

The National Strategies: a review of impact

This report evaluates which aspects of the National Strategies' programmes had been effective and which less so, and how leaders and managers at regional and local levels of the National Strategies judged their impact. Almost all the schools visited considered that the National Strategies had contributed to improving the quality of teaching and learning and the use of assessment, and valued their materials. However, the frequent introduction of new initiatives had led to overload and diminished their potential effectiveness. Evaluation of the impact of the National Strategies' many programmes was also a weakness at national and local level.

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Executive summary

The aim of this survey was to evaluate the impact of the National Strategies on standards and progress. Inspectors visited 12 local authorities during the autumn term 2008 and held discussions with nine senior regional directors of the National Strategies. Common themes emerging from this stage were followed up by visits to 33 primary schools and 21 secondary schools in the same authorities between December 2008 and March 2009. The local authorities and schools were chosen to provide a geographically diverse sample.

The report evaluates which aspects of the National Strategies' programmes had been effective and which less so, and how leaders and managers at all levels of the National Strategies judged their impact. The recent schools' White Paper, *Your child, your schools, our future*, signalled major changes to arrangements for school improvement support, involving a move away from national programmes as well as greater devolution of funding and responsibility to individual schools.¹ A key purpose of the report, therefore, is to inform the development of future arrangements for school support, particularly for raising standards in English and mathematics.

The National Strategies have contributed to a national focus on standards and have helped to focus teachers and others on discussing and improving teaching and learning. The National Strategies' initiatives have yielded successes with individual teachers, departments, groups of pupils and schools. When viewed against the nationally agreed targets for 2011, however, the overall improvements in standards and progress over the last four years have been too slow.

Almost all the schools visited were positive about some aspect of the National Strategies' extensive portfolio. The programmes most frequently mentioned were assessment for learning; Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL); the Intensifying Support Programme, and Letters and Sounds. However, when asked about the impact of these programmes, the schools often found it difficult to disaggregate the effect of any one initiative or element from the many other actions taken to improve outcomes or from other contextual factors.

The most common model of school improvement work was one-to-one coaching of individual teachers and subject leaders in the core subjects.² This model involved the allocation of a fixed number of days of support for these subjects from consultants, based on a needs analysis. However, this support, together with other actions taken by schools, was not always sufficient to build the overall capacity to sustain improvement. A weakness in the provision of support was the shortage of high-

¹ *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system*, DCSF, 2009; www.dcsf.gov.uk/21stcenturyschoolssystem/. The fieldwork for this survey was concluded before the publication of the White Paper.

² The core subjects of the National Curriculum are English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology.

quality, intensive professional development available to senior teams in the schools where weaknesses in teaching persisted.

Too much monitoring by too many people did not always tackle weaknesses but simply continued to identify them. The schools and local authorities visited were often overwhelmed by the volume of centrally driven initiatives, materials and communications. They often received multiple requests for the same information from external agencies.

Local authorities all attempted to tailor the National Strategies to the needs of their schools. The schools visited frequently valued their authority's efforts, as did the headteachers who attended the focus groups held during the survey. Inspectors found some innovative practice by local authorities but no evidence of a systematic sharing of good practice among them.

Evaluation by schools, local authorities and the National Strategies frequently lacked the rigour necessary to identify with certainty what was working well for individual schools and what was not. The focus was on implementing initiatives, and the survey found little evidence of systematic robust evaluation of specific National Strategies' programmes or elements.

Key findings

- The National Strategies have contributed to a productive and professional debate around pedagogy. Almost all the schools visited considered that the National Strategies had contributed to improving the quality of teaching and learning and the use of assessment.
- However, in over half the secondary schools and a third of the primary schools visited, despite their engagement with the National Strategies, the survey found weaknesses in basic teaching skills. Responsibility for eradicating these weaknesses lies with the schools' leadership.
- In nine of the local authorities visited, a considerable emphasis by the National Strategies on monitoring was at the expense of helping to develop expertise and capacity.
- Evaluation of the impact of the National Strategies' many programmes was a serious weakness at national and local level. It was often difficult for the schools and local authorities visited to assess which initiatives worked and which did not.
- The frequent introduction of new initiatives, materials and guidance led to overload and diminished the potential effectiveness of each individual initiative. Local authorities were learning how to manage this by tailoring the National Strategies to the requirements of individual schools.
- Taken together, national agencies, including the National Strategies, provided a very considerable number of diverse, changing and sometimes overlapping programmes. Systems for communicating with schools and local authorities did

not help them to have a good understanding of the coherence of different initiatives.

Recommendations

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) should:

- commission systematic and independent evaluation of existing programmes delivered through the National Strategies so that the most effective activities can be continued beyond 2011.

The DCSF and the National Strategies should:

- prioritise fewer school improvement initiatives and identify those that are demonstrably effective
- give schools and local authorities more time to implement, consolidate and evaluate these, as well as opportunities to tailor them to the specific needs of their schools
- increase the emphasis on intensive periods of school-based, high-quality professional development
- before 2011, be clear about what they expect of all schools in terms of developing literacy and numeracy.

The National Strategies and local authorities should:

- develop the skills of senior officers in the National Strategies and the local authorities in order to provide more effective quality assurance
- provide high-quality training to all consultants working in schools to ensure that evaluation of impact helps to accelerate the rate of pupils' progress.

Schools should:

- prepare for the transition to a new system of school support after 2011 which involves much greater responsibility for selecting and managing their own support for improvement
- focus on persistent weaknesses in teachers' classroom skills, including assessment for learning, by providing them with demonstrably effective support and challenge and by disseminating the practice of their best teachers.

The National Strategies in context

1. The aim of the National Strategies is: 'To raise standards of achievement and rates of progression for children and young people in all phases and settings through personalised learning supported by high quality, well-planned teaching which addresses individual needs with a particular focus on the core subjects and early years.' The annual plan for 2008–09 sets out targets in relation to standards and progress, with key performance indicators, to be achieved by 2011.³
2. Ofsted has evaluated both the primary and secondary National Strategies since they were introduced, beginning with the National Literacy Strategy in 1998. This was followed a year later by the National Numeracy Strategy. The Key Stage 3 Strategy was introduced in 2000, becoming known as the Secondary National Strategy from 2001. In May 2003, the Primary National Strategy was set out in *Excellence and enjoyment: a strategy for primary schools*.⁴ The former Ofsted evaluated a number of aspects of the National Strategies and their predecessor programmes.⁵
3. The aim of this survey was to evaluate the impact of the National Strategies on standards and progress. Inspectors visited 12 local authorities during the autumn term 2008 and held discussions with nine senior regional directors of the National Strategies. Common themes emerging from this stage were followed up by visits to 33 primary schools and 21 secondary schools in the same authorities between December 2008 and March 2009. The local authorities and schools were chosen to provide a geographically diverse sample. The overall effectiveness of these schools, judged at their most recent inspection, ranged from satisfactory to outstanding.
4. The report evaluates which aspects of the National Strategies' programmes have been effective and which less so, and how leaders and managers at all levels of the National Strategies have judged their impact. A key purpose of this report, against the background of the recent schools' White Paper, *Your child, your schools, our future*, is to inform the development of arrangements for school support in the future, particularly for raising standards in English and mathematics.
5. The White Paper signalled major changes to arrangements for school improvement support, involving a move away from national programmes and

³ *The National Strategies Annual Plan Summary 2008–09*, DCSF, 2008; www.nationalstrategies.org.uk/docs/Annual%20Plan%20Summary.pdf.

⁴ *Excellence and enjoyment: a strategy for primary schools* (DfES/0377/2003), DfES, 2003.

⁵ The overarching reports and reports on individual programmes are available on Ofsted's website at: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications.

greater devolution of funding and responsibility to individual schools for arranging their own support.

'The DCSF will, in general, cease to provide, or fund the provision of, school improvement support. Rather, DCSF will ensure that there is sufficient supply of quality-assured improvement support, across the country, to meet schools' demands.'⁶

The White Paper also makes it clear that this means the end of the National Strategies:

'As we move to our new model of how improvement support is delivered to schools, we will not renew the current, central contract for the National Strategies when it comes to an end in 2011. We will delegate the funding for the Primary and Secondary National Strategies to schools, and expect them, with their SIPs [School Improvement Partners], to use it to continue their investment in improving their literacy, numeracy and other core business. We will ensure that there is a smooth transition to the new arrangements, and that the legacy of high-quality programmes and guidance that the National Strategies have developed over the last 12 years continues to be accessible to schools and local authorities.'

Impact in schools

6. The majority of the primary and secondary headteachers in the schools surveyed viewed the work of local authority consultants engaged to deliver the National Strategies positively, and considered that they made a difference. The most common way in which local authorities deployed consultants was through one-to-one coaching of individual teachers and subject leaders. The schools concerned were allocated a fixed number of days of consultancy support from consultants for core subjects. The allocation was based on a needs analysis carried out by local authority officers and the schools' senior managers.
7. However, in half the schools visited, their positive views of the work of consultants were not substantiated by robust evaluation or reflected in consistently improving outcomes for children and young people over the last four years. This was despite the fact that the level and type of support allocated were usually linked to schools' individual circumstances.

During a visit to a secondary school, inspectors recorded 55 separate notes of visits made to it by local authority consultants over a 23-month period. As documents to support improvement, these notes were weak. Any impact from this considerable resource was hard to see, either

⁶ Paragraph 4.9, *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system*, DCSF, 2009.

directly in the classrooms or on the school's standards. Overall progress made by 16-year-olds had declined steadily since 2005, most notably in English. Measures of students' progress between the ages of 11 and 16 had placed the school in the lowest 5% nationally for the last three years. This contrasted with the school's positive view of the consultants' work.

8. Although they were less frequent, the survey found some examples of good notes of visits:

Inspectors scrutinised consultants' notes of their visits to a primary school. These contained very clear judgements on the strengths and weaknesses of the school's work. The feedback to the school covered a range of provision, for example, the quality of teaching, a scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment, and the school's environment. Where possible, the notes measured impact against the progress made by different groups of pupils. Despite the strengths of this evaluation, however, the element missing most often was a list of further actions to be taken by the school, together with the agreed approaches to evaluating them.

9. Almost all the schools visited were positive about some aspect of the National Strategies' extensive portfolio. The programmes most frequently mentioned were assessment for learning, SEAL, the Intensifying Support Programme, and Letters and Sounds. When asked about the impact of these, however, the schools often found it difficult to disaggregate the effect of any one initiative or element from the many other actions taken to improve outcomes, or from other contextual factors. The survey found little evidence of systematic, robust evaluation by schools of specific National Strategies' programmes or elements.
10. In all the 21 secondary schools visited, inspectors saw the principles promoted by the National Strategies used in most of the lessons they observed. However, this was not always associated with students making good progress. In 10 of the secondary schools, the teachers' practice showed a balance of strengths and weaknesses. The inconsistencies that the survey found in the quality of teaching and learning were mirrored in variable standards and progress, whether between subjects, key stages or particular groups of pupils. In six of the secondary schools, strengths in teaching and learning clearly outweighed weaknesses. Practice was consistently weaker in the remaining five schools.
11. Where used well, the principles promoted by the National Strategies, and drawn upon by good teachers for many years, had honed teachers' skills. In the lessons seen in the secondary schools during the survey, the most frequent strengths included:
- teachers' skilled questioning of students, pitched at the correct level for individuals
 - regular checking of students' learning, using a variety of imaginative approaches

- objectives for a lesson that were discussed with the students in a way that they could understand
 - marking that helped students to understand what they needed to do to improve their work and move to a higher level
 - self-assessment and assessment by peers used well to support learning
 - teachers' detailed knowledge of students' learning needs.
12. The weaknesses seen were usually the absence of or the converse of the above; teachers knew what approaches to use, but their execution was less effective. The impact of such inconsistent practice was to reduce the overall effectiveness of individual schools.
13. The survey identified 111 separate National Strategies' programmes devised to improve outcomes in secondary schools. The list of programmes did not include improvement strategies devised by other national agencies, local authorities or the schools themselves, although these were commonplace. The National Strategies' many different initiatives for supporting teaching and learning in the core subjects placed pressure on the time of subject leaders in English, mathematics and science, and risked the neglect of the other subjects.

Inspectors visited a secondary school which had been judged to be satisfactory at its previous inspection but which was improving. For example, the proportion of 14-year-olds attaining both the expected and higher levels in English had increased each year between 2005 and 2008, narrowing the gap between the school's results and the national average.

The head of the English department referred to 'constant changes' and an 'overwhelming volume of materials' from the National Strategies, although he acknowledged that the local authority 'does a good job of filtering out some material'. He explained that the improving trend in standards in English was because teachers had become examiners and moderators. These roles had brought a better understanding of the curriculum and assessment into the classroom. Changes in staffing, with other school-generated initiatives, particularly the very effective support which inspectors had seen for developing literacy in Years 7 and 8, had also contributed to the improvements.

14. The survey found strengths in aspects of classroom practice in 27 of the 33 primary schools visited. In nine of these schools, there were some inconsistencies in teachers' skills, which led to weaknesses in some of the teaching and learning. However, the teaching was consistently weak in only two of the primary schools visited. The impact on pupils of teachers' effective application of National Strategies' principles included:
- high levels of motivation
 - clear understanding of learning objectives

- high expectations of themselves
 - benefits from a culture of discussion and teamwork
 - enjoyment of learning as a result of teachers' high expectations combined with stimulating resources.
15. In nine of the primary schools visited, the programme Letters and Sounds was used particularly effectively. Pupils clearly enjoyed their work on phonics and they were enabled to make rapid progress. For example, they wrote confidently, with good letter formation, and used capital letters and full stops for their sentences. In one of these schools, the coordinator for the Foundation Stage referred to the positive impact the programme had had on her expectations of pupils:

'When I was being trained to use the scheme, I thought that there was no way Reception children could do this; it was Year 2 work. Since then I have been humbled to see what they can achieve and hold my hands up and say I was wrong.'

16. In 14 of the primary schools, the new frameworks had been a positive influence on teachers' planning.⁷ The survey found good practice in teachers' use of the frameworks to develop stimulating activities for pupils in preparing them to write and in promoting the importance of problem-solving in mathematics. Seven of the schools reported that the SEAL programme had improved their management of behaviour. Pupils' behaviour was inadequate in only one lesson of the 102 observed in primary schools. The following illustrate the National Strategies' contribution in three primary schools.

This school considered that the local authority's bespoke programme 'Developing confident communicators' was a significant force in improvement. The initiative blended elements from the National Strategies to promote the development of writing through speaking and listening. Inspectors observed lessons spanning the full age range and, in all of them, pupils made rapid progress. Teachers used information from assessing pupils very well to match the activities to the needs of different groups of pupils. Behaviour in all the lessons was good; skilled teaching assistants supported the pupils who found behaving appropriately in lessons difficult. The SEAL programme had made a good contribution in these cases.

⁷ *The Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics* (02011-2006BOK-EN), Primary National Strategy, 2006. The frameworks were revised to reflect developments since the publication of the original frameworks for literacy and mathematics in the late 1990s. The revisions took account of the recommendations of the *Independent review of the teaching of early reading*, conducted by Sir Jim Rose, as well as other developments. The revised frameworks include extensive online resources. Further information is available at: <http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/primaryframework/introduction/about>.

The headteacher's high expectations, effective systems for tracking pupils' progress, highly skilled teachers and well-considered local authority initiatives were the significant factors in success. The school had successfully harnessed the benefits of a number of external initiatives, of which the National Strategies were one, to ensure that pupils' progress accelerated each year. Other initiatives included, for example, the services of a family support worker. The headteacher was very clear in her view that 'the National Strategies are only as good as the staff delivering them. They need to be adapted to the particular needs of the school before they can be effective.'

The school's accurate assessment showed that children's skills on entry were well below those expected for their age. Standards by the end of Year 2, however, had been consistently average in recent years, indicating the progress the children had made from their below-average starting points to the end of Key Stage 1.

The school was part of a local learning network that had improved both provision for higher-attaining pupils and the teaching of reading. The network was originally set up as a National Strategies initiative. When the funding ceased, the schools decided to maintain the network because it was proving so useful. At the time of the survey, it was receiving a significant proportion of funding from its secondary school because of the benefits the latter was deriving in terms of the pupils' improved skills on entry to Year 7. The school had made good use of the local authority's own initiative to improve writing, which drew heavily on the National Strategies' approaches, and had tailored them to the needs of the individual schools. A group of pupils told inspectors during the survey that they particularly appreciated the 'response to marking' opportunities, through which they could apply their teacher's suggestions about how to improve their writing.

The importance of high-quality leadership in building and sustaining improvement was the headteacher's priority. He considered that the National Strategies' Primary Leadership Programme had contributed significantly to developing the senior team's skills. The survey found consistency in effective teaching across the school, good use of assessment and sharp evaluation of the impact of actions taken to improve relative weaknesses.

Published test results showed an improving trend, sustained between 2005 and 2008. In particular, there was a marked improvement in writing and, in all subjects, a notable increase in the proportion of pupils attaining a higher than expected level for their age.

This primary school had used intervention programmes at Key Stage 1 effectively to narrow the achievement gap for pupils at the 'school action plus' level. The teachers said that the National Strategy's 'Early Literacy Support' and 'Letters and Sounds' had had a 'fantastic impact' and pupils had become much more confident writers because they had the knowledge and skills that helped them to spell.

The headteacher was unwavering in her commitment to using information from assessment and to its contribution, through very thorough systems, to evaluating the impact of interventions. A range of short- and longer-term evaluations was used routinely. Immediately after lessons an adult noted down progress against very specific targets, for example, whether a pupil could spell the five agreed words correctly; termly corroboration meetings involved teaching assistants, class teachers and the phase leader in analysing and evaluating each pupil's progress and the impact of interventions. Quantitative measures of impact included, for example, National Curriculum sub-levels, reading ages and spelling scores. Where more appropriate, the measures were qualitative, for example, confidence, concentration and cooperation. In 2008, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in English rose significantly. Progress in reading, however, was much stronger than in writing where just over half of the pupils made two levels' progress during Key Stage 2.

17. Inconsistency in applying the principles promoted by the National Strategies was more pronounced in the secondary schools visited than was the case in the primary schools. The impact of this inconsistency was to reduce the overall quality of teaching and learning.

Local implementation and evaluation

18. The National Strategies were widely credited by the schools and local authorities visited with contributing strongly to a professional dialogue around the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning, raise standards and narrow the achievement gap for all groups of pupils.
19. In all the local authorities visited, the National Strategies' learning resources and continuing professional development materials were considered to have the potential to add value to school improvement work and were often recognised as being of high quality. The survey also found, however, that it was necessary for local authorities to select and adapt the National Strategies' resources in order for them to drive school improvement effectively.
20. In seven of the local authorities, officers reported a tension between a national agenda driven by the National Strategies and local need. A recent change of emphasis, where regional advisers have been more willing for local authorities to select and adapt strategies to meet the needs of their schools, was welcomed. The approach adopted by one local authority is illustrated below.

It was clear that officers in this small local authority knew their schools very well, and had combined elements of National Strategies' programmes with other initiatives into packages suitable for their schools. The management structure supported effective communication between key personnel; each school had a link officer from the local authority, regardless of whether its School Improvement Partner was external to or based in the local authority. The 10 headteachers who met inspectors in focus groups during the survey judged this approach very positively. The secondary headteachers also commented on the coherence of the school improvement programme and the impact of the Departmental Intensive Support Programme, which had been developed to tackle weaknesses in core subjects. In this local authority, the improvement in outcomes was clear, with the results of the end of key stage national tests compared favourably with those of its statistical neighbours.⁸

21. Consultants working with teachers and subject leaders in the core subjects were at the forefront of the local authorities' day-to-day work with schools. In almost all the local authorities visited, the contribution made by the teams of consultants was valued highly by the senior officers.
22. However, in just under half the 54 schools visited the pattern of achievement and standards across different subjects and key stages presented a mixed picture of impact since 2005. To varying degrees in over half the secondary schools and a third of the primary schools visited, senior leaders had not been successful in achieving consistency in the quality of teaching, and basic weaknesses were evident. To enable teachers to make the most of the National Strategies' considerable range of learning resources, well-managed arrangements for coaching and training by skilled practitioners were required.
23. The rapid pace of the introduction of new initiatives reduced the potential for the consultants and the materials to have an impact on standards. Typically, schools had several initiatives under way simultaneously. This often made it difficult to evaluate which ones were making a positive difference and which were not, as exemplified by a local authority consultant who said: 'We often have to move to a new initiative before we know the impact of those we have just worked on.' Some headteachers contacted during the survey also reported feeling 'overwhelmed' by the range of initiatives, despite local authorities often seeking to manage the flow of activity for schools.
24. In 10 of the local authorities, the impact of their consultants' work was sometimes limited by the rushed or late distribution of training materials. Too little time was left for the consultants to reflect on them and consider how to modify generic materials into more useful programmes for their particular

⁸ Statistical neighbours are local authorities deemed to share similar characteristics. This provides a benchmark for comparing their progress.

schools. Consultants in three of the local authorities reported their frustration during the survey at having to rearrange training events they had planned because new materials from the National Strategies did not arrive on time. Consultants in another two local authorities expressed concern over initiatives introduced mid-year, with little advance notice, making it difficult to plan and schedule work effectively.

25. Senior school improvement officers in four of the local authorities cited insufficient differentiation to meet the needs of all groups of pupils as a weakness in many materials. In eight of the local authorities, difficulties in using the National Strategies' website got in the way of implementing new programmes effectively. In five of the authorities, officers reported during the survey that teachers were having difficulty using a web-based planning tool, and this was slowing the implementation of the revised literacy and numeracy frameworks.
26. While seven of the local authorities judged relationships with the National Strategies' regional advisers to be sufficiently constructive, five considered them to be barely satisfactory. Protocols for communication with the National Strategies at regional level were not clearly understood by local authority officers. This was a barrier to establishing productive partnerships to improve schools.
27. There were considerable weaknesses in reports written by advisers from the National Strategies in four of the seven local authorities in which such reports were shown to inspectors. Often, these reports described what the adviser had done on their visit rather than evaluated the impact of the work. Inspectors saw examples of reports which offered no useful new information to the headteachers or senior local authority officers for whom they were intended. In six of the local authorities, senior officers considered that the work of the National Strategies' regional advisers was inconsistent in quality and often told them nothing new. The extracts below from a regional adviser's note of visit to a secondary school in January 2007, written for the local authority's senior officers, illustrate this point.

'The school has been involved with AfL [Assessment for Learning] for 4 years and 5 A* to C (English/mathematics) increased 56–73%.'

This superficial statement does not take into account the many other factors that were likely to have contributed to this improvement.

Action points which were included in the note of the visit such as 'Identify areas of variation in learning and teaching and track standards linked to improved learning and teaching through developing AfL practice' lacked sufficient detail and incisive analysis to help the school or the local authority more generally.

The note gave no indication of success criteria, methods by which progress would be monitored, or timescales. The note closed with:

'Organisation: by school; by whom: SLT [senior leadership team] and ML [middle leaders]; Status: open.'

28. The National Strategies' management structure generated too many meetings remote from schools. During the survey, many of the local authority officers reported feeling overburdened: one had 26 meetings with National Strategies' staff in her diary for the year. In the smaller local authorities in the survey, officers and consultants who, of necessity, were supporting a number of different areas of work, attended multiple training events but experienced considerable overlap in what was provided because the themes overlapped.
29. Too often, inspectors were told that regional training events imparted information rather than developed consultants' skills in helping them to modify materials to bespoke programmes. To tackle this weakness, five of the local authorities, independently of one another, had developed a similar approach: their consultants trialled new materials with small groups of schools, seeking teachers' ideas on how to make them easier to use. The teachers then contributed to disseminating the materials more widely.
30. In nine of the local authorities visited, the survey found weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of National Strategies' programmes. Examples included:
 - too much monitoring that yielded little new information
 - simplistic measures of impact
 - pressure to evaluate initiatives too early
 - multiple requests for the same information.

Overall, the National Strategies' own quality assurance systems lacked rigour, and the survey rarely found incisive action-planning arising from robust evaluation.

31. A clear message in the White Paper is the need to refine and reduce the content of national school improvement strategies in the future and to devolve greater responsibility to school leaders for their successful implementation. This resonates well with the findings and recommendations of this survey.

Notes

The aim of the survey was to judge the impact of the National Strategies on raising standards of achievement and rates of progress for children and young people in primary and secondary schools.

Her Majesty's Inspectors visited 12 local authorities between September and December 2008. The sample was chosen to balance size and complexity, location and the effectiveness of Children's Services in improving outcomes for children and young people as identified by the annual performance assessments in 2007. Inspectors held discussions with senior school improvement officers, groups of primary and secondary National Strategies' consultants, and groups of primary and secondary headteachers: 247 individuals in all, across the 12 local authorities. Inspectors scrutinised documentation provided by the local authorities. Between September and December 2008, HMI held a telephone discussion with each of the National Strategies' nine senior regional directors.

Between December 2008 and March 2009, inspectors visited 33 primary and 21 secondary schools. The sample included inner-city, suburban and rural schools, selected from the local authorities visited previously. The overall effectiveness of these schools, judged at their most recent inspection, ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Inspectors held discussions with headteachers, senior staff, teachers, pupils and students. This was followed up by observations of teaching and learning. Inspectors analysed documentation, including notes of visits from a range of external consultants and each school's published performance data.

Further information

Ofsted publications

The National Numeracy Strategy: the first three years 1999–2002 (HMI 554), Ofsted, 2002; www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/Mathematics/Primary/National-Numeracy-Strategy-the-first-three-years-1999-2002h.

The National Literacy Strategy: the first four years 1998–2002 (HMI 555), Ofsted, 2002; www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Curriculum/English/Primary/National-Literacy-Strategy-the-first-four-years-1998-2002.

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<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Providers/Secondary-schools/The-Secondary-National-Strategy>.

www.ofsted.gov.uk/layout/set/print/Ofsted-home/Publications-and-research/Browse-all-by/Education/Leadership/Management/Developing-social-emotional-and-behavioural-skills-in-secondary-schools.

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An evaluation of National Strategy intervention programmes (070256), Ofsted, 2009; www.ofsted.gov.uk/Publications/070256.

Annex: Local authorities and schools visited for the survey

Local authorities

Barnet
 Barnsley
 Bristol
 Gateshead
 Greenwich
 North Yorkshire
 Nottinghamshire
 Peterborough
 Redbridge
 Rochdale
 Solihull
 Warrington

Schools

Arnold Mill Primary and Nursery School	Nottinghamshire
Ashton Park School	Bristol
Bank Leaze Primary School	Bristol
Barley Mow Primary School, Birtley	Gateshead
Bede Community Primary School	Gateshead
Belfield Community School, Belfield	Rochdale
Bill Quay Primary School, Bill Quay	Gateshead
Bishop Douglass School, East Finchley	Barnet
Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England Secondary School, Blackheath	Greenwich
Bristol Metropolitan College	Bristol
Caterham High School, Ilford	Redbridge
Christ's College Finchley	Barnet
Deeplish Community Primary School	Rochdale
De Lucy Primary School, Abbey Wood	Greenwich
Eskdale School, Whitby	North Yorkshire

Fullwood Primary School, Barkingside	Redbridge
Gooseacre Primary School, Thurnscoe	Barnsley
Hatchford Community Primary School, Chelmsley Wood	Solihull
Hendon School, Hendon	Barnet
Heworth Grange Comprehensive School, Felling	Gateshead
Highlands Primary School, Ilford	Redbridge
Hookergate School, Rowlands Gill	Gateshead
Intake Farm Primary School, Mansfield	Nottinghamshire
Jack Hunt School	Peterborough
Ken Stimpson Community School, Werrington	Peterborough
Kingshurst Primary School, Kinghurst	Solihull
King Solomon High School, Barkingside	Redbridge
Kirkby College, Kirkby-in-Ashfield	Nottinghamshire
Langold Dyscarr Community School, Worksop	Nottinghamshire
Leeming RAF Community Primary School, North Allerton	North Yorkshire
Light Hall School Specialist Mathematics and Computing College	Solihull
Locking Stumps Community Primary School, Birchwood	Warrington
Malton Community Primary School, Malton	North Yorkshire
Meadowside Community Primary and Nursery School, Longford	Warrington
Middleton Primary School, Middleton	Peterborough
Monkspath Junior and Infant School, Shirley	Solihull
Norwood Primary School, Gunthorpe	Peterborough
Portland School, Worksop	Nottinghamshire
Parnwell Primary School, Parnwell	Peterborough
Ray Lodge Primary School, Woodford Green	Redbridge
Sandbrook Community Primary School	Rochdale
Scarborough, Braeburn Infant and Nursery School, Braeburn	North Yorkshire
Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School, Latchford	Warrington
St Bede's Catholic Primary School	Redbridge
St Bede's Catholic College	Bristol
St Gregory's Roman Catholic High School, Westbrook	Warrington
St John's Roman Catholic Primary School	Rochdale

St Peter's Catholic School and Specialist Science College	Solihull
The Hyde School	Barnet
The Meden School, Mansfield	Nottinghamshire
Tudor Primary School, Finchley	Barnet
Whickham Parochial Church of England Primary School, Whickham	Gateshead
Windrush Primary School, Thamesmead	Greenwich
Wynndale Primary School, Mansfield	Nottinghamshire