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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Reducing School Paperwork

FOREWORD

Our number one priority is to raise standards in education.

As a new Government, we were determined to see rapid improvements and we had to get essential materials on literacy and numeracy into our schools. But we had inherited an incoherent system of communications with schools. There was no co-ordination and nobody to say “no”. Despite the huge problems experienced in 1993 with the National Curriculum, nothing had been done to rationalise the system.

This report represents the latest steps we have taken to root out cumbersome procedures and unnecessary paperwork in schools. We asked the Cabinet Office Public Sector Team to work alongside the DfEE to take forward the programme to streamline procedures and make practical changes that will help save time in schools, building on activity already underway and the recommendations of the Better Regulation Task Force.

We have made great strides to improve the system we inherited. We rationalised how materials are sent to schools – monthly batches rather than random mailshots, more items on request rather than sent automatically, and much clearer labelling. And we committed ourselves to longer term goals of eliminating time-wasting bidding for funds and establishing modern systems of electronic data collection.

At the National Association of Head Teachers Conference on 1 June this year, a comprehensive programme of measures was spelt out, all of which have been put in train. The first of these was the commitment to reduce the number of documents that we send automatically to schools by a third and the number of pages by a half; this is well on course for achievement and we are now looking to others to follow this lead. Other measures announced in June included the need to streamline the delivery of the Standards Fund, which provides over £2 billion every year to back up our agenda for raising standards – including the literacy and numeracy strategies. Plans were spelt out to use electronic communications to provide resources for teachers and reduce unnecessary data collection.

This report takes into account the findings of a series of visits to schools to hear at first hand about the paperwork and processes that distract head teachers and teachers. Within a short space of time, an impressive agenda of activity has been developed and the action taken directly addresses many of the specific issues that were brought forward by the schools. This report sets out the first fruits of the collaboration between our Departments which we are sure will be welcomed by those who work in schools.

David Blunkett

Mo Mowlam

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the first results of a joint project, carried out by the Cabinet Office Public Sector Team and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), aimed at reducing unnecessary paperwork in schools. Schools were visited to see and hear directly how administrative work can get in the way of raising standards in the classroom. The areas targeted were those where, in the short to medium term, the most difference could be made to the most people.

The work builds on commitments made by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, at the conference of the National Association of Head Teachers in June 2000, including the targets to cut numbers of documents and volumes of paperwork sent to schools which are on course to be met.

Key outcomes of the project are:

- Simplified Standards Fund for 2001-02, with an end to bidding, less form filling, simplified monitoring and freedom to transfer money between most funding streams.
- Commitment from key stakeholders to develop a universal document classification system to apply to all communications sent to schools.
- DfEE/Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) booklets revised to clarify that schools are not required to complete entire Common Transfer Forms where this would duplicate information already provided electronically.
- Agreement reached with software manufacturers that software will be made available to enable all items on Common Transfer Forms to be transferred electronically with the aim to make paper based Common Transfer Forms obsolete by April 2002. In the interim, work has begun on assessing options for improving the forms – including the possibility of merging them into a single form.
- Schools no longer expected to produce separately a Governors' Annual Report and a School Prospectus, provided requirements in current regulations are met. Consultation to be held on reducing information required in a combined document.
- From June 2001 a new system will be trialled in Benefits Agency (BA) pilot offices where by the administration of free school meals will be linked with the administration of welfare benefits, minimising the input from schools.
- Teachers' Handbook amended to clarify that the writing assessment sheet at the end of Key Stage 1 is optional. Future editions will also contain examples of completed sheets.
- Common approach to end of Key Stage 1 Assessment Record Sheets to be developed.
- Single cumulative assessment sheet for newly qualified teachers to be introduced.
- Office For Standards in Education (OFSTED) to test ways of using Annual Schools' Census data to reduce the information schools need to fill in for themselves on Forms S1 and S2.

- OFSTED to provide guidance on how much information is needed on Form S4 and parts of Form S1.
- 2000 Autumn Package reduced in size by 50% and made available in CD-ROM format, alongside OFSTED's Performance and Assessment Report.

As a direct result of the outcomes of this project, it is estimated that a typical school could potentially save over 200 hours every year, which amounts in total to around 4.5 million hours per year across the whole schools system.

INTRODUCTION

This report sets out the first results of a joint project, carried out by the Cabinet Office Public Sector Team and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), aimed at reducing unnecessary paperwork in schools. The Public Sector Team was established in 1999 to look specifically at minimising the regulatory impact of central government on the public sector, and reducing or removing red tape and bureaucracy. Annex A contains more information about the Team, its methods of working and its achievements to date.

The work builds on commitments made by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, at the conference of the National Association of Head Teachers in June 2000:

- to cut by a third the number of documents and by a half the number of pages DfEE sends automatically to schools in the current school year;
- to radically simplify the operation of the Standards Fund for 2001-02.

The first target is on course to be met. So far this school year, primary schools have been sent 30 fewer documents than last year saving 1170 pages. Last year they received 56 documents totalling 1660 pages in the same period. Of the 490 pages they have received this year, 216 pages were from the new Grammar Guide designed to improve pupils' writing skills which was widely welcomed. In secondary schools, there have been 44 fewer documents this year saving 737 pages. Last year they received 66 documents totalling 991 pages. From January 2001, Local Education Authorities will be expected to adopt published standards for their communications with schools, controlling the amount sent and cutting out any duplication.

The second target is being delivered as set out in the Standards Fund section of this report.

Identifying and understanding the issues

Schools were visited to see and hear directly how administrative work can get in the way of raising standards in the classroom. This frontline research was supported by desk research, in the course of which a range of literature was reviewed (see Annex C for full list) to see how processes had evolved and discover the legislative basis behind them.

The research informed subsequent meetings and negotiations with key stakeholders, such as Local Education Authorities (LEAs), the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA). During these meetings, care was taken to confirm that the policy objective behind the process had been properly understood, before looking for simpler ways to achieve the same objective.

Identifying and initiating action to address the issues raised

After analysing the views of front-line staff and other stakeholders, we identified the areas where – short and medium term – the most difference could be made to the most people, and set out action that could be taken to alleviate existing concerns. This report looks at each of those areas and describes what has been achieved. Many of the issues that arose were complex and involved a range of stakeholders. Potential solutions were brokered through negotiation with schools, policy-makers, administrators and other stakeholders to ensure that all parties were satisfied with the outcomes and had a sense of ownership.

Making a Difference

Throughout the project the key aim was to achieve tangible results that would make a real difference to head teachers and teachers. The report focuses on outcomes and wherever possible, these have been quantified in terms of estimated hours that will be saved.

STANDARDS FUND

The Standards Fund is a key source of funding for improving standards in schools and is the Government's main mechanism for targeting funds at the national priorities to be delivered by LEAs and schools. In 2000-01 the total value of the Standards Fund was £2.2 billion; there were 54 separate funds, each with its own procedures. Ministers are committed to reducing what is described as the "bidding process" by ensuring that resources will be made available directly to schools or projects in a way which not only reduces time consuming form filling, but also unproductive applications. Asset Management Plans are laying the foundations for ensuring that this will be the case for investment in the repair and renewal of buildings, and this process is now being carried forward into broader funding arrangements.

Clearly it is important that any public money provided to schools is targeted at those areas where it is most needed, and that the subsequent spending is properly monitored. However, feedback received from schools indicated that the administration associated with funding streams was time consuming, and in excess of what was needed to ensure that funds were appropriately targeted and head teachers held accountable for the spend. Although the additional funding was welcomed, there were concerns about the time taken on bidding and form-filling, the lack of flexibility to target local priorities and plan spending across a full academic year, and the detailed reporting sometimes required for each individual fund.

At the National Association of Head Teachers Conference in June, David Blunkett pledged to streamline the Standards Fund as part of a wider set of measures to give schools more control over their spending. This has included the introduction of direct grants for schools to spend as they wish on raising standards. The value of direct grants to schools will increase significantly from April 2001, up to £70,000 per school. Head teachers have strongly welcomed the new direct grant funding.

Action

The Standards Fund for 2001-2002 has been simplified so that:

- there will be no more bidding, with all allocations made by formula;
- there will be a single school-level reporting form covering all strands of the Standards Fund;
- schools will be able to transfer money between almost all of the individual funds, without prior approval from their LEA;
- schools will be able to carry grants beyond the end of the financial year to the end of the school year, giving them a full school year in which to spend them; and
- monitoring will be by outcomes against existing targets, with more detailed monitoring on a sample basis.

Benefits

Schools have estimated an average reduction in management time (including both paid staff and unpaid volunteers – notably governors) of around three working weeks per school per annum, with some schools estimating savings far in excess of this figure.

The changes made to the Standards Fund will produce estimated savings of 2.6 million hours per year.

UNIVERSAL DOCUMENT CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Schools, head teachers and teachers receive documents from a number of bodies within the education sector – for example, DfEE, LEAs, OFSTED, QCA, TTA, the General Teaching Council (GTC), British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTa), and the Church of England Board of Education. The documents differ considerably – in length, subject matter and purpose – from substantial guidance documents to single-page requests for information.

Volume of material is an issue for head teachers, which DfEE has taken firm action to address. The head teachers contacted in this project felt that much of what they received was important and useful, but were concerned that too often the documents were unclear as to their purpose, the target audience, the action required, the timescales involved and whether the document needed to be retained for future reference. DfEE has already introduced a standard labelling system so that head teachers can see at a glance what needs to be done with each document. Some other organisations have similar systems. However, at present, the key information providers to schools do not use a uniform system of document classification.

Action

Commitment has been obtained from key stakeholders to develop and introduce a simple and understandable universal document classification system (UDCS) that will apply to all communications to schools. The aim is to pilot a UDCS in Spring Term 2001 for introduction, subject to successful trial, from September 2001. A panel (see Annex B for membership) has been established to assist in the development of the UDCS.

Benefits

There is potential for real and significant time savings. For example, if a UDCS could save every school one to two hours per week, total time savings would be in the range of 900,000 to 1.8 million hours per year.

COMMON TRANSFER FORMS

Common Transfer Forms (CTFs) are statutory forms that must be completed whenever a pupil transfers school. There are four forms, one for each Key Stage¹, and they must be used for transfers during or at the end of the Key Stage to which they refer. The Key Stage 4 form should also be used for pupils beyond Key Stage 4 transferring to another school (but not to a Further Education college or Higher Education institution or other place of education or training).

The forms specify the key information to be transferred about the pupil, including their most recent Key Stage test results and teacher assessments (plus test results and teacher assessments at previous Key Stages where these are known to the transferring school) and their “unique pupil number” (UPN). The purpose of the forms is to ensure that key information about a pupil is transferred in a consistent and transparent manner. The CTF serves as a summary of key elements of the pupil’s record, which is also transferred when there is a change of school.

Schools are at different stages in terms of their acquisition and use of electronic information management/transfer systems. Some schools will transfer most information electronically, some will need to retrieve data stored electronically in order to generate a CTF, and others will wish to complete a CTF manually.

Two key issues were identified for attention: schools were unnecessarily duplicating work by transferring information manually that had already been transferred electronically; and a need to ensure that the potential benefits of electronic transfer and retrieval were fully realised.

Separate CTFs

If a pupil changes school only once then only one CTF will be completed in respect of that pupil; the separate forms are not an issue. However, if a pupil changes school more than once then at least two CTFs will be completed, resulting in duplication of information such as the child’s personal details and their test and assessment results from the earlier key stage.

Electronic Transfer of Data

DfEE already has a major programme of work in hand to automate the transfer of pupil data based on a Common Basic Data Set held in the same format by all schools. Four obstacles to fully realising the benefits of electronic data transfer and retrieval were identified:

- **Access to management ICT.** Around 10% of schools do not possess the equipment necessary to transfer data electronically. Also, in smaller schools, where the equipment exists it is often located in teaching areas and not accessible for administrative purposes during school hours.
- **Lack of awareness.** Some schools were not aware that they did not need to include information on a CTF that they had already transferred electronically.

¹ Key Stage 1 covers pupil ages 5-7; Key Stage 2 ages 7-11; Key Stage 3 ages 11-14; and Key Stage 4 ages 14-16.

- **Disparity in CTF requirements and how data is stored electronically.** Some data (e.g. the attendance percentage) are presented on a CTF in a way that is inconsistent with how they are stored electronically, thereby preventing full electronic transfer. Also, not all data held electronically can be printed out in the form of a CTF (e.g. assessment information) – thus, such data has to be added by hand.
- **Utilisation.** Some schools were not fully utilising the electronic information management/transfer software systems at their disposal.

Action

- The DfEE/QCA "Assessment and Reporting Arrangements" booklets for 2000/01 have been revised to make clear that schools are not required to complete entire CTFs if the information duplicates what has already been provided electronically.
- Agreement has been reached with suppliers of management systems to schools that software will be made available by April 2001 that enables all statutory items on the CTF to be transferred electronically in a standard format. There will be a facility to print out a version of the form automatically for those schools not yet ready to receive an electronic file.
- The National Grid for Learning funding has been increased from £205 to £245 million in 2001-02, and a baseline set that every school should have at least one networked computer with Internet access for management and administrative purposes. The aim is that by April 2002, the paper-based CTF will be made obsolete through the widespread use of electronic transfer of data.
- In the interim, work has begun on assessing options for improving the forms – including the possibility of merging them into a single form. Any changes will be implemented before May 2001.

Benefits

Approximately 1.2 million transfers take place every year - around 600,000 when pupils move to secondary school, and the other 600,000 primarily due to moves between infant and junior school, though some will occur as a result of moving home etc. During the consultation process, head teachers were asked how long it takes to fill in Common Transfer Forms. Responses varied, depending on factors such as familiarity with the form and the particular form in question (a form completed during Key Stage 3 takes more time and effort than one completed during Key Stage 1). Based on the responses received it was estimated that it takes on average 30 minutes to retrieve the necessary information and fill in a form by hand.

Full electronic transfer of data has the potential to save an estimated 503,000 hours per year. Benefits arising from interim changes to the forms whilst electronic transfer is rolled out will depend upon what changes are agreed.

GOVERNORS' ANNUAL REPORT TO PARENTS

It is Government policy that parents must be informed about the policies, performance and achievements of the school that their child or children attend. Schools may communicate this to parents through a variety of channels, such as newsletters and open evenings. However, much of the information must be in a Governors' Annual Report that is sent to all parents and presented to them at an annual meeting. Regulations set out what must be contained in the Governors' Annual Report and DfEE guidance explains to schools how these regulations can be satisfied. The guidance also identifies additional information that a good report might contain.

The schools that were consulted recognised the importance of accountability to parents. However, they felt that the current requirements should be reviewed because not all parents read the Governors' Annual Report, and some of its content duplicates, or is similar to, the contents of the School Prospectus, which is also mandatory. For example:

- information about admissions and in particular the arrangements for pupils with disabilities;
- information about Special Educational Needs;
- pupil absence rates; and
- a summary of the school's assessment results.

Although the Governors' Annual Report is from a school's board of governors, most head teachers and their administrative support staff contribute extensively to its preparation and distribution. Simplification of the requirements for the Governors' Annual Report will help head teachers and schools.

Action

- Schools will no longer be expected to produce separately a Governors' Annual Report and a School Prospectus. Provided the requirements in both sets of regulations are met, they can now produce a single document, removing duplication.
- A consultation will take place early in the New Year on reducing the information schools have to include in a new, combined document.

Benefits

Merging the Governors' Annual Report into the school prospectus removes duplication. Head teachers were asked how much time would be saved if the two documents were combined and all duplication removed. On average, they predicted savings of 13 hours in each annual cycle.

- ***Combining the Governors' Annual Report into the school prospectus will produce estimated savings of 290,000 hours per year.***
- ***Additional benefits may result from any statutory changes arising from the consultation exercise.***

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Children whose parents are in receipt of income support or an income based job-seekers allowance are entitled to free schools meals (FSMs). LEAs are legally responsible for providing FSMs, and for checking eligibility, where a school does not have a delegated budget for the provision of meals. Schools with delegated budgets are responsible for making sure FSMs are provided where parents apply. The Benefits Agency (BA) and Employment Service (ES) do not provide LEAs with information on the parents who are in receipt of these welfare benefits. Consequently LEAs and schools are required to administer their own schemes. This invariably involves parents making a separate application for free school meals.

The FSMs administrative process varies from local authority to local authority, resulting in a lack of consistency in the methods adopted across the country. Some authorities administer FSMs together with Housing Benefits, some have the FSMs administrative function located in the Education Department, and others have delegated the function to schools. Some authorities have local arrangements in place with the BA for the latter to verify parents' eligibility. A few local authorities verify parents' claims through a remote access terminal link to the BA. There is little dissemination of the good practice that has developed in some parts of the country.

In most cases parents are required, in the first instance, to provide proof that they are in receipt of the qualifying benefit by supplying a photocopy of their income support book or appropriate correspondence from the ES. There is no two-way data sharing between the BA/ES and the local authority.

A survey conducted of 20% of LEAs in England showed that the FSMs administrative process often involves administrative work for schools. Practice across the country varies but the survey indicated that a majority of schools are involved in all or some of the following unnecessary activities:

- Notifying parents of eligibility for FSMs.
- Providing parents with application forms.
- Assisting parents in completing application forms.
- Sending completed forms to LEAs together with evidence of parents' eligibility.

The existing processes also create avoidable work for LEAs and require parents to resubmit information already provided to the BA/ES.

Action

From June 2001 a new system will be trialled in BA pilot offices whereby the administration of FSMs will be linked with the administration of welfare benefits, minimising the input required from schools. Where responsibility for the provision of FSMs rests with the education authority, the new process would be as below (where primary responsibility rests with the school, it will be adapted as necessary):

Action

- Parents will be provided with a standard application form at the point at which the parent becomes entitled to FSMs. The application form will be completed by parents and authenticated by the BA/ES. There will be no need for further verification to be provided by the parent, as the authenticated form sent to the LEA will be sufficient.
- The LEA will then compile a list of children eligible for FSMs on a school by school basis, and send the information direct to schools.
- The pilots will be used to develop a workable process which could then be rolled out nationally following a full evaluation and implementation programme agreed by all stakeholders.

Benefits

- Schools will be taken out of the administrative process entirely.
- Parents will obtain an application form at the benefits office as opposed to having to obtain one either from the school or the LEA.
- Submission of the authenticated form will be evidence of eligibility so parents will not have to produce copies of their benefits book either to schools or the local authority.
- Local authorities will receive authenticated forms. No further verification exercise as to eligibility will be required on their part.

During the consultations with schools and LEAs, it was estimated that in around 40% of LEA areas it takes a school administrator, on average, 15 minutes to process a free school meal claim. This includes finding the form, copying the necessary documentation and sending it to the LEA. In 23% of LEA areas it takes the administrator a further three minutes to check the forms and endorse them.

- ***If the pilot study is successful and the changes are introduced throughout England, it will produce estimated savings in schools of 118,000 hours per year***
- ***There will also be savings for parents, who will be able to claim benefits and free school meal entitlement in a single journey.***

END OF KEY STAGE 1 ASSESSMENT RECORD SHEETS

Teachers conduct an assessment of pupils' reading and writing skills at the end of Key Stage 1 through reading and writing tasks. Teachers are provided with both a "reading assessment record" and a "writing assessment record" to make brief notes of the evidence supporting their judgements. Completion of the reading record sheet is mandatory (it is the only written evidence available). The writing record is voluntary, although when we asked all LEAs in England whether they required schools to complete the writing record, some (43% of the 55% who responded) confirmed that they asked at least a 25% sample of their schools to complete it.

The records are used for a variety of purposes: to assist some LEAs in auditing a school's assessment process (e.g. checking that teachers' judgements are justified, consistent and fair); to inform a teacher's professional development; and to provide for future reference more detailed information about a pupil's performance (particularly useful when a pupil moves school or has a new teacher).

In practice, many schools do not seem to be aware of the legal status of the records, resulting in some 40% of the schools consulted completing writing assessment records even though they believed that they had no use for them and even if their LEA did not request them. There was also anecdotal evidence, both from schools and from LEAs, that some teachers completed the sheets in too much detail. Finally, practice in the use of the sheets, both by schools and LEAs, varied considerably, as did the level and nature of support provided to schools.

Action

- QCA/DfEE guidance in the Teacher's Handbook has been amended both to make clear that completion of the writing assessment record sheet is optional and to emphasise that the sheets are a tool for teachers and do not need to be completed in detail.
- Future editions of the Handbook will contain examples of completed sheets, thereby helping teachers decide how much information is expected.
- During 2001, work will be taken forward with stakeholders to develop a common approach to the use of record sheets by LEAs and schools, and disseminate best practice in the provision of support materials. Most LEAs have already agreed in principle to a common approach and have provided examples of the support materials they currently use.

Benefits

The clarification of the status of assessment record sheets and the introduction of a common approach to their use will both eliminate any unnecessary completion of the sheets and maximise their effectiveness.

During the consultation process, head teachers were asked how long it takes to complete a writing assessment record. Responses varied, reflecting that much will depend on the pupil's performance, but the average estimated time was around 20 minutes. 40% said that they would not complete writing assessment records if they did not have to. 57% of the LEAs consulted on the specific question of Key Stage 1 assessment records did not require writing assessment records to be completed. Thus, many schools will be completing records in the mistaken belief that they are required – it is estimated that around 93,000 forms are being unnecessarily completed per year.

The changes made will produce estimated savings of 28,000 hours per year.

NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHER ASSESSMENT FORMS

Every newly qualified teacher (NQT) must complete a period of induction if they wish to work in a maintained school or non-maintained special school in England. It is important both for the individuals concerned and the teaching profession in general that NQTs receive the necessary support and are properly monitored and assessed during their first year of teaching. Formal assessment meetings are held at the end of every term (most schools have three terms) and an assessment form is completed following each meeting. The form is then sent to the “appropriate authority” (usually the LEA).

The assessment form covers: basic information about the NQT and the school; comments from the head teacher about the extent to which the NQT is meeting the induction standards (e.g. performance in planning, teaching, class management etc); and an opportunity for the NQT to provide comments. The form to be completed at the end of the third assessment meeting is slightly different if the NQT has successfully completed their induction (i.e. head teachers are not required to provide comments).

Requiring a separate form to be completed following each assessment meeting means that basic information such as the NQT’s name and date of birth is duplicated. Head teachers also have to retrieve the NQT’s previous assessment forms if they wish to consider what progress has been made.

Action

By May 2001 a single cumulative assessment form will be introduced (a prototype has already been developed), replacing the existing three forms. The form, with expandable boxes, will also be made available on the DfEE website.

Benefits

There are approximately 19,000 NQTs appointed per year. Introducing a single cumulative form will eliminate the duplication currently evident in the system and ensure that every NQT’s progress over the induction year is formally recorded in a single place rather than in three separate ones.

During the consultation process, head teachers were asked how long it takes to fill in an NQT form, in respect of both a successful and an unsuccessful NQT. The average estimated time to retrieve the information needed to complete those duplicated parts of the form, and then complete it, was 5 minutes.

Removing the duplication of information currently evident in the process will produce estimated savings of 3,000 hours per year.

OFSTED PRE-INSPECTION FORMS (S1 – S4)

OFSTED sends forms S1-S4 to a school before an inspection takes place. The completed forms are part of the evidence base for the inspection.

- Form S1 asks for a range of information about the school (e.g. pupil data, organisation and staffing). The inspection contractor uses the information to construct an inspection team that matches the circumstances and curriculum of the school.
- Form S2 is used to collect further factual information about the school before the inspection (e.g. curriculum, finances).
- Form S3 asks the head teacher to state the extent to which the school fulfils its statutory requirements. It also asks the school to indicate the extent to which a range of monitoring and evaluation processes are in place.
- Form S4 provides an opportunity for the head teacher to contribute a structured personal statement to the inspection team.

The forms can be completed by hand or electronically on computer disks provided by OFSTED. The information from Forms S1-S3 is stored electronically in OFSTED's database and is used for nationwide analysis and to create benchmarks for future inspections. The information contained in the completed Form S4 is used by the inspection team but is not stored in OFSTED's database.

The inspection of schools by an objective, independent body is essential to ensure that pupils are receiving a quality education. All of the information collected by OFSTED on its pre-inspection forms is used to inform inspections, report on schools and put their performance in context. The forms also enable schools to contribute any information or views that they feel the inspection team should be aware of.

However, schools provide data to a variety of bodies, and some of the data are similar, if not identical, to those requested by OFSTED. The same was true of information OFSTED requested from LEAs to inform its inspections of LEAs. The DfEE and OFSTED have worked together effectively in the last year or so to remove that duplication. OFSTED is also playing a key role in the development of a Common Basic Data Set, which will, once introduced, provide OFSTED with much of the pre-inspection data it needs.

OFSTED is also working with the Audit Commission and DfEE on the development of a consistent financial reporting framework for schools. This is designed to underpin benchmarking work by schools using the Audit Commission's *School Financial Comparisons* web-site. The framework already incorporates information in OFSTED's Form 2 and could, in time, form the basis of a finance Common Basic Data Set at school level.

Forms S1 and S2 require schools to provide some information that has already been or will be provided by the schools to DfEE (via the Annual Schools' Census) and LEAs. The information may not always be identical – Annual Schools' Census data relate to a school's position on the third Thursday of January whereas OFSTED inspections could take place at any time of year.

Form S4 and some parts of S1 also request comments from head teachers without indicating how much information is expected. This leads to some head teachers providing irrelevant information or far too much detail.

Action

DfEE will provide OFSTED with Annual Schools' Census data to an agreed format and timescale. OFSTED will then test in 2001 how this data can be used to reduce the information that schools have to fill in for themselves on Forms S1 and S2, with a view to introducing pre-population for most Spring and all Summer term inspections by 2002. Head teachers would, of course, have the opportunity to check the data for accuracy.

OFSTED will provide head teachers with guidance on how much information is needed on Form S4 (and parts of Form S1) for 2001/2 inspections.

Benefits

During the consultation process, head teachers said that it took on average two hours to complete form S1, and it is estimated that pre-population would save around 25% of this time. Maximising the use of data already available on schools, and ensuring that head teachers are clear about what information they need to provide and its purpose, will reduce the amount of time a head teacher has to spend completing the OFSTED pre-inspection forms.

Pre-populating Form S1 will produce estimated savings of 3,000 hours per year.

AUTUMN PACKAGE

The “Autumn Package of Pupil Performance Information” is sent to schools every October to assist them and their governing bodies in reviewing school performance and setting informed, challenging future targets. It enables them to calculate and compare: pupil performance with national trends and with the performance of other schools; and individual pupil progress with national pupil progress between Key Stages. OFSTED’s Performance and Assessment (PANDA) Report is an integral part of the Autumn Package, but was previously sent to schools in March. The PANDA demonstrates each school’s performance data in comparison with both national averages and with other schools in similar contexts.

There was scope for achieving a reduction in the length of the Autumn Package from its previous 60+ pages. However, stakeholders, including head teachers, felt that the majority of the information contained in the Autumn Package had to be retained if schools were to undertake a meaningful review of performance and set targets for the future. Thus, any reductions in size had to be achieved without omitting crucial information.

Action

- By limiting the narrative to essential information and improving the presentation of tables and graphs (merging them wherever possible), the size of the Autumn Package has been reduced in size by over 50% and made easier to use;
- OFSTED’s Performance and Assessment Report (PANDA) was issued close to the rest of the Autumn Package to remove duplication;
- Every school has received a CD-ROM version of the Package, which will automatically plot school against national progress when loaded with school data.

Benefits

The Autumn Package is shorter and better laid out, making it an easier item to deal with. The CD-ROM allows the figures to be interrogated and used for management purposes. This has helped reduce the volume of paperwork and made it potentially a more valuable resource.

THE WAY FORWARD

Next Steps

In some areas the action set out in this report has already been completed; in others it is well advanced. Work will continue with the relevant stakeholders – individually or through project teams – to ensure that the actions are properly implemented. Care has been, and will continue to be, taken to introduce revised forms and procedures at times of the school year that will cause minimum disruption so that the process of removing burdens does not, in itself, become burdensome. The aim, wherever possible, is to implement the actions in good time for the next school year (2001/2002). All actions will be monitored carefully and reviewed to ensure that the objective of saving head teachers' and teachers' time is met. This time can then be redirected back into front-line service delivery.

ANNEX A

The Public Sector Team

The Public Sector Team was established in November 1999 in response to the Government's concern about the increased bureaucratic burden on the public sector. Located within the Cabinet Office's Regulatory Impact Unit, the Team's remit is to:

- identify the major bureaucratic and regulatory burdens on the public sector;
- distinguish those burdens imposed by central government from those imposed for other reasons, e.g. as part of internal management systems; and
- recommend ways in which the regulatory burden might sensibly be reduced.

The Team consists of secondees from the private and public sectors and permanent Civil Servants. It is headed by David Hayler, a senior Unilever executive. His management team is:

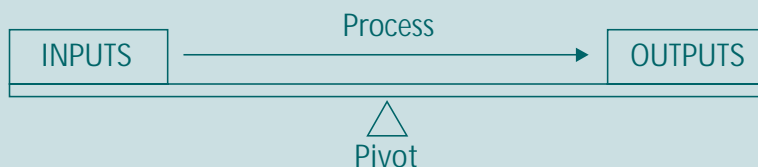
- Zoe Billingham (London Borough of Camden);
- Steve Blake (Carillion plc); and
- Glynne Jones (Cabinet Office).

The Team members have a range of perspectives, knowledge and experiences enabling them to draw comparisons and contrasts between attitudes and approaches in the private and public sectors, allowing lessons to be learned and best practice disseminated.

The Team's key aim is to achieve tangible results that make a real difference to the work of front-line service deliverers. The Team works with front-line staff to identify issues, and then with stakeholders to tackle them. Its reports focus on outcomes and achievements rather than recommendations for action.

The Balanced Argument

The Team uses the "balanced argument" to identify paperwork and processes that are bureaucratic and facilitate solutions. The balanced argument is founded on the principle that the time and effort required for the input must be balanced against the output. A balanced argument can be shown as:



For a process to be beneficial and non-bureaucratic, the outputs should at least equal the inputs and ideally exceed them. The position of the pivot can be changed through policy making and this will affect the balance. For example, if there is a bias towards the outputs as opposed to the inputs, then the pivot will move and the weight ratio necessary to achieve balance will change.

ANNEX B

Participants

Association of Assessment Inspectors and Advisers
 Association of Teachers and Lecturers
 Benefits Agency
 British Educational Communications and Technology Agency*
 Church of England Board of Education*
 Department for the Environment, Transport and Regions
 Department for Social Security
 Employment Service
 General Teaching Council*
 Local Education Authorities
 Local Government Association*
 National Association of Head Teachers*
 National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers
 National Union of Teachers*
 Office for Standards in Education*
 Professional Association of Teachers
 Qualifications and Curriculum Authority*
 Secondary Heads Association
 Society of Education Officers*
 Teacher Training Agency*
 UNISON

* Members of the Universal Document Classification System (UDCS) Panel

Numerous head teachers, teachers and governors also participated in the project. We would like to offer particular thanks to those primary schools who helped to brief members of the Public Sector Team early in the project, including (with the name of the head teacher at the time specified where requested):

Ascot Heath Primary School, Ascot
 Barley Hill Primary School, Thame, Oxfordshire
 Bernadettes Roman Catholic School, Yardley, Birmingham
 Blue Coat Church of England (Aided) Junior School, Durham
 Boughton-under-Blean Methodist (Controlled) Primary School, Kent
 Brecknock Primary School, London
 Bredgar Church of England (Aided) Primary School, Kent

Julie Graham
 John Hulett
 John F McNally
 Rosamund Nancekievill
 Ken Burr
 Linda Lefevre
 Elizabeth Hoadley

Carterton County Primary School, Carterton, Oxford	Mike Curtis
Cathedral Primary School, Red Cross Way, London	Sylvia Morris
Cookridge Primary School, Leeds	Stuart Tomlinson
Crookhorn Community School, Waterloo Vale, Hampshire	John Adam
Dallow Junior School, Luton	David Tuck
Deighton Gates Primary School, Wetherby	Margaret Wiggins
Gateway Primary School, London	Philip Allen
Haswell Primary School, Haswell, Durham	Dawn Whittaker
Hillcrest Primary School, Leeds	Margaret Moyles
Horton Grange First School, Blyth, Northumberland	Ann Elliott
Landywood Primary School, Great Wylley, Walsall	Alan Stockley
Mary Paterson Nursery School, London	Joanna White
Mill Lane School, Chinnor, Oxfordshire	Jacqueline Million
National Church of England Infant School, Hucknall, Nottinghamshire	Julie Clarke
National Church of England Junior School, Hucknall, Nottinghamshire	Kerry Palmer
Nelson Primary School, London	Tim Benson
Paddington Green School, London	Sally Hindle
Robinsfield Infant School, London	Sheila Sansbury
St Aloysius Roman Catholic Infant School, London	Bernadette Britain
St Bedes Church of England (Aided) Primary School, Bolton	Jack Hatch
St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Thame, Oxfordshire	Matthew Flannigan
St Joseph's Roman Catholic School, London	Dan McDonald
St Mary and St Pancras Church of England Primary School, London	Carey Miller
St Marylebone Church of England School, London	John Hunter
Staplehurst Community Primary School, Staplehurst, Kent	Eric Spear
Wessex Infant School, Maidenhead	Margaret Finlay
Wheatley Church of England Primary School, Wheatley, Oxford	Clive Hallett
Wilberforce Primary School, London	Angela Piddock

ANNEX C

Publications

- Annual Schools' Census**, DfEE, 1999.
- Autumn Package of Pupil Performance Information**, DfEE, 1999
- Cutting Burdens Toolkit**, DfEE, 1999.
- Data Rationalisation Report**, DfEE, June 2000.
- Education Act 1996**, HMSO, 1996.
- Education (Induction Arrangements for School Teachers) (England) Regulations 1999**, HMSO, 1999.
- Education (National Curriculum) (Assessment Arrangements) (Key Stage 1) (England) Order 1999 as amended**, HMSO, 1999.
- Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations 2000**, HMSO, 2000.
- Forms S1-S4 – Notes of Guidance**, OFSTED, 1999.
- Governors' Annual Reports in Primary Schools**, DfEE circular 7/99.
- Inspecting Schools – The Framework**, OFSTED guidance, effective from January 2000.
- Key Stage 1-3 Assessment and reporting arrangements 2000**, DfEE/QCA booklets.
- National Association of Head Teachers' survey of head teacher workloads**, NAHT, April 2000.
- Performance and Assessment Report for an Anonymous Primary School**, OFSTED, 2000
- Pupil Records and Reports**, DfEE guidance, March 2000.
- Red Tape Affecting Head Teachers**, Better Regulation Task Force, Cabinet Office, April 2000.
- Reducing the Bureaucratic Burden on Teachers**, DfEE circular 2/98.
- Reducing the Bureaucratic Burden on Teachers – Final Report to Ministers of the Working Group on Reducing the Bureaucratic Burden on Teachers**, DfEE, 1998.
- School Inspections Act 1996**, HMSO, 1996.
- School Prospectuses in Primary Schools 1998/99 Onwards**, DfEE circular 7/98.
- School Standards and Framework Act 1998**, HMSO, 1998.
- Teachers Handbook 2000**, DfEE/QCA.
- The Induction Period for Newly Qualified Teachers**, DfEE guidance, April 2000.

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