House of Commons

Education and Skills Committee

STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION: ANNUAL REPORT OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS FOR 2000-01

Responses from Government and Ofsted to the Second Report from the Education and Skills Committee, Session 2001-02

Fourth Special Report of Session 2001–02

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FOURTH SPECIAL REPORT

The Education and Skills Committee has agreed to the following Special Report:

STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION: THE ANNUAL REPORT OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS FOR 2000–01

RESPONSES FROM GOVERNMENT AND OFSTED TO THE SECOND REPORT OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE, SESSION 2001–02

The Education and Skills Committee reported to the House on *Standards and Quality in Education: The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools for 2000–01* in its Second Report of Session 2001–02, published on 30 April 2002 as HC 699. The Government's response was received on 24 June 2002 and OFSTED's response was received on 25 June 2002. The responses are reproduced as Appendices 1 and 2 to this Special Report.

APPENDIX 1

STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION: THE ANNUAL REPORT OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS FOR 2000–01

RESPONSE FROM GOVERNMENT TO THE SECOND REPORT OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE, SESSION 2001–02

Letter to the Chairman of the Committee from the Minister for School Standards

I am responding to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2001-02, Standards and Quality in Education: The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools for 2000-01, which was published on 30 April. I understand that HM Chief Inspector of Schools, David Bell, is responding on behalf of OFSTED.

The HMCI appointment process

The recent appointment of David Bell as HMCI followed a widely publicised open competition which, for reasons of transparency, was run in accordance with the guidance of the Office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The recruitment process was consistent with previous Government statements on this matter and fully reflected the principles of ministerial accountability and selection on merit, which were highlighted in the Government's response to the Education & Employment Select Committee's Fourth Report of 1998-99. We believe that those principles should remain the key elements of the appointment system for public bodies.

On the recommendation of the Secretary of State, David Bell was appointed as HMCI from 1 May 2002 to April 2007, by Order in Council. The details of future selection arrangements will be determined when the need next arises, but at this stage the Government has not seen the need for significant changes to the process.

Pupil behaviour and attendance

We are keen to support the many schools, LEAs and other agencies that are working hard to improve school attendance and, in particular, to encourage a multi-agency approach to addressing non-attendance. For example, we launched a pack of good practice case studies at the recent 'Tackling it together' conference, held in April, which includes examples of partnership working to increase attendance and reduce youth crime; guidelines on truancy sweeps; the protocol developed by the DfES in collaboration with Police representatives for developing relationships with the Police; and a summary of the Cabinet Office's recent report on privacy and data sharing.

We recognise that, as children's first educators and most enduring role models, it is important for parents to take a positive role in their children's education, acting in partnership with teachers and schools to give children the best possible chance of success. All schools are required to have a home-school agreement, which parents must be invited to sign. This should make clear that pupils are expected to follow the school's rules and that parents will support the school in maintaining good behaviour and discipline.

There are now 3,000 Learning Mentors working in schools as part of Excellence in Cities. They have an important role in securing good relations between school and home, fostering a positive attitude to learning on the part of parents and families, and helping them to support their children. Early feedback suggests that Learning Mentors are forging these

productive relationships and we are encouraged by accounts of pro-active and innovative partnership work including attendance campaigns, and homework and breakfast clubs.

We plan to extend the availability of Parenting Orders to cases involving a pattern of exclusions for unruly behaviour. The Orders require the parents to attend counselling or guidance sessions on managing their child's challenging behaviour more effectively.

We are also currently reviewing the existing penalties for parents who collude in pupil non-attendance as part of the strategy to address street crime, and are considering a range of options including the removal of child benefit from parents who consistently fail in their responsibilities and the further development of existing sanctions such as Parenting Orders.

The DfES is represented on the steering group of a new research project that has been commissioned by the National Children's Bureau and the Local Government Association on the effectiveness of prosecution in cases of non-attendance. We look forward to reviewing the results in autumn 2003.

We recognise the importance of achieving a balance between sanctions for parents who ignore their responsibilities and support for those who are trying to improve their child's attendance and behaviour. We are offering £66 million of funding to targeted local education authorities to pilot our long-term strategy on improving behaviour and attendance. This will include Behaviour and Education Support Teams which will draw together under a clear management structure the full range of specialist support including key workers for vulnerable young people and their families.

Teacher recruitment and retention

We believe that our recruitment and retention incentives strike the right balance between providing incentives to enter the profession and the need to retain those already working as teachers. Our recruitment initiatives are both necessary and well targeted, and have contributed to the reversal of an eight-year decline in recruitment to initial teacher training. There are more teachers in schools today that at any time since 1982 and we want to do all we can to encourage good teachers to stay in the profession.

In March this year, we announced a £44 million recruitment and retention fund available to schools where the high cost of living can make it harder to attract and keep the best teachers. This fund, which comes on top of the £33 million made available for last year, can for example be used to help with travel, housing and childcare costs and retention awards.

We have also established a Teacher Retention Project which aims to encourage schools, LEAs and other key stakeholders such as the Teacher Training Agency, General Teaching Council and the National College for School Leadership to work in partnership to identify, develop and disseminate good practice in redressing retention difficulties. The Project has also funded, and is working closely with, a newly created Unit within the Government Office for London, which has a specific remit of looking at teacher recruitment and retention issues within London.

We recognise that teachers' pay is a key element in retaining those already in the profession and have accepted the recommendations of the independent School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) and implemented an above-inflation increase of 3.5 per cent on all teachers' pay scales and allowances. The STRB's recommendation of a shortened pay spine was a specific response to retention issues and the problem of teacher wastage in the early years of teaching. The number of spine points on the main scale will reduce from nine to six, from September. The effect of this will be larger annual increases for teachers on the main scale and a reduction in the time taken for many teachers to become eligible to apply for the threshold assessment.

As the Committee are aware, OFSTED published a report on the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) on 31 January 2002. The report, which was welcomed by the Government, contained many positive findings about the programme. However, it also suggested that training activities could add more value for trainees. The Government had reached a similar conclusion before the report was published and that is why the Secretary of State asked the Teacher Training Agency last summer to design a reformed GTP with additional measures to reduce bureaucracy and reinforce quality. A working party, which included OFSTED representation, was set up, and produced recommendations for new GTP arrangements to take effect from this September.

Teacher Workload

We remain committed to reducing bureaucratic burdens on the school workforce and would welcome OFSTED's evaluation of initiatives aimed at reducing teacher workload.

We welcome the recent report on teacher workload by the School Teachers' Review Body and recognise that it has important things to say about how we might raise standards whilst also taking firm action on workload. We are currently consulting on the principles contained in the recommendations and will issue a formal response later in the year.

A joint DfES / Cabinet Office project team is considering workload issues in secondary schools and has visited 40 schools and 15 LEAs as part of its investigations. We have been very encouraged by the comments and feedback freely given by teachers and support staff. The final report is due for publication in September.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, in their Teacher Workload Study, recommended that guidance for schools should be developed on "fit for purpose" planning. At present, the DfES is exploring possibilities for producing such guidance with OFSTED and the QCA.

We are currently seeking further ways to simplify education funding through the review of the local government finance system and the Education Bill currently being considered by Parliament.

From April 2003, each local education authority's education standard spending assessment will include a school funding assessment, which separately identifies the amount for spending on school children. There are also proposals in the Bill to give the Secretary of State a reserve power to set the level of the total schools' budget in an individual local education authority.

We are taking forward the commitment contained in the Local Government White Paper: Strong Local Leadership - Quality Public Services, to reduce the amount of ring-fenced funding for schools. In addition, there are provisions in the Bill for a new single grant-making power for the Secretary of State to enable us to bring together the existing grant funding streams into a simpler system.

Taken together, these changes will ensure that the money allocated to schools by the Government reaches them and that schools are better able to identify the total amount available to them.

Supply teachers

Supply agencies are regulated under the Employment Act 1973 and its associated Regulations, which require agencies to assure the personal and professional suitability of individuals before they are engaged as supply teachers. Compliance with the Regulations is overseen by a dedicated inspectorate and revised Regulations are proposed by the Department for Trade and Industry.

We have introduced a voluntary Quality Mark to be awarded to agencies that demonstrate good practice in the recruitment and development of supply teachers and in relations with schools. This will provide headteachers with an indicator by which to assess agencies. We intend to keep under review the potential involvement of OFSTED in respect of teacher supply agencies.

We recognise the importance of high quality supply teaching and there are a number of strands of work designed to support this. As well as publishing internet guidance for schools on making best use of supply teachers, including shared training, we plan to support agencies in addressing the continuing professional development requirements of supply teachers through a set of dedicated self-study materials and specific Key Stage 3 training materials. The Learning and Skills Council has also joined with Hays Education to develop a professional qualification for supply teachers, which will initially cover some 2,000 teachers.

Specialist Schools

We welcome OFSTED's report, *Specialist Schools: An evaluation of progress*, which was published in October 2001, and in particular, the illustrations of good practice in relation to the community programme which it provides. Copies of the report have been sent to existing specialist schools and are being sent to newly designated schools. They are also available for applicant schools.

We believe that our current assessment practice reflects the Committee's concern about the importance of the community element of the specialist schools programme.
There are four components in the assessment of an application for re-designation: progress in relation to the community plan; progress in relation to the school plan; a new four year community development plan; and a new four year school development plan.

Taken together, the two community elements in the assessment carry equal weight with the two school elements. Failure to meet the objectives and targets of the original community plan or to produce a new plan of sufficient scope or ambition may result in a school not being re-designated. However, if the deficiency is fairly modest, a school may be given the opportunity to strengthen the plans or may be set specific conditions for re-designation.

Many existing specialist schools are located in socially and economically deprived areas and serve such communities. Our arrangements for supporting schools in raising sponsorship are designed to help schools in such circumstances whenever possible. The Technology Colleges Trust (TCT) and Youth Sport Trust are grant-aided to help schools raise sponsorship. The TCT provides a booklet on the subject and itself raises substantial sums, on a national basis, for allocation to schools. These allocations must conform with any requirements set out by the sponsors, but such requirements may help schools in deprived areas e.g. by stating that the money is to be used in support of inner city schools. Where there is freedom to do so, the TCT keeps in mind local socio-economic conditions as well as the efforts made by the school to raise sponsorship, in making allocations.

This year's revised guidance for specialist school applicants reduces the sponsorship requirement for small schools, i.e. those with less than 500 pupils, with the requirement set at the equivalent of £100 per pupil, and a minimum of £20,000. More than 200 schools will be eligible to benefit from this change, many of them in rural or inner city locations. We shall continue to look more generally at the relative difficulty of raising sponsorship and will make further changes as appropriate.

Further Education

Inspection of education for 16 to 19 year olds in colleges has an important place in our strategy for improving quality, raising standards and increasing participation in post 16 learning.

Local Education Authority Inspections

We recognise the importance of effective partnership between council services and have ensured that the contractual arrangements for outsourced education services take this issue into account. We have also appointed consultants to undertake an independent evaluation of new organisational models in LEAs. This will include an examination of outsourced education services, including their relationships with other council services.

David Miliband

24 June 2002

APPENDIX 2

STANDARDS AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION: THE ANNUAL REPORT OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS FOR 2000–01

RESPONSE FROM OFSTED TO THE SECOND REPORT OF THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE, SESSION 2001–02

Memorandum from OFSTED

The HMCI appointment process

1. We continue to believe that Parliament should have a role in the appointment of HMCI and that such a role would contribute positively to perceived and actual transparency in the public appointments process and the accountability of HMCI to Parliament. We would welcome further discussion with the Secretary of State as to how future appointments might be informed and supported by Parliament (paragraph 5).

This is a matter for the Secretary of State rather than for OFSTED. However, we are not clear how this would make HMCI more accountable to Parliament as the accountability is already there through the Select Committee and through Parliamentary Questions.

Pupil behaviour and attendance

2. We welcome initiatives to tackle the issue of pupil non-attendance and recommend that the Department, in consultation with OFSTED, should encourage the development of good practice guidelines for schools regarding strategies for dealing with poor attendance, including the disclosure of personal information (paragraph 16).

OFSTED's report *Improving Attendance and Behaviour in Secondary Schools* (2001) was published in response to a request from the Secretary of State. The report analysed what works and made recommendations to schools. Since the publication of the report, OFSTED has collaborated with the Audit Commission on the dissemination of good practice by local education authorities to improve attendance. This material appears on a special Audit Commission website. OFSTED has also assisted the DfES with further advice on attendance for schools and local authorities which has been the subject of regional conferences and appears on the DfES website.

3. We support the view that parental and community support will be central to any successful strategy to address the pupil behaviour and non-attendance problem. We look to the Department for Education and Skills to work with schools to promote this, through policy and public information, as a matter of urgency (paragraph 18).

OFSTED agrees that parental and wider community support is vital in addressing behaviour and attendance at school. The DfES is sponsoring a special behaviour improvement programme, closely associated with the government's initiative on street crime, focusing on 34 local education authorities. The programme, which includes elements on attendance as well as behaviour, is intended, amongst other things, to support better inter-agency and community links. OFSTED is involved in evaluating the programme as part of a joint inspectorate exercise led by HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary.

4. We recommend that the existing penalties for parents who collude in pupil non-attendance or who are responsible for causing non-attendance should be

reviewed, and if necessary expanded, to ensure that they are sufficient for the task (paragraph 19).

This is a matter of government policy. OFSTED will continue to collect evidence about how schools and local education authorities work to increase parents' awareness of the need for full school attendance and to reduce absence, parentally condoned or otherwise.

Teacher recruitment and retention

5. We welcome the progress made in teacher recruitment. We recommend that the Government should put greater emphasis on retention in the profession in order that experienced teachers and school leaders may be retained within the profession (paragraph 22).

If schools are to have available to them the numbers of teachers required to maintain the progress of recent years, significant efforts will be required on both the recruitment and the retention of teachers. The age profile of the teaching profession makes it particularly important that we improve the retention of teachers in early and mid career.

6. While we acknowledge the importance of targeted inducements to for those joining and rejoining the teaching profession, we remain concerned that these strategies may have the effect of demotivating those teachers who have committed themselves to the profession without the benefit of these additional incentives, while adding to overall wage cost inflation (paragraph 23).

As noted above, recruitment and retention are both important and it is for government to find the right balance between them in the allocation of financial incentives. At the same time, it is important to recognise the importance of factors other than the purely financial that influence people to become and remain teachers.

7. We welcome innovative school-based approaches to initial teacher training, particularly where these have been shown to encourage entrants from previously under-represented minority ethnic groups. We are, however, concerned that the expansion of the Graduate Teacher Programmes has been accelerated while significant issues regarding the quality of the initiative remain unresolved (paragraph 25).

In seeking to meet the government's projections for teacher recruitment, it is clear that a greater diversity of routes into the profession is required. In particular, we need to make it easier for those who find that traditional routes do not fit their requirements to obtain training, for example career changers and those who cannot train full-time. At the same time, it is important that all trainees can be assured of high quality training so that they can meet the same high standards expected, regardless of the training route. OFSTED will continue to play a key role in monitoring the quality of all routes to Qualified Teacher Status, including the Graduate Teacher Programme.

8. We recommend that the GTP should be kept under review and that further expansion of the scheme should be contingent upon the introduction of an appropriate system of quality assurance covering the whole Programme. In this way, the public, the teaching profession and individual trainees may be assured that the training available through the Graduate Teacher Programme is consistent with that offered through other routes into teaching and represents good value for money (paragraph 26).

See response to paragraph 25. OFSTED is actively developing proposals for the inspection of the new Designated Recommending Bodies for GTP. These proposals assume that these

bodies will become accredited ITT providers within a fixed period of time and then subject to the same inspection scrutiny as other providers.

Teacher workload

9. We recommend that in the Annual Report for 2001-02 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools should report on the evaluation of measures to reduce the burden of inspection and on any further initiatives to reduce teacher workload (paragraph 27).

We shall be pleased to report on the effectiveness of OFSTED's and others' initiatives to reduce workload. Despite the numerous changes introduced in recent years to reduce the demands of inspection, we remain vigilant on the issue.

The Cabinet Office's Public Sector Team, jointly with DfES, has been asking schools about reducing teacher workload, including asking about inspection, as part of its "Making a Difference - Schools II project". Informal feedback from the first few visits has been encouraging from an inspection point of view. This is perhaps not surprising because the review is concentrating on regular workload pressures and most schools receive a section 10 inspection only once every 4-6 years. We will consider carefully any emerging findings from the review team and respond to them.

10. In order to ensure clarity for all parties, inspectors and inspected, we recommend that OFSTED should publish explicit guidance on expectations for sufficient and effective planning (paragraph 30).

OFSTED does not have any expectations of particular approaches to planning. We emphasised this in a letter sent by the previous HMCI to all schools in September 2001, which also asked headteachers not to ask staff to prepare lesson plans specifically for the inspection. Our position is that lessons should have clear objectives and that planning, whatever form it takes, should be effective. Inspectors judge processes like planning on their contribution to effective learning. Inspectors are expected not to carry into inspection their own predilections about how schools should operate. They must be sufficiently open-minded to be able to judge what they find on its merits.

OFSTED does, however, write many reports illustrating effective practice in schools. One school's successful approach, though, can be another school's burden. The current source of guidance on planning for the national curriculum is the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. We understand that the DfES is exploring possibilities for producing further guidance and that they would wish to consult OFSTED in doing so.

11. We consider the current model for school funding to be excessively burdensome. We recommend that Government should review the strategy for school funding as a matter of urgency in order to achieve a system that is less onerous in terms of management and administration and offers a more efficient use of public funds (paragraph 32).

Our major contribution has been to work with the DfES and Audit Commission in defining a common approach to recording financial information and reconciling our inspection data requirements of schools with this common format.

Supply teachers

12. We recommend that the existing rigorous framework should be maintained to assure the personal and professional suitability of individuals before they are engaged as supply teachers. Any system should also take account of the continuing professional development requirements of teachers employed through supply agencies. We further recommend that supply agencies should be monitored (paragraph 36).

The increasing role of temporary (supply) teachers in schools makes it vital that this important element of the school teaching workforce is properly regulated. OFSTED will be reporting on the use and impact of temporary teachers in schools in the autumn. This report will not focus specifically on supply agencies as we have at present no remit for monitoring their activities.

13. We note the enthusiasm with which Mr Tomlinson suggested that OFSTED might, in future, take responsibility for regulating teacher supply agencies. We welcome this openness and we recommend that the Department should consider taking powers to regulate teacher supply agencies (paragraph 37).

OFSTED has no statutory powers to regulate teacher supply agencies. We would be happy to discuss with the DfES what role we might play in the future.

Specialist Schools

14. We recommend that the contribution schools make to their communities should be prioritised as each specialist school becomes due for redesignation. We further recommend that in cases where specialist colleges cannot demonstrate a significant contribution to raising standards in neighbouring schools they should be withdrawn from the scheme or required to undertake remedial action (paragraph 39).

OFSTED's report, *Specialist Schools: an evaluation of progress* (2001), provided analysis of specialist schools' community roles and examples of good practice. The report has been widely disseminated and all newly designated schools receive a copy of it.

HMI continue to work closely with the DfES on the guidance for new specialist schools and the assessment of applications and on monitoring the progress of existing schools in meeting their targets under the scheme.

The guidance for re-designation in phases 2-4 of the scheme highlights the importance of the community role, in particular the emphasis on high-quality learning outcomes. It is expected that, in these new phases, targets will become more ambitious and involve a greater number of partner schools and community groups. When assessing a school's suitability for re-designation, progress in meeting community targets in schools' current plans is given equal weight with the progress in pursuing in-school developments. A school which fails to demonstrate sufficient progress and has not in its subsequent plan provided details of how these deficiencies will be addressed will be the subject of further scrutiny by the DfES assessors. If, despite prompts, a revised plan remains significantly weak, the school risks losing its specialist school designation.

15. We concur with the view that a more flexible approach to specialist school designation is needed, particularly in areas of economic and social deprivation and we look forward to the publication of the Department's revised criteria for specialist school status (paragraph 41).

A considerable number of existing specialist schools are located in areas of socio-economic deprivation. For example, 17 out of the 45 schools specially visited in the recent OFSTED survey were in such areas. The DfES gives some preference to applications from schools located in Excellence in Cities partnership areas and in other areas of deprivation. In addition, the revised guidance for specialist schools helps relatively small schools, many of which are in such areas, by reducing the sponsorship requirement for schools with fewer than 500 pupils. The same criteria for judging applications for specialist status apply in all cases.

Further Education

16. We look forward to a more detailed and representative commentary on post compulsory provision in the 2001-02 Annual Report from HMCI. Moreover we would welcome clear recommendations to support the improvement of post 16 provision based on an analysis of strengths and weaknesses and examples of good practice (paragraph 50).

The 2001/02 Annual Report will have a more detailed commentary on the college sector than in last year's report quite simply because there were only 5 inspections to draw on this time last year. Next year there will be 17 Area-Wide reviews and 96 further education sector colleges on which to draw, plus inspections of independent specialist colleges and dance and drama institutions.

In addition, there will be commentary on OFSTED's inspections of youth services, Connexions Partnerships, young offender institutions and secure units. We shall report on the effectiveness of the youth work supported by DfES grants to National Voluntary Youth Organisations. We shall also, as always, report on school sixth forms. There will be a clear focus on strengths and weaknesses, with examples of good practice cited.

OFSTED is also preparing a joint report with the Adult Learning Inspectorate on standards and quality in further education colleges and in those geographical areas inspected as part of our area wide inspection programme. This joint report will be published in February 2003. We shall also publish a curriculum review of each of the 14 designated areas of learning, drawn from our inspection findings in the first year of operation under the new arrangements.

Local Education Authority Inspections

17. We support Mr Tomlinson's views on the integration of local services and recommend that this issue should be prioritised in any review of the effectiveness of outsourced local authority education functions (paragraph 53).

OFSTED will continue to examine the effectiveness of the integration of local services during the course of organisational inspections of local education authorities, when such activity impacts on educational provision. In addition, OFSTED has already reviewed, at one local authority's request, that authority's proposals for the integration of its education and social services departments.

Future programme

18. We welcome this programme of work, and look forward to contributing to the work of OFSTED through constructive engagement as part of our scrutiny of its activities (paragraph 55).

We look forward to future discussions with the Committee about the evidence which emerges from these activities.

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