

# **Understanding the Ofsted schools inspection process**

**Allan Steele**



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# Introduction

This commentary is the first in a series on Quality to help the sector respond effectively to the consultations on the new inspection and quality improvement frameworks and to prepare for new ways of working under the Learning and Skills Council.

Colleges and other partners in the sector have raised a number of questions about how the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) framework in schools works. Those questions provide the framework for this commentary. It aims to demystify the terminology and processes. It explains how Ofsted in schools currently approaches areas such as inspection evidence, self-evaluation and value for money. We recognise of course that these terms may be interpreted differently for the new post-16 inspection framework!

This commentary is not an official Ofsted briefing, but is written for a college audience by an Ofsted registered inspector who also works as an FEFC part-time inspector. A list of key documents and appropriate websites is included for further reference. We hope you find this commentary helpful.

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# Understanding the Ofsted schools inspection process

## Question 1 | How was Ofsted set up?

- 1.1 The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was set up on 1 September 1992 as a result of the Education (Schools) Act 1992. The Act requires the Chief Inspector for England to keep the Secretary of State informed about:
  - The quality of education provided by schools in England
  - The educational standards achieved in those schools
  - Whether the financial resources made available to those schools are managed efficiently
  - The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at those schools.
- 1.2 Ofsted's remit is to improve standards of achievement and quality of education through regular independent inspection, public reporting and informed independent advice. Ofsted's principal task is the management of the independent system of school inspection defined originally by the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and revised in the School Inspections Act of 1996. This provides for the regular inspection of all 24,000 schools in England that are wholly or mainly state funded. A similar system of inspection applies to all institutions in receipt of public funding providing education for 3 and 4 year olds in nursery settings.
- 1.3 The first inspection of secondary schools took place in September 1993; primary and special school inspections began in September 1994. All schools had been inspected at least once by July 1998. All schools must be inspected at least within six years from the end of the school year in which they were last inspected. Inspections must be conducted by teams of inspectors, led by a registered inspector, and must result in a written report. Section 10 of the Act says that registered inspectors must report on:
  - **The educational standards** achieved in the school
  - **The quality of the education** provided by the school
  - **Whether the financial resources** made available to the school **are managed efficiently**
  - **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils** at the school.

1.4 Ofsted has produced a framework for inspecting schools, which was revised for January 2000. The revisions in the new framework include the introduction of short inspections for the most effective schools, the reduction of the period of notice for inspection, the principles of best value and a greater emphasis on educational inclusion. The inspection framework includes an evaluation schedule, which sets out what is to be evaluated and the criteria to be used. Inspectors use the schedule when they make their judgements and write the inspection report.

### **Question 2 | What types of inspection are there?**

2.1 There are two types of inspection; the type that a school receives depends on how effective the school is. Both types meet the requirements of the Act. The two types are:

- A short inspection, which is designed for the most effective schools
- A full inspection, which applies to all other schools and to all pupil referral units.

A school is selected for a short inspection if, for example:

- It has a favourable report from the last inspection
- Its performance is improving
- Its test and examination results are high or compare very favourably with those schools having similar pupils.

Currently about a quarter of all schools across the country are selected for short inspection.

### **Question 3 | Who carries out the inspection?**

3.1 Almost all inspections are done by independent teams of qualified inspectors working for contractors appointed by Ofsted. All inspectors are trained either by Ofsted, or by Ofsted-accredited trainers, as team inspectors or lay inspectors. Some inspectors then proceed to further training to become registered inspectors, who lead inspections.

3.2 Each inspection is led and managed by a registered inspector who also has the responsibility for writing the report. A small number of inspections are done by Her Majesty's inspectors (HMI) who are on Ofsted's staff. However, unlike FEFC inspectors, whose main role is to undertake inspection of colleges, the main role of HMI in relation to school inspection is to provide quality assurance through monitoring, and to follow up schools judged to be failing to provide an adequate standard of education.

3.3 Ofsted awards the contracts, monitors the quality and pays the bill. Contractors must deliver the inspection programme and ensure that the work of each team is of the highest possible standard. HMI visit a sample of inspections to monitor and assess their quality. After every inspection Ofsted asks the school for its views on how well it was inspected.

### **Question 4 | Who are the inspectors and what are their backgrounds?**

4.1 All inspections are led by a registered inspector who is responsible in law for making sure that inspectors are fit, proper, competent and effective in their work. The team must include at least one inspector without personal experience in the provision of education (the lay inspector). All inspectors, including the lay inspector, can take part in all aspects of the inspection. The registered inspector is responsible for ensuring that no member of the team has a connection with the school that might reasonably raise doubts about the ability of that inspector to act impartially. Inspectors must have personal experience of the subjects or aspects and phase of education that they inspect. Ofsted accredits inspectors to inspect particular subjects or aspects of the school. When building a team, registered inspectors must use inspectors for the subjects they are accredited for by Ofsted. When Ofsted specifies vocational courses, as part of the contract for schools with post-16 pupils, inspectors must be identified in the team list with experience of vocational education.

### **Question 5 | What do inspectors look for?**

5.1 All inspectors follow the inspection framework set out by Ofsted. They are expected to look carefully at:

- The way pupils are taught
- What the pupils achieve in their lessons
- The school's test and examination results, especially in English and mathematics
- How the school is led and managed
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour
- How well the school cares for its pupils
- How well the school works with parents
- The quality of lessons, clubs and other opportunities provided for pupils.

5.2 In order to reach judgements about how well the school is doing and why, the evaluation schedule asks the key questions that inspectors must consider.

- What sort of school is it?
- How high are the standards?
- How well are pupils or students taught?

- How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
- How well does the school care for its pupils or students?
- How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
- How well is the school led and managed?
- What should the school do to improve further?

### **Question 6 | How are inspections monitored?**

6.1 Ofsted has a duty under the School Inspections Act to keep under review the standard of inspections. Monitoring of inspections is undertaken by HMI and includes assessment of:

- The quality of inspections and their conduct
- The competence and effectiveness of Registered and Team Inspectors
- The quality and standard of inspection reports.

Ofsted also audits the contractor's quality assurance arrangements.

6.2 HMI has access to all elements of an inspection and may visit any inspection at little or no notice, to monitor the work of an inspection team. The registered inspector and other inspectors must give HMI all necessary co-operation and allow access to any materials relating to the inspection and evidence base. Assessments are confidential to the inspectors and contractors concerned. If, however, a report is judged to be seriously misleading, or an inspection is seriously flawed, the school will be notified and may be offered a re-inspection, although this is extremely rare. Similar procedures are in place to monitor the quality of the contractors' work.

### **Question 7 | How much notice are schools given of inspection?**

7.1 Ofsted has reduced the notice of inspection given to schools to between six and ten school weeks. The purpose of this is to reduce the pressure on teachers and other staff, and to avoid long, drawn-out processes, such as rewriting documents and making other preparation, which some schools have felt they needed to do. Most schools have welcomed the shorter notice.

### **Question 8 | What happens before the inspection?**

8.1 Of crucial importance to the success of the inspection process is the relationship between the registered inspector and the headteacher of the school to be inspected. Before the inspection, the registered inspector visits the school at least once. The pre-inspection visit has five main purposes:

- To establish a good and trusting working relationship between the registered inspector and the school, particularly with the headteacher
- To gain a better understanding of the school, its nature, what it is aiming to do and how it goes about its work
- To consider aspects of the school on which inspectors might focus, some of which may be identified by the school
- To brief the staff and any governors who are able to meet with the registered inspectors on how the inspection will work
- To agree the necessary arrangements for the inspection.

8.2 A pre-inspection meeting with parents also takes place before the inspection. This parents' meeting, which is a legal requirement, must take place before the inspection begins so that the inspection teams can fully consider the parents' views as important pre-inspection evidence. There is a standard agenda for the parents' meeting, which gives parents the opportunity to express their views on:

- The standards the school achieves
- How the school helps pupils, whatever their ability, to learn and make progress
- The attitudes and values the school promotes
- Behaviour and attendance
- The work the school expects pupils to do at home and the school's links with parents, including information on how pupils are getting on
- How the school responds to parents' suggestions and concerns
- How the school has improved in recent years.

8.3 The school may ask parents to complete a questionnaire on their views of the school and return it to the registered inspector, in confidence.

8.4 Before the inspection, Ofsted issues a pre-inspection context and school indicator report (PICSi) for each school to be inspected. The report provides a range of contextual and performance information about the school to be inspected. The report places the school in context, with both national comparisons with all schools and comparisons with similar schools, using QCA free school meal bandings. Data included in the PICSi includes that for attainment in comparison with national averages by subject and gender, a socio-economic breakdown of the catchment, free school meals eligibility, percentage of pupils with English as an additional language, percentage of pupils with special educational needs and attendance data.

8.5 After the pre-visit to the school and scrutiny of the pre-inspection documentation and PICSI, inspectors should then be in a position to prepare a detailed, well informed and penetrating pre-inspection commentary on the school. The commentary should present initial hypotheses and identify matters to be pursued in the inspection. The pre-inspection commentary should draw on the full range of pre-inspection evidence including the school's self-evaluation, views formed during the pre-inspection visit, parents' views and parents' questionnaires. It should also make full use of the PICSI data and build on issues raised in the previous inspection report.

**Question 9 | Does Ofsted recognise a role for self-assessment?**

9.1 Ofsted uses the term 'self-evaluation' rather than 'self-assessment'. Ofsted has developed a training course on school self-evaluation for managers, which has been piloted in three local education authorities. Subsequently they have accredited many LEAs around the country to deliver the training course using Ofsted materials. *The handbook for inspecting secondary schools* includes guidance for headteachers on using the framework for school self-evaluation. Headteachers are required to produce a school self-evaluation report as one of several forms, including an audit of compliance with statutory regulations. Many schools now use the Ofsted framework to carry out lesson observations to review their performance continually and have a clear idea of their strengths and weaknesses.

9.2 Schools are also provided by Ofsted, on an annual basis, with a school performance and assessment report (PANDA), which helps schools to analyse their results and evaluate their performance. PANDAs include contextual and performance indicators. Ofsted also published *School evaluation matters* to help schools develop strategies for self-evaluation. However, Ofsted believes strongly that school self-evaluation complements, but is not a substitute for, rigorous and periodic independent inspection. School self-evaluation is seen as an essential part of the continuous improvement process all schools need to have in place. Outcomes from school self-evaluation are important evidence of leadership and management, and are taken into account as part of the evidence base for Ofsted external inspection. However, unlike FEFC inspections, the purpose of the inspection is **not** to verify the school self-evaluation.

**Question 10 | What constitutes inspection evidence?**

- 10.1 Inspectors gather evidence from a number of sources; these include:
- The inspection of teaching and of pupils at work in classrooms and other areas
  - Discussions with pupils
  - The analysis of samples of pupils' work within individual subjects and across the curriculum
  - Discussions with staff, especially those with management responsibilities such as heads of departments and heads of year
  - Documentary analysis of schemes of work and teachers' plans
  - Records of assessment, examination results and other measures or indicators of attainment and progress used by the school
  - Analysis of statements of special education needs, annual and transitional reviews and individual education plans.

**Question 11 | What is the focus of lesson observation?**

11.1 The inspection team is required to spend at least 60% of its time observing lessons and sampling pupils' work. Inspectors are required to make four judgements in each lesson observed and record them on an evidence form. They are required to make judgements on teaching, learning, attainment and pupil attitudes and behaviour. The evidence forms are the key records of first-hand inspection evidence and inspectors' judgements on the basis of that evidence.

**Question 12 | How are lessons graded?**

12.1 When Ofsted was first set up, it used a five-point grading scale similar to the FEFC for grading lessons. In 1996 Ofsted revised the framework and moved to a seven-point scale, which had been used for other aspects of the school. Lessons are graded on the seven-point scale as follows:

Grade 1	Excellent
Grade 2	Very good
Grade 3	Good
Grade 4	Satisfactory
Grade 5	Unsatisfactory
Grade 6	Poor
Grade 7	Very poor

Inspectors are required to use the full range of grades including grade 1 for exemplary learning and grade 7 for very poor quality learning. The descriptive text on the evidence forms should always support the grade awarded.

### **Question 13 | Are all classes inspected?**

- 13.1 Lesson observations should include sufficient work in each key stage to allow inspectors to make judgements about progress of pupils as they work through the key stage and their attainment at the end of the key stage. There should be particular focus on the attainment of the oldest pupils in each key stage: for example, in primary schools at age 7 and 11 and in secondary schools at age 14, 16 and 18. Unlike FEFC inspections, where it would be virtually impossible to observe all teachers, Ofsted inspectors will observe all teachers at least once in full inspections.
- 13.2 The load on teachers should be spread as evenly as possible. Teachers should not normally be observed teaching for more than half of a teaching day and apart from exceptional circumstances, must not be observed for more than three-quarters of the day.

### **Question 14 | How is feedback given to teachers?**

- 14.1 Inspectors must offer oral feedback on the quality of teaching seen to individual teachers during, at the end of, or as soon as practical after a full inspection. Feedback should identify the most important strengths and weaknesses in the teaching observed, provide clear reasons for what was judged to be successful or otherwise, and ensure that points for development are identified.
- 14.2 At the end of the full inspection, or as soon as possible afterwards, the registered inspector must provide the headteacher, in confidence, with a profile of the quality of teaching in the lessons seen. The profile will show the number of lessons taught by each qualified teacher that were:
- Excellent or very good (grades 1 and 2)
  - Good or satisfactory (grades 3 and 4)
  - Less than satisfactory (grades 5, 6 and 7).
- 14.3 In a full inspection, teachers also receive a copy of their individual data.

### **Question 15 | What is the purpose of the profile?**

- 15.1 The profile is intended to provide the headteacher with important management information. The profile does not in any way provide a summative evaluation of an individual teacher's professional competence. It indicates only the sample of lessons seen during the inspection and how the quality of teaching seen in those lessons contributed to the overall quality of teaching in the school during the inspection. Inspectors may not have seen a balanced sample of the teacher's work or have seen all teachers the same number of times. The profile takes no account of the many other things that teachers do.

### **Question 16 | What responsibility does Ofsted have for inspecting school sixth forms?**

- 16.1 Registered inspectors are required to inspect all subjects of the National Curriculum in all key stages up to the age of 16, and in schools with sixth forms the extension of those subjects in sixth forms. Subject reports will include judgements on standards achieved in those subjects at each key stage and in the sixth form. Ofsted can also add to the contract additional subjects or aspects which they require to be inspected as part of the contract. Additional inspection days are usually added to the contract for this. It is very common for schools with sixth forms to have vocational courses or non-National Curriculum subjects added to the contract. There are over 1800 maintained schools with sixth forms. They provide for about 30% of the 16–19 cohort. Just over three-quarters of students in sixth forms are following GCE A-level courses, a tenth are studying Intermediate GNVQ and a tenth Advanced GNVQ.

### **Question 17 | How does Ofsted judge the overall effectiveness of the school?**

- 17.1 The overall effectiveness of the school is reported in the parents' summary of the report, together with a comment on the value for money it provides. Inspectors must reach an overall judgement of the effectiveness of the school based on:
- How well pupils achieve, and their attitudes, values and personal development
  - The quality of education provided, particularly teaching
  - How well the school is led and managed
  - How far the school has improved or maintained very high standards since the last inspection.
- 17.2 In coming to their conclusions, inspectors need to take in to account the characteristics of the school and the background of its pupils.

### **Question 18 | How does Ofsted judge value for money?**

- 18.1 Inspectors judge value for money provided by a school as a composite assessment of its **effectiveness** and **efficiency** in relation to its **costs**. This judgement can only be made at the end of the inspection, when all other elements of the inspection have been considered and judgements made. In broad terms, value for money is considered as the overall effectiveness of the school set against contextual factors including the background of its pupils,

their attainment on entry, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and the school's expenditure per pupil. For example, a school whose **overall effectiveness** is judged to be very good and is working against very unfavourable **contextual factors**, and whose **expenditure per pupil** is low, would be judged to provide very good or excellent value for money. If inspectors deem it necessary to refer to LEA funding of provision, they are required to check the facts with the LEA before reporting on them.

### **Question 19 | Is there an equivalent to the college nominee?**

- 19.1 There is no equivalent to the college nominee in Ofsted school inspections. No member of a school's staff would be present at inspection meetings when inspectors are making judgements. The headteacher in his or her link role with the registered inspector is probably the closest to the college nominee.

### **Question 20 | What is the role of the headteacher in inspection?**

- 20.1 The best inspections are built on a constructive, objective and honest relationship between the headteacher and the registered inspector. Headteachers have a crucial role in inspection. As part of the pre-inspection documentation, the headteacher will provide a headteacher's statement. The headteacher's statement gives the headteacher an opportunity to draw the attention of the inspection team to the specific context of the school and aspects of pupils' progress since the last inspection, particularly details of the school's monitoring of its own performance and progress. It is common practice for the headteacher to meet with the registered inspector at least daily throughout the inspection period to resolve any issues that have arisen during the inspection, to test hypotheses, to provide interim feedback as the inspection process unfolds and to keep the headteacher informed about emerging views. The open dialogue contributes to the smooth running of the inspection, and to the school understanding and accepting its judgements.
- 20.2 After the inspection, the registered inspector will meet with the headteacher and with the governors to provide more detailed feedback. At these meetings the headteacher and governors can seek clarification and explanation of inspection judgements. Factual points can be checked, although judgements are not negotiable.

To ensure that reports are factually accurate a final draft is sent to the school for checking. The headteacher must respond within a week.

### **Question 21 | What happens after the inspection?**

- 21.1 When the inspection is completed the registered inspector writes a report and a summary, which are sent to the school, LEA and Ofsted within six weeks of the inspection. The school must send the summary to the parents of every pupil within two weeks of receipt of the report. The school should also send full copies of the report to the local media and to local libraries. The school must make available copies of the full report to anyone who asks for it, for which they can charge a small fee. The school must produce its response to the report in the form of an action plan within 40 working days of receiving the report from the registered inspector. The action plan must be made freely available to parents. Ofsted posts the report on its website.

### **Question 22 | What are the outcomes from inspection?**

- 22.1 The vast majority of schools emerge with credit from inspections. Their reports usually identify many strengths, together with some areas for improvement, which the governing body use as a basis for their Action Plan. Schools with less than satisfactory outcomes from inspection fall into three categories:
- Underachieving schools
  - Schools with serious weaknesses
  - Schools requiring special measures.

### **Question 23 | How is a school judged to be underachieving?**

- 23.1 A judgement about whether a school is underachieving will be made by considering:
- The effectiveness of the school
  - Improvements since the last inspection
  - The performance of the school in comparison with schools in similar contexts.
- 23.2 The judgement should be made on the basis of performance data and inspection judgements taken together. The performance data should include the following in relation to the highest key stage in the school up to age 16:
- The school's results, compared with all schools nationally
  - The school's results compared with schools in similar contexts using QCA benchmarks
  - Whether the school's average national curriculum levels are improving over time, compared to the trend in national average national curriculum levels.

23.3 Performance data judgements are based on the QCA free school meal bandings for benchmark information. In addition, for sixth forms, the most significant indication of underachievement in schools is the value-added figure from GCSE to GCE A-level or GNVQ, and the extent to which it is significantly below the national average figure.

23.4 Evidence for underachievement identified through inspection judgements will focus largely on aspects of teaching, learning, leadership and management. If the inspection team judges that a school is underachieving, the registered inspector will tell the headteacher at the end of the inspection that the team's view is that the school is underachieving. The registered inspector is then required to use the words 'this school is underachieving' in the parents' summary report. DfEE Circular 6/99 *Schools causing concern* outlines the procedures to be followed to support and monitor schools in special measures and with serious weaknesses, including the LEA's powers of issuing formal warning notices and accessing the Standards Fund to implement procedures identified in the LEA's Education Development Plan to support schools that are underachieving.

#### **Question 24 | How is a school judged to have serious weaknesses?**

24.1 Inspection teams will judge a school to have serious weaknesses if it is giving an acceptable standard of education but nevertheless has serious weaknesses in one or more areas of its work. The following weaknesses would normally be judged as significant:

- Low standards of achievement and/or unsatisfactory learning and progress made, particularly in the core subjects
- Unsatisfactory teaching in about one in eight lessons
- Ineffective leadership and/or management.

24.2 At the end of the inspection, the registered inspector is required to tell the headteacher that the team is considering whether, or that it believes that, the school has serious weaknesses. Ofsted must be informed and the summary report for parents must include the words 'this school has serious weaknesses'. Procedures for monitoring and supporting schools with serious weaknesses are identified in DfEE Circular 6/99 *Schools causing concern*.

24.3 The Governing Body has 40 working days on receipt of the inspection report in which to submit its action plan to Ofsted. The action plan should include a timetable designed to remove the causes of serious weaknesses within one year of receiving the inspection report. It must address all the key issues identified in the inspection report and for each issue the plan should state:

- What is to be done in terms of clear and specific actions
- Who is to do it
- When it will be done
- What resources are required
- Success criteria against which progress will be judged
- How progress will be monitored, by whom, when and how
- How progress will be evaluated, by whom, when and how.

24.4 The LEA should also prepare a statement of action, which should be submitted to Ofsted alongside the school's action plan. The LEA needs to assess within its action plan the scope for the school to be closed and confirmation that the school's action plan will remove the causes of serious weaknesses within one year. The LEA and the school will have access to the Standards Fund School Improvement Grant to help the school to improve, and achievement of targets and LEA support will be monitored.

24.5 HMI may inspect the school after six months to assess progress and may decide that the school needs special measures. A registered inspector will inspect all schools with serious weaknesses about two years after their first designation. The subsequent inspection report should show that the school no longer has serious weaknesses. If, however, the school has not made sufficient progress it is likely that it will be found to require special measures.

#### **Question 25 | How is a school judged to require special measures?**

25.1 The School Inspections Act 1996 states that special measures are required if a school is failing or likely to fail to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education (Section 13 (9)). Towards the end of every inspection, the inspection team must consider whether the school is failing or likely to fail to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. If the team reaches this view, and Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools (HMCI) agrees, then special measures will be required.

Approximately 3% of schools have been found to be in this category. These are the schools with the most serious problems. Inspectors are required to consider a number of features before coming to a judgement in relation to special measures. One feature alone is unlikely to result in a judgement that a school requires special measures, but where inspectors find low standards and poor learning, risk to pupils or the likelihood of a breakdown of discipline, the school will normally require special measures. In reaching a judgement, inspectors work through a series of questions and indicators relating to the education standards achieved by pupils, the quality of education provided and the leadership and management of the school. A school will be likely to fail if it:

- Is close to the point where it would be judged to be failing
- Is declining rapidly in one or a number of important areas
- Is in decline and this has not been checked by the senior managers and governing body
- Is in a precarious state where the management is ineffective and therefore the quality of education is likely to decline
- Has many weaknesses and has made insufficient progress since the last inspection.

25.2 Once special measures have been confirmed, the procedures outlined in DfEE Circular 6/99 *Schools causing concern* come into force.

25.3 When a school has been found to need special measures, the Governing Body has 40 working days after receipt of the inspection report in which to submit its action plan to the Secretary of State and HMCI. The action plan should have a timetable, which will allow the school to be removed from special measures as soon as possible and no later than two years from receipt of the inspection report. It must address all the key issues in the inspection report and include the same elements as those for schools with serious weaknesses. The LEA must also produce a statement of action, which must specify, if the school is to remain open, a target for removing the school from special measures within two years. The LEA and the school have access to the Standards Fund School Improvement Grant to help the school to improve.

25.4 The first monitoring visit by HMI will occur six months after the school was inspected. HMI will then usually visit the school once a term. For the most severe situations, follow-up action may include the use of the Secretary of State's powers to appoint additional governors, or to direct the closure of a school. If, however, as a result of a monitoring visit, HMI believes that the school no longer needs special measures, a further inspection is made. If the inspection concludes that the school no longer needs special measures, a report will be produced giving this judgement and the school removed from special measures (see *Lessons learned from special measures*).

### Question 26 | What happens to the information from reports nationally?

26.1 Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools publishes his annual report, which draws together inspection evidence from all inspections carried out by registered inspectors. During the past year there were over 4900 inspections of schools and 8000 of nursery settings. The annual report also includes inspection evidence from inspection of LEAs (29 in the last year), inspection of Initial Teacher Training, and inspection of a range of youth work and adult education.

### Question 27 | How is Ofsted accountable?

27.1 Each year Ofsted publishes its corporate plan, which outlines its statement of corporate purpose and its aims and objectives. These aims and objectives have also been published in Ofsted's public service agreement for 1999/2000 in the White Paper *Public service for the future: modernisation, reform, accountability*. Ofsted states that its corporate purpose is to **encourage improvement through inspection**. In seeking to meet this statement of corporate purpose, Ofsted has set out its aims and objectives, which are:

#### Aim

To help improve the quality and standards of education through independent inspection and advice.

#### Objectives

- To deliver high quality inspection of schools, funded nursery education and LEAs, providing independent assessment to help them raise educational standards.
- To provide high quality advice, based on inspection evidence to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment to assist in the formulation and evaluation of government policies.

27.2 Ofsted has also published six performance targets as follows:

- 20% of schools to be inspected in 1999/2000.
- 8000 nursery placings to be inspected in 1999/2000.
- 26 LEAs to be inspected in 1999/2000, rising to 30 in 2000/2001.
- 91% of inspection reports reviewed in 1999/2000 to meet HMCI's standard.
- Target costs of contracted inspections in schools in 1999: £54m compared with out-turn expenditure of £106.7m in 1997/98.
- Number of inspections of Initial Teacher Training: 200 secondary subject and 40 primary subject inspections in the 1999/2000 academic year.

**Allan Steele**  
**Registered Inspector**

# Key documents

## Available from the DfEE website

[www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

DfEE Circular 6/99 *Schools causing concern*

## Available from Ofsted

Tel: 020 7510 0180 (orders)

*Inspecting schools – the framework* (2000)

*Lessons learned from special measures* (1999)

*School evaluation matters*

## Available from the Ofsted website

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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*School inspection: a guide to the law* (1999)

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*The handbook for inspecting primary schools* (2000)

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*The handbook for inspecting special schools* (2000)

## Further information

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**The first in a series of commentaries on Quality, *Understanding the Ofsted schools inspection process* addresses questions raised by colleges and other partners in the sector about how the Ofsted framework in schools works. The author, an Ofsted registered inspector, explains how Ofsted in schools currently approaches areas such as inspection evidence, self-evaluation and value for money.**



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