providers pass vital information about general education performance, SEN statements and other statements of need onto custodial establishments when a young person is sentenced. It is equally important that, as part of an effective resettlement process, schools receive equivalent

information back upon a young person's release, including measures of progress. The YJB welcomes the 2006 regulations setting out expectations on schools not to take children who have been sentenced to short term custodial sentences (resulting in an eight week absence) off their school rolls. It should be noted, however, that this is a permissive order and the YJB would welcome stronger regulations to give head teachers less discretion over its enforcement.

22. The YJB welcomes the Government's drive to ensure alternative providers play a specific role in liaising with custodial establishments and YOTs on pre-release planning and the resettlement of young people coming out of custody. Indeed the YJB believes it is good practice for all education providers, including schools, to be encouraged to participate in this process.

School Report Card

23. The YJB welcomes proposals to include wider inclusion outcomes, such as wellbeing, pupil's health and ability to make a positive contribution in the school accountability system, which will be delivered through the proposed School Report Card. The recognition of the importance of these outcomes on a young person's life is welcome. It is anticipated that including wellbeing indicators in the School Report Card will remove any potential confusion over what schools can be held to account for.

24. The YJB believes schools should be encouraged to accept their "fair share" of pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour and who are from disadvantaged backgrounds. We would therefore caution against the reporting of measurements in the School Report Card that may incentivise schools to overlook less advantaged children and young people.

25. The YJB supports greater collaboration and partnership working between schools and believes this will help to achieve the wider drive to integrate schools more fully into children's services. As previously stated, the YJB supports greater partnership working between schools, Children's Trusts, local authorities and other local agencies including youth justice services and we welcome the proposal for schools to be performance judged on their role in partnership working in the future.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by VT Education and Skills

Introduction

1. VT Education and Skills (VTE&S) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Children, Schools and Families' Committee's inquiry into school accountability. As one of the UK's largest providers of schools support and schools improvement services, we have considerable experience of working with individual schools and local authorities across the country and view proper accountability systems which are fully responsive to local needs as one of the key conditions for an effective education system.

2. VTE&S itself is the UK's largest education and training company with a turnover of £270 million and over 4,000 employees across the country. Our main business area in the schools support field is VT Four S, a partnership between VTE&S and Surrey County Council. Through VT4S, we currently provide school improvement services to Surrey and Waltham Forest, and Lewisham, Greenwich, Bedfordshire and Reading, where we provide school improvement and support services to increase attainment in primary and secondary schools.

3. The company's objective is to improve educational standards across the UK by contributing to:

- The provision of new and enhanced learning environments;
- Adding value to the local authority sector through strategic schools improvement;
- Integration of vocational education and careers counselling to facilitate the transition into work for all young people leaving education;
- Provision of accredited qualifications in the work setting; and
- Application of innovative IT solutions both to add value to the learning experience and increase value for money within education.

4. This paper provides further detail of our current activity supporting schools and the positive improvements that have flowed from this. We also provide our thoughts on the current system of school accountability and the measures contained within the DCSF's recent Green Paper, *21st Century Schools*. In conclusion:

- Accountability of schools to parents and pupils is key to delivering strong results. The Government is right to place the principle of accountability at the heart of its forthcoming Schools White Paper.
- Accountability ensures that the contract between schools, parents and pupils works effectively and that taxpayers are receiving value for money.
- If this fundamental contract is to function properly, there needs to be an effective flow of information on performance to parents, reinforced by effective intervention when required.

— Schools should not only be judged against academic results, but on a series of softer measures, including inclusion, collaboration with other schools, contribution to community cohesion and quality of multi-agency working.

— The range of current intervention measures is, in our view, fit for purpose. More problematic at times are the expectations placed on governors, who are ultimately volunteers.

— Systems of accountability driven primarily by quantitative data have less impact in our view than those based around the principle of continuous improvement. The best systems of accountability are those which combine a focus on standards with a process which engages heads and staff, raising their awareness of how to develop the school's capacity for continuous improvement.

— Many educational practitioners argue that the current inspection regime is less traumatic for teachers, although it remains stressful for heads and senior teams. Whilst we appreciate this point, we have concerns about whether a system of reduced tariff inspections, with little time spent on site by outsiders, can do justice to the complexity of some schools.

— The results of inspection reports should be made fully available to parents in as transparent a way as possible to empower them to make choices on the basis of accurate information.

— VTE&S has considerable experience of working with schools as the largest integrated school improvement partner in the UK through VT Four S. The partnership principle lies at the heart of our approach, and has been able to deliver significant improvements in standards.

— Our experience of SIPs is very positive in some local authorities, but not all. In Surrey, the transition has worked painlessly, and colleagues have been able to play their brokerage role fully.

— Concerns about performance data need to be combined with a broader spectrum of judgements if justice is to be done to schools which will not appear outstanding on the basis of contextual value added., but are nevertheless improving their results continuously.

Accountability

5. The education sector is fundamentally changing as it seeks to create a world-class level of achievement. Schools themselves are the centrepiece of social change, working with agendas such as personalised learning, healthy living, social inclusion and community regeneration. As the DCSF has stated in its *21st Century Schools* Green Paper, the school system should deliver excellent personalised education and develop to ensure that every child—no matter what their background—has the opportunity to progress well, achieve highly and have a fulfilling and enjoyable childhood.

6. Schools also, of course, make a vital long-term contribution to economic competitiveness and social cohesion, by promoting good literacy and numeracy skills, and grounding pupils in social relations.

7. Given all of this, it is important to ensure that schools are fully responsive to the parents and pupils they exist to serve. This contract between schools, parents and pupils lie at the heart of our educational system and it is right that schools should be held accountable for their performance. There is a fundamental need to ensure that the education service provides value for money for taxpayers.

8. Therefore, if a school is not serving its pupils well, it should be held to account and improve its performance. All pupils deserve to receive the best possible education, regardless of their economic or geographic circumstances. At the same time, so-called "coasting schools" should be encouraged to improve, and excellent schools should have the necessary incentive to ensure that their performance remains as strong as possible.

The importance of information

9. If this fundamental contract between parents, students and schools is to function properly, there needs to be an effective flow of information on performance to parents, and parents need to know that if a school is not performing to the necessary standard, there will be effective intervention. Evidence currently suggests that parents find it hard to access this information.

10. Whilst the key focus of this information has traditionally been on academic standards, it is important that schools be judged against a series of Key Performance Indicators in wider areas such as class sizes and extra-curricular activities. This is in line with the *Every Child Matters* strategy. *Every Child Matters* itself identified a range of outcomes which should be addressed by schools, including being healthy, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. For individual schools, there are also issues relating to pupil's behaviour and attendance against which performance should be judged. It is important that such an assessment is sensitive to the local conditions of each school, and that strategies for improvement are firmly rooted in an appreciation of what needs to be addressed.

11. However, as indicated above, the provision of information must be accompanied by an effective intervention strategy. The range of intervention measures currently available is, in our view, fit for purpose. More problematic at times are the expectations placed on governors, who are ultimately volunteers; it can often prove challenging for a school to recover in the timeframe expected when it is not possible to attract governors of the calibre required in schools causing concern.

The current accountability system

12. The current accountability system broadly works well, although there is some need for simplification. There are currently too many initiatives, and the information available to parents is either too widely spread or not presented in a form that is easily understood. The reforms envisaged via the introduction of the School Report Card should help to bring all of this information together in a succinct form.

13. Given the length of time between Ofsted inspection—often three years for individual schools—the role of the School Improvement Partner in providing continuous monitoring of a school's performance is important.

14. Indeed, systems of accountability driven primarily by quantitative data have less impact in our view than those based around the principle of continuous improvement. Any system of measuring schools based only on performance results, and not also on a judgement of their capacity for self-evaluation and their capacity to improve is doomed to fail. The best systems of accountability are those which combine a focus on standards with a process which engages heads and staff, and raises their awareness about how to develop the school's capacity for continuous improvement.

Inspection

15. Many educational practitioners have argued that the current inspection system is less traumatic for teachers, but remains traumatic for heads and senior teams. Whilst we appreciate this point, we have concerns about whether a system of reduced tariff inspections, with little time spent on site by outsiders, can do justice to the complexity of some schools. For example, one-day inspections of special residential schools for pupils with behavioural, educational and social difficulties must prove particularly challenging. There is a risk that such inspections will not be penetrating enough, and result in inaccurate reports.

16. The inspection process is still often viewed negatively. Government should work with local stakeholders to achieve a shift away from these negative perceptions. The inspection process should instead be seen as a key influence on school behaviour, in assisting local authorities in the direction of resources; improving internal decision-making within schools; and helping parents to reach decisions on appropriate schools.

17. The results of inspection reports should be made fully available to parents in as transparent a way as possible to empower them to make choices on the basis of accurate information.

18. Inspections should be tailored to the current performance levels of specific schools being inspected. Whilst there is a specific need to lift the performance of the worse-performing schools, there are also issues with coasting schools. It is right that we should demand the best out of all schools,

School Improvement Partners

19. VTE&S has considerable experience of working with schools as the largest integrated school improvement partner in the UK through VT Four S. VT Four S itself was created in 2004 under the 2001–02 DfES New Models Local Authority Pilot initiative, and is the only surviving and successful model. The partnership principle lies at the heart of our approach and we place children and young people at the heart of what we do. The relationship between VTE&S and Surrey County Council combines the best of the private sector with a public sector ethos, delivering a wide range of educational, school improvement and careers guidance services.

20. We have been able to deliver significant improvements in standards in Surrey. Highlights over the last four years include:

- An increase in attainment of five or more A*–C GCSEs including English and mathematics greater than the average increase nationally;
- Performance in reading, writing and mathematics has continued to improve since 2003 at Key Stage 1 and level 2;
- A significant decrease in the number of primary schools below the floor target;
- Key stage 1–4 attainment, robust action to improve schools and our work with disadvantaged groups such as traveller groups have been specifically cited as strengths in Annual Performance Assessments; and
- In 2008, there were no schools below the floor target in the secondary school sector, demonstrating a steady improvement since 2004.

21. VTE&S has a very positive experience of SIPs in some local authorities, but not all. Experience in Surrey has been positive: all of the previously employed attached consultants advising schools became SIPs and consequently have a strong knowledge of individual schools and are well equipped to support and challenge. Surrey County Council itself had already initiated the practice of recruiting into its teams those who were serving or recent heads. The transition across to the SIP model has, therefore, worked painlessly and colleagues are able to play their brokerage role fully.

22. However, local authorities more reliant on recruiting groups of SIPs from databases have struggled. This has often resulted in the recruitment of individuals who have never worked together before, do not know which service to point schools towards as brokers of support, and are consequently unable to challenge heads and governing bodies effectively.

23. The evidence from VTE&S' operations, and from the wider supplier base, shows that partnership between schools, local authorities and the private sector can deliver significant improvements. However, we remain hungry to achieve more. For this to become a reality, companies such as VTE&S need to be given greater freedom and flexibility to innovate, and schools need to be encouraged to use the reservoir of expertise available more readily. This approach needs to be grounded fully in an understanding and appreciation of local issues and dynamics.

Performance reporting

24. Concerns about performance data need to be combined with a broader spectrum of judgements if justice is to be done to schools which will not appear outstanding on the basis of contextual valued added, but are nevertheless improving their results constantly at the same time as improving their practice in softer, harder to evaluate areas such as inclusion, collaboration with other schools, contribution to community cohesion and quality of multi-agency working. Taking a broad range of measures into account can help to avoid the perverse impact of performance tables, which can mitigate against inclusive schools.

25. For reporting to be effective, it needs to be seen to be independent of both government and schools. Whilst Ofsted is the most appropriate organisation to undertake this, the role of the SIP as a continuous performance monitor is invaluable.

26. *21st Century Schools* envisages the new School Report Card as the single accountability tool for all parties, forming the basis of Ofsted's annual risk assessment and being a key part of the dialogue between the school and the School Improvement Partner. This will form an important part of future performance reporting. As the DCSF's recent Green Paper on 21st Century Schools stated, "*The new School Report Card will provide stronger accountability to parents and local communities and provide the common tool for all aspects of school improvement and intervention.*"

27. The main advantage of the proposed School Report Card is its straightforward, transparent presentation. It will be far easier to understand and to use by those who really need it ie parents and learners. However, it is important to ensure that this takes into account the broadest range of measures possible to give a balanced view of the school overall.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Independent Schools Inspectorate welcomes the opportunity to submit written evidence to this inquiry. ISI believes that a strong accountability structure supports schools improvement. Robust inspections based on objective measures and direct observations which result in published reports are essential in helping schools to provide high quality education and care and in securing public confidence.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

2. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is a body approved by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families for the inspection of independent schools in membership of the Independent Schools Council (ISC). ISI inspections report on the extent to which regulatory requirements are met, support school development and improvement and provide independent and frank reports to inform parents, schools and other interested parties. ISI inspects over 1,200 schools, educating over 500,000 pupils—80% of the independent sector in England. ISI also inspects a number of schools overseas each year.

ACCOUNTABILITY

3. ISI agrees with the principle that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance. This accountability arises from two sources. Firstly, schools are, in addition to parents and carers, significant contributors to a child's development. This care for children at a crucial stage of their lives requires full accountability for key outcomes. Secondly, maintained schools are in receipt of public funds and therefore should be accountable for the way in which this money is spent and the outcomes achieved.

4. Schools are, and should be, accountable to pupils, parents and funding sources. They should be accountable for what they claim to provide, for example academic education, pastoral care and welfare etc., and for their compliance with legal obligations. The outcomes should be effectively assessed through objective external review with full public reporting. Where such external review indicates failings then a range of measures, proportionate to risk but including closure, should be available to an appropriate body.

5. Internationally the range of accountability structures for schools varies greatly from undeveloped and superficial to detailed and specific, with requirements backed by external review (as in the UK). It is notable that many countries are investing considerable resources in developing UK type inspection systems.

6. In general terms, the current accountability system of inspection and reporting is fit for purpose. Parents and the public hold published reports in high regard. However, many associated areas on which inspection rests are complex and burdensome. In particular the variety of organisations and requirements both statutory and non-statutory involved in school accountability (eg SIPs, Ofsted, LAs, National Strategies), leads to duplication of effort and cost, and confusion for schools, parents and other stakeholders. Changes in the maintained school inspection framework in recent years have led to greater reliance on self evaluation and test and examination results. We would question whether the current inspection tariff for maintained schools provides sufficient opportunity for inspectors to directly observe practice in schools in order to test the validity of self-evaluation and to make a reliable assessment of the outcomes for pupils beyond test and examination results. The sheer number of regulatory requirements that should be checked for compliance cannot be reliably covered in the time available, relying instead on focusing on specific areas or where concerns may be evident.

7. Where education provision is increasingly collaborative with partner organisations, it becomes progressively more difficult to hold individual schools accountable for their performance. Clear reporting on the effectiveness of joint projects, including the management arrangements, should inform stakeholders appropriately.

Inspection

8. The inspection of maintained schools by Ofsted and its contractors has been effective in increasing accountability of schools through public reporting. In particular Ofsted indicate that the measures for "failing schools" have raised standards and increased the rate of improvement. Independent inspection is the appropriate way of holding schools accountable, and of assessing the impact of government policy as well practice. To do this effectively the inspectorate must be well funded and resourced. Where funding is limited, inspection models may by foreshortened to the detriment of all.

9. The inspection process should drive improvement, and give schools confidence that pupils are achieving standards consistent with reliable external benchmarks. However, where inspection prescribes methods or practices rather than focusing on outcomes, creativity can be stifled and innovation detered. This can slow improvement or even reduce standards. Parallels can be drawn with the practice of "teaching to the test."

10. Inspectors, as with any workforce, have a wide range of qualifications and experience. We would suggest that it is important that inspectors are well "matched" to the schools they are inspecting in terms of prior experience. Where care of pupils in residential settings is being inspected, inspectors from both education and care backgrounds should be included in the team so as to ensure that both areas of expertise are appropriately covered.

11. Inspections should be scheduled at an interval so as to ensure that typically a child cannot complete their time at the school without an inspection having taken place. Inspections must be sufficiently detailed so that they can provide a secure evidence base as to the outcomes for pupils and should result in a published report which is useful to parents and the public. The appropriate notice period for inspections depends on what is viewed as the purpose of the visit. If schools are to be "caught out" then there should be little or no notice. If schools are trusted, then some notice can be given for meetings to be scheduled (especially with governors, who are often not available at very short notice) and documents collated. An increased notice period also allows for a greater number of parents and pupils to confidentially express their views through questionnaires or other means.

12. Self assessment/self evaluation provides a useful indication of a school's ability to be self critical in identifying strengths and weaknesses. It can also be a helpful starting point for the inspection process particularly in terms of influencing judgements on leadership and management. However, self evaluation should be a starting point for rigorous inspection and not accepted without challenge. The results of national tests act as one of many sources for inspectors. Contextual Value Added scores act as a framework for schools performance but must be treated with some caution. In particular, CVA must not exclude the setting of high expectations for individuals or groups of pupils, nor mask differential attainment of different groups of pupils within the school.

13. We believe that attainment and ECM outcomes should not be viewed as in competition. However, attainment is objective and measurable, whereas qualitative "soft" evidence on wellbeing is less amenable to quantitative objective measures. Inspectors must balance these different types of indicators using their professional judgement.

14. Performance based inspections should be based on reliable and measurable indicators, and transparent guidelines should be available. The current "light touch" regime for some schools relies heavily on self evaluation and does not, we feel, sufficiently probe the judgements of the school, particularly in relation to care and welfare.

15. Indicators of underperforming schools include attainment, regulatory compliance and inspection outcomes. These are appropriate indicators but may conflict, for example, pupil attainment may be below target levels, but, in an improving school, the quality of teaching and pupil welfare much higher. Different indicators are "enforced" by different agencies, for example schools falling below the key government target of 30% of pupils achieving five good GCSE grades, may still be judged satisfactory or good on inspection because of positive indicators in other areas.

16. We feel that the current procedure for complaints about inspection is adequate, including the arrangements for review by an independent adjudicator. It is not clear though what influence data from the complaints process has on the development of future inspection models

Performance Reporting

17. Performance can only be usefully measured on objective indicators, including attainment. Qualitative indicators are best expressed in the context of an inspection report or similar document.

18. The publication of league tables is unhelpful in many respects and evidence suggests that it has led to increased "teaching to the test" and narrowing of the curriculum. These tables create the illusion of reliability and comprehensiveness, especially to parents, that is not warranted.

School Report Card

19. The DCSF proposals for a school report card causes us some concern. In particular, there is significant potential for duplication and conflict with other published information. The proposed inclusion of qualitative judgements in numeric form is alarming as it could have a significant negative impact on a school yet be based on relatively "thin" evidence. In particular, it is not clear how the views of parents and pupils will be appropriately reported.

20. If an inspection report is thorough and sufficiently detailed, with inspections occurring at suitable intervals, we see little need for this additional level of reporting.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the Campaign for State Education (CASE)

CASE believes in an education system that is fair to all children, young people and their parents and which has the resources to provide excellent quality.

CASE believes that the current National Curriculum Assessment system, and the Ofsted inspection system, which hinges its judgements of schools on the very narrow NCA results and school comparisons based solely on these, are totally inadequate as a basis for school accountability. CASE is of the view that

- League tables as a way of holding schools to account should be abandoned.
- Governing Bodies are the legally accountable body for schools and should be treated as such; the headteacher and staff are accountable to the Governing Body. Governors' annual reports should be re-instated.
- All schools should be accountable to parents, children , their local community, local authority and the taxpayer.
- Schools should be accountable for ensuring that each child progresses successfully throughout their time at school.
- There are not enough mechanisms of support in place to help schools that are facing difficulties. The "name and shame" ethos does nothing to support the school or help children and staff.
- The effects of potential conflicts of interest in the privatised inspection system need to be taken into account.
- Schools should be not be competing with each other but sharing facilities and good practice so that every school becomes a good school.
- All aspects of school provision should be included in any accountability system and the views of children and young people and parents should be paramount.
- Academies need to be treated in the same way as all other schools ie not just accountable to the DCSF and subject to a separate inspection system.

1. *Is it right in principle that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance?*

The principle that schools should be held to account is sound, as the state education system relies on taxpayers' money. More importantly, there has to be a way of assuring that each child is in receipt of their entitlement to a good education. Holding schools to account is the main way of guaranteeing this. The problem is the word "performance". Performance should have meaning across many areas and take the

many factors into account which are unique to each school and its intake, ie not just raw test results. This is what is making an accountability system which is consistent and meaningful across all settings extremely difficult. The system we currently have is not working.

2. *To whom should schools be accountable?*

Schools should be accountable to parents, children, their local community, local authority and the taxpayer. Parents need to know that their children are well cared for and are in receipt of a well taught, broad curriculum. Children should be able to hold the school to account through any of the various vehicles of student voice—councils, senates, representation on school bodies, etc—as they clearly should have a say in their own education. The public need to know that their taxpayers' money is being wisely spent, so schools are more broadly accountable to the general public. Central Government needs to have some means of knowing to what extent the state education system is fulfilling stated objectives of Government and is providing value for money to the taxpayer. It is also the role of government to monitor schools' performance nationally, to be the main commissioners of research into innovations in education to ascertain this and to disseminate good practice through which is based on research.

3. *For what should they be held accountable?*

Broadly, schools should be accountable for ensuring that each child progresses successfully throughout their time at school. The pastoral element of a child's experience at school is also important. Schools should be accountable for how they ensure that holistic systems are in place that respect and treat each child as an individual.

4. *How should they be held to account?*

League tables of assessments at KS 1–3 are not the most meaningful way of holding schools to account, as they fail to take into account the many socio-economic elements which have huge significance in a child's education. In addition, as league tables result in schools competing against each other, how useful can they ever be in promoting a national state system, where each child should be able to expect a good local school in their neighbourhood? League tables encourage the culture of parental choice and therefore parents as consumers of education. This serves to differentiate the opportunities available to each child, and therefore tarnishes the whole idea of entitlement and equity in state provision of education. League tables as a way of holding schools to account should be abandoned.

The Government has initiated a rethink of the accountability framework in the form of the new Report Card. Initial plans for this take into consideration factors other than test results and contextual value added scores. The jury is still out on whether the Report Cards will be fit for purpose, as their content is still under development and consultation. However, reducing the perceived effectiveness of a school down to a single score, or traffic light system of colours, as has been mooted, would not seem to be able to be representative enough of everything that a school is achieving at any moment in time. It also serves to perpetuate the culture of inter-school competition rather than collaboration. Surely the point of having real people visiting schools as inspectors is that they observe lessons and all that happens in the school and discuss with practitioners at all levels and children and young people and governors, what they think about their school, come to subjective judgements on the basis of their experience and subsequently discuss their finding with all stakeholder groups, making suggestions for improvement and offering support in implementing recommendations.

5. *What should be consequences?*

This question relates to consequences of the system we currently have, rather than any new system which might have very different criteria by which a school is held to account. At the moment a school is held to account by exam results, including SATs, and Ofsted reports. Much of this is under the spotlight at the moment, as to whether they are fit-for-purpose. "Consequences" implies that a school has done something wrong and is somehow to blame and has overall negative connotations. We need to ask how schools that have been shown to be experiencing problems get appropriate support. At the moment there are not enough mechanisms of support in place to help schools that are facing difficulties. The "name and shame" ethos does nothing to support and help children and staff.

6. *Is the current accountability system of inspection and performance reporting for schools broadly fit for purpose?*

There is significant concern that the current systems of SATs, league tables and Ofsted are not fit for purpose. The emphasis everywhere is on competition and largely paper based inspection, rather than on face to face discussion, collaboration and support. SATs serve the purpose of ranking schools, rather than offering meaningful information about how well a child is progressing. Furthermore they encourage the "teaching to the test" approach which narrows the curriculum to the detriment of every child's learning experience. League tables encourage the idea of "high stakes" testing and compound the curriculum problem. Major concerns about Ofsted include: its systems to guarantee consistency amongst the five private companies tasked with the actual inspections; the short inspections which cannot hope to be comprehensive

enough in their scope and attention to detail to serve any useful purpose; and the lack of mechanisms to offer support after identifying problems. It may be that to counter the perceived current deficiencies of Ofsted inspection it may be desirable to reinstate the Local Authority's capacity for school inspection and expand a government employed HM Inspectorate. By removing the private companies now employed by Ofsted, it would be clear to all that HMI judgements were nationally consistent, there were no perverse incentives for inspection outcomes, and no conflicts of interest between or within competing private companies. Local Authorities have the local knowledge necessary to understand the very particular circumstance of each school they inspect and they already have the beginnings of a structure in place to support schools that need help via School Improvement Partners. Not only do these bodies have a solid knowledge of demographic elements of any area, they can also take into account neighbouring schools. As they are the bodies that sort out admissions for schools within their area, it is logical that they continue to be involved in the lives of children that they allocate to certain schools. In small authorities it may be cost effective to have subject and sector specialists who work over neighbouring authorities. LAs should report to central government and be assessed by central government. In addition, it is useful for governors to have a local reference and information point to aid them in their strategic role.

7. *The methodology used by Ofsted for school inspections is problematic at a number of levels:*

(1) It is substantially paper-based. The most significant of the paper inputs to inspection are the existing test result data and the school's Self Evaluation Form—the SEF.

(a) The strong correlation between Ofsted inspection verdicts and test results raises the question about what purpose the inspection serves when the outcome appears to be a foregone conclusion. (eg Times Educational Supplement reporter Warwick Mansell highlighted that of the 6,331 primaries visited in 2006–07, 98% had the same inspection verdict overall as they had been given for "achievement and standards"—which is based solely on test results.)

(b) The school's self evaluation is a one-size-fits-all form. The SEF assumes not only that the "quality" of a school depends on its systems and processes but that the evidence for this must exist in auditable form for Ofsted to recognise it. This can force schools to adopt modes of work which may not suit their staff and pupils and to create nugatory paperwork purely for the placation of inspectors.

(c) If the contribution that a school makes to its community is a function of the whole life of the school, then the inspection will inevitably see little of it since the interaction of inspectors with living people in the school is limited and pressurised. Lesson observation and in depth conversations with sample groups from the school have virtually disappeared.

(2) There is no moderation of Ofsted inspection verdicts.

(a) Inspections are carried out by five monopoly private companies, the Regional Inspection Service Providers, each of which has been allocated an English region. No mechanism exists for comparing the quality of judgements of one company with another. The need for such moderation is not fulfilled by any existing HMI interaction—indeed it would logically be subject to the same criticism. Moderation between companies could only be scientifically convincing if they were asked to judge the same schools.

(b) Inspections are conducted over one to two days by small teams (one to four members typically) with no necessary inclusion of any inspectorial subject specialisms. It is always assumed that their judgements are absolute since they are never confirmed by independent teams. This raises the question of subjective inspectorial input. If there were no subjective input, then there would be no need for the inspection since it would only be necessary to construct an algorithm to transform paper data into the judgement. If there is subjective inspectorial input, and that is the most reasonable and likely condition, then why is there no systematic moderation of judgements?

(c) Ofsted does not keep inspection paperwork beyond three months after the inspection. This makes it impossible to make in-depth comparisons of the judgemental process made over time, even within the current un-moderated system.

The effects of potential conflicts of interest in the privatised inspection system do not appear to have been taken into account. For example, Nord Anglia has the contract for the inspections in the north of England. Nord Anglia is a subsidiary of Pearson. Pearson also owns, inter alia, the examination board Edexcel and does the printing for the OCR examination board. Pearson owns a share of BBC Active, an educational software provider, Phoenix school information management software, Longmann Educational Book Publishers, Heinemann Educational Book Publishers, Knowledge Box, Penguin Books and the Financial Times. In partnership with Amey (a company involved in Building Schools for the Future contracts), Nord Anglia, as "Eduaction", ran Waltham Forest Education until 2008. Nord-Anglia ran Hackney education until it was handed over to the Learning Trust, which held on to some key Nord Anglia managers in Hackney. When an inspection rules unfavourably for a school, current government policy is for that school to become an academy—a school with private sponsors and management. There is no proscription on the private Regional Inspection Providers or their related companies becoming an academy sponsor in these circumstances. In all cases, it seems to be assumed that there will be no conflict of interest. What assurances can be given that that is in fact the case?

8. *Governance and Accountability*

CASE believes that true local democratic accountability of schools can best be achieved through the work of a stakeholder governing body, where each stakeholder has an equal voice, and there is a balance between those groups on the GB which have a sectional short term interest in the school (staff and parents), and those who have a wider and long term view (the Local Authority and the local community). Governing bodies should be large enough to include governors of varying lengths and types of experience in each stakeholder group. Lack of such a stakeholder governing body is one of CASE's major objections to Academies, where the sponsor selects the majority of the governors, and to Trust schools where the Trust appoints the majority of the governors. These schools in our view have no form of local democratic accountability, which as state funded schools, they should have.

As expressed elsewhere, we believe the current National Curriculum Assessment system, and the Ofsted inspection system, which hinges its judgements of schools on the very narrow NCA results and school comparisons based solely on these, are totally inadequate as a basis for school accountability. Judgements of schools need to be much broader and need to be made and communicated by all the stakeholders in the school.

Developing a national framework for accountability that has meaning is fraught with difficulty. Governing bodies with the various stakeholders (ie parents, staff, community, local government, and pupils) involved should be the main way schools are held to account. The Annual Governors Reports to parents which were made available to the public should be re-instated. These reports should contain data of public exam results, eg GCSEs, A Levels, etc and details about how the money has been spent. These reports, along with a regularly updated prospectus (also the responsibility of the Governing Body) which explains the ethos and the many practical details of the school, would be sufficient to inform parents' choice of schools.

Such a Governors Annual Report could also be addressed to the Local Authority as a basis for discussion with LA Inspectors/SIPs and LA support for school improvement. Involving LA personnel in a revived Annual Parents Meeting, together with greater content might attract more interest than is the past experience of most schools. The public too could visit the school and hear what it is doing.

A new style Report, compiled by governors on the basis of their knowledge of the school (not just HT reports) could include a report on pupil progression in the last year, using NCA results as well as wider information, report on behaviour and attendance, the number of children progressing from School Action Plus to School Action, curriculum innovations and their success/popularity, and progress on the Every Child Matters outcomes.

The 1988 Education Reform Act made governing bodies the main avenue of accountability of schools. The role of the governing body in accountability was well recognised in the first Ofsted Framework. (Sections 6.1 and 6.3.) The Governing Body of all maintained schools was seen as the "responsible authority" and as such the body which facilitated the inspection arrangements and to which Ofsted reported. It was then the governing body which was responsible for the post Ofsted Action Plan. Successive Ofsted Inspection Frameworks have reduced the responsibilities of the Governing body and the role of governors in the inspection process.. With the current framework it is unlikely for the inspectors to talk to more than one governor ideally the Chair, but that this can consist of a telephone conversation, and might not happen at all. This is highly unsatisfactory, especially since the governing body is a corporate entity and individual governors may not act on their own.

9. *Accountability for what?*

A major plank of the ERA was the introduction of the National Curriculum and National Curriculum Assessment (NCA). The NC established an entitlement for all children between the ages of 5 and 16 to a broad and balanced curriculum wherever they live and whatever their socio-economic background, ethnicity, first language, faith, Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disability. NCA was designed to check at the ages of 7, 11, 14, and 16 that all children in England and Wales were getting their entitlement. Throughout the 20th century, educational research showed that the main determinant of educational achievement in England was the socio-economic circumstances of the child's parents. Attempts by successive governments since the 1944 Education Act to ameliorate this effect on attainment have had little or no effect. It follows that differences between schools were largely determined by the socio-economic background of their intake. They had very little to do with the quality of teaching and learning in the school, or even the resources available to the school or the effectiveness of its management. However, research showed that the best schools could make up to a 10% difference in the average achievement of pupils in the school and that "good schools" benefited all their pupils, whatever their "abilities" and whatever their background. In order to ensure that all schools are good schools. We need to find an accountability system that includes the many different aspects of what schools do to enable children to grow and develop successfully , endoses what they do well and gives help to improve other areas. Schools do not have to be put in categories; it is more difficult to challenge schools categorised as "outstanding" and those regarded "inadequate" often take longer to improve.

February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the National Foundation for Educational Research

Executive Summary

1. NFER is Britain's leading independent educational research institution and is submitting this paper to the Children, Schools and Families Select Committee to inform its inquiry into school accountability.

2. The evidence presented by the Foundation is based on work commissioned by a number of clients wishing to examine elements of the school accountability system. The findings portray a relatively positive attitude (from schools) to the new accountability mechanisms and suggest a number of areas where further attention should be focused. The key findings from our work are summarised below.

- That schools accept the principle of accountability and would largely expect to be held accountable.
- Questions remain about the extent of and audience for accountability measures.
- Section 5 inspections are seen as "fit for purpose".
- Schools value inspection as a tool for school improvement.
- That the perceived burden of inspection has reduced on moving from Section 10 (S10) to Section 5 (S5) inspections.
- An independent inspectorate has a positive influence on school standards.
- Schools would welcome a greater emphasis on lesson observation and detailed feedback rather than an undue emphasis on data to aid school improvement.
- School self-evaluation, whilst time-consuming, is seen by schools as a good way of identifying strengths and weaknesses.
- Data-led interpretation of school performance must take into account the circumstances of the particular school: Every Child Matters has brought this more sharply into the foreground.
- In a minority of cases, schools feel that inspection findings are not specific or can lead to direct action to address concerns raised by inspectors.

Introduction

3. The Children, Schools and Families Select Committee is conducting an inquiry into school accountability. This submission by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) aims to provide evidence and recommendations that we hope will support the committee in its inquiry.

4. NFER is Britain's leading independent educational research institution. The Research, Evaluation and Information Department is one of two research departments at the NFER, and specialises in providing high-quality, independent research and evaluation in all areas of education and training. The Department for Research in Assessment and Measurement is the second research department of the Foundation. It specialises in test development and research into assessment-related questions. This submission draws solely on the Foundation's experience with respect to research and evaluation concerning school accountability issues. Further information about the NFER is provided in the accompanying NFER Credentials document.

Research Conducted by the NFER

5. The following sections take the lead from the structure set out in the call for evidence by this Select Committee. The evidence submitted by NFER covers only the elements pertaining to Accountability and Inspection.

Accountability

Is it right in principle that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance?

6. Research carried out by NFER suggests that it is indeed right that schools should be held publicly accountable for their performance. Indeed, evidence collected from school respondents across various projects indicates that school staff themselves would very largely accept this principle.

7. Issues arise, however, when questions are raised about the *extent* of this accountability and to *whom* schools should be accountable (see below). Most school personnel would stress strongly that their accountability should be based on valid and reliable data and upon comprehensive information about the *full circumstances* of the school, including its geographical and socio-economic context. In other words, if the information used to judge a school's performance is comprehensive and fair, then a school would accept this judgement. Evidence supporting these statements is provided below in the findings from our research on school inspections.

What should be the fundamental purposes of an accountability system for schools and, in particular?

— *to whom should schools be accountable?*

— *for what should they be held accountable?*

— *how should they be held to account? and*

— *what should be the consequences?*

8. The accountability system should have three fundamental purposes: (1) to ensure that there is a degree of regular external accountability; (2) to ensure that areas for improvement are identified; and (3) to ensure that schools are provided with appropriate support and guidance on *how* to improve.

Is the current accountability system of inspection and performance reporting for schools broadly fit for purpose?

9. Given that a majority of schools are satisfied with the Section 5 (S5) inspection process (see below) it would seem that this process is broadly fit for purpose.

INSPECTION

10. Since 2006 a research team at NFER has had a unique opportunity to carry out a detailed and independent evaluation of the new inspection process. The central aim of the research has been to assess the extent to which schools feel that the new inspections have contributed to school improvement. The evaluation, commissioned by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), commenced in February 2006 and will be completed in March 2009. The research methods included:

— A survey of all schools inspected between October 2005 and March 2006 (subject to minor exclusions): 1,597 schools responded to this survey—a 67% response rate.

— Case-study visits to 36 schools where interviews were conducted with headteachers, senior managers, governors and parents, usually individually, along with 243 pupils, usually in small discussion groups.

— Follow-up interviews with headteachers or senior managers, to provide a longitudinal perspective.

— Statistical modelling of survey responses and various school background factors, using satisfaction with, and perceived impact of, inspection as outcomes.

— A desk-top review of key case-study school documents and test and examination results.

11. The key finding from this evaluation has been that, overall the vast majority of schools are satisfied with the inspection process and this process is generally perceived as contributing to school improvement. Over half of the schools surveyed (52%) were "very satisfied" with the inspection and more than a third (36%) were "quite satisfied". A minority, 10% of survey schools, were "not at all satisfied" with the S5 inspection.

12. A substantial majority of survey respondents (83%) thought that the actual monetary costs incurred due to inspections were minimal and were certainly less than those incurred during the previous S10 inspection process. Furthermore, three-fifths of school respondents thought that the new S5 inspection process was less stressful than the previous system. Further evidence and findings from this evaluation are presented at the relevant points below.

Is an independent inspectorate an appropriate mechanism for holding schools to account?

13. It is difficult to see how schools could be accountable without some form of independent inspection. The NFER believes that the withdrawal of an independent element of inspection or accountability checks would be likely to lead to a decline in academic standards in some schools.

14. Furthermore, despite the largely negative impression of inspection experiences, based mainly upon anecdotal and personal opinions, evidence collected by the NFER clearly indicates that schools themselves are largely satisfied with, and understand the need for, independent external inspections.

What is the impact of the inspection process on school performance, including confidence, creativity and innovation?

15. The impact of the inspection process on school performance is largely indirect, but nonetheless important. This is because there are many drivers of school improvement, including the school's management approach, school improvement or development planning, the use of data, and the impact of specific educational initiatives. The main benefit of inspection was perceived to be that the inspection had been valuable in providing external confirmation of schools' own self evaluation (86% of survey respondents took this view). Additionally, other benefits were perceived to be that inspection boosted staff morale (42%) and, as well as providing confirmation, it also stimulated improvements (33%). In these respects inspections do contribute to confidence, creativity and innovation.

16. Although schools were generally satisfied with the inspection, just under half made suggestions for changes. These most often related to perceptions that the (self-evaluation form) SEF should be simplified, more time should be allowed for inspectors to observe lessons, inspections should be less data-driven and that there should be more consistency across inspection teams.

Are inspectors appropriately qualified and trained to carry out inspections, particularly in the light of the need to report against Every Child Matters outcomes?

17. With respect to schools inspections up to the present time, the evidence collected by the NFER indicates that those who have been inspected have a very positive view of the professionalism and qualifications of inspectors.

18. Oral feedback from the inspection team was found to be a vital part of the inspection process. Over half (60%) of the survey respondents found the oral feedback very useful, and further 32% fairly useful. The research also revealed a positive, and statistically significant, relationship between constructive oral feedback and overall satisfaction with the inspection process.

Is it appropriate for inspection reports to be placed in the public domain?

19. The majority of survey respondents and interviewees agreed with the inspection report recommendations and valued the contribution to school improvement in terms of the confirmation, prioritisation and clarification of areas for improvement. Over three-quarters of case-study school interviewees believed the inspection team's diagnosis, and the written report, to be fair and accurate. Over half of survey respondents found the written report helpful for identifying areas for improvement. The majority of interviewees found the written report to be useful, helpful and easy to read. A few interviewees believed the report to be too brief and generalised. However, it was perceived to be accessible and parents appreciated an independent assessment of schools.

20. On the whole pupils liked the letter from the inspector and valued involvement in the process. Recommendations for improvement were, on the whole, considered to be helpful and sufficiently specific and follow-up interviews showed that almost all case-study schools were implementing all, or most, of their recommendations.

21. The area of greatest perceived impact, from the S5 recommendations, was in assessment, monitoring and tracking. Nearly two-thirds of survey respondents and just over half the case-study interviewees considered that the inspection had contributed to school improvement. The main way it had contributed was by confirming, prioritising and clarifying areas for improvement, rather than by highlighting new areas.

22. Above all, schools recognised that however reliable their own self evaluation was, it was useful for parents and the local communities, as well as for their own staff, to have their judgements confirmed by an external and objective body.

How often should inspections be carried out and how long and detailed should these inspections be?

23. There needs to be a careful balancing act here. There appears to be more support from schools for the five-year cycle with shorter inspections and concise reports, as opposed to the three-year cycle with longer inspection visits and more detailed reports. However, school respondents have told us that they would like more lesson observations and that they appreciated detailed feedback and discussion.

24. On this basis, the current Section 5 approach, with a three-year cycle is appreciated by schools—if the visits required by this approach were to be made more detailed, then any expansions should be in the observation (which could mean more teachers or more subjects) and feedback elements.

How much notice, if any, should a school receive of an upcoming inspection?

25. The shorter notice system is more popular among schools than the previous Section 10 approach, with a longer period of notice.

In the context of an inspection, what is the value of:

- *the school's self-assessment;*
- *the results of national tests and;*
- *the school's contextual value added scores.*

26. All of these are clearly important parts of inspection considerations. School self-assessment and school self-evaluation have grown dramatically in importance in the last 10 to 15 years. So much so that they now have an official and substantial place in the inspection process, in the form of the SEF and all stakeholders now appear to appreciate the usefulness of this.

27. Although the majority of interviewees reported that it was time-consuming to complete the SEF, there was also a strong view that the SEF had been effective as a means of identifying school strengths and weaknesses. Inspection teams made good use of the SEF and it provided a focus for the inspection. Self evaluation generally was regarded as having improved and the SEF framework had contributed to this improvement.

28. In the first year's use of the SEF, school staff complained about the time that was required to fill the SEF in, but they also recognised how important this was and how useful the process is as a means of "getting to know your school". Schools welcome the fact that they can now present their own data and that the inspection team should take due account of this information. The use of self-evaluation is a crucially important part of the dialogue that takes place between the school managers and the inspectors.

29. The NFER has evidence to show that school self-assessments mostly tend to be in line with external assessments, suggesting that, in the main, schools are realistic and sensible in their self-judgements. Filling in the SEF required schools to make their own self-assessment of their "overall effectiveness" and a number of other categories such as "achievement and standards".

30. School survey respondents were asked to compare their own SEF grades with those awarded by the inspectors: two-thirds of survey respondents reported no differences between the S5 and school's SEF grades, indicating a large degree of consistency between the two sets of judgements.

31. The results of national tests are also clearly of importance to inspection as they provide an objective assessment of pupils' progress at certain stages in their school careers. One of the disadvantages of "raw" test results, however, is that they do not take account of the effects of prior attainment, gender and the socio-economic background of pupils. Value added and contextual value added scores can take account of these factors, and schools generally welcome their use, though there have been some concerns about the way school inspectors have used both "raw" and "value added" data.

…and how much weight should be attached to these elements in the inspection report?

32. A common complaint from schools (in a context of mostly positive views about the Section 5 inspections) in our research was that inspection was "too data driven". Clearly attainment data needs to feature significantly in inspection considerations because they indicate a child's academic progress and the extent to which a school is performing the function of providing qualifications and an appropriate academic education.

33. However, many school staff would argue firstly that there has been too much emphasis on the attainment inspection grade, at the expense of other inspection grades and, secondly, that in the context of ECM and the Children's Plan, a school's provision is now about much more than academic qualifications, indeed it is about the five outcomes and creating responsible citizens and much more besides.

In an inspection, how should emphasis be balanced between educational attainment and other aspects of a school's provision, such as the Every Child Matters outcomes?

34. It would seem that attainment indicators are universal and should be maintained, but not to the exclusion of other indicators. The time is now right for other indicators to receive greater emphasis and for more sophisticated indicators of pupil progress and school improvement to be developed. Assessment has to become more sophisticated in the 21st century.

Should inspections be tailored to the current performance levels of the specific school being inspected and, if so, to what extent?

35. The tradition in local authority intervention and support for schools is, of course, intervention in "inverse proportion to success". With regard to inspections there seems to be general agreement that low performing schools benefit from more regular inspections, more detailed inspections and customised support from the local authority and others. With respect to high performing schools the picture is not so clear.

Other Elements of Inspection

36. In the work undertaken by NFER, a number of other factors have been identified as being important to schools and should be shared with the Committee. These are described below.

Use of Data

37. Concern was expressed over data interpretation by some schools inspected throughout the period from October 2005 to March 2006. This suggests that there may be a need for more evenness and consistency in terms of the way data is used, particularly in relation to fully understanding the school context. With the introduction of RAISE online, there should be opportunities to ensure that consistencies in data use and interpretation are further promoted and strengthened.

Importance of Oral Feedback and Dialogue

38. In view of the importance that schools placed on the oral feedback, Ofsted should maintain and perhaps even enhance the central position which oral feedback has in the inspection process. Schools appeared to welcome the opportunity for, and were responsive to, dialogue, especially as these conversations provided opportunities to explain the broader school context.

Using Positive Terminology

39. Though it was widely accepted that inspectors had to work within the agreed standard framework of gradings, there was some dissatisfaction in schools with the terminology used to describe the "overall effectiveness" grades, especially in relation to the "satisfactory" grading. Whilst it was accepted that parents and other stakeholders should be provided with a clear, comparable, external, objective assessment of a school's performance, some school interviewees expressed a view that the terminology was too negative and too rigid. Several respondents suggested that inspectors should look for further ways of providing praise and encouragement for staff: and it might be possible to do this through the oral feedback and the lesson observation elements of the inspection process.

Refining Inspection Recommendations

40. The vast majority of survey respondents agreed with the inspection recommendations, found them helpful, and felt that they were sufficiently specific. Only one in 10 schools found the recommendations "not at all helpful". Where this latter view was present, the reasons were usually along the lines of: (1) the recommendations were not specific enough; or (2) the recommendations lacked practical guidance. It might be worth bearing these two points in mind when any further advice on drafting recommendations is given to inspectors.

What is the impact on schools of league tables published by the press?

41. The importance of terminology and function is worth re-stating here. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) produces school and college achievement and attainment tables, free of any attempts to rank schools or colleges. The transformation of these data into league tables published by the press tend to cause more harm than good. This is particularly true of tables based on raw results. Such information can be very damaging to a school which in fact is doing well and adding value to pupils' experience by supporting them to achieve better than expected test or examination results.

Conclusions

42. A range of research and evaluation exercises have been carried out by NFER focusing upon the school accountability system in England. The predominant findings are about the positive impact which having an independently guided inspection system which has a clear focus on school improvement is welcomed by schools. There are undoubtedly challenges in squaring a simple and low-burden system with the increasingly complex range of activities which schools are expected to be accountable for (emphasised by the scope of Every Child Matters). The research which NFER has undertaken is broadly supportive of the changes from Section 10 to Section 5 inspections.

February 2009

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Memorandum submitted by NASUWT

The NASUWT's submission sets out the Union's views on the key issues identified by the Committee in the terms of reference for the Inquiry and examines significant broader implications in policy and practice in the education system for the development of effective and constructive approaches to school accountability.

The NASUWT is the largest union representing teachers and headteachers in the UK, with over 270,000 serving teacher and school leader members.

Executive Summary

— The NASUWT believes that an effective school accountability system must be based on principles that ensure that it can operate in an effective, development focused way.

— The current school accountability regime, based on performance tables and Ofsted inspections is not only punitive, divisive and demoralising but also undermines the ability of teachers and headteachers to provide high quality personalised learning experiences for pupils.

— The operation of performance tables and Oftsed inspections has created a high-stakes environment in the education system in England with a continual emphasis on improving demonstrated pupil attainment and achievement while skewing the curriculum offered by schools by encouraging an increasing focus on core subjects.

— Inspections in particular continue to undermine work to reduce teachers' and headteachers' workload and organisational bureaucracy.

— A growing number of international studies show that other comparable countries—including in other UK nations—have reached and maintained higher educational standards without the use of the crude systems of school accountability that have become a negative feature of the system in England.

— Ofsted's ability to play a positive role in raising standards is undermined by the inappropriate arrangements in place by which it is held to public account.

— The current focus of inspection practice that simply resorts to more frequent inspection of schools in such circumstances will not support continued and further development of the quality of provision in the schools.

— Current arrangements in respect of the use of data in inspections, the training of inspectors and the management of complaints are inadequate.

— The proposals by the Government to introduce a School Report Card offer an important opportunity to re-examine some of the principles and practices associated with the current school accountability regime and to consider ways in which more positive approaches to school accountability might be established in future.

Principles of an Effective System of School Accountability

1. The NASUWT believes that an effective school accountability system must:

- place minimal burdens on schools;
- be consistent with and support the principles underpinning the School Workforce Remodelling Agenda, which seeks to tackle teachers' and headteachers' workload and raise standards of educational achievement;
- not require schools to undertake any special preparation;
- make use of the wealth of data that is already available and not require schools to prepare or collate data for the sole purpose of inspection;
- be supportive and focused on helping schools to improve;
- focus on schools' management arrangements and processes and their outcomes for pupils and staff in terms of efficiency, equity and effectiveness;
- not duplicate other systems of monitoring, performance management and support;
- operate coherently with other systems of audit and performance management advice and support, including that that is carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) and local authorities;
- provide judgements that are fair and in which the profession and the public can have confidence;
- reflect appropriately the contribution made by schools to pupils' broader development and wellbeing;
- not act in a way that impedes the ability of teachers and headteachers to use their professional skills, talents and expertise to meet the learning needs of the pupils for whom they are responsible;
- not undermine policy priorities and strategies established by democratically accountable governments; and
- reflect the changing nature of the responsibilities of the school workforce, including teachers and headteachers, in the context of a continually evolving policy environment.

2. There can be no objection in principle to the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for holding schools to public account for the work that they can reasonably be expected to undertake with learners. However, the current school accountability regime, based on performance tables and Ofsted inspections rather than reflecting these critical principles, operates in a way that is not only punitive, divisive and demoralising but also undermines the ability of teachers and headteachers to provide high quality learning experiences for pupils.

Basis of the Current School Accountability Regime in England and its Implications

3. The operation of performance tables, currently in the form of the Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DCSF) Achievement and Attainment Tables, has created a high-stakes environment in the education system in England with a continual emphasis on improving demonstrated pupil attainment and achievement. This high-stakes environment has had the effect of skewing the delivery of the curriculum by encouraging an increasing focus on core subjects and stifling creativity and the scope for teachers to use their professional skills and expertise in the development of innovative and personalised approaches to teaching and learning. It has promoted a culture of teaching to the test and has put staff in schools under pressure to target resources at borderline achievers to push them into a higher grade.

4. The accountability regime continues to foster competition between schools. In this way, the operation of inspection and performance tables works against the direction of travel of current Government policy which aims to enhance educational provision by creating structures where schools work in collaboration rather than competition with each other in the interests of all pupils in the communities these schools serve regardless of the specific school they happen to attend.

5. Ofsted inspections continue to undermine efforts to reduce teacher and headteacher workload and organisational bureaucracy. Pressure to generate and produce documentation to justify schools' self-evaluation outcomes is leading to increased bureaucratic burdens on schools and is generating a culture of "self-inspection" involving inappropriate, intrusive and unnecessary scrutiny of teachers' professional practice. This impact was evidenced in the findings of the NASUWT's audit of teachers' and headteachers' workload published in March 2008 which set out the significant extent of inspection-related causes of excessive workload.

6. The high-stakes context of school accountability that performance tables and inspection generates also has wider negative consequences for the development and implementation of Government policy. For example, the New Relationship with Schools (NRwS) agenda, which aims to streamline and modernise the institutional relationships between schools and local and central agencies of government, has been impacted upon negatively by unreformed systems of school accountability.

7. Two key stands of the NRwS agenda, the development of School Improvement Partners (SIPs) and the School Profile illustrate these concerns. In the case of SIPs, development of this role was intended to be the means by which a coherent "single conversation" between schools and outside agencies could be

facilitated. However, feedback received by the NASUWT from members suggests that, in practice, engagement between SIPs and relevant staff in schools is focused to a disproportionate extent on achievement of outcomes designed to satisfy the requirements of the school accountability system.

8. Similarly, the School Profile, which aimed to give parents relevant and meaningful information about school performance and progress, has, as the Government itself acknowledges in the context of its proposals to develop a school report card, failed to secure its intended objectives. In many respects, the lack of engagement by parents with the Profile has been as a direct result of the continued publication of the Achievement and Attainment Tables to which parents' attention is drawn by their widespread use by the media in its publication of crude "league tables" of school performance. As a result, the information given to parents and other relevant stakeholders, either directly by the Government or unofficially by the media, on school performance, does not allow them to form balanced and holistic views of school performance and adds to the difficulties described above in respect of the impact on learners and staff in schools of the current system of school accountability.

Approaches to School Accountability in Other Comparable Education Systems

9. There is little evidence that performance tables or school inspection have contributed to raising standards of attainment in England. As the largest teachers' union in the UK, the NASUWT has gained direct experience of approaches to school accountability in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and it is instructive to consider the key distinctions between these systems and that in place in England.

10. In respect of performance tables, it is notable that the Department of Education Northern Ireland (DENI) has never produced performance tables as part of its public accountability measures, while the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the Scottish Government both abolished performance tables in 2001. In relation to inspection, in Northern Ireland for example, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) takes a collegial, supportive approach to the inspection of schools and colleges. There is no grading system for inspections in Northern Ireland, although following the inspection, schools are expected to produce an action plan addressing areas for improvement. A comparable approach is identifiable in the context of the inspection system in Scotland.

11. Beyond the UK, research also highlights clear distinctions between the system in place in England and that established in other countries. Extensive research by the European Commission's Eurydice European Unit, undertaken in 2007, provides extensive evidence of forms of school accountability that are based on a range of different approaches that do not rely on performance tables or punitive systems of school inspection but that are associated with high levels of public confidence and rising standards of educational achievement.[15]

The Status of Ofsted

12. There can be no meaningful objection in principle to the establishment of a dedicated school inspection organisation within the context of a fit for purpose system of school accountability. However, the problems identified above in relation to the way that Ofsted operates in practice draws attention to serious issues in respect of the basic constitution of Ofsted and means by which it relates to its stakeholders, Government and arrangements by which it is held to account for its activities.

13. The establishment of Ofsted was associated with a significant alteration in the relationship between democratically accountable ministers, the central Government departments for which they are responsible and the organisational machinery of school inspection. The creation of Ofsted gave executive responsibility for the inspection of education to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) as head of a non-ministerial public body (NMPB). To date, Ofsted is the only official public body within the education system in England with this status. The aim and consequence of this alteration in arrangements for the inspection of education in England was to end the ability of ministers to control the discharge of school inspection within set legislative frameworks. The outcome of this policy has been that the effective freedom of Ofsted to interpret its remit within the legislative framework established by Parliament is, to all intents and purposes, unfettered, notwithstanding its formal accountability to Parliament required by its NMPB status. While Parliament, through select committees and other structures, may be able to undertake informed and appropriate analysis and, where appropriate, criticism of Ofsted's work, there are no effective means by which it can direct Ofsted to amend its policy and practice where this is deemed necessary.

14. This has led to Ofsted being given the scope to act in a profoundly undemocratic and unaccountable way. As a key element in a high-stakes system of school accountability, priorities that Ofsted establishes in relation to those areas it is empowered to inspect have a considerable influence on practice at school level, regardless of the extent to which these reflect the policy of Government or the intentions of Parliament when it enacts education-related legislation. Reform of the status of the public agency charged with undertaking inspection of the education system must therefore be a central element of future policy in relation to school accountability.

[15] Eurydice (2007) *School Autonomy in Europe: Policies and Measures*. Brussels, Eurydice European Unit.

Form, Content and Quality of School Inspections

15. Concerns have been identified at school level that inspection judgements are increasingly data driven and that conclusions about school performance are reached by inspectors in advance of inspection. While a mix of sources of evidence about school performance based on data, professional dialogue, the views of staff on school performance and progress and evidence gained directly from visiting schools may have an important role to play in any fit for purpose system of school inspection, the purposes to which this information is put within the context of the current punitive and unconstructive school accountability regime simply serve to undermine the ability of teachers and headteachers to undertake their professional responsibilities and compromise public confidence in the state education system. This calls into question the mechanisms by which schools are identified as "failing" or "underperforming" by Ofsted and publication of inspection reports generated through this flawed system compound these problems.

16. The NASUWT notes the interest of the Committee in the notice given to schools under the current inspection regime, the extent of detail that should be included in inspection reports and whether inspections should be tailored to the current performance levels of individual schools. This latter point clearly relates to the introduction of a light-touch inspection regime for schools Ofsted identifies as "higher-performing".

17. Consideration of these points highlights the extent to which the current inspection regime fails to reflect the principles of effective approaches to school accountability. In a fit for purpose system of accountability, with supportive and development focused school inspection mechanisms, the provision of detail in inspection reports, the extent or otherwise of notice of inspection and the tailoring of inspection to the identified needs of schools would all be based on an objective and informed consideration of the circumstances of each individual school and how schools can be helped to enhance further the quality of their educational provision.

18. However, in the current high stakes school accountability context, variations in the detail of inspection reports, the introduction of short or no notice inspections and the use of so-called proportionate inspection, simply represent tinkering with a fundamentally flawed accountability system. A number of the changes proposed to the inspection regime by Ofsted for inspections conducted from September 2009 may have some impact on the effect of inspection on staff and learners in schools and the NASUWT would welcome the opportunity to consider these complex issues with the Committee in more depth in oral evidence. However, the key issue for the Committee to consider is that while changing aspects of the operation of the current regime may lessen or worsen to some extent the negative consequences for the education system of the way in which inspection is undertaken currently, establishing circumstances where inspection makes a positive contribution to raising standards and sustaining improvement will require a fundamental recasting of the purpose and form of inspection rather than a series of additional amendments to the fundamentally flawed inspection system in place at present.

19. Notwithstanding the significant flaws in the current model of inspection, for all inspectors, both HMI and Ofsted continue to contract externally, effective training and development remain key concerns. For this reason, the fact that the nature, scope and quality of Ofsted's training programmes are not open to independent scrutiny remains an important area of concern. Without any meaningful assessment of the fitness for purpose of Ofsted's provision of training and development for inspectors, confidence in the ability of inspectors to undertake their wide-ranging and complex responsibilities will continue to be compromised. The need for effective training is emphasised by the increasingly complex range of issues that inspectors are required to address including, as the Committee identifies, the contribution of schools towards achievement of the Every Child Matters outcomes and the promotion of pupil wellbeing, the effectiveness of school-level policy and practice in respect of the workforce and the duty on schools to promoting community cohesion.

20. The complaints procedure is heavily weighted towards the judgement of the inspector and it is not acceptable that there is no effective appeals process to challenge an inspection judgement that relates to standards. The current system makes it extremely difficult for individual members of staff to pursue complaints about an inspection and the timescale for making complaints is too rigid and excludes cases where it has taken time for the full evidence to become available.

School Report Card

21. In light of the limitations and negative features of the current system of school accountability, the proposals by the Government to introduce a School Report Card offer an important opportunity to re-examine some of the principles and practices associated with the current school accountability regime and to consider ways in which more positive approaches to school accountability might be established in future.

22. In considering the School Report Card proposals, it should be noted that the consultation document issued by the Government sets out broad and general principles that aim to support more detailed subsequent work on the detail on the School Report Card proposal. It is therefore premature at this stage to set out details of the specific areas of school activity that should be reflected in the Card and the relative weight that should be ascribed to them in the formation of judgements about overall school performance. However, the Government recognises that one of the limitations of the current school accountability regime is that it is not aligned closely enough with the Government's broader vision for the 21st Century School. The Government also makes clear its view that Ofsted inspection reports are subject to limitations in terms of their usefulness as a means by which a balanced view of school performance can be presented. Most

significantly, the Government recognises that the judgements derived from performance tables and those generated through Ofsted inspections are frequently contradictory and that additional pressure is placed on schools by two distinct and, in important respects, non-complementary accountability mechanisms.

23. It is clear that the Government intends to undertake a detailed and thorough consideration of all the key issues associated with approaches to school accountability as part of its development of the School Report Card. In light, however, of the Government's initial rationale for proposing the development of a school report card, it is apparent that the continued existence of a school accountability regime based on narrowly focused performance tables and an outmoded and highly detrimental system of school inspection has become a legitimate area for debate.

March 2009

Supplementary memorandum submitted by NASUWT

This supplementary evidence responds to the questions posed by members of the Select Committee at the oral evidence session held on 16 March 2009.

Specific Comments

What should schools be held accountable for?

1. The NASUWT shares the Government's view that the principle emphasis of the work undertaken by teachers and headteachers is to focus on teaching and learning. Therefore, an effective system of school accountability would rightly place significant emphasis on this aspect of a school's work. However, it is also apparent that schools make a broader contribution to the wellbeing and development of pupils and society more generally. This is reflected, for example in the duty on schools to promote community cohesion and pupils' wellbeing. Therefore, it is appropriate that these aspects of schools' work with pupils should also form part of school accountability. This is reflected in the Government's initial proposals for the form and content of the School Report Card.

To what extent should schools be accountable to Government and Ofsted?

2. As a publicly-funded universal state service, the education system is held and managed in the public interest and must therefore, be accountable at national and local level to those democratically elected by the public. The education system should not be accountable to Ofsted. The body responsible for inspection should provide the means by which the system is held to account and not be an entity to which the system itself is accountable.

What effect does the manner in which results are reported have on schools?

3. The public has a right to information about the education system and therefore it needs to be made publicly available in an appropriate way. However, the current publication of inspection reports and performance tables, which do not reflect accurately the full range of work that staff in schools undertake with children and young people, serves only to intensify the high-stakes nature of school accountability with its significant negative consequences for perceived failure.

4. The implications at school-level of this are increased pressure and stress on staff and learners and a skewing of the curriculum offer made to pupils because the focus is to meet the requirements of the school accountability regime rather than the needs of pupils being paramount.

5. This approach to accountability has promoted a culture of teaching to the test, led to curriculum inflexibility and narrowing and has put staff in schools under pressure to target resources at borderline achievers to push them into a higher grade to meet performance league table targets. In practice, the use of performance tables has worked to undermine teachers' professionalism and autonomy by breeding competition between schools rather than supporting collaboration and the sharing of good practice.

How can it be ensured that parents are involved in the assessment process?

6. The NASUWT has no objection in principle to the use of appropriate means by which the perspectives of parents and pupils should be able to make a contribution to an appropriate system of school accountability. Clearly this is dependent to a significant extent on ensuring that parents have effective, timely and proportionate access to information about their child's progress at school in a variety of ways.

7. However, the widely advocated approach of relying heavily on opinion surveys of parents and pupils is problematic in many respects, particularly in relation to the fact that views of pupils and parents on the quality of provision in schools may differ significantly depending on individual circumstances, such as whether a parent's child has SEN or accesses some other form of specialist service and that not all parents are inclined to or well placed to provide feedback in this way. This highlights the point that while information gathered in this way may be useful, a degree of caution has to be exercised over its use.

Would school standards plummet if Ofsted disappeared?

8. There is little evidence that performance tables or school inspection have contributed to raising standards of attainment in England. Comparison with systems in other countries and elsewhere in the UK indicates that it is possible to achieve and sustain high educational standards and retain public confidence in the education system without the flawed system of school accountability in place in England. Consequently, the NASUWT does not believe that school standards would plummet if Ofsted in its current form disappeared.

What would make the system of inspection more effective?

9. This is a critical and wide-ranging question that goes to the heart of the issues that the Committee is investigating. The NASUWT's initial written evidence sets out in detail the reforms that the Union believes need to be put in place in order to establish a more effective system of inspection in particular and school accountability. However, it is clear that the principles upon which inspection frameworks are established, the purpose of inspection and the role and function of the public body charged with inspecting schools in a more constructive system of inspection would require fundamental change to the way in which Ofsted currently undertakes its responsibilities. The Union believes that these principles should ensure that systems of inspection:

— place minimal burdens on schools;

— be consistent with and support the principles underpinning the School Workforce Remodelling Agenda, which seeks to tackle teachers' and headteachers' workload and raise standards of educational achievement;

— not require schools to undertake any special preparation;

— make use of the wealth of data that is already available and not require schools to prepare or collate data for the sole purpose of inspection;

— be supportive and focused on helping schools to improve;

— not duplicate other systems of monitoring, performance management and support;

— provide judgements that are fair and in which the profession and the public can have confidence;

— not act in a way that impedes the ability of teachers and headteachers to use their professional skills, talents and expertise to meet the learning needs of the pupils for whom they are responsible;

— not undermine policy priorities and strategies established by democratically accountable governments; and

— reflect the changing nature of the responsibilities of the school workforce, including teachers and headteachers, in the context of a continually evolving policy environment.

What could be done to address variability in the inspection process?

10. The Committee is right to highlight the issues of variability in the inspection framework. The NASUWT is clear that a number of issues drive the unacceptable degree of variability in the system.

11. First, Ofsted training of its inspectors is not open to rigorous external scrutiny. For this reason, serious questions about the capacity of individual inspectors are raised on a consistent basis by teachers and headteachers. This is reflected in feedback from members, particularly in relation to the frequent failure of inspection teams to take account of the policy context within which inspections are being undertaken.

12. Second, Ofsted has no effective system for quality assuring its inspections. It is, therefore, unable to learn lessons from incidents of poor practice and thereby put in place reforms designed to secure greater consistency.

13. Finally, the definitions used by Ofsted for judging performance are not clear or consistent and have been subjected to significant changes in meaning since Ofsted was established, the effect of which is to continually "raise the bar" in relation to judgements of acceptable school performance. This is a particular issue in respect of the way in which Ofsted judges and views performance it assesses as "satisfactory". It is therefore not surprising that the way in which descriptions of performance levels set out in the inspection

framework are applied in practice can vary to a significant extent. As part of a package of wider reforms to the inspection system, these issues would need to be addressed if issues of variability are to be tackled successfully.

Do teachers have sufficient redress to respond to critical remarks from Ofsted?

14. See 15 below.

Should there be an appeal process in response to Ofsted judgments, and if so, what form should it take?

15. An effective system of complaints and appeals is an essential feature of an effective and equitable system of school accountability. However, this is clearly not the case in respect of the current system. In its work representing teachers and headteachers, the NASUWT has gained significant experience of supporting members involved in complaints against Ofsted. The Union is particularly concerned that the complaints procedure is heavily weighted towards the judgement of the inspector and it is not acceptable that there is no effective appeals process to challenge an inspection judgement that relates to standards. The Union is also concerned that the current system makes it extremely difficult for individual members of staff to pursue complaints about an inspection. This relates, to a significant extent, to the lack of transparency in the complaints process. Complainants may be told that there is evidence to back up the inspection findings but are not told what that evidence is. These aspects of the system are in urgent need of reform.

16. The timescale for making complaints is too rigid and excludes cases where it has taken time for the full evidence to become available. Timescales for making complaints should be amended so that complainants have the time necessary to gather evidence. Ofsted should also consider introducing an independent advice line to enable schools to raise issues and concerns immediately following an inspection.

17. There are significant concerns about the process used to deal with complaints to Ofsted directly from the public and parents. These can remain on file and be used to inform inspection even if they are not valid complaints in the terms of Ofsted's remit.

What would be the appropriate length of notice for Ofsted inspections?

18. In the current high stakes school accountability context, variations to the degree of notice given to schools simply represent tinkering with a fundamentally flawed system. In some respects, current proposals to introduce no notice inspections could compound the problems associated with the current inspection system as staff in schools are under pressure to be prepared to respond to an inspection at all times in effect schools are on a permanent "war-footing". In a fit for purpose system of accountability the extent of notice of inspection would be based on an objective and informed consideration of the circumstances of each individual school and how schools can be helped to enhance and develop further the quality of their educational provision.

Is the manner of inspection Ofsted carries out in relation to child welfare as apt as the manner of its inspections in schools in assessing quality assurance?

19. The NASUWT does not accept that any aspect of the current system overseen by Ofsted represents an effective system of assessing the quality of educational provision. Given the trend for Ofsted to seek to bring greater degrees of similarity between its inspection frameworks across all its areas of responsibility, there is certainly a risk that the problems associated with the school inspection system, with which the NASUWT has direct experience, could translate into its inspection of child protection. Oftsed's remit has increased significantly since it was first established. In the NASUWT's view, there are legitimate questions to be considered in respect of the extent to which this remit has now become so broad, that Ofsted is now not capable of discharging any of the specific functions effectively.

Does the value of self-assessment have a weighting in the assessment process?

20. See 22–23 below.

Do external operators give the self-evaluation process more credibility and is this worth the cost?

21. See 22–23 below.

What role should self-evaluation play in school accountability and the inspection process?

22. The views of staff in schools on levels of performance and areas of strength and weakness based on informed professional reflection have the potential to provide an important source of information by which a fit for purpose system of school accountability may form judgements about the education system. This would depend critically on this system being based on the clear understanding that self-evaluation in any form is only valuable if professional judgements are trusted and respected. However, the use of self-evaluation as part of the inspection process continues to undermine work to reduce teachers' and headteachers' workload and organisational bureaucracy.

23. Evidence from NASUWT members suggests strongly that the need to collect evidence and produce documentation to justify schools' self-evaluations is leading to increased bureaucratic burdens on schools and is generating a culture of "self-inspection" involving inappropriate, intrusive and unnecessary managerial scrutiny of teachers' professional practice. However, previous systems of school inspection which were less reliant on self-evaluation and made greater use of external inspectors, because it was based on the same flawed principles of inspection as the current system, did not represent a more effective or equitable approach. Before questions of the use or otherwise of external inspectors can be considered meaningfully, more fundamental reforms to the purpose and nature of inspection must be pursued so that judgement of the appropriate balance to be stuck between internal and external assessment of performance can be made within a recast school accountability context.

Is too much money spent on the inspection process?

24. It is clear that the costs of holding public services to account must be proportionate. This principle was reflected clearly in the Government's Office of Public Sector Reform's 2003 document "*Inspection for Improvement."* However, it is also clear that such systems must be resourced to an extent that allows them to undertake their responsibilities effectively. The NASUWT believes, therefore, that public money directed towards a constructive and equitable system of school accountability would represent an appropriate use of these finite resources. However, given the negative impact of the current system, it is clear that the money spent on funding Ofsted is not being deployed as effectively as it would be if the system were to be reformed on the basis set out in the NASUWT's initial written evidence. Ofsted's budget, as with all public sector inspectorates has been reduced in real terms within the current public spending settlement from previous levels. However, it is clear that the fundamental solution to the problem of school accountability in the system in England does not lie in either increasing or reducing further Ofsted's budget but by reforming the basis upon which school inspection is undertaken. An inspection system reconstituted on these terms would then allow an objective assessment to be made on the costs that would be associated with establishing and maintaining the accountability system.

Can school report cards provide greater accountability to the community?

25. See 26–27 below.

Do school report cards have a valuable and legitimate place in terms of having accountability for schools?

26. As made clear in the NASUWT's initial written evidence, the proposal by the Government to introduce a School Report Card offers an important opportunity to re-examine some of the problems associated with the current school accountability regime and to consider ways in which more positive approaches to school accountability might be established in future. The basis upon which the current system attempts to measure and report school performance is extremely narrow, as the Government has acknowledged and is inconsistent with its proposals for 21st Century Schools. The judgements reached by Ofsted and those reflected in performance tables are also often contradictory.

27. In the NASUWT's view, successful implementation of a useful, purposeful and constructive system of school accountability through the School Report Card cannot be undertaken satisfactorily without detailed and considered analysis of the extent to which such a system could replace a school accountability regime based on narrowly focused performance tables and an outmoded and highly detrimental system of school inspection. If the aim of the Card is to provide a streamlined, consistent and holistic view of the work of staff in schools, then it has ability to do so.

March 2009

Memorandum submitted by Mary Wallis-Jones

The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) in effect made governing bodies the main avenue of accountability for schools. With Local Management of Schools governing bodies, which included the headteacher, as well as teachers' reps, local authority representation, elected parents and governors selected by the GB to represent the local community, took control of the entire revenue budget and most of the capital budget of the school. The GB became responsible for planning the budget both on an annual basis and in the long term, so that all the resources available to the school were used to maximum effect to ensure progression for all the pupils, whatever their needs and abilities.

This meant that governing bodies were responsible for deciding how many people should be employed in the school, what their responsibilities should be and what they should be paid. Most importantly, they had responsibility for appointing the headteacher, and in doing so, for determining how they would work with the Head in planning the use of resources to deliver the curriculum effectively to all the pupils. The knowledge and skills of governing bodies and Headteachers in strategic planning and financial management obviously varied between schools according to the individuals involved. This meant that the practical arrangements for the extent to which issues were:—discussed and agreed in the whole governing body, or by its committees or Chair, or the head's recommendations accepted without discussion, varied between

schools. However, there is research evidence that the most successful schools had "effective" governing bodies where there was an collaborative partnership between the Head and the Governing Body. Failing schools have tended to be those with weak management and weak and ineffective GBs which have rubber stamped the head's decisions, not involved themselves in trying to understand why achievement or behaviour was not good, and have therefore failed in their "critical friend" role and not held the headteacher to account.

The role of the governing body in accountability was well recognised in the first Ofsted Framework. (Sections 6.1 and 6.3.) The Governing Body of all maintained schools was seen as the "responsible authority" and as such the body which facilitated the inspection arrangements and to which Ofsted reported. It was then the governing body which was responsible for the post Ofsted Action Plan.

Successive Ofsted Inspection Frameworks have reduced the responsibilities of the Governing body and the role of governors in the inspection process. It is now the head who arranges everything and the short notice given for inspection has been given by Ofsted as the rationale for not involving the GB in the process. With the current framework we understand that it is unlikely for the inspectors to talk to more than one governor, ideally the Chair, but that this can consist of a telephone conversation, and might not happen at all. Governors' organisations think this is highly unsatisfactory, especially since the governing body is a corporate entity and individual governors may not act on their own. All views and decisions need to be ratified by the full GB, even if this is in retrospect.

Accountability for what?

A major plank of the ERA was the introduction of the National Curriculum (NC) and National Curriculum Assessment (NCA). The National Curriculum established an entitlement for all children between the ages of 5 and 16 to a broad and balanced curriculum wherever they lived and whatever their socio-economic background, ethnicity, first language, faith, Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disability. NCA was designed to check at the ages of 7, 11, 14, and 16 that all children in England and Wales were getting their entitlement. This had not previously been possible because there was no common view of what should be taught or how. There were probably very wide differences between schools and between parts of the country. This meant that there was no way to get any kind of measure of the "standards" of education being delivered, at least in primary schools, since their pupils took no national/pubic assessments or tests. Since there was no common curriculum for each year group, any national assessment of standards, such as the sampling method used by the APU could not relate to specific knowledge or factual information.

Throughout the 20th century, educational research showed that the main determinant of educational achievement in England was the socio-economic circumstances of the child's parents. Attempts by successive governments since the 1944 Education Act to ameliorate this effect on attainment have had little or no effect. It follows that differences between schools were largely determined by the socio-economic background of their intake. They had very little to do with the quality of teaching and learning in the school, or even the resources available to the school or the effectiveness of its management. However, research showed that the best schools could make up to a 10% difference in the average achievement of pupils in the school and that "good schools" benefited all their pupils, whatever their "abilities" and whatever their background.

In 1991 the Conservative Party published "The Parents' Charter". This was effectively their Education Manifesto for the 1992 General Election. This asserted that the then new Key Stage 1 National Curriculum Assessments for a school should be used by parents to ascertain which were the "best" primary schools in their choice of school for their children. Of course, since the above was the case, what these results largely indicated was which were the predominantly "middle class" schools. Hence the popularity of league tables.

NCA was designed to have a number of discreet purposes. Within the school it helped teachers know what each child knew and could do, so that they could plan their future learning and ensure that each child made progress, whatever level they were working at. For parents it could be used as tangible evidence that their child was progressing. Average progression, controlling for individual pupil characteristics (ie Value Added) in the school could be used by local authorities and Government to assess how well schools were doing for their pupils.

However, in 1993 teachers boycotted the KS1 assessments, so they largely did not take place, and no data was published. The main teachers' complaint was that the assessments took too long, especially the practical tasks in Science, and were therefore not manageable in the classroom. This led to the Dearing Review and a narrowing of the assessments made to "paper and pencil" tests which all pupils in the class could do at the same time.

The rest as they say is history. Year by year the tests became narrower, the curriculum became ever more restricted to those things which were tested, and eventually KS1 tests were abandoned and then last year KS3 SATs as well. There has been some attempt to broaden the curriculum with compulsory sport, music and cooking, but the straightjacket of the core remains.

Future School Accountability—Why not put the Governing Body back at the centre?

Since 1997 the role and responsibilities of the Governing Body have been considerably reduced as their representativness of relevant stakeholders has diminished. Their control of strategic budget planning has been undermined by such moves as performance management of teachers, which gave teachers massive pay increases as of right if their headteacher considered them eligible. (NB Since pay in the school is likely to account for around 85% of the revenue budget, lack of control of large pay increases has dramatically reduced GBs ability to plan strategically for changes in the staffing structure and planned maintenance of the building.) There have also been numerous Government initiatives which have provided extra money to some schools for short term programmes, eg Behaviour Improvement Programme (BIP), making long term budget planning more difficult.

However, CASE believes that true local democratic accountability of schools can best be achieved through the work of a stakeholder governing body, where each stakeholder has an equal voice, and there is a balance between those groups on the GB which have a sectional short term interest in the school (the producers and consumers), and those who have a wider and long term view (the Local Authority and the local community,). Governing bodies should be large enough to include governors of varying lengths of experience in each stakeholder group, so that experience of what works and what does not work can be passed on to newer governors. Larger GBs (eg at least four in each stakeholder group) can control their own training and succession planning so that they are: a) not bereft when a long term Chair leaves, and b) are not persuaded by their lack of experience or capacity to rubber stamp everything the headteacher says.

Lack of such a stakeholder governing body is one of CASE's major objections to Academies, where the sponsor selects the majority of the governors, and to Trust schools where the Trust appoints the majority of the governors. These schools in our view have no form of local democratic accountability, which as state funded schools, they should have.

As expressed elsewhere, we believe the current National Curriculum Assessment system, and the Ofsted inspection system, which hinges its judgements of schools on the very narrow NCA results and school comparisons based solely on these, are both totally inadequate as a basis for school accountability. Judgements of schools need to be much broader and need to be made and communicated by all the stakeholders in the school. We suggest the reintroduction of something like the Governors Annual Report to Parents, abolished in the 2006 Education and Inspections Act. Abolition was possible because governors, Headteachers and parents had ceased to take it seriously, because it had become formulaic, short and lacking in any new information. A new style Report, compiled by governors on the basis of their knowledge of the school (not just Headteacher reports) could include a report on pupil progression in the last year, using NCA results as well as wider information, report on behaviour and attendance, (progress or not) SEN including not just what arrangements are made in the school but the number of children progressing from School Action Plus to School Action or whatever, curriculum innovations and their success/popularity, and progress on the five "Every Child Matters" outcomes.

Such a Governors Annual Report could also be addressed to the Local Authority as a basis for discussion with LA Inspectors/SIPs and LA support for school improvement. Involving LA personnel in a revived Annual Parents Meeting, together with more meaty content might attract more interest than is the past experience of most schools. And why not invite the public in too to visit the school and hear what it is doing?

MWJ was a local authority governor of various schools in LB Camden from 1974–2006, and a member of the Executive of the National Governors' Council from 1999–2004, during which time she represented school governors to government on various subjects, in particular Attendance and Behaviour and School Finance. The PhD was awarded in 2003 for a thesis entitled: "Education Research and Policy: a case study of Primary School Effectiveness post Plowden", which investigated the relationship between education policy and practice, and showed how research findings rarely if ever really affected policy development.

26 February 2009

Memorandum submitted by the National College for School Leadership

SUMMARY

- The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) delivers the School Improvement Partner Accreditation Programme under contract to the National Strategies on behalf of DCSF.
- Since 1 April 2008, every maintained school and academy in England has had a SIP attached to it.
- The aims of the NCSL accreditation programme are to:
  - increase candidates' understanding of the role of the School Improvement Partner (SIP);
  - provide opportunities for them to apply their skills and personal qualities to the role; and
  - assess their skills and competencies through a variety of assessment activities.
- At every stage of the programme development and assessment are informed by *A New Relationship with Schools: The School Improvement Partner's Brief* (DCSF 2007, Edition 3).

— Applicants follow three stages towards becoming accredited as a SIP:
  — Stage 1: Application
  — Stage 2: Online assessment for primary and secondary candidates
    Online self-assessment for special school applicants
  — Stage 3: Two-day residential development and assessment programme
— National Strategies' quality assurance of the accreditation programme confirms that they consider that it prepares candidates effectively for the role.
— The accreditation programme is very well received by candidates who consider it fit for purpose.

1. Introduction

1.1 The National College for School Leadership (the College/NCSL) is a non-departmental public body, reporting directly to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). NCSL was launched in November 2000 and is responsible for developing excellent leadership in England's schools and children's centres. It exists to serve school leaders and improve school leadership through the highest quality professional development, strategic initiatives and by providing considered and informed advice to government.

1.2 This submission deals with: the accreditation of SIPs for which NCSL is the accrediting body. NCSL delivers a contract on behalf of the National Strategies. It is responsible for recruiting potential SIPs and for planning and delivering the accreditation programme for SIPs. NCSL assesses the competence of candidates to become school improvement partners. Those who are successful are entered on the register of those approved to work with schools that is held and maintained by the National Strategies on behalf of the DCSF.

1.3 NCSL works closely with DCSF and the National Strategies through the School Improvement Partner Assessment and Accreditation Steering Group. This body is established within the governance arrangements for the contract between NCSL and the National Strategies and is charged with strategic responsibility and oversight of all matters relating to SIP assessment and accreditation. Its membership comprises representatives of NCSL, the National Strategies and DCSF.

1.4 The submission focuses on the accreditation programme, its design and development and its contribution to the effectiveness of SIPs.

2. Context

2.1 In 2004 NCSL delivered a successful pilot accreditation programme on behalf of the DfES in which some 50 potential secondary SIPS from the six trial LAs undertook a three-day development and assessment programme. Following this, as part of the implementation of the New Relationship with Schools policy, in March 2005 NCSL was invited to bid for the provision of the assessment and development for the national roll out of SIPs for secondary schools. In December 2005 it was invited to provide a pilot programme for primary SIPs which took place in March 2006, followed by national rollout. Following the national special school trial, a trial special school accreditation programme took place in June 2007, followed by national rollout in autumn 2007.

2.2 Since 1 April 2008, every maintained school and academy in England has had a SIP attached to it. Numbers of accredited SIPs as at 1 April 2009 are as follows:

Primary	2,890
Secondary	1,534
Special school	402

3. The Accreditation Programme

3.1 The format and design of the programme were initially informed by the outcomes of the 2004 pilot programme and have been further shaped and refined in consultation with the Steering Group. At every stage the programme is informed by *A New Relationship with Schools: The School Improvement Partner's Brief* (DCSF 2007, Edition 3). The eligibility criteria are drawn from the person specification as are the assessment criteria used in the programme. Throughout the process, assessment is related to the knowledge and skills set out in the person specification in the *SIP's Brief*. The eligibility criteria draw on the following statement in the *SIP's Brief:*

> "School improvement partners should be able to demonstrate the following:
>
> — membership of school leadership team or experience of senior local authority advisory work and/or related areas of work relevant to the phase of the school improvement partner's work."

3.2 The assessment process is rigorous, evaluating skills, expertise and personal qualities, to ensure that the right people are accredited as SIPs. The assessment focuses throughout the programme on:

— analytical ability;
— judgement—evaluation of performance and potential;

— judgement—evaluation of how to improve; and

— personal qualities—oral and written communication.

3.3 The programme aims, as far as possible, to present candidates with authentic SIP activities and tasks. Development and assessment activities are based on case study schools which are kept as up to date as possible. The following documentation is used for these anonymised schools during the assessment process with primary and secondary candidates:

— the school's RAISEonline Full Report;

— Fischer Family Trust Analyses to Support Self-Evaluation;

— the school's self-evaluation form (abridged);

— the school's Ofsted inspection report (abridged); and

— for primary candidates, extracts from the school's Early Years Foundation Stage Profile.

For special schools RAISEonline and Fischer Family Trust documentation are replaced by school and LA data.

3.4 Applicants and candidates follow three stages towards becoming accredited as a SIP:

Stage 1	Application: an online process, where applicants provide a career profile, a pen portrait, and references. Some applications are rejected at this stage
Stage 2	Online assessment: an estimated five to six hour assessment task, to be completed within a continuous 36 hour period, designed to allow a preliminary assessment of a candidate's analytical ability, and judgement of performance and potential. The assessment includes the use of data, written reports and knowledge of education. Candidates who meet the requirements of the online assessment are invited to attend a two-day development and assessment programme. For special school applicants and candidates the stages include an online self-assessment to help potential applicants decide whether to proceed with their application.
Stage 3	Two-day residential development and assessment programme: a programme designed to increase a candidate's understanding of the SIP role and provide a further opportunity for assessment. Candidates who meet the requirements of the assessment activities on the two-day programme are accredited as SIPs.

Two-day residential development and assessment programme

3.5 Day 1 of the programme comprises development sessions on the role of the SIP based on a case study school, using authentic SIP activities and materials. As candidates are all highly experienced professionals, the programme does not seek to train them as SIPs, it sets out rather to deepen their understanding of the role. The sessions are:

1. Introductory session.
2. Using data to form a view about a school's performance.
3. Forming a preliminary view about a school's capacity for improvement.
4. Report writing.
5. Exploring the role of the SIP.
6. Plenary session.

3.6 Day 2 of the programme comprises assessment related to a different case study school from the case study used on Day 1. Each candidate takes part in three assessment activities which represent authentic aspects of the SIP's role, albeit in a condensed time frame. After initial marking, all the assessment is subject to national moderation.

Assessment task 1: a further assessment of candidates' analytical ability is made in order to provide a secure foundation for forming views about the case study school.

Assessment task 2: meeting with the headteacher of the case study school to explore issues arising from the data and to summarise priorities for the school.

Assessment task 3: Section of a written report on the school.

4. Effectiveness of the Accreditation Programme

4.1 NCSL has worked closely with the DCSF and the National Strategies in seeking to ensure that, through the accreditation programme, applicants are selected who match the SIP person specification and that the development and assessment provided are fit for purpose. The National Strategies' quality assurance reports on the programme state that the programme is appropriately focused on the SIP's role and that tutors are knowledgeable and demonstrate a good command of the subject matter. Candidates'

evaluations of the programme rate it as highly effective and fit for purpose. Headteachers consider that national accreditation is crucial to establishing a SIP's credibility. (*National Strategies' presentation on two-day residential SIP accreditation programme*)

4.2 The *New Relationship with Schools Evaluation Report* (DCSF 2008) refers to the effectiveness of the accreditation programme in stating that:

"The vast majority of SIPs appear to be equipped to undertake their role based on stakeholder perceptions (from the surveys) and corroborated through our triangulated assessments at the case study level (through repeated consultations, document reviews and observations). This is in terms of:

- background experience—most SIPs have either experience of being a headteacher or of working within a LA school improvement service, and many have experience of both;
- accreditation—all practising SIPs are accredited ensuring that a minimum level of skills and knowledge is evident;
- specific skills and knowledge—most stakeholders agree that skills and experience have been effectively matched and that SIPs:
  - have a clear understanding of the school circumstances;
  - have an effective relationship with headteachers;
  - respect school autonomy; and
  - have the knowledge and information required to discuss packages of challenge and support."

5. Conclusion

5.1 NCSL has systematically used the evidence from the National Strategies' evaluation of the programme, candidates' evaluations and its own quality assurance to develop and improve the programme further. The session materials are constantly under review to ensure that they reflect current SIP practice. The case study school materials used for development and assessment are changed regularly to ensure that they match the latest version of RAISEonline and the Ofsted inspection framework.

5.2 All tutors and assessors are experienced education professionals with a background of headship, senior school leadership, senior LA advisory work and inspection experience. Several are practising SIPs. All have considerable experience in training, development and assessment. Regular updating meetings are held which tutors and assessors are expected to attend.

5.3 The NCSL contract with Capita was originally for three years, from 2005 to 2008. In 2008 it was extended for a further two years, to March 2010, subject to an annual review in March 2009. This review has taken place and discussions are in progress to agree the programme for the financial year 2009–10.

April 2009

Memorandum submitted by the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

Key Points

1. In the absence of wider data on outcomes for deaf children, NDCS believes that Ofsted have an important role to play in ensuring that provision for deaf children is of a high quality. However, it is apparent that Ofsted inspections of provision for deaf children are not always conducted with the necessary rigour and awareness of the needs of such children.

2. If SEN inspection judgements of all schools are aggregated, NDCS believes an impression is given where much of SEN provision is good. However, this is not the picture presented by Ofsted thematic inspections of SEN undertaken by inspectors with knowledge, skill and experience in SEN. It is also contradicted by data on attainment. Deaf children in 2007 were 42% less likely to achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C (including English and Maths) than all children.

3. These conclusions are supported by a RNID report from 2005, *At the heart of inclusion*. This quotes from Heads of Support Services who reported:

- A lack of expertise in or experience of deafness on the inspection team.
- Failure to observe teachers of the deaf either in the base or in the mainstream classroom.
- Failure to provide inspectors who had British Sign Language (BSL) skills or BSL interpreters for teams inspecting BSL provision.
- A lack of interest among inspectors in the deaf pupils as members of the school.

Parents and professionals have also reported similar concerns to NDCS repeatedly since 2005 (see Annex A).

4. The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill proposes that if a school is good or outstanding, it will not be subject to a full inspection. In a debate on this Bill, the Minister for Schools and Learners stated that Ofsted has a new framework: *"It is highly unlikely that a school would be judged good overall—if progress for SEN pupils is anything less than good."* However, NDCS is unclear as to how the new framework will ensure this does not happen. NDCS is also unclear—given it is known to occur under the current system—what are the circumstances in which a school might be judged good overall if provision for SEN pupils was not good. NDCS believes this eventuality should be ruled out.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO RAISE

How many days training on SEN do inspectors receive and does it cover low incidence needs such as deafness?

Given there are currently four inspectors with specialist training in sensory impairment, what plans do Ofsted have to increase this? Are Ofsted able to give figures for the number of specialist units or schools which are inspected per year by those who do *not* have the necessary expertise in SEN?

When inspectors are visiting a school where deaf children whose first language is British Sign Language are present, will inspectors be required to be accompanied by a fully qualified and independent interpreter? How many BSL interpreters have been employed in the past year?

Can the new framework guarantee that a school will not be judged as good overall if provision for SEN pupils was not good?

April 2009

Annex A

CASE STUDY

An Ofsted report of a primary school in London in 2008 stated that:

> *"Pupils in the PDC (provision for deaf children) progress well because they are supported by highly experienced staff who ensure that pupils enjoy their work and are fully included in school activities."*

However:

- The unit did not have a teacher in charge who was a qualified teacher of the deaf—or who was even a teacher.
- No evidence was provided to substantiate the claim that deaf pupils were progressing well.
- The acoustics in the classrooms were poor and constitute a hostile listening environment.

The inadequacy of the unit was known to the local authority, as evidenced by a Tribunal over a child who was experiencing difficulties at this school. An advisory teacher of the deaf for the local authority reported that "appropriate leadership" was not in place and that there was insufficient focus on children's progress.

Annex B

RECENT WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families if he will take steps to ensure that Ofsted inspections of educational provision for deaf children are carried out by inspectors who (a) have adequate levels of training and expertise in (i) education for the deaf and (ii) communication with deaf children and (b) are accompanied by a skilled interpreter. [265779]

Jim Knight: This is a matter for Ofsted. HM Chief Inspector, Christine Gilbert, has written to my hon. Friend and a copy of her reply has been placed in the House Libraries.

Letter from Christine Gilbert, dated 2 April 2009:

> Your recent parliamentary question has been passed to me, as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, for a response.
>
> Ofsted recognises that inspecting provision and outcomes for deaf or hearing impaired pupils requires particular specialist knowledge and skills with regard to issues such as language development, communication methods, and acoustic conditions.
>
> You asked how Ofsted ensured that its inspectors had adequate levels of training and expertise in education for the deaf and communication with deaf children. Ofsted has a small core team of four Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) who are specialists in the inspection of sensory impairment who are routinely deployed in the inspection of schools for deaf and hearing impaired pupils. Ofsted also requires our contracted Regional Inspection Service Providers to provide inspectors who are suitable for each individual inspection. Every effort is made to inspect special schools with inspectors who have expertise in that particular field. Where there is specific provision for pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, then every effort is made to provide the inspection team with an inspector with expertise in the particular field of SEN provided by the school. Training on inspecting special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools, special schools and pupil

referral units was provided for HMI and Additional Inspectors (AI) during 2008, and is being updated for the coming year. All inspectors have access to extensive guidance available to support this area of work.

You also asked whether inspectors are accompanied by a skilled interpreter. It is necessary for inspectors to be able to communicate effectively with deaf and hearing impaired pupils: this may require competence in British Sign Language or other methods of communication, or use of a skilled interpreter. Ofsted is reviewing these requirements for the new inspection arrangements for September, including the requirement to have an interpreter on inspection.

Supplementary memorandum submitted by Vernon Coaker MP, Minister of State for Schools and Learners, Department for Children, Schools and Families

Thank you for the interesting discussion at the recent CSF Committee evidence session on School Accountability on 8 July 2009. I undertook to write to you about the Schools Commissioner role and Jon Coles promised that we would send additional information on School Improvement Partners. Following concerns expressed by some Committee members in the discussion on the School Report Card, I also wanted to clarify Ofsted's position.

SCHOOLS COMMISSIONER

I should clarify that there is no mention of the Schools Commissioner in legislation—primary or secondary legislation. Of course during the passage of what became the Education and Inspections Act 2006 there was discussion of Local Authorities role as commissioners of services and in that context the role of the Schools Commissioner arose but that debate did not translate into any legislative provisions. As you know Sir Bruce Liddington was appointed in the Autumn of 2006 as a Director in the Department fulfilling the role of the Schools Commissioner. This role has always been a standard civil service appointment, subject to the normal appointment rules of the civil service. Civil servants and expert consultants were recruited to the Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC)—supporting Sir Bruce in his role—over the following year or so, and there continue to be some 19 civil servants working in this area. As Ed Balls said to you in a reply to a Parliamentary Question on 9 March "Sir Bruce Liddington did an excellent job supporting the commissioning of new schools places, expanding our academies programme and developing National Challenge Trusts". And as you also know Sir Bruce left the Department at the end of last year to take up an important role in the system.

As Jon Coles said in evidence, the Department will, subject to budgetary constraints, advertise for a new Director in Schools Directorate, though he will be reconfiguring to some extent the responsibilities of senior civil servants in the Directorate. There will of course continue to be a Director within Schools Directorate with responsibility for the work of the Office of the Schools Commissioner, as there is now, but alongside a range of other responsibilities. This reflects the fact that following the success of Sir Bruce, we can now move into a different phase of work—looking to secure effective implementation alongside embedding commissioning at LA level.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS (SIPS)

The School Improvement Partners (SIPs) programme was introduced alongside a number of other policies together known as the New Relationship with Schools (NRwS) in 2005 after a trial in 2004. SIPs were first deployed to secondary schools in a phased roll out during 2005–06. At the same time, a pilot project for SIPs in primary schools was carried out, as well as a trial of SIPs in special schools. As a result of a successful pilot and trial, SIPs were rolled out in primary schools from January 2007 and in special schools from September 2007. There have been SIPs in all maintained schools since April 2008.
Since its launch, the SIP programme has been independently evaluated as follows:

— 2004 NFER evaluation of the NRwS trial.

— 2006 Cambridge University evaluation of the special SIP pilot.

— 2006 York Consulting Ltd Evaluation of the primary pilot.

— 2008 York Consulting Ltd Evaluation of the NRwS.

A copy of the most recent report (2008 York Consulting Ltd Evaluation of the NRwS) is attached to this letter.[16]

[16] Not printed.

OFSTED

During discussion on the School Report Card, concerns were expressed that Ofsted's independence was compromised by it working together with the DCSF.

As with other public service inspectorates, the functions of the Chief Inspector are clearly defined in law. Ofsted is a non-Ministerial Government Department, accountable directly to Parliament. The law also places the Chief Inspector under a duty to provide advice to the Secretary of State, and establishes a power to provide advice when the Chief Inspector considers it appropriate to do so. The Chief Inspector can and does publish her advice, in the form of reports and publications, some of which are critical of government policy.

Ofsted's knowledge of the schools system is an essential and valuable resource which the Department can and should call upon to inform policy in relation to schools, including the design of the accountability system. The Department has benefited greatly from Ofsted's advice throughout the work to date developing the School Report Card, leading up to both the initial, joint consultation on the School Report Card in December 2008; and the recent joint School Report Card Prospectus. Such joint working is not a new departure. For example, in 2004, the Department and Ofsted consulted jointly on the NRwS reforms. Inspection was a key part of the NRwS and Ofsted worked with the Department to develop a coherent set of proposals which were jointly presented. As the Committee identified, it will be important that we establish the right relationship between Ofsted inspection and the School Report Card, so that there is coherence between the different elements of the accountability system. Both the Department and Ofsted have therefore taken the view that it will be of greatest benefit to parents and to schools that we develop our proposals for the School Report Card with similar engagement. Indeed, the two organisations would be open to criticism if they did not properly work together to ensure that there is a coherent and consistent accountability system for schools. Both the Department and Ofsted are clear that this in no way compromises Ofsted's independence, and places no barrier on Ofsted criticising government policy, where it considers it necessary to do so.

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