



# **The future accountability of teachers**

Engaging parents and carers in the debate

July 2010

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## Acknowledgements

The General Teaching Council for England (GTC) and OPM would like to thank the parents and carers who participated in this study for their time and contribution to this research.

## Executive summary

The GTC has commissioned a number of research projects to inform its policy development work on the future of accountability in teaching. This is in order to explore ways in which different types of accountability might be rebalanced, in particular, in ensuring that accountability in teaching, as opposed to the accountability of schools, is recognised and understood. This research with parents sits alongside its other work on accountability.<sup>1</sup>

This project was commissioned to investigate parents' and carers' views of possible future accountability arrangements. The research had four objectives:

1. to investigate parents' and carers' views of the different dimensions of accountability in teaching: accountability for what, to whom and by what means;
2. to explore the underlying reasons for these views;
3. to identify parents' and carers' perspectives on the 'trade-offs' to be made between different accountability requirements, including institutional/professional and national/local;
4. to explore with parents and carers their perspectives on developments in accountability that purport to address their needs, and those of children and young people in teaching.

We designed a two-stage approach to achieve these objectives, with stage 1 focusing primarily on objectives one and two, and stage 2 primarily on objectives 3 and 4.

### Stage 1

(looking at current arrangements)

- 6 x 2 hour focus groups
- Analysis
- Interim report

### Stage 2

(looking at possible future arrangements)

- Review stage 1 and scenario writing
- 2 x 2.5 hour workshops
- Full analytical report

The fieldwork was carried out between 24<sup>th</sup> February and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010.

## Main findings

### Current accountability arrangements (stage one)

- To be accountable is to be in a relationship. Accountability requires both an account giver and an account holder. Understanding the nature of the relationship between parents and teachers and the factors that contribute to or detract from good relationships was an important first stage in exploring parents' views of accountability systems both within and external to schools. Most of the primary school parents involved in this project said they had good relationships with their children's schools, and felt positively towards their children's teachers. The relationships between secondary school parents and the teachers at their child/ren's school appeared to be less positive. Both the positive and the negative

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gtce.org.uk/documents/publicationpdfs/opm\\_accountability\\_rpt0709.pdf](https://www.gtce.org.uk/documents/publicationpdfs/opm_accountability_rpt0709.pdf);  
[http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability\\_of\\_teachers](http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability_of_teachers), vii

perceptions relate primarily to communication and responsiveness. Whilst primary parents see their child/ren’s teachers as available, visible and easy to talk to, secondary school parents saw their child/ren’s teachers as unavailable, often uncommunicative and somewhat remote.

- Levitt et al describe accountability as, at heart, ‘*an ethical concept – it concerns proper behaviour, and it deals with the responsibilities of individuals and organisations for their actions towards other people and agencies*’ and see teachers’ accountability to parents as primarily ethical in nature.<sup>2</sup> What is absent from the description of ethical/moral accountability provided in their typology of different forms of accountability is the notion of a personal relationship between parents and teachers, or children and teachers. The typology describes the actors – that is, the account holders – in ethical or moral accountability as ‘*civil society*’. But parents’ stake in accountability arrangements is more specific than that of civil society and it is in part the difficulty of defining their stake, which is aligned with but not identical to their children’s stake, that makes describing their role in accountability arrangements – current or desired – difficult.
- Parents’ initial spontaneous definitions of accountability in the context of teaching were largely associated with positive outcomes and purposes such as safety, security and reassurance, and with factors that are more dependent on the quality of their relationship with teachers. When they compared accountability with responsibility, parents tended to shift at first towards seeing accountability as burdensome and involving processes such as scrutiny, and management. Parents continued to struggle throughout the focus group discussions with distinguishing between accountability and responsibility, and tended as well to conflate responsiveness with accountability.
- Parents highlighted some benefits to accountability, including: ensuring national consistency of standards and comparability between schools, providing motivation and structure to the teacher role and peace of mind to parents. Parents identified a number of benefits to accountability specific to different stakeholders:

| <b>Beneficiary</b> | <b>Benefit</b>   | <b>Rationale</b>   |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Pupils             | Being kept safe<br>Being treated fairly<br>Being treated as an individual                                | General health and wellbeing<br>Respect, equality<br>Recognition of and teaching to, individual needs                |
| Parents            | Attending to child’s safety and wellbeing<br>Information about their child’s progress<br>Value for money | Peace of mind and reassurance<br><br>For independent sector parents, confidence that their money is being well-spent |
| Teachers           | Having their performance monitored<br>Increasing their motivation  | Highlights development needs and informs personalised development plans.   |

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability\\_of\\_teachers](http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability_of_teachers) p1

|                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Wider community | Teachers are performing as required<br>Teachers and schools are addressing child's wider needs (eg behaviour) | Ensuring value for taxpayer<br>Harmonious relationships between the school and its immediate community |
|-----------------|---|--|

- Parents mapped teachers' accountability relationships and identified some of the formal mechanisms through which these relationships function. The figure below describes the four accountability relationships that parents felt were strongest.

| Accountable to:      | Accountable for:  | Accountability mechanisms   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Head teacher         | SAT results, overall pupil behaviour, classroom control, upholding school values, following the curriculum, continuing professional development (CPD) | Performance management<br>Department Head feedback<br>Staff meetings<br>Observations<br>Informal feedback |
| Year/department head | Pupils results, behaviour management, innovation, professionalism, marking and administration   | Termly appraisals<br>Class results<br>Observations<br>Supervision   |
| Pupils               | Results and learning, safety, wellbeing, protection from bullying, making school fun, making learning accessible                                      | Modelling behaviour<br>Showing knowledge<br>Self-evaluations  |
| Government/Ofsted    | Maintaining teaching standards, pupil end of year results, child safety, CPD  | Inspections<br>Special measures<br>League tables<br>Ongoing monitoring through (head teacher)             |

Most parents felt the current framework was too focused on accountability to government, and that teachers' accountability could be rebalanced. They favoured greater self-accountability for teachers, and strengthening accountability to local stakeholders, including parents and carers, pupils and the local authority.

## Parents' stake in accountability

- Parents have an interest in accountability arrangements in teaching working effectively, even when they play no role in expressing or protecting this interest. Their default position was that their interests were protected as a matter of course, primarily through internal school processes. They saw a need to play an active role only when accountability arrangements were not working, so putting their stake in jeopardy. Parents tended to conflate having a stake in accountability arrangements with being able to protect it or have it acknowledged or protected by others.
- Some parents felt that their role in protecting their stake could be strengthened, and that greater access to teachers would be a way of doing this, though access alone would not be sufficient. Teachers would need as well to be responsive to parents' concerns. Secondary school parents emphasised that it was important to be realistic about how much time parents

had to take an active role as stakeholders. They felt that whilst many parents might *claim* to want to have more involvement, in reality this was either not a priority or not a possibility for most parents. Foster carers' stake in accountability is perhaps more evident to schools and more readily taken into consideration because their relationship with teachers and schools is formally encoded.

## Possible future accountability arrangements (stage two)

- Stage two explored possible future arrangements or changes in accountability for teachers and teaching. Parents looked as well at some of the elements of existing arrangements, presented in 'ideal' form (ie as working effectively). This enabled us to test whether parents would be happy with more information about accountability arrangements or whether they did indeed wish these to be rebalanced.
- The strongest finding was that parents wanted to retain the broad structure of the existing national accountability system, and had concerns about replacing it with entirely local, school-based or parent-led accountability arrangements.
- Professional accountability was seen as the bedrock of all other forms of accountability and parents felt that it complemented all other forms of accountability. They felt that the mechanisms explored in the workshops - the requirement to re-demonstrate competence to retain registration and more structured peer-observation – were aligned with other forms of professional accountability, such as the Code of Conduct, which was mentioned spontaneously by parents in one of the workshops.
- Parents wanted to retain some form of national accountability, on the grounds that this provided comparability across schools, and helped to protect consistent standards across all English schools. However, they felt that national accountability mechanisms such as Ofsted could be re-focused, with head teachers and Senior Management Teams being the primary account givers. Individual teachers' strongest accountabilities would then either be internal, through performance management, peer observation and local inspections, for example, or external, to parents.
- Parents identified a number of ways in which accountability might be re-balanced, including:
  - Strengthening teachers' accountability to local stakeholders (such as parents and ex-teachers) by involving them in the design of the national inspection process. On balance, parents felt there were too many risks attached to parents forming part of the inspection team themselves, but they did feel they could add value by helping to inform the criteria against which teachers would be held to account;
  - Strengthening teachers' accountability to parents through mechanisms such as a 'Parent-teacher agreement', which would provide parents with a formal means of holding teachers to account for their behaviour, and set out a process through which to address any failure by teachers and parents to fulfil the role assigned to them in the agreement. This was seen as a way of building partnerships between parents and teachers;
  - Strengthening teachers' professional and self-accountability by linking registration to the re-demonstration of competence. Parents saw this as the most effective form of accountability for teachers. They would be required to demonstrate competence over time, to hold themselves to account for fulfilling competence requirements and their practice would be comparable with professionals both locally and nationally.
- Parents saw as well a greater role for pupils in holding teachers to account, but raised concerns about relying too heavily on this form of accountability. They supported many of



the existing accountability arrangements in schools, including performance management, the Code of Conduct and internal complaints procedures. However, they felt that the latter in particular needed to work more effectively and that parents had more information about the ways in which their stake and their views could be reflected in existing arrangements;

- Parents found it very difficult to make trade-offs between the different accountability arrangements and tended to want to introduce more mechanisms without relinquishing those that are currently in place.

## Conclusions

- The findings from stage one underline the distinction made in the literature review that helped to structure this research, between the formal methods by which professionals, organisations and political bodies and individuals are held to account and the informal accountability relationships characteristic of that between parents and teachers. Whilst the literature does first mention parents in the context of discussing ethical and moral accountability, the actors in this type of accountability are described as ‘civil society’. And whilst teachers should indeed be accountable to wider society and it is the function of the GTC to regulate the profession in the public interest, parents have a more specific and different interest in accountability in teaching, which is aligned closely with that of their children. When defining accountability, parents hold the interests of their children in close view, referring to their wellbeing, their progress and their safety. However their children’s interests do not exhaust parents’ stake in accountability in teaching. Whilst in-school accountability mechanisms may be adequate to protect children’s wellbeing, progress and safety, parents were concerned about issues for which national accountability arrangements are necessary, in particular national comparability, consistency of standards across schools and identification of under-performing teachers.
- The different approaches used in stages one and two provide some explanation for the variation in the findings. In stage two, parents were provided with concrete scenarios presenting possible future accountability arrangements, whilst in stage one, they focused on current arrangements and began considering how these might be re-balanced only at the end of the group discussions. This approach meant that parents in stage two were more able to assess and compare the benefits and disadvantages of different levels of accountability (eg in-school, local and national). They were also more likely in stage two to take a wider perspective on accountability arrangements, rather than focusing solely on their own child and circumstances. This tended to make them more risk averse.
  - In stage one, parents identified a tension between teachers’ accountability to Government and their accountability to individual pupils. Form-filling and a result-driven culture were seen as at odds with teachers’ accountability to pupils and their responsibility to treat them as individuals. This was not identified as an issue in stage two, perhaps because the concrete examples given in the scenario provided parents with some means of resolving this tension, through mechanisms that combine rigorous but infrequent national accountability mechanisms with regular, light-touch and developmental local mechanisms.
  - In stage two, parents were unwilling to give up strong national accountability mechanisms such as Ofsted inspections. They preferred solutions which protected the benefits of national arrangements – consistency and comparability of standards, and objectivity – whilst allowing space for local variability to be factored into judgements.

Parents in stage two were more emphatic than those in stage one about the value of national accountability and less enamoured of local accountability.

- In stage one, parents had argued that teachers should be more accountable to pupils, and that pupils had no means of holding teachers to account. Parents in stage two were less enthusiastic about this, and concerned about whether pupils could be trusted to hold teachers to account in an honest and impartial way. They did still place value in pupils contributing to accountability processes, particularly in relation to identifying under-performing teachers.
- Whilst this research has provided a great deal of information on the factors that inform parents' preferences for different types of accountability mechanisms and the processes that would embed these preferences, it does remain unclear just how much reform they would welcome and whether any reforms that did not include effective communication with and responsiveness to parents would improve to any noticeable degree their view of accountability arrangements in teaching. Parents did provide some clear views on how accountability arrangements might be improved. These included having stronger school-based accountability (through supervision and compulsory observation), stronger professional accountability, through the requirement for teachers to re-demonstrate competence to maintain registration; a greater role for parents in accountability mechanisms – preferably strategically rather than hands-on and more formally structured relationships with teachers. However, any reforms would need as well to take into account parents' unwillingness to give up what already exists – or at least, to provide a mechanism that embeds the national comparability and consistency of standards that they value.

# 1 Introduction

The GTC's work on accountability is intended in part to reframe public debate on the accountability requirements for schools and draw more attention to the importance of accountability in teaching. Rather than focusing on processes such as national testing and inspection frameworks and the debate about their impact on teachers and pupils, the GTC is interested in exploring ways in which institutional and professional accountability and national and local accountability might be rebalanced.

This research builds on the GTC's previous work on assessment of pupil progress and attainment and sits alongside its other work on accountability. This includes a literature review,<sup>3</sup> qualitative research with parents<sup>4</sup>, qualitative research with teachers<sup>5</sup>, exploring their views of accountability in teaching and research, engagement and consultation to develop and test responses to the revised Code of Conduct and Practice which is, in its own right, a resource that supports professional accountability.<sup>6</sup>

The two-stage research project reported on here was designed to explore parents' views on current and possible future accountability processes and elements. To understand what parents found most important about accountability and which accountability mechanisms they felt were most able to protect their interests, we explored the relative balance between different forms and levels of accountability, asking them where they were prepared to make trade-offs.

The definition of accountability adopted in this project is taken from the literature review on accountability commissioned by the GTC<sup>7</sup>. This review draws attention to the relationship between an 'actor' (individual or organisation) and their 'stakeholders':

*'[A]ccountability can be defined as the methods by which the actor may render an account (i.e. justify their actions and decisions) to the stakeholders and by which the stakeholders may hold the actor to account (i.e. impose sanctions or grant permissions).'*'

We have drawn as well on a typology of accountability included in the literature review which, as we note in the main body of the report, is in some aspects at odds with Bovens' definition but nonetheless helps us to gain purchase on some of the points parents raised during the research.

This report covers the main findings and conclusions to emerge from stages one and two of the research project.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability\\_of\\_teachers](http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability_of_teachers)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.gtce.org.uk/research/commissioned\\_research/pupil\\_learning/engaging\\_parents\\_assess/](https://www.gtce.org.uk/research/commissioned_research/pupil_learning/engaging_parents_assess/)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.gtce.org.uk/documents/publicationpdfs/opm\\_accountability\\_rpt0709.pdf](https://www.gtce.org.uk/documents/publicationpdfs/opm_accountability_rpt0709.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gtce.org.uk/teachers/thecode/>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability\\_of\\_teachers](http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability_of_teachers), vii

## 2 Objectives and methodology

The research had four objectives:

1. to investigate parents' and carers' views of the different dimensions of accountability in teaching: accountability for what, to whom and by what means;
2. to explore the underlying reasons for these views;
3. to identify parents' and carers' perspectives on the 'trade-offs' to be made between different accountability requirements, including institutional/professional and national/local;
4. to explore with parents and carers their perspectives on developments in accountability that purport to address their needs, and those of children and young people in teaching.

The research used a qualitative approach to achieve the objectives. This enabled us to explore in depth parents' understanding of the relationship they have with their children's teachers, including teachers' responsiveness to parents, and to probe their views of the differences between responsibility and accountability. We used purposive sampling, choosing participants on the basis of particular characteristics. In addition to being a parent of a school age child or children, these included having children at different types of school, and of different ages. More detail on the sample is provided in the later section on recruitment.

The research took place in two stages.

### Stage one

(looking at current arrangements)

- 6 x 2 hour focus groups
- Analysis
- Interim report

### Stage two

(looking at possible future arrangements)

- Review stage one and scenario writing
- 2 x 2.5 hour workshops
- Full analytical report

## Stage one: current accountability arrangements

At the start of the project, OPM and the GTC met to discuss:

- the specific aims of the project, and expectations for how it would follow on from the previous work on accountability;
- how the project would feed into the GTC's ongoing work;
- the wider political context within which the project sits.

Following this meeting, a brief web review was carried out to scan for recent policy documents, literature or research to feed into the design of the interview guide for stage one of the research.

### Stage one content

The primary focus of stage one was current accountability arrangements in teaching. The content was designed to respond to the first two project objectives and to provide information that would help us to design the second stage of the project. In developing the content for stage one, in addition to the project objectives we drew on the previous research on accountability and information and guidance from the GTC. The GTC and OPM agreed that it would be important to explore the following:

- **parents and carers’ understanding of accountability:** what the term means to them, how it differs from responsibility and responsiveness;
- **the purpose and benefits of accountability in teaching:** why it is important, benefits to teachers/parents/others;
- **the mapping of teachers’ accountability:** accountability for what, to whom and by what means, exploring the underlying reasons for these views;
- **accountability in practice:** the perceived positive and negative aspects of teachers’ accountability, and how these relationships play out in practice;
- **initial views on rebalancing accountabilities:** any perceived conflicts or tensions between different accountabilities, changes that would be beneficial in terms of parents/carers’ stake in different kinds of accountability relationships.

Experience from a previous project with teachers showed that accountability can be a difficult topic to discuss. Our approach needed to allow us to gauge participants’ current understanding of accountability, and how and whether they distinguish between accountability relationships and other types of relationships they have with teachers. It was important as well to understand whether parents’ views of accountability relationships were in any way context dependent – for example, whether parents of children at independent schools hold different views to those with parents at state schools. To determine this, we had an initial discussion about the relationship that parents have with teachers. We explored as well responsiveness and communication between teachers and parents, and between schools and parents, so that we understood the different contexts – both given (ie type of school) and emotional (eg positive/negative relationships with teachers/schools).

The central focus of the six groups was an accountability mapping exercise. This exercise had been useful in the work on accountability with teachers in 2009, providing us with a clear picture of teachers’ perceptions of the number and strength of their different accountability relationships. We felt it would be valuable to develop a comparator map with parents. The exercise was designed to pay specific attention to *who* teachers are accountable to, *what* they are accountable for and *how* they are held to account. The discussion guides, including questions and detailed probes for discussion, can be found in Appendix One of this report. The accountability map completed by parents in the focus groups is in Appendix Two.

### Stage one fieldwork

Six focus groups with parents and carers were carried out in London, Leicester and West Kirby, to explore issues relating primarily to objectives one and two. Table one below shows the locations of the six focus groups, the socio-economic status of participants and the types of schools attended by their children.

| Group no. | Location  | Type of School        | Socio-economic status | Date                      |
|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1         | London    | Primary               | C2DE                  | 24 <sup>th</sup> February |
| 2         | London    | Secondary             | BC1C2                 | 24 <sup>th</sup> February |
| 3         | Leicester | Primary and Secondary | C2DE                  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> March     |

|   |            |           |                    |                       |
|---|------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 4 | Leicester  | PRU/SEN   | Socio-economic mix | 2 <sup>nd</sup> March |
| 5 | West Kirby | Primary   | ABC1               | 2 <sup>nd</sup> March |
| 6 | West Kirby | Secondary | C1C2D              | 3 <sup>rd</sup> March |

TABLE 1: FOCUS GROUP BREAKDOWN BY LOCATION, TYPE OF SCHOOL AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

## Stage two: possible future accountability arrangements

In stage two of the research, we built on the findings from stage one. The issues raised by parents in stage one informed the development of the approach and tools for stage two. Stage two focused on objectives three and four, exploring parents' responses to the benefits and disadvantages of different accountability arrangements and the trade-offs they might or might not be prepared to make.

### Stage two content

In the second stage of the project, we used future scenarios to present parents with a range of elements and processes for current and possible future accountability. These elements and processes were described within the context of specific (fictitious) schools. This approach allowed us to investigate parents' views of the benefits and disadvantages of different elements (eg national vs. local) and approaches to accountability and to explore where trade-offs might be made between the different accountability elements.

Following a review of the main findings from stage one, OPM and the GTC discussed their implications for Stage two. The research with teachers also informed this discussion, and we drew on the accountability elements and processes used in this previous research, where these were appropriate to the aims of this current project. We agreed to include descriptions of the following in the stage two scenarios:

1. Stronger in-school accountability for standards of teaching (such as supervision and increased observation);
2. More localised approach to inspection and holding teachers to account;
3. Greater role for local parents and carers in setting inspection criteria against which teachers are assessed;
4. Requirement for teachers to re-demonstrate their competence to their profession regularly to maintain registration;
5. Greater pupil voice in holding teachers to account for their teaching;
6. Parents' role in expressing or protecting their stake in teachers' accountability.

The six elements were written into three scenarios. These were explored in small group discussions, which participants themselves recorded on feedback grids. Following these, participants shared their views and identified common responses to each of the scenarios.

We developed three scenarios for discussion in the stage two workshops. This allowed us to incorporate the above accountability elements, and allow sufficient time to explore parents' views in some depth.

## Stage 2 fieldwork

Two workshops were run with parents and carers in the penultimate week of March 2010, in Coventry and Hull. A further focused workshop was run in London with five parents of children at a pupil referral unit (PRU), as it proved very difficult to recruit for PRU parents in both Coventry and Hull. As in stage one of this work, we used a specialist recruitment agency to ensure we achieved the specified sample. Details of this are provided in the section on recruitment, below. Table two below shows the spread of locations and types of parents represented by these three workshops. The full specification is in appendix nine.

The workshops in Coventry and Hull comprised 12 parents/carers, with a spread of participants representing the following groups:

- Parents of secondary school children;
- Parents of primary school children;
- Parents of children at Pupil Referral Units (PRUs);
- Parents of children with SEN at mainstream and special schools.

Table two below shows the locations of the three workshops, the socio-economic status of participants and the types of schools attended by their children.

| Workshop no. | Location | School Type           | Socio-economic status | Date                   |
|--------------|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1            | Hull     | Primary/Secondary     | ABC2DE                | 23 <sup>rd</sup> March |
| 2            | Coventry | Primary/Secondary/SEN | BC1C2                 | 22 <sup>nd</sup> March |
| 3            | London   | PRU                   | Mixed                 | 31 <sup>st</sup> March |

**TABLE 2. WORKSHOP BREAKDOWN BY LOCATION, TYPE OF SCHOOL AND SE STATUS**

The futures approach used in the second stage of the project gave participants concrete scenarios through which to explore different accountability elements in specific school contexts. In both workshops, the 12 parents and carers worked in groups of three and four, and focused on each of the three scenarios in turn. We chose a small-group approach to give participants enough time to discuss the issues that were important to them. Parents captured their spontaneous reactions to each of the scenarios using a feedback grid, which prompted responses on their immediate thoughts and the perceived strengths and potential risks or negative impacts of each scenario.

The three scenarios used in the workshops are in Appendix five. The summary document outlining the elements explored within each is in Appendix six and the probe questions used with each scenario are in Appendix seven. The grid completed by parents discussing the scenarios is in Appendix eight.

## Recruitment

OPM worked with Plus 4, an external specialist recruitment agency, to recruit parents and carers for both stages of the project.

We used a purposive sampling approach. This meant that the project objectives informed the sampling strategy and that parents from a range of different backgrounds would be involved. The small scale of the research made it important to gain as much variation as possible across the sample as a whole. We provided the recruitment agency with detailed recruitment specifications for each stage of the research.

The primary variables used in the recruitment specifications for both stages of the work were:

- **School type:** Both stages of the research involved parents and carers<sup>8</sup> with children at primary or secondary school, special school or a pupil referral unit (PRU). In stage one, we also included parents of children from independent schools and academies, to ascertain whether they viewed accountability in markedly different ways to parents of children at other types of school;
- **Location:** Stage one focus groups were carried out London, Leicester and West Kirby, allowing us to work in three different regions and to include one rural location. The stage two workshops were held in Swindon and Coventry.

As outlined above, the other sampling variables included gender, socio-economic status, employment status, ethnicity, gender and age group of child. We aimed for parents with children at both primary and secondary schools.

Further details of the recruitment specifications for stages one and two of this project can be found in Appendix three.

## Analysis

We adopted a thematic approach to analysis, allowing us to read across the main findings emerging from the different groups. Researchers from the stage one focus groups wrote up the notes and used a thematic analysis framework to identify and synthesise the main themes from across the six groups, structured according to the main questions outlined at the beginning of this study and reflected in the focus group guides. The populated analytical framework informed the analysis and writing of the interim report under the key titles set out in the report.

The same approach was used in the analysis of discussions in stage two of the project. Using a thematic analysis framework, we drew out the main themes relating to the primary elements across all three scenarios, and then presented the findings thematically, rather than by scenario. At both stages, an initial analysis meeting with all facilitators helped to ensure that the analysis framework focused on the right questions. Once the interim report and final reports were drafted, they were subjected to a series of internal quality assurance processes, to ensure that findings were validated by the Project Director and all other team members.

## This report

The remaining chapters in this report are structured as follows:

- Chapter three sets out the findings on current accountability arrangements (stage one);
- Chapter four summarises the findings from stage one and draws out their main implications. These informed the design of the second stage of the research

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<sup>8</sup> All carers in this study were either formal foster carers or a family member who had full responsibility for the child, and was the key point of contact for the school and child's teachers.



- Chapter five sets out the findings on possible future accountability arrangements (stage two);
- Chapter six outlines the conclusions of this research.

### 3 Current accountability arrangements (stage one)

This section of the report discusses the main messages and themes to emerge from stage one of the research. For brevity and ease of reading, we have used the term 'parent' throughout the report, but readers should note that this refers to both parents and carers, unless otherwise specified.

#### Teachers' accountability to parents

In their literature review on the accountability of teachers, Levitt et al (2008) describe accountability as a '*slippery concept*'. Accountability raises issues of trust, responsiveness, control and professional autonomy and in seeking to balance these, and the interests of different stakeholders, the accountability framework within which teachers operate can become – and indeed has become, as the recent Select Committee report on school accountability noted - complex, inconsistent and coercive.<sup>9</sup>

Accountability is at heart '*an ethical concept – it concerns proper behaviour, and it deals with the responsibilities of individuals and organisations for their actions towards other people and agencies*'.<sup>10</sup> In their typology of accountability, Levitt et al describe teachers' accountability to parents as a form of ethical or moral accountability. Teachers are said to '*have a commitment towards children and young people, their parents and other stakeholders, to act in the best interest of students to facilitate their effective learning and development*'<sup>11</sup>.

The main difference between ethical or moral accountability and professional accountability is characterised in terms of the extent of formal incorporation into the standards of a profession:

*'While professional accountability is binding for members of professionals associations, ethical or moral accountability relies on an informal code of proper conduct.'*<sup>12</sup>

The informal nature of ethical or moral accountability and its reliance on individual commitment rather than formal mechanisms is at odds with Bovens' over-arching definition, which focuses on *methods*, account giving and being able to impose sanctions, none of which are described in the case of ethical or moral accountability. What Bovens' definition does do – and this has been pertinent to this project – is highlight the importance of the wider relationship between the actor and stakeholder – in this case, teacher and parent. In the description of ethical/moral accountability given in the typology, the account holder is 'civil society'. Yet parents' stake in accountability arrangements is more specific than that of civil society and it is in part the difficulty of defining their stake, which is aligned with but not identical to their children's stake, that makes describing their role – current or desired – difficult.

In the absence of any formal or binding accountability mechanisms or agreed methods of giving or holding to account, factors such as trust and responsiveness become particularly significant. In addition – and this is particularly relevant to the discussions that informed the second stage of

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmchilsch/88/8809.htm>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability\\_of\\_teachers](http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability_of_teachers) p1

<sup>11</sup> Levitt et al 2008, p9

<sup>12</sup> Levitt et al 2008, p9

this work – in the absence of any direct formal role in accountability arrangements, parents must rely on other actors and other methods of holding teachers to account to protect their stake.

Levitt et al describe accountability as essentially ethical. The types of accountability they outline give structure to this ethical concept. The typology lays out five accountability relationships, four of which have codified and formal methods or mechanisms associated with them, whilst the fifth – moral/ethical accountability – has none. This is perhaps the problem with which parents struggled throughout stage one of this research, when they sought to describe their stake and role in accountability and the mechanisms through which it operates. Knowing little about the organisational and professional accountability mechanisms in teaching, many parents focused on those elements of a relationship which might lead one to describe it as ethical: this includes things such as communication, responsiveness, trust and reciprocity and taking responsibility for ones actions and behaviour.

| Type           | Actors                        | Mechanisms and method  |
|----------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Organisational | Superior and subordinate      | Hierarchical/supervisory relationship; rules, standards and targets                                    |
| Political      | Elected politicians           | Democratic   |
| Legal          | Individuals and organisations | Integrity, 'keep them honest', exercised through courts  |
| Professional   | Professionals                 | Conformity to standards and codes of conduct checked by professional peers, through their institutions |
| Moral/ethical  | Civil society                 | Ethical obligation and moral responsibilities, internalised values                                     |

TABLE 3. ACCOUNTABILITY TYPOLOGY

## The wider relationship between parents and teachers

To be accountable is to be in a relationship. Accountability requires both an account giver and an account holder. Understanding the nature of the relationship between parents and teachers and the factors that contribute to or detract from good relationships was therefore an important first stage in exploring parents' views of accountability. To keep their attention focused, we asked parents to distinguish between their relationship with the school as an institution and their relationships with individual teachers. Parents found this distinction difficult at times, conflating teachers' professional practice with the structures and systems both within and external to schools.

In their spontaneous descriptions of their relationships with their children's teachers, parents privileged responsiveness, accessibility and knowledge. Parents of both primary and secondary school children said that the strength and effectiveness of their relationship with a teacher were defined almost entirely by two things: the frequency with which a teacher was able to speak with parents and the teacher's knowledge of the individual child.

Parents' relationships with primary school teachers were notably more positive than their relationships with secondary school teachers. In contrast with most secondary school teachers, primary school teachers were seen as accessible to parents and knowledgeable about individual children. Secondary school teachers were seen as more remote, less accessible and less likely

to communicate with parents. Relationships between secondary school parents and teachers were also more likely to be affected by perceptions of poor teaching or the failure to recognise or address issues such as bullying.

In the sections below, we highlight some of the factors that might explain these differences.

### **Relationships between teachers and parents of primary school children**

The majority of primary school parents said they had good relationships with their children's schools and identified good communication and responsiveness as primary reasons for their positive views of their children's teachers. Primary school parents felt able to speak to teachers as and when they needed, which was most often at the end of the school day. Teachers were seen as flexible, so parents were able to arrange appointments at short notice. Head teachers were seen as accessible and available to discuss serious problems. Relationships between teachers and the children they taught were seen as good and primary school teachers were felt to be knowledgeable about those they taught and able and willing to provide detailed feedback at parents' evenings.

Parents identified small class sizes, and having the same classroom teacher throughout the school year as factors that helped to promote these positive relationships. In addition, both teaching staff and head teachers were generally visible to parents. Parental liaison is also more central to the role of primary teachers. Having a shorter teaching day, with less time required for marking and a less structured timetable might also give primary school teachers more available time to build relationships with parents.

*'I can grab a teacher in the playground'* – Primary school parent

*'They can be quite flexible'* – Primary school parent

*'Teachers of reception children are seen quite regularly...that makes a difference to the relationship with parents'* – Primary school parent

### **Relationships between teachers and parents of secondary school children**

The relationships between parents of secondary school children and their teachers were described less positively. What is evident in these less positive relationships is the absence of good communication and responsiveness. In contrast to primary school parents, those with children in secondary schools said they had little opportunity for face-to-face contact with teachers. Secondary school teachers were seen as inaccessible. Parents were themselves often unavailable during the school day or at its end, because of work responsibilities, whilst teachers were unavailable in the evenings. Most parents said they could not contact teachers by email or phone during the day.

The mode of communication was also seen as poor. In the absence of regular face-to-face contact, as parents have with primary school teachers, other means of rapid communication are essential. Some parents said they had received letters from teachers several days or weeks after an incident, which gave them little or no time to respond appropriately, or received letters when they felt a speedier means of communication would have been appropriate.

*'We get letters if our child is behind – it's too late to catch up. We don't really hear.'* – Secondary school parent

*'I don't feel like teachers are that accessible, it's not their fault but they're often hard to get hold of.'* – Secondary school parent

Whilst primary school parents thought that teachers knew their children well, parents of secondary school children described a '*parents' evening phenomenon*'. They felt it was often apparent that the teacher didn't really know the child they were describing and this lack of knowledge detracted from parents' relationship with the teacher. Parents' evenings in secondary schools were generally described as unsatisfactory and frustrating, with parents feeling they were '*rushed through their 5 minute time slot*'. Whilst they did not feel this was the fault of teachers, when added to their general dissatisfaction with their relationship with teachers at secondary level, it compounds their feeling of not being heard;

*'This isn't the fault of teachers, it's just the way the system is set up, but it really doesn't help if you already don't feel you're being listened to.'* – Secondary school parent

Secondary school parents focused as well on teaching practice, an issue which had not arisen in the primary school discussion groups. Some parents described particularly negative relationships with teachers who they felt were '*failing their children*', had poor teaching skills and did not properly prepare children for exams and their anger at such teachers being allowed to continue teaching was evident. They questioned the effectiveness of internal accountability elements, if such teachers were still able to practise.

Several parents talked about teachers failing to provide support and commitment to children who were being bullied at school. Protecting children against bullying was felt to be central to the teachers' role, and the failure to take prompt and appropriate action led parents to feel disillusioned and disappointed by the school, as well as by teachers.

Whether as a consequence of more problematic communication, incompatible time-schedules or other factors, parents of secondary school children spoke of being fearful of '*hassling*' teachers. They did not want to contact teachers *too much*, for fear of being branded '*the pushy parent*' and their children suffering the consequences of this mark.

*'I don't feel I can keep trying to contact them and ask questions, as you don't want them to get fed up with you and punish your child as a result.'* – Secondary school parent

### **Wider pressures on teachers**

Despite these challenges, parents in both primary and secondary groups acknowledged and appreciated that teachers play a difficult role and have a high number of demands on their time. Several commented that they did not blame teachers themselves for lack of contact or communication with parents. Rather, as illustrated in the quote above, they saw it as the fault of 'the system' and 'the Government', which places standards and targets on teachers that are felt to limit the time available for building relationships with both children and parents. Parents seemed aware of the demands placed on teachers from different directions, and of the range of different stakeholders holding them to account:

*'Teachers should be left to teach our children, rather than form-filling for Government targets the whole time. There's only so many hours in the day, and the majority of those should be spent focused on the children.'* – Primary school parent

*'I don't doubt that teachers would like to be in more contact with parents – it would help them, and it would help us – but they're accountable to others too and that seems to take priority.'* – Secondary school parent

## Relationships between parents and teachers in independent schools

Three of the stage one focus groups involved parents of children at independent schools. Whilst the GTC's remit does not extend to teachers in independent schools, we felt there would be value in exploring whether the views of parents who pay for their child's education differed from the views of those who have children in state schools. Parents of children at independent schools tended to report much closer and more productive relationships with the teachers of their children. Again, communication and responsiveness seem to be the vital elements. Independent school teachers were seen as responsive, with this evidenced by things such as detailed end-of-term reports and good knowledge of individual children, which were more possible given the smaller class sizes. Again, parents are suggesting that both the positive and difficult relationships they have with teachers are due primarily to systemic, rather than individual factors.

Some parents with children at independent schools did feel that, in comparison with schools in the state sector, independent schools could be less than transparent, sometimes attempting to cover up problems. This concern might be a factor of the additional dimension of the relationship between parents who pay for their child's education and teachers in independent schools. The value of reputation is perhaps more keenly felt by schools that depend on fees and on parents who are clients or customers.

## Relationships between carers and teachers

Contact between formal carers and teachers appeared to be more frequent and of a different nature than contact between parents and teachers. Formal carers are trained in the principles and values of fostering, the role played by foster carers, the relevant legislation, communication, child development and safeguarding.<sup>13</sup> Their relationships with a child and with the child's teacher are legally circumscribed in ways that those between parents and their children and child's teachers are not.<sup>14</sup> Schools' responsibilities towards pupils with foster carers are also legally codified. One foster carer spoke of meeting on a weekly basis with her child's teacher, to review progress within the context of the child's personal education plan (PEP).

## Relationships between parents and carers and teachers at PRUs and special schools

Parents and carers of children at pupil referral units (PRUs) and at special schools reported having close relationships with teachers and schools, often because of the very particular physical, behavioural, or social and emotional needs of their children. They were more likely to meet teachers in person, and as with independent schools and state primary schools, smaller class sizes and a more individualised approach were seen as facilitating this. Participants in this group were largely positive about their communication with teachers, citing regular meetings, phone calls, email and text as the channels used. They also reflected on the productive relationships they had witnessed between teachers in such schools and agencies such as social care, mental health trusts, doctors and the police.

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<sup>13</sup> For more details, see <http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/foster-care/standards>

<sup>14</sup> Eg, Children and Young Persons Act 2008, The Designated Teacher (Looked After Pupils etc) (England) Regulations 2009

## Parents' initial understanding of accountability

Early discussions of accountability showed that parents' grasp of the term was often tentative. Many elided the differences between responsiveness, responsibility and accountability. Even where they noted these differences, their understanding of accountability tended to be unstable throughout discussions.

Our aims at the start of the focus groups were to understand parents' spontaneous response to and definition of the term and to help them to develop their own understanding of it, in preparation for the later mapping exercise. We wanted as well to explore their awareness and knowledge of the various accountability arrangements in schools, and the mechanisms through which accountability is enacted.

In their initial definitions of accountability (Figure 1), parents see the concept encompassing a wide range of different functions, most of which are viewed positively. Accountability is important for children's progress and safety; it is a means by which parents gain information about teachers (*'reporting back'*); it is about teaching as a profession, and about individual teachers' professional development; it is about the progress of schools as a whole; and it is about the relationship between parents, teachers and the Head, and helping to ensure that this relationship is built on trust.

Accountability is...

- *'what means we can make sure children do their best'*
- *'awareness of a child's individual needs'*
- *'keeps our children safe'*
- *'a measured way of knowing things about teachers'*
- *'a more direct relationship between teachers, parents and the Head'*
- *'reporting back, on both positive and negative things'*
- *'ensuring you have trust in the professionals teaching your children'*
- *'what makes teaching a profession, rather than a hobby or interest area'*
- *'helps teachers to progress and not stagnate'*
- *'necessary for everyone's peace of mind'*

**FIGURE 1. PARENTS' SPONTANEOUS DEFINITIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

When parents spoke positively about accountability, it was generally with respect to functions related directly to the interests of their own child or to the quality of the relationship between parents and teachers. In this early discussion, accountability is being positioned as primarily ethical and moral, as something that is *'driven by internal values'* and *'supported by their [teachers'] professional status'* and hence – in contrast with Bovens' definition – not formally encoded. Parents seem as well to see accountability as a collaborative relationship between themselves and teachers, which resonates with Levitt et al's (2008) comment that accountability relationships are increasingly horizontal, rather than of the vertical 'superior/subordinate' type.

A few parents, particularly those of secondary school age children, had more negative views of accountability. Some parents' immediate and strong retort, when asked about accountability in

teaching, said that there was no such thing and that teachers close ranks when parents seek to raise issues with them. This view tended to fade in later discussions.

*'There's now such huge accountability for teachers from so many angles that they can't possibly keep up with it all. Something has to give, and it shouldn't be accountability to the children themselves or the parents.'* – Secondary school parent

The requirement on teachers to answer to central government was viewed most negatively and the quote below suggests that the impersonal nature of this process lies behind parents' aversion. Statistics and league tables capture information about a population – the school as a whole or its performance in a particular subject area, for example, whilst parents' primary interest is in the extent to which accountability arrangements protect the interests of their own child/ren.

*'Teachers are increasingly having to answer to long-distant Government people who are only interested in statistics and figures, and not in individual child development.'* – Secondary school parent

This quote echoes very closely Levitt et al's (2008) description of teaching to the test as 'a consequence of imposing a performance and target regime that carries too strong a drive to prove measurable performance improvements at the expense of the overall quality of the professional work'<sup>15</sup>. Parents with more negative views of accountability seem to be picking up – unwittingly perhaps – on what Levitt et al call the 'blind spot' in professional accountability. Their view that the requirement on schools and teachers to collect performance data for government is fulfilled at the expense of attention to children's wellbeing and happiness resonates with Levitt et al's comment that the 'strong emphasis on performance improvement can lead to rigidity that fixates on one particular aspect of performance'.<sup>16</sup>

When prompted to draw comparisons between accountability in teaching and accountability in other professions – for example, medicine, or law – participants suggested that in other professions, accountability only comes into play when a professional fails. They reflected as well on the difference between the more immediate and potentially very serious consequences of a failure to uphold professional standards in medicine and the less easily identified and longer-term effects of this in teaching.

*'You only hear the word 'accountability' when there's something wrong.'* – Primary school parent

*'Accountability in medicine has the worst consequences if it's not taken seriously. Child safety is obviously the same in teaching, but accountability for longer-term learning outcomes is obviously more subtle.'* – Secondary school parent

## Contrasting accountability and responsibility

To help parents gain purchase on the concept of accountability and to differentiate accountability mechanisms from other aspects of their relationship with teachers, we asked them to contrast it first with responsibility and then with responsiveness.

The distinction between responsibility and accountability was seen as vague and many parents struggled to articulate where it lay. However, discussing the difference between the two

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid p 9

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability\\_of\\_teachers](http://www.gtce.org.uk/133031/133036/139594/accountability_of_teachers) p 8 & 9



concepts prompted parents to re-frame their concept of accountability and the issues it encompassed and to identify a number of additional accountability mechanisms. They tended to focus more now on formal organisational and professional accountabilities, identifying both in-school and external mechanisms such as line management, governance, examination results and Ofsted inspections. They tended as well to be more negative about accountability, characterising it as burdensome, overly bureaucratic and *'more official'*.

*'Accountability is a line management thing...there is that pressure on them to get results. But responsibility is to have a community of young people that come to that school.'* - Secondary foster parent

Those aspects of accountability that parents had initially viewed positively and which relate directly to a child's happiness, wellbeing, safety and progress, were now seen by parents as responsibilities. This shift appears to result primarily from parents finding it difficult to identify ways in which either they or their children could hold teachers to account for these things. In other words, because they cannot identify the mechanisms available to them or others by which teachers can be held accountable for these things, they re-describe them as responsibilities. However, failure to identify accountability mechanisms does not mean that there are no mechanisms in place or that teachers are not accountable for these things. Whilst it is possible and correct to describe these things as responsibilities, they are also things for which teachers are professionally and ethically accountable – for example, they are covered in the Code of Conduct. This relationship is highlighted by Levitt et al, who note that, whilst ethical accountability itself might be reliant on internalised values and individual responsibilities, it is *often linked to an external code of conduct and formalised by a professional organisation*<sup>17</sup>.

A further evident tension in parents' discussion of accountability is that between collective and individual benefits, which Levitt et al also point to, describing ethical accountability as *'based on an accommodation'* between these two *'competing requirements'*<sup>18</sup>. On balance, parents seem to favour the individual benefits that accountability brings to them – peace of mind, reassurance and trust – and to their child/ren – safety, educational progress, enjoyment of learning. Those things seen as of wider benefit – overall school performance, whether in inspections or in exam results – are less valued. This suggests that the right accommodation between collective and individual benefits has not, in parents' minds, been achieved. The difficulties of reaching a satisfactory accommodation are highlighted in the second stage of the research.

In one group, some parents noted that two people need to be involved in an accountability relationship, whereas responsibility can be felt without there any means of determining whether or not they have fulfilled this responsibility or taking them to task for any failure.

*'So as a parent, whilst I am responsible for making sure my child brushes his teeth every morning, there is nobody actually holding me to account for that (apart from potentially the dentist in a few years' time!'* – Primary school parent

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p9. This confusion in parents' minds raises two questions. Is the accountability typology outlined by Levitt et al over-broad: ie, does the absence of formal inscription or *method*, which is central to Bovens' definition, mean that ethical or moral accountabilities are more properly defined as responsibilities. Or, instead, does Bovens' description, by focusing on method, fail to capture something that is essential to accountability relationships but not formally inscribed?

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

## Contrasting accountability and responsiveness

Superficially, parents found defining the difference between accountability and responsiveness easier than defining the difference between accountability and responsibility. However, this distinction was also unstable and parents ended up conflating the two concepts. They saw responsiveness as fundamental to a positive relationship with teachers and as a way in which teachers demonstrate their accountability to parents (or others). In other words, responsiveness is one of the mechanisms through which teachers account to parents. It is perhaps one of the actions through which teachers demonstrate their responsibility and adherence to a set of values that might be described as ethical and hence as core to an effective accountability relationship. Parents felt that they should be able to hold teachers to account for their responsiveness to parents, though the way in which they might do this was not made clear.

## An unstable concept

The shift in parents' definitions of accountability during these conversations is note worthy, with clear indications that parents continued to find it difficult to define the difference between accountability and responsibility and accountability and responsiveness. Several factors, such as the wellbeing and happiness of children, were originally classified as things for which parents were accountable, but later in the discussion they were re-classified as things for which teachers were responsible. Many parents were happy with settling on the distinction that accountability requires two 'actors', whilst responsibility can be held within an individual teacher without the need for anyone else. Others were keen to stress the point that failed accountability brings with it consequences, whereas failed responsibility in many cases does not. The fine line between accountability and responsibility, and parents' difficulty in maintaining a distinction between them was present throughout the remainder of the research. In many cases, it may be that parents are indeed describing ethical or moral accountability, rather than responsibility. The difficulty lies then with the informal mechanisms – based on responsiveness, communication and trust – through which this type of accountability works, and its contrast with other types of accountability, that are enacted through formal and structured mechanisms, with clear sanctions in place when accounts fall short. It lies too with the difficulty of reaching a shared and balanced accommodation between the collective and individual benefits of accountability.

## The purpose of accountability

Levitt et al (2008) note that the literature associates different types of accountability with different purposes. Ethical or moral accountability *'[builds] on the ordinary moral responsibilities of people as citizens and serves civil society through established ethical obligations and rights internalized by individuals'*. As noted earlier, this is often linked to an external professional code.

Parents found it quite challenging to identify the purpose served by accountability. However, during their discussion they did identify a number of different possible purposes, some of which resonate with the purpose of moral and ethical accountability, noted above. For example, one purpose of accountability in teaching was seen as providing peace of mind to parents, by teachers fulfilling their obligations to the children in their care. Other parents focused purposes that were more aligned with those more formal types of accountability about which they had been more negative.

The purpose of organisational accountability is described by Levitt et al (2008) as being to:

*'secure compliance with organisational rules and standards; effective governance and accountability arrangements provide feedback to increase effectiveness of performance'*.<sup>19</sup>

During the course of the discussion on the purposes of accountability, some parents began to identify positive aspects to the wider accountability elements in teaching which had previously been seen in a more negative light. Some saw its purpose as being to ensure consistency of performance across schools. Through targets, standards and inspection processes, parents felt that politicians and educational advisors were able to hold teachers to account. This allowed failing schools to be identified and their problems addressed. However, this understanding of the purpose of accountability perhaps relates most directly to the accountability of the school as a whole, rather than to the accountability of individual teachers. Parents are here identifying and seeing value in the collective benefits of accountability.

When parents struggled to identify purposes of accountability, we sought their responses to teachers' views on the main purposes of accountability, explored in the previous research. These included:

- Maintaining public confidence in teaching standards;
- Upholding public perceptions of the profession;
- Encouraging improvement in school performance;
- Providing opportunities for teachers to showcase their achievements;
- Safeguarding the welfare of pupils in their care.

Teachers' focus encompasses organisational accountability (school performance); professional accountability (public confidence in the profession and teaching standards); legal accountability (safeguarding) and, underpinning them all, ethical accountability. Parents were broadly in agreement with the purposes of accountability identified by teachers. However, they felt that it was also possible for 'public confidence in teaching' and 'upholding public perceptions of the profession' to be undermined by *too much* accountability to Government and Ofsted, if time spent fulfilling these obligations meant sacrificing communication with parents and carers. In other words, parents are again concerned primarily about the balance between professional accountability – which encodes ethical accountability – and organisational accountability.

## The benefits of accountability

The majority of parents found it easier to discuss the benefits than the purposes of accountability. They felt that purpose and benefit were closely linked, and that a discussion of the benefits of accountability would also highlight its main purposes.

The most valued benefits of accountability were linked to factors around 'responsiveness'. Receiving timely and relevant information from teachers was seen as having a big impact on parents' peace of mind and knowledge of their child's progress. The benefits for teachers were thought to be at an individual teacher level, such as increased motivation, as well as a profession-wide level, such as improving the quality and reputation of the profession.

## Who benefits from accountability arrangements in teaching?

As noted earlier, many parents saw accountability primarily in terms of its benefits for pupils, rather than for teachers or parents, though the direct benefits for pupils were indirectly beneficial

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<sup>19</sup> Levitt et al 2008, p27

for parents. For example, if teachers were fulfilling and being held accountable for the quality of their teaching and their pupils' learning, parents would benefit indirectly as they would note their child's progress and be assured that their child was happy at school.

The principal benefits identified by parents for pupils, parents and teachers are summarised below, with a further section on accountability to 'others' at the bottom. For each group for whom benefits are identified, there is a mix of collective and individual benefits. For example, teachers are felt to benefit from accountability mechanisms that highlight their individual development needs whilst there is collective benefit to the profession if consistently poor teachers are removed. Some of the direct benefits to individuals – for example, being treated fairly and having ones personal development needs supported – will have indirect collective benefits as well, both within the school and more widely. For example, developing teaching strategies that meet the needs of individual children may help others in the class by reducing disruption; or it may mean that children are more likely to go out into the world equipped with the social and intellectual skills they need to survive and flourish. Alternatively, some of the benefits to individuals may be said to have collective disadvantages. Attention to individual children's safety is unlikely to be something any parent would argue against; however, they do feel that it has led to fewer school trips, which is seen as disadvantageous. In reading the list below, therefore, it is useful to keep in mind the extent to which the benefits identified by parent accrue to individuals or are collective – or both – and whether benefits for one group translate into disadvantages for another.

### **For pupils...**

The perceived benefits of accountability for pupils included:

- **Being treated as individuals:** secondary school parents pointed out that teacher accountability for implementing new Government legislation such as 'personalisation' meant that teachers had to consider each child's individual needs and respond to those rather than just focusing on the whole class;
- **Having their development needs supported:** this was raised by parents of children with special educational needs in particular, who commented on the benefits of teachers being held accountable to support the statementing process for ADHD and dyslexia, and picking up on development needs in the first place;
- **Being treated more fairly:** parents perceived that teachers in the past have been less accountable, and recalled more bullying behaviour in their own education from teachers and more physical punishment in the days when they themselves attended school. Fairer treatment of pupils was felt to be a direct result of accountability, rather than any changes in human nature;
- **Being kept safe:** Teachers' accountability for child safety, formalised through elements such as the Criminal Records Bureau check, was seen by parents as increasing the safety and welfare of pupils. Whilst many parents felt that attention to pupils' safety could be taken to extremes, leading to things that might be against their interests, (e.g. banning school trips) they did think accountability was important in protecting their children from being bullied;
- **Getting the education they deserve:** this was felt to be important because grades at school affect the rest of your life, and if teachers aren't accountable for pupil results then it more likely that some children will slip through the net.

### For parents...

The principle purpose and benefits of teachers' accountability from the point of view of parents and carers included:

- **Peace of mind and reassurance:** parents felt that accountability brings with it a reassurance that 'things are in order' and that their child's education and well-being is in safe hands. If teachers worked for themselves, and were free from accountability, participants felt that they would be much more unsettled as parents and this would impact on their peace of mind;
- **Receiving more information about children's progress:** if teachers weren't accountable for communication through reports and parents' evenings, then parents remarked it would be possible for parents to remain completely in the dark about their child's progress and unable to give them the appropriate support at home;
- **Receiving explanations for decisions affecting a child:** for example, a parent of a child at a PRU described how, when their son was excluded by teachers, the Governing body held a meeting with the parents to explain why the decision was made. This was felt by that particular parent to be a positive example of accountability;
- **Getting value for money:** this was raised in particular by parents from independent schools, who felt they deserved to know where their money was going and what added value their children were going to get out of their education.

### For teachers...

The main benefits of accountability for teachers highlighted by parents were as follows:

- **Having their performance monitored:** Parents noted that accountability 'puts pressure on teachers to perform; you can get good and bad teachers (as you can pupils) – if there's accountability, that should show up'. Parents felt this would benefit teachers by flagging up areas for development and potentially informing training opportunities;
- **Increasing motivation:** Accountability provides goals and direction for teachers who might otherwise get lost in their own interest area. This would bring with it benefits for individual teachers, as well as for the teaching profession more widely in terms of performance and reputation;
- **Removing bad teachers:** Appropriate accountability to Heads/SMTs for being good teachers was thought to be the only way in which 'bad teachers' who were consistently underperforming could be removed from the school system. This was felt to be beneficial for the teaching profession as a whole in terms of improving the quality and reputation of the profession.

### For others...

The principle purpose and benefits of teachers' accountability from the point of view of other parties were as follows:

- **Ensuring 'value for money' for tax payers:** as a wider example of the point above, parents noted that teaching and education is a public service, so teachers should be providing value for money to all tax-payers, and should be accountable for this. This line of accountability therefore brings about benefits for parents and the wider population;
- **Measuring a school's performance as a business:** schools were seen by some parents to be a business which, if successful, will attract more pupils and wider support from the

community. Parents therefore felt that accountability in teaching could bring benefits to parents by ensuring good performance and fulfilling objectives outlined within their school strategy;

- **Ensuring a peaceful community:** parents felt that teachers' accountability to the local community for teaching pupils to behave properly was helpful in maintaining social behaviour in the community, and maintaining the reputation of the school.

## Mapping accountability

After the quite detailed exploration of accountability, its purposes, benefits and related concepts (such as responsibility), parents mapped accountability relationships in teaching, identifying:

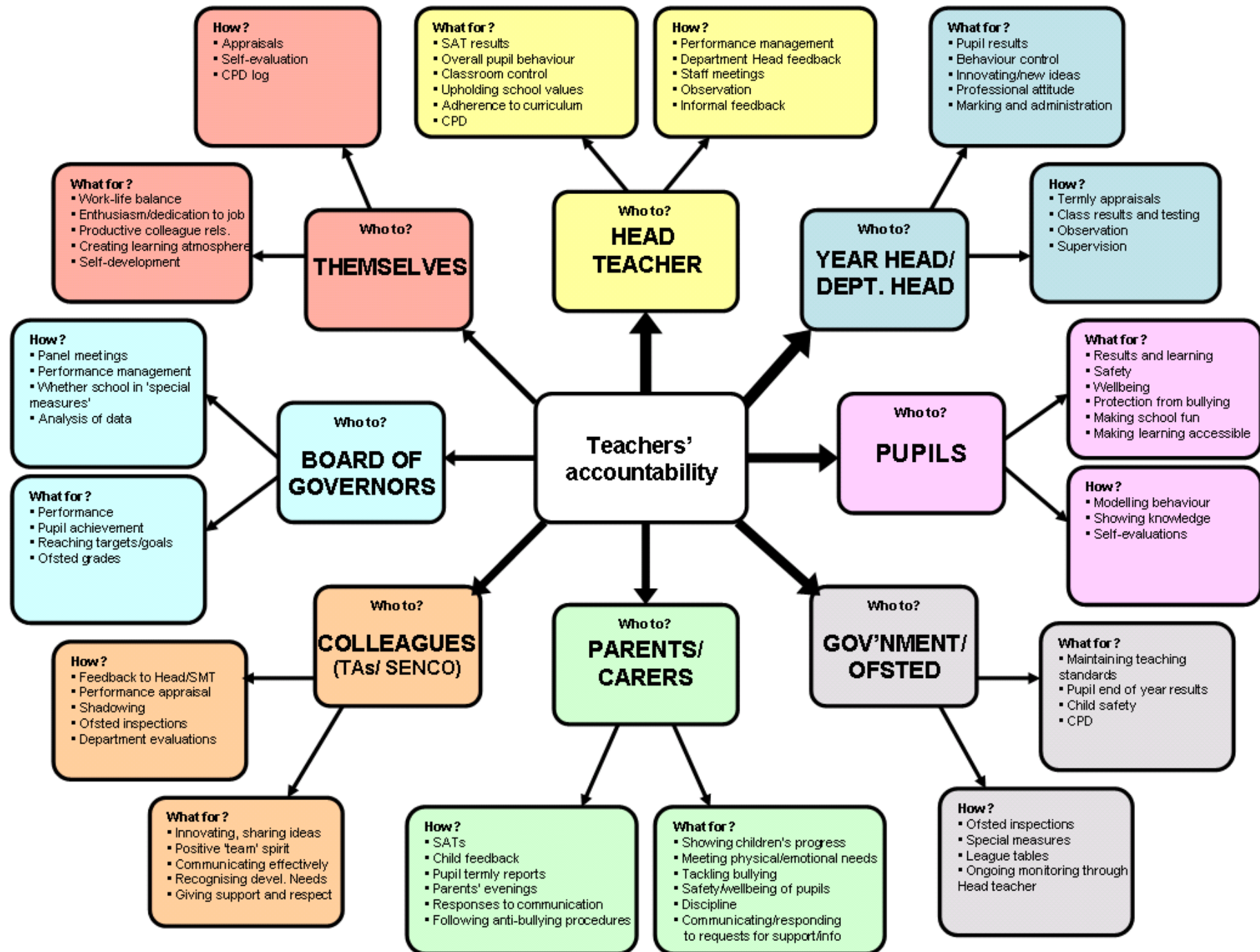
- the people and organisations to whom they felt teachers were accountable;
- what it was they felt teachers were accountable to these stakeholders for;
- the different ways in which they felt teachers were held to account for this.

They indicated as well how strong they felt the different accountabilities were and which were most prominent. They were also asked to categorise the nature of the relationship in question as either moral, legal, professional or organisational.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 2 below shows a synthesis of 20 accountability maps produced across the 6 parents' and carers' groups. The different widths of the connecting arrows denote the strength of accountability that parents felt teachers have towards each of these stakeholders.

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<sup>20</sup> See the earlier discussion on page 12 for the typology of accountability



## Parents' perceptions of accountability

The mapping exercise encouraged parents to see accountability as a system and teachers as actors within that system. This was an important exercise, providing useful information on the ways in which parents reconfigured some of their initial ideas, once teachers' accountability was seen in its wider context. Parents appear to feel relatively well-informed about the external mechanisms through which schools – or head teachers - are held directly to account and (according to their map) teachers are held indirectly to account. However, they did question whether individual teachers were directly accountable to central and local government, having no experience of individuals facing sanctions as a consequence of failing to provide a satisfactory account to these bodies.

They were much less informed about school-based accountability mechanisms and had different levels of interest in becoming more informed. Most parents trusted head teachers to ensure these systems were in place. They were not certain whether the relationship between colleagues at a similar or lower level – for example, other teachers, SENCOs or TAs – was one of accountability or responsibility, again because they could not identify any mechanism by which teachers could be held to account by their colleagues.

During this exercise, parents continued to conflate responsibility, responsiveness and accountability. For example, making school fun and achieving a work-life balance, modelling behaviour and showing knowledge might all be described as responsibilities. There was insufficient time in the discussion groups to tease out with parents which of the mapped relationships they saw as accountabilities and which as responsibilities. However, rather than edit the map, we feel there is value in looking at all the relationships identified. As highlighted earlier in the report, responsibility is an essential element of accountability – particularly ethical and moral accountability – and hence the distinction between the two is not fast. The list is presented in order of the strength that parents attached to each accountability relationship, with the strongest first.

### Accountability to the Head teacher

Parents saw teachers' accountability to their head teacher as both professional and organisational, operating through external mechanisms such as inspection and school examinations and through school-based performance management processes. Head teachers were felt to have overall accountability for school results, pupil behaviour and school reputation. In the context of discussing how accountability works on a day-to-day basis, one parent described how a new head teacher had used internal performance management systems, stronger line management and regular appraisals to motivate teachers and raise performance in a struggling school.

Many parents said they were 'ignorant' of the different methods by which teaching standards and behaviour were assessed within schools. Some were content with this, trusting schools to manage teachers' performance effectively. Others said they would welcome greater transparency and particularly to have information on how 'bad teachers' are held to account for their poor teaching.

*'Whilst we assume it is being done well, there are many examples of really bad teachers who aren't teaching the kids properly being left within the schools for years and years. Where's the accountability there?'* – Secondary school parent.



### **Accountability to head of department or year head**

Teachers' accountability to their head of department or year head was felt to be of equal or similar strength to their accountability to the head teacher, primarily because teachers' relationship with the head teacher was felt to be mediated by department or year heads. Parents envisaged classroom teachers being directly accountable to year heads (for things such as class results), and year heads in turn being accountable to head teachers.

Again, parents had limited knowledge of how this relationship was codified and of the frequency and structure of performance management, line management and appraisal systems. They felt that regular contact and communication between classroom teachers and department or year heads would strengthen accountability relationships. This resonates with an earlier discussion, and one which follows in a later section (on parents' stake in accountability), both of which position effective communication and regular access to teachers as integral elements in upholding ethical and moral accountability.

### **Accountability to pupils**

Parents debated whether there was an accountability relationship between pupils and teachers. Aside from pupil feedback questionnaires and pupil input into Ofsted inspections, parents were unable to think of any ways in which pupils were personally able to contribute to holding teachers to account, and could identify no direct accountability relationship between pupils and teachers. They did feel that teachers' accountability to pupils should be stronger, and that ways of increasing pupils' power to hold teachers to account should be explored. However, the suggestion of increasing opportunities for pupils to feedback on their teachers' performance is perhaps a further example of indirect, rather than direct accountability:

*'There should be more ways to feed back, even for the little ones.'* – Primary school parent

*'At the moment this line of accountability is not as strong as it should be, and there needs to be thought about ways to strengthen it. It would be more empowering for pupils themselves.'* – Secondary school parent

Many secondary school parents agreed that the strength of teachers' accountability towards their pupils changes as a child progresses through school, with accountability to pupils in secondary school seen as much stronger than that towards children in primary school.

### **Accountability to central government**

Parents thought that teachers' accountability to government was directly linked to their accountability to Ofsted though, as noted above, their accountability to these external bodies was seen as mediated by the head teacher. Parents had no evidence of individual teachers being reprimanded directly through the Ofsted process. This means that they have repositioned their understanding of this accountability mechanism. At first, it was seen as a bureaucratic imposition on individual teachers, limiting the time they had to spend with individual children. However, in the mapping exercise, they positioned within the wider system, with the head teacher taking on the direct accountability for collective progress.

### **Accountability to local government**

In the mapping exercise, accountability to the local authority was included within accountability to government and parents saw it as primarily a relationship between the head teacher and the local authority. The discussion of day-to-day accountability highlighted the

rareness, in parents' eyes, of local authority involvement in schools, and their important role in stepping in when school-based accountabilities fail. The involvement of the local authority signals that a problem is more severe and that school-based accountability mechanisms have failed, are of the wrong type or are not sufficiently robust to cope with a particular problem. However, parents' examples of the escalation of problems to the local authority tended to focus less on the severity of the issue than on the repeated failure of a school to address what might seem a fairly minor matter. One parent described having complained to a Head that their son had said there were no locks on the toilet doors. When no action was taken, the complaint was repeated on several occasions, with the Head promising that arrangements would be made for broken locks to be mended. When nothing happened, the parent took the issue to the local authority, following which locks were repaired immediately, leading the parent to feel that the LA either took its accountabilities more seriously or that the school felt its accountability to the local authority more keenly than its accountability to parents or pupils. This issue is perhaps a school-based problem rather than one for which an individual teacher could be held to account. However, it does illustrate that when parents feel unable to hold schools to account they are happy to look for external bodies that can do this on their behalf.

*'Local authority involvement is more a rarity than a norm, [but] if it gets bad, the LEA is brought in to sort things out.'* – Secondary parent

Without prompting, parents from Leicester highlighted teachers' accountability to the GTC, which they saw this as directly related to their accountability to the government. They described teachers as accountable to the GTC for maintaining training and continued professional development (CPD), and for upholding the Code of Conduct.

### **Accountability to parents and carers**

Parents felt that teachers were accountable to them as parents and carers. As with pupils, however, they could identify few mechanisms through which they could hold teachers to account, which meant they saw it as weak in comparison with accountability to head teachers or government. Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) were seen as one good channel for ensuring accountability to parents. However, views on the effectiveness of PTAs were varied. Some parents felt they were good, whilst others saw them as inaccessible and more focused on fundraising than on teaching and learning. As with previous findings from the opening discussions in these groups, the way in which parents described teachers' accountability towards them was presented more as resembling a combination of 'responsiveness' and 'responsibility' rather than accountability.

Parents raised the issue of bullying repeatedly and unprompted and felt that tackling bullying and protecting children from harm were things for which teachers should be held most accountable to parents and carers. They felt that many teachers - particularly those in larger schools - were failing to address bullying, primarily because of large class sizes. More generally, parents felt that accountability to parents and carers followed an inverse pattern to that shown towards pupils, with stronger accountability towards primary school parents than those with children of secondary school age, whilst accountability towards pupils was felt to strengthen as they progressed through their school lives.

*'As the accountability to children increases as they grow older, and so the accountability to parents weakens as a result. That's natural and how it should be.'* – Secondary school parent

### **Accountability to colleagues**

Accountability to colleagues, and most notably to special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and teaching assistants (TAs), was raised by parents of children at PRUs and special schools in particular. They emphasised the importance of strong and collegiate relationships between teachers and other professionals, inside and outside the school. Parents felt teachers were particularly accountable to TAs and SENCOs for communicating effectively about children's needs, and working as part of a multi-disciplinary team to meet the individual needs of each child. Parents of children in PRUs also highlighted the importance of accountability between teachers and colleagues in external agencies such as doctors, therapists, social workers and members of local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) teams. Parents felt teachers had accountability in particular for maintaining lines of communication with these professionals, and ensuring they were available to discuss concerns when necessary.

### **Accountability to governing body**

Parents felt that teachers were accountable to the governing body via the head teacher, and that the power of the governing body to sack individual teachers for breach of conduct meant that it could directly hold teachers to account for their behaviour. They did think that the strength of accountability to the governing body would depend on the type of school, the nature of the governing body and the relationship between the governors and the head teacher. Teachers in schools where the relationship between governors and the head teacher was close were thought more likely to feel their accountability towards the governing body more keenly. This supports their view that teachers' strongest sense of accountability is to the head teacher. Parents felt as well that accountability between teachers and the governing body would be stronger in secondary schools than in primary schools. This was linked to the greater formality and size of the governing bodies in secondary school settings:

*'Primary school governing bodies often seem to be quite small, meet irregularly, and often made up from lots of keen parents. Secondary school ones – in my experience – have more external presence and are more powerful'* – Secondary school parent

*'With some schools, the Governors are very distant and trust the Head to hold overall accountability for many things, whereas others are directly involved in recruitment and performance management. That role would affect accountability'* – Secondary school parent

### **Accountability to sponsoring bodies**

Parents of children at faith or voluntary aided schools identified the importance of accountability to the faith base (i.e. the Dioceses, synagogue or temple) or the sponsoring organisation (in the case of voluntary-aided schools). These bodies were seen as holding teachers to account for their moral standards and behaviour, their standard of teaching, maintaining values in line with the faith or sponsoring organisation and providing evidence of pupil learning and achievement in line with the original objectives of the school. Parents were unsure about how these accounts were given by teachers and suggested that these were perhaps responsibilities rather than accountabilities.

### **Accountability to the teaching profession**

Teachers were seen as professionally accountable to themselves and to colleagues. They were self accountable for commitment to their job, to continuing professional development (CPD) and for their own job satisfaction, by maintaining a good work-life balance. Some

parents struggled to see how teachers could hold themselves to account, and reiterated the point that an accountability relationship requires two separate individuals or bodies:

*'By nature accountability needs one party to be the 'account giver' and the other to be the 'account seeker'. If there's only one party then it's not accountability anymore. It's responsibility. Or just a goal' – Secondary school parent*

CPD was the only area which all parents agreed it would be possible for teachers to hold themselves to account, through the completion of an ongoing CPD log. CPD was also seen as an element in teachers' accountability to their colleagues and the wider teaching profession, for maintaining the skills and knowledge needed to perform well in the role.

### Day-to-day accountability

We have provided some examples above of ways in which parents see particular accountability relationships working on a day-to-day basis. Their general view was that day-to-day accountability should operate school-based mechanisms, on the basis that this would be less costly and more directly effective, as problems could be addressed more rapidly. Their main concern is that day-to-day accountability mechanisms are able to identify poor teachers and provide ways of either supporting their development or, if essential, removing them from practice. Without being prompted, some parents proposed a 'licence to practice', seeing it as a good tool for identifying teachers with inadequate skills and expertise. They were also positive about CPD, acknowledging both its purpose and benefits, but expressed concern that additional CPD during term-time would detract further from time spent with the children:

*'A licence would be a good idea – where teachers have to renew [it].'* – Primary school parent

In contrast to parents of children at state schools, parents from the independent sector said that they felt the teacher's day-to-day accountability to parents was more consistent. They felt that teachers took more initiative to get in touch with parents unprompted, were easier to get hold of and were more responsive to requests around problems with children. However, as noted earlier, they did have a strong sense that problematic issues were kept quiet to avoid reputational damage, which meant that accountability to parents could, in many situations, be undermined in the interests of protecting the public standing of the school.

## 4 Summary and implications of stage one findings

### Summary of stage one

The majority of primary school parents said they had good relationships with their children's schools and teachers, whilst parents of secondary school children were more negative. The primary elements of a positive relationship were communication, trust and responsiveness. Whilst primary parents see their child/ren's teachers as available, visible and easy to talk to, secondary school parents saw their child/ren's teachers as unavailable, often uncommunicative and somewhat remote. They were also concerned about being perceived as 'pushy' parents.

Initially, parents identified accountability with things such as safety and security for their child and reassurance and peace of mind for themselves. Only when digging deeper into the concept and contrasting accountability with related concepts such as responsibility and responsiveness did they identify more formal accountability mechanisms, such as inspections. Initially, they saw these as bureaucratic and burdensome, on the grounds that they took away from the time teachers had to spend addressing the needs of individual children. However, they did see some benefits to formal accountability mechanisms. These included protecting nationally consistent standards and comparability across schools; providing motivation for teachers and structure to their role, and peace of mind for parents, who would know through these mechanisms that their school was performing well – or less well and hence that their child was (or was not) likely to achieve its full potential in that school. They saw accountability as having both collective and individual benefits for a range of different stakeholders and, when considering the system as a whole, acknowledged the complexity and number of teachers' accountabilities.

In discussions on the rebalancing of accountability, the majority of parents felt the current framework was too focused on accountability to central government, and that teachers' accountability could be rebalanced through greater accountability to themselves; to parents and carers; to their pupils; to their colleagues and to the local authority. In stage one, parents were largely in favour of a shift away from national forms of accountability and targets towards more local accountability which they felt would be more likely to increase teachers' time to focus on individual child development.

### Re-balancing accountabilities: learning from stage one

The parents of primary school children felt strongly that good parenting has an important role to play in children's education, and did not think that teachers could be held to account for every aspect of a child's behaviour. Some suggested that '*teachers have become too accountable*' and that rebalancing accountability would entail parents being properly responsible for their children's behaviour. However, others suggested that teachers often see children for longer during the day, and should therefore be held accountable for their pupils' behaviour.

Although parents involved in stage one were ambivalent about the level of accountability teachers currently have to central government, seeing it as having both benefits and disadvantages, they did see value in placing more emphasis on accountability to other stakeholders and reducing central accountability. The other stakeholders to whom greater accountability might be of benefit were as follows:

- **teachers themselves:** *'if not enjoyment [in the role], then pride'*, but that more effective methods for holding oneself to account for these factors would have to be developed;
- **parents and carers:** although the responsibility and responsiveness of teachers to parents was already felt to be strong in many cases, parents wanted strengthened accountability to parents, with requirements for more regular communication around pupil progress and more opportunities for parents to get in touch when they had concerns. In terms of formal accountability, the key area in which parents felt teachers needed to have greater accountability to parents was around preventing and tackling bullying behaviour within their schools;
- **pupils:** with greater power for pupils themselves to feed back on teachers and expose teachers who were not doing their jobs properly; *'children could do 360 degree review on teachers' performance'*;
- **their colleagues:** although marked on the map as having relatively weak accountability, parents felt accountability to colleagues (including their head teacher) to be the most fundamental line of accountability for maintaining and raising standards: *'there should be more emphasis on peer learning and peer review'*;
- **the Local Authority:** some parents felt that if poorly performing teachers were not being removed from a school, then the local authority had a role to play. They suggested strengthening the accountability between individual teachers and the LA. They saw this as helping to ensure that all teachers were of 'the same standard', and felt that LA should have more power to remove teachers due to repeated poor performance. Interestingly, this concern over consistency in standards across schools was seen as the most beneficial aspect of accountability to central Government. Others said that local authorities should be able to take more direct action against individual underperforming teachers, because Ofsted currently does not have the power to remove individuals.

These proposals for rebalancing and shifting accountabilities at this stage were taken forward with other key messages from stage 1 to inform the design and writing of the stage 2 scenarios.

### National vs. local accountability

The majority of parents supported a shift in the balance of accountabilities, away from national organisations and towards local authorities and internal school processes, including performance management.

Without prompting, parents identified the current emphasis on central government targets, SATS and exam results as having a negative impact on teachers' accountability to parents and pupils and as disconnected from the individual needs of pupils and day-to-day school life. Target-based accountability was felt to *'move teachers away from focusing on the well-being and life skills of children, towards focusing purely on results'*.

Accountability to local authorities and within schools was seen as helping to ensure that *'things happen, and you know about it'*. Local systems were seen as more responsive and, at least in theory, as more transparent. Local accountabilities were also seen as more able to flex according to local contexts. More localised accountability could mean *'things would be done differently in Leicester and London'*:

*'You can't compare a comprehensive in inner-city London with a small rural school in Wiltshire. They're not comparable and it's wrong to do so.'* – Secondary school parent

Although parents had limited understanding of how school-based performance management worked, they did seem to think that, as a locally-based form of accountability, it could offer benefits if it were made more transparent.

*‘As a parent, I don’t think it’s transparent enough, as a public service there needs to be more say for individual teachers to be performance managed.’ – Primary school parent*

Some parents saw risks in over-diluting national accountability, which they felt would jeopardise the ability to compare schools and ensure standards were nationally consistent. However, the majority of parents did seem to feel that their individual child’s results were unlikely to suffer as a result of reduced accountability to central government, and that their child’s happiness and enjoyment of school was more important than attainment, especially at primary school age:

*‘Children of 6 years shouldn’t be coming home crying due to the stress of exams. They should be enjoying themselves, and learning in a stress-free environment. That is much better for their development than passing exams at that age.’ – Primary school parent*

In conclusion, whilst parents felt there were more benefits associated with local rather than national accountability for their own individual children, they were reluctant to propose a shift away from all forms of national accountability. They wanted stronger local accountability but were not prepared to relinquish any of the processes or elements of existing accountability arrangements. This theme recurred more strongly in the second stage of the research.

## Parents’ stake in accountability

At the end of the focus groups, parents were asked what stake they had in different forms of teachers’ accountability. To help parents consider this question we defined ‘stake’ as the level of ‘interest’ and ‘investment’ parents felt they had in the accountability of teachers.

The discussion was complex. Parents were very clear that they had a stake in accountability in teaching, and saw this as bound closely to their children’s stake. However, there was some confusion at the heart of the discussion. Parents tended to conflate having a stake in accountability arrangements – that is, having an interest in them working effectively - with being able to express or protect their stake, or with this stake being acknowledged or protected by others. Their default position was that their interests are protected as a matter of course and hence that there is no need for them to have a role in protecting their own interests. It is when accountability arrangements are not working effectively that they want their voices to be heard. When in-school accountability mechanisms fail, they want to be able to call on an external body, which can step in and protect their interests and those of their child – hence their emphasis on the role of the local authority.

*‘At the end of the day most parents just want teachers and the school to get on with it, and they only feel they need more stake in accountability when accountability seems to be going wrong. If it’s going right, then the only role for parents really should be around communication with the teacher, rather than holding them to account. That’s the role of the school.’ – Secondary school parent*

Some parents did feel that they could play a more active role in protecting their stake in accountability arrangements and saw their ability to do this as linked to their level of access to teachers. They felt that teachers would welcome this closer relationship with parents – for example, through regularly scheduled meetings - but that barriers such as time constraints and administration responsibilities stood in the way. However, secondary school parents emphasised that it was important to be realistic about how much time parents had to take an

active role as stakeholders. They felt that whilst many parents might *claim* to want to have more involvement, in reality for most parents this was either not a priority or not a possibility. Good communication was, once more, seen as fundamental to parents feeling confident that their interests are recognised and their stake is being protected by the school. Controlling communication was also seen as a way of controlling parents' power

*'If we don't have any information, then we have nothing to use in holding them to account. We're essentially powerless. I think this is why they hold it back'* – Secondary school parent

This point was underlined by a couple of parents of children with special needs. They felt that teachers didn't involve them sufficiently in planning the support offered to their child, suggesting that the role parents feel it is appropriate for them to play and necessary in order to protect their stake varies according to the needs of their child, as well as the type of school (eg primary or secondary) they attend.

Foster carers' stake in accountability is perhaps more evident to schools and more readily taken into consideration because their relationship with teachers and schools is formally encoded. Foster carers are paid and trained to play a more active role in their wards' education and more able to take steps if they feel that their stake is not being properly protected by a school. Carers felt that they could not afford to play less of a role than they did currently in ensuring their interests were recognised, as this would potentially impact negatively on their child's progress at school.

## Developing ideas for stage 2

Parents' reflections on their stake in accountability, the role they felt happy playing – and saw as necessary – in order to protect this and their assumptions about their stake being protected by existing accountability arrangements informed the design of the second stage of the work. This focused on potential future accountability arrangements, which built into three scenarios. The following themes were addressed:

- Parents' stake in accountability and the role they felt would be comfortable and realistic for them to play in protecting this stake, and whether it would be realistic for parents to give up this level of time and commitment;
- The means by which parents would communicate with teachers and their level and frequency of access to teachers;
- Opportunities for building relationships between parents and teachers;
- Building some of the elements of current agreements between teachers and foster carers in the relationship between teachers and all parents – eg, more regular and structured meetings



## 5 Possible future accountability arrangements (stage two)

In this chapter we discuss parents' responses to the scenarios that were developed following analysis of the findings from stage one. The themes emerging from stage one were distilled into six possible future changes to accountability arrangements.

In addition to these possible new features in accountability arrangements in teaching, we felt it was important to include some current accountability arrangements. Stage one findings showed that many parents know little about school-based accountability elements such as internal performance management systems and complaints procedures. By including existing accountability processes in stage two, without these being identified as such, we were able to explore whether, when they were aware of how they functioned, parents would feel these elements of accountability were in fact adequate. This approach also allowed us to explore whether they felt there were benefits in strengthening or weakening any of the elements or processes in existing accountability arrangements.

Appendices five, six and seven include the scenarios in which these elements are described and the probe questions used to explore parents' views. Appendix eight shows the grids on which parents recorded their discussions. Appendix ten provides details of parents' responses to each of the six new possible accountability mechanisms.

### Possible future accountability mechanisms

The six new possible future accountability mechanisms described in the three scenarios were:

1. Stronger school-based accountability for standards of teaching (supervision and increased observation)

Introduction of a regular supervision and performance management in schools. Ofsted inspections would focus more on school leadership and classroom teachers would be less directly involved in school-wide inspection. Instead, they would take part in a structured peer observation programme.

This process was positioned in the scenarios as replacing the data driven performance management systems and scrutiny imposed on teachers during whole-school inspection. Teachers were described as being less directly involved in school-wide Ofsted inspections, and instead having regular supervision and being required to play their part in a peer-observation programme within the school. Non-school-based accountability elements were also featured in this scenario.

2. Strengthening local accountability

Re-balancing national and local accountabilities. Existing national Ofsted inspections would be replaced by a locally-based inspection process, with inspection teams involving parents, teachers and ex-teachers working voluntarily to carry out 'light touch' inspections throughout the school year. The local inspection process was presented as being more personalised, more developmental and less burdensome on individual teachers.

3. Enhanced role for local parents and carers in setting inspection criteria against which teachers are assessed;

Parents playing a strategic role in inspection processes. Rather than taking part in the inspection process itself, parents and pupils would be involved in deciding the criteria against which inspectors would make their judgements about a school and its teachers. For example, parents would contribute to decisions about the areas on which the next inspection should focus, such as student's moral and social development, and have more input into the focus and timing of inspections.

4. Requirement for teachers to re-demonstrate their competence to their profession regularly to maintain registration

Teachers would be required to re-demonstrate their competence every couple of years through a formal 'teaching assessment', in order to maintain their registration. Once a teacher had received several positive teaching assessments in a row, they would be required to demonstrate their competence less frequently.

5. An enhanced pupil role in holding teachers to account for their teaching

Enhancing teachers' accountability to their pupils by allowing pupils to give regular feedback on their teachers, so helping to inform the training and development opportunities for teaching staff the following year. Pupils would be given training on completing regular feedback forms on teachers, and receive an aggregate report of pupil feedback outlining what would be put in place in response to this.

6. A more active role for parents in protecting their stake in teachers' accountability.

A more formal and codified relationship between parents and teachers, drawing on the current system of contact between foster carers and teachers, in which teachers and foster carers meet on a regular basis to review pupil progress within the context of the foster child's personal education plan (PEP). Teachers and parents would communicate more regularly than they do at present and hold each other to account for their actions through a formal 'parent-teacher agreement'. The Parent-Teachers (P-T) agreement would replace existing means of contact such as parents' evenings and school reports. .

7. The current accountability elements and processes described in the scenarios were:

- internal performance management systems;
- Ofsted inspections involving classroom observations;
- clear procedures for both parents and pupils to make complaints;
- the existence of the Code of Conduct and Practice, and
- the overall responsibility of the head teacher and the governing body for dealing with concerns about the ongoing performance of teachers.

The scenarios described not only these elements and processes themselves, but also the means by which they were communicated to parents. The main aim of presenting some of the existing accountability processes and elements was to assess the extent to which parents were aware of them and to explore whether they felt it was adequate. In other words, is the problem parents have with the accountability arrangements themselves or with their own limited knowledge about the existence and operation of these arrangements?

## Factors informing parents' responses

In reviewing parents' responses to the different possible new accountability mechanisms described in the scenarios, it is important to bear in mind that parents in stage 2 were largely unfamiliar with existing accountability arrangements in teaching and hence their sense of one

or other of the new mechanisms constituting an improvement over those currently in place may be a consequence of this, rather than of dissatisfaction with existing mechanisms themselves. This concern lay behind the introduction of some of the existing mechanisms into the scenarios, enabling us to determine whether, if these were both working as intended and communicated effectively, parents would see them in a positive light.

The factors that parents took into consideration in responding to the six possible changes to accountability in teaching, as described in the scenarios used in stage 2, echoed many of the issues that arose in the first stage of the work. These included:

- protecting objectivity and avoiding bias' by ensuring comparability and consistency of standards across schools, nationally and locally;
- taking local and individual circumstances into account;
- being realistic about the time parents have to be involved in accountability mechanisms, as well as their level of skill and confidence
- Motivating teachers to maintain and update their professional skills
- identifying problems such as under-performing teachers early and being able to act upon information promptly;
- protecting teachers from too much stress;
- consistency of application of accountability mechanisms, regardless of prior performance
- communicating with parents regularly and effectively;

### **Protecting objectivity and ensuring comparability of standards**

One of parents' main concerns, when assessing the various new and current mechanisms, was to protect their ability to compare teachers and standards of teaching and learning in their child's school with that in other schools, both locally and nationally. Whilst they welcomed all those mechanisms designed to strengthen in-school accountability – structured peer observation, regular performance management, local inspection teams, parent-teacher agreements and pupil feedback – they were insistent that these needed to be aligned or in conjunction with Ofsted-style national inspections. These were seen as contributing not only the broader perspective required for comparability but also an objective perspective that might be lost if accountability mechanisms were brought entirely within schools or the local area. Indeed, parents raised concerns about the robustness of all the mechanisms describing in-school accountability with no external input.

The fourth mechanism, requiring teachers to re-demonstrate competence in order to retain their registration was also seen as relatively free from bias, as teachers would be required to demonstrate competence over time and assessments would be based on evidence accruing over a year and judgement would be made according to national standards. However, parents did feel that Ofsted-style national inspections would need still to be in place, though they would have to be properly aligned with the competency requirements, in order to avoid duplication or placing too much stress on teachers. Finally, parents also raised concerns about removing external accountability arrangements in their discussion of the sixth mechanism. They felt that, despite having a more regular and more formal relationship with teachers, they would still need information comparing teachers (and teaching) to other schools in the local area and other parts of the country.

### **Taking local and individual circumstances into account**

Together with their concern to protect comparability and objectivity, parents saw great benefit in introducing a stronger local element into accountability arrangements. Foremost amongst the benefits identified was the greater knowledge of schools and accountability in teaching that parents would develop through being a member of an inspection team, as described in the second mechanism. Having a greater understanding of the ways in which teachers are held to account could help to reassure parents that their interests are being protected. Parents felt too that the increased role this process would enable them to play would help to boost their confidence in education, their motivation to get involved in their child's education and help to strengthen their relationship with schools.

Whilst some of these benefits might also follow from parents having more understanding of the ways in which national accountability arrangements work, their 'hands-on' role in a local system might be an integral element in improving their relationship with schools and teachers. To play their role effectively, parents suggested they would need training. They felt too that teams would need, as far as possible, to be representative of the parent body and, possibly, the wider community, involving perhaps police officers or GPs.

One concern raised about the requirement for teachers to re-demonstrate competence to maintain registration was loss of local perspective if this mechanism were rolled out nationally. In this case, the local perspective related to teachers working in low-achieving schools in which pupils had severe behaviour problems. Parents felt that these teachers were likely to have less time for CPD (if this was required as part of re-registration) or be less likely to be able to gather evidence of their teaching accomplishments. They were concerned too that if this system were rolled out nationally, the differences in required competence between secondary and primary school teachers and, those working in PRUs or special schools with children with SEN might not be taken into account.

*'A teacher in a special school needs a completely different set of skills and behaviours to that in normal secondary school. I'd be worried about not capturing that through this system'* – Parent of a child with SEN

*'If the system was too 'capture all' then it might become a bit meaningless...unless there were lots of different kinds based on your role in different schools, which is a possibility'* – Parent of a child at PRU

### **Being realistic about parents' contribution**

Parents did suggest that the time and skills required for them to play such a direct role in inspections might be unrealistic and possibly off-putting for parents who lack confidence in their ability to contribute. They cited current problems faced by schools in engaging parents in school life. This was one of the main reasons for their preference for the more strategic input described in the third mechanism tested, which saw parents involved in setting the criteria which inspection teams would use. The other reason was their concern that parents' direct involvement in inspection processes could introduce bias, as personal views and experiences of particular teachers might detract from their ability to provide measured judgements. This same concern was raised in relation to involving ex-teachers in local inspection teams. One suggestion for over-coming this was for teams to work locally, but not in the school with which they were directly connected, as parents or ex-teachers.

Parents felt too that this more strategic involvement would enable a greater number and range of parents to play a role in accountability mechanisms. In their discussions of the second mechanism – direct involvement of parents in inspection teams – some foster carers

had suggested that short-term carers might not be able to make the long-term commitment that would be required. Setting criteria rather than being an inspector was seen as helping to overcome this problem. Some foster parents were, however, happy with their current role in holding teachers to account, through the formalised system of PEPs, and did not feel they needed to be represented on the inspection team.

A similar issue was raised in relation to the sixth mechanism. Some participants felt that not all parents would be keen to engage with teachers, or to make available the time needed for this level of contact and communication. Having seen one of the benefits to this mechanism as improvements to teaching and learning as a result of improved parent-teacher relationships, they raised their concern that this variability in their parents' ability or willingness to engage in a more formal relationship with teachers might impact on some pupils' levels of attainment and widen the gap between them and their peers whose parents were engaged.

### **Protecting teachers from stress**

We have seen that parents in stage 1 were aware of and concerned about the level of stress experienced by teachers involved in national inspections. Local inspection processes were characterised in the scenarios as being both more regular and less onerous, both of which were welcomed by parents in stage 2. As well as being bad for teachers, parents felt that the stress associated with Ofsted inspections could potentially impact on the accuracy of inspectors' judgements, as they would not be seeing teachers 'at their best'. Reducing stress and, possibly, making inspections more collaborative by giving teachers a role, was seen as a way of ensuring judgements reflecting teachers' actual performance, rather than their 'exam' performance. More regular inspections would also allow for both a 'lighter touch' and attention to issues specific to a particular school at a particular time.

*'If bullying is the major problem in a school for pupils and their parents, then teachers need to be held to account for what they are doing to manage this. This kind of flexible system could account for that.'* – Primary school parent.

In their discussion of the mechanism describing a more active role for parents in protecting their stake in accountability, through regular meetings with teachers and a parent-teacher agreement, a minority of parents felt that this might also place additional stress upon teachers, who could feel under scrutiny or 'violated' in their role, due to the additional measures being put in place to assess their performance by yet another stakeholder group. We should note that these parents were also concerned that parents might feel undue pressure was being placed on them, to update teachers on their role at home, and to fulfil contractual obligations.

### **Motivating teachers to maintain and update their professional skills**

The fourth mechanism, which described teachers being required to re-demonstrate their competence in order to maintain their registration, was seen as strengthening professional accountability. Being professionally accountable was seen as motivating teachers to update their skills and knowledge regularly, providing them development goals and aims in a way similar to that in other professions such as medicine and financial services. Parents felt as well that this mechanism would give them peace of mind about the competencies and skills of teachers, particularly those who had been teaching for many years. One parent likened this mechanism to MOT inspections on cars.

*'It's basically a way of providing quick assurance that a teacher is up to scratch – for the head teacher, the parents, the pupils and the teacher themselves. It's also important for*

*other teachers to know that their colleagues are operating at a certain standard, and this boosts morale.’ – Secondary school parent.*

*‘Older teachers need to update themselves on changes in society and be open-minded about new ideas, as children change over time and new approaches are needed in teaching processes.’ – Primary school parent*

*‘You have to do this sort of thing in many other businesses and professions – and teaching is both a business and a profession. I don’t see why it should be considered to be any different.’ – Secondary school parent*

Parents noted that the fourth mechanism described in the scenarios differed from the other five, in that it would not rely to such a great extent on the judgement of one or more internal or external individual. It would encourage teachers to take responsibility for their own development and benefit both them and pupils by spreading the work associated with developing a portfolio over a longer period of time, helping to reduce stress.

*‘The whole system would probably feel less invasive and dis-trusting than inspection. Like the teacher was more in control of this process themselves. It might be more empowering and less demoralising.’ – Foster carer*

*‘You could do a port-folio approach, so you’d have to record certain things throughout the year – i.e. number of inspections, CPD courses attended, supervision sessions etc. That way it would feel more spread out and less all-encompassing like it currently does with Ofsted.’ – Secondary school parent*

The first mechanism, involving structured peer observation and regular supervision and performance management was seen as having some of the same benefits. Parents expressed some surprise that this process was not already in place in schools, seeing it as crucial for maintaining teaching standards and holding teachers to account for their performance on an ongoing basis.

### **Identifying problems at an early stage**

One of the main concerns expressed in the first and second stages of the work, which was that poor teachers were not being identified, supported to improve or removed, where necessary. The main benefit associated with peer observation and performance management, as described in the scenarios, was its potential to impact positively on teaching and learning by ensuring that standards were monitored regularly, enabling poorly performing teachers to be identified and supported or removed from a school. Data from structured peer observations could be used to identify development needs and enable a tailored professional training and development plan to be shaped. Structured peer-observation was seen as well as a way of gathering information about teaching methods across the school as a whole. Where evidence of good practice emerged, this could be shared throughout the school, so helping to drive up standards for all. However, as noted earlier, parents felt that some form of independent inspection of teachers’ performance would also be needed to ensure that internal observations were sufficiently robust and to ensure consistency of standards across schools.

The identification of under-performing teachers was also seen as a potential benefit of the fifth mechanism, which describe a structured process by which pupils could provide feedback on their teachers. There was some debate amongst parents as to whether or not this was an accountability mechanism, since it did not require teachers to give an account of their teaching or behaviour, with some suggesting it was straightforward feedback instead. Parents emphasised too that the process would need to be properly designed to ensure not

only that all pupils of all ages were able to provide feedback but also that the right kind of feedback – that is, positive and constructive comments – was encouraged. However, they felt it would emphasise teachers' role in supporting their pupils' learning and help to shape pupils' behaviour in later life by encouraging them to become active and involved citizens.

The fifth mechanism outlined a structured process by which pupils would be able to contribute to assessments of teachers' performance. Whilst many welcomed this, they raised concerns about pupils being given *too much* of a say and some questioned how this would strengthen teachers' accountability to pupils. They suggested it was a feedback system, rather than one in which teachers were required to give an account of their teaching or behaviour.

Some parents suggested that the sixth mechanism, describing a codified relationship between teachers and parents, could also have a role to play in identifying problems:

*'The more information you have, the more evidence you have to use against teachers who are not doing their job properly.'* – Primary school parent

### **Consistency of application of accountability mechanisms**

The scenario describing the mechanism by which teachers would be required to re-demonstrate competence included reference to those teachers who had received positive teaching assessments being allowed to demonstrate their competence less frequently in the future. Parents resisted this strongly, arguing that whilst some incentive should be built into the process, this was the wrong one. They were concerned that, whatever the practical arrangements around re-registration, they should apply equally to all. Reducing the frequency of assessments for some teachers was seen as inviting them to relax and possibly slacken and also as reducing the strength of accountability they would feel. Parents were very keen that teachers with 40 years service should go through this system as often as those who had been teaching for 5 years or less. Some parents argued that there was a stronger case for more experienced teachers having to re-demonstrate their competence and show that they were keeping up with more modern teaching methods and refreshing their knowledge:

*'You could say that the longer it's been since a teacher actually qualified, the more they would need to do this to stay refreshed. Just because they have a lot of experience – and this is important – it doesn't mean they are teaching in the right way for the children of today. Or teaching the right things.'* – Secondary school parent

This illustrates a more general concern amongst parents for fairness in accountability arrangements– as in the need to avoid bias and ensure consistency – and for regular and ongoing mechanisms to be in place. These would help to reassure parents that their interests are being well-protected and that problems can be identified quickly and effectively, regardless of a teachers' prior performance or level of experience.

### **Communicating with parents regularly and effectively**

We have noted earlier in this report that, in the absence of formal mechanisms by which parents can hold teachers to account, good communication becomes vital. Parents in one of the stage 2 workshops saw their role in teachers' accountability as directly related to the level of communication with teachers and the information they had about their child's progress. The sixth accountability mechanism explored in stage 2 gave formal structure to the relationship between teachers and parents, through regular meetings and a parent-teacher agreement.

Parents responded very positively to this mechanism, seeing it as overcoming some of the shortcomings of parents' evenings and helping to strengthen teachers' direct accountability to parents. Encouraging a mutual understanding of each others' circumstances and of factors that might impact on a child's learning or behaviour, this mechanism was seen as helping to encourage a partnership between parents and teachers, in place of what can currently be either combative or non-existent relationships. As long as the necessary practical factors were addressed – such as ensuring a flexible process able to cope with incompatible working hours or ensuring the process was not dependent on access to computers – parents saw considerable benefits in this mechanism.

## Reviewing current accountability arrangements

Whilst only one of the six mechanisms focused on communication between parents and teachers, this and teachers' responsiveness to parents were themes in this second stage of the work, as they had been in stage 1. Parents seemed to be suggesting that improved communication, leading to increased knowledge would not only help to reassure them that their stake in accountability arrangements was being protected but could also motivate them to play a greater role in their child's education and the school as a whole. Indeed, it might be that parents would prefer this reassurance to any requirement to be actively involved in accountability arrangements, through things such as inspection. Their preference seems to be to keep their direct involvement at a fairly high level – for example, through setting criteria for inspections – for reasons that are both practical (who has the time?) and professional (who has the skills?).

The majority of parents reacted to the existing accountability processes and elements explored by stating that if these things weren't in action at schools already, *'then they definitely should be'*. Many were not aware of the Code of Conduct, questioning why their children's schools hadn't made it explicit to them that this was the professional Code by which all teachers within their school should abide. Most felt 'pretty ignorant' about internal accountability arrangements such as performance management systems. They felt uninformed about the role of the 'year head', and how line management and supervision processes worked within schools. Many were unhappy with the way in which complaints processes worked too, again citing lack of responsiveness, follow-up and limited opportunities for making complaints face-to-face. Reinforcing the value of information and communication, they all felt they would like to know more about current accountability mechanisms in schools, and how they as parents could feed into this process:

*'It's the kind of thing that, historically, parents have just been expected to let schools get on with – but if we're comparing again to businesses or other professions, then everything has to be more transparent around internal processes these days – you have to report about it to customers and clients.'* – Secondary school parent

Parents were, on the whole, satisfied with the accountability arrangements within school. They felt the balance of 'internal' and 'external' accountability was good, although it lacked the level of local accountability outlined in the other scenarios. The one aspect they identified as missing was professional accountability, and they underlined their positive response to the requirement for re-demonstrating competence, explored earlier in the workshops.

## Rebalancing accountability

Throughout the small group discussions and plenary sessions in the Stage 2 workshops, parents were encouraged to think about the trade-offs between the different accountability elements, and the principal changes needed to achieve a more appropriate balance between



different forms of accountability (e.g. national and local, or professional and institutional). When they were in favour of strengthening a particular aspect of an accountability arrangements – for example, local accountability processes - we asked what they would be prepared to forego or relax in order to rebalance accountability and ensure the arrangements as a whole did not become too onerous on teachers or too complex to function effectively.

Parents found it quite challenging to discuss this. Often, they were reluctant to weaken existing forms of accountability for fear of leaving poor teaching unexposed or losing the comparability of teachers and teaching with other areas or schools. The main messages from discussions of trade-offs and rebalancing re-emphasise some of the points made in discussion of the issues raised in discussing the six new possible accountability mechanisms and the current arrangements:

- **National vs. local accountability:** Parents struggled with the trade-off between national and local forms of accountability. On the one hand, they wanted local accountability strengthened, to ensure local context and knowledge were acknowledged as relevant factors in judgements about schools' and teachers' performance. Local inspections would be more regular, unannounced and take a more developmental, rather than judgemental approach. On the other hand, they did not want a reduction in comparability between schools, at both a national and regional level, so were reluctant to lose existing mechanisms such as Ofsted inspections or league tables.

Their preference was for a system that combined local and national accountability mechanisms, whilst reducing the direct role of class teachers in national accountability processes such as Ofsted inspections. These were seen as stressful and hence unable to capture an accurate picture of teachers' every day teaching practice. Instead, national inspections should focus on head teachers and the Senior Management Team. This suggests that the desire for comparison is operating at the level of the school rather than at the level of individual teachers. The majority of parents claimed that, despite its identified benefits, they would feel nervous about any shift towards more the local forms of accountability explored, unless they were accompanied by some method by which to compare teaching across different schools and areas:

*'It just feels like a vulnerable and potentially disastrous situation if a school is allowed to carry on by itself, without direct comparison with others. How do you aim to improve and challenge yourselves? How do the badly-performing schools learn from those that are better performing? How do you actually know which the badly-performing schools are?'* – Primary school parent

- **Internal vs. external accountability:** As with the rebalancing of local vs. national forms of accountability, parents were very much in favour of strengthening internal accountability systems through performance management, peer observation and feedback systems. Again, however, there was notable nervousness about strengthening these internal systems at the cost of a reduced level of external accountability, which they felt was important to counter the potential for bias in internal forms of accountability. It is important to note that parents making these comments were not aware of how current internal accountability processes operate within schools. Hence it is not possible to say whether or not they would recommend changes to current processes if these were working and communicated effectively.

External accountability elements were seen as supplementing internal elements, by validating assessments and ensuring there was consistency across schools at a national level. Parents did feel that certain assessment methods, such as observation of classroom teaching, could be shifted internally as long as some external input was

retained. Examples included twinning arrangements with other schools and external validation of the internal observation system.

- **Professional vs. institutional accountability:** Parents saw professional accountability as ‘sitting over and above’ and complementing all other forms of accountability and were very much in favour of strengthening teachers’ professional accountability, both to themselves and to the teaching profession as a whole. The mechanisms explored in the workshops - the requirement to re-demonstrate competence to retain registration and more structured peer-observation – were seen as aligning with other forms of professional accountability, such as the Code of Conduct. And rather than being seen in a trade-off relationship with institutional methods of accountability, such as performance management processes, parents felt that professional accountability processes could easily be aligned with them. For example, parents felt that re-demonstrating competence could incorporate compliance with the Code and engagement with performance management systems.
- **Accountability to parents vs. internal accountability:** Parents felt strongly that teachers’ accountability to parents needed to be strengthened and we explored two ways in which this might be done. The first strengthened the relationship between teachers and parents directly, through the introduction of formal parent-teacher agreements. The second increased the role played by parents in the wider mechanisms by which teachers were held to account, ensuring that their interests were reflecting in the inspection process, either at a strategic level or by including parents on inspection teams.

Views differed on what these ways of strengthening parent-teacher relationships might mean for in-school accountability mechanisms (eg line management). Some parents argued that by strengthening accountability towards parents in this way, teachers could afford to spend less time and energy on giving accounts to line managers within the school. These parents argued that if these forms of accountability to parents were genuine, any concerns or risks would be picked up by parents themselves and fed back to line managers, if relevant. However, a minority of parents argued that the effectiveness and strength of parental accountability would be dependent on the engagement of the parents involved, and that by loosening a standardised system such as performance management, the accountability of teachers who had a disengaged parent body would be notably weakened.

*‘It’s a tough one because in theory it should work really well, and parents are in the best position to comment if things are not working, but in reality it is dependent on so many variables: parent confidence, parent engagement, the relationship between parents and teachers. With the PEP for foster carers, you don’t have any choice but to engage, and this is why it works’ – Foster Carer*

## Summary of the main messages from stage two

The strongest message from Stage 2 workshops was that parents would like to retain the broad structure of the existing national accountability system, and would have concerns about replacing this system entirely with more local, internal or parent-led forms of accountability. However, they did support some re-balancing of the system. National accountability mechanisms such as Ofsted could be directed towards head teachers and Senior Management Teams, removing the burden from individual classroom teachers. Individual teachers’ strongest accountabilities would then either be internal, through performance management, peer observation and local inspections, for example, or external,

to parents. As noted, however, parents remained nervous about losing comparability across schools and standards growing inconsistent, in the absence of comprehensive national inspections. Professional accountability, through processes such as the re-demonstration of competence and peer observation, was seen as the bedrock of all other forms of accountability.

Parents favoured the following as the main elements of a modified accountability system:

- Increasing in-school accountability, through a more structured system of supervision and internal observation within schools, to encourage greater accountability between teaching colleagues. Whilst parents did not advocate the value of performance management processes in managing poorly-performing teachers, they did welcome the proposal for strengthening the developmental focus of supervision to lead to more tailored training and development plans;
- Increasing the accountability of teachers to local stakeholders (such as parents and ex-teachers) through greater involvement in the design of the national inspection process. On balance, parents felt there were too many risks attached to parents forming part of the inspection team themselves, but did feel they could add value through helping to inform the criteria against which teachers would be held to account;
- Increasing the accountability of teachers to parents, through a more structured process of communication and mutual accountability through 'Parent-teacher agreement' processes. Parents felt this would be beneficial in providing a forum through which parents could formally hold teachers to account for their behaviour, and follow a set process if teachers were not meeting the agreements. They also agreed that teachers should be able to hold parents to account in return, and that this would promote a sense of partnership between them.
- Increasing the professional accountability of teachers, both to themselves and to the wider teaching profession, through linking registration with the re-demonstration of competence. Parents felt this to be the most effective form of accountability for teachers, due to the ability demonstrate competence over time, achieve comparison at both a local and a national level and for teachers to take responsibility for the process themselves.

Parents were also interested in other elements of rebalanced accountability systems, such as the increased role for pupils in holding teachers to account through feedback systems, but were quick to raise concerns with relying too heavily on this form of accountability. Parents were also in favour of many of the existing elements of accountability in schools currently (performance management; GTC code of conduct; complaints procedures) but felt there needed to be more transparent communication with parents about these systems to ensure that parents knew how to feed into these systems, if necessary.

## 6 Conclusions

Parents find accountability a difficult concept to pin down and hard to differentiate from responsibility. Their confidence in accountability arrangements and in the extent to which their interests are being protected seems primarily to be a function of their wider relationship with their child's school and teachers. Where teachers are responsive, communicative and knowledgeable about their children, parents seem to be largely satisfied with existing arrangements – though they may know little about what these are and how they work, as we discovered in stage one and confirmed in stage two. However, parents with positive relationships with teachers are more likely to be able to elicit and provide information that will help to ensure and reassure them that their children's progress and wellbeing are being looked after and hence are perhaps less concerned about the finer details of accountability arrangements. The more positive relationships between parents of primary school children and their teachers provide some evidence of this. Primary school teachers are visible, available at the school gate and in school and easy to talk to, whilst secondary school teachers are more likely to be seen as uncommunicative and remote. It is when communication and responsiveness break down that parents feel most keenly their lack of knowledge about how to progress concerns or how to ensure teachers are held to account.

When identifying the specific benefits of accountability, having distinguished it from responsibility, which they tend to associate with things such as keeping children safe and looking after their wellbeing, parents point first to management and performance management – teachers are seen as most accountable to head teachers and year heads – and to national accountability processes. Whilst they do recognise the burden placed on teachers by current accountability arrangements, emphasising the role of parents in children's upbringing and suggesting at times that teachers are being held too accountable, they value things such as national consistency and comparability between schools, as well as the motivation and peace of mind that strong accountability can provide to teachers and parents, respectively.

As well as finding accountability a slippery concept, parents also tended to conflate having a stake in accountability arrangements and playing a role in protecting their stake. In the absence of any problems, parents' default position seemed to be that their interests were being protected as a matter of course. Again, good communication, responsiveness, accessibility and openness – are taken by parents as evidence that the school is indeed acknowledging and protecting their stake. If we return to Bovens' definition, these factors might be seen as elements in the process by which teachers give an account of themselves to parents. They need take an active role only when the school is not doing this.

The findings from stage one underline the distinction made in the literature review that helped to structure this research, between the formal methods by which professionals, organisations and political bodies and individuals are held to account and the informal accountability relationships characteristic of that between parents and teachers. Whilst the literature review does first mention parents in the context of discussing ethical and moral accountability, the actor in this type of accountability is described as 'civil society'<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> 'Civil society' is not defined by Levitt et al. The Centre for Civil Society at the LSE defines it as follows: 'Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often

However, it is not necessarily the case that the interests of parents and civil society are aligned. They might be at times – for example, through parents associations – but may often not be. Parents have a specific and direct interest in accountability arrangements working effectively, which is closely aligned with the interests of their children and distinct from the interests of civil society. When defining accountability, parents hold the interests of their children in close view, referring to their wellbeing, their progress and their safety. However, these things do not exhaust their stake, and accountability mechanisms internal to schools may not be able to protect these interests adequately. Parents' desire for accountability arrangements to protect national comparability, consistency of standards across schools and enable identification of under-performing teachers reflect their wider concerns.

Parents are also a sub-group of the general public and hence have an interest in political accountability. Parents recognised that teaching and education are public services, and that teachers are public servants. As such, they felt teachers and schools should be providing value for money to all tax-payers, and should be accountable for this. So in addition to the direct interests of their children and their interests in consistency of standards and comparability, as members of the public parents have an interest in schools being democratically accountable.

Asked to re-balance accountability, having explored possible new accountability mechanisms, parents in the second stage of the research struggled, proving unwilling to relinquish the strong forms of national accountability, such as Ofsted inspections, in order to provide space for more local forms. Instead, they preferred solutions which protected the benefits of national arrangements – consistency and comparability of standards, and objectivity – whilst allowing space for local variability to be factored into judgements. Whilst parents in stage one had recognised the value of national arrangements, they expressed some frustration with them, seeing them as taking time away from teachers' core responsibility to teaching and learning. They favoured the more local forms of accountability. However, those in stage two were more emphatic about the value of national accountability and less enamoured of local accountability. This is perhaps because the concrete examples given in the scenario provided parents with some means of resolving the tension between local and national accountability, through a combination of rigorous but infrequent national accountability mechanisms and regular, light-touch and developmental local mechanisms.

In stage one, parents identified a tension between teachers' accountability to Government and their accountability to individual pupils. Form-filling and a result-driven culture were seen as at odds with teachers' accountability to pupils and their responsibility to treat them as individuals. This was not identified as an issue in stage two and again, this might be because the concrete examples given in the scenario provided parents with some means of resolving this tension, through mechanisms that combine rigorous but infrequent national accountability mechanisms with regular, light-touch and developmental local mechanisms.

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complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups. [http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what\\_is\\_civil\\_society.htm](http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm) See also: [http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/civil\\_society/what\\_is\\_civil\\_society](http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/civil_society/what_is_civil_society). Both accessed 26th July 2010.

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This allowed them as well to remove their focus from their own child and circumstances and consider accountability arrangements in the round, which perhaps tended to make them more risk averse and less attendant to issues such as personalisation.

There were differences too in stage one and stage two parents' views on the role of pupils in accountability arrangements. Whilst those in stage one argued that teachers should be more accountable to pupils, and that pupils had no means of holding teachers to account, those in stage two were less enthusiastic about this, though they did still place value in pupils contributing to accountability processes, seeing it as helping to identify under-performing teachers. However, the discussion in stage two of whether pupils could be trusted to play such a role emphasised the different views and also the need for both local and individual accountability arrangements to have a degree of flexibility.

Whilst this research has provided a great deal of information on the factors that inform parents' preferences for different types of accountability mechanisms and the processes that would embed these preferences, it does remain unclear just how much reform they would welcome and whether any reforms that did not include effective communication with and responsiveness to parents would improve to any noticeable degree their view of accountability arrangements in teaching. They gave us some clear messages about the ways in which accountability arrangements might be improved. These included having stronger school-based accountability (through supervision and compulsory observation), stronger professional accountability, through the requirement for teachers to re-demonstrate competence to maintain registration; a greater role for parents in accountability mechanisms – preferably strategically rather than hands-on and more formally structured relationships with teachers. However, any reforms would need as well to take into account parents' unwillingness to give up some of the benefits of existing arrangements, particularly the ability to compare one school with another and some means of ensuring that the standards required of teachers are consistent across different schools.

## Appendix 1: Focus group discussion guide

### General objectives (for facilitator reference)

This workshop will last for 2 hours, and the same discussion guide will be used for all six workshops on accountability, which will be held in London, Leicester and West Kirby. The workshops will focus on the first two objectives for this project:

- To investigate parents and carers' views of the different dimensions of accountability in teaching: accountability for what, to whom and by what means
- To explore the underlying reasons for these views
- To begin exploring the balance of accountabilities across the system as a whole

The outputs from the project will be used to inform the development of scenarios and other materials for use in the two final workshops.

### Definition of accountability

Don't use this – it's for your information only:

*'accountability can be defined as the methods by which the actor may render an account (i.e. justify their actions and decisions) to the stakeholders and by which the stakeholders may hold the actor to account (i.e. impose sanctions or grant permissions).'*

**Throughout discussions, it is important for facilitators to probe on *why* people hold the views they do.**

### Materials in facilitator packs

- 4 x 'Accountability Maps' for small group work
- 10 x marker pens, highlighters, biros
- 20 x coloured cards (for map on wall)
- Sticky wall material + blue-tac
- Coloured arrows (thin, medium and thick)
- Camera

### 18.30: Introductions (15 minutes)

- **FACILITATOR:** Give a very brief overview of the aim of the discussion group. The main points to get across are:

a) The GTCE has commissioned OPM to run a series of discussion groups across the country with a range of parents and carers with different backgrounds.

b) This work follows on directly from some work speaking with teachers and head teachers about their experiences of accountability in teaching.

b) The focus of the discussion today is on your views on how teachers are currently held accountable, as professionals, what they are accountable for and who they are accountable

to. We're also interested in hearing your initial views on whether and how you think the current system could be changed for the better.

c) Your views are really important, and we are keen to get your honest opinions so we can feed back to the GTCE and inform the policy advice they give to government in this area.

d) Stress again that we are an independent organisation, we are not teachers or working for the GTC ourselves, and all points made today will be non-attributed and treated with confidence.

Participant introductions round the room (in pairs) - ask each participant to spend 2-3 minutes talking to their neighbour. Information to gather is: name and occupation (which might include working in the home/looking for work); number and age(s) of children and type(s) of school they attend.

Each person to introduce their neighbour

(Facilitator: you will need to keep this tight – don't let people introduce opinions at this stage – let them know there will be an opportunity to do this later in the discussion.)

**Answer any questions from participants briefly before leading straight into the opening discussion**

### **18.45: Opening discussion – your relationship with your child's school/teacher (10 minutes MAX)**

The aim of this opening discussion is to develop a broad sense of how parent and carers perceive their relationship with their child's school and teacher and to provide the facilitator with an overall picture of participants' level of understanding of school systems etc and their general attitudes towards their child's school/teachers. This will help the facilitator to pitch the later discussion of accountability at a level that will be accessible to all participants. Parents might also begin to highlight issues relating to accountability, which facilitators can pick up in the mapping exercise.

#### **Facilitator introduction:**

As parents and carers your relationships with your children's schools and teachers are likely to have different aspects to them and they might change over time, depending on the age or the particular needs or interests of your child, or the type of school they go to. What we'd like to do first is think about what those different types of relationship are, how they take place and what is important about them.

#### **What different types of relationship do you have with the schools your children attend?**

- PROBES: (if people don't mention different things)



- **The ‘usual’ relationship** – on a day-to-day basis, when everything is just ticking along, how would you describe the relationship you have with your child’s teachers?
- **Parents’ evenings** – what sort of relationship do you have with your children’s teachers here – is it the same as usual or different in some way?
- **Ofsted inspections** – e.g., have you ever filled in a questionnaire as part of a school’s Ofsted inspection? Do you think differently about the school or teachers when completing this than you do usually?
- **If your child is being bullied?** Or they haven’t done as well in their exams as you expected? Do these things change the way in which you think about your relationship with your child’s teachers? Or school?

**Facilitator:** keep the distinction between relationships with *schools* and relationships with *teachers* in mind. Ensure you clarify for each relationship identified whether parents/carers see this as a relationship with teachers directly or a relationship with the school as a whole, or a relationship with teachers that is *mediated* by the school. (eg where a parent raises an issue about a particular teacher and this is dealt with by the school according to their institutional policies/systems etc – might be good to have a concrete example of this.)

### FLIP CHART RESPONSES

Once you have a list of things (7-8), begin to focus on accountability.

## 18.55: Introducing accountability (10 minutes)

I’d like to leave this for a moment and think a bit about what we mean by accountability. We will come back to this list in a little while.

### What does the term ‘accountability’ mean to you?

#### PROBES

- What springs to mind when you hear this word?
- How does accountability differ from responsibility and responsiveness?
  - PROBE on any issues relating to: sanctions, punishment, having to justify decisions or actions, etc
- Can you think of any examples of the ways in which different types of professional are held accountable? (e.g., doctors, lawyers, teachers)

### FLIP CHART RESPONSES

Facilitator: you will need to use this session carefully to gauge levels of understanding of accountability and ensure that people don’t feel left behind at this early stage. Have 2-3 examples of accountability relationships to hand to help you elucidate the concept in a very practical way. Only continue when you are sure that people have a grasp of the basic principles.

## 19.05: The purpose and benefits of accountability (10 minutes)

### What do you think is the purpose of accountability in teaching?

- Why is it important?

- What are the benefits to teachers?
- What are the benefits to you as parents/carers?
- Who do you feel teachers are accountable to?

[Only if probes are needed]: These are some of the ways in which teachers saw accountability:

- Maintaining public confidence in teaching standards;
  - Upholding public perceptions of the profession;
  - Encouraging improvement in school performance;
  - Providing opportunities for teachers to showcase their achievements;
- 
- What is your response to these views?
  - What do you think is positive/negative about teachers' views of accountability?
  - How do you think they compare with your own views?

(This section of the guide is needed for comparison to teachers' views from previous work, captured in accompanying sheet).

## FLIP CHART RESPONSES

### 19.15: Mapping current accountability (35 minutes)

Leading on from the definitions of accountability and parents' understanding of their relationship with schools/teachers, this exercise uses a mapping tool through which to explore the different accountability relationships of teachers, the strengths and level of the accountability and its type. This forms the main section of the discussion.

**Facilitator:** Looking now in more detail at the different types of accountability, I'm going to ask you to work in two smaller groups, to fill in this map. There are three things to think about:

- Who** are teachers accountable to (and we've already started thinking about your own relationship with teachers – so think about whether you are able to hold teachers to account in any of these relationships)
- What** are they accountable for (this might be things like, for example, keeping children safe, or things relating to how well they do in school – and what 'doing well' means)
- How** they are held accountable – for example, through appraisals by their manager, by parents themselves (i.e. through parental questionnaires used by Ofsted etc.)

For example, are teachers in a particular school accountable to the head teacher? What are they accountable for? How are individual teachers held to account by the Head? Or are they accountable to central Government? How? Use the relationships you've already started thinking about at the start of our discussion as a kick-start for thinking about teachers' accountability to you as parents – bearing in mind some of the relationships we identified might not be about accountability.

When we've mapped out the main lines and types of accountability, which should take about 15 minutes, we'll come back together as a group to discuss your maps.

**FACILITATOR:** Give each group an empty 'Map of accountability' (appended), and explain that this has been left empty in order that they can map out:

- a) the main people/groups/organisations to whom they feel teachers are most accountable.
- b) what exactly they feel teachers are accountable to this person/group/ organisation for? (Probes: pupil results, own behaviour, child safety etc)
- c) how teachers are held to account for this? (Probes: how does it work in practice formally and informally?)

Sit with each group in turn to help them initially, so you are sure they have got the hang of the exercise.

After 15 minutes, with parents/carers using their individual maps as a guide, work with the group as a whole to develop a collective map of accountability on the sticky wall. Use the GTC Think Tank map to probe around any notable accountability relationships that have not been included (including national/local: at level of school, governors etc or internal to the school/external to the school). As you do so, explore accountability relationships in more detail, through the following questions:

### **What sort of accountability do you think this is? For example, is it organisational; moral; professional; legal?**

- Does it operate at a national level, do you think or are teachers held to account for this at a local level?
- How would you rate the strength of the accountability you think teachers feel towards this person/group/organisation? (Mark with 'Strong' 'Medium' or 'Weak') Which accountabilities are most pressing for teachers?
- Is this accountability relationship the same for all teachers or does it differ, depending on where they are teaching (e.g., by local authority, by type of school and role?) Do parents have an accountability relationship with more than one kind of teacher?
- Is this accountability relationship of value to you as parents? How? Why?

Make sure that the information on strength, type and level of accountability are mapped out clearly on the wall, so that the group can make changes as the discussion progresses.

### **19.50: 5 minute break**

### **19.55: Accountability on a day-to-day basis (15 minutes)**

This conversation is aimed at getting some insights into actual experiences of accountability observed by parents from day to day, and to gather any anecdotes about situations in which parents have been aware of teachers' accountability to others. Focusing the participants on the map they have created, explain that the GTC is particularly interested in how these accountability relationships are played out in practise, and how they are experienced by parents and carers.

### **What are the positive things about the map we have drawn of teachers' accountability? Why are they positive?**

- PROMPT: does the level of accountability make any difference to the way you think about it – e.g., what are the positive things about accountability at a local level? At a national level?
- What are the positive things about this map of accountability in relation to your involvement in your child's education? On your trust in the school? On your feelings of security about their children's safety? On their relationship with teachers?
- Can you give me an example of any of these positive aspects of accountability we have identified?

**FACILITATOR:** try to get parents to stick with the positives at this stage: 'park' negative comments for the next discussion:

### **What are the negative things about the map we have drawn of teachers' accountability? Why are they negative?**

- PROMPT: does the level of accountability make any difference to the way you think about it – eg, what are the negative things about accountability at a local level? At a national level?
- What are the positive things about this map of accountability in relation to your involvement in your child's education? Your trust in the school? Your feelings of security about their children's safety? Your relationship with teachers?
- Can you give me an example of any of these negative aspects of accountability we have identified?

One element of accountability relates to the giving of permission to the person or people you are holding to account. Looking at the accountability relationships we have mapped here, can you identify any relationships in which parents' views or actions are particularly crucial?

## **20.10: Re-balancing accountabilities (10 minutes)**

Looking at the map as a whole now:

### **How do you think all these different accountabilities work together as a system?**

- Are there any conflicts or tensions? Is the balance right between the different types of accountability?
- Are there any changes you'd like to make to the map that would be good for teachers? For pupils? For parents or carers? For the wider public?
- Do you think that the accountabilities are at the right level – ie, should more of them be national? Or local?
- What do you think the impact would be of teachers being held more accountable as professionals – that is, to the teaching profession as a whole and to their colleagues?
- What do you think the impact would be of teachers being held more accountable through things such as inspection and assessment processes?

## **20.20: Concluding discussion (10 minutes)**

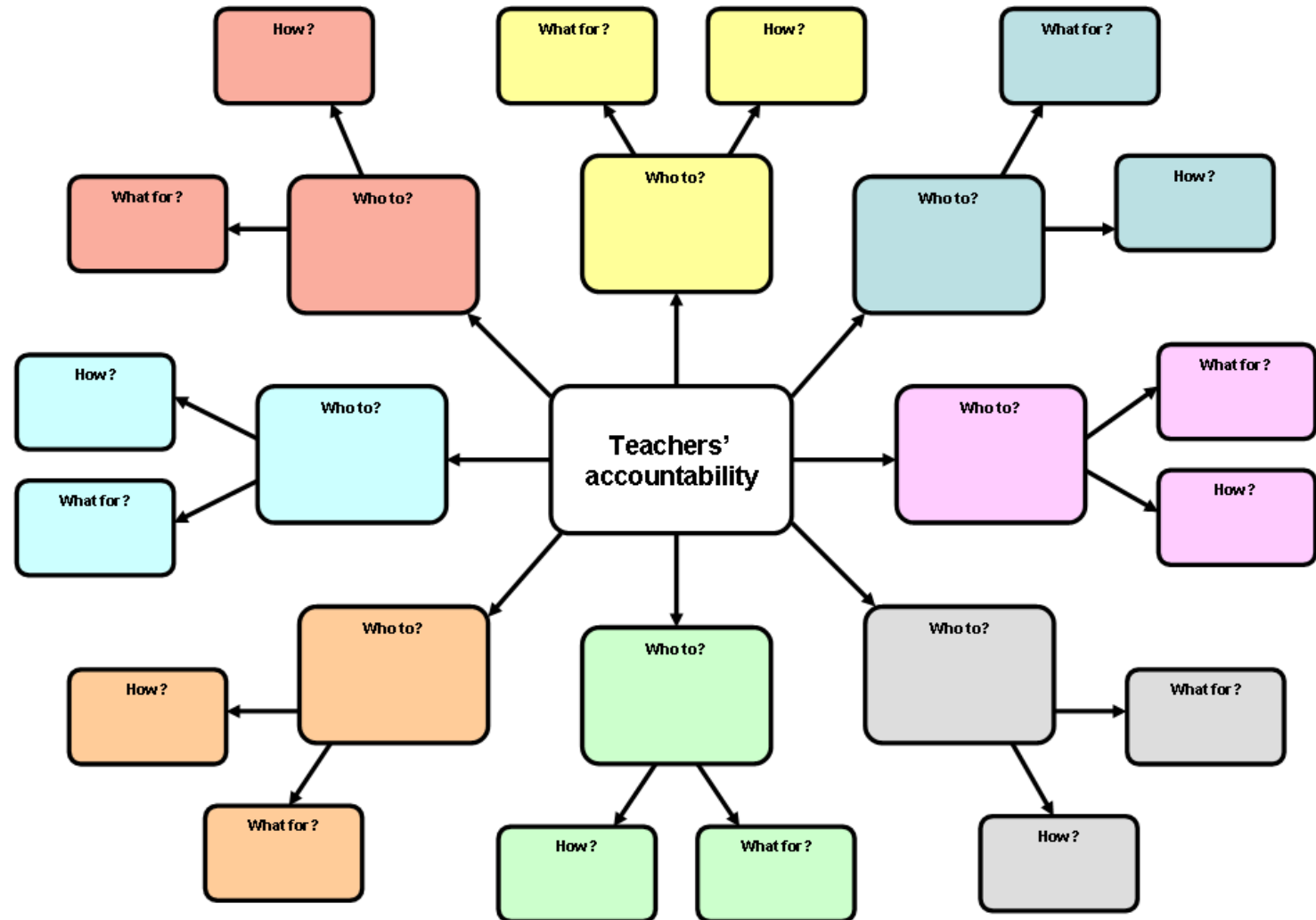
For the last 10 minutes, I'd just like to review with you some of the most important issues we've discussed today.

- What stake do you feel you have as parents/carers in some of the different kinds of accountability relationships that we've discussed today?
- Do you think the role you currently play is as it should be?
- If not, why? How might that change?
- Are there any other final points you would like to make?

Explain next steps: the material from this group will be used as the basis for a further discussion, which will focus on developing ideas around self-accountability and how this might be measured, or monitored, or assessed.

Thank you.

## Appendix 2: Accountability Map



## Appendix 3: Focus group recruitment specification

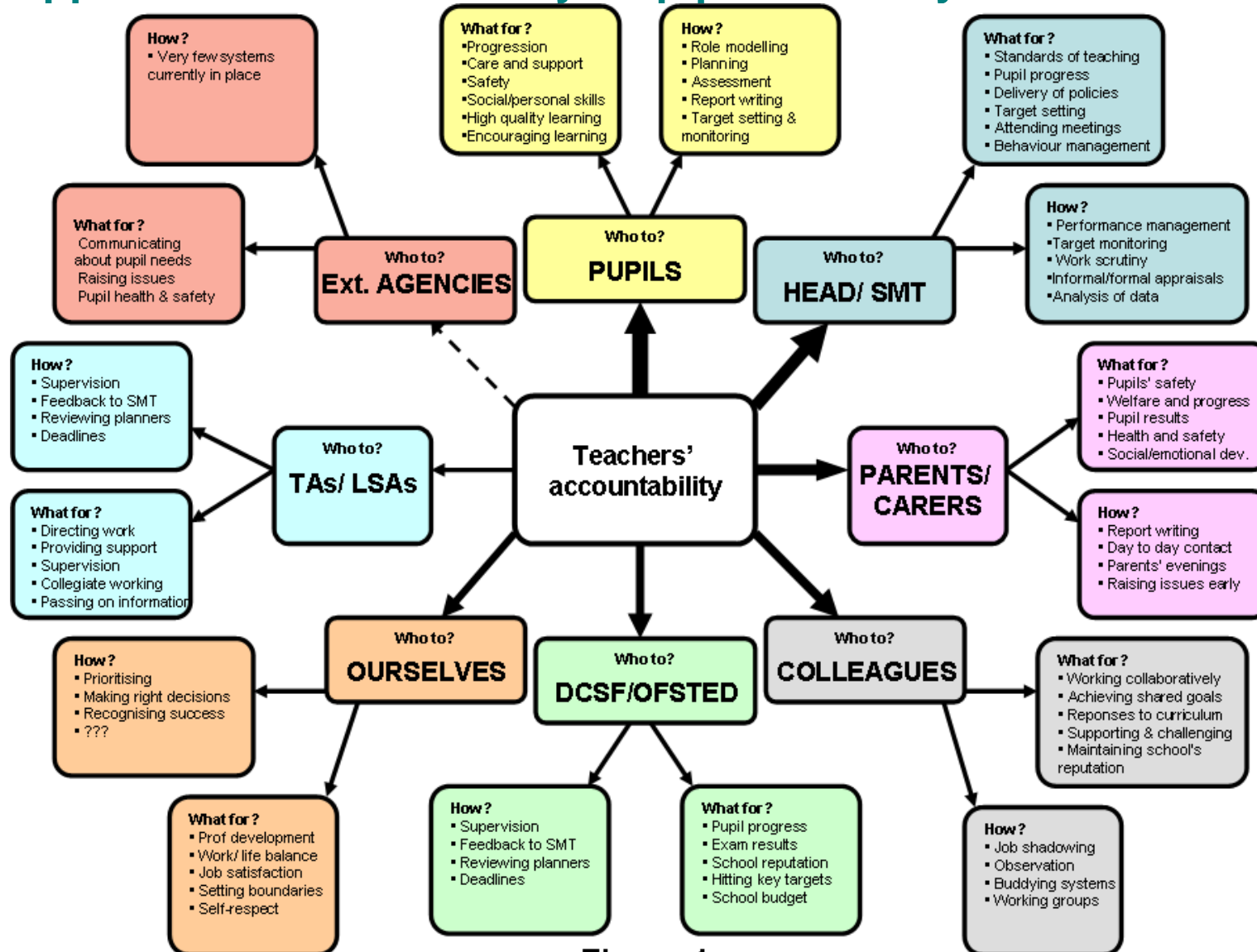
| Group No.       | Location   | Date              | Male / female | Broad profile of participants (all of whom must be parents or carers of children currently in education)                      | Other criteria   |
|-----------------|--|-------------------|---------------|---|--|
| 1 (8-10 people) | London (OPM)<br>252b Grays Inn Road,<br>London, WC1X 8XG                                 | Weds 24th Feb     | 50/50         | Primary (preferably including a mix of community/voluntary aided/faith schools/trust or foundation trust schools)<br><br>C2DE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> of 2 carers</li> <li>• <b>No more than 2</b> parents with children at the same school</li> </ul>   |
| 2 (8-10 people) | London (OPM)<br>252b Grays Inn Road,<br>London, WC1X 8XG                                 | Weds 24th Feb     | 50/50         | Secondary<br><br>BC1C2  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2 parents</b> of child/ren in academies</li> <li>• <b>2 parents</b> of children in independent schools</li> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> of 2 carers</li> <li>• <b>No more than 2</b> parents with children at the same school</li> </ul>        |
| 3 (8-10 people) | East Midlands (Leicester)<br>Belmont hotel, De<br>Montfort Street,<br>Leicester, LE1 7GR | Weds 3rd<br>March | 50/50         | Primary and secondary<br><br>C2DE   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> of 3 participants in part-time employment</li> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> of 3 participants not working</li> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> of 2 carers</li> <li>• <b>No more than 2</b> parents with children at the same school</li> </ul> |

The future accountability of teachers – the perspectives of parents and carers

|                               |  |                             |              |  |   |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--------------|--|---|
| <p><b>4</b> (8-10 people)</p> | <p>East Midlands (Leicester)<br/>Belmont hotel, De Montfort Street, Leicester, LE1 7GR</p> | <p>Thurs 4th March (JS)</p> | <p>50/50</p> | <p>PRU/SEN (children with a statement of special needs)<br/>Socio-economic mix</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> of 2 carers</li> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> of 3 parents with children attending Pupil Referral Unit</li> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> of 3 parents of children with SEN: <i>either</i> <b>statemented</b>, or in <b>School Action/ School Action Plus</b></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>5</b> (8-10 people)</p> | <p>North West (West Kirby, The Wirral?)</p>  | <p>Tues 2nd March (KW)</p>  | <p>50/50</p> | <p>Primary preferably including a mix of community/voluntary aided/faith schools/trust or foundation trust schools)<br/>ABC1</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> of 2 carers</li> <li>• <b>2 parents</b> of children in independent schools</li> <li>• <b>No more than 2</b> parents with children at the same school</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>6</b> (8-10 people)</p> | <p>North West (West Kirby, The Wirral?)</p>  | <p>Weds 3rd March (JS)</p>  | <p>50/50</p> | <p>Secondary<br/>C1C2D</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2 parents</b> of child/ren in academies</li> <li>• <b>2 parents</b> of children in independent schools</li> <li>• <b>Minimum</b> of 2 carers</li> <li>• <b>No more than 2</b> parents with children at the same school</li> </ul>                                   |



## Appendix 4: Accountability map produced by teachers in 2009



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## Appendix 5: Workshop Scenarios

### Scenario 1

**'School takes part in locally-based inspection system, in which they are inspected by parents and local/ex-teachers in place of a national Ofsted inspection'**

*A school takes part in a new peer-review process led by a team of local teachers, ex-teachers and parents. The school now has more regular and focused reviews during the year, which the wider parent body can help to shape. There is also access to support in between inspections to help implement recommendations for improvement.*

Teachers and parents at Forestmoore secondary school in Burnersfield have had concerns for some time about the national Ofsted inspection system. The most recent inspection at Forestmoore School was stressful for everyone, with a busy period of preparation for all teachers which took time away from marking coursework and providing support to children who were struggling. Similar complaints from other schools in Burnersfield have led to trials for a new inspection system for a small number of schools in the local area.

The new system is based more at the local level, with inspection teams including parents, teachers and ex-teachers who have lived and worked in Burnersfield and understand the history of the school and the backgrounds and needs of the pupils. Some members of the inspection team are ex-students of the schools themselves. Parents on the inspection team will give their time voluntarily, and will have to commit to inspection training and a certain number of days per year to carry out inspections at short-notice. To be chosen as a member of the inspection team, parents, teachers and others need to show a willingness to learn about how schools work and an ability to help form recommendations and actions for improvement.

Instead of the usual Ofsted inspections, Forestmoore Secondary will now have more regular light touch inspections from this local team, at different points throughout the school year. The visits will be un-announced visits, but will be more supportive and focused on thinking of positive ways to improve teaching in the school. They also won't require any preparation from the school or teachers themselves beforehand. The trained parent, teacher and ex-teacher inspectors will observe classroom teaching, interview pupils and teachers and complete assessment forms to feed into the internal performance management process. Findings from this new system will be fed back through annual reports to Government, with a response from the school about to actions put in place throughout the year to address highlighted areas for development.

The inspection team assigned to Forestmoore has a national inspector on the team, Samira Norris, whose role is to challenge the team and help moderate standards across the country. If at any point Samira thinks that Forestmoore lacks capacity to improve in any area, or that the inspection team is failing to identify and support improvement at Forestmoore, she will recommend a return to the previous Ofsted inspection system.

A wider group of parents and pupils at Forestmoore are also very closely involved in deciding what measures the inspectors should use to judge the school and the teachers. The head teacher of Burnersfield, Alan Fellows, has brought together a small team of staff to run the consultation with

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parents and pupils. This team has been very busy, setting up meetings and interviews with a cross-section of parents and pupils to make sure that their thoughts are fed into the new inspection design.

Parents and pupils identified the following as important things to look at and improve for the next inspection:

- Students' moral and social development from years 7-9 in particular;
- Developing partnerships with outside agencies, to help support vulnerable children and children with special educational needs;
- Communication with pupils and parents on things like pupil progress, objectives for learning and ways to prevent and deal with bullying behaviours;

After the consultation period, Mr Fellows produced a report for the local inspection team and for Government, outlining the main areas on which the new inspection should focus. Some of the things that Ofsted might have focused on, like the results in Maths and English, were not highlighted by parents. This means that they will not be an important part of the next inspection process.

The wider parent body can also play a part in the timing of these inspections, as shown by a recent set of requests for a review to look at teacher responses to the problem of bullying in Year 7. Following these, the inspection team visited the school for a peer review process tailored to explore how parents' concerns about bullying could be addressed.

## Scenario 2

**'Large primary school introduces a way of improving engagement with parents, including making school policies easier for parents to understand, and having more formal teacher-parent agreements'**

*A large primary school adopts a structured approach to engaging with parents, involving regular contact based around 'parent-teacher agreements'. Parents and teachers meet regularly, and sign agreements about parents' support with homework, behaviour management in the home and the kind of support pupils will get at school. All parents are informed about the current school policies and systems of feedback on teachers within the school, and given an opportunity to influence this.*

Dunhurst School is a large primary school in Canterfield, which has recently received complaints from some parents that they do not feel well enough informed about how the school ensures the teaching is of a high quality. They are particularly concerned that not enough is being done about some teachers who they think are performing badly. The head teacher, Mr Shah is keen to respond to the parents' wishes. He has introduced some new ways for the school to communicate with parents and more information about how the school works is now given to them. He has outlined to parents that the following are in place:

- An internal performance management system in which each teacher is line managed directly by a head of department or year head. All teachers have a yearly appraisal in which their overall performance is assessed against their job description. Plans for each teacher's future development are put in place, making sure that these fit within the wider school improvement plan.
- All teachers at the school have achieved Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), which is the accreditation awarded after completing a period of initial teacher training. This ensures that

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teachers meet the professional standards for QTS, and have the skills, knowledge and understanding required to be an effective teacher.

- Teachers re-demonstrate their competence every couple of years through a formal 'teaching assessment' in order to maintain their accreditation. Once teachers have received several positive teaching assessments in a row, they demonstrate their competence less frequently.
- The General Teaching Council's (GTC) Code of conduct and Practice for Registered Teachers outlines expectations of registered teachers and the standards that teachers should expect of themselves and their colleagues. In cases in which teachers are proved to have fallen seriously short of the expected standards of conduct and practice set out in the Code, Employers have a duty to refer this to the GTC for investigation.
- A school complaints procedure exists for addressing any concerns raised by parents, staff or members of the community. It sets out the steps people should take if they want to make a complaint, including contact with the teacher, with the head teacher, and if still unresolved to approach the Governing body in writing. Parents and others can also complain directly to Ofsted, who have responsibility for inspecting schools and drafting recommendations for change.
- Schools are rated in the national league tables every year on the basis of their exam results, and are inspected by Ofsted every few years. Individual teachers are observed in the classroom and assessed by Ofsted. If this process raises any grave concerns about the ongoing performance of individual teachers, then head teachers follow a process through the GTC in which teachers can be removed from their teaching post. The Governors are often involved in this process, but ultimate responsibility lies with the head teacher of the school.
- There are also 'Pupil and Parent guarantees' in place, which set out what schools should do and how parents should support them. These guarantees also explain what pupils and parents can do if they are concerned about any element of the school or teaching. Parents are also encouraged to be involved in the new 'reporting' process, which reports to Government and includes parents' and pupils' views of the school and the support they are receiving.

Parents and carers can talk directly to the head teacher and Governing body about any aspects of this system that they think should be strengthened or weakened, and their reasons for this. The head teacher will need to write to parents and carers, explaining any changes and the reasons for them.

Mr Shah has also responded to parents' wishes for more regular communication with the school. He has replaced parents' evenings with a system based on 'parent-teacher agreements'. Under this system, parents can meet teachers every month to discuss their child's progress and agree on actions at home and at school that will help support their development. Teachers outline what they would like parents to do, such as reinforcing learning and good behaviour at home, and parents are committed to honouring these actions and reporting back. These meetings also allow parents to raise any concerns they have about their child's development or well-being, such as experiences of bullying. Both teachers and parents sign a written copy of the agreed actions, and the whole process is overseen by the year head. Any complaints about individual teachers' performance that come out of this Parent-Teacher agreement are fed directly into their performance management and appraisal process, and taken seriously by the Head teacher.

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## Scenario 3

### **'School introduces stronger performance management to improve teaching and learning and reduce the individual inspection of classroom teachers'**

*A model of regular supervision and performance management is introduced to focus on teaching skills and recognise individual pupil needs, and to remove the need for national inspection of teachers. Ofsted inspections are focused more on school leadership. Classroom teachers are less directly involved in school-wide inspection, but involved more in a peer-observation programme within the school.*

Mrs Gregory is an experienced head teacher, who has recently taken up post at Steepers, a large secondary school in Harlsborough with around 850 pupils. Mrs Gregory is particularly keen to improve pupil attainment in Year 10 for those pupils currently achieving B grades, as well as for gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs (SEN). Building on research, she developed a model of regular supervision and observation to trial at Steepers. Under this new scheme, all classroom teachers have supervision sessions every three weeks with their Key Stage coordinator, and regular observation from colleagues including other teachers, TAs and Heads of Department.

The supervision meetings last for about an hour and have two main elements. The first part of the meeting is a discussion about teaching and learning in relation to individual pupils and groups of pupils. The discussions might cover how to ensure that all pupils are making good progress, steps to be taken to address the needs of less able pupils, and making sure that the right levels of challenge are put in place for more able pupils. The second part of the meeting focuses on early intervention. It gives teachers a chance to flag up any early concerns they have about children who might need additional pastoral or academic support.

A second part of the trial involves regular internal observations of classroom teaching, with all teachers in the school required to spend a minimum of 2 hours a month observing the teaching practice of their colleagues. Teachers can observe any lesson taking place in the school, and log the lessons they have observed on a central system. This record helps to ensure that all teachers are observed on a regular basis. Teachers doing the observations are required to feed back to their colleagues through a formal process, highlighting areas of strength and areas for development. This information is also given to teachers' managers and included in their supervision and appraisal process.

Teachers who are consistently reported to be underperforming are placed under a more regular observation system involving the head teacher, and given targeted training and development to focus on specific areas of weakness. Teachers who still fail to improve will be taken down a 'capability route', which is a process run by the head teachers and the Governing body that can ultimately result in a teacher being dismissed from their role.

The previous performance management system at Steepers has been changed to focus less on targets and statistics, and more on the personal development of individual teachers based on their supervision and observation throughout the year. Since the introduction of regular supervision and observations outlined above, classroom teachers have become less directly involved in the whole school inspection system run by Ofsted. This inspection now centres predominantly on the school leadership team, and asks questions about the management of the new supervision and observation system, and how this benefits teaching and learning. However, some parents have

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voiced concerns that the new system is not as robust as they'd like, and are worried that not having any external inspection or observation of teachers might mean that standards of teaching in the school decline. Some parents have also suggested that they are no longer getting the type of information they want about the performance of individual teachers, and of the performance of school compared to other schools in England.

Mr Fellows is also encouraging pupils to have more of a voice in their own learning. He has introduced a system which lets pupils give regular feedback on their teachers, and help to decide what training and development opportunities will be provided for teaching staff the following year. Pupils are asked to complete feedback forms for their teachers at the end of each school term, that look at areas in which pupils think teachers are effective, and areas in which they feel teachers could improve on their practice. At the beginning of the year, pupils are given some brief training to help them understand why their feedback is important and how it will be used. All feedback is anonymous to encourage honesty. At the end of each year, an aggregate report of pupil and parent feedback is given to all pupils and parents. This includes what is going to be done to address things that are not working so well and no individual teachers are named. Teachers who are consistently found to be receiving poor feedback from pupils and parents are placed on a structured performance management and development programme to address weaknesses.

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## Appendix 6: Main elements of scenarios

### Scenario 1

#### More localised inspection process:

- Greater school control over designing external inspection process criteria
- Parents and pupils play a larger role in determining focus of national inspections
  - Criteria seen as irrelevant locally play a less important role
- Inspection teams are more locally based, including parents and ex-teachers, and:
  - inspection is relevant to local context and draws on local knowledge
  - is more developmental and light-touch, involving school parents on the inspection team
- Wider parent body can feed into the inspection process, identifying criteria which generates a plan and objectives for the coming year
- Yearly aggregate reports of feedback provided to all parents and teachers and for Government

### Scenario 2

#### Improving parental engagement and communication between teachers and parents:

- Greater transparency from Head/school about systems for monitoring teachers' performance and holding them to account;
- System based on internal performance management, Ofsted inspections, clear complaints procedures, compliance with the GTC Code and overall power of the Head and the Governing Body.
- Parents can feed back directly to the Head/Governing body on any aspects they want to be changed;
- 'Parent-teacher agreements' drawn up through more regular meetings between parents and teachers, and joint action plans.

### Scenario 3

#### Improved supervision and system of observation in schools:

- Model of 'regular supervision and internal observation' introduced - all classroom teachers have regular supervision sessions and are observed by the colleagues and receive feedback.
- Supervision focused on;
  - narrowing achievement gaps, achieving potential
  - early intervention – early concerns about pupils
- Internal observation process made compulsory, to feed back into performance management process
- Classroom teachers less directly involved in whole-school inspection
- Ofsted agreed renewed national focus on school leadership
- Pupils give more regular feedback on their teachers, and help focus their training and development plans. Parents also able to feedback more regularly on their perception of teachers.

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## Appendix 7: Probe questions for scenarios

### Scenario 1

- What do you think about this scenario? What do you see as its main purpose?
- What do you think would be the benefits of this approach to inspection?
  - What are the benefits of involving pupils more in feeding back on teachers in this way?
  - What are the benefits of involving parents more closely in the process?
- What would the impact be of these benefits on:
  - Parents? Do you think this would help them? If so, why?
  - Teachers? Pupils? Schools? Others?
- Would this system help to provide sound evidence to head teachers, parents, themselves and the Government about how teachers are performing in their roles? Why?
- Do you think this would be equally beneficial if the inspections were carried out by national inspectors, but still designed by parents? Why/why not?
- Would you feel more secure to know there was a national representative, such as Samira Norris, on the inspection team?
- What do you think would be the risks or disadvantages of this system of inspection? Does it sound practical to you?
- What would the impact be of these risks or disadvantages on:
  - Parents? (probe for details)
  - Teachers? Pupils? Schools? Others?
- What about the lack of comparability between schools? Would that matter to you?
- And what about the lack of focus on English or Maths if they were not highlighted by parents?
- Do you think that these elements would work equally well in a highly performing school as in a poorly performing school?
  - Why? Why not?
- What do you think would need to be in place to make this system work well?
  - For teachers?
  - For parents? (i.e. what would parents need to help them participate?)
  - For pupils? For schools? For others?
- How would teachers justify their actions or decisions under this system?
  - Who do you think they would justify actions or decisions to? (eg parents? Pupils? Colleagues? Others?)
- What actions do you think would be available under this system for parents/pupils/colleagues/others to ensure that teachers address poor teaching performance or other professional shortcomings?
- What would need to be in place to make this system work?



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## Scenario 2

- What do you think about this scenario for communicating with parents about performance management processes?
- What do you see as the main purpose of increasing this communication?
- What do you think are the benefits of this new system of communication?
- What would the impact be of these benefits on:
  - Parents? Do you think this would help them? If so, why?
  - Teachers? Pupils? Schools? Others?
- What do you think are the risks and disadvantages of this new system of communication? What are the possible drawbacks of the parent-teacher agreements?
- What would the impact be of these risks or disadvantages on:
  - Parents? (probe for details)
  - Teachers? Pupils? Schools? Others?
- How would the benefits, risks and disadvantages we have identified change if the school was poorly performing?
- What do you think would need to be in place to make this system work well?
  - For parents? (i.e. what would parents need to help them participate?)
  - For teachers? For pupils? For teachers? For others?
- How would teachers justify their actions or decisions about teaching and learning under this system?
  - Who do you think they would justify actions or decisions to? (eg parents? Pupils? Colleagues? Others?)
- What do you think about teachers re-demonstrating their competence every few years? Do you think this would be useful or necessary?
- What are your thoughts on the parent-teacher agreements? Do you think they would work? Do you think they'd be helpful? Why?
- What actions do you think would be available under this system for parents/pupils/colleagues/others to ensure that teachers address poor teaching performance or other professional shortcomings?
- What would need to be in place to make this system work?
- Do you think this would work in a secondary school?

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## Scenario 3

- What are your views on this scenario?
  - Are any particular elements very positive? Who for?
  - Are any particular elements more negative? Who for?
- What do you see as the main purpose of increasing supervision in this way?
- Looking at the system of regular supervision for teachers first, what do you think are the potential benefits of this?
- What would the impact be of these benefits on:
  - Parents?
  - Teachers? Pupils? Schools? Others?
- And what do you think are the potential risks or disadvantages of this system of regular supervision for teachers?
- What would the impact be of these risks or disadvantages on:
  - Teachers? Pupils? Parents? Schools? Others?
- Looking next at the system of regular and compulsory observation of teaching, what do you think are the potential benefits of this?
- What would the impact be of these benefits on:
  - Teachers? Pupils? Parents? Schools? Others?
- And what do you think are the potential risks or disadvantages of regular and compulsory observations?
- What would the impact be of these risks or disadvantages on:
  - Teachers? Pupils? Parents? Schools? Others?
- How well do you think these processes would help to address the problems of poor teaching and learning, as set out in the scenario?
- What would need to change/be in place to make this work (conditions for success)?
- Under this system, how would teachers justify their actions or decisions about teaching and learning?
  - Who do you think they would justify actions or decisions to? (eg parents? Pupils? Colleagues? Others?)
- What do you think about the element in which pupils have more opportunity to feed back on their teachers? Do you think this would be useful? What would help it to work well?
- What actions do you think would be available under this system for parents/pupils/colleagues/others to ensure that teachers address poor teaching performance or other professional shortcomings?
- How might your answers to the questions above differ if Steepers School was a highly performing school? What if there had been inconsistencies highlighted in the performance of the Key Stage Coordinator?

## Appendix 8: Feedback grid for workshops

|   |  |   |  |  |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| <b>Initial thoughts on the scenario (what is the main purpose? What is the most attractive element to you, and why?)</b>                  |  |   |  |  |
| <b>Would this system help to provide sound evidence to Heads/parents, Government etc about how teachers are performing in their role?</b> |  |   |  |  |
|   | <b>What are the benefits of these proposed elements of accountability?</b> | <b>What are the risks or disadvantages?</b> | <b>What is the likely impact of these?</b> | <b>What needs to be in place to make this work (specifically, what support for parents)?</b> |
| <b>For parents?</b>   |  |   |  |  |
| <b>For pupils?<br/>Teachers?<br/>Schools?<br/>Others?</b>   |  |   |  |  |

## Appendix 9: Workshop recruitment specification

| Workshop No.       | Location                | Date                           | Broad profile of participants  | Specific requirements   |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|
| 1 (10-12 people)   | South West<br>(Swindon) | Tues 23 <sup>rd</sup><br>March | Primary and secondary schools<br>Socio-economically mixed<br>No more than 2 parents from same school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of 3 from BME groups</li> <li>• Minimum of 3 foster carers</li> <li>• Minimum of 2 parents in part-time employment</li> <li>• Minimum of 1 parent from an <i>independent</i> school</li> <li>• Minimum of 1 parent from an <i>academy</i></li> </ul> |
| 2 (10 – 12 people) | North East<br>(Hull)    | Weds 24 <sup>th</sup><br>March | Special and PRU schools<br>Socio-economically mixed<br>No more than 2 parents from same school       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of 3 from BME groups</li> <li>• Minimum of 3 foster carers</li> <li>• Minimum of 2 parents in part-time employment</li> </ul>  |

## Appendix 10. Detailed overview of parents' responses to possible new accountability mechanisms

| Purpose  | Benefits  | Risks   | Critical success factors  |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Structured peer observation</b>   |   |   |   |
| <p>Improving teaching standards and children's education</p> <p>Highlighting development needs at an early stage</p> <p>Sharing best-practise within schools</p> | <p>Three main benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening school-based accountability</li> <li>• Reassure parents that SMT were aware of individual teachers' practice</li> <li>• Accountability an ongoing process rather than intermittent, as with Ofsted inspections, enabling problems to be identified early</li> </ul> <p>Other benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting more interaction between teachers;</li> <li>• helping to standardise teaching methods across the school;</li> <li>• encouraging professional development</li> <li>• giving teachers more opportunities to voice their opinions.</li> </ul> | <p>Bias:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• observation feedback could lack consistency if done by many different teachers, reducing comparability between them</li> <li>• observation feedback from teachers within the same school could be biased if teachers have close relationships and loyalties towards each other</li> <li>• teachers might be reluctant to feed back negative information, which could cover up areas of weakness</li> <li>• negative feedback could lead to conflict in the workplace</li> <li>• lack of comparability across schools, if observation tailored to each individual school</li> <li>• pressure on teachers, particularly those who are under-performing: pupils could see regular observation of teacher as comment on that teacher's ability and lose respect for them.</li> </ul> <p><i>'How will the teachers inspecting be introduced to children in the class?'</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring some element of objectivity: eg, teachers observe colleagues from another local school. This would require steps to minimise possibility of conflict between teachers and schools and to maximise incentive to give honest feedback.</li> <li>• Linking with external process (eg Ofsted), which would act as overall supervisory body and inspect as regularly as they do currently..</li> <li>• Providing observation data to parents (eg through online forums, emails, letters).</li> </ul> |

| Purpose   | Benefits   | Risks  | Critical success factors   |
|---|--|--|--|
|   |  | <p><i>Will the school let children know that their teacher is being inspected?</i> – Primary school parent</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Regular supervision and performance management</b></p>  |  |  |  |
| <p>To enable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ongoing performance monitoring and improvement</li> <li>development of tailored professional training and development plans for individual teachers.</li> </ul> | <p>Regular supervision seen as fundamental element of effective performance management.</p> <p>Close supervision seen as strengthening accountability.</p> <p><i>‘If a teacher knows they will be held accountable by their direct line manager, then they’re more likely to make an effort. That’s how it works for humans, and for professionals. They need to know they will be chased up, and they need to know who will do it.’</i> – Foster Carer</p> <p><i>‘This type of supervision and appraisal is what most employees have to go through in all other businesses. And a school is basically a business, so shouldn’t be any different.’</i> – Secondary school parent</p> |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervision reviews performed bi-annually, for all teachers, regardless of quality of performance.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Strengthening local accountability</b></p>  |  |  |  |
| <p>Main purpose seen as improving parents’ understanding of and contribution to accountability in teaching (rather than strengthening the accountability of teachers for their</p>                                      | <p>Inspection data would be more accurate as a consequence of less stressful, more regular and context-aware inspection process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local perspective would bring</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Practicality:</b> Current difficulties in engaging parents with schools suggest many parents would have either no time or no inclination to act as parent inspectors.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanisms to ensuring easy and effective comparison across schools</li> <li>Transparent communication with parents to ensure they’re aware of</li> </ul> |

| Purpose   | Benefits  | Risks   | Critical success factors   |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p>behaviour or their teaching):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving parents and other stakeholders a greater role in inspections</li> <li>• Increasing parent inspectors' knowledge of teaching methods, performance assessment and the role of teachers within the classroom;</li> <li>• Giving parents more insight into schools, boosting their engagement and the likelihood of mirroring and supporting teaching behaviours in the home;</li> <li>• Giving schools more insight into what parents want of their children's education; <i>'Parents' perspective is very important and relevant'</i>;</li> <li>• Benefitting from the knowledge of local people and their understanding of the socio-economic background of pupils attending the school.</li> </ul> | <p>valuable understanding of the teaching context and help to ensure that criteria used to make judgements about school are appropriate to the local context.</p> <p><i>'Parents know issues and are already discussing them amongst themselves at school gates, etc. Being involved in inspection would allow them to look at these issues and have an input.'</i> – Secondary school parent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular light touch inspections focusing on one or two issues only would help to reduce pressure on teachers, as would having local inspectors.</li> </ul> <p><i>'As long as it doesn't feel aggressive or imposing, the more regularly teachers are assessed or observed, the stronger accountability will be.'</i> – Parent of a child at a PRU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspection could be collaborative, with teachers feeding input into the inspection.</li> </ul> <p><i>'It has to be a more healthy and more robust system when it's not a terrifying and stressful ordeal. All systems of accountability work better when the person being held to account has some input and is signed up, rather than feeling resentful'</i> – Secondary school parent</p> | <p><i>'If parents don't want to be a PTA or on governor school boards, then why would they want to volunteer in inspections? We'd have to think about incentives for this or make it really clear what the benefit of involvement would be.'</i> - Primary school parent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Comparability:</b> local inspections could be less robust than national inspections, and fail to focus on maintaining standards, as does Ofsted.</li> </ul> <p><i>'What if the local team decided to focus only on teaching of religious studies, because there were some Christians on the team, and neglected to focus on maths and English? How would we then know that the school was up to the national standards?'</i> – Primary school parent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Impartiality:</b> Personal views, relationships or experiences of local inspectors could bias judgements</li> </ul> <p><i>'The power of inspection and observation as a process for holding teachers to account is that it is independent, external and impartial. The minute you lose one of these things, the less effective the system becomes. This could lack impartiality and independence, even if it was still external.'</i> – Secondary school parent</p> | <p>system and able to get involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspector supervision to minimise bias and ensure team has appropriate skills and knowledge;</li> <li>• National representation on the inspection team, to ensure performance in line with national standards;</li> <li>• Independence: team members without connections with the particular school they're inspecting, to minimise bias</li> <li>• Involving members of the wider community in inspections, eg, police, doctors.</li> </ul> |

| Purpose   | Benefits   | Risks   | Critical success factors  |
|---|--|---|---|
|   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Skills and competencies:</b><br/>Members of local inspection teams, including parents, could lack the necessary skills, in particular if they have no knowledge of teaching, or lack teaching qualifications.</li> <li>• Opportunity to act as local inspector might be closed to some – eg, short-term carers might be unable to make long-term commitment</li> </ul>  |   |
| <b>Enhanced role for local parents and carers in setting inspection criteria against which teachers are assessed</b>  |  |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving parents a strategic role in accountability without handing them all power.</li> <li>• Help boost parents' confidence in education and strengthen their relationship with schools</li> <li>• Allowing the local context and school concerns to be reflected in the inspection process</li> </ul> <p><i>'If bullying is the major problem in a school for pupils and their parents, then teachers need to be held to account for what they are doing to manage this. This kind of flexible system could account for that.'</i> – Primary school parent.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personalising the school inspection system, making it more enjoyable and efficient for those involved;</li> <li>• enabling parents to feel more engaged in their children's schools by playing a more active role in teachers' accountability,</li> <li>• providing an opportunity for tailored improvements to be made;</li> <li>• providing a forum through which parents are able to join together and communicate with one another;</li> <li>• providing a motivation for parents to keep informed and involved in the school and in their children's education.</li> </ul> | <p>Some parents' more able or likely to express their views because they have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enthusiasm/inclination and are able to express their views with vigour</li> <li>• Easy access: process would need to ensure that parents without access to computers or the internet were able to contribute</li> <li>• Skills: schools might need to support some parents to enable them to play a role in inspections</li> </ul> <p><i>'You wouldn't just want the usual suspects feeding into this system, you'd need to work hard to make sure you could include everyone, and especially those who might not do so</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear communication from the head teacher to parents about the purpose of this system, and how they can get involved;</li> <li>• A key point of contact within each school who parents can discuss concerns with during the process;</li> <li>• Clear guidance about the issues that can be addressed in an inspection</li> </ul> <p><i>'You don't want people wasting time and saying they want assessment around things such as physical prowess, which are irrelevant and wouldn't make it into any form of assessment.'</i> – Secondary school parent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Channels for parents to feedback</li> </ul> |



| Purpose   | Benefits  | Risks   | Critical success factors  |
|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | <p><i>naturally without prompting. They might have important things to say' – PRU parent</i></p>  | <p>on the process and their involvement, contributing to continuous improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access for all – not restricting process to those with access to computers/ internet</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Requirement for teachers to re-demonstrate their competence to their profession regularly to maintain registration</b></p>  |   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring under-performing teachers are identified and supporting them to update or develop their skills to meet pupils' needs</li> <li>• Motivating teachers to update their skills and knowledge regularly, and have something to work towards in their development (eg as with professional exams in medicine and the financial services);</li> <li>• Giving parents peace of mind about teachers' skills and competencies;</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less open to bias, demonstrates competence over time and based on evidence accruing over the year</li> <li>• Strengthen teachers' sense of accountability to the teaching profession and themselves</li> <li>• Make teachers responsible for demonstrating their own competence rather than their classrooms being open to inspectors</li> <li>• More responsible and less 'accusatory'</li> </ul> | <p>Duplication/additional stress on teachers if introduced as additional to Ofsted inspections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-registration process would need to be aligned with/part of Ofsted inspections</li> <li>• Ofsted inspections might be reduced, providing classroom performance was included in re-registration criteria and assessed regularly</li> </ul> <p>Local circumstances not being taken into account if process rolled out</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the benefits of this process are communicated to the teaching profession, unions, including how existing accountability mechanisms or requirements would be lifted from teachers to allow time for this</li> <li>• Structuring the process so that teachers have to contribute to something resembling a 'portfolio' throughout the three years, and have mini-goals and deadlines that ensure they do not have a concentrated period of stress at</li> </ul> |

| Purpose  | Benefits   | Risks   | Critical success factors  |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p><i>‘Older teachers need to update themselves on changes in society and be open-minded about new ideas, as children change over time and new approaches are needed in teaching processes.’ – Primary school parent</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting the recruitment process in schools by providing proof that teachers have passed a ‘teaching assessment’ in the last 3 years. This was likened by one parent to an MOT on a car:</li> </ul> <p><i>‘It’s basically a way of providing quick assurance that a teacher is up to scratch – for the head teacher, the parents, the pupils and the teacher themselves. It’s also important for other teachers to know that their colleagues are operating at a certain standard, and this boosts morale.’ – Secondary school parent.</i></p> | <p><i>“The whole system would probably feel less invasive and dis-trusting than inspection. Like the teacher was more in control of this process themselves. It might be more empowering and less demoralising.” – Foster carer</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process continuous over a three year period, rather than focused on a single final assessment, minimising stress and benefitting pupils as re-demonstrating work is spread over time</li> </ul> <p><i>“You could do a port-folio approach, so you’d have to record certain things throughout the year – i.e. number of inspections, CPD courses attended, supervision sessions etc. That way it would feel more spread out and less all-encompassing like it currently does with Ofsted.” – Secondary school parent</i></p> | <p>nationally</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some teachers might be less able to gather required evidence (eg those in PRUs, special schools)</li> </ul> <p><i>‘A teacher in a special school needs a completely different set of skills and behaviours to that in normal secondary school. I’d be worried about not capturing that through this system.’ – Parent of a child with SEN</i></p> <p><i>‘If the system was too ‘capture all’ then it might become a bit meaningless...unless there were lots of different kinds based on your role in different schools, which is a possibility.’ – Parent of a child at PRU</i></p> <p>Allowing teachers receiving positive teaching assessments to demonstrate their competence less frequently</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Could invite these teachers to relax and would reduce their accountability</li> </ul> <p><i>‘You could say that the longer it’s been since a teacher actually qualified, the more they would need to do this to stay refreshed. Just because they have a lot of experience – and this is important – it doesn’t mean they are teaching in the right way for the children of today. Or teaching the right things.’ – Secondary school parent</i></p> | <p>the end</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardising the process across the country to include teachers of all levels and experience</li> <li>Ensuring sufficient tailoring to accommodate the different roles and responsibilities taken on by teachers in different teaching contexts</li> <li>Building in incentives for teachers performing well on assessments</li> <li>but not any that are linked to the frequency of assessment – e.g. building in performance scales that are linked in some way to pay or promotion opportunities within the school.</li> </ul> <p>Overall, this was the element featured within the scenarios that raised the biggest level of support from parents across the groups. Requirements to re-demonstrate competence were thought to bring with them greater peace of mind for parents, better results for pupils and individual motivation and structure for individual teacher development. Parents were concerned that a national system may fail to take into account individual circumstances, but felt that these could be picked up in other ways. Principally, they felt it was very important that this system did not place an additional burden on</p> |

| Purpose  | Benefits   | Risks   | Critical success factors   |
|--|--|---|--|
|  |  |   | teachers at high stress points, and that requirements to re-demonstrate were spread out over the three year period.  |
| <b>An enhanced pupil role in holding teachers to account for their teaching</b>  |  |   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposing under-performing teachers</li> <li>• Emphasising teachers' role in supporting pupils' learning</li> <li>• Encouraging pupils to voice their opinions at an early age, with the hope that this would shape their behaviour in later life and encourage them to become more 'active citizens of society'.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showing pupils that their opinions matter, by producing aggregate reports of their feedback and drafting actions in response to these;</li> <li>• Keeping teachers aware of pupils' voice and their accountability to pupils for their behaviour and their teaching;</li> <li>• Reassuring parents that pupils have a channel for direct feedback on their teachers, and that this should be effective in preventing bad teaching from going unaddressed;</li> <li>• Producing an aggregate report of feedback so that both parents and pupils can view the thoughts of those being directly impacted by teaching;</li> </ul> <p><i>'I think by producing this report, it would not only be transparent and honest, but would show both pupils and parents that their feedback was being taken seriously. It does become accountability if something is</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students lacking the knowledge and independence to provide useful and meaningful feedback</li> <li>• Students' judgements being clouded by irrelevant factors such as teacher personality or looks</li> </ul> <p><i>'It's hard for pupils to know if their teachers are good or not [...] It depends on their age'. – Primary school parent</i></p> <p><i>'If judgement and feedback on teachers is not principally related to their teaching role, then this becomes unhelpful. You could argue that personality is important, if it affects the teaching, but it can be a dodgy ground if pupils are rating teachers based on how 'cool' they are rather than their knowledge of the subject.'</i> – Secondary school parent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for teenagers to abuse the system if given too much power, eg, by ganging up on teachers they dislike</li> <li>• Different levels of trust accorded to pupils by both parents and</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that pupil feedback forms (which they assumed to be the process) are appropriate to level of feedback required/expected</li> <li>• Framing the process as a whole and specific questions in a positive light, to avoid overly-negative comments or abuse – i.e. asking for 'areas of strength' and 'areas for development', rather than asking about specific weaknesses</li> <li>• Enabling pupils to feed back every 2 months – or in between if they wish to</li> <li>• Designing bespoke system for primary pupils – eg, parents interviewing pupils and filling in questionnaires on their behalf, using a 'smiley-face' system of scoring;</li> <li>• Encouraging secondary school pupils to complete the feedback at home, as part of a homework assignment, rather than in the classroom surrounded by friends who might affect their judgements;</li> </ul> |

| Purpose  | Benefits  | Risks   | Critical success factors   |
|--|---|---|--|
|  | <p><i>done about it, but if not then it is just feedback.</i> – Secondary school parent</p>   | <p>teachers</p> <p><i>‘If you don’t trust pupils to feedback well on teachers, then how can they hold them accountable for their behaviour? We’d never know anything about what happens in the classroom...’</i> – Secondary school parent</p> <p><i>‘I think it is trying too hard to be consultative, and would back-fire and ultimately disadvantage teachers.’</i> – Parent of a child at a PRU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That views of children with SEN would not be included in a satisfactory way</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gaining support from TAs and SENCOs for SEN pupils to complete the forms in their own time, to ensure this contribution is genuine.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>A more active role for parents in protecting their stake in teachers’ accountability.</b></p>  |   |   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping to cement the relationship between parents and teachers by providing teachers with a better understanding of the pressures that parents face, and vice versa</li> <li>• giving parents the level of information they need to make complaints about individual teachers if they are not fulfilling their side of the agreement</li> <li>• helping parents to help pupils with their homework - pupils would no longer be able to lie to parents about school, or teachers about their home lives</li> <li>• providing a relationship into which</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving relationship between teachers and parents</li> <li>• Gives parents more direct role in accountability and protects their interests more effectively</li> <li>• Enabling more open communication between teachers and parents</li> <li>• Producing a shared aim of supporting a child thus reducing possibility of conflict between teachers and parents</li> <li>• Increasing mutual understanding – parents more aware of school life and teachers more aware of pupils’</li> </ul> | <p>Parents and teachers feeling under scrutiny (minority view only)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• parents feeling pressured to update teachers on home situation and to fulfil contractual obligations</li> <li>• teachers feeling pressured by having yet another accountability mechanism in place</li> </ul> <p>The process being little more than ‘box-ticking’, with the Parent-Teacher Agreement just ‘another piece of paper’ bearing no weight and leading to no actions or change</p> <p>Time required of teachers and parents to ensure the process is</p> | <p>Flexibility, to allow for different parents’ preferences</p> <p>An opt-in/opt-out system, with alternative means of communication in place for parents not able to commit to frequent and structured contact. These could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more email communication between parents and teachers;</li> <li>• a clearer and more transparent procedure for parents to provide feedback to teachers and schools, that is not just based on negativity but also on praise and development suggestions;</li> <li>• an open internet forum for parents</li> </ul> |

| Purpose  | Benefits  | Risks  | Critical success factors   |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>the views of pupils could be fed back to the teacher, via the parent:<br/> <i>'This might help form an indirect way of pupils having more of a stake in holding teachers to account – which would probably be better than pupil feedback questionnaires etc as unreasonable comments could be filtered by parents.'</i> – Secondary school parent</p> | <p>home lives and situations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils working harder because aware of regular contact between school and home</li> <li>• Teachers performing better, because they have to report to parents more frequently</li> <li>• Teachers able to take family circumstances into account when diagnosing individual pupils' specific needs/difficulties</li> <li>• Parents gaining a sense of ownership and being encouraged to take an active interest in their child's schooling and development</li> <li>• Information provided by teachers likely to be more accurate</li> </ul> <p><i>'The more information you have, the more evidence you have to use against teachers who are not doing their job properly'</i> – Primary school parent</p> <p><i>'Without information and regular communication with teachers and the school, you are powerless to do anything. Your voice doesn't count if you don't have details. That's why it's so important for us as foster carers to have that level of structure, but all parents should be the same really.'</i> – Foster Parent</p> | <p>effective</p> <p>Absence of comparability – parents would need information about performance in other schools</p> | <p>and teachers to communicate with each other and discuss issues and problems (bearing in mind confidentiality and anonymity).</p> <p>Ensuring that parents who wish to take part in structured and regular meetings with parents are not disadvantaged by incompatible working hours by having range of channels through which teachers and parents can communicate</p> <p>Ensuring feedback includes praise</p> <p>Having channel through which parents can escalate issues if they do not feel a teacher is fulfilling their commitments.</p> <p>Ensuring parents are clear about the process and their particular powers</p> <p><i>'Parents would need to be clear from the beginning, that if they were concerned about a teacher or didn't feel they were fulfilling their end of the bargain, they could go to Mr so and so and they would have the power to take it further. Basically, it would need to link in with performance management, and the parent would need to understand how.'</i> – Secondary school parent</p> |

