The publication of statistics on maintained schools and academies: inspections and outcomes

A report on the responses to the consultation

This is a report on the outcomes of the consultation on proposals for the publication of statistics on the inspection outcomes of maintained schools and academies.

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Introduction

1. Ofsted currently produces the official statistics release maintained schools and academies: inspections and outcomes. This is published four times per year at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/maintained-schools-and-academies-inspections-and-outcomes-official-statistics.

2. The consultation sought views on proposed new arrangements for this release. These proposals included three key changes to the statistical publications:

   - changing the frequency of the releases
   - making the data more relevant
   - streamlining the release to make it more focused and user-friendly.

3. The consultation ran from 1 July 2015 to 29 July 2015.

The consultation method

4. The consultation was carried out through an online questionnaire placed on the Ofsted website. It was also available to complete in Word/ PDF format to return by email or to print out so that responses could be filled in by hand. We used a range of communication methods to ensure that we reached a wide variety of people who have an interest in, and use of school inspection outcomes statistics.

   - A link was provided on our maintained schools and academies official statistics webpage and was promoted on Twitter.
   - An email was sent to key stakeholders including local authorities (LAs), professional associations, dioceses, multi-academy trusts and other organisations with an interest in school inspections data.

5. We received most of the responses via the online questionnaire and a small number in Word/PDF format by email. A total of 92 completed responses were received, with a further 170 respondents partially completing the consultation.

6. The responses came from many sources, including schools, LAs, professional associations, multi-academy trusts, dioceses and other organisations with an interest in school data. A more detailed list of external stakeholders is listed in the annex at the end of this document.

Summary of findings

7. The responses received supported all of the proposals.

   - A very large majority of respondents (85%) supported the proposal to reduce the number of releases from four each year to three each year.

- Respondents also supported plans to make the data in the release more relevant. A very large majority of respondents (81%) supported the move to reporting inspections in the academic year to date as opposed to in the previous time period. A very large majority of respondents (84%) supported the proposal of providing additional tables on the inspection outcomes by school type (sponsor-led academy, academy converter, LA maintained school or free school).
- Respondents also agreed with our plans to streamline the release. Seventy-one percent of respondents agreed with our plans to streamline the tables related to school outcomes in the previous period (with 23% saying 'don't know'). Seventy-nine percent were also in favour of us reducing the number of tables that we publish as part of the revised release.
- Just over half of respondents were happy for us to remove each of the tables that list schools that had been added into or removed from a category of concern. In each instance, between 28% and 34% of respondents disagreed with this proposal. Some of their concerns will be addressed at a later point in the document.

8. Based on these findings, all of the changes proposed as part of the consultation will take effect. The publication previously planned for September 2015 will not take place. All other changes will take effect from December 2015. The December release will report on inspections that have taken place throughout the 2014/15 academic year as well as most recent inspections outcomes of open schools as at 31 August, 2015.

Findings in full

9. The full numbers and proportions of responses to each question can be seen in the annex.

Q1. We are considering reducing the frequency of maintained schools outcomes official statistics releases from four releases per year to three releases per year. If these statistical releases were supplemented with regular management information, published every month, would this be sufficient to meet your needs?

10. Of the 150 responses received for this question, 85% (127 responses) agreed with the proposal and 5% (seven responses) disagreed. Those in agreement came from a wide range of stakeholder groups.

11. Some respondents commented that publishing the official statistics release three times per year instead of four seemed more sensible because this aligns with school terms. Many respondents commented on the usefulness of the management information in their work and welcomed the more frequent publication of these statistics.

12. In light of this feedback, we will be carrying out this proposal.

Q2. We are considering reporting inspections in the academic year to date as opposed to reporting inspections in the previous quarter. Do you agree that this would improve the way in which we report on the outcomes of school inspections?

13. Of the 114 responses to this question, 81% (92 responses) were in agreement, while 11% (13 responses) disagreed. Those in agreement came from a wide variety of stakeholder groups. Three of the LAs who responded were among those who disagreed.

14. Some of the comments included:

> 'Releasing the statistics in the academic year to date will give everyone the largest relevant data set available, rather than a potentially misleading one for the most recent quarter.'
>
> 'The cumulative data towards the end of the academic year is very valuable.'

15. From the 'no' responses, the below concern was raised:

> 'We find it useful to track the termly percentages to evaluate the effectiveness of our support for school improvement.'

16. It should be noted that users will be still be able to calculate termly school performance from the underlying data. As the majority of respondents were in favour of this proposal, in future inspections will be reported based on the academic year to date.

Q3. We are considering providing additional tables to allow users to compare the most recent inspection outcomes of LA maintained schools, academy converters, sponsor-led academies and free schools. Do you agree that this information would be helpful?

17. Of the 112 respondents, 84% (94 respondents) agreed with this proposal, with 10% (11 respondents) disagreeing. Almost all of the responses submitted on behalf of an organisation were in agreement of this change.

18. Some of the comments included:

> 'There is not enough attention on failing academies and this would help for a more balanced debate.'
>
> 'This would help to dispel many myths around academies and maintained schools and their relevant successes.'

19. An independent fact-checking organisation commented, 'We agree this would be helpful but only if it is published alongside clear caveats of what

comparisons can and cannot be made between different types of schools, and the limitations of such comparisons.'

20. Given that the majority of respondents agreed with this proposal, we will provide an additional table showing the most recent inspection outcome of LA maintained schools, academy converters, sponsor-led academies and free schools. We will publish quality information, highlighting any limitations when comparing these data.

Q4. We are considering combining the information found in Tables 2a to 2e (School inspection outcomes in the previous period by phase) into Table 2 (School inspection outcomes in the previous period). Do you agree that this change would allow you to better compare data across different phases?

21. Of the 102 respondents, 71% (72 respondents) were in agreement, while 7% (seven respondents disagreed). 23% (23 respondents) replied 'don't know'.

22. Comments included:

> 'Provided that no information is removed, we are happy for these tables to be combined and agree that it would make comparisons easier.'

23. As the majority of respondents agreed with this proposal, it will be carried out.

Q5. To streamline the release, are you happy for us to remove the following tables? [The tables and charts were specified in the consultation and are listed in the annex. They all relate to schools in categories of concern.]

24. The responses to the proposal for removing the four tables were fairly similar. There were 97 responses to the proposal to remove tables 4a, 4b and 4c and 98 responses to the proposal to remove table 4d. The responses are listed in full in the annex. Just over half of respondents were happy with the proposal to remove these tables. Between 28% and 34% of respondents disagreed with these proposals.

25. Comments made by those agreeing with this proposal indicated that they were happy, as long as the information could be obtained within the underlying data.

26. Some respondents expressed concern about the removal of these tables.

27. Comments included:

> 'These tables are useful for making progress comparisons.'
>
> 'It is helpful to have them recorded in a single list.'
>
> 'All publications should be transparent for those wishing to look at them.'

28. Given that just over half of respondents were happy with the proposal, these tables will be removed. However, the concerns expressed with this proposal have been noted. Users should be aware that:

- they will continue to be able to get a list of schools in a category (either schools in special measures or judged to have serious weaknesses). They can do this by applying a filter to the most recent overall effectiveness grade in either the 'inspection data for open maintained schools' or 'school inspection data files' that are published as part of the release
- we will be adding the previous overall effectiveness grade into these files so that users can identify which schools have been removed from a category
- users can identify the schools in a category that have closed by comparing the 'inspection data for open maintained schools' files from the most recent release and the previous release.

Q6. We are considering reducing the number of tables and charts that we publish revisions for. The provisional dataset published would take into account any revisions to the previous period. Are you happy with this change?

29. There were 96 responses to this question, of which 79% (76 respondents) were happy with this change and 11% (11 respondents) disagreed.

30. There was some concern that this change would mean that the underlying datasets would no longer be published. This is not the case.

31. There was also a comment that all tables should be 'republished for the purpose of transparency.' We will continue to revise those tables relating specifically to the previous time period, but these will be included in the next 'provisional' release rather than in a separate 'revised' release. We will also ensure transparency by referring to any revisions within the key findings document that accompanies the release.

32. As the majority of respondents agreed with the proposal, then the number of tables and charts that we publish revisions for will be reduced.

Q7. How could the current official statistics releases be improved? (open text field)

Q8. Do you have any other further comments relevant to this release that you would like to make? (open text field)

33. We received 22 responses to question 7 and 19 responses to question 8. A number of themes came up in the responses. Some examples of these are presented in the annex.

34. Some respondents asked how the official statistics release will be amended to incorporate changes to inspection from September 2015, such as the

introduction of short inspections. We are currently conducting an internal review of the changes that will be necessary following this change. These will take effect from the release published in March 2016.

35. One respondent asked about the impact that these changes would have on DataView. Dataview is currently updated shortly after each official statistics release and includes aggregated data on the most recent overall effectiveness grades for all open schools. Dataview will continue to be updated after each release, but as there will be three releases rather than four in future DataView will be updated slightly less often. However it should be noted that our monthly management information includes all the underlying data users would need to replicate any of the calculations available in DataView. This includes number of pupils, phase of education, and which LA and constituency a school resides in.

The way forward

36. We greatly appreciate the time spent by those individuals and organisations who responded to the consultation. Respondents' views strongly supported many of our proposals and broadly supported all of them. The comments received were extremely helpful in better understanding the needs of our users. We will carry out these proposals during the rest of 2015.

37. The frequency of publication will change to three releases a year. These releases will comment on all inspections that have taken place in the academic year until the end of the reporting period and have been published. There will no longer be a publication each September, effective from September 2015. The three releases will report on periods as follows:

- 1 September – 31 December, which will be published in March
- 1 September – 31 March, which will be published in June
- 1 September – 31 August, which will be published in December.

38. We will publish management information every month, rather than in batches as we do at present. The schedule for the next few months will be as follows.

- In September and October 2015, we will publish the most recent inspection outcomes of all open schools.
- Due to the introduction of new data management systems in the autumn we do not intend to publish management information in November.
- In December 2015, we will publish a list of inspections that have taken place in the academic year to date under the new framework due to be introduced in September 2015.
- From January 2016, we will publish management information on the most recent inspection outcome of all open schools every month.

39. We will publish a table that shows the most recent inspection outcome of LA maintained schools, sponsor-led academies, academy converters and free schools. Many users agreed that this information would be useful for them. We will provide guidance to users on the limitations to making comparisons across these different groups of schools. We agree that these groups of schools are very different, with distinct characteristics and backgrounds. Respondents agreed that it is helpful to provide clear information on the performance of these different groups of schools.

40. We will streamline the release by:

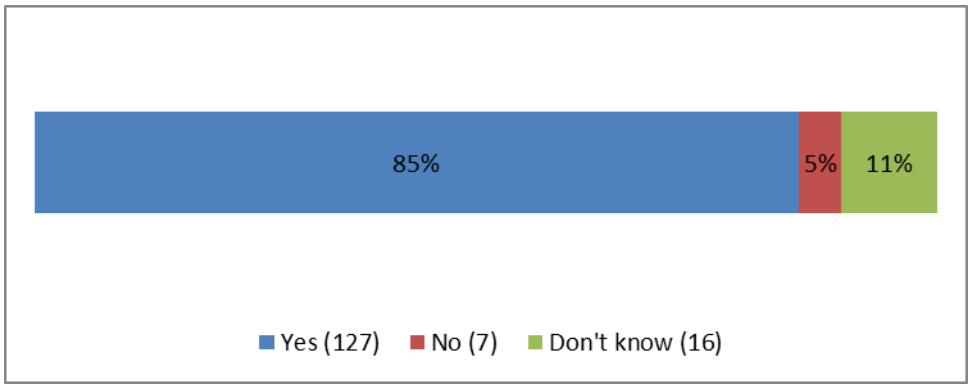
- merging all of the tables reporting inspections in the most recent period by phase into one interactive table
- removing the tables that show which schools have entered or have been removed from a category of concern
- no longer publishing a 'revised' version of each release but including the revised versions of some of the key tables within the following provisional release.

41. We will provide the previous inspection outcome in our school level data sets in order to allow respondents to look at the change in inspection outcome.

42. The changes in paragraphs 35–37 will be carried out in the release published in December 2015.

Annex

Question 1: We are considering reducing the frequency of maintained schools outcomes official statistics releases from four releases per year to three releases per year. If these statistical releases were supplemented with regular management information, published every month, would this be sufficient to meet your needs?



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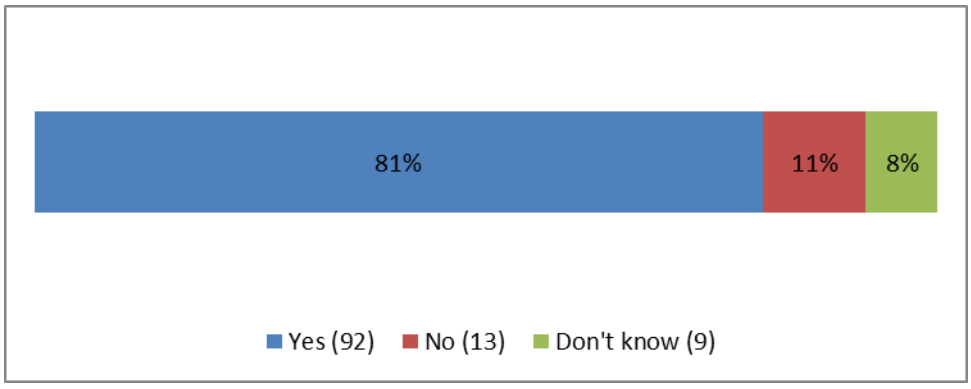

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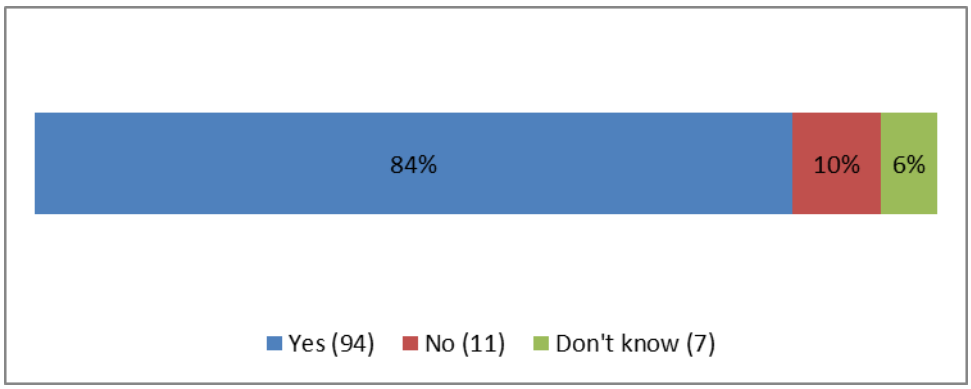

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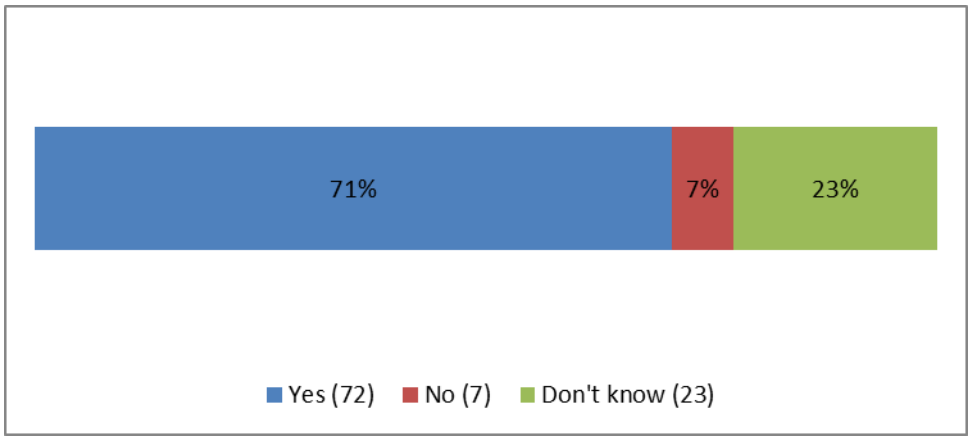
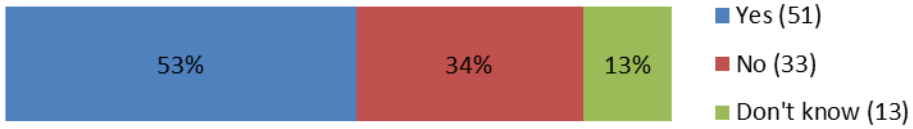
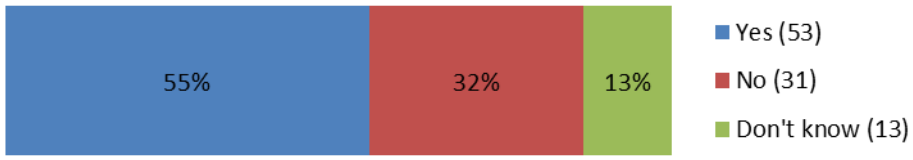
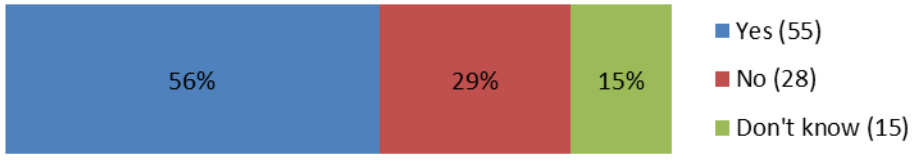
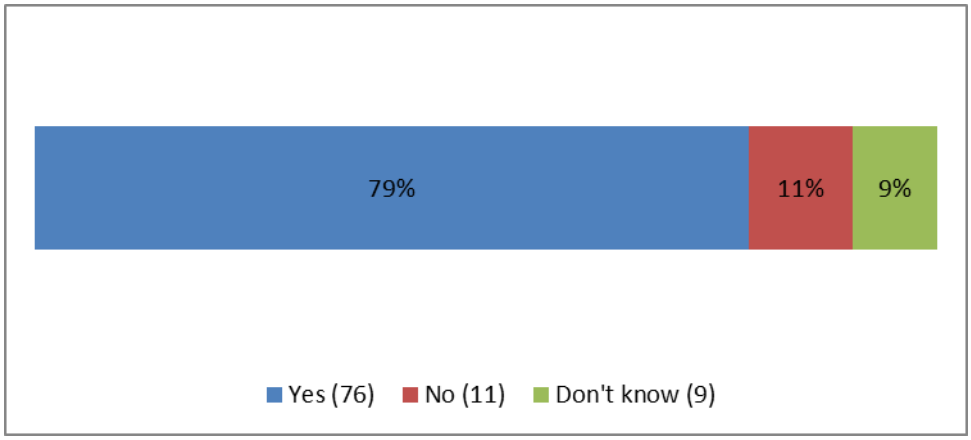


Question 5: To streamline the release, are you happy for us to remove the following tables?

4a	Schools in special measures at end of previous quarter	
4b	Schools having serious weaknesses at end of previous quarter	
4c	Schools removed from special measures during previous quarter	
4d	Schools removed from serious weaknesses during previous quarter	

Question 6: We are considering reducing the number of tables and charts that we publish revisions for. The provisional dataset published would take into account any revisions to the previous period. Are you happy with this change?



Question 7: How could the current official statistics release be improved? (open text responses only)

Some examples of the 22 responses we received are listed below.

- 'It would be helpful to include previous inspection outcomes in the school level data.'
- 'More frequent school level data for inspection judgements would be beneficial to us.'
- 'It would be helpful for us if there could be an additional comparison between schools with a religious character, broken down by denomination, in contrast to all other kinds of school.'
- 'It would be useful to have a regional split on Tables 1 to 4.'
- 'Allow all data to be downloaded as a data dump, including all historical data.'
- 'The monthly provisional releases are most useful as they help us to make sure that we have up to date information on schools.'
- 'Emphasise what can and cannot be assumed from the data.'
- 'Have faster turnaround of data (between inspection and it appearing in the report).'

Question 8: Do you have any other further comments relevant to this release that you would like to make? (open text responses only)

Some examples of the 19 responses received are listed below.

- 'It would be helpful if the monthly management information could also include schools that currently don't hold an inspection judgement to assist in reconciling with locally collected data.'
- 'Moving forward we are likely to be making more use of your monthly management information reports so it would be important to us that you retain the existing spreadsheet formats (field names etc.) so that we do not have to change the reporting mechanisms we'll be putting in place.'
- 'Please can the monthly management information be every month and on a fixed day of each month as it is very random at the moment.'
- 'I consulted my team of advisers all of whom have been, or continue to be, successful headteachers and they were unanimous in feeling these proposals will streamline the data and make it more usable in their work with schools.'

List of external organisations who responded

Of the responses, 33 were given on behalf of a named organisation. These are as follows:

- one charity
- two schools commissioner groups (within the Department for Education)
- two diocese
- 13 local authorities
- one multi-academy trust
- five professional associations
- seven schools
- two other educational organisations.