



House of Commons
Education and Skills Committee

The Work of Ofsted

Sixth Report of Session 2006–07

Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence

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The Education and Skills Committee

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Footnotes

In the footnotes for this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by 'Q' followed by the question number. References to written evidence are indicated by the page number as in 'Ev 12'.

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Summary

The new Ofsted is responsible for a wide range of services. Prior to April 2007 Ofsted was responsible for the inspection of child-care providers, maintained schools, non-association independent schools following the Education Act 2002, further education colleges, provision for children and young people in secure settings and services for children and young people. From 1 April 2007 Ofsted has been the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. This new remit covers the inspection functions previously carried out by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, inspection of Children and Family Court Advisory Service functions in England, the inspection of secure training centres and the registration of children's homes, residential family centres, fostering agencies, voluntary adoption agencies and adoption support agencies. The role of the Children's Rights Director and Local Authority inspection function have been transferred from the Commission for Social Care Inspection to Ofsted.

We welcome the potential for the new Ofsted to take a more comprehensive and strategic view of the issues affecting children, young people and adult learners but we are concerned at the increasing complexity of this large bureaucracy and the ability of its new non-executive board to rapidly grasp this complexity.

A number of sectors which are now under the remit of Ofsted have expressed concern about the effect that the creation of the new Ofsted would have on them. It is clear that some of these reservations are still present. Ofsted has already expressed a desire to engage service users and providers from all of the sectors they are responsible for. This is essential if Ofsted is to fulfil its potential and we encourage Ofsted to intensify its work in this area.

The new Ofsted has been operating only since April 2007. We will be interested to see what will be achieved in the first twelve months of the new Ofsted and what value has been added by its creation. We cannot disguise our concern as to the fitness for purpose of the organisation at the present moment. We ask our successors to return to this issue in future meetings with HMCI.

'Light touch' inspections

We welcome moves that reduce the burden of inspection on service providers but changes to the inspection system must ensure that a rigorous inspection framework that can identify under-performing schools is maintained. We recognise that self-evaluative work can be beneficial for schools, highlighting areas for improvement but we urge Ofsted to ensure that self-evaluations are of sufficient quality and accuracy to be relied on as part of an inspection.

We are concerned that some schools could be eligible for reduced tariff inspections without undergoing a full Section 5 inspection. Ofsted should clarify whether schools are identified as 'high performing' on the basis of previous inspection, data such as exam results or a combination of the two. We urge Ofsted to monitor how successful reduced-tariff inspections are at identifying falling standards in schools. It is important that previously good schools which are either coasting or no longer performing at such a high level are identified early. Ofsted needs to ensure that inspectors do have a proper opportunity to test self evaluation against what is happening in schools. We recommend that light touch inspections are properly evaluated after two years in operation, as we are not fully convinced of their effectiveness.

Subject reports

Some outside bodies have argued that the sample of schools Ofsted uses in its thematic or subject reports is too small. We are concerned that, while thematic subject reports may identify general issues in subjects they will not provide a reliable picture of the standard of teaching in that subject. We are also concerned that the lack of subject focus in school inspections will lead some schools to neglect non-core subjects in order to improve their grading. We urge Ofsted to review the size of the sample used to produce subject reviews. We also urge Ofsted to ensure that some observation of non-core subjects is included in all inspections.

Inspection and improvement

While schools, in general, seem satisfied with Ofsted's role—assessing quality but not working with schools on the improvement process—other sectors are used to an inspection service that also does active improvement work. It is important that Ofsted clearly communicates to all service users what it does and does not do. It is also vital that Ofsted continues to pass examples of good practice to improvement agencies to ensure that they provide the best help possible for service providers. It still appears that Ofsted has no capacity to give advice when a cluster of local schools suffer from systemic underperformance. This continues to be a weakness in the inspection system.

1 Introduction

1. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was established in 1992 as a non-ministerial Government department. Since then it has been given a number of additional responsibilities. In September 2001 the responsibility for regulating day-care was transferred from local authorities to Ofsted as a result of the Care Standards Act 2000. The Education and Inspection Act 2006 merged a number of other bodies with Ofsted, which became The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills from 1st April 2007. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) reports to the Secretary of State for Education and is formally accountable to Parliament, principally through scrutiny by this Committee.

2. The Committee last reported on the work of Ofsted in 2003. Since then, as indicated above, Ofsted has become responsible for a number of additional areas. Ofsted also introduced new inspection arrangements in September 2005.

3. There have been a number of staff and structural changes since 2003. Christine Gilbert was appointed as HMCI in September 2006. Dorian Bradley stepped down as Director of Children's Services in June 2007. A new directorate for learning and skills has been established and Melanie Hunt was appointed as the Director of Learning and Skills in May 2007.

4. A non-executive board for Ofsted was also created in April 2007. The board is made up of Zenna Atkins, Chairman; Christine Gilbert, HMCI and eight non-executive directors with experience from across the public, private and voluntary sectors; Dame Enid Bibby, Sharon Collins, David MacLeod, Dame Jane Roberts, John Roberts CBE, Beryl Seaman CBE JP, Museji Takolia and Christopher Trinick.

5. Ofsted has recently published its strategic plan for 2007-2010 and the yearly Ofsted Departmental Report. The strategic plan sets out the priorities for Ofsted over the next three years. The strategic priorities are: Better outcomes; Better inspection and regulation; Better communication; Better Consultation; Better value; and Better ways of working. The Departmental Report is a review of the work Ofsted has done in the previous year. In addition to these documents the Ofsted Annual Report was published in November 2006. This is the first to be published since Ms Gilbert took up her appointment as HMCI.

6. The Committee takes evidence from Ofsted twice a year. This year those meetings have coincided with the publication of the Annual Report in November and the publication of the Strategic Plan and the creation of the new Ofsted in May. Inevitably, only a small proportion of the work of Ofsted and the issues dealt with in HMCI's Annual Report and the Ofsted Strategic Plan 2007-2010 could be covered in the oral evidence taken by the Committee. The issues addressed in this report reflect the themes raised in oral evidence, those brought up in written evidence and matters of public concern or discussion.

7. The dissolution of the DfES and the creation of two new departments, announced on 28 June 2007, will have an impact on Ofsted. Ofsted's remit covers areas in both the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills. **We recommend that the scrutiny work that this Committee has carried out is continued by successor committees.**

2 The Work of Ofsted

The New Ofsted

8. The new Ofsted is responsible for a wide range of services. Prior to April 2007 Ofsted was responsible for the inspection of child-care providers, maintained schools, non-association independent schools¹ following the Education Act 2002, further education colleges, provision for children and young people in secure settings and services for children and young people. From 1 April 2007 Ofsted has been the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. This new remit covers the inspection functions previously carried out by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, inspection of Children and Family Court Advisory Service functions in England, the inspection of secure training centres and the registration of children's homes, residential family centres, fostering agencies, voluntary adoption agencies and adoption support agencies. The role of the Children's Rights Director and Local Authority inspection function have been transferred from the Commission for Social Care Inspection to Ofsted.

9. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also made provision for a non-executive board for Ofsted. The role of the eight-person board and the Chairman, Zenna Atkins, is to scrutinise the governance of Ofsted and the work of HMCI. The board is also intended to ensure that the voice of service users is represented.

10. Press reports state that both "Ofsted chiefs [Atkins and Gilbert] insist there will be benefits from the mergers. They promise a clearer focus on the 'cross-cutting issues' that some of all of the inspectorates have previously tackled separately, leading to broader, more comprehensive research."²

11. However, there has been some concern about the scope of the new Ofsted. Reports also suggest that "the concern among the professions coming into Ofsted's regulatory grasp is whether the organisation can understand and balance the interests of disparate groups of service users and providers."³

12. When asked about whether anything would be lost through the expansion of Ofsted, HMCI said "I do see the strengths of each [area], and I do not mean this in just the clichés I think that the strengths of each will really contribute to the whole."⁴ She also considered that "it is important that we do not lose our specialism in some way [...] So I do not see that we are just going to have generic inspectors but I think we might be doing things together across the organisation, in a way, and I think there will be a lowering of some of the boundaries that we have established or that we will be establishing from April."⁵

13. When asked about what had been gained from the merger HMCI pointed to providers, such as boarding schools, which had previously been subject to two separate inspections

1 Independent schools that are not members of the Independent Schools Council.

2 "Same name, new recipe", *The Guardian-Society Guardian*, 28 March 2007, p 3.

3 *Ibid*

4 Q 34

5 Q 35

“having some greater consistency and coherence in the inspectors arriving at their door.”⁶ However, HMCI accepted that there was still work to do to develop joint working. Miriam Rosen, Director of Education, also said, of care and education, “We are not there yet, but we have a lot of potential for bringing that together in a better way.”⁷

14. This is a time of great change for Ofsted and whilst we are sensitive to the challenges that this brings we are still concerned at the complex set of objectives and sectors that Ofsted now spans and its capacity to fulfil its core mission.

The Adult Learning Inspectorate

15. Some of the most high profile criticism among those people affected by the creation of the new Ofsted has been from David Sherlock, former head of the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). He argued that the dual role of ALI should not have been split, with Ofsted taking on the inspection work and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) focusing on improvement. He said “I think ALI lost the battle but won the war, or will be shown to have done so. I think the role of pure regulatory organisations is not likely to be a strong one in the future.”⁸ The TES also reported that he had “warned that private trainers may lose patience with the new inspectorate because it will not be able to offer all the ALI’s support services to help training companies improve.”⁹

16. He also claimed that of the 100 or more ALI inspectors that had not gone to Ofsted, 60 would be available to work for Beyond Standards¹⁰ on an *ad hoc* basis. The NUT expressed some concern about the merger, saying:

“Anecdotal evidence of joint Ofsted and Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) inspections, however, has suggested that misunderstandings have arisen as a result of inspectors’ lack of experience in, for example, adult or VI form academic provision.”¹¹

They added that

“ALI and the Commission for Social Care Inspections (CSCI) offered active support to providers, for example CSCI worked closely with senior local authority staff to monitor local plans and progress. These developmental functions have been lost under new arrangements.”¹²

17. When asked the effect of losing over half of the former ALI inspectors HMCI replied “We have not lost any. This is a myth [...] Every single inspector has come over from the Adult Learning Inspectorate.”¹³ HMCI’s statement contradicts press reports that a number

6 Q 161

7 Q 162

8 “What the inspector did next”, *The Guardian*, 24 April 2007, p 9.

9 “Ofsted battles to quell distrust”, *TES FE Focus*, 30 March 2007, p 3.

10 Beyond Standards is a new organisation, set up by David Sherlock which aims to carry on and expand the improvement work undertaken by ALI.

11 Ev 62

12 *Ibid*

13 Qq 143-144

of ALI inspectors had chosen not to join Ofsted. We accept that HMCI is more likely to have accurate and up to date information on Ofsted staffing matters and that her comments on how many former ALI staff have joined Ofsted are more likely to be correct.

18. HMCI did accept that there was some concern from employers over the merger. She said

“I have been very conscious that employers were suspicious, I suppose, or waiting to be convinced that the new organisation would hear anything beyond the voice of schools. [...] It is certainly less stark than it was when the new organisation was being created, but I think that people are waiting to see. They are giving us the benefit of the doubt, but they will want us to be engaging with them very constructively over the next year.”¹⁴

19. Ofsted told us it is committed to improving the way they are perceived by employers. HMCI said

“It is one of the reasons why, at this stage we have set up a separate directorate within Ofsted with a new director, to give confidence there. [...] A number of various bits of information, booklets and so on, have been produced for employers, providers and so on, and a number of conferences and meetings held [...] we are inviting and engaging responses on the Strategic Plan [...] I see us now moving into a new gear, with the appointment of the new director”.¹⁵

20. It is important that Ofsted continues to work with employers to ensure the new, Ofsted-led inspections of adult learning are viewed with as much confidence as inspections carried out by ALI. Some of the concern among employers and other services users has been that adult learning and related services will not be disadvantaged by the previous focus of Ofsted on schools and early-years provision. The creation of a new directorate for learning and skills is a sign that the new Ofsted will not ignore this part of its remit.

Other Mergers

21. The merger of a number of organisations involved in inspecting and regulation of children’s services, education and adult learning has the potential to reduce bureaucracy and the burden of inspection on providers while at the same time providing a more coherent inspection system. Both HMCI and the Chair of the Ofsted board have expressed the view that the new Ofsted will be able to take a more joined up approach to reporting on issues affecting children, young people and adult learning as a result of the additional information Ofsted will now collect. **We welcome the potential for the new Ofsted to take a more comprehensive and strategic view of the issues affecting children, young people and adult learners but we are concerned at the increasing complexity of this large bureaucracy and the ability of its new non-executive board to rapidly grasp this complexity.**

14 Q 163

15 Q 163

22. A number of sectors which are now under the remit of Ofsted have expressed concern about the effect that the creation of the new Ofsted would have on them. It is clear that some of these reservations are still present. Ofsted has already expressed a desire to engage service users and providers from all of the sectors they are responsible for. This is essential if Ofsted is to fulfil its potential and we encourage Ofsted to intensify their work in this area.

23. The new Ofsted has been operating only since April 2007. We will be interested to see what will be achieved in the first twelve months of the new Ofsted and what value has been added by its creation. We cannot disguise our concern as to the fitness for purpose of the organisation at the present moment. We ask our successors to return to this issue in future meetings with HMCI.

The Strategic Plan 2007-2010 and the work ahead

24. The Strategic Plan 2007-2010 sets out Ofsted's priorities for the next three years. The Board and Ofsted staff have already been consulted on the Plan and now a wider consultation is taking place. Ofsted has said it is trying to engage service users and other interested parties with the plan, and HMCI said "we decided that it would be completely inappropriate just to say, 'This is the new Ofsted's Strategic Plan'. We did feel that we had to engage with people in what we were saying."¹⁶

25. The introduction to the Strategic Plan states "We expect to be assessed publicly by the same rigorous standards we apply to others. This strategic plan sets out the priorities against which we believe our performance should be judged."¹⁷ This introduction also states that a second version of the plan will be published in early autumn to reflect the consultation and other work that is being done.

26. One of the areas that Ofsted recognises requires further work is the targets that it will set for itself. HMCI said

"we were determined at Ofsted that we did set ourselves measurable targets that we could be held to account for; but they had to have a sensible base. In many instances we do not know; so it is fine saying, 'We're going to make 20% improvement'. We do not know whether that is really easy or whether that is stretching in some areas. We are doing quite a bit of work on those. Not all of them but many of them will be there by September/October time, when we hope to come forward with them."¹⁸

27. The Chairman of the Ofsted Board said

"What is interesting about the development of the Strategic Plan is that it was very much led by the Board, and it is one of the roles of the Board to ensure that the document becomes living and breathing.[...]we are absolutely pushing that there are smart targets in that document. Where we do not have baselines, instead of guessing them, which is quite easy to do—and we did have a go at guessing them and pulled

16 Q 165

17 *Raising standards, improving lives: Ofsted Strategic Plan 2007-2010*, April 2007, pg 4.

18 Q 166

them all out because, to be honest, a five or 10% increase here or there is stuff that perhaps we should have been doing in our sleep. In some areas we should have been looking at a 60%, and in some areas a five per cent was a ridiculously too-far stretch.”¹⁹

28. We welcome the work that Ofsted is doing to ensure that the targets it will be judged against are appropriate and await those targets with interest. Consultation on the Strategic Plan is an excellent opportunity for Ofsted to hear and act on the concerns of service users and service providers. We urge Ofsted to use the information gathered from the consultation to identify areas of good practice within the organisation and also identify areas that need improvement.

29. Zenna Atkins told us that

“the Board is very much there to monitor that we actually deliver this [the Strategic Plan]. Where we have not—and it is one of the commitments that I strongly make that I do not think if we set really stretched targets we should be surprised if we do not make some of them—what we need to do is not change them, but to be honest about that. My experience has been that where you do not necessarily have shareholders[...] where you have people who are constantly saying, ‘Hang on a minute, you said this but you’ve actually done this, and you’ve changed the target’, the Board will be doing that and will be honestly publicising.”²⁰

We ask our successors to return to this issue in future meetings with HMCI to see both the progress that Ofsted is making towards the targets and priorities and also how successful the non-executive Board has been.

Bullying within Ofsted

30. The 2006 Survey of Ofsted Staff revealed a high percentage of staff, 23%, claimed they had been bullied or harassed. Zenna Atkins said “as a Board [...] we take that very seriously. It is not acceptable. Twenty three per cent reporting harassment and bullying, for whatever reason, is not acceptable.”²¹

31. HMCI argued that “I am still not absolutely sure whether people do not like being managed, and see that as harassment and bullying.”²² However, she also said

“We take the result of the staff survey very seriously. [...] We have analysed it and we have an action plan to address it in a number of areas. The biggest issue is the continuing isolation of so many of the workforce based at home. [...] We really are taking this very seriously, and in the Strategic Plan you will see that we have set ourselves the target of Investors in People Profile, which is quite an advance stage of Investors in People—which you would never be able to get unless you had a staff survey showing that the staff were very positive about working in the

19 Q 170

20 *Ibid.*

21 Q 155

22 Q 151

organisation.[...] I will expect the Chairman of the Board to be assessing me on whether there are significant advances in that survey the next time that we do it.”²³

32. It is clear that nearly a quarter of staff reporting that they are being bullied is far too high. We accept that some work, such as reviewing anti-bullying policy and practice, is already taking place. The consultation with staff which began for the Strategic Plan is one way of fostering a culture of respect for the views and opinions of staff and should continue. We were not reassured by the comments on bullying made in evidence, and we expect regular updates on this issue for our successor Committee.

Inspection and Reporting

33. The Departmental Report 2006-2007 states that the purpose of the Ofsted is

“to make a greater difference for children, young people and adult learners, contributing to their educational, economic and social well-being and contributing more to our success as a country.”²⁴

Core to this aim is the inspection and reporting work that Ofsted does. When asked about the effect of Ofsted in initiating improvement Miriam Rosen said

“We would be the first to admit that all sorts of things help to bring about improvement in schools. [...] we do believe that Ofsted acts as a stimulus. [...] I think we can say there is a correlation; we cannot say there is a direct causal effect.”²⁵

Section 5 and ‘light-touch’ inspections

34. A new form of school inspection was introduced in September 2005 in accordance with the provisions of Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The new system meant shorter notice periods prior to inspection, smaller inspection teams, more frequent inspections, and an increased emphasis on school self-evaluation. In addition to section 5 inspections, reduced-tariff inspections have been introduced for the best performing schools. Reduced-tariff inspections do not require inspectors to spend as much time in schools.

35. Part of the rationale for introducing Section 5 inspections was to reduce the burden on service providers. The new inspections are also meant to use the self-evaluation provided by schools to assess providers’ capacity to improve. HMCI said “there is a very positive feel about the new inspection process, which people feel is less burdensome.”²⁶

36. NFER recently published an evaluation of Section 5 inspections which was commissioned by Ofsted. This found that 88% of respondents were either ‘very satisfied’ or ‘quite satisfied’ with Section 5 inspection.²⁷ The evaluation also found that 95% of schools

23 Q 150

24 Ofsted, *Ofsted Departmental Report 2006-2007*, May 2007, pg 5.

25 Qq 208-209

26 Q 174

27 National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), *Evaluation of the impact of Section 5 inspections*, April 2007, pg iii-iv.

found the Self-Evaluation form ‘very helpful’ or ‘somewhat helpful’ as a vehicle for self evaluation.²⁸

37. The NUT also carried out a survey of its members and their views on Ofsted in autumn 2006 which found 60% of respondents felt Ofsted inspection was an aid to self-evaluation.²⁹ The NUT survey also found that on most issues respondents were more positive about Ofsted and Section 5 inspections than they had been when the NUT carried out a similar survey in 2004. When the first survey was carried out Section 5 inspection had not begun and respondents were expressing views about proposals rather than reporting their own experience.

38. The number of respondents who viewed inspections as supportive and motivating for teachers had risen from 17% to 35% and those who did not view inspections as supportive or motivating had fallen from 59% to 36%.³⁰ Section 5 inspections were felt to be an improvement on the old system by 75% of respondents, compared to 37% in 2004 who believed it would be an improvement.³¹

39. However, there have been some concerns about the new inspection arrangements. The *TES* claimed to have seen inspection packs, used for Ofsted inspections, which showed that school gradings are being based on exam results rather than the quality of teaching because of the reliance on performance data and a shorter time for teaching observation. The article claimed

“Ofsted verdicts now place great weight on statistical judgments about how good a school’s test and exam results are. The *TES* has seen copies of inspection packs in which inspectors are asked to use statistical tools in reaching a verdict on how high standards are in a school. Each of these tools is framed in the same way: a comparison is made as to how good the school’s results are, compared to the national average. This can be plotted graphically, with the national average represented as a line in the middle. Those schools which finish well above the line are likely to be ‘outstanding’ for standards. Those slightly above the national norm will be ‘good’; those on line or slightly below will be ‘satisfactory, and those well below the national average will be inadequate.[...] ‘inadequate could simply be translated as ‘below average’, while ‘satisfactory’, in a system defined such as this, simply means ‘average’. It is not surprising[...] that many schools will be average, and many will be below average, since by definition all schools cannot be above average.”³²

40. HMCI refuted this claim, saying

“I do want to emphasise that the categories are absolutely not norm-referenced³³ [...] Some of the performance information, the CVA—the contextual value added—has a

28 *Ibid*, p 14, table 2.4.

29 Ev 67

30 Ev 68

31 Ev 69

32 “Verdict on inspectors: inadequate”, *Times Educational Supplement*, 1 December 2006, p 19.

33 A norm-referenced assessment is one where the organisation or individual being assessed is compared to a sample of similar organisations. A norm-referenced system of inspection would compare schools with each other and grade them accordingly, rather than comparing all schools against set criteria.

norm reference. [...] this is part of the whole picture; it is not the whole picture. We do look at a number of things. The overriding thing—and I really do want to emphasise this—is the inspector’s judgment; the debate in the school; what she or he sees in the school; what emerges from discussions; and what other information the school might have.”³⁴

41. Another area of concern is the reliance on self-evaluation and whether this provides an accurate picture of the quality of teaching within a school. Aspect, a union representing professionals working in educational improvement and children’s services, said “the available evidence suggests that the quality of English schools’ self-review remains uneven.”³⁵ However, the NFER evaluation found that in 85% of schools the Section 5 inspection confirmed the schools’ own evaluation.³⁶

42. HMCI also reported a positive attitude to self-evaluation, saying, “the process has changed in a number of ways.[...]The second major strand I would identify is the increased focus on self-evaluation—much stronger now than ever before—and schools themselves are universally positive about the self-evaluation element.”³⁷

43. We welcome moves that reduce the burden of inspection on service providers but changes to the inspection system must ensure that a rigorous inspection framework that can identify under-performing schools is maintained. We recognise that self-evaluative work can be beneficial for schools, highlighting areas for improvement but we urge Ofsted to ensure that self-evaluations are of sufficient quality and accuracy to be relied on as part of an inspection.

44. There has also been criticism of reduced tariff, or ‘light-touch’, inspections and whether the light touch is, in fact, too light. Reduced-tariff inspections are used in the best performing schools but Aspect urged caution in “a significant widening of the category of high-achieving schools to be viewed as requiring only a single-day visit by one inspector [...] to embrace 30% of all schools from April 2007.”³⁸

45. The NUT has also voiced concern that

“many of these schools have not been inspected under the new Section 5 arrangements. Judgements on whether a school is eligible for a reduced tariff inspection are made therefore, purely on the evidence available from pupil performance data, with all of the dangers of relying too heavily on such an approach.”

They have also criticised reduced-tariff inspections, saying

“Under the new arrangements for the inspection of higher achieving schools, the process of inspection remains very similar to that for full Section 5 inspections. This

34 Qq 65–66

35 Ev 48

36 NFER, *Evaluation of the impact of Section 5 inspections, April 2007*, p 17, table 2.5.

37 Q 9

38 Ev 48

means that inspectors undertake the same kinds of activities during the inspection visit, but have even less time to complete them.”³⁹

46. When asked if the new inspections arrangements were better at identifying weaknesses in schools than the previous inspection arrangements, Miriam Rosen said, “If anything it would be better at that because of this very sharp focus on the overall effectiveness of the school, aided by the data and the self-evaluation.”⁴⁰ If Section 5 inspections are more effective at identifying weaknesses than previous inspection regimes it seems probable that even schools which are performing well would benefit from at least one full Section 5 inspection before moving onto reduced tariff inspections.

47. We are concerned that some schools could be eligible for reduced tariff inspections without undergoing a full Section 5 inspection. Ofsted should clarify whether schools are identified as ‘high performing’ on the basis of previous inspection, data such as exam results or a combination of the two. We urge Ofsted to monitor how successful reduced-tariff inspections are at identifying falling standards in schools. It is important that previously good schools which are either coasting or no longer performing at such a high level are identified early. Ofsted needs to ensure that inspectors do have a proper opportunity to test self evaluation against what is happening in schools. We recommend that light touch inspections are properly evaluated after two years in operation, as we are not fully convinced of their effectiveness.

Clarity of reporting

48. When we last reported on the work of Ofsted we voiced concern that the interpretation of the term satisfactory had shifted and that this was causing concern. We stated that “It must be understood that satisfactory performance represents work that is adequate in all respects in the context in which it takes place.”⁴¹ This issue has continued to provoke debate. The Annual Report 2005-2006 said that “‘Satisfactory’ can never be good enough.”⁴²

49. HMCI said that

“If you look at a ‘satisfactory’ judgement, it means that no aspect of that school’s provision—no major aspect of that school’s provision—is what we would describe as ‘inadequate’. We would think, though, that that school had much further to go. I do not think that any parent would choose, in most cases, to send their child to a school that was described as ‘satisfactory’ [...] So my personal ambition is that all of our schools are ‘good’ schools.”⁴³

50. It is clear that the idea that “satisfactory” is not good enough continues to be contentious. To be effective, the gradings that Ofsted use must be clear and understood by

39 Ev 56

40 Q 203

41 Education and Skills Committee, Sixth Report of Session 2002–03, *The Work of Ofsted*, HC 531, 23 July 2003, para 13

42 *Ofsted: The Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools 2005-06*, HC (2005-06) 1596, November 2006, p 9.

43 Q 65

both service users and service providers. **We fully support HMCI's view that satisfactory schools should be encouraged to improve and that a good school is preferable to a satisfactory one. However, statements suggesting that a satisfactory grading is in some way a failure are unhelpful. We urge Ofsted to ensure that they are clear that satisfactory schools are not failing. Care needs to be taken that the discussion on the quality of provision is constructive rather than accusatory.**

Subject reports

51. As a result of Section 5 inspections only core subjects are inspected as part of a school inspection. The thematic reviews that Ofsted carries out pick up on individual subjects. Each year Ofsted looks at the provision of teaching in some subjects through a small sample of schools. Over a three-year period this data informs the report on that subject. The Royal Society of Chemistry and The National Association of Advisers and Inspectors in Design and Technology have expressed concern about the small number of schools that are involved in the formation of subject reports. The Royal Society of Chemistry claim “it would be most unwise to make robust generalisations on a visit to a sample of schools, possibly as small as 30 in number, given the diversity of provision across England.”⁴⁴ The National Association of Advisers and Inspectors in Design and Technology argue that the yearly sample “is an extremely small sample and unlikely to provide valid and reliable information, even when combined in the triennial subject report.”⁴⁵

52. Miriam Rosen accepted that the sample used to write subject reports was too small to be statistically significant but said

“We feel that this enables us to pick up on particular issues, on strengths and weaknesses, on trend that are happening, and for us to focus in on particular things that we are interested in. It will not be a statistically significant sample, because to be statistically significant you need a huge sample. We are not going to be writing state-of-the-nation reports but, even so, we will be able to write authoritative reports on the basis of these inspections, which tell us about issues in that subject and trends in it.”⁴⁶

53. The House of Lords Science and Technology Committee have also looked and this issue and said

“We do not believe that Ofsted's new regime for the inspection of individual subjects, based on a small and statistically insignificant sample of schools, will provide sufficiently reliable data on science teaching.”⁴⁷

We believe this is also true of other subjects.

44 Ev 82

45 Ev 52

46 Q 99

47 House of Lords, *Science Teaching in Schools*, Tenth Report of the Science and Technology Committee, Session 2005–06, HL Paper 257, para 3.7

54. We are concerned that, while thematic subject reports may identify general issues in subjects they will not provide a reliable picture of the standard of teaching in that subject. We are also concerned that the lack of subject focus in school inspections will lead some schools to neglect non-core subjects in order to improve their grading. We urge Ofsted to review the size of the sample used to produce subject reviews. We also urge Ofsted to ensure that some observation of non-core subjects is included in all inspections.

Every Child Matters

55. We continue to take an active interest in children's issues and the *Every Child Matters* (ECM) agenda. Work towards the five ECM outcomes: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being, is vital for ensuring that children and young people achieve their potential.

56. Ofsted also recognise the importance of the ECM agenda. The Annual Report says "Every child matters: this phrase is central to Ofsted's mission."⁴⁸ When asked whether an emphasis on academic achievement had led to less work being done to support the safety and emotional outcomes for children and young people HMCI replied

"I do not, because I think that the very best schools have a holistic view of the child and do not just look very narrowly at literacy, numeracy and test results. If you look holistically and you are worried about the child's safety or health, and make sure that you do what you can to support in those areas, the results of the enjoy-and-achieve part would improve too. So I think that it is a whole picture that is very important."⁴⁹

57. While supporting the ECM agenda is commendable it is sometimes unclear how Ofsted and inspection can help the delivery of the ECM outcomes. HMCI said

"I suppose the fact that we are inspecting in terms of the five outcomes will mean that the schools look more closely at the five outcomes, and that those five outcomes feed into the school's self-evaluation is key. I think that would be the major thing: that we are going to be shining a light on that area and the school's contribution to those areas."⁵⁰

58. The NUT say that

"The inclusion of the ECM indicators highlights a long-standing tension between what Ofsted uses to base its reports on and what parents and others want to know about schools. Ofsted, through its reliance on performance data to inform judgments, concentrates on that which is easily measurable. Fundamental questions, such as the happiness, well-being and engagement of individual pupils within a school are not so easily answered by a 'snap shot' approach and are more likely to be accurately determined by on-going monitoring and evaluation."⁵¹

48 *Ofsted Annual Report 2005-06*, p 5.

49 Q 117

50 Q 116

51 Ev 57

59. The focus of Ofsted on the five indicators may have had some effect on schools' approaches to ECM. However, inspection alone, particularly reduced-tariff inspection, is unlikely to be able to report in any depth on how well schools are promoting all five outcomes. The formation of the new Ofsted and the consultation over the new Strategic Plan is a good opportunity for Ofsted to consider what additional support it can give to the ECM agenda. **We urge Ofsted, when looking at the operation of the new, larger organisation, to explore ways to strengthen their monitoring of the five ECM outcomes.**

Inspection and improvement

60. One of the main justifications for inspection is that it leads to improvement. In the foreword to the Strategic Plan the Secretary of State for Education and Skills said "Independent external assessment is central in the drive to reform and strengthen our public services."⁵² HMCI also expressed the view that "inspection can lead and shape change."⁵³

61. There is also some evidence that teachers and school leadership teams feel that inspections help to improve their schools. The NFER found that 85% of respondents felt that inspection had contributed to improvement to a great extent or some extent and 89% of respondents felt inspection was likely to contribute to school improvements to a great extent or some extent.⁵⁴ John Brennan, head of the Association of Colleges also said,

"Colleges need Ofsted. They need an external, dispassionate observer to report without fear or favour, to set the benchmarks for success and show how far colleges have come to meet the needs of the people they teach. The professional judgment of Ofsted is respected by parents, politicians and civil servants alike."⁵⁵

62. While inspection may contribute to improvement, HMCI has made it clear that the responsibility for improvement lies with individual schools, saying

"I cannot stress enough that the responsibility for improvement rests with the institution, the organisation. We cannot do it from outside the school. [...] That is not our role. [...] What schools have told us is that the regular visits when a school is in difficulties help them become better at evaluation themselves, in assessing whether their progress has been as good as they think it has, but as to the real locus of responsibility for development and improvement, it seems to me absolutely essential that it rests with the school."⁵⁶

63. ALI and CSCI both took a more active role in helping providers to improve their service. Improvement and support was, in both cases, provided by the same agency that carried out the inspection process. While Ofsted argues that it drives improvement it does not provide support to schools. Instead it highlights areas of weakness or areas where

52 *Ofsted Strategic Plan 2007-2010*, p 3.

53 *Ofsted Annual Report 2005-06*, p 9.

54 NFER, *Evaluation of the impact of Section 5 inspections*, April 2007, p 58, table 4.8.

55 "Watchdog wanted", *Education Guardian*, 22 May 2007, p 8.

56 Qq 20-21

improvement could be achieved. The Quality Improvement Agency [QIA] supports improvement by being a ‘critical friend’ and identifying effective ways of improving performance. HMCI said that “it is absolutely accepted that Ofsted inspectors will continue to provide examples of good practice which would then be fed through to the QIA and so the resource will continue for the system in some way.”⁵⁷

64. While schools, in general, seem satisfied with Ofsted’s role—assessing quality but not working with schools on the improvement process—other sectors are used to an inspection service that also does active improvement work. It is important that Ofsted clearly communicates to all service users what it does and does not do. It is also vital that Ofsted continues to pass examples of good practice to improvement agencies to ensure that they provide the best help possible for service providers.

65. It still appears that Ofsted has no capacity to give advice when a cluster of local schools suffer from systemic underperformance. This continues to be a weakness in the inspection system.

Recruiting and retaining senior management teams

66. Ofsted has emphasised the importance of head teachers and senior leadership teams in ensuring the quality of schools. The Annual Report notes that “Good leadership and management are [...] essential.”⁵⁸ HMCI expanded on this saying “I think leadership and management are really important; but I also think that the quality of teaching is absolutely vital.”⁵⁹ When asked about research from the Policy Exchange which suggests headteachers do not make a difference in a school⁶⁰ she said “All our inspection evidence is that the quality of leadership and management is very important and that head do make a difference.”⁶¹

67. Brenda Despontin of the Girls’ School Association claimed that between 2004 and 2005 the proportion of vacancies for head teachers that needed to be readvertised rose from 27% to 36% in secondary schools, and from 27% to 38% in primary schools.⁶² At 2006 conference of the National Association of Head Teachers it was suggested that one of the reasons fewer teachers wanted to become heads was the pressure of Ofsted inspections and the consequences of a bad report for head teachers.⁶³

68. When asked if Section 5 inspections would have an impact on the number of applicants for head teacher posts Miriam Rosen said

“we have been told that the new inspection framework is less stressful overall, but there is more intensive focus on the senior leadership team. The self-evaluation

57 Q 32

58 *Ofsted Annual Report 2005-06*, p 8.

59 Q 82

60 Policy Exchange, *The Leadership Effect: Can headteachers make a difference*, 2007.

61 Q 251

62 “Recruitment of heads ‘in crisis’”, BBC News Online, 13 November 2006.

63 “School leaders have had enough”, BBC News Online, 5 May 2006.

means that inspectors have to hold quite a focused dialogue with the head teacher and with other senior leaders[...] So I do not know if we are going to see a link or not. I think there is a huge range of factors which contribute to workforce issues like this”.⁶⁴

69. A rigorous inspection regime is unlikely to ever be stress-free, especially for senior managers in a school. However, despite some reports that the pressure of Ofsted inspection is a significant reason for teachers not wanting to become heads, we were presented with little evidence that this is the case.

Conclusions and recommendations

Continuing scrutiny of Ofsted

1. We recommend that the scrutiny work that this Committee has carried out on Ofsted is continued by successor committees. (Paragraph 7)

The New Ofsted

2. This is a time of great change for Ofsted and whilst we are sensitive to the challenges that this brings we are still concerned at the complex set of objectives and sectors that Ofsted now spans and its capacity to fulfil its core mission. (Paragraph 13)
3. We welcome the potential for the new Ofsted to take a more comprehensive and strategic view of the issues affecting children, young people and adult learners but we are concerned at the increasing complexity of this large bureaucracy and the ability of its new non-executive board to rapidly grasp this complexity. (Paragraph 20)
4. However, a number of sectors which are now under the remit of Ofsted had expressed concern about the effect that the creation of the new Ofsted would have on them. It is clear that some of these reservations are still present. Ofsted have already expressed a desire to engage service users and providers from all of the sectors they are responsible for. This is essential if Ofsted is to fulfil its potential and we encourage Ofsted to intensify their work in this area. (Paragraph 21)
5. The new Ofsted has been operating only since April 2007. We will be interested to see what will be achieved in the first twelve months of the new Ofsted and what value has been added by its creation. We cannot disguise our concern as to the fitness for purpose of the organisation at the present moment. We will return to this issue in future meetings with HMCI. (Paragraph 22)

The Strategic Plan 2007-2010 and the work ahead

6. We welcome the work that Ofsted is doing to ensure that the targets it will be judged against are appropriate and await those targets with interest. Consultation on the Strategic Plan is an excellent opportunity for Ofsted to hear and act on the concerns of service users and service providers. We urge Ofsted to use the information gathered from the consultation to identify areas of good practice within the organisation and also identify areas that need improvement. (Paragraph 27)
7. We will return to this issue in future meetings with HMCI to see both the progress that Ofsted is making towards the targets and priorities and also how successful the non-executive Board has been. (Paragraph 27)

Inspection and Reporting

8. We welcome moves that reduce the burden of inspection on service providers but changes to the inspection system must ensure that a rigorous inspection framework

that can identify under-performing schools is maintained. We recognise that self-evaluative work can be beneficial for schools, highlighting areas for improvement but we urge Ofsted to ensure that self-evaluations are of sufficient quality and accuracy to be relied on as part of an inspection. (Paragraph 42)

9. We are concerned that some schools could be eligible for reduced tariff inspections without undergoing a full Section 5 inspection. Ofsted should clarify whether schools are identified as ‘high performing’ on the basis of previous inspection, data such as exam results or a combination of the two. We urge Ofsted to monitor how successful reduced-tariff inspections are at identifying falling standards in schools. It is important that previously good schools which are either coasting or no longer performing at such a high level are identified early. (Paragraph 46)
10. We fully support HMCI’s view that satisfactory schools should be encouraged to improve and that a good school is preferable to a satisfactory one. However, statements suggesting that a satisfactory grading is in some way a failure are unhelpful. We urge Ofsted to ensure that they are clear that satisfactory schools are not failing. Care needs to be taken that the discussion on the quality of provision is constructive rather than accusatory. (Paragraph 49)
11. We are concerned that, while thematic subject reports may identify general issues in subjects they will not provide a reliable picture of the standard of teaching in that subject. We are also concerned that the lack of subject focus in school inspections will lead some schools to neglect non-core subjects in order to improve their grading. We urge Ofsted to review the size of the sample used to produce subject reviews. We also urge Ofsted to ensure that some observation of non-core subjects is included in all inspections. (Paragraph 53)
12. We urge Ofsted, when looking at the operation of the new, larger organisation, to explore ways to strengthen their monitoring of the five Every Child Matters outcomes. (Paragraph 58)

Inspection and improvement

13. While schools, in general, seem satisfied with the Ofsted’s role—assessing quality but not working with schools on the improvement process—other sectors are used to an inspection service that also does active improvement work. It is important that Ofsted clearly communicates to all service users what it does and does not do. It is also vital that Ofsted continues to pass examples of good practice to improvement agencies to ensure that they provide the best help possible for service providers. (Paragraph 63)
14. It still appears that Ofsted has no capacity to give advice when a cluster of local schools suffer from systemic underperformance. This continues to be a weakness in the inspection system. (Paragraph 64)

Formal minutes

Monday 2 July 2007

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Jeff Ennis

Paul Holmes

Helen Jones

Fiona Mactaggart

Mr Gordon Marsden

Mr Andrew Pelling

Stephen Williams

Mr Rob Wilson

The Work of Ofsted

The Committee considered this matter.

Draft Report, proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 69 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Ordered, That memoranda be appended to the Report.

Ordered, That the memoranda be reported to the House.

Several Memoranda were ordered to be reported to the House for placing in the Library and Parliamentary Archives.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 4 July at 9.15 am

Witnesses

Wednesday 13 December 2006

Page

Ms Christine Gilbert CBE, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, **Mr Dorian Bradley**, Director, Early Years, **Mr Robert Green**, Director, Inspectorate Reform, **Ms Vanessa Howlison**, Director, Finance, and **Ms Miriam Rosen**, Director, Education, Ofsted

Ev 1

Wednesday 9 May 2007

Ms Christine Gilbert CBE, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, **Ms Zenna Atkins**, Chairman, Ofsted Board, **Ms Miriam Rosen**, Director, Education, **Mr Dorian Bradley**, Director, Children, and **Ms Vanessa Howlison**, Director, Finance, Ofsted

Ev 22

List of written evidence

1	Ofsted	Ev 43
2	Association of Colleges (AoC)	Ev 43: Ev 46
3	Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts (Aspect)	Ev 48
4	Harrow Council for Racial Justice (HCRJ)	Ev 50
5	John Chidgey, Honorary President, The National Association of Advisers and Inspectors in Design and Technology (NAAIDT)	Ev 52
6	National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)	Ev 52
7	National Union of Teachers (NUT)	Ev 54: Ev 61
8	Royal Society of Chemistry	Ev 82

List of unprinted 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.

Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL)

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2006–07

First Report	The Work of the Committee in 2005–06	HC 301
Second Report	Citizenship Education	HC 147 (HC 517)
Third Report	Bullying	HC 85 (HC 600)
Fourth Report	The Bologna Process	HC 205 (HC 788)
Fifth Report	14–19 Diplomas	HC 249

Session 2005–06

First Report	Schools White Paper: <i>Higher Standards, Better Schools For All</i>	HC 633-I and II (Cm 6747)
Second Report	Public Expenditure on Education and Skills	HC 479 (HC 1132)
Third Report	Special Educational Needs	HC 478-I, II and III (Cm 6940)
Fourth Report	Further Education	HC 649 (HC 1712)
Fifth Report	Public Expenditure	HC 1201 (HC 211)

Oral evidence

Taken before the Education and Skills Committee

on Wednesday 13 December 2006

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Mr Douglas Carswell
Mr David Chaytor
Jeff Ennis
Paul Holmes

Helen Jones
Fiona Mactaggart
Mr Andrew Pelling
Mr Rob Wilson

Witnesses: **Ms Christine Gilbert CBE**, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, **Mr Dorian Bradley**, Director, Early Years, **Mr Robert Green**, Director, Inspectorate Reform, **Ms Vanessa Howlison**, Director, Finance, and **Ms Miriam Rosen**, Director, Education, Ofsted, gave evidence

Q1 Chairman: Can we welcome Christine Gilbert, the new Chief Inspector, for her first appearance before the Committee, and the rest of the team—Robert Green, Miriam Rosen, Dorian Bradley and Vanessa Howlison—it is very good to see you all here. As we all know, we have a fixed appointment every six months and quite a lot in between, depending on what inquiry the Committee is conducting at that time. As you know, we are coming to the end of an inquiry into citizenship, so you will not be surprised if something around citizenship comes up today, and we also are well into an inquiry into sustainable schools, and so on, and have been looking at bullying too, so there will be some of that dropped into the questions that you will get today. Chief Inspector, we usually give the Chief Inspector a chance to say something about her Annual Report before we get started. Would you like a short time to give us, in a nutshell, what you think are the essential parts of it?

Ms Gilbert: Thank you, Chairman. I welcome the opportunity to appear in front of your Committee in my new capacity as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, and it is a privilege to account for the work of Ofsted through this parliamentary process. By way of introduction what I would like to do is to mention some of the key issues that emerged in the Annual Report, launched just a few weeks ago, and then point to the establishment of the new Ofsted next April. I took up post at the beginning of October. One of my very first tasks as HMCI, in fact during my first week, was to review the Annual Report and produce a commentary on it. I describe it as my report, but you will recognise that the inspection activity within it was carried out with Ofsted under the work of my predecessors David Bell and Maurice Smith, both of whom I understand appeared before you on a number of occasions. You will have seen that this year's report is in two sections. The first provides the state of the nation summary, if you like, of the quality of education and care in England—this is a different format from previous years—and the second offers an overview of a range of issues in education and care based on surveys and reviews of children's

services carried out this past year. If ever a justification were needed for the creation of the new Ofsted, then it is to be found in the pages of this report. The importance of providing high quality support for vulnerable children and young people cannot be overestimated. The Every Child Matters agenda will receive the highest priority from me personally and from the new Ofsted, and it forms, I think, a common thread running through the entire report. I want the new Ofsted to play a central role in the drive for better education, life-long learning and care for children, for young people and for adult learners. To place in context where we are now, I found it useful to go back through the Annual Reports of my predecessors and look at how they had viewed the English education system. Their reports conveyed a sense of improvement and progress, and that was reinforced by my reading of this year's report. The overwhelming majority of child care and nursery education settings inspected are at least satisfactory, and over half are good and outstanding; almost six out of ten maintained schools inspected this year were good or outstanding and I think that is a particularly reassuring statistic and impressive given that the new inspection arrangements have raised the bar; the trend of improvement in further education colleges continues and 11% were outstanding and 44% good; the quality of training for our next generation of teachers, particularly among the school-based providers is improving; and, last but not far from least, I think, annual performance assessments of local authorities judged that the overall provision of children's services in three-quarters of authorities is good or very good. However, as was widely reported at the time of the Annual Report launch, the picture is not a wholly positive one. It is not acceptable that one in 12 schools inspected was judged to be inadequate this past year. In the secondary school sector this proportion rises to around one in eight, nearly twice that of the primary sector, and improving these schools must be a key priority. Equally, the poor levels of attainment and attendance of many

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Ms Vanessa Howlison and Ms Miriam Rosen

children in care is simply unacceptable. I welcome the fact that over the next few months colleagues from the Adult Learning Inspectorate, the Commission for Social Care Inspection and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration will be joining with colleagues from Ofsted to form a potent new force in the drive to enhance the quality of life of children, young people and adult learners. The new Ofsted will be built on the very best of these four inspectorates, and from April we will have a very real opportunity to create a strong, innovative organisation that adds value to what happens currently and drives up performance and standards. The new Ofsted will be supported by stronger governance arrangements, and a number of experienced and very capable non-executive members have been appointed to the new Board, which is to be chaired by Zenna Atkins. The Education and Skills Act protects the Chief Inspector's independence and direct accountability to ministers in Parliament; so this will not be my first and last appearance before your Committee, Mr Chairman. My colleagues and I now look forward to taking your questions. Thank you very much.

Q2 Chairman: Chief Inspector, thank you very much for that. Can I open the questioning by asking you: it is very good to look at the history, but let us look at the recent history since you took over as Chief Inspector? The very first performance in front of the press seems to have given the press the impression that English education is going to hell in a hand-cart. You have given us a fairly balanced view of what you found as you looked at the report and as you did your commentary on English education, but the overwhelming impression in the press was that the state of English education was dreadful and getting worse. Why do you think they got that view?

Ms Gilbert: I clearly cannot speak on behalf of the press, and in fact the presentation I gave at the beginning of the press conference did present a very balanced view. It gave very positive messages and then the negative ones, but I guess the negative messages sell more papers. We are running a number of receptions for outstanding providers of early years, of childcare, schools and colleges—we are running eight of them up and down the country. We had two last week with, I think, 180 in London and 130 people in Manchester, and then we invited the press. There was not a single representative from the press at either occasion and both were very positive occasions both for Ofsted and for those being celebrated in that way.

Q3 Chairman: So you think you got an unrepresentative press coverage. They did not reflect really what you said?

Ms Gilbert: I said a number of very positive things which, to be fair, were reported in most of the press, I guess they do not make the headlines, and the picture, I think, is a strong and positive one. Nevertheless, it is part of Ofsted's job to report

fairly and frankly on what it sees through the inspection process, and it is very important that I do that too.

Q4 Chairman: I understand that. You have been reading (and this is a very valuable process) all the Annual Reports, so you have got a very good idea of the beginning of Ofsted. You know for what reason it was introduced, it has been maintained over two administrations and we are now where we are, so you have got a good historic overview of the process over time. Has Ofsted made a difference?

Ms Gilbert: I am very positive about the inspection process, be it by the Audit Commission, Ofsted or anybody else. I felt that at school level, local authority level, and so on. I thought that before I even applied for this particular job, and I have got lots of anecdotal evidence to show that inspection certainly supports improvement. It does not do the improvement but it supports improvement. Since I took up this post in Ofsted, I have seen more detailed evidence of the impact of our inspection on the process, because this has been something that Ofsted has been giving greater to emphasis to over the past few years; and it is not just me thinking it makes a difference, parents tell us it makes a difference, teachers tell us it makes a difference and heads, as part of those responses, tell us it makes a difference.

Q5 Chairman: What I am trying to get at is, as you did your review, have schools in England got better year on year?

Ms Gilbert: Yes, in my view they have. As you read the Annual Reports year after year and if you look at the framework that was used in those, you can see in the back of those reports the steady improvement. This year, of course, we have changed the framework for inspection, so it is not quite clear by looking at the stark data that that improvement has continued, but one of the reasons that the change in the inspection framework came about is that schools have improved but, at the same time, people's expectations of schools and education and care, more generally, have also risen, and it is important to keep that focus on accelerating improvement, I think, really clear in our minds. The new inspection framework was designed to do that. It was to capture higher expectations and to drive up standards even further.

Q6 Chairman: In your Annual Report you do not reflect that, in the sense that there is no graph or there is no narrative that says, over the period that Ofsted has been operating, there has been a steady improvement in educational attainment and performance. Why do we not have that historic overview, because if the press wants to say education is going to hell in a hand-cart, surely Ofsted can then say, but if you look at the years that Ofsted has been engaged in this process, things have either got steadily better or there have been some dips, but where is the narrative in the report?

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Ms Vanessa Howlison and Ms Miriam Rosen

Ms Gilbert: Looking through the Annual Report, that is said sometimes in some of the commentaries; it is not highlighted every year. I think it would be fairly arid to make some comment like that every single year, but one would want to look at trends over time. I think it is important that we do that. My focus very much, coming in new in the first week of October, was to look at the report I was being presented with and to sit back and draw back from that report and look at the key issues that were emerging from me reading it, to discuss those with colleagues and then to write the commentary. My focus this year was very much on what had been achieved this past year.

Q7 Chairman: You do understand?

Ms Gilbert: I do.

Q8 Chairman: If you are a taxpayer, you would quite like to know if all this taxpayers' money that has been poured into Ofsted over the last ten years has actually made a positive difference and an incremental difference?

Ms Gilbert: I take that point, Chairman.

Q9 Chairman: Can I ask you about the new inspection. We used to have the Chief Inspector come in front of us, and the sort of information that we would get from all sorts of people who knew that the Chief Inspector was going to be in front of us would be on the lines of, "Too much inspection; too rigorous; they are here too long; they take over our schools; we are terrified; our staff are immobilised by the fear of Ofsted coming along", and now we are getting people writing in to us saying, "This is so light-touch, there is no way it can show the quality of our school. There is no way that it can do anything very useful. The light touch has gone beyond anything meaningful." Are you worried about that, because we are getting that kind of report?

Ms Gilbert: I have had both of those things said to me since taking up my post, and reviewing the new process is something that we have taken very seriously in Ofsted. Miriam might want to talk about that later on, but the process has changed in a number of ways. We have got better performance information now than we ever had before, and that plays a major part in the new process. The second major strand I would identify is the increased focus on self-evaluation—much stronger now than ever before and getting better almost as I speak to you—and schools themselves are universally positive about the self-evaluation element. So we have those two things, and we might have a range of data captured in the school evaluation form, as it is described, but the key piece and the most important piece is still the inspector's judgment. Inspectors look at that information before they go into a school, they then test it out in the school in a number of ways. They test it out by talking to the senior management, to teachers, to pupils, they have got information from parents and they go in and out of classrooms. That process is different from the

process before. It happens more frequently than it happened before—every three years now, not every six years. Last year, for instance, Ofsted inspected many more schools than the previous year, so those things, I think, are very important and are helping us and I have been reassured that the system is rigorous. I read every single report if a school is placed in special measures, so I read about maybe half a dozen a week, and I have to be assured that the judgment is a right one, and that report will have been through a number of quality checks before it comes to me, and think there is only one since October in which I queried the judgment. In the end I was persuaded and we have left the judgment, but I was persuaded by the quality of the judgment set out in those reports that the inspectors had got to the heart of what was going on in that school and were seeing that school very clearly.

Q10 Chairman: Is that a problem, Chief Inspector, in the sense that it is in a way easier to evaluate a school that is in serious trouble perhaps, that the short-comings really jump up and bite you as your inspectors go into the school and watch and listen to what is going on? Is that as good when you are visiting a coasting school, a school that is sort of average, not going anywhere, not really improving as fast as you would like, and is that one of the problems that you find? You need a much more sensitive approach, do you not?

Ms Gilbert: I think this new system is absolutely right. If you ask me the single biggest difference will be the closer and tighter focus on a pupil's progress and school performance in those schools, because this time the performance data raises a number of questions that you will then debate when you go into schools. For instance, a school that is getting 70% five A—Cs will look on paper as though it is a very good school. The CVA data might suggest that it is not quite as good as it looks on paper. It is not telling you that it is not, but it is raising a number of questions that the inspectors would then follow through when they attended the school, when they inspected the school.

Q11 Chairman: You have a fascinating background because you have seen education from almost every view, but, drawing on that experience, are you really confident? You have come in and you have got the system you have got; you have not had time to change it. Are you sure that this great emphasis on self-evaluation is really the way to go?

Ms Gilbert: I am absolutely sure that self-evaluation is core to improvement, and I think, whether an organisation is being inspected or not, knowing yourself well, knowing your strengths and weaknesses is absolutely crucial in any organisation. Be it education or the world of business, I think self-evaluation—you might not call it that—is absolutely central. If you do not know your strengths and weaknesses, I do not know how you can progress in a very focused way, and so I do think self-evaluation is very important. What external scrutiny does is

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sharpen that up, and, in fact, that was the most fascinating thing for me reading the evaluation where, I think, about 82% of heads were saying how positive it was. A large majority of them were saying: what it has helped us to do is to validate the things that we are saying in our own assessment; it is reinforcing, if you like, that we have identified the right things and we are going in the right direction.

Q12 Chairman: You do not think, Chief Inspector, that this enormous growth of Ofsted—the taking over of the Adult Learning Inspectorate, getting into the Early Years, the responsibility for Every Child Matters—overall has weakened, that you are doing so much that you have lost your focus? Do you not think that is a danger? People outside are suspecting that that might be the case.

Ms Gilbert: It does not feel a very big organisation to me. I have come from one that is almost four times its size, so it does not seem a very big organisation. I think the issue is whether we are clear about our purpose, and the bringing together of inspectorates, I think, is key in terms of that. It is very clear to me that the Act and the job descriptions I received when I applied for this post focus very much on three things. They focus on improvement, they ask us to focus on users and they ask us to focus on the efficient and effective use of our resources. Those three things are central, and I think that bringing the four inspectorates together gives us an holistic view of what is going on in terms of learning, skills, development, care and so on. We will push forward the ECM agenda, but the broader agenda too, in terms of performance, in a way it has not been done before.

Q13 Chairman: It may not be as big as the last organisation you were with before, but it is a lot of taxpayers' money.

Ms Gilbert: It is.

Q14 Chairman: There are a lot of people in education who say, "You got rid of Ofsted. What can we do with that money in terms of school improvement?" We could do all sorts of things, and you would agree, would you not, that if under your leadership Ofsted does not show value for money, it makes a difference, people will increasingly say, "Why have Ofsted? We have just come back from Australia. They do not have an inspection system like this. They seem to work very well." Unless under your leadership you prove value, people will increasingly say, "Do we need you?"

Ms Gilbert: I applied for the job because I believe that Ofsted, the new Ofsted, will make more of a difference actually than even the four inspectorates separately. If we do not, there is something that I am not doing very well in leading the organisation, but we will continue to build on the processes that are already there in the different organisations to varying degrees, on the processes there for benchmarking ourselves. It is far more difficult to benchmark Ofsted than it was to benchmark the organisation from where I came, but we will

continue to do that, we will continue to look at how efficient we are, we will continue to look at how effective we are and we will ask our users, and find more innovative ways of asking our users, about the difference we make to what is going on on the ground.

Q15 Chairman: Chief Inspector, thank you for that. As you will know, the Chairman of the Committee is the warm-up act.

Ms Gilbert: I did not.

Chairman: We now have some serious questions from David Chaytor.

Q16 Mr Chaytor: Chief Inspector, how do you think the purpose of inspection will change as a result of the creation of new Ofsted?

Ms Gilbert: I think the three things that I have just referred to when answering the Chairman's questions are absolutely central, and they are really clear in the Act. The focus on improvement is much more stark than was there before. We do have to be clear that we are making a difference and that inspection activity is contributing to improvement. We do not improve things ourselves. The different settings, the different organisations use our recommendations and they do the work in terms of improvement, so we do not do that. Secondly, I think the focus on users is much more strong than it has been probably in at least three of the four inspectorates. I think it is very strong in CSCI (the Commission for Social Care Inspection) and I think the new Ofsted will build on the strengths of the existing inspectorates and our focus will be really sharp and clear on users; and in the questions that we have been having about value for money, and so on, I think those things will be really important in establishing this new organisation, because we are describing it very much as a new organisation.

Q17 Mr Chaytor: In terms of the focus on improvements, the Annual Report highlights that in your inspection of Early Years you have a responsibility to see through the recommendations you make in your inspection reports, and I think, from memory, the report says that you had made 80,400 recommendations during your inspections of Early Years settings. Your responsibility is to ensure that these recommendations are implemented, but you do not have quite that responsibility in respect of school or college inspections. Do you now envisage that that will change and there will be a far greater follow-through in the role of Ofsted?

Ms Gilbert: In terms of schools and colleges?

Q18 Mr Chaytor: In terms of schools and colleges.

Ms Gilbert: We cannot force the schools or colleges to do what we are recommending that they do.

Q19 Mr Chaytor: You can in terms of Early Years settings?

Ms Gilbert: It is a different process. It is much more to do with compliance against national standards. I do not know, but Dorian might want to pick up

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some of that. There is much, much more of a regulation aspect, in fact it is regulatory, in the Early Years, whereas it is very much inspection activity in schools and colleges; but what we have established from the evaluation that we have carried out is that over 80% of schools are telling us that they think the recommendations are right and that they are using the recommendations. Some of them are even using them before we have produced the report. So they are telling us that that is the case. If a school is in an inadequate category, we will be going back to check what they are doing, not necessarily the detail of what we have said, but that their provision in the school is improving.

Q20 Mr Chaytor: In terms of your focus on school improvement, the only change will be slightly more frequent return visits or a quicker return visit in the case of a school that is in difficulties. You do not think that the power to make schools comply would be an essential power if Ofsted is really going to focus on school improvement?

Ms Gilbert: No. I would not want any more powers in terms of school compliance than we have at the moment. I cannot stress enough that the responsibility for improvement rests with the institution, the organisation. We cannot do it from outside the school, and we do not do it in the Early Years setting either, but we go back to check that it is being done in a very formal way against national standards, but the approach is different, as I said.

Q21 Mr Chaytor: You will recognise that one of the criticisms of the role of Ofsted has always been that the inspectors come in, they make their criticism and they go away and that is it, and the school is left without sufficient support. Has that been a valid criticism in the past and, if it is, do you not think that there is a responsibility to respond to that and be a little bit more—

Ms Gilbert: I would probably say that that was a misunderstanding of our role. That is not our role. As part of the change in the new framework, we devote more resources to schools that are in difficulties, and I think that is entirely appropriate. What schools have told us there is that the regular visits when a school is in difficulties help them to become better at evaluating themselves, in assessing whether their progress has been as good as they think it has, but as to the real locus of responsibility for development and improvement, it seems to me absolutely essential that it rests with the school.

Q22 Mr Chaytor: What would the relationship be between Ofsted and the School Improvement Partners?

Ms Gilbert: I think the School Improvement Partners are doing a different job. We work closely with the DfES, and so on, in a number of ways, and the initiative came from the DfES, and they have only been going a little while. I suppose I would liken them (and I do not know if this borne out in practice, it might be borne out just by my anecdotal knowledge) more to local authority advisers: they

give support, they also give some challenge to schools in particular areas. They are employed, I think, they are certainly funded, by the local authority, and their focus is very much on support and development of that school. They understand Ofsted's role, which is external scrutiny. Ofsted developed in the very beginning because the system that we had, I think, for local advice and support was not sufficiently rigorous to get the sort of improvement the country needed.

Q23 Mr Chaytor: But after a critical inspection, will the School Improvement Partner not be responsible for ensuring that the Ofsted recommendations were implemented?

Ms Gilbert: I do not know enough about them to say, but my guess is that they would not. My guess is that the school is itself still responsible. The head and the governing bodies have to discharge that responsibility, because they can ignore, presumably, what the School Improvement Partner is telling them. They will be fairly daft to do so, particularly, I guess, because they are generally involved in the performance assessment of the head teacher too.

Q24 Mr Chaytor: You do not see the School Improvement Partner as an enforcer; the School Improvement Partner will remain a critical friend rather than an enforcer?

Ms Gilbert: Certainly that is my understanding of their role, but, as I say, I have not had detailed experience of it. We have not done an evaluation in Ofsted, as far as I am aware, of the role of the SIP.

Ms Rosen: The School Improvement Partner's role is to provide support and challenge. If you consider the case of a school which has just been put into a category of concern, perhaps into special measures, it is the role of the head teacher to bring about improvement but they will receive support from the School Improvement Partner, from the local authority; and the local authority is likely to take action if they do not bring about rapid improvement, but the locus of responsibility has to remain within the school; external forces cannot make a school improvement; it is the work of the head and the teachers within the school that brings about the improvement. As to our interaction with the School Improvement Partner, we will look at the School Improvement Partner's report on the school when we inspect a school.

Q25 Mr Chaytor: Finally, can I ask, Chairman, about the value for money aspect. Clearly, the cost of Ofsted has been an issue. The amalgamation of different inspectorates has resulted in some savings. Do you expect this process to continue? Are you planning for further reductions in the size of the Ofsted budget over the next two/three years and, specifically, how do you expect to squeeze out more value from the existing the budget on which you are working?

Ms Gilbert: One of the things that has struck me in coming new to Ofsted is the level of reduction that the organisation has already managed and

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managed, I think, very effectively. It has been very significant. There have been Gershon efficiency savings and then there have been the reductions relating to the Better Regulation Executive. I think it is about £120 million over time that has got to be found. A significant amount of that has been found, but there is still more to find. I cannot pretend to you that is easy, we will live within whatever budget we have got, but we are still looking at a number of ways to bridge the remaining gap that we have. We are part way through a cycle of reduction which we are going to see through. I do not know if Vanessa wants to add anything to that?

Ms Howlison: Yes. Our combined budgets were £266 million in 2003–04. The reduction needs to take us to 186 million by 2008–09. That sounds like a big jump, particularly when you consider the inflation impact, and it is a big jump, but Ofsted has done a considerable amount in the past to deliver savings, as Christine says, partly through Gershon, though the merger itself will generate a dividend of £15 million, which is where it will cost us less to provide, particularly back office functions, when you merge the organisations together. There are a range of other proposals which we are discussing with the Department to take us further down the road to BRE compliance, and we do still have a gap at the moment. We are working with DfES on proposals to bridge that gap, and a lot of them are about really moving further forward down the track that Ofsted were already going in terms of proportionate inspection. We were also reducing our costs before the BRE reduction was announced and a lot of the proposals are simply taking us further down the line of proportionate inspection where we are focusing more of our effort and resource at the areas which deserve it most.

Q26 Mr Pelling: Can inspectors be school improvement advisers?

Ms Gilbert: Can HMI be?

Q27 Mr Pelling: Yes, in their brief visits to schools?

Ms Gilbert: Technically can they be, do you mean?

Q28 Mr Pelling: Or informally can they be?

Ms Gilbert: I see, informally. I am sure they certainly cannot be SIPs officially, but they can certainly advise. Actually I have had a number of letters since I started saying how much head teachers have valued the support. They usually do use the word “challenge” in that context as well. The ones that I am talking about are the schools essentially in special measures that have had quite an intensive relationship with an inspector over a period of time, because it is the same inspector, generally, that will come back for the visits, and so on; and, obviously, if you are talking with the head and school about what you are seeing, you are advising as part of that, or you are making some recommendations as part of that.

Chairman: That was Andrew’s first question as new member of the Committee. Welcome.

Q29 Paul Holmes: When Ofsted go into an FE college and they use the Common Inspection Framework, the college knows what they have got to do to please Ofsted and try and get a good report, but colleges also have another master that they have to appeal to, which is the Learning and Skills Council, who control funds and, under the current Government’s proposals, are going to be giving a direction on how to close colleges down. The Learning and Skills Council are developing a Framework for Excellence, which they consulted on in October, there is a vision document in January and the final version in June. So the colleges are getting a bit worried that the Framework for Excellence seems to be developing out of kilter with the Common Inspection Framework and that by next autumn they are going to have to do one set of things to please the Learning and Skills Council, who control the money, and one set of things to please you, who can hang them out to dry with a bad report. How is that going to be catered for?

Ms Gilbert: I have had a number of discussions with the Association of Colleges and various college principals since I took up post, not just about that but as part of that discussion, and every single one has raised the same issue. We have responded at Ofsted to the consultation that came out on this and made a number of points, such as the need to have one framework, also coherence across the frameworks. For instance, we would be asking for four grades rather than the five that they are recommending, and so on. We have sent in a response, and we hope that those points will be considered. I think the overriding thing is that relationships are good at various levels in Ofsted and the LSC and so on and that we are talking and debating, and we have responded formally and we hope that those responses will be listened to, because I think it would be very difficult to operate with two frameworks in the way that you have just described.

Q30 Paul Holmes: So you hope that the Learning and Skills Council are going to respond. Perhaps Miriam is doing this more nuts and bolts. Are you getting a good response from the Learning and Skills Council?

Ms Rosen: We are working closely with them to make sure that there is coherence between the Common Inspection Framework and the Framework for Excellence. So that work is going on together with the department, and we will have to think about how best to operate that, whether the Common Inspection Framework really fits into, and is part of, the Framework for Excellence, but we are quite sure there has to be coherence and that we cannot have colleges operating to separate frameworks. I think there is goodwill on all sides to work as closely as we can to achieve that aim.

Q31 Paul Holmes: So you do get the impression that the Learning and Skills Council share your concern that colleges should not have two separate contradictory frameworks?

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Ms Rosen: Yes. I think that is well understood and they wish to work with us. If you look at the response to the consultation document, it actually quotes from us and names us all the way through, which, again, I think, is very good because it has been very open about what we have said and what other people have said and how we want to resolve things in the best possible way.

Q32 Paul Holmes: One of the things the colleges valued about the Adult Learning Inspectorate was that when they saw good practice during the inspections, they have their website called Excalibur, and they put the good examples up so that colleges could easily refer to them, and that has now been passed on to the Quality Improvement Agency. How will the Ofsted inspectors pass on really good examples or do they not see that as their role?

Ms Gilbert: Again, I think relationships are very strong. This has not been raised with me. It has been talked about that this is going to happen, but it has not been raised with me as an issue of concern. The details are still being worked out, but it is absolutely accepted that Ofsted inspectors will continue to provide examples of good practice which would then be fed through to the QIA and so the resource will continue for the system in some way.

Q33 Paul Holmes: So that will be a specific requirement of Ofsted inspectors, that they should pass the good examples straight through?

Ms Gilbert: Yes, they are absolutely clear that that is what they will be doing as part of the new arrangements.

Q34 Paul Holmes: With Ofsted expanding into different areas, from schools, to Early Years to colleges, it is a little like the parallel one with a single equality contribution set up with different strands—visibility, gender, *etcetera*. They all feel, “We are going to lose out in this merger”, that only one strand will come to dominate. There is the same feeling with Ofsted. How far will the specialisms of the Adult Learning Inspectorate, for example, change the way Ofsted operates or how far will simply Ofsted say, “This is the way we do it.”

Ms Gilbert: I have been very keen to talk all the time about the new Ofsted, because though Ofsted remains, the title remains, the title of the office is different than previously from 1 April, and though Ofsted is bigger than the other organisations, I think it is very important that we certainly look and feel new internally, that it is one organisation focused very much in the same way. I do see the strengths of each, and I do not mean this in just the clichés I think that the strengths of each will really contribute to the whole. In year one, actually I do not think that the differences will be more than minimal in some of the ways that we operate, but I think through time we will change in the way that we are inspecting, and so on, by using perhaps more imaginative ways looking across the different strands in different things. The inspectors from the ALI seem to me now positive. They were accepting, and they are now positive,

about the move and are very keen to get started. Some see a larger organisation giving them more opportunity to do different things; some, for instance, have asked to be trained as school inspectors as well so that they might have a broader view across, and I think that is particularly important with things such as the 14–19 focus that we have got. So we do see that bringing the strengths together will make a stronger, more thriving organisation; it will do much more than we would be doing separately.

Q35 Paul Holmes: But in three or four years time when all this has bedded in, is your vision that you will have generic inspectors who this week can do a nursery placement and next week do an FE college, or will it be more discrete areas?

Ms Gilbert: No, I do not ever envisage that, who knows, but certainly within four years I would not envisage that. I think it is important that we do not lose our specialism in some way. In particular, in some of the adult learning the focus there is important, and certainly employers have valued that as part of the service that they have received from the ALI. So I do not see that we are just going to have generic inspectors but I think we might be doing things together across the organisation, in a way, and I think there will be a lowering of some of the boundaries that we have established or that we will be establishing from April.

Q36 Paul Holmes: One last question, and it parallels something that is going to be asked later about subject reports within schools. If you go into an FE college, on the one hand you might need the expertise to assess whether you are training bricklayers and plumbers very well, but later on that morning you go and look at the graphic design department, which is an utterly different world. Have you got the expertise, will you retain the expertise, to make proper assessments of those vastly different areas within an FE college?

Ms Gilbert: As far as I am aware now, the teams are joint for some of the inspections of FE colleges. I think that is one of the reasons that the ALI inspectors themselves are so positive about coming over; but we are looking at the inspection process, or will be looking at the inspection process, for FE. In fact, we are going to be consulting on shifts to that process probably early in the New Year now, and, again, that will have the same risk assessment, if you like, and putting resources where they need to be. That does not mean, in my view, that there will be no external scrutiny of the very best, but there will be minimal scrutiny of the very best, or a light touch, if you like.

Q37 Chairman: But you are going to have a wheel-change, the Leitch suggestions are going to transform FE, and you are going to have to change your inspection system quite dramatically to meet those new circumstances, are you not?

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Ms Gilbert: We will have to change, but I think, as I look at the history of Ofsted, it changes the inspection framework and I think it is very healthy that it does change the framework. I think in terms of what is coming in terms of skills and so on, certainly we will have to look at what we are doing but I do think there are elements in what is happening now that can be built on, particularly what is going on now with the work-based inspection through the ALI.

Q38 Chairman: Do you share the concern of your colleagues in the Adult Learning Inspectorate about that shift that is in Leitch, that there is so much more emphasis on employer-driven, demand-driven in that sector? You have seen the comments of your colleague in the Adult Learning Inspectorate?

Ms Gilbert: Yes, I was at the launch of the Annual Report yesterday, and I do not recall the comment, I do not recall anxiety. He talked about some anxiety about light-touch inspection—maybe that is the bit I noticed—but I do not recall him talking about anything other than positively about the changes that are being proposed.

Q39 Chairman: It is the wicked press again, is it?

Ms Gilbert: I have missed it. I have obviously missed what you are referring to.

Q40 Mr Carswell: Why do we have an Ofsted?

Ms Gilbert: Why do we have an Ofsted? I think we have it for a number of reasons. I think we do have it to generate improvement; we have it to demonstrate that public money is being used effectively; we have it to give assurance that what is happening in care and education up and down the country is reaching at least minimal standards; and I think we have it to give advice to the Secretary of State. Have I missed anything out? I am sorry, and information for parents—that has been absolutely key.

Q41 Mr Carswell: So we have had years of Ofsted, and yet in your report you say that standards are not good. How can you claim that Ofsted is actually good for standards: it has not done terribly well if improving standards is its *raison d'être*, has it?

Ms Gilbert: I think I say in the report, and I said at the launch of the Annual Report, that things were still not good enough. As I said in response to some of the Chairman's remarks and in my introduction, I think there has been significant improvement. Ofsted cannot take all of the credit for all of that improvement—I do not think Ofsted would pretend to—but I think it has contributed to the improvement that we have seen. I think one of the things that Ofsted is very good at is reporting fairly and frankly about what they are seeing, even if it is unsettling for people, even if people do not like it, and I think that people take those remarks very seriously. The research that we did with parents told us that 92% of parents think that Ofsted is a very good thing and they felt reassured by it and it led to improvement.

Q42 Mr Carswell: You have talked me through the actual mechanics for improving standards; how can it drive up standards? Is there not a case for saying that actually the additional paperwork and the distraction from the classroom that Ofsted inspections create for teachers and the senior management teams in schools maybe distracts from high standards? How can the tick-box inspection system actually drive up standards? Could you talk me through what is a measure of performance which actually influences outcome and process?

Ms Gilbert: I will ask Miriam to say something about the grades and the detail of the framework, because I think that would be helpful in terms of the general answer, but I do want to emphasise that Ofsted is not asking for loads of paper, it is not asking for anything other than a look at the school evaluation form, which I think most schools would tell you is a real aid to their own development, and particularly having done it once where they did find it time-consuming, and so on, they find that they are just amending it and adjusting it during the course of the year, they find it a very valuable tool in terms of their own improvement. I cannot stress enough that it is the schools that improve themselves. We give them information that they might not have got anywhere else. The external scrutiny is really important, I think, and certainly on the receiving end of it as a local authority, both in education and the wider view through the comprehensive performance assessment, it was very rare for inspection not to just hold a mirror up in a slightly different way and help you see something or help you see your way through something that you had not been able to see your way through before. So I think the element of external scrutiny, which is why an Ofsted inspector's role is so different from the role of the SIP, is really valuable. In the discussions with colleagues from FE when I went to speak at their conference, a very large conference at the Association of Colleges a few weeks ago, I was expecting some hostility to Ofsted. There was absolutely none. There was a real welcome for the level of scrutiny people get externally from us, and they feel that the way we are going in terms of proportionality, and so on, is absolutely right; but I did want to clarify that people are not being expected to do loads of extra paper work because they are now being inspected. In terms of the level of improvements, I think that the grade descriptors are really helpful. Perhaps Miriam could add to what I have just said in terms of that.

Ms Rosen: Can I, first of all, say that the new current schools inspection framework has certainly reduced the stress for schools. All the feedback that we have had from head teachers and teachers says that the stress is reduced because the inspections are shorter and also it is much less noticed. There is not the six weeks of waiting for the inspectors to come doing additional preparations; so we definitely cut down the stress. The framework makes explicit the standards that we are looking for, and this helps the schools know what they are aiming for, helps them with their self-evaluation. That has been a significant

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driver for improvement. One of the things we have done with the new school inspection framework is that the criteria are actually more rigorous, and because we have the new performance data, which enables us to look very closely at how different groups of people are making progress, again, that helps both the school and the inspectors to see: is enough progress being made by the pupils of this school? That is a significant driver for improvement.

Q43 Mr Carswell: You used a phrase “driver for improvement”. Standards in supermarkets or shops are not maintained by government inspectors. We do not have an Ofshop. Standards are maintained by choice. Surely, if you are out to drive up standards, you should be recommending that a driver for improvement should be a bottom-up choice rather than purely top-down inspection?

Ms Rosen: Parents do have a choice as to where to send their children to school, and Ofsted actually informs that choice by producing independent external reports on schools, but I think at the same time the fact that we give schools very focused recommendations that they can concentrate on would also help them to bring about improvement. There is not a single answer to your question, I think.

Ms Gilbert: Chairman, could I ask my colleague to say something about Early Years.

Q44 Chairman: Dorian, we would hate for you to remain silent for any longer?

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Chairman. Certainly since Ofsted took over Early Years in 2001 we have reduced the impact on the providers that we inspect in a number of ways. We have gone for a longer inspection period for the good providers. We have reduced the time on site, as it were. We certainly do not use tick-boxes; it is a professional dialogue with the providers and an in-depth assessment of what the providers do for the young children in the country. We can point to a fairly significant improvement in the quality of what we have seen. Compared with the inspection programme that ended in March 2003, which was our first major programme, the new programme shows that about 56% of child minders and 46% of day care providers have moved from unsatisfactory to satisfactory in that period, and a similar improvement from satisfactory to good, 25% of child minders and 18% of day care providers; so it is a steady growth in the quality which is measured by inspection and, as Miriam and Christine have stressed, it is important that providers take on that quality improvement agenda but they do it against the background of that external scrutiny and the recommendations made by the inspectors.

Q45 Mr Carswell: One final question, if I may, to Miss Howlison. At the beginning we heard that an efficient use of public money was a key objective of Ofsted. Could you tell me what is the total annual budget of Ofsted this year and how many inspectors you employ?

Ms Howlison: The total budget of Ofsted for the current year is 204.

Q46 Mr Carswell: Two hundred and four million?

Ms Howlison: Two hundred and four million pounds, my apologies, and we currently employ, I think, 260 HMI inspectors and we have around 750 childcare inspectors. Apart from that, of course, a considerable amount of our work is contracted out as part of the inspection contract connected to our five inspection partners in the private sector.

Q47 Mr Carswell: How many roughly?

Ms Howlison: The value of that contract is about £45 million a year. How they deploy their resources is their own business. Obviously we have a degree of involvement in their work, and I think that is more into Miriam’s territory, but that is the kind of scale.

Chairman: I now want to move to deal with the Annual Report. Rob Wilson.

Q48 Mr Wilson: Thank you, Chairman. After ten years of almost constant initiatives in our schools, can we say that as a country we are proud of the results that have come out from our schools?

Ms Gilbert: I think we can be proud of the improvements and the achievements that have been made, and I did say that in my Annual Report and in my comments linked to the report, but I still think there is much further to go. In the authority that I left, when I went there in 1997, 26% of young people were leaving school with five A–C GCSEs and this summer they achieved 56% five A–C. That was not including English, before you ask me that. So there is still a lot more to do, but that sort of progress is really impressive. Nevertheless, almost half are still not leaving with those qualifications, so there is still much more to do in these different areas.

Q49 Mr Wilson: One in eight secondary schools are inadequate, by your own terms, 13% of secondary schools. You think we should be proud of that?

Ms Gilbert: No, I did not say we should be proud of that. I would like to say it was one in eight schools inspected in the course of the year. That is what is in the report. There is a very important distinction which I think has got lost in the reporting. We absolutely should not be proud of that. It is very important that we address that issue and tackle that issue, because every young person deserves to go to a decent school where they are going to make good progress and do well.

Q50 Mr Wilson: One in five 11-year-olds is leaving primary school with poor literacy. Is that something we should be proud of? I think you agreed that it was a national disgrace.

Ms Gilbert: Yes, I am not saying that we should be proud of these, and I did not use the term “national disaster”.

Q51 Mr Wilson: You said you agreed with it when it was described to you?

Ms Gilbert: I think it is a national concern. It is absolutely related to the point I am making about secondary schools in the report and in my introductory remarks, because one of the key

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questions is: why are these schools not providing an acceptable education for these pupils, and leadership and management is very important and has a major role. Nevertheless, if young people are coming to those schools not able to read and write effectively, I think it is a major issue that needs addressing before they get to secondary school. Nevertheless, if they are going to secondary school not able to read and write in a fully functional way, that is a very important issue for us. I am not trying to gloss over anything. I think the improvements have been significant, but I think we have got much more to do.

Q52 Mr Wilson: Chief Inspector, are you a fan of *Little Britain*, the television series?

Ms Gilbert: No, I am not a fan but I have seen it.

Q53 Mr Wilson: If I said the phrase “Yeah, but no, but yeah”, would that mean anything to you?

Ms Gilbert: It is a phrase I associated, when I saw the reports of what I had said, actually, with myself—“Yes, but. . . .”

Q54 Mr Wilson: In a sense you are associated. There is a report out today that says that teenagers have a very narrow vocabulary, along the lines of a character in *Little Britain* called Vicky Pollard. I just wonder whether you think that is something we can be proud of coming out of our schools, with teenagers barely able to string two sentences together.

Ms Gilbert: I think that oracy is a major part of literacy, and it is really important that we have a focus on this. I have seen well-qualified young people not getting jobs because they have not been sufficiently articulate at interviews. This is sometimes described as a range of soft skills, but I do not think that they are soft at all. They are work skills, if you like. Being confident orally is a very important part of those skills. If people are not confident orally, they are often not demonstrating how good they are at a number of things they can do.

Q55 Mr Wilson: Presumably you have seen some of the criticism from, for example, Chris Woodhead, a former Chief Inspector, about the current inspection regime. How much faith can we actually have in this Annual Report, when we are now at a point where most schools are doing self-assessments; there are very short inspections; you only visit for a day or so into the schools? How much emphasis can we put on these results? It all seems a bit vacuous to me.

Ms Gilbert: I do not want to repeat the things that I have said earlier, but we feel confident about the process that we have started after one year, and we are reviewing what we are doing. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of the performance information as part of that, and the importance of the school thinking in a much more focused way about its own self-evaluation. I think the very best schools always did do this. That was clear when you looked at their school development plan: that they had reviewed themselves very effectively. The

other element—the very important element—is the inspector’s judgment. I have mentioned performance information, but I also think—and we are talking about ways of getting at this more fully—the views of the parents and the views of the young people themselves are key. So I would stand by the system that we have established. In fact, we are seeing more schools. We saw more schools last year than we have ever seen before. So we are getting a picture of what is going on in those schools.

Mr Wilson: How do you respond to a highly respected former Chief Inspector of Schools who thinks the current inspection regime—

Chairman: He is highly respected in some quarters but not with some members of the Committee here who used to interview him.

Mr Wilson: Am I allowed to ask my own questions?

Chairman: Carry on.

Q56 Mr Wilson: How do you respond to the highly respected former Chief Inspector’s remarks that the reports are basically worthless now?

Ms Gilbert: I do not think that they are worthless. I would invite him to look at the sort of detail that we have on the school before an inspector goes in, and I would invite him to look in some detail at the reports themselves. Actually, a number of the schools of the company that he is involved with very proudly display on their websites reference to their Ofsted inspections and so on.

Mr Wilson: Can I move on to money very briefly? Is that possible?

Chairman: Yes, briefly.

Q57 Mr Wilson: Does funding make a huge difference to the results outputs?

Ms Gilbert: I think it is how you use the money that is absolutely key.

Q58 Mr Wilson: So it is not the totality of the money spent; it is how the budget is deployed?

Ms Gilbert: The most important thing for me is how you would use the money that you are given.

Q59 Mr Wilson: You said earlier that you have to demonstrate that public money is used effectively. Does Ofsted have any evidence about the levels of spending and the outputs that are resulting from it?

Ms Gilbert: We are doing the sort of analysis that I referred to earlier, in terms of value for money. We are asking people if it made a difference. We have looked at our costs and worked out what it costs the taxpayer to have Ofsted, and we have looked at the costs that we have reduced over the years. So cost is a real issue for us and we are very alive to it. I am not saying we cannot do more, but we have looked very hard at costs, as Vanessa went through them. You could not make the sorts of reductions that Ofsted has made over the past few years unless you were very sensitive to cost, and I think that the reductions that are being made demonstrate that.

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Q60 Mr Wilson: Do you think that there is an educational requirement for state schools to have matched funding with private schools? So the same levels of money spent in the state sector as in the private sector?

Ms Gilbert: I think schools need the money to do the job that they are being asked to do. Private schools all charge differently, as far as I can see. I think the schools need to be funded for the job that they have to do. I would not pretend to know the difference in the impact that you are describing that happens in private schools compared to state schools.

Q61 Mr Wilson: So the answer is you do not know whether there is a case?

Ms Gilbert: I do not have enough knowledge or enough evidence.

Q62 Mr Wilson: Does anybody within Ofsted have that knowledge?

Ms Gilbert: I am sorry?

Q63 Mr Wilson: Does anybody—because I know you are new—within Ofsted have that knowledge whether there should be the same level of spending on state schools as private schools?

Ms Gilbert: I do not think that is something that has emerged from any report that we have looked at, and I cannot see how we would look at it, actually. We look at the educational provision. We make a judgment on each school whether they are providing value for money and we set that out in the report; but we do not make an explicit comparison in the sort of political way that I think you might be suggesting.

Chairman: We have to move on, Rob. We have only covered a small number of the questions we want to ask, and you have had quite a good innings.

Q64 Helen Jones: The Annual Report said that 8 per cent of the schools that you had looked at were classified as “inadequate” and the rest were “satisfactory” or above. Is that good news or bad news?

Ms Gilbert: It is not good news that we have any schools classified as “inadequate”. At Ofsted we would hope to get to a state where we have no schools classified as “inadequate”. Of those schools, it gives some reassurance—but it is still not reassuring enough if you are a parent near such a school—that the majority of them, we think, have the capacity to improve within them. So they have something called a “notice to improve”, and we go back and check that they are making that improvement. The smallest number are the schools placed in special measures, which do give us greatest concern because the inspectors there are reaching a judgment that the management of the school do not have the capacity to make the improvements that we think need to be made. So it is not good news to have any schools classified as “inadequate”.

Q65 Helen Jones: Can I look at the schools you have classed as “satisfactory”? Your report states that “‘satisfactory’ can never be good enough”. Apart

from doing some violence to the English language, does that not call into question the categories you are using and the inspection framework that you are using? There was an article in the *TES* which suggested that a comparison is made during an inspection of schools results compared to the national average. If that is the case, you can never have a majority of schools above average, can you? Does it not call into question the categories you are using and the way that the information in your report is then conveyed? What does “satisfactory” mean?

Ms Gilbert: I do want to emphasise that the categories are absolutely not norm-referenced. You couldn’t have all of our schools “outstanding” but more schools could be “good”. The categories themselves are not norm-referenced; they are based on the inspector’s judgment, going in to the school. The inspector does not say, “I’ve got two ‘outstanding’ this month. I need to identify two ‘special measures’ to compensate”. If you look at a “satisfactory” judgment, it means that no aspect of that school’s provision—no major aspect of that school’s provision—is what we would describe as “inadequate”. We would think, though, that that school had much further to go. I do not think that any parent would choose, in most cases, to send their child to a school that was described as “satisfactory”; they would rather want one that was described as “good” or “outstanding”. So my personal ambition is that all of our schools are “good” schools. I think that far more of them could become “good”, and I would hope that what we are doing in inspecting them might help them to do that.

Q66 Helen Jones: That raises two questions, does it not? Is the *TES* right in what it said about the statistical tools that you are using? I accept what you say about the inspector’s judgment. Secondly, if everything was classed as “good”—if we got to that stage where everything was classed as “good” or “excellent”—what use would the categories be?

Ms Gilbert: Shall I start with that one first? The categories would give you some reassurance and information about what was going on in that school. The supermarket analogy was used earlier. All the supermarkets could be good supermarkets for a particular brand and you would not think that there was anything strange about that. So I do not think there is anything wrong at all in aspiring for “good” or “outstanding” for all of our schools. The first point was about the performance information. Some of the performance information, the CVA—the contextual value-added information—has a norm reference. However, as I said at the beginning, that is part of the whole picture; it is not the whole picture. We do look at a number of things. The overriding thing—and I really do want to stress this—is the inspector’s judgment; the debate in the school; what she or he sees in the school; what emerges from discussions; and what other information the school may have. We use some school information, some of the schools use very sophisticated information for their own

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schools, and for some of the small schools the CVA is not helpful. For some of the bigger schools I think that it is very helpful indeed.

Q67 Helen Jones: Let us return to the categories. If you have schools classified as “good” or “outstanding”, that surely indicates that they are better than average? They are better than the norm. If I, as a parent, looked at your categories and all schools are classified as “outstanding”, that would not tell me anything, would it? Then to use the phrase that “‘satisfactory’ is not good enough” implies that those schools are failing. They are not, are they?

Ms Gilbert: They are not inadequate in any major aspect of their provision. I do not think that they are providing a good enough education. One of the points I made about some of the FE colleges that worried us is that too many of them are getting stuck with a “satisfactory” rating and not moving. Part of my job in managing a school, a local education authority, a local authority, has always been to push up aspirations and ambition. I think that it would be dreadful if we told schools that “‘satisfactory’ is fine and we are not expecting more of you”. I think that parents who live in a local area want their child to go to a school that is better than satisfactory. Therefore, I would ask the schools to lift their sights and move forward. What we are saying is we think that they have the capacity to do that; we are making some recommendations that would help them do that.

Q68 Helen Jones: I accept what you are saying, that schools can improve and should always be looking to improve. I do not think there is a dispute about that. Our difficulty as a Committee is with the categories Ofsted use, and with the implication in your report that “satisfactory” is failing. I will put it to you again. Do you not need to consider your use of categories? Because if all schools reach the level of “outstanding”, that would be a nonsense, would it not? Everything cannot be better than average; everything cannot be outstanding. That would not tell me anything, as a parent.

Ms Gilbert: The categories are not based on average. To drive a car, you do not get one of four categories: you can or cannot drive a car. I would be delighted if every school was identified as “outstanding”, because—

Q69 Helen Jones: I am sorry, that does not make sense. In terms of the English language, that does not make sense, does it?

Ms Gilbert: The word “outstanding” is not necessarily related to norm-referencing.

Helen Jones: It is. It means “better than the rest”. You cannot be outstanding unless you are better than a lot of others. By definition, everything cannot be outstanding.

Q70 Chairman: It could be referenced to international comparisons—but who am I to...? Chief Inspector, I do not think that we are getting any further on this.

Ms Gilbert: If you look at the detail for the grade descriptors, they say what an outstanding school is. They do not reference that to any norm. If the school is doing the best by the pupils attending it and providing excellent provision, it would be described as an outstanding school. I think that is about it, is it not, Miriam? Do you want to say anything about the descriptors?

Q71 Chairman: Robert is in charge of this area—are you not, Robert? Do you want to say anything?

Mr Green: I do have some thoughts, if I may, Mr Chairman. I think that what Christine says about the content of the descriptors is surely the crucial thing. Ofsted is an organisation in which we can bat for England in terms of deciding whether a particular adjective is the right adjective to use. However, it seems to me that the important thing is the substance of what is actually being looked at. We are a long way away from a position in which all schools are outstanding, so that at the moment that kind of language makes sense. It may be—I do not know—if we move to a stage where 100% of schools were outstanding, then the language would be something you would look at; but that would not change what you were looking at in substance in terms of what inspectors are saying.

Helen Jones: Has the percentage of schools classified as “satisfactory” changed over the years? If so, in what direction?

Q72 Chairman: Miriam is nodding.

Ms Gilbert: It would be difficult to compare it with this year, but I think we could say for previous years.

Ms Rosen: I think that it has changed over the years, but you have to remember we are on our fourth framework and, each time we have changed the framework, we have changed it in a direction which is more rigorous. Perhaps that has not been recognised, but we have raised the bar several times and will continue to do so. So each time we introduce a new inspection framework, actually the percentages all shift downwards; then they creep up again as people aim higher. The trend overall is upwards, therefore, but there are changes each time we change the framework.

Q73 Helen Jones: I understand that. Does that not raise questions about how we measure the effectiveness of the inspection system? You have given us, Chief Inspector, anecdotal evidence about people saying they found it helpful and so on, but if you keep changing the categories it is very difficult to measure objectively the effect of the inspection regime on school improvements, is it not? Is there an objective measurement?

Ms Gilbert: I think that evaluative judgments are the most effective. Though I have given some anecdotal answers in response, the evidence that I

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am quoting from Ofsted is not just anecdote; we do our own internal surveys after every inspection, and we have done a piece of work internally on what we thought but—

Q74 Helen Jones: I am sorry, I missed that. Could you repeat it?

Ms Gilbert: I did not mean to suggest that all the evidence we had was anecdotal. We have done work internally on assessing the impact of inspection, but we also commissioned the NFER—who reported in July on what they had found on one year of the new process—and we are continuing to work with them on a more extensive and detailed survey. So there is some evidence about the impact of inspection on improvement.

Q75 Helen Jones: I understand you to say that that was looking at only the new process. What I asked was whether it is difficult, over time, to measure the impact of inspection on school improvement. If the categories keep changing, we are not comparing like with like, are we?

Ms Gilbert: But we would not pretend that the improvement in schools was all down to Ofsted. We are one, and I hope an important, lever in generating that improvement; but it is the schools themselves that do the work to improve. I would not use those sorts of figures in that particular way, therefore. Nevertheless, if schools were not improving and there was no shift at all, they would not be able to tell us that we were helping them contribute to that improvement—if you see what I mean.

Q76 Helen Jones: I think that we are mixing two things up, and I want to try and get some clarity on this. I personally have no doubt that schools are improving. The question I want to try and dig down to is what are the causes of that improvement and what proportion of that improvement is down to Ofsted. Do you have any evidence to offer the Committee on that?

Ms Gilbert: I think that we are clear about what are the ingredients that make an effective school, and the framework that we use essentially identifies those different elements. So we would look for performance in all of those areas. It is difficult to assess the impact of Ofsted without engaging the key users and stakeholders in assessing that impact. That is not to say I would ever expect 100% satisfaction rate, and for us to become soft and cuddly animals. The external scrutiny does give sharpness and a rigour, but nevertheless schools are sufficiently professional and focused now in what they are doing that they are very honest about whether we have contributed to the difference that they have made or not. That is what they are telling the NFER; it is not that they are just telling us.

Q77 Helen Jones: That is interesting, but do you accept that actually that is still not an objective measurement? How do you think school improvement here compares to those countries

where they do not have this kind of inspection regime? I am not necessarily advocating getting rid of it, but I am asking the question. If some countries manage to do it without the rigorous inspectorate, what difference does Ofsted make?

Ms Gilbert: All I can say is that, since appointment in October, we have had a stream of visitors. Nothing to do with me—that sounded as though since my appointment we have had a stream of visitors. I think that this is fairly common. There is a stream of visitors from abroad looking at our inspection processes, because it is seen as a major factor in the sorts of improvements that have been going on.

Q78 Mr Chaytor: Can I clarify the point that you made earlier, Chief Inspector, on CVA data? Is it the case that next year's report will be the first report to take account of the publication of CVA data?

Ms Gilbert: No. CVA is core to the new inspection framework and so we have reported now on one year of that. So CVA has been in operation this past year.

Q79 Mr Chaytor: So where we get references to achievement and performance, this now always takes on board the impact of the CVA data as well as the raw source?

Ms Gilbert: Yes.

Q80 Mr Chaytor: The second thing is that, in respect of your judgment on academies, it says in the report that nine of the new academies have been inspected under the new arrangements and the progress they are making, while uneven, is broadly positive. My question is this. Is that judgment a sufficient basis to justify a doubling of the number of new academies?

Ms Gilbert: I cannot remember if the point is made in the report, I certainly made it in response to questions about academies, that is a very, very low number of academies to be making general points about development. What we are looking at is not whether something is an academy or not; it is the provision within it. That point in the report about “generally positive” is because these were all schools that were in great difficulties, and so they have made—some of them have made—positive progress, and we wanted to acknowledge that. However, it is far too few for us to be making a general point about academies on.

Q81 Mr Chaytor: Could I ask one other, short question? In terms of your assessment of sixth-form colleges you said, “[...]seven out of ten are good or better in terms of overall effectiveness”. What is better than “good”? Surely the only other category is “outstanding”, so why does it not say that “seven out of ten are good or outstanding”?

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Ms Gilbert: It could have done, I think!

Q82 Chairman: Going back to a couple of earlier questions, in terms of the underperforming schools, what is the correlation between the number of schools that are really underperforming and anything else out there? You mention leadership. Are most of these schools in the leafy suburbs? Where are they?

Ms Gilbert: Miriam may want to give a broader picture but, as I said earlier, I have read reports of every school placed in special measures since October. By about the third week, I asked Miriam to send me some good ones because I was getting such a depressing feel of what was going on. I think that there is not a single one where you would think that leadership and management was effective in any way. There may have been some where somebody new had come in, but inspectors were not seeing the positive feel that they got about the head reinforced in classrooms or in practice, and so on. So I think that leadership and management are really important; but I also think that the quality of teaching is absolutely vital. Those two things combined give you a really good focus on the progress that each child is making within the school. Is the child making sufficient progress? Are children generally in that school making sufficient progress? I think that those would be my key things—and Miriam is nodding.

Q83 Chairman: I want to drill down a bit further in that. The whole academy programme is based on trying to turn schools round in the poorest parts of our inner cities and inner towns. Surely there is a relationship between underperforming schools and poverty? Or does it have nothing to do with it? You are telling me that there is no relation between how poor that school is, where it sits, how deprived that community is on a range of measures. You are telling me that there is no link between these really underperforming schools and poverty?

Ms Gilbert: I would not say that there was no link. What I would say—and I did say this very strongly when I was in Tower Hamlets—is that poverty and disadvantage are absolutely no excuse for failure. When I moved from Harrow to Tower Hamlets, I could see immediately that the children in Tower Hamlets were no less bright than the children in Harrow. We had more money in Tower Hamlets per child, and it was what we did with that money to make more of a difference than we were making that was absolutely key. You have to make people believe in themselves and believe that they can achieve and do better, and they will. So I think that it is very much not saying, “We’re disadvantaged, therefore we can’t do X, Y and Z”; it is looking at what you can do and using the resources more effectively to effect change.

Q84 Chairman: So if you took those children from the other Harrow school they would do just as well, would they?

Ms Gilbert: I think that it is a number of factors. One of the big differences is that, when I was a head in Harrow and when I was a director, parents were very active and very key. I used to run a Monday evening surgery and open the school on Monday evenings for parents, and there used to be a stream of people on Monday evenings. I do not think that would have happened in Tower Hamlets. It did not mean that the parents were not any more committed to the development of their child; they were just less confident about tackling the school about issues. If homework was not set in a Harrow school, not only would I as a head have had a number of complaints, either in person or by letter, but probably as director I was receiving complaints too. Nobody ever complained to me in Tower Hamlets about the homework not being set. So it is trying to get the sorts of things that—Harrow is not entirely middle class—more middle class parents do for their children. We need to be using some of the resources to get that sort of intervention.

Q85 Chairman: You say poverty is not an excuse, but there is a correlation between underperforming schools and the degree of poverty and parental support.

Ms Gilbert: I am not sure if the evidence that I looked at recently, in terms of London schools, is saying that in terms of the judgment of inspectors on some of the schools. So in some of our urban schools, with good leadership and management—it is quite a small survey, so I probably need to be a bit careful—it was suggesting that leadership and management in some of the inner city schools were stronger than elsewhere, and actually the provision and the grades that they were getting from Ofsted were better. There could be a link between disadvantage and attainment, unless we put in the interventions that we should be putting in to make sure that progress is better.

Q86 Paul Holmes: You have recovered the position slightly with what you have just said, but first of all you were giving very good examples from your own experience of working in Harrow and in a different capacity in Tower Hamlets of how there is a huge difference between the social background, parental support, and all the rest of it, that did make a big difference between the two areas. Then, in response to the Chairman’s question, you said, “No, that’s not really significant”—the social deprivation and so forth. It seemed incomprehensible to me that you could say that. If it was all down to leadership, quality of management and how we spend the resources, then Tower Hamlets, after your leadership, would be getting exactly the same results as Harrow, presumably—if it was just down to leadership.

Ms Gilbert: I would stress that I was chief executive for the last five years. There was another director of education; it certainly was not me. I think that the director of education would not say that it was

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him either; it is the schools that make the real difference. However, the results in some cases were not far off some off the Harrow schools.

Q87 Paul Holmes: Across the board at Tower Hamlets, do the results match Harrow, after these years of excellent leadership?

Ms Gilbert: No, they do not, but look how the gap has narrowed over those years. I did not mean to say—and I hope I did not convey—that disadvantage is not an issue; but you cannot say, “This is a disadvantaged school. They’re only getting so-and-so results because they are disadvantaged”. That is my issue with value-added. It is a very important lever in improving a school but no child can go to an interview and say, “Look at my value-added schools”; they have to go to an interview with real GCSE results.

Q88 Paul Holmes: David was saying earlier that in the report on sixth-form colleges you were saying that 70% of them are “good” or “outstanding”. What is the percentage of schools that are “good” or “outstanding”?

Ms Gilbert: It is about 59% or something. In the report we were saying that.

Q89 Paul Holmes: So why the difference? Is that because all the good and outstanding leavers go into sixth-form colleges, or is it because sixth-form colleges by their very nature are taking pupils who are academically able, well-motivated, and working at a higher level than an average school across the country?

Ms Gilbert: Yes, and sometimes you can have a school graded one way and the sixth-form provision is better. We have been looking at reasons for that. It is to do with the sorts of reasons that you have identified, and it is to do with subject knowledge, smaller groups, the focus, and so on. So we think it is to do with some of those things.

Q90 Mr Pelling: A fundamental in the Annual Report was your inspiring comment that “competence in literacy and numeracy continue to be fundamental in all learning”. What has Her Majesty’s Inspectorate seen in the inspections it has made as being the most important element or elements to ensure that that priority is given? Is it possible for schools within the competing demands of the curriculum to be able to deliver in this area?

Ms Gilbert: I think that it is very rare for a school, for a primary school anyway, not to see literacy and numeracy as central to their work, and I think that it is a focus for them. In terms of secondary schools, it is increasingly identified—but I need to be careful because I may be saying these things without the evidence of Ofsted reports to back me up. Certainly from what I have seen in terms of primary school Ofsted reports, literacy and numeracy are central to those. However, a number of studies have been done on this, and a number of studies of the national

strategies might be helpful here. Perhaps, Mr Chairman, I could ask Miriam to pick up some of the key points in those. That might be helpful.

Ms Rosen: We have certainly found that the Primary National Strategy has been helpful in helping teachers to focus within the primary sector. One of the things that our last report, which is slightly out of date now—it was December 2005—pointed out was that sometimes children who are not making the progress they should be left too late. There is a lot of catch-up work done towards the top end of the primary school, Years 5 and 6, when we are recommending that it should be done earlier. That was one of the main messages that came out of the December 2005 report, therefore. We also reported on the Secondary National Strategies at the same time. There we said, yes, there were signs of improvement, but there were particular problems for schools taking in large numbers of children at 11 who had not yet reached Level 4 in English, because they do not have access to the whole of the curriculum. We also said that we did not think there was sufficient focus on literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.

Q91 Jeff Ennis: Chief Inspector, can I tell you that last Friday I went to the retirement party of the former head in the school where I used to teach for 18 years, Hillsborough Primary School. Stuart Bell is retiring early at 57 years old, having been head teacher for 16 years. The school has had a very good Ofsted report recently. The most telling comment he made in his retirement speech to the assembled audience was the fact that, when he was appointed as the head teacher 16 years ago, 30-odd people applied for the post. This time, with a good inspection, *et cetera*, there were five people who applied to be head at Hillsborough Primary School, and one of those dropped out. I wonder if you feel that the imposition of Ofsted over the last ten years or so has impacted on the number of teachers who are now willing to put themselves forward as head teachers. If it has not, what have been the factors which have resulted in our seeing a drastic reduction in the number of senior teachers putting themselves forward to be head teachers?

Ms Gilbert: One of the unions raised this with me, that Ofsted had been a factor here. There are a number of factors, which I think are being addressed by looking at salary and so on. The National College of School Leadership is doing some really interesting work in this area, encouraging people to become heads and so on, and identifying people to become heads. I think that it is a number of factors, really. We just need to try and address them. We need to give people confidence that it is not just them: that they are part of a leadership team in a school, and make them feel that the job is worthwhile and worth doing, which I think it is doing.

Q92 Jeff Ennis: What would the other factors be then, Christine, apart from salary? You have mentioned the fact that it could be Ofsted. Are there any other factors that have a bigger influence on the lack of head teachers coming forward?

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Ms Gilbert: I think that the demands in terms of accountability put some people off. I think that people feel it is a lot of additional time; that they are happy to be a deputy but do not want the additional time, the additional responsibility and so on. That is why I think that the thrust taken by some of the major unions on shared leadership is right. I would not previously have promoted that sort of approach because actually there is one head, but nevertheless these days one head does not do the job that is needed to be done in the school. I think that there are the expectations on schools. I think that it is harder to be a head today than it was when I was a head. I think that the expectations of parents, government, Ofsted—all of those people, for instance, are harder than they used to be. What the NCSL is doing is very imaginative in some ways, therefore, in encouraging some people to come into headship. I also think that some people who would never anticipate being a head, given an experience of it, start to realise that they like doing it; that it is a job that they could do, and they should be given confidence in doing it. So I think that also we need to find more experiences like that.

Q93 Jeff Ennis: Do you think that the new inspection framework will assist in future head teacher recruitment, so that we do see more deputy heads wanting to become head teachers as a direct consequence of the short, sharp inspection, shall we say?

Ms Gilbert: As Miriam said earlier, schools are telling us that it is less stressful. They are stressed from when they get the phone call but they are only stressed for three days, rather than ten weeks or whatever it was, and it is forgotten afterwards. I mean the feeling of stress is forgotten, not the inspection report. I think that is a factor, therefore, but there will always be an element of some stress and adrenaline with external scrutiny.

Q94 Jeff Ennis: But you would hope, say over the next four or five years, with the new inspection framework, we would see more people wanting to become head teachers again?

Ms Gilbert: I do not know enough to know, at a general level, how much that has played as a factor against some of the other things that are a factor.

Q95 Chairman: Miriam does. She is shaking her head.

Ms Rosen: What I was thinking was that we have been told that the new inspection framework is less stressful overall, but there is more intensive focus on the senior leadership team. The self-evaluation means that the inspectors have to hold quite a focused dialogue with the head teacher and with other senior leaders about what their priorities are, why, what they are doing about their identified weaknesses, and so on. So I do not know if we are going to see a link or not. I think that there is a huge range of factors which contribute to workforce issues like this, not talking from my experience as an inspector but from the 18 years I spent teaching.

Whether there were lots of teachers around or not seemed to be very closely linked to the economy, because I can remember trying to recruit science teachers when we would get one applicant for an ordinary post, and trying to recruit them when we would get 100 applicants. It did seem to be linked to the availability of other jobs as well.

Q96 Chairman: The economy was not very good 16 years ago.

Ms Rosen: I am talking about longer ago than that!

Q97 Jeff Ennis: One final question. What more can be done by Ofsted, or local authorities, or the DfES to support head teachers and members of the schools' senior management team?

Ms Gilbert: We can support them do their job more effectively by making our recommendations as clearly focused as we can. I do not think that we have a broader role in supporting them than that. In schools that are in special measures and so on, I think that we have a more focused role. Again, however, it is not just general support; it is very much focused on the development of the school and so on. We engage with partners—the NCSL and so on—in dialogue with them about what we might do. We would support the seminars, conferences, and so on; but I would not want to pretend that we saw ourselves as having a very direct supportive role for head teachers.

Q98 Jeff Ennis: So it is not your role, effectively.

Ms Gilbert: Absolutely.

Q99 Fiona Mactaggart: I want to ask about subjects and curriculum and whether the new inspection arrangements adequately deal with subjects outside English, Maths and Science particularly. We have had evidence from the Royal Society of Chemistry and the National Association of Advisers and Inspectors in Design and Technology, expressing concern that the present arrangements for subject inspection do not give an accurate picture about subject teaching around the country. What is your view of this?

Ms Gilbert: As you may know, we are picking up a look at subjects through the thematic reviews that we are doing, which complements the school inspection programme. We will look, over a three-year period, to get some sense of what is going on in some of the subject areas. The same criticism has been raised with me but, in dialogue with colleagues, it is hard to see the impact of some of the annual work on subjects. So I would hope that thematic work would give us an opportunity to have a closer focus on what is going on in particular areas, be it a subject or an issue or a theme, and to think very hard about the impact of that work on making a difference in what is going on on the ground.

Ms Rosen: Every year, we have a sample of schools that we look at for each subject. Over a three-year period we write a report on that subject. We all say something in the Annual Report in between times. We feel that this enables us to pick up on particular

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issues, on strengths and weaknesses, on trends that are happening, and for us to focus in on particular things that we are interested in. It will not be a statistically significant sample, because to be statistically significant you need a huge sample. We are not going to be writing state-of-the-nation reports but, even so, we will be able to write authoritative reports on the basis of these inspections, which tell us about issues in that subject and trends in it.

Q100 Fiona Mactaggart: You are confident that you can pick up weaknesses in teaching and give an assessment of that through this process?

Ms Rosen: We will find out quite a lot about the teaching in the schools that we visit, because we will spend quite a lot of time in classrooms. I think that we will be able to pick up on particular trends. As I say, we are not really pretending to give a state-of-the-nation report on it but, even so, it will be authoritative and it will pick up on particular issues of the day. For example, our modern foreign language inspector at the moment is particularly looking at uptake at Key Stage 4, because she realises this is a problem. So she is concentrating on that in the programme of modern foreign languages inspections.

Ms Gilbert: I would just add to that, by referring you to a report that I read fairly recently in this vein on history teaching post-16. I learnt phenomenally from just reading this report and seeing the sort of innovative practice going on. So the issue for me is how the outcomes of that report are disseminated; how they influence practice; and what we are doing in terms of the impact of some of the reports that we are producing.

Q101 Fiona Mactaggart: Let us take an area that we are presently looking at, where there is some confusion about what constitutes good practice. As you point out in your report, there is a lack of consensus about the aims of citizenship education, and we are studying it at the moment. What is your role in trying to sort this out?

Ms Gilbert: Miriam will answer the citizenship questions, but I would say that we have a role in seeing what is going on—citizenship is slightly different, is it not?—highlighting good practice and identifying that. We would disseminate it in a number of ways. We would attend conferences. I have spoken at conferences recently about the Creative Partnerships report, and so on. There are a number of things that we would disseminate in that particular way.

Ms Rosen: Going back to citizenship, I think that our recent report *Towards Consensus?* pointed the way very clearly. We were talking about what we had found, what constituted good practice, what did not. We were giving practical approaches on how schools could deal with this and we had recommendations there. I think that we have a clear role in picking out good practice and on giving clear recommendations, and I think that this is a very good example of it.

Q102 Fiona Mactaggart: Chief Inspector, you referred in your response to me to your report on *Creative Partnerships*. What do you think the next steps ought to be for Creative Partnerships? You have identified how they have highlighted issues of skills in terms of economic well-being for pupils. I think that in this report you have not looked—although in the other report I thought that you did more so—at the issue of how they contribute to creativity in schools.

Ms Gilbert: I looked at a number of reports, because I was asked to speak at the conference. So I went back a bit over the time before I had arrived. The areas visited were hand-picked, so they probably do not give a warts-and-all picture; but I thought that a number of very practical recommendations were made. The more general thing, which is not made explicit, is that it would encourage schools to think more creatively—I am sorry to use that word!—about what they are doing. Because one of the key messages was that taking a more creative approach to some of these things could improve the basic skills, such as literacy, numeracy, and ICT was mentioned. However, there were a number of very practical things recommended, such as experience of working with creative practitioners, work experience placements with creative practitioners, and so on: all of which I thought were very helpful and designed to generate improvement. What I have not teased out yet, and want to over the coming year, is what happens with these reports. People are waiting for school reports and every line is read and pored over, but there is some terrific work going on and some very important work going on in some of these reports. Is it having the impact that it should have on people in schools and colleges?

Q103 Chairman: Could I follow that up for a second? This Committee looked very carefully and were very committed in the recommendations in our report to the value of out-of-classroom learning. We believe that it is a mark of a truly successful school that they take the out-of-classroom learning very seriously indeed, and there has recently been the publication by the Government of a manifesto for out-of-classroom learning. However, you do not have any purchase on that. How do you evaluate that? Are you able to evaluate it? Do you find it important? There is no demand from the Department that you should evaluate it.

Ms Gilbert: I do not know if it was a result of your report but certainly the guidance behind the school evaluation form points to this sort of area, suggesting that the school might want to consider what it does in this area. In the reports that I have read—even the ones in special measures—generally there is some reference to what is going on, and the children's broader curricular experiences are outlined in those reports. Ofsted itself does have the view that this is valuable and is important, and acknowledges that in the work that they see within schools. It contributes to the personal, social and physical development of young people, for instance, and there is always a section in the reports on that.

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Q104 Chairman: It is an area that we care about and I think that the report was quite a seminal one.

Ms Rosen: Can I point out that we did publish a survey report in 2004 which was looking at outdoor education, which said many of the things you have said? We value it very much and we were encouraging schools not to lose sight of it. We gave lots of examples of good practice. We will be including another look at education outside the classroom in our next survey programme, that is 2007-08.

Chairman: That is very encouraging.

Q105 Paul Holmes: Coming back to the question of the citizenship report, was there a clear picture that emerged from the citizenship inspections that having a specialist teacher who was qualified in citizenship made any particular difference to the quality of what went on?

Ms Rosen: That was one of the main findings of the report. Having a specialist teacher who understood, was enthusiastic and could use, for example, political events of the day to help illustrate their teaching, really did help improve the quality of the citizenship curriculum.

Q106 Paul Holmes: So the relatively low number of places—220 a year—that are available for training citizenship teachers, would you say that needs to be increased?

Ms Rosen: We did recommend that in the report and there has been a response to that. One thing we would say, though, is that some of these young teachers who are being trained in citizenship are being taken on by schools to teach other subjects. So we would also say to schools, “Consider recruiting a specialist citizenship teacher”, because obviously schools are not always focusing on that if our young citizenship teachers are having to go in to take up other subjects.

Q107 Paul Holmes: On Monday afternoon we had a series of witnesses sitting there, representing Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Catholic and Church of England faith schools. I think that one of the unanimous messages from them was that the curriculum was far too crowded; they were not really interested in recruiting citizenship teachers. They did it already anyway, because they were faith schools. Do you have any comments on that from the report?

Ms Rosen: The report did comment on that and said that, particularly early on, after the introduction of citizenship in 2002, schools felt they did it because they had a good ethos and they were naturally dealing with citizenship. What we found in the report was that it was rare for schools to be able to teach citizenship successfully if they did just spread it across the curriculum, because it did tend to disappear. The recommendation was that, in schools where it has been most successfully taught, there is a discrete core. That might be as a subject in its own right or it might be as a discrete part of PSHE. Some schools have successfully taught citizenship across the curriculum, but that is rarer and harder to do.

Q108 Paul Holmes: So you would not accept a general message, which we received on Monday afternoon, that if you are faith schools you do this anyway, and so it does not apply?

Ms Rosen: There is a particular body of knowledge which is part of the citizenship national curriculum and that does actually have to be taught. So the schools, if they are teaching it across the curriculum, would have to be auditing very carefully to make sure that they are teaching what they need to teach for national curriculum citizenship. As you know, there are three strands to this. It is not just a question of a bit here and a bit there. If they are doing that, they have to look very carefully to make sure that they are covering things, and we know there are certain areas that tend not to be covered.

Q109 Paul Holmes: In your report you said that there was insufficient reference to local, national and international questions of the day and how politicians deal with them.

Ms Rosen: Yes.

Q110 Paul Holmes: Over the 22 years that I was a teacher I did a lot of citizenship before the term was ever invented, but under different headings. There was always a pressure from heads, governors, LA advisers and all the rest of it, not to be political—because they cannot be seen to be controversial and indoctrinating and everything else. Whereas, when the Committee went to Dublin, we saw very open civics or citizenship lessons, where they were encouraging their kids to write to Tony Blair about radioactive pollution in the Irish Sea; to write to the Taoiseach about cuts that had just been made in charitable funding in Éire, for example. That was very up-front, whereas in this country we seem to back away from that. So your report would agree with my version rather than—

Ms Rosen: Yes, I think that it goes back to the need for specialist teachers, because specialist teachers who have been trained in this area are much more confident in dealing with political issues of the day, with controversies, with resolving conflict; whereas teachers who are out of their comfort zone, because in fact they have been trained in something else, may find that very difficult to deal with.

Q111 Chairman: So you would like to see more specialist teachers in schools trained in citizenship?

Ms Rosen: I have made the point that there are specialist teachers who are not being employed to teach citizenship. It is not just an issue for the Government, therefore; it is also an issue for schools.

Q112 Chairman: But is it a fact that there are fewer being given the full, one year of teacher training this year than last?

Ms Rosen: There has been a gradual improvement in the number of specialist teachers available. That needs to continue. Schools need to think about how they take the specialist teachers on. There has also

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been an improvement and an increase in the continuous professional development available for teachers. That is important.

Q113 Chairman: Unlike you, Miriam, you are dodging and diving a bit on this one.

Ms Rosen: I am sorry?

Q114 Chairman: Uncharacteristically, you are dodging and diving a bit. Do you think that there is a need for more, properly trained specialists in citizenship or not?

Ms Rosen: Yes, we did say that there should be more; but I am trying to make an additional point, which is that they need to be employed to teach their specialism.

Chairman: They need to be kept on their subject rather than taken off.

Q115 Mr Carswell: A quick question about Creative Partnerships. I saw some very good evidence in Clacton about the role that Creative Partnerships plays in making pupils more creative, more ambitious, more aspirational. I am afraid that I have not had a look at your report. Could you elaborate a little on the importance of Creative Partnerships in raising standards? If there is a danger of reducing the Creative Partnerships programme because of a loss of funding, how serious would that be?

Ms Gilbert: I had seen it as a sort of pump-priming programme. I would stress that the report is based on probably the best practice that we were seeing, because these areas were identified. I would not feel confident, therefore, on the work that I have done, to say that is more important than funding something else. I think that the report was giving licence, if you like, to some flexibility within the curriculum; that you could increase standards and still have this going on, in terms of the broader curriculum. That was the main message for me on reading the various reports—in particular the last one—and the very focused, practical examples that were given which schools could find ways of doing, or local authorities might find ways of doing, to increase that. Examples are work experience placements and those sorts of things.

Q116 Fiona Mactaggart: You say in your Annual Report that the phrase Every Child Matters is central to Ofsted's mission, and indeed it is clear from the way you structure your report. But do you think that Ofsted actually adds value to the Every Child Matters agenda? If so, how?

Ms Gilbert: I suppose the fact that we are inspecting in terms of the five outcomes will mean that the schools look more closely at the five outcomes, and that those five outcomes feed into the school's self-evaluation is key. I think that would be the major thing: that we are going to be shining a light on that area and the school's contribution to those areas. It is not something that they can do next year or the year after, therefore—or they can, but they would not get a very positive report if the progress of the children had not been good in terms of those areas.

I think that is the most important element. Over and above that, we will then be reporting more generally on how we find progress in those outcomes, at a general level through an annual report process. That is just the first year that you see before you.

Q117 Fiona Mactaggart: Do you think that our traditional emphasis on academic achievement, examination results, test scores and so on, has meant a diminution of the emphasis in school settings of being safe, the emotional outcomes for children, and so on?

Ms Gilbert: I do not, because I think that the very best schools have a holistic view of the child and do not just look very narrowly at literacy, numeracy and test results. If you look holistically and you are worried about the child's safety or health, and make sure that you do what you can to support in those areas, the results of the enjoy-and-achieve part would improve too. So I think that it is a whole picture that is very important.

Q118 Fiona Mactaggart: You spoke earlier about the importance of parental support in terms of what happens in a school, and the difference in different areas. That is obviously true for different children within a school: that there are some children who do not have that network of support beyond the school, which is so significant to a child's self-confidence and success in future life. How can you, in your inspection, identify whether schools are dealing equally well with children with different sets of experiences?

Ms Gilbert: One of the things that the new framework is doing is asking schools to look at the different groups within their schools and reflect on the progress of those different groups. That might do some of what you are suggesting. One of the things that we are conscious of is that we do at the moment ask parents about a school. We think that we might be doing more in this area over the next few years, engaging parents more in what is going on in the school. The difficulty of course is engaging with those parents who are most difficult to engage with, if you like. We need to find some more imaginative ways perhaps of doing that. That is why the four organisations coming together into one does give us a fresh focus, and a look across to see what other organisations are doing to try to engage parents more in the whole process.

Q119 Fiona Mactaggart: We all know that there are various predictive factors which signal that a child is at risk in terms of their success and their development; for example, children who are in the care of the state do shockingly badly. I am wondering whether you have thought that, in your new Ofsted role, you might look at settings and ways of tackling the needs of groups of children who those predictive factors are depressing, and those settings which actually help those children to outperform what was predicted for them. Do you have any plans to look at that and to provide guidance for other settings on what works well?

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Ms Gilbert: One of the things it is important to do, and we have done it in the report, is to identify things that make all of us feel uncomfortable—so our responsibility. We all have a responsibility in some way to look after children and for their progress. We have been working too with the DfES on some of the recommendations set out in their Green Paper in this area. I think that it is always important to look at areas that buck the trend, if you like, and for people to find out more about why those things are happening, to see if the lessons are transferable. Sometimes they are not transferable. We have been talking about Creative Partnerships. One of the fascinating things there is that people did find it quite difficult to transfer the skills they had gained in those areas more broadly across the curriculum. It is whether we can identify areas, schools or places where that is happening, and we can write it up. This is where the theme approach is really important—the three-year programme that we are looking at. So the debate with the DfES should help identify some of the sorts of things that you are asking us to address.

Q120 Fiona Mactaggart: Will you be able to look at alternative ways of dealing with these young people's needs? Things like Kids Company and other voluntary settings who are providing for their needs, educationally and otherwise?

Ms Gilbert: I guess our focus would be on what is happening with these young people within the school setting and so on, to see if some of the things that you have just identified are making a difference. The look would be that way round, rather than looking at the organisation and doing it that way.

Q121 Mr Pelling: How important have the Joint Area Review and Annual Performance Assessment been to the Every Child Matters agenda?

Ms Gilbert: I think that it has been very important to that agenda. The Area Focus has been important too, because it is a local community, in effect, being responsible for the children in its area. It is changing and evolving, and the process that we are adopting is shifting slightly; but the focus on more vulnerable groups, low-attaining groups and so on, is really key to what we are doing. So I think that it has been very important.

Q122 Mr Pelling: You are obviously satisfied with the way things are working so far. Do you support the end to this practice of these Joint Area Reviews and the Annual Performance Assessments over the next couple of years?

Ms Gilbert: The Joint Area Reviews only ever had what was described as a three-year life or programme; they would then need some sort of review. We have begun to review that, particularly in the context of the White Paper and the focus down on the narrower focus in some ways, but I think also a very constructive focus in some ways. So I think that they are changing and we are talking now about how they are changing. However, they are really key

to developing the agenda more broadly. I would not see them disappearing completely, therefore, but they may look different from how they look now.

Q123 Mr Pelling: Moving ahead to the new arrangements that will be put in place, do you think that they will adequately deal with the inspection and concern of children's services?

Ms Gilbert: I think that one of the great benefits of bringing the organisations together is that it would allow us to look more holistically. Part of the evaluation we did with local authorities told us that our inspectors, the CSCI inspectors and the Ofsted inspectors, were not joined up, they did not seem one; whereas they were joining them up locally—and that was a lesson for us. Post-April, we will be one organisation and so we have to be joined up. I think that will be positive, therefore. I am sorry, I have lost the thread of the question. Was that—

Mr Pelling: That is fine. Thank you very much.

Q124 Chairman: Chief Inspector, we are coming to the end of this session, but could I ask you one or two final questions? We are very conscious as a Committee about our responsibility for scrutinising the Every Child Matters programme right across a number of departments. We are the lead committee. I do not know if we really think that we do it well enough. Of course, you share that with us. You have a very large, new responsibility, and so we have that in common. Do you not agree that, in terms of many of the outcomes, they are wonderful and they are motherhood and apple pie? There is nothing attached to it that says, "In order to achieve this, there must be this kind of progress or this kind of agenda". Do you think that there is a danger in having these rather nice, fuzzy outcomes?

Ms Gilbert: I think that the outcomes capture the whole child and the holistic importance of the child's development in the round, if you like. Some are supported by a number of indicators possibly better than others, and we need to do some work on that. It is therefore easier to make judgments in some areas than it is in others. I think that we are finding our way with this, as our particular areas. It is why I think that the schools' judgments about their performance in each of these is so key. We will learn from that as we are inspecting, either the schools themselves or through the Joint Area Reviews.

Q125 Chairman: In the early years' sector, are you aware—I am sure that you must be aware—that a lot of the research is pointing to the fact that, if we are to tackle underperformance of students, we have increasingly to focus our attention on the three to fives, and perhaps the five to sevens? It is increasingly apparent that, whether we do it in much more structured, creative play or whatever, that is the way. A lot of the research has shown that is the way we tackle those kinds of challenges. How are you equipped to evaluate that sort of practice?

Ms Gilbert: When I spoke to the outstanding providers last week, I used this as an example of the key thing that joined them all together. In the room

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there were people who were child-minding three children and who had received an outstanding provider award; there was a principal from a college with 4,000 students. What the Every Child Matters themes do, it seems to me, is to capture the whole person—whatever words we use. I like them because you remember them easily and you are not reeling off two phrases for each. They are catchy enough, but they capture the whole child and the focus on that, and how important it is to get all of those things working to generate the sort of development and improvement we want. What Ofsted did some while ago was to use the Every Child Matters themes for the framework of the inspections that go on. I do not know if there is time for Dorian to say anything about that, but that has already gone on within Ofsted.

Q126 Chairman: We are minded to have a Committee sitting just on Every Child Matters with you at some stage, so Dorian will get a chance to come back to us. But if three to five is crucial, does not the quality of training and pay of those very people who are intimately involved in the development of our young children of that age worry you? It is a pretty appalling lack of qualification and poor pay generally still, is it not?

Ms Gilbert: You do not mean inspectors; you mean the people providing—

Q127 Chairman: Not the inspectors; the people actually providing. You might know something about the inspectors that I do not know. You know what I mean. It is poor qualification, very few qualified teachers, and not much above minimum wage in many areas.

Ms Gilbert: What I have looked at is the evidence of progress over the last few years. I have been really struck by the improvement in provision in the early year's sector in childcare as demonstrated through the Annual Reports and other reports. Some of the main ones are captured in the findings. There has been improvement there. I agree with you about the

importance of that age group; it really is fundamental. However, it seems to me that there has been some really impressive progress there over recent years.

Q128 Chairman: We will have that conversation again. Lastly, we always ask this—well, I certainly always ask this—of the Chief Inspector. This whole notion of an inspection is a very special one from the inspectorate to the school. What we sometimes feel very frustrated about, both as members of this Committee but also as members of Parliament, is that when you pick up—and you must pick up—a kind of systematic failure in an area, in a town, in a part of the city or whatever, you do seem unable to respond to that, to draw the threads together, and to say something about systemic failure rather than just individual evaluations of a school. Do you still think that is a weakness of Ofsted?

Ms Gilbert: I thought that was what we were trying to do in the Annual Report.

Q129 Chairman: All your predecessors have said, “That is not our job”.

Ms Gilbert: In the commentary in the Annual Report I am addressing system failure in some parts of the country. The points that I am making about inadequate schools—that is a failure of the system to address those schools, and we all have some responsibility. We have a responsibility in identifying it and, as I said earlier, making people feel uncomfortable about this. Other people have their part to play in generating improvement around those. So I do see that we have a role in highlighting. That is why, presumably, the Chief Inspector is asked to report annually on the state of education and care in the country.

Chairman: Chief Inspector, it has been a very good first meeting with you. May I thank Robert Green, Miriam Rosen, Dorian Bradley and Vanessa Howlison too? All of you did get a chance to say something. Chief Inspector, it has been a pleasure to meet you for the first time. We look forward to a long relationship.

Wednesday 9 May 2007

Members present:

Mr Barry Sheerman, in the Chair

Mr David Chaytor
Jeff Ennis
Paul Holmes
Helen Jones

Fiona Mactaggart
Stephen Williams
Mr Rob Wilson

Witnesses: **Ms Christine Gilbert CBE**, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, **Ms Zenna Atkins**, Chairman, Ofsted Board, **Ms Miriam Rosen**, Director, Education, **Mr Dorian Bradley**, Director, Children, and **Ms Vanessa Howlison**, Director, Finance, Ofsted, gave evidence.

Q130 Chairman: May I welcome the Chief Inspector and what I would usually call her "team", but it is not a team now! May I welcome Christine Gilbert, the Chief Inspector, and Zenna Atkins, the new Chair of—how would you describe it? Your Board?
Ms Atkins: The Ofsted Board.

Q131 Chairman: And Dorian Bradley, who is here today for a Sinatra-like last performance, I understand.

Mr Bradley: That is correct, Chairman, and I am very pleased to be here.

Q132 Chairman: You will be sadly missed in the future. Welcome to Miriam Rosen, who we have seen a few times before, and Vanessa Howlison, I think that it is your second or third performance?

Ms Howlison: It is my third.

Q133 Chairman: Let me start by asking Zenna Atkins what is this new Board and why are you there?

Ms Atkins: The Board is a non-executive board. It is the first time, as I think you will be aware, that Ofsted has had a non-executive board. Of the component parts that came together to create the new Ofsted on 1 April, the Commission for Social Care Inspection has traditionally had a board. They are known as "commissioners" but they are a non-executive board. The Adult Learning Inspectorate, which was one of the team that came to join the party to create the new Ofsted, had a board. The courts inspection service, at the level we took on—the 12 people we took on—who inspect the CAF/CASS service, the children's advisory family and welfare service, did not have a board. The thinking was that it would add real benefit to have a non-executive board at the top. Our role is to ensure governance; scrutiny—to make sure that the new Ofsted is doing what it says it will do on the tin; strategic advice and guidance, principally in the shape of the Strategic Plan, which I hope you have all been able to have a look at now—and we are still making sure that we get that right in a period of consultation with stakeholders up until the end of October; and obviously to have an input into the performance management of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector. We are there to make sure, in its essence, that Ofsted does what it says it will do on the tin, effectively and efficiently. To add one final comment,

the thing that is probably the most exciting about the new Board is that we have a statutory duty to ensure that the views and the voice of the user are heard throughout the new Ofsted. I think that is a really valuable role for a non-executive board, and one I am particularly pleased to be taking forward. I hope that answers your question, Chairman.

Q134 Chairman: Thank you. Chief Inspector, that means that you will not regard us as the point of scrutiny for your operation any longer. Is that right?

Ms Gilbert: I think that I would continue to regard you as a point of scrutiny, and the Board. I think that this underlines the independence of the role of HMCI and scrutinises me and the work of the organisation from two different angles.

Q135 Chairman: Is it not a bit bureaucratic to have two lots of scrutiny? We have always scrutinised you and you report to Parliament through this Committee.

Ms Gilbert: At the moment, it feels workable, helpful and constructive; but if you asked me in a year's time I might have a different view, Chairman. At the moment, however, it feels fine.

Q136 Chairman: It is a bit worrying, is it not? Does this not trammel the lines of communication and responsibility between you and the Minister, you as an organisation and the Secretary of State, and you as an organisation and Parliament?

Ms Gilbert: I do not see that, Chairman. I have responsibility—and I retain this under the new system—for judgments about inspections, and so on. I have overall management responsibility for Ofsted, for the staffing, resources, and so on, and I think it is perfectly proper that a board working closely with me—in a way that this Committee could not, nor a Secretary of State—holds me to account for, essentially, what I have said I am going to do. We therefore take the Strategic Plan and we operationalise the Strategic Plan in a number of ways. It seems entirely appropriate, however, that a number of times in the year we report formally on aspects of that progress. I see this Committee as adding value and absolutely central to my role and my independence as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector.

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Q137 Chairman: Is it not a bit worrying, though, that if you look over recent years you see this massive increase in the responsibilities of Ofsted? You have got bigger and bigger. The role has gone back into early years over the last five years; it is now going into adult learning. You have taken over the Adult Learning Inspectorate's role, and now you are reaching out into a whole range of other different areas. Is there not an overall picture of quite a large, unwieldy bureaucracy that is being created, and now we have added another board, to intervene between all the players in this educational sector?

Ms Gilbert: The thinking behind the creation of the new Ofsted was to reduce and streamline bureaucracy by having, as you know, Chairman, four new inspectorates. I think that the opportunity we have for focusing much more closely on the views of users, engaging users in the process—and by that I mean children, learners, parents and employers, as stipulated in the Act—is really enormous. We will therefore be able to work across boundaries and across service providers, and make the connections across those things, focusing very much on the needs and progress of individual users.

Q138 Chairman: Zenna Atkins, you have a lot of experience in the private sector. When you look at Ofsted—I know it is early days yet—is there not a bit of you that is already saying, “Look, give me this organisation. I could run it as a private sector operation. I could cut the bureaucracy. I could cut the number of people working in it. I could run this much more effectively as an independent but private sector-organised and run organisation”? Could you not do that?

Ms Atkins: Notwithstanding, of course, that I think I could do anything, I actually do not think that I could do that! I think there is real merit in Ofsted being a non-ministerial government department. There is real merit in making sure that we are actually scrutinising the agenda that is appropriate to the government—and I mean the broadest government—of the day. There are things that I am sure Her Majesty's Chief Inspectorate is looking at internally. As a Board, what is interesting—taking your earlier question—is that we do not have any accountability or responsibility, for example, for the staffing of Ofsted. The legislation clearly states that is the responsibility of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector. I am sure that, if you asked Christine, there are several areas where she is beginning to think about ways of doing things that might improve and drive value, and the sorts of things that you have begun to mention. I do not think that it works necessarily, just taking stuff from the public sector and saying, “This is better in the private sector”. I do not think it always is. Far from thinking that the new Ofsted is broken, I think that it has come together very well. It has brought four organisations together very well. It has already begun to reduce the cost to the public purse, and I think it will continue to do that. When you have something that effectively is going in the right direction, you do not want just to stick it in the private sector. Picking up on your

points about the value that the Board can add, I am absolutely determined that it will add real value. It will add real value to the strategic thinking; it will add real value to the governance of Ofsted; but I, like Christine, will be here and will honestly tell you in a year's time whether I think it has done that. If it has not, I will be stepping aside to ensure that there is a chairman who can make that happen. You are absolutely right in saying that we are not in the business of creating more bureaucracy or of creating more layers of decision-making. We are in the business of trying to drive and improve standards, and raising achievement for children and learners across the country. That is what we are there to do, and if we are not adding value as a Board then I think we need to be held to account for that.

Q139 Chairman: Is the Board remunerated?

Ms Atkins: Yes.

Q140 Chairman: A quick question for you, Chief Inspector. I have been reading this rather glossy thing, *The New Ofsted*. If you strip it all away, however, how much difference do you think Ofsted is making? I am still going round schools in towns, in inner cities and in rural areas that are underperforming or coasting. They have had an inspection regime for a long time. I do not see that the problems have been solved, by even a rigorous inspection or a lighter-touch inspection. What is going wrong? When Ofsted was set up I thought that, with these schools that were coasting or failing or struggling, you would have sorted that out by now. The problems seem to be just as great as they ever were. Why is Ofsted failing to deliver?

Ms Gilbert: Chairman, I said last time—the first time I appeared before the Committee—that I had looked through the Annual Reports in preparation for my first report. I think that I had started just six weeks before it was launched. I asked exactly the same question. I could see, by reading those reports and analysing the fairly dense charts at the back of them, improvement through each cycle of the inspection framework that was being used. What has happened, and what makes it more difficult—and we had this debate last time—is that, in raising the bar, it is harder to equate the performance under one framework with another. However, it is clear to me that there is improvement throughout, and it is happening now with this current framework. I get a strong sense of that. At the same time, there are fewer schools than there have ever been in terms of inadequate schools. The most impressive thing I looked at recently, in analysing statistics, is the reduced time that schools now sit within the particular category of special measures in Ofsted. It has been reduced through time by about 20 weeks. If I had the figures I would give them to you, but there are numerous children benefiting from better schools, in a way that they would not have benefited before. It is absolutely clear to me, particularly at the lower-performing end of the range, that Ofsted does make a real and focused difference. Schools themselves tell us that. The heads and the teachers

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tell us that, eventually, not immediately, progress has been better because of the school being placed in special measures.

Q141 Chairman: Chief Inspector, you remember that last occasion we met very well, and so you could almost predict what I am going to ask you now. Do you still not think that a real flaw in government policy and in your role is this focus on individual schools? Those of us who represent constituencies, who know our local authority areas, who travel around the country looking at the state of our schools, do see improvement—I do not want to exaggerate—do see change and do see positive things. I am not dwelling on the negative, therefore; but we do see the need for systemic change. You go to an area and all the schools, even the better ones, are performing well below where they should be, given their intake. Ofsted never seems to be able to come back with any positive help in areas where there is systemic change. You come into an individual school; you make your comments about that individual school; and you go away. The real question that my constituents would ask is that they want systemic lifting of the standard across the piece. They do not want one school to be inspected and changed. They want a systemic answer. Why cannot Ofsted have a broader role in terms of system change?

Ms Gilbert: I think that it does have a role. It has a role at the individual school level; I would not play down the role of individual schools, because I think that the individual schools are part of a local system and part of a national system. I think that expectations and performance are raised in individual schools; but, over and above that, I do have a role in saying—at least annually, but at other times of the year too—what I think about the national system. I think that I had just done that before I appeared before you at the last meeting. The Annual Report that is produced therefore comments on the quality of education, and I think that it does make recommendations for improvement in key areas. At the same time—and I do not think that we discussed this last time—the focus on the local area is really important. Though I believe and have always believed, even when I was Chief Executive, that education is the biggest force for regeneration in an area, I also believe that other factors in an area—health, employment, crime, all those sorts of things—are major determinants of the quality of a local area. The work and progress that is now being made, with what are to be called “comprehensive area assessments”, have Ofsted playing a key role in those, but part of a bigger role in the judgments on what is going on in a particular area, with recommendations for change. I think that also gives us a focus on looking at more vulnerable groups, and perhaps focusing in a starker way on the performance and progress of some of those groups, with some suggestions for change. As you look up and down the country, you do get areas that are

really bucking the trend in terms of performance. We need to find out what is going on in those areas, to see if those lessons can be transferred.

Q142 Chairman: So the new Ofsted is new in that regard too. We will come back to that in later questioning. This is the last one from me, before we broaden the questions. It seems to me that, in any organisation, it is the person on the frontline that represents the quality. If you belong to a motoring organisation and your car breaks down on the motorway, you want a highly trained person that you respect to come and fix what has gone wrong with the car. You sometimes pick up, when you go to schools—and members of this Committee go to a lot of schools—that some of the inspectors that you use are a bit out of touch. They are perhaps at the older end of their professional experience and that, in a sense, is resented; because a young, vigorous head with a young, vigorous team, trying to do new things, feels that the inspectorate is not quite up to the mark in terms of what is going on in the real world. How do you make sure that your quality control and the skills training of your inspectors is up to speed? You have lost half of the ALI people, have you not?

Ms Gilbert: We have lost . . . ?

Q143 Chairman: The ALI people have gone.

Ms Gilbert: We have not lost any. This is a myth.

Q144 Chairman: Have you not? An article in the *Guardian* by the previous Chief Executive of ALI says that 50% have gone.

Ms Gilbert: Every single inspector has come over from the Adult Learning Inspectorate.

Q145 Chairman: So that was an inaccurate report in the press?

Ms Gilbert: It was indeed inaccurate.

Q146 Chairman: How do you make sure the ones you have are of the right quality?

Ms Gilbert: As you know, most of the school inspection work is contracted out, and we have very tight criteria for the appointment of people as inspectors. They are described as having to be “fit and proper” people for the role. There are very tight criteria, therefore. There is then very detailed guidance and a very intense induction programme and training programme. There is a period of time when a new inspector is monitored, checked and seen by an HMI before approval is given to that person becoming an inspector; there is then a quality assurance process, where we check inspections to make sure that the quality is up to it. That said, people are human. We cannot say that, every single day in every school, everything is as we want it. If we do hear complaints, we act on them and we use them to help us improve what it is that we are doing and make our processes better.

Q147 Chairman: Is the average age of inspectors going up or down, or about the same?

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Ms Gilbert: I have absolutely no idea. I do not know if Miriam knows.

Q148 Chairman: Does anyone know?

Ms Rosen: We do not have the figures for the average age of inspectors.

Q149 Chairman: It might be something useful to have. Most organisations would want to know roughly how old their workers are, even in terms of workforce planning.

Ms Gilbert: We must have tried to collect it once, because I was at some event recently when I was berated by a head teacher for Ofsted having asked her her age. We must be asking the ages of some people somewhere in the system; so let me follow that up, Chairman, and see what we can do.¹

Q150 Helen Jones: Your staff survey for 2006, Chief Inspector, had some worrying results, in that 23% of Ofsted staff reported bullying or harassment in the previous year. That was an increase on the year before, albeit an increase of 2%. How can an organisation maintain its focus properly and improve the skills of its staff when so many are reporting that kind of experience?

Ms Gilbert: We take the results of the staff survey very seriously. It was happening the month I arrived, and there was one previously two years before. I should stress that it was for the old Ofsted; it is not the new Ofsted. Some of the other organisations would have had more positive responses. We have analysed it and we have an action plan to address it in a number of areas. The biggest issue is the continuing isolation of so many of the workforce based at home. We are trying to find ways of making them feel less isolated, as cost-effectively as we can. It is not as simple as just having meetings. We have now introduced a meetings framework, because it is not always easy for people who live in very disparate parts of the country to meet up once a month and so on. The discussions I have had with some of those inspectors have suggested that what they really missed—because most of the early years inspectors have done their inspections by themselves—is a colleague, now and again and not every time, coming out with them on the inspection, just to test out whether their views on what they are seeing are right and that the problems they are seeing are the problems that the colleagues are seeing. We are really taking this very seriously, and in the Strategic Plan you will see that we have set ourselves the target of Investors in People Profile, which is quite an advanced stage of Investors in People—which you would never be able to get unless you had a staff survey showing that the staff were very positive about working in the organisation. It is absolutely crucial, and this has been a major thrust of the organisation: that people buy in to the vision; they sign up to the vision. There has been such enthusiasm—I cannot tell you—across new Ofsted about the Strategic Plan, and staff's engagement in

that Strategic Plan. It is crucial that they are now involved in building up this new organisation. I take it very seriously and I will expect the Chairman of the Board to be assessing me on whether there are significant advances in that survey the next time that we do it.

Q151 Helen Jones: What you have said is very interesting about support for staff, but my question was specifically about bullying and harassment. I would like to know what Ofsted is doing to tackle that. Schools are expected to have anti-bullying policies. What is Ofsted's?

Ms Gilbert: I did look at that specifically because I remembered it. I thought, like you, that it was an annual survey. When I was preparing for this post, I asked for the second survey because I remembered the headlines from the *Times Educational Supplement*. I looked at that area quite closely, therefore, when the results came in. In fact, old Ofsted had done a number of things to try and tackle that. It introduced a grievance and anti-bullying policy and procedure. What it has shown me is that staff are just not using it. I do not have the numbers in front of me, but they are really very low. I do not know if anyone has them to hand, but they are very low and the couple of cases that have gone through have not been founded. That policy and that practice, in itself—which is what most good organisations would be doing—obviously has not been enough to generate confidence in coming forward. I am still not absolutely sure whether people do not like being managed, and see that as harassment and bullying. I have in mind a survey of the London Borough of Haringey about two years ago where, when there was some management in a particular area for the first time, people in that department felt that they were being bullied and harassed, and essentially it was just management. I therefore need to tease out some of those things. One of the things I am doing is to have an external review of our capability as a new organisation—this will be taking place next month—where a team of people, working with a couple of people from inside the new Ofsted, will look at the capacity of the management of Ofsted to move the new organisation forward and to address just the sorts of issues that you are talking about.

Q152 Helen Jones: Do you think it is linked with another issue, which is staff turnover? I realise that in 2006 there was a major restructuring going on, but you still lost nearly a quarter of the workforce. Has that, in your view, contributed to staff's feeling of being under pressure or, alternatively, are you losing staff because they feel bullied and harassed? That is a major problem in any organisation, if you are losing a great deal of expertise all at once, is it not?

Ms Gilbert: I could give anecdotal responses to that, but actually we are now collecting systematically information about why people are leaving the organisation, to give some substance to our impressions of why people are leaving. People leave for a whole host of reasons. Sometimes it is really

¹ See Ev 43.

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good if people leave and go on to better jobs. I also have to say—and my colleagues will be able to give you chapter and verse—that people in Ofsted are headhunted all of the time for a whole host of different organisations and private contractors that are around. In some cases they are therefore going on to jobs that pay more, that are more satisfying to them, with promotion, and so on. In some cases, my guess is that they are going because they have not liked the organisation. However, the next time I appear before you I will be able to give you some factual response to that and to explain why people are leaving.

Q153 Helen Jones: Would you agree that, if lots of people were leaving because they found more satisfying jobs elsewhere, that in itself tells you something about the organisation? You ought to be able to keep good people and keep them satisfied with their jobs—to a certain level. There will always be a turnover, but losing almost a quarter of your workforce in one go is a staggering number of people, is it not? Are you confident that you will be able to come back to us in a year's time and show both that that problem has been tackled and that the figures of people reporting bullying will have dropped?

Ms Gilbert: I am confident, but I should also say that, until last October, I was in a very satisfying job that I enjoyed most of the time. I am in a more satisfying job now, and so I have left for positive reasons. I think that a number of people might have left for those reasons; but, as I say, I am not able to give you the sort of detailed and substantial answer you require at this stage.

Q154 Helen Jones: Do you have staff development?

Ms Gilbert: Yes. Staff development is crucial.

Q155 Chairman: Zenna Atkins, you have a lot of experience in different organisations. If there is a happy ship, you get less staff turnover. If people enjoy it and find it fulfilling, there is not a high turnover. That is true, is it not?

Ms Atkins: I think that it depends on why people come in to Ofsted and what it is they hope to achieve by it. Once upon a time, anecdotally, the stories would be that when you became a Her Majesty's Inspector you stayed there until you retired. In an attempt to attract younger people—which was a comment you made earlier—to get a more diverse workforce, people are now seeing that role as a stepping point. As Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has said, maybe that is partly contributing to the staff turnover. What is important, however, is that as a Board—as Christine alluded to—we take that very seriously. It is not acceptable. Twenty-three per cent reporting harassment and bullying, for whatever reason, is not acceptable. If that is because they are being managed for the first time and do not like it, we need to introduce ways that we can separate that out in our staff survey and see a difference between effective management and bullying and harassment, and we need to address that and to change it.

As a new organisation, there is a phenomenal opportunity—as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has alluded to—and when you have four organisations coming together to create one, you can pick and try to drive the best of the cultures that you bring together. You are not stuck with the culture of one organisation. What the Board is looking to do is to see the ideas and the initiatives that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has for tackling those; for creating a positive culture; for creating an inclusive culture; for creating an environment where people feel it is okay to stay until they retire, but it is equally okay to move on and to have left us with their skills and their experience. I take your point entirely, however, and I think that the whole Board does—and I know that Christine does—that we really need to understand what is going on. If there are issues around bullying and harassment they will be addressed; because we are not in the business of having our staff coming to work to feel intimidated in any way. I think that the initiatives that are underway will bear fruit within a year's time; but you need to know that it is not only something that I know Her Majesty's Chief Inspector takes incredibly seriously, but also the Board does, and I think that we will then understand those indicators better.

Q156 Chairman: Why do we still not have a Director of Learning?

Ms Gilbert: Could I just cheat a bit and finish off that last one, because it is important and leads into what you are saying? I do not get a sense, in six months, that it is an organisation where managers are bullying staff. We do a whole series of things, as I said, to bottom it out. One of the issues which I do not think will be resolved in a year—if you have looked at the staff survey in as much detail as you obviously have—is the issue about pay. Childcare workers are paid much lower than other parts of the organisation. There is no way that we will be able to meet people's expectations in terms of pay over a year, or even three years, in my view. That is an issue, therefore. One of the things I have been doing about that is talking openly to staff and explaining why it is difficult; it is not just that we are not hearing them. I talked to 150 staff in Swindon on Friday and tried to explain how our hands were tied in a number of ways, in terms of the way we could pay and the allocation of pay. I absolutely subscribe to the importance of building up a strong, rigorous organisation, but it is not all rosy and I can only deal with a number of things—which leads into the question about appointments.

Q157 Chairman: A Director of Learning and Skills—do you have one yet?

Ms Gilbert: We have.

Q158 Chairman: You do have one?

Ms Gilbert: We have indeed, yes. We have Melanie Hunt, who is the National Director of Learning at the Learning and Skills Council. She was appointed just over a week ago and we are now able to say, "Here it is", because the lines have been cleared, and

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so on. She has been a teacher, a vice-principal, an inspector at the FEFC—a good appointment. We have three good appointments now to these director posts.

Q159 Jeff Ennis: Chief Inspector, the Chairman mentioned earlier the rapid expansion of your organisation. Have we seen it reach its full potential now? Do you see any further expansion of Ofsted, or has it gone as far as it should go?

Ms Gilbert: I certainly do not see us having reached our full potential—but not for the second bit of your question! We have brought the organisations together. There have been fewer wrinkles than I had anticipated at this stage of things, but we now have lots to do and there are all sorts of connections we can be making across the organisation. We are far from seeing the potential of this new organisation, which I think really will be impressive. I do not immediately see—the second part of the question—other things that could be added to it. I do see us having to work very closely with other organisations that are not part of us—the Healthcare Commission, and so on.

Q160 Jeff Ennis: When you get an expansion within an organisation like that, you are bound to have a number of teething problems. You have already touched on the fact that, when you brought in the early years inspectorate a few years ago, they were used to working in teams under social services and they were then asked to work in isolation. The computer system the inspectors were using was not very good for the first two or three years. I know that this is a very difficult question, but what teething problems do you anticipate in the most recent expansion?

Ms Gilbert: One of the things that shows that the old Ofsted certainly did learn some lessons from that time is that everybody I see who came over CSCI has told me how good the kit is, how good the computer setup is at home, and are really very positive about it: far better than anything they had anticipated. We have learnt some lessons from that, therefore. A lot of work went on before 1 April, with people working across the four different organisations. I think that was really helpful. The investment of time in producing the Strategic Plan—over 2,000 people from across the four organisations met in a number of conferences, and either I or one of the directors went and spoke, some of the Board members were there, and so on—was really important in shaping up a common vision and getting some common priorities in the organisation. It also helped every single person in the organisation understand that that was their plan; that was their vision, and everything they did every single day contributed to the achievement of that. The thing that we are doing now is to listen hard and to respond quickly, so that it does not build up to be a big, enormous problem. The fact that I am sitting here, with nobody having to complain to me massively about anything, is an indication. I know that there have been some teething problems, but they have not reached me;

they have been resolved far more easily. It is still early days and we are just beginning to start some of the inspections. There was a lot of training and investment before this happened.

Q161 Jeff Ennis: In your press release announcing the new inspectorate you said, “The new Ofsted will ensure that provision is inspected in totality, so that there is less chance of issues slipping through the boundaries between inspectorates”. Can you give the Committee any clear, practical examples of issues that you have addressed so far, to ensure that it is an inspection in totality?

Ms Gilbert: The Directors might be able to give better examples, but we have been very keen to make sure that the focus is on, for instance, a different user group. So that looked-after children would no longer be dealt with by just one directorate; there would be a holistic look across. I can give you an example. The planning and thinking that we are doing for the development of the area inspections is an initiative across all directorates. Though the leadership is in education, led by Miriam, it is an initiative for us all. We have had a seminar, for instance, involving people outside Ofsted to shape up and help us in our thinking and progress, to move forward. There is therefore that sort of thinking going on, at probably a more strategic level. There is also some frontline activity going on about particular user groups, such as looked-after children, and so on. In terms of providers, they should already be feeling the benefit of having some greater consistency and coherence in the inspectors arriving at their door. It is no longer Ofsted coming on Monday and Tuesday and CSCI coming to the same boarding school on Thursday and Friday, with no connection between the two, and that school having to prepare twice for two separate inspections.

Q162 Chairman: Does Dorian want to comment on this issue?

Mr Bradley: I could give another example: of the Adult Learning Inspectorate which, in its day, used to look at adult learning, and the area of developing the childcare workforce. They used to visit nurseries to look at the training of nursery nurses on site, for example, and then, as Christine has said, a day or two later an Ofsted inspector could turn up—an old Ofsted inspector could turn up—to look at the quality of childcare. We have opportunities to bring those two events together, so that through the ordinary inspection programme we could get information about the childcare workforce development, which I know is of great interest to the Government at the moment. There are a couple of other examples along those lines.

Ms Rosen: In the past, boarding schools had two separate inspections. The inspectors will now visit together. That will be a single event, to look at both care and education. Another area on which we are doing a great deal of work, although there is more to be done, is 14–19, because we now have the two inspectorates together that used to look at this. We really will try to maximise potential there, both

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through survey work and how we tackle it through the new joint area review process; and in looking at difficult issues, such as how we are looking at sixth forms in schools and the same age group in colleges. We are not there yet, but we have a lot of potential for bringing that together in a better way.

Q163 Jeff Ennis: A final question from me. What efforts have you been making, Chief Inspector, to engage better with employers? Have you had any sort of feedback from them in terms of your taking over the role from the Adult Learning Inspectorate and how that has been received by employers, *et cetera*?

Ms Gilbert: I have been very conscious that employers were suspicious, I suppose, or waiting to be convinced that the new organisation would hear anything beyond the voice of schools. We have therefore been very concerned about that. It is one of the reasons why, at this particular stage, we have set up a separate directorate within Ofsted with a new director, to give confidence there. The previous chairman of the Adult Learning Inspectorate was part of the recruitment process to recruit to the new director post. A number of various bits of information, booklets and so on, have been produced for employers, providers and so on, and a number of conferences and meetings held. That is up until now, and we are inviting and engaging responses on the Strategic Plan. This evening I am going to a dinner of 22 employers, talking about our work and so on. We have therefore taken every opportunity to do this. I see us now moving into a new gear, with the appointment of the new director—she is joining us next month—and that being a major focus for her work, certainly over the next six months, so that she is seen and known, and builds up confidence in the new Ofsted. It is certainly less stark than it was when the new organisation was being created, but I think that people are waiting to see. They are giving us the benefit of the doubt, but they will want us to be engaging with them very constructively over the next year.

Chairman: Thank you for those answers, all of you. I want to move now to the Strategic Plan.

Q164 Mr Chaytor: Chief Inspector, the Strategic Plan is really a draft strategic plan, because you are putting it out to consultation. However, very shortly you will be publishing the Annual Departmental Report, I imagine. Is this due out later this month?

Ms Gilbert: It is.

Q165 Mr Chaytor: Is there likely to be any conflict or any great difference between the key planks of the draft strategic plan and the projections in the Annual Report, because the annual report looks forward as well as looking back, does it not?

Ms Gilbert: The Departmental Report is a report just on old Ofsted, not on the other three organisations. They will each have had their different process for reporting. Nevertheless, it is due out later this month, and it has picked up the key priorities and themes of that Strategic Plan. The

focus for producing that plan, the major investment at the start, came from the engagement of the Board. Then, as I said, we talked to as many staff as we could engage in the process—well over 2,000 staff—and produced that document. It was fairly late in the day that we decided that it would be completely inappropriate just to say, “This is the new Ofsted’s Strategic Plan”. We did feel that we had to engage with people in what we were saying. That said, the plan did not come from nowhere. It did look at the work of the four inspectorates, because it is “business as usual”, as well as creating a new organisation. We therefore did look at the major priorities of each of the four areas, the achievements and the areas for development; but tried to bring them together and give them a holistic grip, if you like, and to try, by bringing the four organisations together, to do something better than existed before. My impression, therefore, is that there will be very little change in the major priorities. The debate that I have been engaged with so far, with external partners and stakeholders, is about what we are saying in the targets, whether the targets are challenging enough, can we really deliver this bit, and so on. That seems to me to be the major debate. If we have got parts of it wrong, we will hear that too. Essentially, however, we are facing in the right direction. It will be points of detail amended, rather than the overall thrust.

Q166 Mr Chaytor: In the Strategic Plan, there seem to be quite minimal targets. In fact, in some areas you say, “We’re going to have a specified high percentage”. What you are saying is not, “Here are our targets. What do you think about it?” but, “What do you think our target should be?”. Is that realistic: that you expect the various stakeholder bodies to come back to you and say, “The specific high percentage should be 85 or 95”? Is this a reasonable criticism, that you are very thin on targets and very strong on generalities in the Strategic Plan?

Ms Gilbert: We are asking whether the target areas are the right areas. Are we focusing the right way? People can say anything about the plan, but essentially that was one of the key things we were asking about. In producing the plan, I looked at the plans of a number of organisations. Very, very few of them—I will not name them here, but national organisations—have what I would call smart targets, measurable targets, in their plan. We were determined at Ofsted that we did set ourselves measurable targets that we could be held to account for; but they had to have a sensible base. In many instances we do not know; so it is fine saying, “We’re going to make 20% improvement,” but we do not know whether that is really easy or whether that is stretching in some areas. We are doing quite a bit of work on those. Not all of them but many of them will be there by September/October time, when we hope to come forward with them.

Mr Chaytor: You say you considered the plans of other organisations. In your plan you have six strategic priorities: better outcomes; better

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inspection regulation; better communication; better consultation; better value; better ways of working. My question is this. Is there anything distinctive about the Ofsted Strategic Plan, or is this not just an off-the-shelf plan that any organisation would be likely to adopt? Is there anything here that other organisations would not subscribe to?

Chairman: I think David is saying that it is a bit anodyne. Is that right, David?

Mr Chaytor: That is your word, Chairman.

Q167 Chairman: Chief Inspector? It is very glossy.

Ms Gilbert: The distinctive contribution that we make that nobody else does is regulation and inspection; so it is all of those, related to regulation and inspection.

Q168 Mr Chaytor: It would be surprising if you did not say that the key plank of the plan should be better inspection and regulation, surely? What else could you have in your Strategic Plan?

Ms Gilbert: It does not make it any less important that you would have predicted that we might say it. It is still very important for us to be better at what we are doing, expect ourselves to be better, and not to sit here complacently and say, "We're doing terribly well. Everybody thinks we're great". We want to do better than we are doing at the moment, which is what we are setting out in that plan in a number of areas. It did not feel—and perhaps the Chairman might add to this—as though we were pulling something off the shelf. There were quite heated discussions about different aspects of it; about our contribution to national performance, for instance. I think that we do have a major contribution to make and, if we are not making an impact, we do need to consider our role.

Q169 Mr Chaytor: Where do you think the greatest leap forward has to be made in this next three-year operational period?

Ms Gilbert: I think that we have to show added benefit from bringing the organisations together, which means that individual users are getting something more out of it and they are therefore making more progress in education, the quality of their care is better, and so on. That is the bottom line in many ways. One of the major differences in the way that the organisation is going to work will be the involvement of users—this dreadful word "users"—but that is what the Act says. We have been quite good at engaging providers, though interestingly the providers' reaction to that plan is that it is not saying enough about them and about their engagement with us. We will therefore need to be looking at ways of doing that slightly differently. Over the next three years, however, I think that we will listen to our users in ways that we are not even thinking of at the moment; and we will engage them in different aspects of our work, to help us do our core job of inspection and regulation more effectively than we have done it until now.

Q170 Mr Chaytor: Could I ask the Chairman of the Board how you will be monitoring the successful implementation of this plan over the next three years?

Ms Atkins: Is it an anodyne report? Does it just say what any other strategic plan could say? I suppose, in all honesty, as the Chairman of the Board I do not mind if it is doing that. What I mind about is that it shows a palpable difference on the ground, year on year, and that it is not a static document that we just take away, shove in a cupboard and do no more about. What is interesting about the development of the Strategic Plan is that it was very much led by the Board, and it is one of the roles of the Board to ensure that that document becomes living and breathing. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has alluded to the level of debate we have already had about it, and we are absolutely pushing that there are smart targets in that document. Where we do not have baselines, instead of guessing them, which is quite easy to do—and we did have a go at guessing them and pulled them all out because, to be honest, a five or 10% increase here or there is stuff that perhaps we should have been doing in our sleep. In some areas we should have been looking at a 60%, and in some areas a five per cent was a ridiculously too-far stretch. So there was some work needed, to really understand what they are, and we are doing that; because, as a Board, we need to be able to show that they are being achieved. For us, as a Board, part of that is getting those targets right. Part of it is listening to our stakeholders and our staff. Staff are very important. Probably one of the longest debates the staff had about the Strategic Plan was about the values section of that document. Never more apposite, often, is the word "anodyne" to values. [*sic*]. I could pick those values up and apply them to any organisation anywhere in the country that had a soul. But if you had heard the debate amongst the staff in developing that—about what those meant, "How will I live them? How will I breathe them? How will my behaviour reflect those?"—for me, as Chairman of the Board, it was very encouraging to see a sense of ownership; that this is something that is more than a document. The feedback that we have had has been very welcoming from the four organisations coming together; that they have had an input in developing it. So while it may not look or sound wildly different, what it is is an owned document and what it is striving towards is to set clear targets that we can then measure ourselves against—as a Board, as an organisation—to be able to come and report to you where we have hit what we have said we would do and where we would not. Finally, to answer your question, the Board is very much there to monitor that we actually deliver this. Where we have not—and it is one of the commitments that I strongly make, that I do not think if we set really stretched targets we should be surprised if we do not make some of them—what we need to do is not change them, but to be honest about that. My experience has been that where you do not necessarily have shareholders—the Chairman has alluded to my experience in the

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private sector—where you have people who are constantly saying, “Hang on a minute, you said this but you’ve actually done this, and you’ve just changed the target”, the Board will be doing that and will be honestly publicising. Instead of saying, “We’ve changed the target”—“No, we didn’t meet this and these are the reasons why”. I think that is what people want. I would finally echo what Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector has said with regard to the users. Getting children, parents, carers, employers, providers of services involved in understanding what that Strategic Plan means, and telling us about the quality of what they think we are doing, as well as the quality of what they think the service is that we inspect and regulate, will be vital. I absolutely echo the sentiment that we do not yet entirely know how we are going to do that. We know that we are going to do it, and I think that the creativity and the vibrancy that we can bring as a Board to doing that will be something which this Select Committee will be interested to probe us on over time. But, yes, I think we can monitor it.

Q171 Chairman: Does the Chief Inspector want to come in on this?

Ms Gilbert: I want to say this, because you asked at the beginning, Chairman, about the role of this Committee in relation to the new Ofsted. This seems to me a really good example because, at this time next year, the Departmental Report will be a review of that Strategic Plan. To stop us becoming too cosy, too self-congratulatory, I would imagine that this Committee would have questions to ask about the performance over the year, and whether or not we have achieved, why we have not, and so on. I think that is a very good example of the value of the scrutiny from both groups.

Q172 Mr Chaytor: Will the Board be evaluating the successful implementation of the plan in terms of the improvements within the organisation and the successful amalgamation of the predecessor bodies, or in terms of improvements in the services that are being inspected? I suppose my question is do you see the purpose of the plan simply to refine the organisation, or to ensure the organisation has impact?

Ms Atkins: To answer your question succinctly, the Board will be directly monitoring and evaluating the impact the plan has on bringing those four organisations together, and effectively delivering something that is significantly greater than the sum of its parts. Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is very specifically charged with ensuring that the inspection and regulation frameworks that we deliver result in real improvement on the ground. The Board will be holding Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector to account for doing that. Although we would not be specifically monitoring that bit of the plan, we monitor the Chief Inspector in undertaking that, because, by statute—as the Chairman started off by saying—she is accountable for doing that. We

will be monitoring it, therefore, in monitoring that performance. So, yes, we do both, but we do both by a different route.

Ms Gilbert: I think that we will do both through the monitoring of the plan, because there is a very detailed process for the Board to be monitoring the plan. If you look at priority six, which is “Better ways of working—delivering results through people and partnerships”, that is where there will be headlines about progress on Investors in People, progress of the organisation, and so on. So it will be at a headline level, but the Board will have oversight and will see progress or problems in those areas as they monitor the overall direction of the organisation.

Q173 Mr Chaytor: Do you think it follows, Chief Inspector, that, if the organisation is firing on all cylinders and well regarded by its users, it inevitably impacts positively on the services that it is inspecting? Do you think that there is a direct correlation between the quality of the organisation as an organisation and improvement in the performance of the services that are being inspected?

Ms Gilbert: There is a direct correlation with how we behave as an organisation—we are a better organisation, people are engaged and positive, and so on—and I would need to be checking all of the time that the things that we were doing were the right things to be doing to generate improvement. If 100% of the people were saying that we are great and wonderful, I would start to worry very much about what we were doing. We are not going to please all of the people all of the time, and I think that we need to be really straight about that. We will be testing out the way we work—whether this framework or that process, and so on, is working effectively—as we go.

Q174 Mr Chaytor: Finally, could I ask about the “Better communication” aspect of the plan? You seem still to have some difficulties with some sections of the teaching profession but, in terms of the further education sector, the Association of Colleges is very complimentary about Ofsted inspections and shows an increasing number of colleges agreeing with the inspectors’ judgments. Why should there be this striking difference between the view of some teachers and the general view of the representatives of colleges?

Ms Gilbert: I think that there is a difference coming through with Section 5s—and they are no longer new, because they were introduced in September 2005—but if you look at the results of the impact report and at the reviews that we do of school inspections, there is a very positive feel about the new inspection process, which people generally feel is less burdensome and are generally positive about it. Through time, over the next 18 months, I think that we will see the percentages of those growing together. I think that some of the teacher unions have probably not caught up completely with that; others have.

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Q175 Mr Chaytor: You are not intending to do anything to improve your communication with those more recalcitrant sections of the teaching unions. They will just come round to your point of view inevitably.

Ms Gilbert: As part of our work on the Strategic Plan over the coming months—and the Board was looking at this in its first official meeting this week—we are looking at the way we engage stakeholders and talk to stakeholders and so on. We will have to see whether the processes we have are right. They probably will need to be enhanced in some way. I have talked a lot, since my appointment in October, and I know the other directors have too, at stakeholder meetings. That would not necessarily be with the teacher unions, though it might be. I spoke at the ACSL conference and so on. Up and down the country, at regional meetings, authority meetings, diocese meetings and so on, we pick up some of these issues and we do not just let them fester; we do come back and talk about them and see if there are ways of building in improvements. For instance, one of the things that has been debated quite a lot in the last few months has been the use of contextual value added. We have heard what people are saying and we remain very committed to it. We do need it as part of the new approach we take to inspection, but we think we need to do far more to clarify our approach, just to explain to people what we are doing. We will be producing a book of some sort, explaining what it is we are doing, why it is we use it, and it is one part of the things that help an inspector make a judgment when he or she is on an inspection.

Q176 Chairman: In passing, you say there would be a tendency without this non-executive Board to get cosy and comfortable. You are not suggesting the scrutiny that Ofsted has been held up to in the past has allowed it to become cosy and comfortable, are you?

Ms Gilbert: Quite the reverse. I was saying that in-house, as it were, with your own board, you could get quite a closed view of things. I do not think we will do that.

Q177 Chairman: We do not intend to let you become cosy and comfortable at any time.

Ms Gilbert: No, I meant quite the reverse: that you would keep your eye on us and the eye of scrutiny on us.

Q178 Chairman: Would it worry you if you saw that NUT and other surveys showed a growing approval rate of Ofsted? Should you be trying to drive down the approval rate of Ofsted amongst the teaching profession?

Ms Gilbert: We have talked about this, which is why I do not think we should ever be saying in that document that we want 100% of people to be really positive about us, so there is a discussion about that. That said, if you read what the NUT has been saying about us over the last few months, it has been quite positive. It has not been positive from some of the other unions. In fact, the NUT, in the different

meetings we have had with them, has been asking us to do different inspections. They wanted us to look into the role of SIPs, for instance, and that is not in our current programme. So they have enough faith in us to ask us to be looking at different aspects of work.

Q179 Chairman: We have not seen the unions for a while. We will ask them in to see if they are going soft. We are going to turn now to inspections. Before I do, I should have said to Zenna Atkins earlier, as I know you come from Portsmouth, that I personally love Portsmouth. I have a strong family connection with Portsmouth and I believe it is a wonderful town. I visit it regularly. That is just to make you feel more comfortable.

Ms Atkins: Thank you. It is a wonderful place and I love it.

Chairman: I am sure you will know why I am saying that. We will now move on to inspections and Stephen you are going to lead us.

Stephen Williams: Is it as good as Huddersfield?

Chairman: It is on a par.

Q180 Stephen Williams: That is praise indeed! It is about 18 months since the new light-touch inspection regime has been in place. What evaluation have you made of the success of that new approach?

Ms Gilbert: Miriam might like to come in with some of the detail. We have conducted our own regular evaluations through forms that we send out—that are online in fact—through telephone calls, through visits and so on, so we have kept the whole system under review and built in minor improvements throughout that period. But we also commissioned the NFER to do a review of the implementation of those. We have used the results of that. With the reduced tariff inspections, we focus closely on those, asking the inspectors how the experience was for them, how the schools found them and so on. We were trialling those initially and they expanded it to about 30% of schools from April. So there is a whole range of different ways of looking at it.

Ms Rosen: This is the report we commissioned from NFER which was published last Friday.

Q181 Chairman: Could you not get a proper photographer? It made me feel quite dizzy looking at the photograph on the front!

Ms Rosen: This was published last Friday and it is good news for us. A large number of schools were surveyed, over 2,000, and there were also a number of schools which were subject to visits. This report shows that they were very positive about the impact of Ofsted inspections. They feel that, on the whole, they do contribute to improvement or are likely to contribute to improvement in the future. They do say that the main way in which the inspections contribute to improvement is by clarifying and prioritising what the school is going to do so they have a better idea of how they want to take forward the actions they have in their plans, but there are also instances where there are new recommendations on

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which the schools act and which then bring about improvements. This is an independent evaluation which is pretty positive. It also gives us some pointers for things we need to do for improvement, which we will take very seriously.

Q182 Stephen Williams: Chairman, as that was published last Friday, we have not had a chance to see it. Maybe in a future session, we will ask questions based on its findings. Talking to staff in schools or just to friends who are in the teaching profession, under the old system they used to have nervous trepidation about the arrival of your staff. That has largely gone away but there are still complaints about the burden of, effectively, a self-assessment system, particularly on the head teachers. It is a bit like the Inland Revenue getting taxpayers to do all the work to make it a light-touch experience for the Inland Revenue itself. Do you feel that the burden of the work is perhaps still a bit too heavy on schools, and particularly principals?

Ms Gilbert: Schools still tell me that they do get nervous before the inspection, so it is not quite stress-free, and I think it is entirely appropriate that that happens. The whole focus of the new inspection framework is on self-evaluation. One of the things that has emerged is that people have found it time-consuming to complete the school evaluation form which we propose they might use—they do not have to use it but most do—to help them produce their own self-evaluation. One of the things we found early on was that people were producing very long school-evaluation forms—90 pages; 120 pages, in one instance. We gave guidance and produced guidance formally with the DfES a few months ago where we stressed that length was really not the issue; the issue was the accuracy and what the schools were doing with their own information and their own review of their own school. So we tried to help with that. We are also getting feedback that, having done it once, updating it is much easier than producing it cold, as it were, for the first time, so we think there has been progress there. That said, one of the things that has come out of the impact report is the very point you are making, so we do need to be sure that we are addressing all of the issues.

Q183 Stephen Williams: One of the aspects of any self-evaluation process, self-assessment or whatever, is that it is going to be focused on data that is provided. Because it is now a light-touch, briefer inspection, it is also more of a snapshot. How in those circumstances can you be confident that other aspects of Every Child Matters to do with child welfare are being properly assessed by your organisation because not all of those deliverables are done by the school. There is a role for the local council's children's services as well. How do you have that sort of holistic approach?

Ms Gilbert: The school has some role across each of the five outcomes. The school framework does ask that each of those areas be addressed. In fact, I think the title of the framework is Every Child Matters so the framework is really embedded in the ECM

agenda. The school reviews itself using the data that it has available and then the inspector uses contextual value added information. Inspection looks at that, it looks at the school's assessment of itself, but then the important thing is the visit, where it tests out a number of things about which it has come to a hypothesis from looking at that information. It will test out in various ways—firsthand observation; classroom discussion with pupils, teachers, parents, in some instances and so on—in order to get an overall view of the school, some debate about how the school itself is using the information it has available to it. The data are one aspect of that information to progress and move forward.

Q184 Stephen Williams: Let us take as an example something that was in the news this morning just as I was getting ready to come into work and which I have raised at this Committee before: young carers. How would Ofsted satisfy itself that the welfare of young carers in the school is being addressed and that their home needs are not impacting on their attainment in school? What role does your organisation have in mind?

Ms Gilbert: It would depend. We focus on particular groups within a school. It would be unlikely, in all honesty—I think this is right—that young carers would emerge as a particular group to focus on. Though we have been talking about school inspection, a really important strand of our work which I am really keen for us to develop over the next few years, because we could look holistically across Ofsted at some very interesting areas, is the survey, topic and theme work where we might take an issue and look at it right across. That is a perfect example of an issue or an area that we might look at, make some visits, talk to some young carers and so on and do a focused piece of work on that particular group. So it would not emerge from a school inspection process or it would be unlikely to—and Miriam might have something to add there—but we certainly could build it into our programme. We have a three-year rolling programme. We are picking areas to look at and one of the things I think we need to be doing is thinking much harder about the things we are looking at and making sure the work we are doing has greater impact and influences, people on the ground, policy and thinking and so on.

Q185 Stephen Williams: In the context of the report you have commissioned, which, from what you were saying, is based upon the information schools have fed back to you, have you commissioned any studies of what parents think about the contribution Ofsted makes, particularly of the light-touch inspection regime?

Ms Gilbert: We certainly had a study—just after I arrived in October, the results came through, so it was sometime last year—where Ipsos MORI had been commissioned to do a piece of work with parents, where parents were very positive about inspections. Only 4% of parents were saying they did not think it was a good thing. We have done some

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work with pupils. A lower percentage there of people knowing about Ofsted, but thinking still it is a very good thing. I am meeting Ben Page from MORI next week to talk about ways of progressing some of this in the new organisation.

Ms Rosen: In the NFER report the researchers did talk to groups of parents in the schools that they visited, so the parents were able to give their view there.

Q186 Chairman: We are a little bit cross—I am sensing a frisson on this side—that we did not have a chance to look at the NFER report before you came in. You said it came out on Friday. Is it the Bank Holiday that has stopped us getting a copy of this?

Ms Rosen: I would have thought you would have been sent it. I think we need to investigate that.

Q187 Chairman: We have not. That does leave us at something of a disadvantage, in that you are referring to a report that we have not been able to scrutinise.

Ms Rosen: Yes, I am sorry.

Q188 Stephen Williams: Pursuing this theme about parents, is asking parents what they think about the inspection regime something you are going to do on a regular basis?

Ms Gilbert: We would be engaging parents. We need to think about how we engage parents in the regime. One of the things that previously used to happen was the meeting of parents. It was never very well attended but it was an opportunity. We do say that, if possible, if any parent wants to see an inspector we will find an opportunity for them to come in and see that inspector but I think we do need to think about this more. We have begun to think about it because of Ofsted's new role with parental complaints.

Q189 Stephen Williams: On a completely different area, Chairman, from my last couple of questions, this is about the different types of inspectors the organisation has. There are your own full-time HMIs, additional inspectors and private sector inspectors as well. What is the rough proportion of personnel you deploy on inspections between your own staff, additional inspectors and private sector inspectors?

Ms Gilbert: I think they are different on different areas and both Dorian and Miriam would give different examples. For the first time with the new Ofsted, we have created HMI in all directorates, so there are HMI now coming over from CSCI, from ALI, from HMICA and joining HMI in Ofsted. They will be in different directorates in Ofsted.

Ms Rosen: Within the Education Directorate there are now approximately 220 or 230 HMI and virtually all of them will lead school inspections, but there are between 1,000 and 1,500 additional inspectors employed by the regional inspection service providers who also lead and act as team members on school inspections. Overall, there are more additional inspectors than there are HMI

working on school inspections. We particularly deploy HMI to lead secondary school inspections, whereas only a small minority of primary inspections are led by HMI. Within the joint area reviews, all of those will be led by HMI, and those HMI are either originating from old Ofsted or from CSCI, and there will be inspectors from other inspectorates working on those as well. We do occasionally use additional inspectors on those inspections but not very often.

Q190 Stephen Williams: In the case of a primary school, where the inspection would be led by the additional inspectors rather than HMI, how does Ofsted evaluate the quality of their work?

Ms Rosen: Schools are asked to complete an evaluation form at the end of that process and that is the same whether they are HMI or AIs. The schools will complete an evaluation form, but the RISPs themselves will evaluate the work of their own inspectors and within Ofsted we also deploy HMI to undertake quality assurance visits. That is going on and the review that we did looked at the work of both HMI and AIs. It looked at inspections. It did not differentiate who was leading those inspections.

Ms Gilbert: Mr Chairman, could I ask Dorian to add a bit to that, so that the early years and Children's Directorate are covered too.

Mr Bradley: For completeness, Chairman, the Children's Directorate tends to employ staff directly. We do not have as much of a contracted-out system as is in existence in schools. Transferring from the old Ofsted we have just over 700 inspectors who will continue with the childcare work. On 2 April we inherited just under 300 staff from CSCI, with 230 of those being engaged directly on inspection work. We also had just about 30 HMI and they will be joining Miriam's colleagues on joint area reviews of children's services. So there is a different pattern of employment across the different directorates in Ofsted.

Q191 Chairman: Are HMIs much more expensive? Is Vanessa Howlison trying to make sure you get all this inspection on the cheap? The cost of change from the old to the new is at £9 million, you are a bit tight for budget and so you are cutting down on the quality of inspection, are you, Vanessa?

Ms Howlison: That is absolutely not the case.

Q192 Chairman: You are the evil genius behind all this.

Ms Howlison: It is true that creating the new Ofsted did cost money but we were very careful to make sure that we kept that to an absolute minimum.

Q193 Chairman: Ministers usually say these things are going to save money.

Ms Howlison: It has saved money.

Q194 Chairman: The report says it has cost £9 million.

Ms Howlison: It cost a little more than that, in actual fact, but the payback period was 18 months, so we think that is money well spent. There is not just a financial benefit; there are the benefits that the Chief Inspector and the other directors have already set out—

Q195 Chairman: Yes, but you sitting at board meetings saying, “Let’s have less HMIs because they are expensive and let’s do it cheaper because the other people come cheap.”

Ms Howlison: That is not what I say. My role is to make sure we have enough money to deploy effectively to deliver our remit. It is certainly not my role to sit there and state that one staff group should be paid differently from another.

Q196 Chairman: Are HMIs more expensive than the other inspectors?

Ms Howlison: They are paid more than the other inspectors. We have been careful to make sure that we understand the market that we are pulling from: it is very much a reflection of what staff are paid in these sectors from which we tend to draw staff.

Q197 Chairman: But HMI are better trained.

Ms Howlison: It is not a case of that.

Q198 Chairman: What is the difference then? Chief Inspector, why do you use one rather than the other?

Ms Gilbert: They are doing different jobs. The nature of the work is generally, not always, different. We now have HMI going across the different directorates, in working together, for instance, on the joint area reviews, so they are doing the same task and therefore they are being paid the same money but generally the work is different. If you compare the payment of a childcare inspector with an HMI, I am told that in terms of the market we pay well. Dorian is nodding to that. Dorian, you were going on to elaborate and I think it would be helpful if you talked a bit about the level of inspections.

Q199 Chairman: I am sorry, Dorian, did I cut across your answer.

Mr Bradley: I am quite happy that you did, Chairman.

Q200 Chairman: You take as much time as you like. It is your last performance today.

Mr Bradley: I will not indulge you! The childcare inspectors who transferred into our Ofsted in 2001 came from local authorities and their pay rates reflected what the local authorities were paying for them. We have maintained that and tried to enhance it as much as we can. A number of the inspectors who transferred from the CSCI are better paid and HMI are better paid again. We have the outline of an inspector ladder, if you like, where people can see there is a progression as they gain more experience in the work that they do, but it is true to say that the work in the childcare sector tends to be more

straightforward, less complex, than the work HMI are paid to carry out and therefore the pay rates reflect that.

Q201 Mr Wilson: Inspector, why was the old heavyweight inspection style changed?

Ms Gilbert: It was changed before I arrived but one of the first things I asked Miriam, and the Deputy Director, was whether we changed because the budget was being cut so drastically and we therefore had to cut our cloth or whether we believed this was the most effective form of inspection, and I was told very, very clearly that they thought this was the most effective form of inspection. The framework is changed very regularly, there are differences in style and so on. Therefore, if I looked at the analysis of how schools have progressed over the last 10 years, they have become much stronger. And—my analysis is based on evidence in Ofsted reports—and they have become much better at self-evaluation. We are now much more data rich than we ever were before. We are able to look across schools and up and down the country more effectively than we ever did before. Miriam will want to add to this, I am sure, but, from outside, I saw that the previous system, which was very intensive and quite a drain on schools, had probably yielded as much as it could in terms of improvement, and we were now moving on to do something else which builds on the schools’ developments over the years and their strengths in the different areas.

Q202 Mr Wilson: Before Miriam comes in, was the old system in any way ineffective in identifying underperforming schools?

Ms Gilbert: From the outside, I would not have said it was. I do not know if Miriam wants to add to that.

Ms Rosen: I would say that the old system was successful in identifying underperforming schools but it was much more resource intensive. We looked at every subject of the curriculum as well as the overall leadership and management and effectiveness of the school. We had done that for three cycles and we felt the system had served the country well but it was time to move on and to move to a shorter, sharper system that was less expensive but was also less burdensome on schools, gave them less notice, enabled us to see them as they were, and had an extremely sharp focus on the central nervous system and the overall effectiveness of the school. That is the system that we now have. We could not have done it without the focus on the school self-evaluation, and, as Christine says, that has improved markedly over the years and the data that we now have. We do feel it is a very successful system and it is less burdensome. The downside is that we are not systematically picking up subjects, in the way we used to do, but you know that we have a complementary survey system that looks at subjects and enables us to report on those on a rolling programme.

Q203 Mr Wilson: Is the new light-touch approach better at identifying weaknesses in schools?

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Ms Rosen: If anything it would be better at that because of this very sharp focus on the overall effectiveness of the school, aided by the data and the self-evaluation. This will enable us to look at schools whose raw results might appear to be good but they are not doing terribly well for the intake of the pupils they have, for the context. The contextual value added data and the sharp focus that we now have I think enables us to winkle out those schools in a better way.

Q204 Mr Wilson: So your answer is yes, it is better.

Ms Rosen: Yes.

Q205 Mr Wilson: How much time in the new light-touch inspection regime is spent by inspectors in the classroom compared to the old regime?

Ms Rosen: Less time is spent in the classroom.

Q206 Mr Wilson: How much less?

Ms Rosen: Taking into account the reduced tariff inspections that we now have, the average for lesson observation is nine lessons in a primary school and 22 in a secondary school. There is a spread around that. That is considerably down from the lesson observations that we used to have, but I would like to make the point, firstly, that the inspectors have access to all the information about lessons that the school has in its self-evaluation—because the schools also evaluate the effectiveness of teaching—and the inspectors also have other evidence which they seek out, such as looking at pupils' work, discussions with pupils and teachers. All of these things contribute to judgments on the quality of teaching and learning.

Q207 Mr Wilson: Have you identified any correlation between a lighter-touch inspection regime and improvements in school performance?

Ms Rosen: I am not sure I understand your question.

Q208 Mr Wilson: You have a new inspection regime and the end product of that should be improvements in schools. Have you identified a correlation between the new regime and better standards in schools as a result of those inspection regimes?

Ms Rosen: Standards have risen gradually over the years, including since 2005 when we introduced this new system, but I think we would be the first to admit that all sorts of things help to bring about improvements in schools. Firstly, the work of the teachers and the pupils and the heads within the schools is crucial, but we do believe that Ofsted acts as a stimulus and the report to which I alluded earlier would confirm that.

Q209 Mr Wilson: I am not clear whether you had identified a correlation between the light-touch and—

Ms Rosen: I think we can say there is a correlation; we cannot say there is a direct causal effect.

Q210 Mr Wilson: How many schools are currently in special measures?

Ms Rosen: I think our current numbers are around 250. One point I would like to make is that the proportion of schools inspected that go into special measures has remained relatively constant in the last year of section 10 and in the first year of section 5 and in the autumn term, so the proportion of schools going into special measures has remained relatively constant. There was a bit of a fuss last term when the overall figures went up. That was because there were fewer coming out of special measures not because there were more going in. We do anticipate that, overall, the numbers will start to fall because, in fact, there are more schools coming out more quickly.

Q211 Mr Wilson: When you announced the number of schools in special measures, which I think was in February this year—

Ms Rosen: Yes.

Q212 Mr Wilson: You did not name the schools. Why was that?

Ms Rosen: As far as I understood, we did produce a list. It is usual for us to produce a list of the schools.

Q213 Mr Wilson: I actually wrote to the Chief Inspector about this very point because I felt it was very important that the names of the schools should be released at that time. It would be interesting for the Committee to hear your views as to why they were not.

Ms Gilbert: I am trying to recall the letter. As far as I can recall, a number of the schools had not received the final report. I think that is correct, is it not? That was the response to you.

Q214 Mr Wilson: I specifically requested details for my own constituency, because obviously it is a very important for the parents of my constituency that they have this sort of information, and I still have not had that information from Ofsted.

Ms Gilbert: You should have had it by now. I will check it as soon as I get back. You certainly should have had it by now. As far as I had understood that particular query, all of the schools had not received their final report when those figures were produced. We are talking there about a matter of days or weeks. We publish all the reports on the web, so the individual school reports should have been on the Ofsted website.

Q215 Mr Wilson: Could we move on to the Education Inspections Act. Do you think the new powers local authorities are going to have as part of that are going to lead to fewer schools going into special measures?

Ms Gilbert: In terms of local authorities, did you say?

Q216 Mr Wilson: Yes, because they have these new powers about serving notices to schools, *et cetera*, and sacking governing bodies and teaming up with external partners. Is that a help?

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Ms Gilbert: I would hope that with a stronger focus on their school improvement role, linked with the work of the School Improvement Partners, if those things are working effectively, there should be fewer schools going into special measures because the issue should have been picked up in a more focused way earlier and addressed locally earlier.

Q217 Mr Wilson: How closely are you working with local authorities to identify struggling schools?

Ms Gilbert: Part of the work we are doing is refining our processes about risk and assessment of risk in a local area and so on. We are talking to directors of children's services about how we might use them as part of the general risk assessment process. We have not come up with any final conclusions to those discussions but I think we have very good relationships with them and we engage them in different aspects of our work. I meet with them regularly, for instance, and have those sort of discussions. The sort of issue you have just been describing is a feature on the agenda of some of those meetings.

Q218 Mr Wilson: Do you feel these new powers cut across Ofsted and what you are doing at all?

Ms Gilbert: No, I think they do not. They complement our work. We give an external perspective to the work of local authorities, the work of SIPs and so on. We think we just give a bit more edge to that work in helping areas progress and in helping schools progress.

Q219 Mr Wilson: Do you think a local authority has the necessary expertise to identify a struggling or failing school because obviously they are not trained to inspect schools?

Ms Gilbert: I think some authorities have the resource. I do not know any more the sort of complement of local inspectors or local advisors held by each local authority. It did change significantly over a number of years. Some people reduced their inspection service and advisory services; others always kept a core. It was very, very rare for a local authority to have no local advisors or inspectors, whatever you might call them. I see them using the School Improvement Partners now, in many ways as some effective authorities used local advisors before: as a sort of link between the individual school and decisions of the local authority. So the role of the school improvement advisor will be to analyse what is going on in the school in a very focused way, to make some sort of judgment on the school's progress in achieving its targets and its outcomes, some comments on the quality of its improvement planning and then some judgments, and some support for judgments, on the performance appraisal of the head and the performance management that is operating in school, and then brokering some support for the school with the local authority. That is how it should be working. In some authorities I think it has begun to work like that with the SIPs that they have been employing in secondary schools. It is just taking off,

I think, in primary and in special. I think we will have to wait and see how it evolves. Some school improvement advisors are offering greater challenge around issues such as targets than others with the schools. We are not doing a formal evaluation but I understand the DfES is doing a formal evaluation of the School Improvement Partners.

Q220 Fiona Mactaggart: I am sorry that I have not seen the NFER report but I presume that one of the reasons why you commissioned it was that only one in three schools are returning post-inspection questionnaires. Why do you think the figure is so low?

Ms Gilbert: We commissioned it because we did not think people would believe our own evaluation of what we were saying. We wanted some sort of external perspective on what we were doing and we thought it would complement the work we were doing. We have been worried about the low figures and, in fact, the very first meeting I attended of the regional inspection providers had a focus on how could the numbers be increased. In fact they have increased. I think they are up to about 50.

Ms Rosen: Late 40s now.

Ms Gilbert: Because we had had a focus on doing it. I will not go into it, but there were technical problems that we seem to have resolved. We have made it very clear that we would welcome responses from them. I have reassured them at conferences that if they return the form and complain it does not mean that we will treat them any more harshly than people who are not returning the form or who are being positive about it. So there is a whole host of things we are doing. We really are trying to make it important. The regional inspection providers are trying hard to get the responses up. We have made significant progress, I think.

Q221 Fiona Mactaggart: It is disappointing, is it not, that even if you solve the technical problems less than half of these questionnaires are being returned. Can I suggest that one of the reasons for that might be the phenomenon of "gaming" the Ofsted system; that people are working out how to work it. They are doing the performance of what you need to see, producing that for you and then going away. They are not seeing it as a process for them or for the children in the schools but a performance that needs to be performed through. How do you avoid that?

Ms Gilbert: It depends what they are performing to. I think the framework sets out the sort of expectations of a really good school that anybody would want to see really, so they would have to be performing across that range and you could not do it for 24 hours and then stop it on the day after the inspectors have gone. There is no notice any more—next to no notice. You come and see the school as it really is and inspection is rooted in performance and the performance of individual groups, and focused very clearly on the outcomes of those individual groups and individual pupils in the schools. It would be hard to perform for 24 hours, get a good inspection and go away. That is not to say that

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people do not become more familiar with a framework and look at different aspects of it and perhaps focus on some areas they might not have been focusing on before, but I do think the framework is a good framework, and it does point to the broad area of things we should be looking for in a good school and that they should be developing in a good school.

Q222 Fiona Mactaggart: Chief Inspector, you have said yourself it is hard but not impossible. One of my concerns about all sorts of areas about government regulation and inspection, is that people put their energies into performing to the test, to the inspection, and not into achieving excellence. Can you give me an example of how you have acted to reduce that or an example where you have seen that, perhaps where you have changed processes in order to try to deal with it? Because it cannot not be a problem.

Ms Gilbert: Miriam might want to add to this but the biggest example is reducing the notice for inspection so that there is not this long lead-in time. I was looking at some comments from children about being told to smile for 24 hours when the inspectors were there and so on. It is fairly difficult to get kids to smile for 24 hours if they do not like the school and what is happening in the school. I think the reduction in notice is a major shift. At two days' notice you cannot do the sort of preparation that was there before. Although I am not sure how effective that preparation would have been if the inspectors were in looking at all aspects of the school for that long, nevertheless the school might have thought it was.

Ms Rosen: I would confirm exactly what Christine has said. The reduction in notice was taken for that reason and I think it has been very effective.

Q223 Chairman: You recognise what Fiona is putting to you. If you take the curriculum and then you take all the testing and assessment and the Ofsted inspection, when we go into schools we very often hear a voice which says that the whole process of learning, developing children, innovation, the creativity of the school does not happen because of what you people do. Does that strike any chord at all?

Ms Gilbert: I think some head teachers think that. One of the things I have certainly been stressing in talks I have been doing is that they sometimes misunderstand what inspectors will be looking at. There are very few of our outstanding schools that are not innovative and creative in what they are doing it seems to me. It is perfectly possible to perform very well in an Ofsted inspection and be different and creative within, obviously, a framework of expectations. I think there is a feeling out there that we are dumbing down creativity. I have done what I can to redress that balance and I am sure Miriam has as well.

Q224 Chairman: It might be all right if you get an outstanding school. In our experience an outstanding school, in a sense, does not care about you. They know they are good. You come and they know you are going to see a good school. It is that middle band of average schools—a bit timid, a bit worried—that is the bulk of schools. The average school is the bulk of schools.

Ms Gilbert: They need to be more confident about what they are doing but they also need to be confident about getting some of the basic things right as well.

Q225 Chairman: But they have testing and the curriculum and all these other things apart from you guys pitching up at very short notice.

Ms Gilbert: It is no good being a very innovative, satisfactory school if the children in the school cannot read or cannot write or cannot add up. Those sorts of things are absolutely crucial to the development of the school, it seems to me.

Q226 Fiona Mactaggart: What do you do to create the confidence in schools that you expect that of them? Do you see what I mean? I do not think you have done that, if I can be quite honest. I think it is still quite usual for good enough schools to focus their energies on matching the kind of *pro forma* and avoid risk. You do not have to sacrifice teaching children to read if you take risks. You do not balance the two against each other. Of course there are basic standards everyone has to achieve but what are you doing to encourage schools to be prepared to take risks to be really excellent?

Ms Gilbert: I think that is the job of the head teacher and the leadership team in a school. It may be that we can be clearer about our expectations, but our expectations are rooted in the framework, which is what we assess and we use to make our judgments about schools. We do try to pick up good practice. I spoke earlier about the emphasis that we are going to place on our thematic and survey work. It might be that we need to be more focused and clearer about picking up examples of good and interesting practice. It does not have to be brilliant practice because sometimes the most innovative practice is emerging; it has not got there yet. We might be sharing some of that in a more focused way. We are doing that but I think probably it does not have the sort of impact that you are alluding to. School inspection reports are grabbed and read by people in the school and acted on, and parents see them and so on, but actually the impact of our survey reports, our thematic reports, is not that strong, and we need to focus that and make it stronger, I think. We might be able to do it in the sort of way you are suggesting.

Q227 Paul Holmes: Could I go back to one specific thing Miriam said earlier in response to questions from Rob. Back in February there was a spike in the number of schools going on special measures. It went up from 208 to 243, which is about an 18% increase. It had a lot of attention at the time, and Ofsted at the time and Government Ministers said it

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was because you had raised the bar: it was the change with the 2005 framework and satisfactory was no longer satisfactory and all the rest of it. But Miriam said about 10 minutes ago that it was because more schools were slow in getting out of special measures. They are two completely contradictory measures. Which one is it?

Ms Rosen: The bar was raised and we did sharpen our criteria. But, as I have said, the proportion of schools inspected going into special measure stayed constant between those two years. More schools actually went into special measures because we were inspecting at twice the rate. We had moved from a six-year cycle to a three-year cycle, so there were more actual numbers of schools in but I would like to emphasise that the rate at which schools inspected went in remained constant. There was, however, a change between the number of schools judged to be good. If you put together the proportion of schools judged to be good and excellent, that was less than we had had under the old seven-point framework judged to be excellent, very good and good. I think that is directly attributable to having raised the bar.

Q228 Paul Holmes: Raising the bar meant there were less becoming excellent or good, but that is not the reason, you say, why more were in special measures.

Ms Rosen: It was not precisely the reason why more were in special measures.

Q229 Paul Holmes: But Ofsted did categorically state back in February that is why there had been an increase, because the bar had been raised.

Ms Rosen: I am afraid I cannot remember exactly what we said in February. We have quite unashamedly raised the bar but the proportion has remained fairly constant.

Ms Gilbert: I do not know if the difference might be accounted for by the notice to improve schools.

Ms Rosen: Yes, that is true actually. A higher proportion became grade 4 but that was because we saw an increase in schools having a notice to improve compared with the other sorts of categories we had had before.

Ms Gilbert: That was a new category under the new framework.

Ms Rosen: Yes.

Q230 Paul Holmes: As I say, you said about 10 minutes ago that the other explanation was that schools were being slower to move out of special measures. Why is that? Why are they slower now than last year or the year before?

Ms Rosen: No, we did not say that they were slower to move out. It is to do with how many there are in and there were less coming out. They were not being slower to move out, there were just less physically coming out, and that is to do with the numbers that were in and when they went in. Quite a lot went in in that first term, in the autumn of 2005. As I say, we were inspecting at twice the rate that we had been inspecting before, so quite a number went in. As that little bulge starts to come out, then the numbers overall will drop.

Q231 Paul Holmes: I think you said the number was about 240-odd still, so three or four months later there is not an increase, where there was up to February. Why has it levelled off? There was a spike in the number in special measures for whatever reasons, but in the last four months that has levelled off, the spike has not continued.

Ms Rosen: That is right. It is more to do with numbers coming out than numbers going in. May I also say something about Mr Wilson's question earlier. The lists are now on the website. In February, the data was published first, because some of the schools were subject to moderation. As soon as all the moderations went through, the lists were published on the website, but that was a few days afterwards. So you will now find the lists if you look.

Q232 Jeff Ennis: We have already focused, Chief Inspector, in response to earlier questions, on inspection, the enhanced role in the consultation we have with parents. I know that also applies equally to governors, having been recently quizzed by one of the inspection team at the local high school where I serve as a governing body member. One of my hobbyhorses is that in schools in very deprived circumstances, representing deprived communities, it is not just a question of engaging with parents; it is a question of engaging with entire communities and raising the profile of education across the entire community and not just with specific sets of parents. I am wondering if it is possible for the inspection regime to bring out what schools are doing in terms of community engagement, not just with parents, hopefully to raise the whole profile of education within deprived communities. I wondered if you had looked at this.

Ms Gilbert: There is a component of the framework that asks the school itself, and inspectors then, to look at the contribution that is made to the local community. That is there at the moment. Whether it comes out strongly enough or not, I do not know. It may be that the local area assessment might be a way of generating more discussion about the sorts of areas you are talking about. It is not going to be a heavy process, it is going to be a light process, but it is hard to see that it would not in some way look at that sort of engagement of a whole educational community, contributing not just to education but to the whole aspirations of the community, raising the aspirations of the local community in terms of the quality of life—and by that I do not mean something just soft, I mean something across the whole range, in terms of health, work and so on.

Q233 Jeff Ennis: Do you think the fact that schools are asking now to work more collaboratively, particularly looking at 14–19, will assist in the process of greater community involvement across the whole school settings?

Ms Gilbert: It certainly has the potential for doing just that. We have not looked across the piece in that way, but my own experience as a head and in a local authority was that generally collaboration supported individual schools and improved the

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performance of individual schools. They were not wasting time when they were doing it, and generally made the commitment to the area and to the locality, if not the whole broad area, really strong in different organisations.

Q234 Chairman: Chief Inspector, if you are doing an inspection of the school and you arrive and there are no unruly children and it is very, very peaceful, do you probe the fact that there might be a very significant percentage of those less orderly students missing but in an FE up the road?

Ms Gilbert: Miriam would have to answer the detail of that but this question comes up in various ways. I do not think there is any time, if this really ever did happen, to move them up the road if they were not going up the road anyway.

Q235 Chairman: The mobility of students is going to make your inspection more difficult, is it not? The whole Government agenda, when the new diplomas come in, is that children will be in one setting and they might go to a school with a strength in one diploma area. They will be moving all over the place.

Ms Gilbert: But that is absolutely the case for the new Ofsted. We are not just looking at what is going on post-16 or post-18; we are looking for examples at the development of skills right from pre-school all the way through. That is what the new Ofsted gives us.

Q236 Chairman: But you are very institutional. You arrive at an institution. You do not go to a cluster of institutions.

Ms Gilbert: We might go to different institutions. Certainly with the joint area reviews, we look at the whole area and the work going on across institutions. An inspection I had before I became Chief Inspector focused on what was going on 14–19. It was an analysis across all of the organisations and the work-related learning as well. So some of that has been going on for ages.

Q237 Chairman: So you are moving with the times, then.

Ms Gilbert: I hope we are, yes.

Q238 Chairman: All the examination boards now have very sophisticated methods of showing you every child's performance, every examination script marked; whole class performance; the school performance; the local authority performance and how that compares locally, regionally and nationally. Is all that stuff of interest to you? Do you look at it?

Ms Gilbert: The contextual value added looks at all those things.

Q239 Chairman: I am not talking about contextual value added.

Ms Gilbert: It is the same sort of thing, is it not?

Q240 Chairman: Is the sort of stuff that this Committee has looked at, shown to us by people like Edexcel, taken into account. They can tell you in the school which questions were particularly badly answered and I suggest that might lead you to surmise that that part of the course was badly taught. That is very valuable information. That is what I am told by people at Edexcel. Are you using it?

Ms Gilbert: We would be very unlikely to pick up that sort of detail in the short school inspections we are doing now. However, if we looked at that issue thematically or in a survey or a topic that it was important for us to look at or that the DfES asked us to look at, we would feed it into our programme and look and feedback on just that. It would be a piece of work.

Q241 Chairman: Why do we have to wait for anyone to ask you? It seems absolutely clear that here is the new technology, rapidly changing, that can give you more information about how children are scoring in exams, what is well taught and what is poorly taught, and you are saying that you would not look at that routinely?

Ms Gilbert: I do not know what it is you have seen as a committee, so I would have to look at that and see. I do not know what the theme or topic would be. We look at a number of issues and we prioritise those issues, because there are always more things that people want us to look at, or that we want to look at in our programme, than it is possible to do, and we make decisions about those. I do not know what the information is but we use information as much as we can in the institutional inspections but also in the survey inspections.

Ms Rosen: If a school has that kind of information, it really should be building it into its self-evaluation. It is extremely valuable information for the school. If the children are not doing well in one particular aspect of a subject, that will be reflected in the self-evaluation and will be discussed during the inspection. It is a good school which knows its strengths and weaknesses and is acting on them and doing something about it. Our focus would be: "You know this, what are you doing about it?"

Q242 Chairman: I do not want to advertise a commercial organisation but I would suggest, Zenna Atkins, that you and your committee get down to see Jerry Jarvis at Edexcel, and OCR and AQA, just to see the high level of information that is now available. I am sorry, but if Ofsted is not looking at that, I am worried.

Ms Atkins: The Board, and certainly I, will take you up on that. I think it is an issue which faces more than just Ofsted. It is about the effective and efficient use of the vast range of electronic data that is now available to us as inspection regulation services in inspecting and regulating public services. I have been talking to the Chairman of the Audit Commission about how they are using that information, how they are farming data from wide sources, and talking to the Chairman of the

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Healthcare Commission, Sir Ian Kennedy, as well about what is the range of data available and where does it interface and where is it useful to us as individual inspectors and regulators. I will certainly take you up on that and make sure those organisations are fed into that debate, because they may be very relevant to the health of a community equally. We will take that on board.

Chairman: Thank you. That leads us nicely into Helen's last questions on improvement and innovation.

Q243 Helen Jones: In the Strategic Plan, Chief Inspector, you say that good inspection makes what you call "a vital contribution to recovery and improvement". How does Ofsted measure that contribution?

Ms Gilbert: We ask schools, in the process we have outlined this morning, about that. We do track improvement, particularly in those schools that are performing less well. I do not just mean the inadequate schools but we look in detail at progress in terms of the special measures schools. With notice to improve, we go back very quickly and we assess the progress there, and generally that has been extremely positive. In satisfactory schools with worrying aspects, we are now using the resources that we were using for outstanding and good schools and investing it in those schools, because we feel that our contribution there is going to have greater impact. We can track and show; for instance, of the 59 schools that were designated notice to improve at the beginning of, I think, last year, when we went back six to nine months later 56 of those had improved.

Q244 Helen Jones: That is very interesting but I am trying to tease out of you how you measure the contribution of Ofsted as opposed to the contribution of everything else going on: the school doing self-assessment, for example; the role of the local authority, for example. You are now a very big organisation which costs a lot of public money and I am asking you how we can measure what we are getting for our money.

Ms Gilbert: To some degree, we have to rely on the schools. As Miriam said earlier, it is quite difficult to isolate effects sometimes, but the schools will tell you. For instance, if you ask schools in special measures what made the greatest difference, they will tell you that it was, first of all, being designated special measures and then the regular visits from the inspectors after that which really honed up the schools' skills in terms of self-evaluation and development. We have to rely on that. It gets harder as the schools get better. It is an important piece of external perspective, which is what schools are telling us. They value it for that; they value it as an endorsement of their prioritisation and so on. But the direct link you are suggesting with all schools is quite difficult to tease out.

Q245 Helen Jones: The Chairman referred to schools that are very innovative earlier and to the inspection team. Can you give me any examples of innovative schools that Ofsted has inspected and the results of those inspections? How do you then spread that good practice?

Ms Gilbert: I cannot give you any individual examples of that. We do pick up good practice when we are inspecting schools and that is looked at sometimes in subject reviews—the reviews we mentioned earlier, when we are looking at a particular topic or an aspect of work and so on. We go into those schools or colleges where outstanding or good practice has been seen, the report is then written up and it is described and shared at subject conferences and so on. The survey work does pick up examples of good and interesting practice, as I said earlier. The schools themselves are very positive about those thematic inspections. Those that have been involved in it say it has helped them to reflect on what they are doing, to be crisper and clearer about what they are doing, and to improve their good practice in that area just by having the inspectors coming in. We have evidence about that in the reports we have done.

Q246 Helen Jones: Before Miriam answers, can I clarify that? We have heard earlier that there is a very small proportion of schools returning surveys from normal inspection. Is that the same for thematic inspections?

Ms Gilbert: I think with thematic inspections it is easier to pick up the survey returns because there are far fewer numbers. For instance, if you are looking at a subject, it might be around about 30 schools in a year. You can phone, you can pursue. We do get better returns from them.

Ms Rosen: This year we are conducting a survey into schools with innovative curricula. We will be publishing that and hopefully that will give examples of good practice that others can look at and find interesting.

Q247 Helen Jones: We will look forward to seeing that. You also say in your plan: "We influence policy development through our analysis and reporting." It is correct, is it not, that in two very important areas, the academies programme and the School Improvement Partners, the Government has used private consultancies, PricewaterhouseCooper and York Consulting to look at those programmes. Why, in your view, is that happening? Is it a failure in Ofsted? Are you not able to analyse those programmes?

Ms Gilbert: I do not know why the DfES has chosen to do that. I have not been engaged in any of those discussions and I think that question is probably best placed to them. They might be conscious of the restrictions placed on Ofsted through the Better Regulation initiative. We have to work through a very tight budget to do some of these things. If the programme is full, for instance, for the year—if we are looking at a programme of issues and they want

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a big piece of work done—it might be that they have to ask somebody else to do it. I do not know if Miriam has been involved in those discussions.

Q248 Helen Jones: Before Miriam comes in, could I ask a follow-up question. These are very important educational initiatives. Is Ofsted going to look at them at all?

Ms Gilbert: We might do. They are not in the programme. This is the question the NUT asked me when they wanted us to do them. We might, in time, look at the impact that they are having on the ground. In terms of our planning, we will think about our programme, we will look at what is in our programme, and it might be that moves up the agenda in something that we might look at. It did not feature in the list of things that we looked at for our three-year programme, but it is a rolling programme which is reviewed annually. We would not look at it this year if the DfES was getting somebody else to look at it, but it might be that in three years' time we wanted to see the impact of the SIPs on the quality of provision in schools.

Q249 Helen Jones: The academies programme has been running for some time and is expanding. I accept that SIPs has only just started up but are you telling me that Ofsted as an organisation does not have in its work plan any plans to look at these very new and sometimes highly controversial areas in education. If not, why on earth have they been left out?

Ms Gilbert: I think we invest quite a lot in the academies. We do very detailed visits and inspections of the academies. Each academy is inspected by Ofsted and there are various visits to the academies. The SIPs is a different issue. As I say, it may or may not feature on our programme in future years.

Q250 Chairman: Could I push you a little bit, Miriam, on this. When we go to schools, heads or the teams often say to us, "Look, we are doing this really innovative stuff" and they see as a problem that the Government puts so much emphasis on individual school leadership, that a head may go and a wonderful new system will die because the head has gone off somewhere or retired. What can we do not just about identifying innovation and good practice but spreading it systematically. Should that not be part of Ofsted's role?

Ms Rosen: By our reports we do hope to disseminate good practice, and also, by frameworks that we produce. The current framework for inspection of schools, for example, does not focus only on the leadership of the head but it focuses on leadership throughout the school. Therefore, we would hope that if the head leaves the whole school does not immediately fall apart. But I think we do quite a lot by publishing survey reports and by publishing reports of outstanding schools that other people can look at.

Q251 Chairman: Would you agree with Policy Exchange who recently said they have done some work that suggests that heads do not make a difference in a school?

Ms Rosen: All our inspection evidence is that the quality of leadership and management is very important and that heads do make a difference. We would agree that a head cannot do it by themselves; that the other managers within the school are also very important, as indeed are the teachers. The head hopefully will make sure that they have around them a good management team and good quality teachers and will help to keep those teachers up-to-date and well trained.

Q252 Chairman: Would you have evaluated the Policy Exchange report, Chief Inspector? Would your team have read that and would you have had your team assess it?

Ms Gilbert: We are due to discuss it. We have looked at it and we have had brief conversations about it, but, as I read it—and I would absolutely endorse this—teaching and learning is absolutely fundamental to good progress from pupils, and good heads generally set up a structure which gets good teachers and good teaching in classrooms. So I do not think we are at great variance there.

Q253 Chairman: You can tell, these are the last couple of questions. When we were looking at Sustainable Schools and Building Schools for the Future, we found that, for a school involved in the early waves, if they were going to do it well it was a tremendous distraction from their day job. Are you in inspection picking up that that is a very great pressure? Does a school's performance deteriorate when they are involved in a large programme like that?

Ms Gilbert: Certainly so far it has not emerged as an issue that we have picked up generally. I read a selection of reports and all special measure reports, and even in those special measure reports—and I might read half a dozen a week—there has never been a mention of Building Schools for the Future. Actually, that is not true. It was not Building Schools for the Future, but one of them talked about building work in the school having slowed down progress, but generally there is no reference at all to Building Schools for the Future in distracting from the main purpose of the school.

Q254 Chairman: Dorian, I am probably more fond of Wales than I am of Portsmouth, and I cannot resist asking you a couple of final questions. You are going to go down in history as the man who brought testing in for seven-year-olds, are you not? Is that one of your claims to fame?

Mr Bradley: That is one of the things I have done in my past, Chairman.

Q255 Chairman: Do you think it is about time we scrapped it?

Mr Bradley: I thought it had been just about scrapped, Chairman.

9 May 2007 Ms Christine Gilbert CBE, Ms Zenna Atkins, Ms Miriam Rosen, Mr Dorian Bradley
and Ms Vanessa Howlison

Q256 Chairman: Why have they just about been scrapped?

Mr Bradley: I thought that was the trend. Certainly, it has occurred in Wales, which may be leading the UK countries in this regard.

Q257 Chairman: Do you think they are going to be scrapped in England now?

Mr Bradley: It is not for me to say, Chairman.

Q258 Chairman: You just said it.

Mr Bradley: I thought what I said was that I thought that was the trend.

Stephen Williams: Wales leads the way.

Q259 Chairman: That was a trend. Do you think that is a trend, Chief Inspector?

Ms Gilbert: I believe very much in the importance of assessment. I believe formative assessment, assessment of learning, is absolutely crucial. I see that as the area on which we really have to focus next. You asked about issues coming out of inspection reports and for me the issue of assessment is still the weakest part of teaching and learning, so I think it is a crucially important area and I am really pleased that your Committee has chosen to have to focus on it over the next few months.

Mr Bradley: Chairman, perhaps I could say, having been so closely involved and in all that I have done ever since, that I am rather sad to see that assessment is going. The initial form of standard assessment tasks, as they were when they were introduced, I thought did a lot to improve the standard of teaching and learning in infant schools and this certainly helped year 2 teachers lead the way in using assessment to set a programme for improvement of those young people. I am really sorry to see that go from the national scene.

Q260 Chairman: Even if you are retiring from Ofsted, that does not mean to say you will be beyond the reach of the Committee. We can have you back when we are looking at teaching assessment. There is chaos in early years, is there not, out here? Chaos. There are private nurseries closing. There are

children's centres appearing. There are local authority provided nurseries closing down. It is pretty chaotic out there. Is this a healthy situation out there or not?

Mr Bradley: It is a vibrant sector, Chairman, that is certainly true, with new providers coming on-stream. The reassuring thing for parents is that the quality that we see throughout the sector is good and is continuing to improve.

Q261 Chairman: Some years ago, we did an inquiry into early years, and we are still very concerned about the quality of training and the pay of those people working in early years. Do you think it has improved or is the same? What is your assessment?

Mr Bradley: The encouraging thing is that the Government is looking at the Childcare Workforce Development Strategy and is looking for ways in which better qualified people enter this most important sector of early education. That can only be a good thing. But it will take some considerable time, I think. There is a long way to go until we have a better qualified workforce in this area of the educational care sector. The pay rates are, as ever, determined by market forces, so I have no comment on that really.

Q262 Chairman: They have less qualified inspectors and lower paid people. They all get a pretty poor deal then in the early years, do they?

Mr Bradley: Whether they are less qualified inspectors or not is debatable. All our inspectors are trained to do the job for which we employ them. In the childcare workforce inspectors, we have a range of people with different educational background, from some with very few paper qualifications but a long experience of working in that sector to others who are extremely highly qualified.

Q263 Chairman: Chief Inspector, Miriam Rosen, Vanessa Howlison, Zenna Atkins, for the first time, it was very nice to meet you. Dorian we wish you well particularly on this occasion.

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman: Thank you very much. We will see you again soon.

Written evidence

Supplementary memorandum submitted by Ofsted

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Average age of inspection workforce deployed on section 5 inspections (years)</i>	<i>Average age of additional inspection workforce (June 2007)</i>
Tribal	59	
CfBT	55	
Nord Anglia	57	
Cambridge Education	57	
Prospects	57	
		57

Average Age of Ofsted CCI's and HMI's

<i>Grade</i>	<i>April 2001– March 2002</i>	<i>April 2002– March 2003</i>	<i>April 2003– March 2004</i>	<i>April 2004– March 2005</i>	<i>April 2005– March 2006</i>
HMI	50	49	50	48	48
CCI	44	44	40	41	43

Note: The dates range from 1 April to 31 March in any given year.

CCI: Childcare Inspector

HMI: Her Majesty's Inspector

June 2007

Memorandum submitted by the Association of Colleges (AoC)

BACKGROUND

AoC (the Association of Colleges) is the representative body for colleges of further education, including general FE colleges, sixth form colleges and specialist colleges in England, Wales (through our association with fforwm) and Northern Ireland (through our association with ANIC). AoC was established in 1996 by the colleges themselves to provide a voice for further education at national and regional levels. Some 98% of the 400-plus general FE colleges, sixth form colleges and specialist colleges in the three countries are in membership. These colleges are the largest providers of post-16 general and vocational education and training in the UK. They serve over 4 million of the 6 million learners participating in post-statutory education and training, offering lifelong learning opportunities for school leavers and adults over a vast range of academic and vocational qualifications. Levels of study range from the basic skills needed to remedy disadvantage, through to professional qualifications and higher education degrees.

The key role played by the sector and its 250,000 staff in raising the level of skills and competitiveness of the nation's workforce makes colleges central to the Government's national and regional agenda for economic prosperity and social inclusion. AoC works in close partnership with the Government and all other key national and regional agencies to assist policy development, continuously to improve quality and to secure the best possible provision for post-16 education and training.

THE WORK OF OFSTED—CONTEXT

This submission addresses the work of Ofsted in the context of recent major developments.

NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR INSPECTION INTRODUCED IN 2005–06

- The publication of the new draft LSC quality assurance framework for colleges.
- Framework for Excellence and the draft QIA quality improvement strategy Pursuing Excellence.
- The forthcoming merger of Ofsted with the Adult Learning Inspectorate.

SUMMARY

Quality of Ofsted's work

Recent changes to the inspection arrangements are recognised as valuable by colleges.

Lighter touch

AoC welcomes lighter touch, proportionate inspection, which acknowledges the improvements in the sector and its capacity to self improve, and supports colleges' goal of self-regulation.

Ofsted's professional judgement

Colleges value the contribution that Ofsted has made to college demonstrable self improvement. Over the last two cycles, colleges have become confident with the decisions that Inspectors make. Their professional judgements are for the most part recognised as being fair and accurate.

Self assessment

Ofsted has a vital role in the validating of college self assessment under the current inspection arrangements, and this external role in quality assurance should be retained and strengthened as colleges move towards self-regulation.

Framework for Excellence

AoC urges a single quality framework based on the CIF, rather than a proliferation of new standards. The framework should include school sixth forms.

ALI/Ofsted Merger

The combined service is welcomed, but it is important that the FE sector is not lost or subsumed in the enlarged service.

Partners in Quality improvement

AoC would like to be confident that the distinction between the quality assurance role of Ofsted and the quality improvement role of the QIA is safeguarded, and that other agencies do not step onto Ofsted's territory

QUALITY OF OFSTED'S WORK

1. The Annual Assessment Visit is a new development that colleges see as a useful management tool, more useful than the four year visit.
2. The new short notice of an announcement of an inspection is also welcomed as the previous arrangements had led to months of college distraction as they prepared for the inspection. The long lead-in was also increasingly unnecessary as colleges now build a cycle of internal audit into their own quality assurance systems.

LIGHTER TOUCH

3. The new inspection arrangements are risk-based: the lower performing colleges receive the most intensive inspection. Some colleges will now be exempt from inspection, and we welcome this incremental and proportionate approach that Ofsted is taking, which is appropriate for a more mature sector.
4. Risk-based assessment means that colleges that have proved themselves are enabled to get on with minimal inspection to ensure inspection resources are devolved where they are most needed. This is consistent with colleges' goal of self-regulation.

THE VALUE OF OFSTED'S PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT

5. While welcoming these proportionate developments, AoC would also wish to see the continuation of the annual visit from Ofsted, as even outstanding colleges value the professional judgement that they have to come to expect of Ofsted.

6. AoC would like to emphasise that over the last two cycles colleges have become confident with the decisions that Inspectors make. Their professional judgements are for the most part recognised as being fair and accurate. AoC does not wish to see the expertise and vast body of experience which is the basis for sound professional judgement being lost with the introduction of Framework for Excellence.

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF OFSTED IN VALIDATING COLLEGES' SELF ASSESSMENT

7. The college Self Assessment Report (SAR) is the centre of the current inspection arrangements. Ofsted is essentially making judgments about the accuracy of this report. In particular, the new and critical judgement, "capacity to improve", is largely made on the basis of how well a college is able to self-assess its own performance and implement effective action plans to improve.

8. We would like to emphasise that AoC sees Ofsted's role as the external assessor of colleges' performance as essential and critical. This is something that AoC would wish to remain even within a self-regulating system. The credibility and rigour would be important to retain, especially when colleges are working with peers to regulate themselves.

9. The self-assessment reports in the sector have received greater importance in inspection than ever before, as this is the main plank along which the self regulation agenda is built into the Framework for Excellence.

FRAMEWORK FOR EXCELLENCE

10. It is important that the quality standards and systems that are being developed by LSC map across to the Common Inspection Framework, rather than impose new standards and criteria for self assessment to substitute or add to these existing standards.

11. We would like to see the Inspectorate developing their existing framework in collaboration with the LSC and other agencies.

12. AoC would like to go further in having greater simplicity in terms of quality assurance, which would align all standards within a single quality framework, so that one set of judgements could be used many times.

13. We have major concerns about the proliferation of different organisations, including the Sector Skills Councils, making judgements about colleges. This is unhelpful in that it diverts their efforts away from what should be their priority—providing quality education and training for learners.

14. There is already a rigorous and independent set of standards embodied in the Common Inspection Framework, and AoC believes that this should be the basis for Ofsted, the LSC, SSCs and other agencies to form a single quality framework.

15. Furthermore AoC would like to reiterate its repeatedly stated view that the same quality assurance processes are used in both schools and colleges (even though this is slightly outside the brief of the submission). It is a matter for considerable regret that the Framework for Excellence excludes schools. There needs to be a level playing field between schools and colleges, so that the performance of institutions can be fairly compared and contrasted. We are aware that Ofsted is collecting data that should make it possible to include the schools in the Framework for Excellence.

MERGER OF OFSTED WITH THE ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE AND ENCOMPASSING CHILDREN'S SERVICES

16. We supported the enlarged Ofsted remit to encompass "cradle to grave" inspection because we agree that there needs to be a much greater synergy between schools and colleges. We therefore acknowledge that a combined service makes sense.

17. However, we have emphasised previously in our previous submissions to the Committee in October 2005 and March 2006 the necessity for each division to retain the specialist expertise that it needs to inspect different parts of the sector. It will be particularly critical that the new larger Ofsted retains the expertise of ALI inspectors.

18. We have in previous Select Committee submissions indicated that it is very important that the FE sector is not lost or subsumed as part of Ofsted's wider remit. FE needs to be properly represented at Board level and the distinctiveness of what we do given proportionate attention, focus and resource.

PARTNERS IN QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

19. We welcome continuation of the ALI/ EXCALIBUR service. We believe it is an appropriate decision to place this support service with the Quality Improvement Agency.

20. AoC is firm in the view that Ofsted's remit of quality assurance should not be subsumed by other agencies. We should not confuse the need for rigorous inspection with the quality improvement remit of the QIA. It is important that these respective roles of the partners in the Quality Improvement Strategy are clearly defined.

21. We have some concerns about whether or not the QIA may be tending to stray into the territory of the Inspectorate, for example recent discussions about the definition of "excellent", which we feel is within the standards remit of Ofsted.

22. In our view, the role of the QIA is to be reactive, rather than proactive, so that it supports colleges where either the Inspectorate or the LSC has found inadequacies.

23. We think it is important in terms of the strategic partnership, that there isn't the tendency, following the lighter touch and proportionate approach taken by Ofsted, for any other agencies to come in and take on quasi-Ofsted roles. We feel that this would be unhelpful and unnecessary.

December 2006

Further memorandum submitted by the Association of Colleges (AoC)

THE WORK OF OFSTED—CONTEXT

This submission addresses the work of Ofsted in the context of recent major developments:

- the publication of LSC quality assurance framework for colleges;
- the merger of Ofsted with the Adult Learning Inspectorate; and
- the implementation of proportionate Inspection.

SUMMARY

Quality of Ofsted's work

Recent changes to the inspection arrangements are recognised as valuable by colleges.

Lighter touch

AoC welcomes lighter touch, proportionate inspection, which acknowledges the improvements in the sector and its capacity to self improve, and supports colleges' goal of self-regulation.

Ofsted's professional judgement

Colleges value the contribution that Ofsted has made to college demonstrable self improvement. Over the last two cycles, colleges have become confident with the decisions that Inspectors make. Their professional judgements are for the most part recognised as being fair and accurate.

Framework for Excellence

AoC is pleased to see the greater alignment of the Framework for Excellence with the CIF, and the commitment to a single quality framework announced in the LSC publication (03/07) *Framework for Excellence: Raising Standards and Informing Choice* which reflects the responses to the original Framework consultation.

Self assessment and self regulation

AoC welcomes the key role of self assessment and peer review envisaged in within the new arrangements for Framework for Excellence, and particularly welcomes the suggestion that Ofsted have a role in validating self assessment reports. Ofsted currently has a vital role in the validating of college self assessment under the inspection arrangements, and this external role in quality assurance should be retained and strengthened as colleges move towards self-regulation.

Funding Ofsted

In view of the reduction in Ofsted's budget, and the expansion of its remit as a result of the merger with the Adult learning Inspectorate, AoC would suggest that its budget is reviewed in the light of the likely time—commitment which would be required if Ofsted were to now expand its role in validating self assessment report, as envisaged.

ALI/Ofsted Merger

The combined service is welcomed, but it is important that the FE sector is not lost or subsumed in the enlarged service. With the reduction in the Ofsted budget, recent and planned, AoC urges that this is closely monitored.

QUALITY OF OFSTED'S WORK

Proportionate inspection

1. The new inspection arrangements are risk-based: the lower performing colleges receive the most intensive inspection. Some colleges are now exempt from inspection, and we welcome this incremental and proportionate approach that Ofsted is taking, which is appropriate for a more mature sector.

2. Risk-based assessment means that colleges that have proved themselves are enabled to get on with minimal inspection to ensure inspection resources are devolved where they are most needed. This is consistent with colleges' goal of self-regulation.

The value of Ofsted's professional judgement

3. While welcoming these proportionate developments, AoC would also wish to see the continuation of the annual visit from Ofsted, as even outstanding colleges value the professional judgement that they have to come to expect of Ofsted.

4. AoC would like to emphasise that over the last two cycles colleges have become confident with the decisions that Inspectors make. Their professional judgements are for the most part recognised as being fair and accurate. AoC does not wish to see the expertise and vast body of experience which is the basis for sound professional judgement being lost with the introduction of Framework for Excellence.

The central role of Ofsted in validating colleges' self assessment

5. The college Self Assessment Report (SAR) is the centre of the current inspection arrangements. Ofsted is essentially making judgments about the accuracy of this report. In particular, the new and critical judgement, "capacity to improve", is largely made on the basis of how well a college is able to self-assess its own performance and implement effective action plans to improve.

6. We would like to emphasise that AoC sees Ofsted's role as the external assessor of colleges' performance as essential and critical. This is something that AoC would wish to remain even within a self-regulating system. The credibility and rigour would be important to retain, especially when colleges are working with peers to regulate themselves.

7. The self-assessment reports in the sector have received greater importance in inspection than ever before, as this is the main plank along which the self regulation agenda is built into the Framework for Excellence.

Framework for Excellence and a single quality system

8. We would like to see the growing alignment between the LSC and the Common Inspection frameworks continuing and strengthening.

9. AoC would like to go further in having greater simplicity in terms of quality assurance, which would align all standards within a single quality framework, so that one set of judgements could be used many times.

10. We have major concerns about the proliferation of different organisations, including the Sector Skills Councils, setting standards and making judgements about colleges. This is unhelpful in that it diverts their efforts away from what should be their priority—providing quality education and training for learners.

11. There is already a rigorous and independent set of standards embodied in the Common Inspection Framework, and AoC believes that this should be the basis for Ofsted, the LSC, SSCs and other agencies to form a single quality framework.

Remit of Ofsted post-merger

12. We have emphasised previously in our previous submissions to the Committee in October 2005, March 2006 and December 2006, the necessity for each division within the merged organisation to retain the specialist expertise that it needs to inspect different parts of the sector. We are particularly concerned that the interests of the 14–19 sector is given due importance within the organisation in view of the complex quality issues that arise as a result of the 14–19 Diploma developments and the consortia partnership arrangements between colleges, schools, and other institutions.

May 2007

Memorandum submitted by the Association of Professionals in Education and Children’s Trusts (Aspect)

1. The Association of Professionals in Education and Children’s Trusts (Aspect), formerly the National Association of Educational Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (NAEIAC), offers the following comments on the work of Ofsted to the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, for consideration prior to its meeting with Ms Gilbert on 13 December 2006. As the representative body for inspectors and other school improvement professionals, Aspect enjoys regular contact and dialogue with HMCI and Ofsted over issues of current concern to our members and to local authorities, schools and colleges, as well as with DfES and other national agencies in the education and children’s services arena.

SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION

2. Our submission may be summarised as follows:

- HMCI’s announcement that a significantly wider category of schools is to receive only one-day visits by a single Ofsted inspector raises several practical concerns. These include the need for more detailed and up-to-date research evidence on the quality of school self-evaluation in England and how to further improve it, a reduction in valuable lesson observations, the problem of the earliest possible identification of the minority of high-performing schools which suffer sudden deterioration, and the future role of the inspection regime in monitoring all schools’ responses to their new statutory duty to promote the well-being of children broadly in accordance with the Government’s Every Child Matters agenda.
- The recent Local Government White Paper proposal to alter the newly-introduced Joint Area Review (JAR) system for inspecting local children’s services and to rely on more restricted inspection activity requires active exploration of several issues, including the question of how concrete examples of good practice in local inter-agency co-operation will now be identified and their practical lessons disseminated across other local authorities around the country, and the availability or otherwise of other effective levers to actively promote the ECM agenda within local areas, based on stronger collaboration between different children’s services.

“LIGHTER TOUCH” SCHOOL INSPECTIONS: PRACTICAL CONCERNS

3. The “lighter-touch” S.5 school inspection system in England, introduced in September 2005 in line with broader changes to public sector inspection regimes and involving overall expenditure reductions, is already being modified. HMCI has announced a significant widening of the category of high-achieving schools to be viewed as requiring only a single-day visit by one inspector (“reduced tariff inspections”), to embrace 30% of all schools from April 2007 (*Times Educational Supplement*, 3 November 2006). This approach necessarily relies yet more heavily on the nature and quality of a school’s own self-review arrangements, duly reflected in the contents of its Self Evaluation Form (SEF), a document already of central importance to the present standard Ofsted inspection process. However, the available evidence suggests that the quality of English schools’ self-review remains uneven. In 2004, at a national DfES/ Ofsted conference for school governors, Ofsted confirmed that, prior to the introduction of its revised S4 self-evaluation form in 2001, 30% of schools’ self-evaluation processes were “weak, poorly-completed and have not conveyed insight into the school’s strengths and weaknesses”. Ofsted then noted that “following the introduction of the revised S4 in 2001, the quality of self-evaluation has improved, but is still variable”. Last year, Ofsted reminded all schools that “there is no perfect SEF and inspectors know this” (“Ofsted Direct” No. 4) and, in useful practical guidance jointly published with DfES, entitled “A New Relationship with Schools: Improving Performance Through School Self-Evaluation”, felt it necessary to underline the point

that “self-evaluation is only effective if it is based on openness, honesty and trust”. The overall grading of the effectiveness of English schools described in HMCI’s recent Annual Report for 2005–06—11% outstanding, 48% good, 34% satisfactory and 8% inadequate—also implies that further steps are required to enhance the quality of self-evaluation procedures. Aspect would therefore urge more detailed and up-to-date research into this key feature of school life and how to further improve it, since the culture of too many individual schools still suggests that traditional “top down” management styles prevail which can hinder genuine openness regarding internal weaknesses. Fortunately, more inspectors are learning how to rapidly identify less than robust SEFs, as their practical experience of the S5 system grows.

4. Even “lighter” one-day visits to schools by inspectors also reduce opportunities for valuable lesson observations by inspectors, even though the quality of classroom-based teaching and learning remains a key factor in school performance. Reduced tariff inspections tend to involve just ten-minute classroom observation sessions, which can be frustrating for inspectors, and also for the teachers and support staff involved, in terms of arriving at useful opinions on the quality of lessons. Yet the rigour of an inspection process clearly remains an important factor and it is worth recalling that the original introduction of the “lighter-touch” S.5 system was accompanied by a visible “raising of the bar”, in terms of expected school performance levels, at the same time. Among other considerations, the expansion of RTIs consequently highlights the need for effective liaison and information-sharing between Ofsted inspectors and local authority school improvement professionals working with the same local schools.

5. A further practical concern is posed by the risk of a minority of high-performing schools, regarded as requiring one-day Ofsted visits only, deteriorating due to such unpredictable internal developments as the sudden illness or resignation of a key middle manager. This type of problem can and does occur, but the resultant impact on the school’s standards may not be visible beyond the school for a time. In such cases, the absence of a better-resourced inspectorial process potentially removes one of the mechanisms for identifying and remedying such problems at an early stage. As the universal inspection of schools in England gives way to more targeted inspections, such risks can grow.

6. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 now places a specific duty on all schools, whether high or low achieving, to promote the well-being of children, broadly in line with the requirements of the Government’s important “Every Child Matters” agenda. This represents a new and very welcome development in itself, which recognises the current reality that only one in 10 of English schools is, as yet, actively engaging with the ECM project, despite its importance and intrinsic value (NFER Annual Survey of Trends in Education, October 2006). The S.5 inspection framework obliges schools to address ECM issues in compiling the SEF but there is a genuine concern that positive local involvement with this key government agenda can be a different matter. It is, in any case, difficult for inspectors conducting short school visits to apply certain of the present ECM related grade descriptions, for example “learners generally act responsibly when in high-risk situations, based on a good understanding of what is likely to be dangerous”, with full confidence. Such outcomes are not easy to quantify, and may also relate to out-of-school factors and experiences.

INSPECTION OF CHILDREN’S SERVICES

7. The DCLG Local Government White Paper, *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, published in October 2006, has proposed that the relatively new children’s services Joint Area Reviews (JARs) should be altered from April 2009, and that universal inspection of such services should be replaced by an annual risk assessment process and “Use of Resources” and “Direction of Travel” judgements, with inspection activity proper confined to local services “targeted primarily on the basis of risk assessment”. While this would further reduce the cost of inspections and doubtless attract support in those localities where the burden of experiencing formal inspection processes is eased, this proposal nonetheless raises important practical considerations. The JAR system, although still evolving in certain respects with a revised structure due in April 2007, was originally intended as a central “driver” of the Government’s “ECM” agenda, which would also identify models of good practice in the development of integrated education and children’s services, as well as highlight problems of under-performance to be addressed by specific local activity to secure improvements. The newly-proposed change to JARs will therefore require the encouragement and creation of other mechanisms for detecting, defining and disseminating good practice in local-level integrated children’s service delivery.

8. Many significant components of the wide-ranging and ambitious national ECM agenda have not yet been fully understood, at this stage, by those who will be required to implement the associated local changes over the next few years. The JAR system, where applied to date, has proved to be important in focussing greater attention on the nature and content of the ECM project, within local areas and services. An external perspective can indeed be helpful to monitoring and objective evaluation of service delivery, as senior managers and professionals in the field often acknowledge, and this can prove particularly valuable in a period of major local changes related to significant central government policy initiatives. It is accepted, however, that JARs have been complicated by the operation of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) system, with the review process at times delayed by local authorities challenging individual CPA scores and, to an extent, by the different cultures and approaches of the Audit Commission and Ofsted. Nevertheless the projected modification of JARs should necessitate early and fresh thinking on how best to positively advance the ECM agenda in the localities from 2009 onwards.

FURTHER INFORMATION

9. Aspect trusts that the above points will be of interest to the Education and Skills Committee, and would be willing to respond to any requests for further information which may assist the Committee's deliberations on the work of Ofsted in this period of ongoing change.

December 2006

Memorandum submitted by the Harrow Council for Racial Justice (HCRJ)

1. The Harrow Council for Racial Justice, established in 1992, is committed to creating a society based in equity and social justice. Its aims and work are based upon a rigorous structural analysis of socio-political and economic situations which affect the quality of life, particularly of those who are deprived, vulnerable and under-represented.

1.1 The Council members include parents, teachers, school inspectors, social workers and quality assurance managers who are well experienced in MoD and BS procedures.

1.2 The work of the Council is not limited to Harrow. Over the years, the HCRJ has made substantial contributions towards developing the criminal justice system, community consultations, youth and community service, community care and education for all, and NHS provision. More about the Council and its work is on our website.

2. In our experience Ofsted listens and learns, has successfully fulfilled its role and has effectively contributed towards:

- developing a culture of standardisation in education;
- improving the work of the education providers, particularly the consistency of their work;
- raising stakeholders' awareness of the education provision and outcomes, enabling them to influence the work of the education providers; and
- raising education standards.

Areas for improvement include:

- sustained focus on teaching;
- more proactive role in raising the stakeholders' understanding of inspections; and
- close scrutiny of inspectors deployment by the contactors and their working conditions.

2.1 *Commentary:* in the 1980s a wider consensus of opinion emerged about an urgent need to create consistency in what the schools teach and how they teach it. Subsequent initiatives included creating an education "market" so that schools were competing against each other for "customers" (pupils), the National Curriculum, National Curriculum Assessments and Ofsted.

2.1.1 Since all these initiatives met some resentment, when Ofsted started (in 1993) monitoring the work of the schools through inspections, it was mostly seen as an external intruder. Ofsted met this challenge successfully and over the years developed respect for its work to a point that the inspections are now considered as friendly and effective means for professional development in the areas like management practices and raising standards.

2.1.2 Ofsted publications such as the inspection and research reports, and wealth of the statistical information, including the performance data (for example, the league tables based on value added scores and test/examination results), have enabled parents and others to compare outcomes and demand improvement. For example, we have noticed a shift in parents' expectations about the school: from the key focus on pastoral aspects before to academic achievements now, and weighing the education providers in terms of what they offer and achieve.

2.1.2 As an example of how communities can effectively build upon LA inspection findings, we have previously sent a copy of *Every Child Matters (ECM) in Harrow setting* to the Select Committee. It is rather unfortunate that the Harrow LA administration 2005 did not benefit from our thorough and professional review of their work due to the local politics!

2.1.3 The questions/ issues skilfully raised by the inspectors during the inspection process as well as the readily available inspection reports and examples of good work, enable schools to adopt well proven good practices. It is not uncommon to see schools hundreds of miles apart using similar strategies to tackle underachievement, behavioural problems and to motivate disaffected pupils, for example.

2.1.4 Extensive focus on teaching and firmly measuring its effectiveness in terms of pupils' achievement have resulted in much improved teaching, helpfully raising education standards. The lesson observations by SMT and sharp focus on how learning is planned are now common features of most schools management practices.

2.1.5 Whilst Ofsted school inspections, started in 1993, were needed to monitor the teaching and learning and set a framework of coherent practices, there has been strong feeling that eventually it will be the education providers who have to evaluate and monitor their own work, especially as this would be more acceptable politically and financially. In line with such a rationalisation and having successfully achieved its previously set key objectives, Ofsted now moves to the stage where it focuses on checking the education providers self-evaluation as well as the overall factors that influence the quality of the providers' work—an industry based model for quality assurance.

2.1.6 Ofsted has successfully gone through a process of development over years. The new inspection arrangements under the provisions of the Education Act 2005 and within the available budget are appropriate and imaginative, signifying Ofsted's maturity, experience and thoughtfulness.

2.2 However, Ofsted can still improve its work and we recommend the following:

2.2.1 *Increased lesson observations during the inspection, because:*

- differentiated teaching based on pupils' individual or collective needs, though improved over the years, is still a matter of significant concern and that by helping each child to do their best, we can improve achievement by all groups of pupil and can help improve our overall community.

2.2.2 *More proactive and effective role in raising the stakeholders' awareness and understanding of the purpose, mechanics and the process of Ofsted inspections since the LAs do not always do this well:*

- In our experience most of the complaints by parents and schools about the inspections and their outcomes are because of the wrong expectations or inadequate understanding of Section 5 school inspections.
- Ofsted can consider to facilitate an internet discussion forum where the stakeholder can raise concerns, exchange views and develop a shared understanding of the issues surrounding the Ofsted inspections.

2.2.3 *Ofsted to urgently, actively and closely monitor the deployment and working conditions of the inspectors as an important aspect of their quality assurance measures, because:*

- Ofsted has been of the view that the working conditions of the inspectors are a matter between the inspectors and contractors, over-looking that the expectations of mechanical rather than the qualitative work by inspectors, do it or [. . .] attitudes by some lead inspector and contractors have serious implications for the quality of inspections.
- Under the new arrangements there are fewer RISPS and the inspector deployment is almost entirely through them—there are already indications that the contractors are treating inspectors in a very cavalier manner.
- Guidance like, "it is useful to assign aspects of the school to particular team members, who can then lead on collecting and synthesising evidence and drafting report sections" and "the lead inspector must decide whether bullet points or continuous prose are required from team members" can lead to inconsistent practices and demands. For example, situations arise where an inspector who is in for only one day in a 2 days inspection finishes up in gathering evidence for the aspects as well as writing the paragraphs for the report by the end of the day.

3. The proposals for a single inspectorate for children and learners: The HCRJ sympathises with the argument for having a single inspectorate, particularly as it would bring the vocational learning into the mainstream. However, we have reservations about the effectiveness of such an initiative which no doubt merits in terms of cutting down public service inspectorates from eleven to four.

3.1 We are not sure about the possibilities of having a pool of expertise to check multiple provisions for the diverse needs of children and learners, ranging from the culturally sensitive social care and support to health care—including mental health, to provisions for young offenders, including the strategies for their social integration. Also, that the role of social care providers, including private and voluntary sectors, is different than those providing education.

3.2 Given that present inspectorates struggle in measuring the outcomes of their respective services, it would be a nightmare for a single inspectorate to evaluate complex outcomes. Also, we are not at all sure how a single inspectorate could have an authoritative voice in speaking for the needs of all children and learners.

4. Having checked with the Education and Skills Committee secretariat, we have sent a copy of the submission to Ofsted since we believe in openness where most of our communications are public.

Memorandum submitted by John Chidgey, Honorary President, The National Association of Advisers and Inspectors in Design and Technology (NAAIDT)

INTRODUCTION TO SUBMITTER

I am Durham Local Authority's Inspector for Design and Technology with an additional responsibility for the educational input into the Building Schools for the Future Programme. I am also an Ofsted Inspector for the Primary and Secondary phases. Prior to this I was a Head of Department/Faculty and then advisory teacher for Design and Technology. In 2006 I became President of the National Association of Advisers and Inspectors in Design and Technology.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Since the introduction of the new inspection procedures, where the emphasis is on general aspects and core subjects, there has been a significant reduction in information from Ofsted pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses of the foundation subject, Design and Technology.

2. This situation is exacerbated by the proportionate inspection system. Early indications are that schools can feel "short changed" by an inspection carried out by one person in one day. Key areas can be missed and the expertise of the inspector called into question when complex issues have to be analysed in a very short time. Superficial judgements may be made and given great weight by the school, sometimes in contrast to the views of subject specialists or others who have close contact with a school or subject department, including the School Improvement Partner (SIP).

3. Because of the focus on the key skills of literacy and numeracy the important foundation subjects including Design and Technology receive little if any scrutiny during a typical Ofsted inspection. Unless the school has highlighted Design and Technology as an area of weakness in their own self evaluation, the Ofsted team will not pursue a rigorous evaluation of standards in the subject.

4. The Annual Report from HMCI is focused on general issues and includes relatively little comment on foundation subjects, a strong component of any broad and balanced curriculum.

5. The reduced subject inspection programme for Design and Technology is restricted to 60 schools a year. (The sample consists of thirty Secondary and thirty Primary schools—approximately 0.003% of schools nationally). This is an extremely small sample and unlikely to provide valid and reliable information, even when combined in the triennial subject report.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

1. Ofsted should review the current arrangements for inspecting schools so that foundation subjects including Design and Technology receive greater attention. This could be achieved through identifying annually themes and subjects for all inspections. The outcomes of such focused activity could assist subject Associations including NAAIDT by providing details of what is working well in schools and why. The seeking out, publicising and sharing of good practice would be a productive process enabling improvements in the subject to be monitored and shared.

2. There should be enhanced training for inspectors making judgements on Design and Technology in schools. NAAIDT took the lead in training subject inspectors as we were concerned about the quality of judgements made under the old system. With the emphasis on self-evaluation it is even more important that schools have good advice to assist them in making accurate judgements on the quality of Design and Technology.

3. The impact of the new arrangements for proportionate inspection should be carefully evaluated to ensure that judgements made by Ofsted are valid and that the report does not duplicate the Annual Report made by the SIP.

December 2006

Memorandum submitted by the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT)

The National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) has c29,000 active members, headteachers, deputies and assistant headteachers in schools educating young people aged 3–19, in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The majority of special school leaders are members of NAHT, along with over 90% of primary and 50% of secondary school leaders.

NAHT welcomed the underlying principle of the revised inspection arrangements, that it should be based on the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness. The Association has long argued for an inspection process, driven by the school's own judgements. Since September 2005, many members have reported highly successful section 5 inspections, and it is clear that in many schools the new arrangements have worked well and been positive and beneficial to the school.

However, in a significant minority of schools, the arrangements have been unsatisfactory, and we outline below concerns that have been reported to the Association by members.

1. USE OF DATA IN SCHOOL INSPECTIONS

Inspectors have access to a range of data on school performance, including Contextualised Value Added, Fischer Family Trust, and key stage test and GCSE results. This data gives a strong indication of the strength of the school, but it is only an indication. NAHT supports the guidance to inspectors from Ofsted, that such data should inform but not determine inspection judgements. However, we continue to receive reports from members of inspectors who appear to have made up their mind about the school, and reached the inspection judgements, before they come into the school. This particularly affects schools in challenging circumstances, whose test results are below national averages; it is too easy to infer from the data that the school is underperforming. Members report that, where the inspector has come to that conclusion before coming into school, it can be very difficult to persuade them to look at other evidence available in the school, such as pupil tracking records, which might show the progress being made by pupils. Such professional discussion may well give greater understanding of factors linked to apparent under-performance. In a school improvement context, the best use of data is to stimulate questions and discussion, rather than to make judgements.

2. THE WIDER SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Schools are encouraged to innovate, to look at different approaches to learning and to the curriculum. The Primary Strategy Document, "Excellence and Enjoyment" highlighted the benefits of a broad primary curriculum, while the Primary Review launched recently has as one of its themes "Curriculum and Assessment". This will consider, *inter alia*, the elements of a "meaningful, balanced and relevant" primary curriculum. However, the inspection process only focuses on the core subjects, essentially on outcomes in literacy and numeracy, and takes little account of whatever else is happening in the school. NAHT is not arguing for detailed inspection of all that is taught within the school, but wants the inspection system to take greater account of the wider provision offered by the school.

3. HIGH STAKES NATURE OF INSPECTION

Inspection outcomes are extremely important to a school, and to its leadership. A special measures judgement, not uncommonly, means a change of headteacher, while other members of the leadership team may well find that this blights their future career. Heads in schools in challenging circumstances feel particularly vulnerable in inspection—we noted above the impact which data-led judgements can have on the inspection of a school whose results are below the national average. In this context, if a school feels it is likely to be inspected soon, it is reluctant to introduce changes or innovations which may affect the end of key stage results, irrespective of any other benefits such innovation might bring for the children's learning.

The current inspection system puts greater pressure on school leaders than on classroom teachers. Indeed, in large schools, it is possible for some classroom teachers not to come into contact with an inspector at all. However, for school leaders the move to short notice inspections has increased rather than reduced the pressure. There is less time for discussion with the inspectors, and to provide additional evidence if it is needed. Schools in challenging circumstances are conscious that if the inspection does not fully take account of their circumstances and achievements, and as a result they are placed in a category, the professional implications can be severe. In addition, such a judgement will affect the reputation of the school locally, with implications for admissions and funding. Contact with members indicates that this is a major factor in the reluctance of teachers to become heads, and is contributing to the difficulties many schools face when they advertise for a headteacher.

When inspection goes awry, schools are reluctant to use the formal Complaint Procedure. Since September 2005, it has been possible to complain about the outcome of an inspection, as well as about the conduct of inspectors. NAHT has urged members to use this procedure if appropriate. However, three factors contribute to reluctance to follow this course. The first is a desire simply to put a difficult and distressing experience behind them, the second is that they have no confidence that the inspection judgements will be changed as a result. The third worry is that, if the school complains, the inspectors will come back and repeat the inspection, and members say to us that they are not prepared to put their staff through it again. True or not, the concern is there, and illustrates the way in which Ofsted is viewed in many schools.

4. POST INSPECTION LETTERS TO PUPILS

The principle behind the letters is to ensure that pupils are informed about the inspection outcomes. This can be achieved effectively by means of a School Council where this exists, or by discussion of the findings in assembly, class or tutor group discussions. However, a number of members have reported instances to us of difficulties caused by the wording of the letter. Wording appropriate for older children in a school may well be inappropriate for younger pupils, and vice versa. Sometimes the wording has not helped the leadership team in working with staff. We look forward to seeing further advice from Ofsted in this area.

5. CULTURE OF THE INSPECTION SYSTEM

Despite revisions to the inspection system, many members remain concerned at the culture of the system, seeing it as a process which focuses on identifying perceived failure, of “naming and shaming” when things go awry. NAHT does not contemplate endorsing complacency, but does argue for a move to a more constructive form of inspection. Inspection should be rigorous, but should also be a professional process that seeks to identify, support, and, where necessary, defend, schools in challenging circumstances.

December 2006

Memorandum submitted by the National Union of Teachers (NUT)

SUMMARY

This submission from the National Union of Teachers (NUT) focuses on issues arising from the new framework for the inspection of schools, including one day inspection visits and inspection judgements on Every Child Matters. The submission also addresses early years inspection and relevant provision within the Education and Inspection Act, in particular, School Improvement Partners and the new arrangements for schools in Ofsted categories of concern.

There are a number of questions which arise from the submission which members of the Select Committee may wish to consider in their interview with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector. These questions are as follows:

- *Can HMCI be confident that the new inspection arrangements, which in many cases involve a one day visit to schools, present an accurate picture of schools' performance?*
- *Would HMCI agree that a review of the entire inspection system is now needed, since the future of individual schools rests on judgements which do not include an evaluation of teaching throughout the whole school?*
- *Would HMCI agree that it would be timely to enter into a public debate about the future format of school inspection arrangements?*
- *Given the finding that “the overall picture is positive”, would HMCI agree that Ofsted should be moving towards a system of evaluating each school's self-evaluation arrangements rather than inspection of schools?*
- *Have the reforms to the Ofsted school inspection arrangements been driven by educational or financial considerations?*
- *Would HMCI agree that internal monitoring and evaluation have increased significantly since the introduction of the new inspection framework and that this has been driven in large part by the Ofsted Self-Evaluation Form (SEF)?*
- *What level of responsibility will Ofsted take for ensuring that monitoring and evaluation are developmental processes, linked closely to professional development identification?*
- *Would HMCI agree that Ofsted's focus on this area could lead schools to place more emphasis on the quality rather than quantity of monitoring and evaluation?*
- *Is it possible for Ofsted to gather hard data within individual schools on the five Every Child Matters outcomes, when they are equally dependent on what happens outside the school, in pupils' homes and local communities?*
- *Why is the contribution of the local authority children's services not a factor in the evaluation of the school's performance in terms of the Every Child Matters indicators?*
- *What remedies does HMCI think should be put in place which would address this imbalance?*
- *Does not HMCI consider that this is a fundamental criticism of high stakes test and examinations themselves?*
- *Does she believe that there should be a review of the impact of summative testing on young people's learning?*
- *Does HMCI believe that it is important to retain qualified teachers as part of the early years team, rather than replace them with Early Years Professionals?*

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- *Is she concerned that the employment of Early Years Professionals rather than qualified teachers will impact negatively on the quality of early education provision, particularly in Children’s Centres?*
 - *Why does the Annual Report not contain a break down of effectiveness of early education by types of setting or provider, comparable to Figure 4, as in previous years?*
 - *Is HMCI aware of the type of setting which consistently provides the highest quality of early years provision in each of the categories used in Figure 3?*
 - *Does HMCI have a view on why quality of early education has the second lowest ranking for effectiveness?*
 - *How do these findings relate to those reported in paragraph 25, that “most of the nursery schools inspected are good or outstanding”?*
 - *What factors can HMCI identify that make such a difference in these inspection judgements?*
 - *What implications do they have for the future of early years education provision?*
 - *Is HMCI comfortable with the role of School Improvement Partners (SIPs)?*
 - *Does HMCI have plans to evaluate the impact of SIPs on schools’ management, leadership and standards?*
 - *Would HMCI agree that SIPs are, in effect, Ofsted’s “territorial army”, a sub-contracted version of additional inspectors?*
 - *Does HMCI think that SIPs will provide local authorities and Ofsted with the same high quality information that trained HMIs offer currently?*
 - *In HMCI’s view, how appropriate are Academies as the solution to the types of problems identified by Ofsted which lead to schools being placed in special measures?*
 - *What are HMCI’s first impressions of Ofsted’s relationship with Government?*
 - *How independent is Ofsted? Is HMCI able to speak “without fear or favour”?*
 - *Bearing in mind that Academies are Government’s flagship initiative, does she believe Academy status, of itself, will raise standards?*
 - *Does HMCI agree that one year is sufficient time to turn around a “failing school” and introduce sustainable improvement, as Government claims?*
 - *Could HMCI specify the actual average recovery time for primary and secondary schools placed in special measures?*
 - *Would HMCI agree that the “one size fits all” recovery time suggested by the DfES in its draft guidance on schools causing concern is unrealistic and unhelpful?*
 - *How does this view relate to that expressed by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee recently, which suggested that over 1,500 schools were failing?*
 - *What percentage of secondary schools are actually failing, as opposed to requiring special measures?*
 - *Would HMCI agree with the Public Accounts Committee that Ofsted needs to do more to support schools at risk of failure?*
 - *Would HMCI expand on her comment later in the Commentary that “it may well be that the answer in the most challenging of neighbourhoods will be not more of the same but something different”?*
 - *To what extent does HMCI believe that current difficulties in recruiting and retaining head teachers is affecting the performance of schools in the most challenging circumstances?*
 - *What does HMCI think could be done to make headship in such schools more attractive?*
 - *Does HMCI agree with the view expressed in some quarters, that head teachers do not necessarily need to have an educational background?*
 - *What impact, if any, does she think that such head teachers might have on educational standards?*

FULL SUBMISSION

1. This submission from the National Union of Teachers (NUT) focuses on issues arising from the new framework for the inspection of schools, including one day inspection visits and inspection judgements on Every Child Matters. The submission also addresses early years inspection and relevant provision within the Education and Inspection Act, in particular, School Improvement Partners and the new arrangements for schools in Ofsted categories of concern.

2. As HMCI’s Annual Report 2005–06 was published after the Select Committee’s call for evidence, this submission also draws on and relates relevant findings in the Annual Report to the above areas of scrutiny.

SECTION 5 INSPECTION

3. The new school inspection arrangements are predicated on the belief that inspectors are able not only to evaluate schools as they are but are able to understand and convey the complexity and “dynamic” of a school’s character during a visit lasting, in many cases, no longer than one day. Snapshots of a school’s performance, which still lie at the heart of the new inspection model, are by nature limited by both the inspection framework and focus.

4. “Reduced tariff” inspections were introduced in September 2006 for approximately 20% of higher achieving schools. Such schools have been described by Ofsted as those “*where achievement is high, self-evaluation is good and there is a good track record from the schools’ previous inspections*”. Yet many of these schools have not been inspected under the new Section 5 arrangements. Judgements on whether a school is eligible for a reduced tariff inspection are made, therefore, purely on the evidence available from pupil performance data, with all of the dangers of relying too heavily on such an approach.

5. Under the new arrangements for the inspection of higher achieving schools, the process of inspection remains very similar to that for full Section 5 inspections. This means that inspectors undertake the same kinds of activities during the inspection visit, but have even less time to complete them. Direct interaction between inspectors and the school, through activities such as observation of lessons or talking to staff, pupils and governors have therefore been reduced still further, becoming virtually meaningless.

6. The further streamlining of school inspection arrangements would suggest that a review of the entire inspection regime is now needed. One model would be to combine Ofsted’s emphasis on achieving an accurate and rigorous view of the school’s effectiveness with a proper engagement with the school community, on the procedures it uses to assess its strengths and weaknesses and its plans for improvement.

7. Inspections 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 inspection framework 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, rather than limited to the Ofsted Self-Evaluation Form (SEF).

Can HMCI be confident that the new inspection arrangements, which in many cases involve a one day visit to schools, present an accurate picture of schools’ performance? Would HMCI agree that a review of the entire inspection system is now needed, since the future of individual schools rests on judgements which do not include an evaluation of teaching throughout the whole school?

8. HMCI concludes the Commentary by setting out her vision for the future. In particular, she intends to adopt the principles that “*there should be no inspections without a reason*” and that “*comprehensive risk assessment should be at the heart of all programmes of inspection*”.

Would HMCI agree that it would be timely to enter into a public debate about the future format of school inspection arrangements? Given the finding that “the overall picture is positive”, would HMCI agree that Ofsted should be moving towards a system of evaluating each school’s self-evaluation arrangements rather than inspection of schools?

9. The Ofsted consultation document which set out the proposals for reduced tariff inspections said that this development was predicated on “*achieving better value for money*”. Value for money, however, should not be the main criteria for basing fundamental changes to inspection arrangements. It is essential that the effectiveness of the service provided by Ofsted to schools is of paramount concern. The inspectorate is in the optimal position to present an overview of best practice and “what works” in a wide range of contexts, which could offer practical support to school improvement. In terms of value for money, this function should be exploited far more, as the Committee has itself recommended previously.

Have the reforms to the Ofsted school inspection arrangements been driven by educational or financial considerations?

10. Paragraphs 58 and 59 of the Annual Report address the leadership and management issues. Analysis of “*the quality and consistency of teaching . . . to ensure that the professional development provided for staff brings about improvement*” is highlighted as a feature of outstanding leaders. In addition, it is suggested that “*monitoring and evaluation . . . remain the weakest elements of leadership and management*”.

Would HMCI agree that internal monitoring and evaluation have increased significantly since the introduction of the new inspection framework and that this has been driven in large part by the Ofsted Self-Evaluation Form (SEF)? What level of responsibility will Ofsted take for ensuring that monitoring and evaluation are developmental processes, linked closely to professional development identification? Would HMCI agree that Ofsted’s focus on this area could lead schools to place more emphasis on the quality rather than quantity of monitoring and evaluation?

11. On the evidence of the current “Framework for the Inspection of Schools in England from September 2005”, there would appear to be little significant change to the focus of inspection, despite the inclusion of references to the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes as part of evaluation requirements. As the above document says, “*most refer to enjoying and achieving*”, although “*in judging leadership and management and the overall effectiveness of the provider, inspectors will consider the contribution made to all five outcomes*”.

12. The inclusion of the ECM indicators highlights a long-standing tension between what Ofsted uses to base its reports on and what parents and others want to know about schools. Ofsted, through its reliance on performance data to inform judgements, concentrates on that which is easily measurable. Fundamental questions, such as the happiness, well-being and engagement of individual pupils within a school are not so easily answered by a “snap shot” approach and are more likely to be accurately determined by on-going monitoring and evaluation, in particular, that done through schools’ self evaluation work.

13. The NUT has welcomed previously the inclusion of the ECM indicators in the revised Ofsted inspection framework. It has noted, however, that there is considerable variation in the frequency with which the indicators other than “enjoying and achieving” appear, for example, the “achieving economic well-being” indicator is used almost twice as often as “being healthy”. This would seem to imply a hierarchy of indicators, at least in educational settings, which could undermine the holistic approach taken in Every Child Matters to the relationship and inter-play between these indicators.

14. In addition, the rationale for assigning indicators to some of the strands of the inspection schedule appears unclear or arbitrary. Judgements on the behaviour of learners, for example, are used to provide evidence for the “being healthy” and “staying safe” indicators, although behaviour would have a fundamental impact on “enjoying and achieving” and could also be argued to relate to “making a positive contribution “ and “achieving economic well-being”.

15. A NUT head teacher member, speaking at the October 2006 NUT Leadership Convention, expressed concerns shared by many about the inclusion of the ECM indicators within school inspections:

“There seems to me to be a great tension between inspection nominally based on the five outcomes (for which hoorah!) and inspection which is overtly and dominantly “data-focused”. But there isn’t comparable data for all five outcomes and data means SAT scores (ie one narrow part of the outcomes). I heartily welcome the ECM agenda but I am very sceptical about, in practice, the implications for inspection. When did a school ever go into special measures for having a poor inclusion policy?”

16. This exemplifies the difficulty of attempting to marry the inspection schedule with the ECM indicators, as the two have very different starting points, over-arching philosophies and purposes. Whilst acknowledging the desire to reflect the Every Child Matters agenda within the Ofsted inspection framework in order to “mainstream” it, this can only ever be on a superficial level, as the much broader and less easily measurable concerns of the former cannot be adequately captured by the “snap shot” approach of the latter.

17. In addition, the inclusion of the ECM indicators in the inspection evaluation criteria is predicated on schools’ ability to address wider, societal issues, such as the prevailing culture of the neighbourhood and the socio-economic profile of the community from which the school intake is drawn. As the recent Audit Commission report, “More than the Sum: Mobilising the Whole Council and its Partners to Support School Success” notes:

“improving the prospects of the most disadvantaged pupils in schools is not a matter for schools alone The council as a whole, along with its wider partners, has a key role in helping to create the infrastructure and conditions which maximise schools’ chances of success. School improvement and renewal are inseparable issues from neighbourhood improvement and renewal, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas.”

18. Although individual school inspection reports feed into the evaluation of a local authority’s children’s services provision, the contribution made by the local authority is not a factor when assessing individual schools. The inclusion of the ECM indicators within the school evaluation framework would suggest that this situation needs to be reviewed.

Is it possible for Ofsted to gather hard data within individual schools on the five Every Child Matters outcomes, when they are equally dependent on what happens outside the school, in pupils’ homes and local communities? Why is the contribution of the local authority children’s services not a factor in the evaluation of the school’s performance in terms of the Every Child Matters indicators?

19. HMCI notes in paragraphs 213 and 215 the relationship between primary pupils’ enjoyment of their education and the extent to which teaching is focused on preparing for national tests in English and mathematics. In addition, Ofsted’s evaluation of the fifth year of the Primary National Strategy, which is summarised on page 53, is critical of schools which “gave too great an emphasis to supporting teachers and pupils in Years 5 and 6 in improving outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2, to the detriment of earlier support”, suggesting that the achievement of those pupils is disadvantaged.

What remedies does HMCI think should be put in place which would address this imbalance?

20. HMCI refers to the “experience of English becoming narrower in certain years as teachers focused on tests and examinations” and to the fact that this affected pupils’ achievement in speaking and listening in particular.

Does not HMCI consider that this is a fundamental criticism of high stakes test and examinations themselves? Does she believe that there should be a review of the impact of summative testing on young people’s learning?

EARLY YEARS INSPECTION

21. The Government's recent Action Plan for the Ten Year Childcare Strategy announced the target of one early Years Professional (EYP) in every Children's Centre by 2010 and one in every full day care setting by 2015. It made no reference, however, to the Government's previous commitment, via its planning guidance for Children's Centres, to working toward the employment of a qualified teacher in every Centre on a full time basis. The recently published Early Years Professional Prospectus, issued by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) also refers only to the Government's target relating to EYPs.

22. The Action Plan explained that the EYP would not be the leader of a setting but would take "*a professional leading role*". This role is currently undertaken by teachers who provide input into early years settings' educational provision.

23. This is particularly relevant in terms of the staffing ratios recently proposed by Government in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consultation document, which Ofsted would be required to inspect. The NUT does not agree that QTS is not equivalent to EYP status or another "relevant" Level 6 qualification in relation to staffing ratios for the educational element of the EYFS. The professional knowledge and skills gained during a B.Ed or PGCE cannot be compared to the EYP training course, which might take as little as three months to complete.

24. Independent research shows that qualified teachers are best for improving the life chances of young children. The Government-funded Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) research from the Universities of Oxford and London shows that settings which had more substantial numbers of trained teachers provided the highest quality care and education. Whilst identifying a clear link between level of qualification and quality of provision, it was reported that the quality of practitioners' knowledge and understanding of curriculum and pedagogy was vital and that trained teachers were the most effective in their interactions with children.

25. The NUT believes that all early years settings should contain a rich range of staff who work as a team. Early years teams should include qualified teachers, early years professionals, nursery officers and specialist support staff. This range of expertise is vital if all the social, emotional and learning needs of very young children are to be met. Early years education is too important to be delivered on the cheap. One type of professional cannot substitute for the other.

26. The NUT has had serious concerns about the EYP since it was announced. Its concerns are not about preserving the status quo, but about ensuring that the highest quality of education provision in the early years is available to all children, given its importance to their later academic performance. The new emphasis on literacy in the early years, arising from the Rose Review, makes this even more essential.

27. There is an urgent need to clarify, therefore, the relationship between the EYP status and QTS. Government itself appears to be confused about this issue. Lord Adonis, speaking during the second reading of the Childcare Bill in the House of Lords on 4 May 2006, said:

"I cannot stress too strongly enough that there is no plot, whatever the National Union of Teachers may say, by us to have qualified teachers playing a lesser role in early years settings than is the case today."

although Alan Johnson, Secretary of State, said at the Daycare Trust's Annual Conference on 8 November 2006 that "*The EYP is the QTS of the early years*".

28. The NUT does not agree that the two qualifications are interchangeable. QTS is not equivalent to EYP status or another "relevant" Level 6 qualification in relation to staffing ratios for the educational element of the EYFS. The professional knowledge and skills gained during a B.Ed or PGCE cannot be compared to the EYP training course which might take as little as three months to complete.

29. Notwithstanding the new focus on the integration of early years care and education services, introduced by the Childcare Act, where provision is deemed to be "education", it should be provided by a qualified teacher. As indicated above, there is a wealth of research evidence to support this view, complimented by the evidence of practice in a number of other countries which are generally regarded as having high quality early years provision, such as the Scandinavian countries and New Zealand. To minimise the importance of QTS within the early years would be a retrograde step which could jeopardise the advances made in the quality of provision over recent years.

Does HMCI believe that it is important to retain qualified teachers as part of the early years team, rather than replace them with Early Years Professionals? Is she concerned that the employment of Early Years Professionals rather than qualified teachers will impact negatively on the quality of early education provision, particularly in Children's Centres?

30. Paragraph eight of HMCI's Annual Report 2005-06 says that over half of early years settings "*provide a good or outstanding quality of care and education for children*". More detailed information on the effectiveness of provision generally is contained within Figure 3 of the Annual Report, whilst Figure 4 covers the overall quality of childcare by type of provider.

Why does the Annual Report not contain a breakdown of effectiveness of early education by types of setting or provider, comparable to Figure 4, as in previous years? Is HMCI aware of the type of setting which consistently provides the highest quality of early years provision in each of the categories used in Figure 3? Does

HMCI have a view on why quality of early education has the second lowest ranking for effectiveness? How do these findings relate to those reported in paragraph 25, that “most of the nursery schools inspected are good or outstanding”? What factors can HMCI identify that make such a difference in these inspection judgements? What implications do they have for the future of early years education provision?

THE EDUCATION AND INSPECTION ACT

31. School Improvement Partners (SIPs) appear to have a pivotal role in the implementation of part 4 of the Act, relating to schools causing concern in England. In particular, SIPs will have a significant impact on the extent to which local authority powers of intervention could be used.

32. The NUT has serious concerns about the development of the SIPs initiative. When they were first announced, they were described by Government as “critical friends” to schools. Since then, however, their role has evolved substantially and has become essentially adversarial, militating against the establishment of trust and friendship, as SIPs will inevitably see themselves as primarily accountable to the local authority and the National Strategies, not to the school.

33. The revised intervention powers contained in the Act, in particular the reduction in the amount of time schools causing concern would have to respond to the warning notices issued by local authorities, will inevitably mean that councils will rely on SIPs to provide them with the information they need to exercise their powers. SIPs will be under enormous pressure to act as quasi-Ofsted inspectors conducting preliminary school inspections.

34. In this situation, head teachers will find it very hard not to see SIPs as yet another externally imposed accountability measure rather than as a source of support.

35. In addition, existing local authority services are also likely to come under pressure. Effective local authorities target their services to schools that need them most while fostering networks of good practice and knowledge across schools. The idea of a single person with Olympian qualities sufficient to substitute for the rich, specialist range of services which local authorities make available to schools, is absurd. It is a one-size-fits-all approach to school improvement which sits very oddly with the idea of tailored and personalised learning for young people.

36. The NUT believes that it was unwise, therefore, to rely on the role of SIPs to secure the implementation of the Act, especially given that their role has been established very recently, not all schools have SIPs yet and there has been no national evaluation of their effectiveness. This is unlikely to be available in the near future, as the national roll out of SIPs for secondary schools was only completed in September 2006 and SIPs for all primary schools will not be in place until September 2008.

37. There also appears to be a lack of coherence between the role of SIPs and Ofsted’s proposal to extend its monitoring to schools deemed “satisfactory but with pockets of underachievement”. Such arrangements would be frankly, “overkill”—interim monitoring by the local authority, SIP, National Strategies personnel as well as Ofsted will achieve nothing other than an increase in stress in schools and a duplication of existing information. The focus must be on harnessing the expertise of these various organisations into an effective and coherent programme of support and development, which emphasises the importance of building a school’s capacity for its own improvement work.

Is HMCI comfortable with the role of School Improvement Partners (SIPs)? Does HMCI have plans to evaluate the impact of SIPs on schools’ management, leadership and standards? Would HMCI agree that SIPs are, in effect, Ofsted’s “territorial army”, a sub-contracted version of additional inspectors? Does HMCI think that SIPs will provide local authorities and Ofsted with the same high quality information that trained HMIs offer currently?

38. The “New Relationship with Schools” agenda was first announced by David Miliband, then Minister for School Standards, in January 2004. It was presented as a Government initiative to deliver an “intelligent accountability” framework and a simplified school improvement process. The following month, Ofsted published its own consultation document “The Future of Inspection”, which set out how its approach to school inspection would be reconfigured in light of this policy shift.

39. In June 2004, a joint DfES/Ofsted document “A New Relationship with Schools” was published, which contained the outcomes of the Ofsted consultation exercise as well as detailed information on the other two strands of the New Relationship with Schools. In a joint foreword by David Miliband and David Bell, the policy was described as “our vision for a new relationship between government and schools.” (NUT’s emphasis) Whilst acknowledging that Ofsted should be consulted fully on policy developments which would impact significantly on its work, this close involvement in the active development of Government policy is a matter of concern.

40. In addition, the NUT has learnt recently that Ofsted will not be undertaking an evaluation of the Academies initiative, following Government’s advice that the research programme it has commissioned from PricewaterhouseCoopers is sufficient for its monitoring purposes. As the Committee knows, the Academies programme has become highly controversial and politicised. Independent scrutiny by Ofsted, drawing on its published inspection reports and other monitoring documentation, would provide valuable information about the success of the initiative.

In HMCI's view, how appropriate are Academies as the solution to the types of problems identified by Ofsted which lead to schools being placed in special measures? What are HMCI's first impressions of Ofsted's relationship with Government? How independent is Ofsted? Is HMCI able to speak "without fear or favour"?

41. HMCI does not refer to the Government's Academies initiative in her Commentary and comment s on Academies in only one paragraph of the Annual Report (paragraph 32).

Bearing in mind that Academies are Government's flagship initiative, does she believe Academy status, of itself, will raise standards?

42. Draft guidance on schools causing concern was issued by the DfES in April 2006, to provide details of the practical interpretation of the Act's provisions. This document stated that after one year in special measures, "the strong presumption at this point will be that the school should be replaced unless the local authority is able to make a very convincing case why an alternative solution that has not yet been implemented would result in better outcomes for the pupils at the school." Local authorities will, obviously, have aimed to identify the best course of action originally—the required progress may simply not be achievable within 12 months.

43. Furthermore, if "major difficulties at any monitoring visit" were identified, the Secretary of State would be able to issue a notice that the case had become "urgent". This could mean that a school in special measures could be closed after just six months. This is an unacceptably short period of time in order to secure improvement.

44. These proposed new arrangements are contrary to evidence about the nature of effective school improvement. The National Audit Office report "Improving Poorly Performing Schools in England", commissioned by the DfES and published in 2005, noted that "turning a school around takes time and can be expensive". It found that "Of the schools that do not close soon after going in to Special Measures, currently less than 10% make a full recovery within 12 months, although around two-thirds of the schools make at least reasonable progress over the first 12 months."

45. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that the current time scales are appropriate and realistic. Only 5% of schools that recover from Special Measures after two years are assessed by Ofsted as "unsatisfactory" or worse two years later, while 60% of them are assessed as good or better. HMCI's Annual Report 2004–05 states that "gradual improvements in national test and examination results"(NUT's emphasis) can be observed in most such schools over time (Paragraph 107). Two years would therefore appear to be the minimum for the kinds of change which need to become embedded in school practice if improvements are to be sustained.

Does HMCI agree that one year is sufficient time to turn around a "failing school" and introduce sustainable improvement, as Government claims?

46. Paragraph 69 of the Annual Report notes "the higher overall average recovery time for schools taken out of the category (special measures) in 2005–06" and that "the average recovery time for primary schools is shorter than that for secondary schools."

Could HMCI specify the actual average recovery time for primary and secondary schools placed in special measures? Would HMCI agree that the "one size fits all" recovery time suggested by the DfES in its draft guidance on schools causing concern is unrealistic and unhelpful?

47. The Commentary to HMCI's Annual Report celebrates the achievements of the majority of maintained schools whilst raising concerns about the one in 12 schools where "persistent weaknesses remain".

How does this view relate to that expressed by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee recently, which suggested that over 1,500 schools were failing? What percentage of secondary schools are actually failing, as opposed to requiring special measures? Would HMCI agree with the Public Accounts Committee that Ofsted needs to do more to support schools at risk of failure? Would HMCI expand on her comment later in the Commentary that "it may well be that the answer in the most challenging of neighbourhoods will be not more of the same but something different"?

48. HMCI notes in the Commentary that "good leadership and management are also crucial" in terms of the success of schools.

To what extent does HMCI believe that current difficulties in recruiting and retaining head teachers is affecting the performance of schools in the most challenging circumstances? What does HMCI think could be done to make headship in such schools more attractive? Does HMCI agree with the view expressed in some quarters, that head teachers do not necessarily need to have an educational background? What impact, if any, does she think that such head teachers might have on educational standards?

Further memorandum submitted by the National Union of Teachers (NUT)

SUMMARY

This submission from the National Union of Teachers (NUT) focuses on issues arising from the extended role of Ofsted as The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills; the new Strategic Plan for 2007–10; and the work of Ofsted generally.

There are a number of questions which arise from the submission which members of the Committee may wish to consider in their interview with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) and the Chair of the Ofsted Board. These questions are as follows:

- *Given that the new Ofsted has brought together all forms of educational provision within a single body, how confident are HMCI and the Chair that inspectors are deployed appropriately and that the distinctive expertise of each of the previous inspectorates has not been lost?*
- *Would HMCI and the Chair explain why the existing support services offered by ALI and CSCI were discontinued following their merger with the new Ofsted?*
- *Are HMCI and the Chair monitoring the effects of the merger of the inspectorates on service providers and users, in particular in terms of the support services offered previously by individual inspectorates? Can they report on any early findings?*
- *How would HMCI and the Chair describe their working relationship?*
- *Would HMCI and the Chair expand upon the criteria which were used to select board members?*
- *Do HMCI and the Chair know how many board members have direct experience of (a) inspection by one of the predecessor inspectorates and (b) working in the public sector?*
- *Would HMCI and the Chair explain how the appointment of board members by the Secretary of State is consistent with Ofsted's status as a non-ministerial Government agency? Is there not a danger that these arrangements could compromise Ofsted's independence and its ability to report "without fear or favour"?*
- *Would the Chair describe the relationship which she and other members of the Board have with Government and with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)?*
- *Would HMCI describe the relationship she has with the DfES and Government, including the Prime Minister, in particular the influence if any these have on the priorities and practices of Ofsted?*
- *On what evidence do HMCI and the Chair base their assertion in the introduction to the Strategic Plan that Ofsted is one of the "most trusted names in the public sector"?*
- *Would HMCI expand upon what Ofsted's "important relationship" with Additional Inspectors and with private inspection service providers actually means in practice?*
- *How satisfied is HMCI and the Chair with the consistency of inspections undertaken by Additional Inspectors?*
- *Does HMCI have any evidence of a correlation between schools' and other settings' complaints about inspection and whether they were led by HMI or Additional Inspectors?*
- *Could HMCI explain what will be "new" about the partnership contracts between Ofsted and private inspection service providers, which is suggested as a possible target on page 21 of the Strategic Plan? Which areas of the partnership does HMCI believe are in most urgent need of addressing?*
- *Would HMCI explain how inspections "incentivise improvement and help services to become more effective", other than by simply listing areas of weakness and by the fear of punitive consequences following a poor Ofsted report?*
- *Would HMCI outline to the Committee the evidence, both internal and external, which Ofsted has provided of its effectiveness and value for money to date?*
- *Would HMCI and the Chair agree that, in order to make judgements about Ofsted's effectiveness and value for money, it is necessary to have data about the costs of inspection per institution, rather than only on a system-wide basis?*
- *Would HMCI and the Chair explain how, given that local authorities and other local providers are the main sources of support for "failing" schools, Ofsted will identify its own contribution to improving the quality of educational provision?*
- *Would HMCI explain the process by which Ofsted advises Government on policy development? Are Ofsted constrained in any way by Government on which areas of policy it may offer advice?*
- *Does HMCI agree that private companies can provide better evaluation of Government education strategies than Ofsted on key aspects of Government education policy such as School Improvement Partners and the Academies programme? Does HMCI feel that Ofsted has been "sidelined" and prevented from investigating controversial Government initiatives?*
- *Why, in HMCI's opinion, do more schools not complete the post-inspection questionnaire? What steps have Ofsted taken to improve response rates?*

- *Can HMCI give any examples of how issues raised via the post-inspection questionnaire have been acted upon?*
- *Would HMCI and the Chair agree that there is a substantial degree of risk attached to taking an overly proportionate approach to inspection?*
- *How would HMCI respond to the view that the unintended consequence of such an approach would be to exacerbate the problems experienced by weaker provision, such as staffing recruitment and retention difficulties and polarised pupil intake?*
- *Would HMCI agree that it would be timely to enter into a public debate about the future format of school inspection arrangements?*
- *Would HMCI and the Chair explain how and why the six areas of work and their associated outcomes and targets included in the Strategic Plan were identified? What, if any, is the significance of the 2010 milestone for the proposed targets?*
- *Would HMCI and the Chair explain how the specified percentages will be determined and which, if any, groups or organisations will influence the setting of these targets?*
- *Would HMCI and the Chair outline what would be the consequences of Ofsted failing to meet specific targets?*
- *Do HMCI and the Chair believe there is a danger that, as in other areas of the public sector, the introduction of targets will eventually drive practice rather than inform it?*
- *Does HMCI believe that it is possible for Ofsted to gather hard data within individual schools on the five Every Child Matters indicators, when they are equally dependent on what happens outside school, in pupils' homes and local communities?*
- *Why is the contribution of the local authority's children's services not a factor in the evaluation of schools' performance in terms of the Every Child Matters indicators?*
- *Would HMCI confirm whether any schools have been placed in a category of concern due to shortcomings in any of the Every Child Matters indicators other than "enjoying and achieving"?*

FULL SUBMISSION

1. This submission from the National Union of Teachers (NUT) focuses on issues arising from the extended role of Ofsted as The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills; the new Strategic Plan for 2007–10; and the work of Ofsted generally.
2. As the NUT responded fully to the Committee's last annual scrutiny, which took place in November 2006, it will not rehearse the issues it raised on that occasion concerned with Section 5 inspections, early years inspections or relevant provision within the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

THE EXTENDED ROLE OF OFSTED

3. The most productive form of inspection is undoubtedly one in which inspection teams understand the processes at work and have the appropriate qualifications, training and experience. Anecdotal evidence on joint Ofsted and Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) inspections, however, has suggested that misunderstandings have arisen as a result of inspectors' lack of experience in, for example, adult or VI form academic provision.

Given that the new Ofsted has brought together all forms of educational provision within a single body, how confident are HMCI and the Chair that inspectors are deployed appropriately and that the distinctive expertise of each of the previous inspectorates has not been lost?

4. Two of the predecessor inspectorates, ALI and the Commission for Social Care Inspections (CSCI) offered active support to providers, for example, CSCI worked closely with senior local authority staff to monitor local plans and progress. These developmental functions have been lost under the new arrangements.

Would HMCI and the Chair explain why the existing support services offered by ALI and CSCI were discontinued following their merger with the new Ofsted?

Are HMCI and the Chair monitoring the effects of the merger of the inspectorates on service providers and users, in particular in terms of the support services offered previously by individual inspectorates? Can they report on any early findings?

5. The establishment of a statutory board and non-Executive Chair for the new Ofsted was intended, according to the consultation document which proposed their creation, to provide an additional means of holding HMCI accountable, as well as providing support in terms of policy direction and internal management arrangements. The success of this development will obviously be dependent upon the quality of the personnel involved.

How would HMCI and the Chair describe their working relationship?

Would HMCI and the Chair expand upon the criteria which were used to select board members?

Do HMCI and the Chair know how many board members have direct experience of (a) inspection by one of the predecessor inspectorates and (b) working in the public sector?

6. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 provided for the establishment of the Ofsted board and for its non-executive members to be appointed directly by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. Ofsted was created as a non-ministerial Government agency, however, to be independent rather than be run by Government.

Would HMCI and the Chair explain how the appointment of board members by the Secretary of State is consistent with Ofsted's status as a non-ministerial Government agency? Is there not a danger that these arrangements could compromise Ofsted's independence and its ability to report "without fear or favour"?

Would the Chair describe the relationship which she and other members of the Board have with Government and with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)?

Would HMCI describe the relationship she has with the DfES and Government, including the Prime Minister, in particular the influence if any these have on the priorities and practices of Ofsted?

THE NEW STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2007–10

7. In the introduction to the Strategic Plan, HMCI and the Chair assert that the new inspectorate "*retains one of the best known and trusted names in the public sector*" (page 4). A range of research, however, including that undertaken by the NUT which is attached as Annex A to this submission, indicates that teachers and head teachers who have experienced Ofsted school inspections do not have a high level of trust in the inspection process, most commonly because of variations in the quality of inspectors and the "snap shot" nature of the inspection process.

On what evidence do HMCI and the Chair base their assertion in the introduction to the Strategic Plan that Ofsted is one of the "most trusted names in the public sector"?

8. The Strategic Plan says "*we have an important relationship with Additional Inspectors and with private inspection service providers who work with Ofsted to manage the inspections of maintained schools, some independent schools and further education colleges*" (Page 13). It goes on to report "*the contracted inspectors who work on Ofsted's behalf deliver an efficient and effective service*" (Page 21).

9. The experience of the NUT, gained through casework and the support it has provided to its members would suggest, as noted above, a rather different perception amongst those who have been inspected. It is often the quality and consistency of Additional Inspectors and private inspection service providers, rather than HMI, which has caused problems in relation to the conduct and outcomes of inspection.

Would HMCI expand upon what Ofsted's "important relationship" with Additional Inspectors and with private inspection service providers actually means in practice?

How satisfied is HMCI and the Chair with the consistency of inspections undertaken by Additional Inspectors?

Does HMCI have any evidence of a correlation between schools' and other settings' complaints about inspection and whether they were led by HMI or Additional Inspectors?

Could HMCI explain what will be "new" about the partnership contracts between Ofsted and private inspection service providers, which is suggested as a possible target on page 21 of the Strategic Plan? Which areas of the partnership does HMCI believe are in most urgent need of addressing?

10. The Strategic Plan makes a number of references to inspection being a catalyst for improvement. For example, it says that inspections "*incentivise improvement and help services to become more effective*" (page 9); "*provide encouragement and incentive for others to improve*" (page 11); and "*helps providers improve and avoid complacency*" (page 16). Two of the most common criticisms of the Ofsted inspection system, however, are that it is punitive in nature and not supportive or developmental.

11. As the Committee knows from previous submissions, it has been a matter of long standing concern for the NUT that Ofsted has focused exclusively on "challenge" rather than providing schools and other settings support to aid improvement. Indeed, the NUT believes that Ofsted inspection has failed to bring about sustained improvement precisely because of its separation from developmental support and from schools' and other settings' own improvement work.

12. Instead, inspection has been used as a means of policing the education system. Despite the inclusion of elements of self evaluation, inspection is still done to, rather than with, school communities and other forms of children's services provision.

Would HMCI explain how inspections "incentivise improvement and help services to become more effective", other than by simply listing areas of weakness and by the fear of punitive consequences following a poor Ofsted report?

13. The Strategic Plan claims that Ofsted "*provide(s) evidence about whether money is spent wisely and whether investment is producing results*" (page 9). An on-going concern expressed by the Committee in recent years is the lack of clear evidence about the value for money of Ofsted's activities, in particular the link between inspection and school improvement.

14. In addition, the NUT has attempted, without success, to clarify the average cost of a primary and secondary school inspection. The NUT was told by Ofsted that this information was not available, partly because of the proportionate inspection system, which made an “average” inspection difficult to define and partly because of the need for confidentiality in Ofsted’s dealings with commercial inspection providers.

15. The targets proposed to demonstrate Ofsted’s impact on standards include a reduction in inadequate provision and increases in the rates of progress made by provision which was previously judged to be inadequate (Page 16). No detail is provided, however, on how this will be assessed accurately, given the range of partners involved in school improvement and intervention strategies.

Would HMCI outline to the Committee the evidence, both internal and external, which Ofsted has provided of its effectiveness and value for money to date?

Would HMCI and the Chair agree that, in order to make judgements about Ofsted’s effectiveness and value for money, it is necessary to have data about the costs of inspection per institution, rather than only on a system-wide basis?

Would HMCI and the Chair explain how, given that local authorities and other local providers are the main sources of support for “failing” schools, Ofsted will identify its own contribution to improving the quality of educational provision?

16. The Strategic Plan stresses on a number of occasions the importance of Ofsted’s function of providing advice to Government, for example, “our contribution in informing policy development” (page 11); “we use what we learn from our objective analysis to advise providers and policy makers on what works” (page 9); and “we investigate new initiatives and good practice so that our findings can inform their implementation and development” (page 14).

17. As the Committee might be aware, however, Ofsted will not be undertaking an evaluation of two of the Government’s most significant initiatives in recent years, School Improvement Partners (SIPs) and the Academies programme. The Government has instead commissioned evaluations from two private sector companies, York Consulting and PricewaterhouseCoopers respectively, to undertake this work and has stated that this will be sufficient for its monitoring purposes.

18. As the Committee knows, the Academies programme has become highly controversial and politicised. Claims have been made consistently that Academy status of itself raises standards. This claim needs examining. SIPs have a pivotal role in the implementation of Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, relating to schools causing concern and will have a significant impact on the extent to which local authority powers of intervention are able to be used. It would be reasonable to expect that independent scrutiny by Ofsted, drawing on its published inspection reports and other monitoring activities, would provide invaluable information about the impact of both of these initiatives.

Would HMCI explain the process by which Ofsted advises Government on policy development? Are Ofsted constrained in any way by Government on which areas of policy it may offer advice?

Does HMCI agree that private companies can provide better evaluation of Government education strategies than Ofsted on key aspects of Government education policy such as School Improvement Partners and the Academies programme? Does HMCI feel that Ofsted has been “sidelined” and prevented from investigating controversial Government initiatives?

19. The Strategic Plan says that Ofsted “consult(s) service users and stakeholders regularly to ensure not only that we are focusing our work effectively but also that we are coherent and comprehensible for those inspected” (Page 14). Ofsted has reported elsewhere, however, that returns of questionnaires by schools which have received an inspection are relatively low (approximately 34% response rate).

Why, in HMCI’s opinion, do more schools not complete the post-inspection questionnaire? What steps have Ofsted taken to improve response rates?

Can HMCI give any examples of how issues raised via the post-inspection questionnaire have been acted upon?

20. A key action to achieve Ofsted’s first priority, “impact”, is to “ensure that our frameworks for inspection, regulation and self evaluation focus sharply on weaker provision” (Page 16). Judgements on whether provision is “weak” are made on the evidence available from performance data, however, with all of the dangers inherent of relying too heavily on such an approach.

21. The further streamlining of inspection arrangements implied by the Strategic Plan would suggest that a review of the entire inspection regime if now needed. One model, on which the NUT has submitted detailed evidence to the Committee previously, would be to combine Ofsted’s emphasis on achieving accurate and rigorous view of an institution’s effectiveness with a proper engagement with service users and providers, on the procedures it uses to assess its strengths and weaknesses and its plans for improvement. Such a model would promote ownership of the inspection process by those who are subject to it or are its intended audience and build capacity for improvement within settings, thus representing greater value for money than current arrangements.

Would HMCI and the Chair agree that there is a substantial degree of risk attached to taking an overly proportionate approach to inspection?

How would HMCI respond to the view that the unintended consequence of such an approach could be to exacerbate the problems experienced by weaker provision, such as staffing recruitment and retention difficulties and polarised pupil intake?

Would HMCI agree that it would be timely to enter into a public debate about the future format of school inspection arrangements?

22. The Strategic Plan contains for the first time six priority areas of work and, for each, a programme of related activities, desired outcomes and possible targets for 2010.

23. In addition, most of the proposed targets contained within the Strategic Plan include, for the first time, references to “a specified high percentage” of particular outcomes, which are to be identified at a later date.

Would HMCI and the Chair explain how and why the six areas of work and their associated outcomes and targets included in the Strategic Plan were identified? What, if any, is the significance of the 2010 milestone for the proposed targets?

Would HMCI and the Chair explain how the specified percentages will be determined and which, if any, groups or organisations will influence the setting of these targets?

Would HMCI and the Chair outline what would be the consequences of Ofsted failing to meet specific targets?

Do HMCI and the Chair believe there is a danger that, as in other areas of the public sector, the introduction of targets for Ofsted will eventually drive practice rather than inform it?

THE WORK OF OFSTED

24. Although the new inspectorate has brought together the inspection of children’s social care, local authority children’s services and educational provision, there has been little significant change to the focus of inspection for schools. Despite the inclusion of references to the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes as part of school evaluation requirements, most refer to “enjoying and achieving”, with arguably more emphasis on the latter half of that outcome.

25. The inclusion of the ECM indicators highlights a long standing tension between what Ofsted uses to base its reports on and what parents and others want to know about schools. Ofsted through its reliance on performance data to inform judgements concentrates on what is easily measurable. Fundamental questions, such as the happiness, well-being and engagement of individual and groups of pupils within a school are not so easily answered by a “snap shot” approach and are more likely to be accurately determined by on-going monitoring and evaluation, in particular, that done through schools’ self evaluation work.

26. A NUT head teacher member, speaking at the October 2006 NUT Leadership Convention, expressed concerns shared by many about the inclusion of the ECM indicators within school inspections:

“There seems to me to be a great tension between inspection nominally based on the five outcomes (for which hoorah!) and inspection which is overtly and dominantly “data focused”. But there isn’t comparable data for all five outcomes and data means SAT scores (i.e. one narrow part of the outcomes). I heartily welcome the ECM agenda but I am very sceptical about, in practice, the implications for inspection. When did a school ever go into special measures for having a poor inclusion policy?”

27. This exemplifies the difficulties of attempting to marry the inspection schedule with the ECM indicators, as the two have very different starting points, over-arching philosophies and purposes. Whilst acknowledging the desire to reflect the ECM agenda within the Ofsted inspection framework in order to “mainstream” it, this can only ever be on a superficial level, as the much broader and less easily measurable concerns of the former cannot be adequately captured by the “snap shot” approach of the latter.

28. In addition, the inclusion of the ECM indicators in the inspection evaluation criteria is predicted on schools’ ability to address wider societal issues, such as the prevailing culture of the neighbourhood and the socio-economic profile of the community from which the school intake is drawn. As the 2006 Audit Commission report “More than the Sum: Mobilising the Whole Council and its Partners to Support School Success” notes:

“improving the prospects of the most disadvantaged pupils in schools is not a matter for schools alone The council as a whole, along with its wider partners, has a key role in helping to create the infrastructure and conditions which maximise schools’ chances of success. School improvement and renewal are inseparable issues from neighbourhood improvement and renewal, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas.”

29. Although individual school inspection reports feed into the evaluation of a local authority’s children’s services provision, the contribution made by the local authority is not a factor when assessing individual schools. The inclusion of the ECM indicators within the school evaluation framework would suggest that this situation needs to be reviewed.

Does HMCI believe that it is possible for Ofsted to gather hard data within individual schools on the five Every Child Matters indicators, when they are equally dependent on what happens outside school, in pupils' homes and local communities?

Why is the contribution of the local authority's children's services not a factor in the evaluation of schools' performance in terms of the Every Child Matters indicators?

Would HMCI confirm whether any schools have been placed in a category of concern due to shortcomings in any of the Every Child Matters indicators other than "enjoying and achieving"?

April 2007

Annex A

NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS OFSTED INSPECTION SURVEY 2007

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Introduction

1. This survey was conducted in autumn 2006. It was sent to a random sample of 1,000 nursery, primary, secondary and special school teachers, including head teachers, whose school had received an Ofsted inspection in the previous year under the 2005 Ofsted inspection framework. 367 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 36.7%.

2. A number of questions which appeared in the 2006 survey were used previously in a NUT survey of members in spring 2004, which sought members' views on the proposed new arrangements for school inspections, as well as on their experience of the last Ofsted inspection their schools had received. Comparisons between the two survey's findings are considered in Section C of this summary report.

Section A: Views on the New Ofsted Inspection Framework

3. Forty-four per cent of respondents have mixed views on the fact that school inspections now focus on the core subjects only. Thirty-three per cent, however, either oppose or strongly oppose this and a further 23% either support or strongly support this development.

4. More than half of respondents (59%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Ofsted inspection stimulated help and support from external agencies. However, 21% either agreed or strongly agreed and 20% had mixed views on this.

5. Seventy-six per cent either support or strongly support the new "short notice" system of inspection. Eighteen per cent have mixed views on it. Only 6% either oppose or strongly oppose the reduced notice period for inspections.

6. Forty-nine per cent either support or strongly support the reduction of the maximum period between school inspections from six to three years. Thirty-four per cent of respondents, however, have mixed views on this. Nineteen per cent either oppose or strongly oppose.

7. The large majority (81%) either support or strongly support the reduced duration of inspections, typically two days for the majority of schools. Thirteen per cent have mixed views on it. Only 6% either oppose or strongly oppose this.

8. The large majority (83%) either support or strongly support the reduction in the number of lesson observations for individual teachers. Fourteen per cent have mixed views on it. Only 2% either oppose or strongly oppose this.

9. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents have mixed views on the fact that some teachers are not observed at all during the inspection. Twenty-eight per cent, however, either support or strongly support this, with a further 24% either opposing or opposing strongly this development.

10. Forty-one per cent of respondents have mixed views on the separate Ofsted inspections for subjects and other aspects of the curriculum. Thirty-four per cent, however, either support or strongly support this, with a further 25% either opposing or strongly opposing.

11. The majority of respondents (61%) either support or strongly support the use of questionnaires to gather the views of parents, rather than through meetings between inspectors and parents as under the previous inspection arrangements. Twenty-nine per cent have mixed views on it. Only 10% either oppose or strongly oppose.

12. The majority of respondents (63%) either support or strongly support the involvement of HM Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in school inspections. Thirty-four per cent have mixed views on it. Only 4% either oppose or strongly oppose their involvement.

13. The large majority of respondents (86%) either support or strongly support the reduction in the size of inspection reports. Ten per cent have mixed views on it. Just 4% either oppose or strongly oppose this.

14. Almost half of respondents (48%) either support or strongly support the introduction of a pupil letter to accompany the school inspection report. Twenty-six per cent, however, have mixed views on it with an additional 26% either opposing or strongly opposing it.

15. The majority (74%) either support or strongly support the use of the School Self Evaluation Form (SEF) to provide the key evidence for the inspection. Twenty-one per cent have mixed views. Just 5% either oppose or strongly oppose the SEF.

16. Sixty-three per cent of respondents either support or strongly support the use of the school's previous inspection report and PANDA to inform inspectors' planning for the inspection. Thirty per cent have mixed views. Only 7% either oppose or strongly oppose.

17. The large majority of respondents (82%) either support or strongly support the greater focus on the quality of the school's leadership and management when making the overall inspection judgment on the school. Fifteen per cent have mixed views. Only 3% either oppose or strongly oppose it.

18. Forty-four per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the Ofsted inspection had helped their school. Thirty per cent, however, had mixed views. A further 26% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

19. Over half of respondents (60%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the Ofsted inspection was an aid to self-evaluation. Twenty-one per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and a further 19% had mixed views on this issue.

20. Almost half of the respondents (47%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the Ofsted inspection provided an accurate assessment of the value added by the school. However, 28% had mixed views and 26% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

21. The majority of respondents (62%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the Ofsted inspection provided an accurate judgment of the management of the school's resources. Twenty-one per cent had mixed views on this. A further 17% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

22. The majority of respondents (67%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the pre-inspection preparation and the inspection itself had disrupted previously planned professional development for staff. Twenty per cent either agreed or strongly agreed and a further 13% had mixed views on it.

23. The majority of respondents (71%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the new inspection arrangements had reduced pre-inspection preparation. Sixteen per cent had mixed views on this and a further 13% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

24. Over half of respondents (53%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the new inspection arrangements had reduced pre-inspection stress. Thirty-one per cent, however, either disagreed or strongly disagreed and a further 16% had mixed views.

25. Almost half of the respondents (48%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the new inspection arrangements had reduced the burden of inspection on schools. Twenty-seven per cent, however, either disagreed or strongly disagreed and a further 25% had mixed views.

26. Thirty-seven per cent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the new inspections presented a more accurate picture of schools. However, 37% had mixed views on this and a further 26% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

27. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents had mixed views on whether the new inspections had stimulated "more rapid improvements" in schools as Ofsted had claimed when launching the new arrangements. However, 37% either disagreed or strongly disagreed and a further 24% agreed on this.

28. The majority of respondents (75%) thought that the new inspection arrangements, compared to their previous experience of inspection, were either an improvement or a significant improvement. Nineteen per cent had mixed views. Only 6% thought that these new arrangements were either a worsening or significant worsening compared to the previous system.

Section B: *Perceptions of the Last Inspection Experienced*

29. Thirty-six per cent of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the inspection was supportive and motivated teachers. Thirty-five per cent, however, either agreed or strongly agreed and a further 29% had mixed views.

30. Sixty-nine per cent of respondents were not asked to do additional work specifically for the inspection. Thirty-one per cent were asked to do so.

31. Fifty-two per cent either agreed or strongly agreed that the preparation for the inspection created significant additional workload. Thirty per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 18% had mixed views.

32. The majority of respondents (71%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the preparation for the inspection had generated additional classroom observations. Twenty-three per cent either agreed or strongly agreed, with a further 7% expressing mixed views.

33. Over half of the respondents (60%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the judgment of inspectors about their school was fair and accurate. Twenty-one per cent had mixed views. Eighteen per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

34. More than half of respondents (58%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the combined experience of the inspection team matched well with the inspection needs of their school. Twenty-three per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed and a further 20% had mixed views on this issue.

35. The majority of respondents (65%) either agreed or strongly agreed that inspectors took proper account of the history of their school and the make up of its pupil population when making judgements. Nineteen per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed and a further 16% had mixed views.

36. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that inspectors established a professional dialogue with teachers. A further 18% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixteen per cent had mixed views.

37. The majority of respondents (60%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the inspection team was balanced in terms of experience relevant to the curriculum in their school. Twenty per cent had mixed views. A further 19% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this view.

38. Over half of respondents (53%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the inspection team was balanced in terms of gender and ethnic group representation. However, 32% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 15% had mixed views.

39. The large majority of respondents (84%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the inspection took account of their school's existing self-evaluation. Twelve per cent had mixed views. Only 5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

40. The majority of respondents (73%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the information inspectors gathered from pupils about the school was useful in informing the inspection findings. Seventeen per cent had mixed views. A further 9% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

41. Forty-two per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that there were aspects of the school which should have received more attention from the inspectors. Thirty-three per cent, however, either disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 24% had mixed views.

42. The most commonly cited aspects of schools' provision which were cited by respondents as in need of greater attention during the inspection were the foundation subjects and the ethos of the school, particularly as manifested by enrichment activities and/or community links. Aspects of leadership and management, particularly middle management and the importance of gaining teachers' perspectives on the school's leadership, pastoral issues and SEN were also regularly suggested by respondents as in need of more emphasis during the inspection.

43. More than half of respondents (52%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that there were aspects of their school which received too much attention from the inspectors. However, 28% agreed or strongly agreed and 20% had mixed views.

44. The vast majority of respondents who believed that there were aspects which had received too much attention from inspectors raised issues about an over-emphasis on data. Relatively few respondents believed too much time had been spent on the core subjects or other aspects of schools' provision:

45. The large majority of respondents (84%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that pre-inspection preparation and the inspection itself had disrupted activities for pupils outside school. Nine per cent agreed and 7% had mixed views.

Section C: *Comparison of Findings from the NUT 2004 Ofsted Survey*

46. Ofsted's focus on the core subjects only during school inspections is far less popular with respondents now than when it was first proposed. The proportion of respondents supporting this development has reduced by half, from 47% in 2004 to 23% in 2006. Many more respondents now have mixed views about this (44%, compared to 25% in 2004).

47. There is also a shift in perception about the extent to which inspections are viewed as supportive and motivating for teachers. Thirty-five per cent of respondents now think that they are, compared to just 17% in 2004. Similarly, 36% of respondents disagreed, a considerable reduction from the 59% who held this view in 2004.

48. Support for the reduced period of notice of inspections has grown. In 2004, respondents were divided on the issue, with 42% in agreement with this change and almost a third (31%) who disagreed. In 2006, almost half of respondents support the development (49%) and only 6% oppose it.

49. Exactly the same proportion of respondents from each survey (59%) disagreed with the statement that the Ofsted inspection system stimulated help and support from external sources. There was a 10% increase, however, in respondents who believed this to be the case (21% in 2006).

50. Support for the reduced cycle of inspections, from six to three years, has increased. In 2004, only 19% supported this development, with 48% opposing it. In 2006, this situation was reversed, with 49% supporting it and only 19% opposing it. The number of respondents with mixed views on this issue has remained almost constant.

51. Respondents continued to support the reduced duration of inspection visits to schools. Agreement with this development increased by 11% to 81% in 2006. Opponents of the reduced duration declined by 1%, to 6% in 2006.

52. The new system of limited lesson observations for individual teachers continued to be supported. Eighty-three per cent now support this development, compared to 70% in 2004. The proportion of respondents who held mixed views or opposed this initiative both decreased, by 8% and 5% respectively.

53. The introduction of the Ofsted School Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) has been problematic according to respondents. Whilst there is still a high level of support for it (74%), this is a reduction of 10% compared to 2004. More respondents now have mixed views about it (21% compared to 13% in 2004).

54. More respondents now believe that their school's existing self evaluation work is taken into account by inspectors, an increase of 29% compared to 2004. Five per cent disagreed in 2006, compared to 16% in 2004, with a further 12% holding mixed views on the issue (compared to 27% in 2004).

55. Over half of respondents (52%) reported that preparation for the inspection had created significant additional workload in 2006. This was a considerable reduction compared to 2004, when 94% said that their workload had increased as a result of inspection preparation. Only two per cent of respondents reported that no additional work had been created; compared to 30% in 2006.

56. Respondents' opinions on the validity of inspection judgements have also improved. Over half (60%) now think that judgements are fair and accurate, compared to 38% in 2004. The proportion of respondents who do not hold this view declined from 28% to 18% in 2006.

57. This may be linked to the findings that more than half of respondents (58%) now believe the experience of the inspection team is well matched to their school, compared to less than a third (31%) in 2004. Twenty-three per cent of respondents in 2006 were critical of their inspection team, compared to 34% in 2004. In addition, there was an increase of 17% of respondents who believed that the inspectors had established a professional dialogue with teachers (67% in 2006), with an accompanying decrease in the proportion of respondents who held mixed views on this issue (16% compared to 27% in 2004).

58. The proportion of respondents who believed the inspection team was balanced in terms of experience relevant to the curriculum increased by 15% to 60% in 2006, with those who held mixed views (20%) or disagreeing (19%) declining correspondingly by 8% and 6% respectively compared to 2004.

59. Respondents also appeared slightly more confident that the inspection covered the right things in the right proportion. Thirty-three per cent felt that the coverage was accurate, compared to 25% in 2004. A significant proportion, however, still believed there were aspects of the school which should have received more attention (42% compared to 51% in 2004). In addition, 28% of respondents felt there were aspects of the school which received too much attention from inspectors, compared to 44% in 2004, with a further 52% disagreeing with this view, compared to 27% in 2004).

60. There has been a significant growth in support for the use of information gathered from pupils to inform inspection findings. Almost three quarters of respondents (73%) now support this aspect of inspection, compared to 45% in 2004. Opposition to the use of such information has decreased by half, from 18% to 9% in 2006.

61. There also seems to be growing support for the view that Ofsted inspections help schools improve. Forty-four per cent of respondents in 2006 expressed this opinion, compared to 12% in 2004. Fifty-seven per cent disagreed with this view in 2004, compared to 26% in 2006.

62. It was felt that Ofsted inspections were increasingly accurate in terms of assessing the value added by the school, with 47% of respondents expressing this view, compared to 29% in 2004. Twenty-six per cent, however, disagreed, compared to 38% in 2004.

63. Respondents also believed increasingly that inspection provided an accurate judgement of the school's management of resources (62% compared to 36% in 2004).

64. When comparing their experiences of inspection under the "old" and "new" frameworks, 71% of respondents stated that pre-inspection preparation had been reduced, compared to 38% who believed that it would in 2004. It was felt that the new arrangements were an improvement to the previous system (75% compared to 37% who believed it would be).

65. This did not necessarily, however, lead to a more accurate picture of schools according to respondents in 2006. Thirty-seven per cent had mixed views and 26% disagreed with this statement, compared to 28% and 36% respectively in 2004. The proportion of respondents who believed the new arrangements had led to more accuracy remained almost constant (37% compared to 35% in 2004).

INTRODUCTION

This survey was conducted in autumn 2006. It was sent to a random sample of 1,000 nursery, primary, secondary and special school teachers, including head teachers, whose school had received an Ofsted inspection in the previous year under the 2005 Ofsted inspection framework. 367 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 36.7%.

It is notable that a larger proportion of head teacher members (47%) responded to this survey compared to similar NUT surveys in previous years, which may account to some extent for the significant changes in perceptions about Ofsted inspections noted in Section C of this report.

The comments used to illustrate responses to each of the questions are taken, in the main, from respondents' comments at the end of the questionnaire. This section of the questionnaire was frequently used to clarify, expand upon or qualify responses given to specific survey questions. Whilst comments tended to be more critical than the rankings given in response to individual survey items, those used in this report are representative of respondents' views overall.

Section A: Views on the New Ofsted Inspection Framework

66. Seventy-six per cent either support or strongly support the new "short notice" system of inspection. Eighteen per cent have mixed views on it. Only 6% either oppose or strongly oppose the reduced notice period for inspections.

"It was better to have a shorter preparation time leading up to the inspection but we still worked around the clock to get things ready."

(Primary Deputy Head Teacher)

"The teachers took it in their stride and were happy with the new approach. When we got the phone call it was 'bring it on', resounding around the school."

(Primary Head Teacher)

67. Forty-nine per cent either support or strongly support the reduction of the maximum period between school inspections from six to three years. Thirty-four per cent of respondents, however, have mixed views on this. Nineteen per cent either oppose or strongly oppose.

"Although an improvement, the pre-inspection stress is now replaced by large periods of 'in-readiness'—schools try to be in a constant state of readiness for Ofsted or HMI subject inspections therefore actually more constant (if lower level) stress."

(Primary Head of Key Stage)

68. The large majority (81%) either support or strongly support the reduced duration of inspections, typically two days for the majority of schools. Thirteen per cent have mixed views on it. Only 6% either oppose or strongly oppose this.

69. Most of the comments written about the reduced period of time spent in school by inspectors were, however, critical, including for respondents who had indicated support for this development:

"The new, more ruthless expectations, coupled with the shorter inspection framework, restrict the inspection's capacity to really (a) assess the validity of a school's SEF vs reality observed, and (b) support the school in moving forward. Inspectors are under pressure to make sweeping generalisations from samples that are too small and at risk of being invalid. Within the climate of raising standards and the pressure to improve performance in schools, the result is more stress due to the process rather than in preparation. My Ofsted has set me back."

(Secondary Head Teacher)

"We have six classes and in 1½ days the inspector's time was stretched to the limit in order to fulfil the remit of the inspection process. She constantly said there wasn't enough time to discuss issues so we felt we had been short changed."

(Primary Head Teacher)

"Not enough time for professional dialogue with the inspectors."

(Secondary Mainscale Teacher)

"Inspector was in for one day only and criticised us for insufficient ICT use. We disagree and had the inspection been more than one day (not that we really want that!) he would have seen more aspects of ICT."

(Nursery Mainscale Teacher)

70. The large majority (83%) either support or strongly support the reduction in the number of lesson observations for individual teachers. Fourteen per cent have mixed views on it. Only 2% either oppose or strongly oppose this.

“Other members of staff felt ‘deflated’ as they were not observed and felt the inspection had passed them by.”

(Primary Assistant Head Teacher)

“Some teachers felt ‘cheated’ that they were not observed.”

(Special Head Teacher)

71. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents have mixed views on the fact that some teachers are not observed at all during the inspection. Twenty-eight per cent, however, either support or strongly support this, with a further 24% either opposing or opposing strongly this development.

“A few people had lots of inspection time and conversation, some very little.”

(Secondary Head of Department)

“Judgements made about teaching weren’t based on proper observations.”

(Primary Mainscale Teacher)

“They were making judgements about teaching and learning when not all teachers had been observed.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

72. Forty-four per cent of respondents have mixed views on the fact that school inspections now focus on the core subjects only. Thirty-three per cent, however, either oppose or strongly oppose this and a further 23% either support or strongly support this development.

“Emphasis on achievement data or other agenda left little time to consider the ethos of the school and the foundation subjects.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Although the inspectors tried, they were bogged down by data. The broad curriculum received recognition through their distilled experience but the process militated against it.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

73. Forty-one per cent of respondents have mixed views on the separate Ofsted inspections for subjects and other aspects of the curriculum. Thirty-four per cent, however, either support or strongly support this, with a further 25% either opposing or opposing strongly.

74. The majority of respondents (61%) either support or strongly support the use of questionnaires to gather the views of parents, rather than through meetings between inspectors and parents as under the previous inspection arrangements. Twenty-nine per cent have mixed views on it. Only 10% either oppose or strongly oppose.

75. The majority of respondents (63%) either support or strongly support the involvement of HM Inspectors of Schools (HMI) in school inspections. Thirty-four per cent have mixed views on it. Only 4% either oppose or strongly oppose their involvement.

“I feel we were desperately unlucky in our team during the inspection in September 2005. They were incompetent, ill-prepared and extremely rude! We were lucky that there was an HMI in attendance on the second day, as we had issues with the report which were not listened to by Ofsted but the report was withdrawn on the instructions of the HMI until it was corrected.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

76. The large majority of respondents (86%) either support or strongly support the reduction in the size of inspection reports. Ten per cent have mixed views on it. Just 4% either oppose or strongly oppose this.

77. Almost half of respondents (48%) either support or strongly support the introduction of a pupil letter to accompany the school inspection report. Twenty-six per cent, however, have mixed views on it with an additional 26% either opposing or strongly opposing it.

“I object strongly to the letter that was sent to the pupils, stating ‘some of your writing is not good enough, especially those of you who find it easy’.”

(Primary Subject Co-ordinator)

“Dependent on inspectors’ familiarity with children the same age. Letter needs to be informative, not patronising and celebrate the children’s success. I do not feel it is appropriate to tell the children what the school’s targets are—they should just feel proud of what they have achieved.”

(Primary Subject Co-ordinator)

78. The majority (74%) either support or strongly support the use of the School Self Evaluation Form (SEF) to provide the key evidence for the inspection. Twenty-one per cent have mixed views. Just 5% either oppose or strongly oppose the SEF.

“Completing the staff evaluation form and highlighting our targets was useful.”

(Secondary Head of Department)

“The inspection confirmed our own findings and praised our SEF for its accuracy.”

(Primary Subject Co-ordinator)

“The inspection team seemed happy to confirm the school’s SEF without invading space or disrupting the life of the school.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“The SEF takes too much time away from what leadership and management teams should be doing.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

79. Sixty-three per cent of respondents either support or strongly support the use of the school’s previous inspection report and PANDA to inform inspectors’ planning for the inspection. Thirty per cent have mixed views. Only 7% either oppose or strongly oppose.

“Inspectors seem to have fixed views of a department’s worth before they come into school, based on PANDA/ results, etc.”

(Secondary Mainscale Teacher)

“Our experience was very positive. The lead inspector had made judgements which were quite inaccurate due to misunderstanding our circumstances and role . . . as he was comparing us directly with mainstream provision.”

(PRU Head Teacher)

“The lead inspector focussed only on pupil progress from KS1 to KS2 in terms of our test results and PANDA. Was not sympathetic to any suggested analysis from school team.”

(Primary Deputy Head Teacher)

80. The large majority of respondents (82%) either support or strongly support the greater focus on the quality of the school’s leadership and management when making the overall inspection judgment on the school. Fifteen per cent have mixed views. Only 3% either oppose or strongly oppose it.

81. Written comments highlighted a particular concern in the primary sector about governors being included in inspectors’ judgements about the quality of leadership and management:

“My only niggle was that ‘leadership and management’ would have been outstanding/good if we had a chair of governors (we were between chairs—the previous one having moved to London). I was told in the verbal feedback that they would find it very difficult to rate leadership higher in the absence of a chair—why??”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Concern about governors being part of leadership group in terms of judgements—when we have difficulty recruiting and governors are not skilled or proactive and do not have time to get fully involved in the life of the school. They only spoke to our chair of governors, who felt intimidated by them, as they asked very specific questions about hypothetical situations, eg, what would you do if results fell drastically? All our governors are supportive and work well as a team but do not have confidence or professional expertise to answer all questions.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

82. Forty-four per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the Ofsted inspection had helped their school. Thirty per cent, however, had mixed views. A further 26% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

83. A number of respondents highlighted the need for Ofsted to play some role in supporting schools which it had judged to be failing. Others, by their annotations to this question, clearly felt there was no connection between Ofsted and the concept of school improvement:

“They put the school into special measures and then walked away. The school was left feeling poorly assisted by a fairly useless LA. Since then, eight members of staff have had time off for stress-related illness. Ofsted has a moral responsibility to assist a school in recovery from what it does to them! However, they do not do this, they simply walk away ignoring the damage they do.”

(Special Mainscale Teacher)

“A very fair Ofsted team. Kind, helpful, supportive.”

(Infant Leadership Group)

“Our inspection team were very ‘human’. They gave constructive feedback, praise and encouragement. It was almost an enjoyable experience.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Isn’t that only after the event? If you go into a category?”

(Primary Head Teacher)

84. Over half of respondents (60%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the Ofsted inspection was an aid to self-evaluation. Twenty-one per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed, and a further 19% had mixed views on this issue.

“Completing the SEF and highlighting our targets was useful. Identifying how to reach our targets was also useful but don’t feel that Ofsted inspection added anything!”

(Secondary Head of Department)

85. Almost half of the respondents (47%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the Ofsted inspection provided an accurate assessment of the value added by the school. However, 28% had mixed views and 26% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

“We spent the whole time convincing them that the cohort they were basing their judgements on was very poor and showing evidence that the next cohort were well on track to do better. (They did). He (lead inspector) said a number of times ‘It doesn’t feel as though I should be worried about this school but the data tells me that I should.’”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Not enough notice was taken of social deprivation or the state that the children entered school. We felt we were unfairly judged on standard learning.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“We had a very fair team who looked beyond the PANDA and who recognised the value of work currently being done.”

(Primary Deputy Head Teacher)

86. The majority of respondents (62%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the Ofsted inspection provided an accurate judgment of the management of the school’s resources. Twenty-one per cent had mixed views on this. A further 17% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

87. The majority of respondents (67%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the pre-inspection preparation and the inspection itself had disrupted previously planned professional development for staff. Twenty per cent either agreed or strongly agreed and a further 13% had mixed views on it.

88. More than half of respondents (59%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Ofsted inspection stimulated help and support from external agencies. However, 21% either agreed or strongly agreed and 20% had mixed views on this.

“One of the areas they highlighted for us to improve is almost impossible to do without extra funding and a new school. Even the Ofsted team said they did not know how we could achieve outdoor provision improvements for the foundation stage when we are so limited by physical space. Naturally, as usual, schools will do what it can. Perhaps the Government should help more with resources.”

(Infant Leadership Group)

“We need genuinely supportive (and honest) school improvement partners to work consistently and creatively with schools.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“The support we received post-Ofsted has not helped the staff and school and significantly added to our workload and stress levels.”

(Primary Leadership Group)

89. The majority of respondents (71%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the new inspection arrangements had reduced pre-inspection preparation. Sixteen per cent had mixed views on this and a further 13% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

“A much improved, less onerous experience.”

(Secondary Mainscale Teacher)

“Preparation for inspection is ‘always there’ because you never really know when you are going to have one.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

90. Over half of respondents (53%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the new inspection arrangements had reduced pre-inspection stress. Thirty-one per cent, however, either disagreed or strongly disagreed and a further 16% had mixed views.

91. Whilst many agreed that stress levels during the inspection had been reduced, others, particularly head teachers, argued that stress had simply been transferred elsewhere:

“Switched the stress from before and on the staff, to during and on the head. Some may say this is correct but falling recruitment for heads, particularly in primary, would suggest otherwise.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Ofsted’s most recent 2-day inspection was very ‘light touch’ indeed. In fact, anxieties and pre-inspection preparation were much more stressful than the actual inspection itself. The idea of a coming inspection with short notice was the cause of management anxieties about covering all eventualities so that some work carried out in advance of the inspection was very unnecessary and distracting.”

(Special Head of Department)

“The Sword of Damocles hanging over heads is not an improvement on the previous system.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Although in Question 18(b) I have ticked ‘agree’. I do feel there will always be pre-inspection stress, irrespective of a phone call a few days beforehand. Most schools will know where they are in the cycle of a possible inspection and this could still mean a year or more of stress for some staff. For example, as a new head in January of my school, I was aware the phone could go at any time in the coming months. Eleven months later, it did—that’s a long time to wait!”

(Primary Head Teacher)

92. Almost half of the respondents (48%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the new inspection arrangements had reduced the burden of inspection on schools. Twenty-seven per cent, however, either disagreed or strongly disagreed and a further 25% had mixed views.

“Pre-inspection preparation and anxieties were much more stressful than the actual inspection itself.”

(Secondary Mainscale Teacher)

“I am in favour of the new inspection schedule and strongly believe that the burden is greatly reduced for the classroom teachers and other staff.”

(Secondary Head Teacher)

93. Thirty-seven per cent of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the new inspections presented a more accurate picture of schools. However, 37% had mixed views on this and a further 26% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

“The findings were spot on and reflected good practice and results.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Seemed to make sweeping statements about departments based on results and a few ‘small scale’ observations—which may not be a true reflection of a department at the time of inspection.”

(Special Head of Department)

“A very positive experience. Judgements were accurate, well informed, ie, from SEF, parent survey, child interview and really seemed to take ‘Every Child Matters’ into account.”

(Primary Leadership Group)

94. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents had mixed views on whether the new inspections had stimulated ‘more rapid improvements’ in schools as Ofsted had claimed when launching the new arrangements. However, 37% either disagreed or strongly disagreed and a further 24% agreed on this.

“The fall out from a poor inspection has effectively become a self fulfilling prophecy with $\frac{3}{4}$ of staff leaving, worsening behaviour amongst children and a growing culture of blame between the head and staff.”

(Primary Mainscale Teacher)

95. The majority of respondents (75%) thought that the new inspection arrangements, compared to their previous experience of inspection, were either an improvement or a significant improvement. Nineteen per cent had mixed views. Only 6% thought that these new arrangements were either a worsening or significant worsening compared to the previous system.

“Less stress and now can get a genuine view of the school not the artificial one that can be produced in six weeks.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“A much improved, less stressful experience.”

(Secondary Head Teacher)

“It wasn’t as bad as before—quite positive in fact.”

(PRU Deputy Head Teacher)

“I prefer the new inspections.”

(Primary Subject Co-ordinator)

“Better than before.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

Section B: *Perceptions of the Last Inspection Experienced*

96. Thirty-four per cent of respondents reported that their school had received three days' notice of the inspection and 26% five days' notice. Twenty-one per cent received two days' notice and 14% four days. Five per cent received six or more days' notice of the inspection.

97. Fifty-two per cent either agreed or strongly agreed that the preparation for the inspection created significant additional workload. Thirty per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 18% had mixed views.

98. Sixty-nine per cent of respondents were not asked to do additional work specifically for the inspection. Thirty-one per cent were asked to do so.

99. Amongst respondents who did indicate that they had undertaken additional work for the inspection, the collection and/or collation of evidence and/or data was the most commonly cited by all respondents. For head teacher respondents, the second most common driver of workload was reading inspection documentation and preparing the SEF, whilst for Heads of Department/Subject Co-ordinators, updating policies and schemes of work and, for mainscale teachers, producing lesson plans were the second most popular responses:

"To type up the SEF onto the website even though I offered to e-mail our Word document to the inspector. The inspector then couldn't access the website and didn't read the SEF before having the contact meeting."

(Primary Head Teacher)

"Revamp of internal tracking to better counter the misleading effect of PANDA."

(Primary Head Teacher)

"Gather certain information together to grade teachers on their performance."

(Infant Head Teacher)

"More detailed lesson plans."

(Primary Mainscale Teacher)

"Look through the pre-inspection briefings and comment/correct it."

(Secondary Head Teacher)

"Gathering evidence to make it easier for inspectors."

(Primary Head Teacher)

"Subject file, update policy, analysis data."

(Primary Subject Co-ordinator)

"Rewrite/update policies, schemes of work, records of pupil progress—even if they were already up to date."

(Primary Subject Co-ordinator)

100. The majority of respondents (71%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the preparation for the inspection had generated additional classroom observations. Twenty-three per cent either agreed or strongly agreed, with a further 7% expressing mixed views.

"Classroom observations have recently multiplied because, we are told, the closer our self evaluation, the easier the inspection. Classroom observations are done using an Ofsted pro-forma . . . Although only pre-agreed aspects of the observations are agreed on beforehand, the form is always filled in from top to tail by the observer—VERY INTIMIDATING."

(Secondary Mainscale Teacher)

101. Thirty-six per cent of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the inspection was supportive and motivated teachers. Thirty-five per cent, however, either agreed or strongly agreed and a further 29% had mixed views.

"Staff felt very tired after inspection and needed morale boosting despite the fact we got an outstanding grade."

(Primary Deputy Head Teacher)

"It boosted morale throughout the school as we were a school causing concern three years ago and now classed as a very good school—which we knew and was confirmed by the inspection."

(Primary Head Teacher)

"After 35 years and 3 inspections, it made me feel like handing in my notice, despite the fact that I got very favourable assessments. Now back on Prozac and waiting for retirement."

(Primary Deputy Head Teacher)

“We found the lead inspector to be autocratic, unprofessional in his treatment of staff and, at times, unpleasant . . . The school staff, who are extremely conscientious and hardworking, felt undervalued and thoroughly demoralised post-Ofsted.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

102. Over half of the respondents (60%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the judgment of inspectors about their school was fair and accurate. Twenty-one per cent had mixed views. Eighteen per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

“Some members of staff felt the feedback was negative and too harsh but I felt it was actually a true reflection of the school’s strengths and areas for development.”

(Secondary Deputy Head Teacher)

“We all agreed that the final report was a fair and accurate evaluation of our school present and future.”

(Primary Mainscale Teacher)

“They didn’t look to celebrate our strengths! More to expose our weaknesses!! We had to push them to acknowledge the positives although, to be fair, they did in the final report, but it was hard work.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

103. More than half of respondents (58%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the combined experience of the inspection team matched well with the inspection needs of their school. Twenty-three per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed and a further 20% had mixed views on this issue.

“The team were well prepared, impressively well qualified to meet the range of school population—SEN, EAL, etc.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Our male Ofsted inspector did not seem to have the Early Years understanding as the female inspectors we have experienced in the past. He was too pressing with our EAL children who did not have the confidence to answer his questions fluently (or in English) and his conclusions were far more critical as a result.”

(Nursery Mainscale Teacher)

“The quality of the inspector was very good. She quickly grasped the strength and value of the school and made it an affirming experience for all.”

(Special Head Teacher)

104. The majority of respondents (65%) either agreed or strongly agreed that inspectors took proper account of the history of their school and the make up of its pupil population when making judgements. Nineteen per cent either disagreed or strongly disagreed and a further 16% had mixed views.

“We had a very fair team who looked beyond the PANDA and who recognised the value of work currently being done in other aspects (PSHE, PE, etc). Another team might have become ‘hooked up’ on the PANDA and not recognised the considerable improvement.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Our final report was accurate, but if they had become overly obsessed with our poor results cf. to national, as opposed to our good value-added, it could have gone the other way.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

105. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that inspectors established a professional dialogue with teachers. A further 18% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Sixteen% had mixed views.

“The absolute key to the usefulness of the process is the integrity and honesty and trust in shared purpose between the inspector and the head teacher. We had these things. It wasn’t a comfortable experience but I valued it and it has had a positive impact on the school.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“No/very little feedback to classroom teachers.”

(Special Head of Department)

“There was no professional dialogue. The inspection was ‘done to us’ not with us. Previous inspection under the last framework was never like this.”

(Special Head Teacher)

“We had a very teacher-friendly team who treated us professionally and respectfully.”

(Secondary Mainscale Teacher)

“Inspector constantly said there wasn’t enough time to discuss issues.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

106. The majority of respondents (60%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the inspection team was balanced in terms of experience relevant to the curriculum in their school. Twenty per cent had mixed views. A further 19% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this view.

“One of our inspections was ill-informed about new initiatives.”

(Secondary Head of Department)

“We are a primary school. Our lead inspector came from the secondary phase. We didn’t think this was appropriate.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

107. Over half of respondents (53%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the inspection team was balanced in terms of gender and ethnic group representation. However, 32% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 15% had mixed views.

“In a primary school where most children and staff are members of ethnic communities, we were presented with three white male secondary school inspectors. That’s not great is it?”

(Primary Subject Co-ordinator)

108. The large majority of respondents (84%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the inspection took account of their school’s existing self-evaluation. Twelve per cent had mixed views. Only 5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

109. The majority of respondents (73%) either agreed or strongly agreed that the information inspectors gathered from pupils about the school was useful in informing the inspection findings. Seventeen% had mixed views. A further 9% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

110. Forty-two per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that there were aspects of the school which should have received more attention from the inspectors. Thirty-three per cent, however, either disagreed or strongly disagreed. A further 24% had mixed views.

111. The most commonly cited aspects of schools’ provision which were cited by respondents as in need of greater attention during the inspection were the foundation subjects and the ethos of the school, particularly as manifested by enrichment activities and/or community links. Aspects of leadership and management, particularly middle management and the importance of gaining teachers’ perspectives on the school’s leadership, pastoral issues and SEN were also regularly suggested by respondents as in need of more emphasis during the inspection.

“In a school with 40% SEN, they seemed overly focussed with provision for Gifted and Talented at the expense of SEN provision.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Pastoral care—wasn’t much interest in this—far more interest in results.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Management inadequacies were not fully investigated.”

(Primary Mainscale Teacher)

“Most things out of core subjects.”

(Primary Mainscale Teacher)

“Pastoral care, balanced curriculum.”

(Primary Subject Co-ordinator)

“Non-core subjects, vocational subjects, 6th form lessons.”

(Secondary Head of Department)

112. More than half of respondents (52%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that there were aspects of their school which received too much attention from the inspectors. However, 28% agreed or strongly agreed and 20% had mixed views.

113. The vast majority of respondents who believed that there were aspects which had received too much attention from inspectors raised issues about an over-emphasis on data. Relatively few respondents believed too much time had been spent on the core subjects or other aspects of schools’ provision:

“Inspectors made too much of PANDA/SATs as cohorts tiny.”

(Secondary Head Teacher)

“The team inspected in September and refused to consider the SMT’s results from the previous year which would have strengthened the upward trend regarding standards.”

(Secondary Assistant Head Teacher)

“The inspectors were only interested in Level 5s.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

114. The large majority of respondents (84%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that pre-inspection preparation and the inspection itself had disrupted activities for pupils outside school. Nine per cent agreed and 7% had mixed views.

Section C: *Comparison of Findings from the NUT 2004 Ofsted Survey*

115. A number of questions which appeared in the 2006 survey had been used previously in a NUT survey of members in spring 2004, which sought members' views on the proposed new arrangements for school inspections, as well as on their experience of the last Ofsted inspection their schools had received. The 2004 survey findings, therefore, provided a baseline with which to assess the extent to which members' views on Ofsted inspections had changed since the introduction of the new inspection arrangements in September 2005.

116. Support for the reduced period of notice of inspections has grown. In 2004, respondents were divided on the issue, with 42% in agreement with this change and almost a third (31%) who disagreed. In 2006, almost half of respondents support the development (49%) and only 6% oppose it.

117. Support for the reduced cycle of inspections, from six to three years, has increased substantially. In 2004, only 19% supported this development, with 48% opposing it. In 2006, this situation was reversed, with 49% supporting it and only 19% opposing it. The number of respondents with mixed views on this issue has remained almost constant.

118. Respondents continued to support the reduced duration of inspection visits to schools. Agreement with this development increased by 11% to 81% in 2006. Opponents of the reduced duration declined by 1%, to 6% in 2006.

119. The new system of limited lesson observations for individual teachers continued to be supported by respondents. Eighty-three per cent now support this development, compared to 70% in 2004. The proportion of respondents who held mixed views or opposed this initiative both decreased, by 8% and 5% respectively.

120. Ofsted's focus on the core subjects only during school inspections is far less popular with respondents now than when it was first proposed. The proportion of respondents supporting this development has reduced by half, from 47% in 2004 to 23% in 2006. Many more respondents now have mixed views about this (44%, compared to 25% in 2004).

121. The introduction of the Ofsted School Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) has also been problematic according to respondents. Whilst there is still a high level of support for it (74%), this is a reduction of 10% compared to 2004. More respondents now have mixed views about it (21% compared to 13% in 2004).

122. Interestingly, however, more respondents now believe that their school's existing self evaluation work is taken into account by inspectors, an increase of 29% compared to 2004. Five per cent disagreed in 2006, compared to 16% in 2004, with a further 12% holding mixed views on the issue (compared to 27% in 2004).

123. The new arrangements do appear to have reduced to some extent the amount of additional work generated by inspection. Whilst over half of respondents (52%) reported that preparation for the inspection had created significant additional workload in 2006, this was a considerable reduction compared to 2004, when 94% said that their workload had increased as a result of inspection preparation. Only 2% of respondents reported that no additional work had been created; compared to 30% in 2006.

124. There is also a notable shift in perception about the extent to which inspections are viewed as supportive and motivating for teachers. Thirty-five per cent of respondents now think that they are, compared to just 17% in 2004. Similarly, 36% of respondents disagreed, a considerable reduction from the 59% who held this view in 2004.

125. In addition, respondents' opinions on the validity of inspection judgements have also improved. Over half (60%) now think that judgements are fair and accurate, compared to 38% in 2004. The proportion of respondents who do not hold this view declined from 28% to 18% in 2006.

126. This may be linked to the findings that more than half of respondents (58%) now believe the experience of the inspection team is well matched to their school, compared to less than a third (31%) in 2004. Twenty-three per cent of respondents in 2006 were critical of their inspection team, compared to 34% in 2004. In addition, there was an increase of 17% of respondents who believed that the inspectors had established a professional dialogue with teachers (67% in 2006), with an accompanying decrease in the proportion of respondents who held mixed views on this issue (16% compared to 27% in 2004).

127. Similarly, the proportion of respondents who believed the inspection team was balanced in terms of experience relevant to the curriculum increased by 15% to 60% in 2006, with those who held mixed views (20%) or disagreeing (19%) declining correspondingly by 8% and 6% respectively compared to 2004.

128. Respondents also appeared slightly more confident that the inspection covered the right things in the right proportion. Thirty-three per cent felt that the coverage was accurate, compared to 25% in 2004. A significant proportion, however, still believed there were aspects of the school which should have received more attention (42% compared to 51% in 2004). In addition, 28% of respondents felt there were aspects of the school which received too much attention from inspectors, compared to 44% in 2004, with a further 52% disagreeing with this view, compared to 27% in 2004).

129. There has been a significant growth in support for the use of information gathered from pupils to inform inspection findings. Almost three quarters of respondents (73%) now support this aspect of inspection, compared to 45% in 2004. Opposition to the use of such information has decreased by half, from 18% to 9% in 2006.

130. There also seems to be growing support for the view that Ofsted inspections help schools improve. Forty-four per cent of respondents in 2006 expressed this opinion, compared to 12% in 2004. Fifty-seven per cent disagreed with this view in 2004, compared to 26% in 2006.

131. It was also felt that Ofsted inspections were increasingly accurate in terms of assessing the value added by the school, with 47% of respondents expressing this view, compared to 29% in 2004. Twenty-six per cent, however, disagreed, compared to 38% in 2004.

132. Respondents also believed increasingly that inspection provided an accurate judgement of the school's management of resources (62% compared to 36% in 2004).

133. Exactly the same proportion of respondents from each survey (59%) disagreed with the statement that the Ofsted inspection system stimulated help and support from external sources. There was a ten% increase, however, in respondents who believed this to be the case (21% in 2006).

134. When comparing their experiences of inspection under the "old" and "new" frameworks, 71% of respondents stated that pre-inspection preparation had been reduced, compared to 38% who believed that it would in 2004. It was felt that the new arrangements were an improvement to the previous system (75% compared to 37% who believed it would be). This did not necessarily, however, lead to a more accurate picture of schools according to respondents in 2006. Thirty-seven per cent had mixed views and 26% disagreed with this statement, compared to 28% and 36% respectively in 2004. The proportion of respondents who believed the new arrangements had led to more accuracy remained almost constant (37% compared to 35% in 2004).

Section D: Discussion

135. The findings of this survey would appear to indicate that the new system of Ofsted inspection has been welcomed by teachers and head teachers. There are high levels of support for aspects such as the short notice of inspection; the reduction of time spent in schools by inspectors; the limited amount of lesson observation undertaken by inspectors; and the greater focus on the school's leadership and management. Three quarters of respondents believed that the 2005 inspection framework represented an improvement from the previous arrangements.

136. This was reflected in a number of findings relating to respondents' direct experience of inspection and to the judgements made on their schools. Over two-thirds of respondents reported that they had not been asked to do any additional work for the inspection and that they had established a professional dialogue with inspectors during the visit. Just under two thirds of respondents believed that the inspectors' judgements on their school were fair and accurate and took proper account of their school's history and intake.

137. The survey did highlight, however, a number of key areas of the new inspection framework where respondents' opinions were divided. Significant misgivings were expressed about the focus on the core subjects only, the separate system of subject inspections and the fact that some teachers were not observed at all during the inspection. Many respondents also felt that there were aspects of their school which had received too much or too little attention.

138. In addition, a number of written comments suggested dissatisfaction with the small size of inspection teams, in particular, the ability of a single inspector to provide a fair and accurate judgement on a school.

"As a very small school, we had only one inspector for one day and whilst I was grateful for that in one respect, it could lead to a lack of balance in views/judgement. Also, the size of a school does not necessarily reflect the breadth and extent of its practice—so we felt the inspector hadn't really got the time to get a flavour of all we do."

(PRU Head Teacher)

"As head of a small school, we only had one inspector. She came with what appeared to be a personal agenda and there was no-one to debate and discuss opinions with."

(Primary Head Teacher)

“My very small school had one inspector for one day whose own background was predominantly secondary. We did not feel judgements could be termed as corporate . . . I also found the complaints procedure unsatisfactory as my concerns were put to my inspector and I received the same response as when I raised the issues in my feedback meeting. There is no group discussion possible if only one inspector is on site, no second view.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

139. Even more crucially, respondents still expressed serious concerns about the workload and pressure caused by inspection, which the new framework was designed to tackle. Although the percentages of respondents who expressed such views under the previous system had diminished, respondents still reported unacceptably high levels of pre-inspection stress. The inspection had created additional workload for them, therefore, respondents did not feel that the burden on schools caused by inspections had reduced sufficiently. Whilst Ofsted inspections continue to have such “high stakes” for schools, this perception is unlikely to change.

140. Similarly, respondents remain dissatisfied with the separation of the inspection regime from support for school improvement. The majority of respondents still believe that inspections do not stimulate help or support from external sources or help their individual school to improve. There was, therefore, considerable disagreement with the view expressed by Ofsted that the new arrangements would stimulate more rapid improvements.

141. Whilst the findings of this survey certainly indicate that the new inspections arrangements represent a welcome improvement on previous Ofsted frameworks, respondents indicated that there is still room for improvement.

142. Some respondents’ comments related to the over-emphasis on data to the detriment of other aspects of schools’ provision:

“Our team was fair and we found the experience positive but it was clear that they were completely hidebound by the Government’s requirements. The ECM agenda doesn’t count—results do! It is politically expedient but when it counts, only attendance and results are important to Ofsted. The inner child is NOT!”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Very concerned by such powerful and potentially destroying judgements being made on such questionable data.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

143. Other respondents identified specific aspects of the 2005 Inspection Framework which they believed were in need of improvement.

“The four point grading is crude . . . With four points it does not allow for a true reflection of the school’s performance. There is a need for a ‘very good’ grade between ‘good’ and ‘outstanding’. In analysis of other Ofsted reports, there is a huge difference in the written commentary on the sub-sections although schools receive the same grade.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“I believe an issue is that the new approach only examines what is the case in the majority of schools and, therefore, cannot respond sensitively enough to local changes—in our case a recent amalgamation and ‘live site’ building programme. Staff efforts in these areas are huge and somewhere this and the ability to numerise the impact on pupils, should be recognised.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“At the end of a very long day, it is difficult to be on the ball in challenging judgements, etc. Some comments were changed but only after a vigorous process with Ofsted.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

144. The written comments highlighted a wide range of issues for special school inspections. Multi-level analysis revealed that special school respondents were more likely to be less supportive of the new inspection and of the quality of the inspection team arrangements than any other group.

“I feel that some of the new format for inspection is less sensitive to the needs of a special school . . . special schools with SLD pupils only seem to manage a 4 for pupil progress because the benchmark with mainstream is wholly wrong.”

(Special Head Teacher)

“The sole inspector had no experience as a teacher in a special school and no professional experience of ASD (we are an ASD specific school). He was, therefore, unable to make informed judgements with regard to this school’s population.”

(Special Head Teacher)

“The trend towards inspectors with no special school experience is not positive. Our inspector lacked the knowledge and understanding to make judgements about the quality of learning and teaching . . . He did an efficient job in confirming the SEF but no more.”

(Special Head Teacher)

“The criteria for success/achievement, etc., of pupils in a PRU needs to be altered. We are significantly different to a school and should be assessed accordingly—not on the same criteria as a mainstream school.”

(PRU Head Teacher)

“(Pupil letter) needs to take account of special school audience, eg, writing and symbols.”

(Special Head Teacher)

145. Amongst respondents from all phases, the perception that the quality of inspection teams was inconsistent and that schools were “lucky” or “unlucky” in the allocation of inspectors to their school has persisted, indicating that little progress has been made in improving quality assurance to ensure consistency of inspectors’ approaches or behaviour during an inspection inset:

“This was my fourth Ofsted inspection and I have also done my training as an Ofsted inspector but I still feel that the process is very subjective, depends a lot on the team you get, the agenda they come with and then the ability of the head teacher to establish a good relationship with them and ‘play a game’ confidently.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“A good team with a strong knowledge of the work of a primary school . . . but I know this is not always the case from other colleagues.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“We (the management team) found the last experience to be quite a negative episode in the life of the school, despite being regarded/judged as good/outstanding! It is very clear to me that the quality of teams is just as variable as before and that not all schools get the same ‘quality control’. I was pleased to have a second inspection (Section 48 Church School) two months after the Ofsted—it restored my faith in the conduct/attitude of inspectors. Decided not to complain to Ofsted—after all, who wants them back again!”

(Secondary Head Teacher)

“We were desperately unlucky in our team during the inspection.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

146. A number of respondents used the space provided at the end of the questionnaire as an opportunity to suggest what they believed would be improvements to the current mechanisms for school accountability.

“Better than before, but still am not convinced it’s the ‘best’ way to get a true picture of a school.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Happily, we received a very positive report—outstanding in all areas. However, I still feel that it is a drain on national education resources and that if the local authority gains a positive report, our link advisors, with increased powers, should be able to challenge and help develop schools.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“Stop all Ofsted inspections and move to a complete self evaluation programme with local LEA inspectors. Use Ofsted as a sampling body only or where there are significant school failures.”

(Secondary Head of Department)

“Our school was validated and you would think I would support the process. Morally, I object, the model is still low trust and punitive and a lost opportunity for genuine dialogue and professional development which all the professional colleagues I have crave.”

(Primary Head Teacher)

“The key focus this seems to concentrate on is the end of key stage results through tests. The testing arrangements and VA/CVA are greatly flawed. Teacher assessments are still not valued as highly as test results . . . why isn’t the money from inspections and test papers, marking used to employ moderators instead to moderate results, not ‘inspect them’, on a rolling programme?”

(Primary Head Teacher)

Section E: *The Spread of the Sample*

147. Seventy-one per cent of respondents were female, 29% male.

148. The majority of respondents were over 41 years of age (36% aged 41–50, 51% over 51 years of age).

149. Sixty-two per cent of respondents worked in primary schools and 16% in secondary schools. 12% worked in special schools, 5% in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), 3% in other schools and 2% at nursery level.

150. Forty-seven per cent of respondents were head teachers and 12% Subject Co-ordinators. Nine per cent worked as deputy head teachers and 9% indicated that they were Head of Department/Key Stage. Nine per cent were other members of the Leadership Group and 9% worked as mainscale teachers. Three per cent were assistant head teachers and 1% worked in other positions.

151. Sixty-three per cent had been teaching for over 20 years. Fifteen per cent had taught for between 16–20 years, 10% between 11–15 years. Nine per cent have been teaching for between six and 10 years and 3% between one and five years.

152. Respondents to this survey, therefore, clearly supported the view that it is the structural nature of the inspection system which is now in urgent need of reform. Until inspections are de-coupled from their potentially punitive consequences and given a more developmental and supportive function, they will continue to drive up pressure and stress in schools.

Memorandum submitted by the Royal Society of Chemistry¹

SUMMARY

- Previous subject reports are extremely helpful in improving science education.
- The new inspection regime provides much less rich data on which to base these reports.
- Other organisations collect data but gaps remain.
- The provisions for subject inspection need to be reviewed and collaborations with other organisations considered.

EVIDENCE

1. This evidence is provided by the learned societies, academies, and subject associations who work closely together in the field of school science education (the Association for Science Education, the Biosciences Federation, the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society, and the Royal Society of Chemistry).

2. The above organisations support the role of Ofsted as helpful guardians of standards in schools. However, while we recognise the importance of school inspections to support institutional improvement, and thus strongly commend the New Relationship with Schools in its efforts to reduce unnecessary burdens of the inspection regime, we are extremely concerned about the future of subject inspection.

3. We find reports such as *Science in Primary Schools*, HMI 2345, and *Science in Secondary Schools*, HMI 2332, reporting on the state of science education, to be extremely valuable. We agree that sections such as “standards in national tests and public examinations” could still be counted on as authoritative. It is our contention however, that the programme from September 2005 for a minimum of 30 visits per phase per subject of the National Curriculum are unsatisfactory. This is particularly true for National Curriculum Science at Key Stage 4 where there are clear differences in the supply of appropriately qualified biology, chemistry and physics specialists. We consider it would be most unwise to make robust generalisations on a visit to a sample of schools, possibly as small as 30 in number, given the diversity of provision across England.

4. As we understand it DfES have in the past considered a sample of 100 schools to be the minimum required for even a narrow study to be considered reliable.

5. Since September 2005, when inspections became very much shorter than they were previously, there has not been time for inspectors to evaluate individual subjects in detail, except in the case of some college inspections. This means that Ofsted needs to find other ways to fulfil its statutory duty to give advice to the Secretary of State on subjects and other aspects of education. At that time it proposed to do this through additional visits to schools and colleges, focusing on subjects and curriculum areas, from the Foundation Stage right through to post-16. These visits are intended to:

- feed into the Chief Inspector’s Annual Report to give a national picture of strengths and areas for development;
- provide the basis for Ofsted to disseminate findings, including good practice, through its website, conferences, talks and articles;
- give institutions detailed feedback to help them improve; and
- support institutions’ self-evaluation.

We are concerned that these visits do not provide enough robust statistical data to do this.

¹ On behalf of the Association for Science Education, the Biosciences Federation, the Institute of Physics, the Royal Society, and the Royal Society of Chemistry.

6. It is our contention that changes to the inspection of schools and subjects has altered considerably the quantity and nature of data available to Ofsted. This, despite the comment by HM Chief Inspector of Schools in his commentary to the Annual Report 2004–05 that, “Never before have we had such a wealth of data at our disposal”. Such a “wealth of data” are clearly not available now under the new regime.

7. It may be helpful to compare the data available per year up to 1 September 2005 and afterwards.

8. Pre-1 September 2005 numerical data are available from a statistically representative sample of around 600 secondary and 400 primary schools by key stage. Each subject has 43 judgements made about it. Thus “how effective are teaching and learning” has 20 indicators including teaching, learning, assessment, challenge, use of time, homework etc. This mass of data allows year on year comparison of judgements on science, allowing an exploration of the impact of initiatives.

9. Post-1/9/2005 numerical data are made available from a non-nationally representative sample of 30 secondary schools and 30 primary schools. Only four judgement grades on “Standards”, “Progress”, “Teaching”, and “Overall Quality of the lesson” will be available. We believe it is not possible to compare these kinds of data in any meaningful way to the present data sets.

10. Ofsted could work with other government organisations to gather subject information and data and could allocate appropriate subject HMI to the organisation to do this. We believe, however, that the data produced by these organisations may not be as helpful as that currently available.

For example:

- (a) DfES gathers data but few data sets relate to specific subjects and they are collected principally by questionnaire and not by direct observation.

DfES appears not to collect data that Ofsted could. A recent question [*Hansard 96996*] to the Secretary of State elicited the response that the Department does not routinely collect information on individual laboratories in response to the question:

- “(i) how many school science laboratories are designated of a satisfactory standard; [96996]
 (ii) what progress he has made on bringing school science laboratories up to a (a) good and (b) excellent standard by 2010. [96997]?”

- (b) QCA routinely evaluates curriculum matters by questionnaire followed by some school visits. However, classes are not directly observed and no data are derived from first hand observation.

11. Other bodies, such as the learned societies, gather and report data where it is unavailable from Ofsted or Government. Recent examples includes *Laboratories, Resources and Budgets* from the Royal Society of Chemistry on the state and number of school science laboratories, the Institute of Physics’ report on girls and physics, the Royal Society’s *Increasing uptake of science post-16* report and the Association for Science Education/Royal Society’s *Survey of science technicians in schools and colleges*.

12. It is noteworthy that the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee in its report on Science Teaching in Schools (November 2006) recommended:

“We do not believe that Ofsted’s new regime for the inspection of individual subjects, based on a small and statistically insignificant sample of schools, will provide sufficiently reliable data on science teaching. We recommend that Ofsted revisit the new subject-specific inspection regime with a view to devising a system which draws evidence from a substantially larger number of schools. We further recommend that subject-specific inspections be carried out by specialists in the subject concerned. (3.7)”

13. It is our contention that the details of “Subject and Survey Inspection” HMI 2489 July 2005 should be reviewed in the light of our comments above, to provide a reliable and statistically significant review of subjects, providing data that can be compared to that obtained pre-1 September 2005.

December 2006