



**Office for Standards
in Education**

Improvement through inspection

An evaluation of the impact of Ofsted's work

July 2004

Peter Matthews

Pam Sammons

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Prefaces

David Bell

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England

This report is an evidence-based appraisal of the work of Ofsted that centres, in particular, on the impact of inspection on the quality and standards of education. I commissioned the evaluation in autumn 2003, when starting to consider the future of inspection and the implications of Ofsted's involvement in the proposed inspection of Children's Services. The work also coincides with initiatives taken by the government to review the performance of national inspectorates.

The review will be relevant to all who are interested in and knowledgeable about the improvement of education in England at both institutional and national levels. It spans Ofsted's wide-ranging sphere of activity, although it cannot reflect everything we do. The principal focus is on school inspection, since this was at the heart of Ofsted's original statutory remit. It will be possible, in the future, to say more about the effects of inspecting other sectors.

The report also represents a sincere attempt at externally tested self-evaluation. One of Ofsted's successes is actively to promote and support self-assessment across all the sectors it inspects, both as an internal management tool and as a complement to external inspection. This report displays, largely for the first time, the type of evidence we use in our own work to assess the quality of inspections and evaluate their outcomes.

I believe it is important that the way in which we have selected and used the evidence in this evaluation should be subject to independent scrutiny. To this end, I am very pleased that the Institute of Education, University of London agreed to write this work jointly with Ofsted in order to provide an external and more objective perspective.

The report contains findings that will be the subject of further reflection and debate as our policies and methodology for the inspection of education and childcare continue to evolve. I warmly welcome this report and hope it will provide a fertile basis for discussion and development.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Bell". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Professor Geoff Whitty

Director of the Institute of Education, University of London

The creation of Ofsted in 1992 has had major consequences for the performance and accountability of education providers across all sectors, particularly for schools and initial teacher education institutions, but subsequently embracing further education colleges and, most recently, early years providers. This report provides the first major evaluation of Ofsted's impact on the education system over the past 10 years. It is the result of collaboration between Ofsted and the Institute of Education, University of London to explore the consequences of inspection – some intended, others unintended.

The decision to undertake this exercise demonstrates Ofsted's commitment to self-evaluation and its recognition of the benefits of incorporating an external, research-based perspective. The authors have analysed changes in inspection outcomes over successive inspection cycles and made use of surveys of pupils, parents, teachers, principals and headteachers. In addition, they have drawn on research critiques, Select Committee enquiries and a wide range of other information and data. The report focuses most heavily on evidence of impact on schools, reflecting the longer-term nature of Ofsted's involvement with this sector.

The report examines the extent to which Ofsted has met its statutory obligations and its self-selected aspiration to promote 'improvement through inspection'. Its authors are aware, of course, of the difficulties of attributing causation in educational and social enquiry. However, they argue that the weight of evidence shows that Ofsted has played an important role as a catalyst for improvement, particularly of weaker institutions. Furthermore, the data indicate significant improvements in the observed quality of teaching and learning, educational standards, and leadership and management across the education system. Pupils' and parents' views suggest that inspection can play a key role in informing users about the education service and in enhancing public confidence. The report also demonstrates how inspection has interacted with other policy changes, including the national curriculum and assessment and the devolved management of schools, and it makes some interesting points about value for money.

Ofsted has attracted much criticism over the years, particularly in relation to teacher workload and stress. Successive revisions to the inspection frameworks have sought to reduce the inspection burden. While it recognises that pre-inspection anxiety remains a source of concern, the report indicates that the great majority of those inspected perceive the benefits of inspection to outweigh the negative effects. Nevertheless, the authors make a number of proposals for the future development of inspection, which hopefully will improve public and professional perceptions still further.

Foreword

The office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England (HMCI) was created as a new non-ministerial government department by the Education Act 1992 and named the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). Ofsted's remit centred originally on: the regular inspection of all schools by independent inspectors; public reporting, with a summary of the report to be provided for parents; an annual report to parliament, and the provision of advice to ministers. In many of these functions, Ofsted not only built on the legacy of Her Majesty's Inspectorate in developing its inspection and reporting methodologies but increased greatly the transparency of the inspection process through open consultation and publication of its inspection frameworks and guidance, and through the wider dissemination of inspection findings.

By 2004, Ofsted was also responsible for inspecting the post-compulsory education of students aged 16 to 19 years; teacher education; local education authorities (LEAs); and for the regulation and inspection of child care. From the beginning, Ofsted's aspiration has been to promote 'Improvement through Inspection'. Ofsted has little direct control over this aim, however, except in relation to statutory provisions for the identification and monitoring of schools, colleges and sixth forms causing concern, and the regulatory control of childcare.

This report represents Ofsted's first self-evaluation of the contributions of its inspections to improving quality and raising standards of education and care. The review was commissioned by HMCI and has been conducted jointly with the Institute of Education, University of London. The methodology involved the internal and external review of a wide range of evidence papers produced by the divisions of Ofsted responsible for inspecting different sectors, together with some specially commissioned research. Most of these papers are published separately on Ofsted's website. Trends in educational performance were also considered, together with published external commentaries, research and the views of a variety of stakeholders.

We acknowledge gratefully the substantial evidence contributed by many staff in Ofsted and the analyses of data undertaken by staff of the Research, Analysis and International Division and Preston Regional Support Centre. The project received much help from HMCI David Bell; directors and senior staff of Ofsted; Professor Geoff Whitty, Director of the Institute of Education, University of London; Professor Elizabeth Leo of De Montfort University; John Malynn and colleagues at the Department for Education and Skills, and Sarah Phillips of the Office for Public Service Reform, and benefited greatly from the editorial advice of Janet Brennan HMI.

The comments of Professors John Gray, University of Cambridge and Frans Janssens, Dutch Inspectorate and University of Twente, on a draft of the report were particularly challenging and valuable.

Peter Matthews

Pam Sammons

Summary

This evaluation of the impact of inspection covers most of the main areas of Ofsted's operational work, some in more detail than others – reflecting the size of the different sectors and the timescale over which Ofsted has been responsible for their inspection. The report gives precedence to recent evidence but relates this to earlier inspections where relevant. Ofsted's duties and expanding remit are examined in Chapter 1, which also explores the extent to which inspection acts alongside other policies intended to promote educational improvement.

Chapter 2 looks at evidence of the impact of inspection on the performance of schools and finds that well-managed schools and those that cause concern are the most likely to benefit from inspections. Many other schools show some improvement but, in the absence of external follow-up, tend to make incomplete use of their inspection findings. The report identifies factors that affect the extent to which inspection findings are implemented. Chapter 3 comments on the inspection of independent schools, the post-compulsory education and teacher education sectors, and local education authorities. Evidence of the quality of inspections, particularly school inspections, for which more extensive data are available, is examined in Chapter 4. The report addresses some of the concerns raised about inspections and identifies improvements since the first cycle of school inspections. Evidence confirms that advance notice of inspection often contributes indirectly to the stress on those inspected and may result in heightened performance by providers during and often beyond the inspection visit. Implications for future inspection arrangements are discussed.

Chapter 5 considers the quality of inspections and how Ofsted assures and improves inspection practice. Ofsted's relatively new remit for the regulation and inspection of provision for children in the early years is introduced in Chapter 6. The wider impact of Ofsted on the education system is illustrated in Chapter 7, with particular reference to its contribution to policy formation, evaluation and dissemination, the role of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (HMCI), as well as its international contribution and influence.

Chapter 8 reports on the extent to which inspections fulfil statutory requirements, particularly in relation to accountability, public reporting, advice to ministers and the value of *Standards and Quality 2002/03: The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools*. There is independent survey evidence that parents and the public value inspections, and that the majority of parents believe that they lead to improvement.

The report addresses value for money questions in Chapter 9, discussing aspects of the costs and benefits of Ofsted's inspections. It is argued that there is a need for better comparative indicators and that any discussion of costs needs to be made in relation to the size of the public investment in the different education sectors inspected. The report concludes with a discussion of some of the findings of the evaluation and their possible implications for the future development of the inspection system.

Introduction

'We support thorough, independent, external inspection of education services in England.'

House of Commons Education and Employment Committee, report on 'The Work of Ofsted', 1999

Context of this study

1. This report examines evidence of the effectiveness and impact of inspection. It covers the range of inspections for which Ofsted¹ is responsible, with a particular focus on the inspection of schools and colleges and the range of work undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). The report also makes brief reference to the weighty but relatively new responsibility for the regulation and inspection of childminding and day care, particularly the work of Ofsted's childcare inspectors (CCI).

2. The evaluation is timely. In July 2003, the government published a new policy on the inspection of public services.² It aims to ensure that inspection continues to make an important contribution to the efficiency and reform of local services. Key elements are the development of inspection's role in relation to **service improvement** as well as **public assurance**, and ensuring that the inspection provides **value for money**; in other words, that money spent on inspecting a service contributes more to improvement than if it had been invested directly in the service concerned. Inspectorates are charged with reviewing their consistency, effectiveness and value for money to improve these aspects. Ofsted's approach to evaluation is closely mirrored by the 'principles of inspection and extended review' (annex A) that the Office for Public Service Reform (OPSR) has set out in its publication *'Inspecting for Improvement'*.³ This evaluation report can be seen to provide an early response to the government's enquiry. Principally, however, it was conceived as one of a number of corporate developments as Ofsted began to consider how inspection should evolve. It coincides with the nationwide consultation on future inspection arrangements, instigated in spring 2004 by HMCI.

3. The government's changing view of school inspection was reflected in a speech signalling a new relationship between the government and schools, placing the onus of accountability on schools themselves.

The integrity and robustness of the current inspection process has played a vital part in the improved levels of achievement we have

¹ The name and acronym were coined by the first chief inspector, Professor Stewart Sutherland, to describe the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England, a non-ministerial government department.

² *The government's policy on inspection of public services*, The Prime Minister's Office of Public Service Reform (OPSR), July 2003.

³ *Inspecting for improvement*, OPSR, July 2003.

*seen over the last six years. This model has served the education system well, but it is right to seek improvements that will deliver a sharper focus, lighter touch and clearer link to school improvement.*⁴

4. This report explores factors that enable those inspected to act on the inspection findings and identifies barriers that serve to reduce the impact of inspection on improvement. These findings are relevant to the future of inspection and to those who lead educational institutions: schools, colleges, teacher education providers and LEAs. They also relate to providers of childcare.

5. This evaluation takes as its basis the view that Ofsted's effectiveness should be judged by how effectively it fulfils its statutory remit as well as by its influence in terms of the self-imposed aspiration of *Improvement through Inspection*. Evidence of improvement is viewed in terms of changes identified in the quality of the providers inspected, the perceptions of key stakeholders, and the wider impact of inspection and advice on the development of the education system.

6. This evaluation is written jointly in order to ensure that an external, research-based perspective was available.⁵ It uses a range of inspection and research evidence across different sectors of education to make informed assessments of the quality, strengths and weaknesses of inspections and their outcomes. It also examines the role of self-evaluation and its relation to inspection, as well as discussing matters raised by external research and, particularly, by the now bi-annual scrutinies of the work of Ofsted undertaken by the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (the Select Committee). The evaluation aims to inform the next steps in the development of inspection policy and practice, through providing an analysis of past and current experience.

Background

7. Before Ofsted was established in 1992, the inspection of schools, further and higher education was vested in Her Majesty's Inspectorate, established in the 1830s: a branch of the Department of Education and Science (DES). HMI and some local education authority (LEA) inspectorates and advisory services also undertook some school inspections, reviews or other forms of evaluation. Practice varied widely between LEAs, both in quality and extent. HMI also spent a substantial proportion of their time on thematic surveys of aspects of education; provided a wide range of professional advice to the DES through close links with the Department's operations, and had a range of other commitments. Some of these, such as the contribution to professional development through national 'DES-HMI Short Courses', could not be sustained when Ofsted was formed and the number of HMI was cut from over 500 to 175.

⁴ Speech to the North of England Education Conference by David Miliband MP in January 2004.

⁵ To enhance objectivity, Ofsted involved an independent partner from the field of research to provide a critical assessment of the evidence and its interpretation and to act as co-author. The Institute of Education, University of London won the contract for this work.

8. With the establishment of Ofsted, the direct inspection of schools was contracted out to independent inspectors selected and trained by Ofsted. The coverage of educational phases and subjects by HMI was greatly reduced. HMI gave up their 'district inspector' links with LEAs and were no longer organised regionally. Some of this capacity was filled after 1997 by educational advisers appointed to the new Standards and Effectiveness Unit (SEU) of what is now the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).⁶ Much of the effort of the reduced HMI force was directed either to the management and quality assurance of the new school inspection arrangements or, increasingly over the years, to following up the inspections of schools found to be causing concern. HMI continued to undertake the inspection of initial and in-service teacher education, youth provision, service children's education and some independent schools. They also undertook thematic surveys for the DfES and contributed advice to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.

9. One other major development in Ofsted was the creation of an inspection database (see below), which has provided, over time, the most extensive data and evidence related to the performance of schools and other parts of the education system inspected by Ofsted. Ofsted's research and analysis function now includes the new sectors inspected as well as data relating to the regulation of childcare.

Ofsted's database

Ofsted holds one of the world's largest, longitudinal educational databases combining both qualitative and quantitative information. This collates, and has done since 1993, all data from the inspection of over 4,000 schools every year. For each school it draws together about 140 school-level judgements made by inspectors, and a further 40 judgements about each of the 12 subject areas inspected; in addition, the database receives a total of over a quarter of a million records of inspectors' observations of individual lessons. The database also holds copies of test and examination results at school and, more recently, pupil level, and contextual information about schools. Data are held from Ofsted's inspections of teacher education providers, further education colleges and LEAs. In addition, Ofsted undertakes – largely through HMI – a number of other inspection exercises and surveys covering a wide range of educational issues, and data collected during these exercises are also on the database.

The data and inspection evidence provide an important foundation for HMCI's public observations on education and his advice to ministers, and is central to his Annual Report on quality and standards in education. The database is also the source for the Performance and Assessment (PANDA) reports that are issued each year to all schools and other providers, and profiles of indicators for local education authorities. The data are used extensively for internal research and are available to *bona fide* researchers elsewhere.

⁶ The SEU was disbanded in summer 2004.

10. Since 1993, all schools in England have been inspected on two or more occasions. School inspections have been conducted by teams of inspectors who are independent of Ofsted, who have no connection with the school being inspected, and who are expected to be impartial. Inspection procedures are intended to be transparent and all inspection reports are published, with a summary of the report issued to parents. HMCI's Annual Reports have become increasingly rich in data, and a substantial number of other inspection-based studies have been published. In recent years, Ofsted has also been given major additional statutory responsibilities for inspection. These are described in Chapter 2 of this report.

Accountability of Ofsted

11. Ofsted's work is subject to a range of external evaluations, starting with the formal mechanisms established by the Crown and parliament. The chief inspector is appointed by the Queen in Council to head a non-ministerial government department (not an agency, as is often misreported). His ministerial remit letters are published in the evidence to successive reports of the Select Committee on *The work of Ofsted*. The Select Committee reviews the work of HMCI's office twice a year. Its published reports are based on a wide range of evidence submitted by interested parties, and on the Members' examination of the chief inspector and his colleagues. There are many similarities in this process to an institutional inspection, owing to the preparation – including self-evaluation – undertaken by Ofsted before the Committee meets, the provision of evidence to it, the publication of the Select Committee's evidence and conclusions, and the requirement for Ofsted to respond to the Committee's recommendations.

12. Select Committee reports provide measured, forthright and topical appraisals of Ofsted's work. HMCI is also subject to other forms of parliamentary accountability, for example through the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, and has links with the prime minister's office, the Cabinet Office, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills and the Treasury. It is clearly important that, while Ofsted's direction is set by parliament and its course influenced by the government, Ofsted's inspection findings and advice should be impartial and rooted in the evidence collected by HMI and the other inspectors working on behalf of Ofsted. In this way, Ofsted is able to contribute objectively and distinctively to the evaluation of the quality of educational provision. It is, therefore, uniquely placed to assess the impact of educational policy changes across successive cycles of inspection.

13. During the last decade, the inspection system in England has attracted much international interest and a range of views from the national education system, as well as generating a minor research industry. As a challenging and influential public body, Ofsted attracts much public scrutiny and criticism. Its work is subject to the appraisal of every provider it inspects, as well as that of associations representing teachers, local education and church authorities, and a range of other interests. Inspection has been subject to both approbation and criticism that may or may not be well informed. The volume of criticism has subsided over time as inspection has

become an established part of the education system and the quality of inspections has improved.⁷

14. There exist some substantial commentaries on early school inspections⁸ and their impact.⁹ This report, however, is the first comprehensive evaluation of Ofsted's impact that spans the range of its work. Findings are supported by evidence, much of it internal but published separately on the Ofsted website, and by dedicated research, including specially commissioned surveys.

Evaluation methodology and sources of evidence

15. This evaluation commenced in autumn 2003. The first step was to map its scope¹⁰, taking account of the government's policy¹¹ on inspection of public services. The initial project considered six aspects of Ofsted's work that, taken together, define the sphere of Ofsted's effectiveness and impact:

- i. Ofsted's purpose and remit
- ii. public information and accountability
- iii. improvement of providers in each of the sectors inspected by Ofsted
- iv. systemic improvement and policy advice
- v. inspection quality assurance and improvement
- vi. value for money and joint working.

16. Ofsted holds considerable evidence which can shed light on the impact¹² of its work, defined in terms of the six aspects listed above. The effectiveness of inspections can be judged in many ways, for example: their use, information content, influence, contribution to change, accountability and regulatory functions and power to help improve learning and outcomes for learners. Evidence has been sought through:

⁷ The only overt pressure group was known as OFSTIN, the Office for Standards in Inspection. This group disbanded in 2000, announcing in a letter to HMCI that, with the exception of one member, they now found inspection acceptable. The latest Select Committee Report *The Work of Ofsted* (2003) rehearses few of the concerns that featured in its earlier reports.

⁸ See, for example, Wilcox B. and Gray J., *Inspecting schools*, OUP 1996.

⁹ Studies such as that of Scanlon M., *The impact of Ofsted inspections*, National Foundation for Educational Research for the National Union of Teachers, 1999, have reported surveys related to school inspections only.

¹⁰ *Inspection Impact Paper: The impact of Ofsted: mapping the territory*, Ofsted Internet, 2004.

¹¹ *Inspecting for improvement*, Office for Public Service Reform, The Stationery Office, 2003.

¹² The nature of Ofsted's impact and 'improvement through inspection' is discussed more fully in Chapters 2 and 3.

- *Inspection Impact Papers*, contributed by different operational divisions within Ofsted, which engaged critically with evidence drawn from current databases and offered specific examples of the impact of inspections
- *Articles and research papers*, by a number of commentators on inspection, including perceived adverse effects, including on workload and a possible post-inspection dip in performance
- *Inspection data and evidence*, which include trends in quality and standards and information about the performance and improvement of providers
- *Surveys*, particularly of stakeholders such as parents, learners, headteachers and principals, teachers and governors, undertaken by Ofsted and commissioned from external consultants
- *Ofsted's publications*, especially inspection frameworks and HMCI's Annual Reports
- *Reports* of the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee
- *Views* expressed by Ofsted staff, inspectors, the DfES, educational researchers, headteachers and teachers, parents and pupils
- *Original research conducted by Ofsted*, including a study of schools inspected for the third time.

17. National trends in inspection judgements provide an important guide to apparent improvement in the quality of provision and standards achieved over time. The impact of inspections is more apparent at institutional than at national level, where the effect of inspection is difficult to distinguish from those of a range of other policies, initiatives and interventions. Account has been taken of recorded views and perceptions of those whose work is inspected. Trend data and evidence are more extensive for the school and teacher training sectors than for those whose inspection by Ofsted began more recently. Analyses of trends in attainment, using statistics on pupils' attainment in national assessments at different key stages and GCSE examination results, and the relationship of these to the inspection cycles of schools, provide indirect additional evidence to consider whether there are associations between inspection and improved standards of attainment.

18. This evaluation of the impact of Ofsted's work seeks to study the range of evidence systematically, using research-based approaches. Wherever possible, evidence is triangulated in order to enhance the reliability and validity of judgements. For example, where different aspects of inspection evidence, analyses of data over time, the views of practitioners and users all point to similar conclusions, greater confidence can be placed in interpretations of impact. Causality may seldom be

ascertained with certainty in education or social enquiry, but the longitudinal perspective offered in the analysis of inspection evidence allows trends to be examined. Where improvement is evident in a number of different indicators, particularly for schools deemed to be requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses, it is argued that the most plausible explanation is that inspection can act as a catalyst for change.

Ofsted's considerable achievements have allowed it to make confident assertions about the strength of its approach, its role as a catalyst for change and the crucial part that external inspection plays in raising standards and improving schools. Its record seems to support the chief inspector's claim that 'schools in England are uniquely well placed to find answers about their current strengths and weaknesses and the actions they must take to achieve improvements and raise standards.'¹³ Its effects on schools, however, extend far beyond these auditing and action planning processes and include some long term and pervasive influences on the way teachers reflect on their own teaching and on the quality of education provided by their school.¹⁴

19. The evaluation methodology seeks to bring together inspection and research approaches and recognises the difficulties inherent in the study of improvement. It has been informed by literature on educational change, particularly that in the growing school improvement field which recognises the role of leadership at different levels. It has also drawn on theoretical discussions developed in other inspection contexts to assist in the interpretation of the various sources of evidence, in particular recent work in the Netherlands.

20. The authors worked jointly from their different perspectives to interrogate and assess the wide range of available evidence, and to raise additional questions where appropriate. These were followed up, where possible, by further analyses of relevant Ofsted databases to clarify aspects where evidence was felt to be limited or questionable. To conclude the process of analysis, overall judgements of different aspects of Ofsted's work are offered, reflecting Ofsted's own inspection practice. These are reported in the final chapter, together with issues and implications stemming from the evaluation.

¹³ Foreword to *School evaluation matters*, Ofsted, 1998.

¹⁴ Ferguson N., Earley P., Fidler B. and Ouston J., *Improving schools and inspection, the self-inspecting school*, Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd., London, 2000.

1. Ofsted's purpose and remit

What was intended by the government when Ofsted was established in 1992? Ofsted's remit centred originally on: the regular inspection of all schools by independent inspectors; public reporting, with summaries of reports for parents as users; an annual report to parliament, and the provision of advice to ministers. The scope of Ofsted's work has been expanded substantially since 1997 as a result of legislation. 'Improvement through inspection' is a self-selected aspiration over which Ofsted has little direct control except in relation to statutory provisions for the identification and monitoring of schools, colleges and sixth forms causing concern, and the regulation of childcare.

Ofsted's duties

21. The origins of Ofsted are well documented from different perspectives.¹⁵ For the Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1991, the policy of separating the education inspectorate from the government department in which it was placed aimed to ensure greater independence of advice to ministers as well as the inspection of every school at least once during a pupil's time in it.¹⁶ Ofsted was established through the Education Act 1992 to procure more frequent and rigorous inspection of schools.

22. The 1992 Act became the first plank of the 'Parents' Charter' and government policy intended to inform and empower citizens, in this case by providing parents with information to assist them in choosing schools. While doubts remain about the practical equitability of open enrolment in terms of the extent to which parental choice (in fact, ability to state a preference) can be exercised,¹⁷ clear evidence exists that the great majority of parents remain highly interested in receiving inspection information about schools, as is demonstrated in Chapter 8.

23. Since 1997, successive governments have endorsed and strengthened Ofsted's role. There has also been an increase in the number of other national inspection and regulatory bodies as ministers have sought to devolve responsibility and resources to providers of public services while strengthening central mechanisms for ensuring their accountability and promoting improvement.

24. HMCI's duties in relation to maintained schools are set out in law. Essentially, they include responsibilities to:

- manage the inspection of schools

¹⁵ See, for example, *School inspections*, ed. Brighouse T. and Moon R., Pittman 1995.

¹⁶ Communication from the Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke QC, MP.

¹⁷ It is suggested that geographical and social circumstances can act as severe constraints on choice especially for less advantaged groups of parents and pupils.

- report on the quality and standards of education, the leadership and management of schools, and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of their pupils
- advise the secretary of state
- monitor schools causing concern.

25. Ofsted also inspects initial and in-service teacher education and training and independent schools¹⁸ and, in recent years, has been given responsibility for inspecting LEAs, post-compulsory education¹⁹ and Connexions²⁰ (see Table 1). These inspections are undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), all of whom are part of Ofsted's permanent staff, and additional inspectors appointed by HMCI. Some are conducted jointly with other inspectorates.

26. Most recently, Ofsted has been charged with regulating and inspecting childminding and the provision of day care for children. The 2000 Care Standards Act transferred the duty of regulating and inspecting care providers from local authorities to Ofsted, recognising Ofsted's previous success in designing and implementing inspections and meeting all its inspection and quality targets agreed with the secretary of state and the Treasury. Ofsted's childcare inspectors (CCIs) carry out these inspections, which are a major element of its work.

Table 1. Sectors inspected by Ofsted: changes over time.

Sectors inspected in 1993	Sectors inspected in 2003	Number of providers	Legislation
Maintained schools	Schools	23,220	Education Act 1992 School Inspections Act 1996
Independent schools	Independent schools	1,120	Education Act 2002
Teacher education	Teacher education	187	Education Act

¹⁸ Ofsted inspects all independent schools which do not belong to associations which are members of the Independent Schools Council (ISC). These schools are inspected by the Independent Schools' Inspectorate (ISI); Ofsted monitors the quality of their inspections and reports.

¹⁹ In association with the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

²⁰ Connexions partnerships offer a range of advice and support to 13 to 19 year olds to help them to make a smooth transition from school to adult life.

			1944 Teacher and Higher Education Act 1988
	Further education	358+	Learning and Skills Act 2000
	14-19 Area-wide provision	–	Learning and Skills Act 2002
Adult education			Inspected by the Adult Learning Inspectorate under the Learning and Skills Act
Youth services	Youth services Connexions partnerships	47	Learning and Skills Act 2002 Education Act 1996 Learning and Skills Act 2000
Young offender institutions, prisons, secure units and training centres	Young offender institutions, prisons, secure units and training centres	–	By invitation of the lead inspectorate
	Local education authorities	150	Education Act 1997
	Childminding and day-care provision Funded nursery education (mainly as part of combined inspections)	100,000+	Children Act 1989 (as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000) School Standards and Framework Act 1998

27. A basic evaluation would assess Ofsted²¹ against its terms of reference and the performance targets set out in each strategic plan. This joint evaluation seeks to go a good deal further, however, by examining a wide range of evidence of impact, including inspection findings, performance data, documentary evidence and the perspectives of key stakeholders.

Success indicators

28. Ofsted met all its official quality and performance targets in education-related inspections successfully, completing the first cycle of inspection of all 24,000 schools in England within four years and the second cycle in six years. All inspection reports were published – and continue to be – and Ofsted has been open in the development and publication of its processes and procedures. Statute required Ofsted to establish a competitive inspection market and to train over 11,000 inspectors and 2,000 lay inspectors in the use of an inspection framework and inspection procedures. Currently, there are about 4,000 active, qualified inspectors. Ofsted has identified over 1,200 schools that require ‘special measures’ (fail to provide an adequate education) and many more that also cause concern, and has monitored their progress thereafter.

29. Ofsted has produced a wide range of reports including *The Annual Report of her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools*. Some examples of these and their impact are examined in later chapters. Ofsted has evaluated the quality of initial teacher training (ITT) and provided a clear basis for the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) to approve courses and allocate funding through student numbers.

30. The rapid and effective arrangements Ofsted made in 1996²² to inspect funded nursery places in the 30,000 non-maintained nursery providers demonstrates its ability to respond swiftly to challenging additional requirements. Ofsted was subsequently assigned responsibility for regulating childminders and providers of nursery education and day care in the Children Act (as amended by the Care Standards Act). By the end of March 2004, Ofsted had inspected 46,000 of the 99,000 childcare providers who were registered at the start of the 2003–05 programme, and was ahead of target for the two-year programme.

31. Ofsted has also taken over responsibility for inspecting further education colleges and other post-compulsory provision for learners aged 16 to 19 years from the former Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) inspectorate, working in partnership with the ALI to a common inspection framework. The first cycle of college inspections is almost complete. All 150 LEAs have also been inspected, in conjunction with the Audit Commission. In the second cycle of LEA inspections, Ofsted has moved towards more differentiated ‘organisational inspections’. Its claim

²¹ Such as has been undertaken each year by the Treasury in reaching financial settlements with departments and the annual assessment of the performance against objectives of HMCI.

²² Following the Nursery Education and Grant-Maintained Schools Act 1996.

that 'Ofsted delivers'²³ is well substantiated on these indicators.²⁴ The effects and the costs of this diverse regime are examined later.

Link between inspection and improvement

32. Curiously, there is no mention in statute of promoting improvement,²⁵ although it is unrealistic to suppose that this was not an expectation. Ofsted adopted the strapline 'Improvement through inspection' from its inception. The main statutory lever for school improvement following inspection, except for schools causing concern, is the requirement for the appropriate authority to produce an action plan on receipt of the inspection report and, in the case of schools, to circulate the action plan to parents. The implication of the legislation is that governors receive the evaluation and should ensure that the school follows up the inspection, and that parents hold the governing body accountable. In practice, the headteacher and senior staff generally lead their school's response to the inspection. The responsibility for improvement, therefore, lies within the school, college or other institution.

33. This raises the question of the extent to which improvement, or lack of it, can be attributed to the inspection rather than to the institution inspected. There is little doubt that the conduct of the inspection, the relevance and clarity of its findings and the willingness of the institution to move forward are all pertinent to the way inspection findings are used. The evidence from the sectors which Ofsted inspects suggests that there is no guarantee of improvement following inspection unless there is an expectation of external follow-up to the inspection or something, such as funding or prestige, is at stake. Nonetheless, the evidence points to a positive impact in the majority of cases (see the following chapters).

34. Some researchers and policy makers have assumed that it should be possible to demonstrate a causal link between inspection and improvement. This evaluation argues that such expectations may be too simplistic. While there is much evidence of improvement in quality and standards of education, it is rarely, if ever, possible to attribute causality with certainty in the study of social and educational processes. Where disparate evidence points mainly in the same direction, however, it is reasonable to infer a general association between the inspection stimulus and quality improvement outcomes, even though the intervening processes function in different ways and at different levels of effectiveness. In relation to schools, for example, inspection by Ofsted has worked in conjunction with other major initiatives designed to raise standards, for example: the national curriculum and its assessment, devolved management, the government's national literacy, numeracy and Key Stage 3 strategies aimed at raising standards, leadership training and the development of specialist schools. It is likely that improvements evident during the 1990s reflect the

²³ A claim made in speeches by HMCI.

²⁴ See, for example, successive Annual Reports of HMCI.

²⁵ Except in the case of inadequate provision.

combined impact of such policy developments, to which the contribution of inspection has been recognised.

Where an Ofsted inspection had taken place either before or during the period of change with which we were concerned, there was some acknowledgement that it had acted as a spur for change and for further input to the change process.²⁶

35. This mutual reinforcement of different initiatives has also been demonstrated in research into new community schools in Scotland, where the whole appeared to have a greater effect than individual elements in isolation.²⁷

36. A number of research studies have argued that effective schools successfully combine common characteristics²⁸ and that school improvement is a complex process:²⁹ it takes time, energy and commitment and often benefits from external support. For schools in severe difficulties, the processes are likely to be particularly challenging. It is not inspectors but teachers in classrooms, and school leaders, who improve the quality of teaching and learning and management in schools. Inspection, however, provides a valuable external assessment of the quality, strengths and weaknesses of providers. Post-inspection surveys indicate that most headteachers and principals recognise this. In addition, for some, inspection provides a major stimulus for support and resources to be provided externally. This evaluation takes the view that improvement *through* inspection should not be misinterpreted as a claim of direct 'improvement *by* inspection'.

37. Her Majesty's Inspectors have worked to a tradition that long pre-dates Ofsted, encapsulated by the notion of 'doing good as they go'. This involves sharing good practice based on validated inspection findings without eroding the cardinal principle of independent reporting without fear or favour. In recent years (from 1998), Ofsted has explicitly required its independent inspectors of schools to provide feedback to individual teachers and this is now one of Ofsted's inspection principles (annex B).

38. Inspectors in England are cast in the role of detached and independent external evaluators. Except in the early years sector, they do not normally have regulatory or executive functions. In this important element, therefore, their duties differ from those of inspectors in France, who carry out performance assessments of all teachers, or

²⁶ Gray J., Hopkins D., Reynolds D., Wilcox B., Farrell S. and Jesson D., *Improving schools' performance and potential*, Buckingham, OUP, 1999.

²⁷ Sammons, P, Power, S, Elliot, K, Robertson, P, Campbell, C and Whitty, G, *New Community Schools in Scotland Final Report of the National Evaluation of the Pilot Phase* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/ins7-00.asp>, 2003.

²⁸ Sammons P, Hillman J and Mortimore P., *Key characteristics of effective schools*, London: Ofsted-ULIE, 1995; Scheerens J and Bosker R, *The Foundations of Educational effectiveness*, Oxford, Pergamon, 1997.

²⁹ Fullan M, *Successful school improvement*, Buckingham, 1992; Gray J, Hopkins D, Reynolds D, Wilcox B, Farrell S and Jesson, D, *Improving schools' performance and potential*, Buckingham OUP; 1999; Hopkins D, West M and Ainscow, M, *Improving the quality of education for all*, London: David Fulton, 1996.

in the Netherlands, whose inspectors are held responsible for school improvement. Dutch law,³⁰ for example, gives the inspectorate two specific duties:

- to guarantee that schools meet certain minimum (quality) requirements
- to urge schools, through its (supervisory) activities, to improve the quality of the education they provide.

39. Thus, inspections in the Netherlands are expected to lead, both directly and indirectly, to an improvement in the quality of education provided. The Netherlands' inspectorate follows up each school annually to check on progress and, if necessary, to intervene to ensure improvement.

40. Ofsted monitors schools and colleges causing concern and gives priority to the early reinspection of other unsatisfactory provision, but it does not have responsibility in law for ensuring they improve. The government's policy for inspectorates now, however, is more overtly concerned with *inspection for service improvement*.

Commentary

41. The OSPR's inspection principles (annex A) see inspection as a lever for change. This implies a change of emphasis from the purposes of accountability and public reporting that were dominant in the early stage of Ofsted. Improvement was a desirable effect but still a by-product of inspection, whereas now the government expects that inspections will lead to improvement. This has consequences both for the nature of inspectorates and their relationship with increasingly diverse and autonomous providers.

42. The logic of the assumption that inspection, feedback and public reporting *will* automatically lead to improvement has been challenged most recently in the context of primary school inspections in the Netherlands.³¹ Ehren's paper uses 'programme theory' to reconstruct the assumptions about how inspection should lead to certain effects and comments on the limited extent to which it does in the Dutch context. This evaluation of Ofsted's impact uses much new data to test many of the features of inspection that the analysis of Ehren and her colleagues also explores. Interestingly, evidence of Ofsted's impact is able to demonstrate greater potency in inspection and the processes that accompany it than are argued theoretically in Ehren's thesis. Both investigations, however, raise questions about future inspection strategy and the redesign of inspections to achieve greater fitness for their new purpose.

³⁰ Education Supervision Act 2002, the Netherlands.

³¹ Ehren M.C.M., Leeuw F.L., and Scheerens J., *On the impact of the Dutch Educational Supervision Act*, paper presented at the ICSEI Conference, Rotterdam, in January 2004.

2. Improvement of schools

This section examines a range of evidence of associations between the inspection and improvement of schools. It examines evidence for positive and negative associations between the inspection and improvement of schools. The report considers whether inspection is differentially effective and looks at evidence for improvement over three cycles of inspection. Some criticisms of school inspection are addressed and the report considers factors that facilitate improvement through inspection.

Inspection frameworks and guidance

43. One of Ofsted's major contributions to the education system has been the publication and dissemination of its inspection frameworks and associated guidance and their use by those who lead and manage educational provision. The frameworks (Table 2) express quality standards related to the core work of schools and, subsequently, of colleges and LEAs. They are aligned with other national standards and criteria. The framework for inspecting initial teacher training, for example, is consistent with the government's standards for teachers.

Table 2. Ofsted's major inspection frameworks, May 2004.

Sector inspected	Name of document	Implementation date
• Schools	Inspecting schools	September 2003
• Independent schools	Inspecting independent schools	September 2003
• Post-16 education and training	Common Inspection Framework	February 2001
• Area inspections	Area Inspection Framework	September 2003
• Local education authorities	Framework for the inspection of local education authorities	January 2004
• Initial training of teachers	Framework for the inspection of initial teacher training	June 2004
• Initial training of further education teachers	Framework for the inspection of the initial training of further education teachers	March 2004

	(consultation document)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nursery education and day-care providers 	Guidance on inspecting funded nursery education	April 2004

44. The frameworks go further, of course, by establishing a basis for internal quality assurance that is widely adopted by providers. They offer benchmarks or expectations for institutions as well as a resource for internal review. Inevitably, there can be claims of circularity, when an open framework indicates in advance the basis on which subsequent inspection judgements are made. The advantages of openness, however, are that the expectations are clear to all involved, and the frameworks – which have consistently received very positive responses in consultations – can assist institutions in identifying what is broadly accepted as constituting good or effective practice, as discussed below. It is important that inspection frameworks are sufficiently loosely woven and intelligently applied to allow innovation and unorthodoxy to be recognised but, nonetheless, are clear, coherent and generally favourably regarded as encapsulating what constitutes good professional practice and high standards. For this reason, the school inspection framework, to take one example, has evolved over the last 11 years to a point where all judgements are made in terms of their impact on learning and raising achievement.

45. The original Ofsted framework and handbook for school inspections broke radically new ground. They set out, for the first time, the basis on which inspections were conducted by revealing the criteria, methods and principles underpinning inspectors' judgements. The impact and professional relevance of the 1993 school inspection handbook was such that the Secondary Headteachers' Association described it as *'the best book on school management that has ever appeared from official sources. It is a well polished mirror in which to reflect – and reflect on – the performance and procedures of all areas of school life.'*

46. In its report on the work of Ofsted in 1999, the Education and Employment Committee stated that:

The (school) Inspection Framework was widely praised in evidence to our enquiry as a valuable tool for school development and evaluation... The NUT³² believed that the Inspection Framework provided a valuable checklist for school improvement, not least for schools to use themselves.

47. The school inspection framework has been revised regularly to take account of developments such as performance management policies and improvements to the inspection system. Successive frameworks have couched their criteria in terms of indicators for effective schools. These criteria have been based on HMI practice and

³² National Union of Teachers – evidence to the House of Commons Education and Employment Committee.

findings³³, subject to widespread consultation, meetings of focus groups, professional scrutiny and validation through research.^{34 35}

48. The Common Inspection Framework for the inspection of post-16 education and training was drawn up, for joint use by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate, having due regard for the school framework and its application to sixth forms. An independent survey³⁶ reported that *'there remains strong agreement across all stakeholders that the Common Inspection Framework³⁷ continues to provide an important guide for inspections and in particular has implemented the changes to the overall approach to inspections effectively'*. The survey quotes views that the Common Inspection Framework:

- *'has been a major success. It is now much more comprehensive'*
- *'has been transferred into prisons very effectively'*
- *'is highly regarded by providers and it has been used as a template for self assessment'*.

School improvement between inspections

49. Comparison of inspection judgements over different time periods provides important indicators of improvement. While it must be recognised that institutions will seek to present their best face to inspectors where there is advance notice of the visit, this is the case for each inspection and is unlikely to account for the extent of improvement identified from one inspection visit to another. Nor is it considered likely that inspection standards are slipping, since periodic revisions of the framework and guidance have commonly been perceived as making inspection benchmarks more explicit and, in some cases, raising expectations. Inspectors have also gained further experience and received additional training and professional development across inspection cycles. The great majority of schools are judged to have improved since their previous inspection (Figure 1). In 2002/03, inspectors judged the improvement in almost one quarter of schools was very good or excellent, and good (or better) in over two thirds (67% of primary and secondary schools and 55% of special schools). By contrast, there was insufficient improvement, or indeed deterioration, in 8% of primary and secondary and 12% of special schools.

³³ For example, *Ten good schools*, HMI, DES, 1977.

³⁴ Rutter M., Maughan B., Mortimore P. and Ouston J., *Fifteen thousand hours*, Open Books, London 1979.

³⁵ Sammons P., Hillman J. and Mortimore P., *Key characteristics of effective schools: a review of school effectiveness research*. Report commissioned for the Institute of Education and Ofsted, London, 1995.

³⁶ *Evaluation of post-16 Learning Arrangements*, York Consulting, for the DfES, 2004.

³⁷ Used jointly by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate to inspect post-compulsory education and training.

Figure 1. Judgements of extent of improvement of 3,041 primary and 551 secondary schools since their last inspection (2002/03 Annual Report).

50. In 44% of primary schools (Figure 2), 78% of secondary and 53% of special schools (and pupil referral units) inspected in 2002/03, teaching was judged to have improved since the previous inspection. By contrast, in 14, 11 and 12% of these respective types of school, the quality of teaching was judged to have deteriorated. Improvement of teaching, while common, is thus not universal and decline is evident in a minority of cases.

Figure 2. Primary schools: change of inspection judgements since previous inspection (percentage of 3,041 schools inspected in 2002/03).

51. Leadership and management had improved in over half (56%) of primary schools. However, leadership and management were found to have improved more securely in the secondary sector, where they were judged to have improved in 62% of schools (Figure 3). Despite changes to the inspection frameworks over time, it is likely that such changes reflect reasonably accurately 'real' improvements in most cases, because, as noted above, the frameworks have tended to become more demanding over time. The evidence of positive change is also supported by other external evidence on attainment (as discussed later).

Figure 3. Secondary schools: change of inspection judgements since previous inspection (percentage of the 551 secondary schools inspected in 2002/03).

52. The comparative data for special schools show a similar profile of very significant improvement in leadership and management (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Special schools: change of inspection judgements since previous inspection (percentage of the 185 special schools inspected in 2002/03).

53. It is important to remember that these improvements should be viewed in the context of an already strong record of teaching and learning and leadership and management in the majority of schools. Some caution is needed in interpreting the data because of changes to the inspection framework, although it is not considered likely that such changes could account for the level of improvement recorded.³⁸ Early Ofsted data from the third cycle of inspections that commenced for secondary schools in September 2003 shows that inspectors judged the overall effectiveness of about 60% of schools to have improved since the previous inspection.

54. Establishing causal relationships in relation to school improvement is methodologically challenging because it can be difficult to attribute relative weight to

³⁸ For example, the current judgements on leadership and management relate only to the work of the headteacher and senior members of staff. Before January 2000 the judgement of leadership and management was combined with that of the work of governors. The work of governors has been judged to be weaker than that of headteachers and key staff.

the many internal and external factors that contribute to change. There is substantial evidence, however, of improvements in many schools that have occurred since Ofsted inspections began. A separate study of schools inspected for the third time was undertaken specifically for this evaluation in order to explore improvement processes in more depth and to illuminate the part that inspection has played in them. Initial findings are described in the final section of this chapter.

Inspection, improvement and standards in primary and secondary schools

55. Turning to improvements that are regarded as associated with the work of Ofsted, the most striking of these is the difference between the ‘stubborn statistic’ of 25 to 30% of work seen by HMI being unsatisfactory, reported by a former senior chief inspector³⁹ in the years that preceded Ofsted’s first Annual Report, and the steady and substantial improvement in the quality of teaching, school management and most other aspects of schools identified in 10 successive Annual Reports of HMCI. Inspection is one of several policies that are expected to engender school improvement and there is much evidence that indicates that its influence – in conjunction with other policies – has been substantial.

56. Overall, school standards – reflected in test and examination results – have risen markedly during the 1990s, although there has been some levelling off in recent years. In Key Stages 1 and 2, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in national curriculum tests in the core subjects has risen steadily, especially so from 1996 to 2000 (Figure 5). The proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 or above in English and mathematics rose by 18 percentage points between 1996 and 2000. While the government’s National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are regarded as particularly influential in primary schools from 1997-98 onwards, inspection guidance on the teaching of literacy and numeracy (through specially commissioned reports) and subject guidance is likely to have played a part in supporting the implementation of the strategies in primary schools. International comparisons, such as the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS, 2001) likewise indicate that current levels of literacy and mathematics are high in England. At secondary level, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2000) study indicates that English students attain significantly above the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average and better than those in most of the other countries surveyed.⁴⁰

Figure 5. Percentage of 11-year-old pupils reaching level 4 and above in English, mathematics and science.

57. The quality of teaching in primary schools, which has been found to have improved steadily from 1994 when Ofsted’s inspections of primary schools began, shows very little evidence of unsatisfactory teaching (4-5%) in the last three years.

³⁹ Report of the Senior Chief Inspector, 1988.

⁴⁰ See, for example, *Knowledge and skills for life: First results from PISA*, OECD, 2001.

Preparation for inspection has probably done much to reduce the likelihood of inspectors seeing unsatisfactory or poor lessons. Given this, it is thought that the proportion of good or better (rather than satisfactory) teaching may now give a more secure indication of trends in the quality of teaching, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. The proportion of good or better teaching in primary schools.

58. There are several possible explanations for the outcome and process curves shown in Figures 5 and 6. The period of improvement before 2000 is likely to be attributable to the inclusion of the test results of primary schools in the publication of national comparative tables, as well as curriculum development such as the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. These strategies were supported by focused and well-resourced professional development of headteachers and teachers, as well as the inspection of 3,000 primary schools each year. For much of the period after the introduction of the strategies, inspectors saw most teachers in inspected schools teaching the recommended literacy hours and daily mathematics lessons, thus both evaluating and reinforcing the implementation of the strategies. HMI concurrently undertook longitudinal focused evaluations of the two strategies in 600 primary schools and published annual reports on what they found. These influenced the schools visited and others who read the evaluation reports. They also provided important feedback that informed the modification of the strategies and the associated training.⁴¹

59. The introduction of a new inspection framework and a differentiated inspection model from January 2002 meant that disproportionately fewer lessons were seen in the 25% or so most effective schools.

60. Since 2000, however, the standards achieved nationally in English and mathematics for 11 year olds at the end of Key Stage 2 appear to have reached a plateau. At the same time, the proportion of good or better teaching in primary schools has also levelled out. As this trend became apparent, Ofsted could be expected, first, to explain the phenomenon and, second, to advise on what could be done to raise standards further. HMI provided professional interpretation on both these areas. The first was to evaluate the perceived distortion of the curriculum that had resulted from focused application of the strategies in many schools, and remind the system (not for the first time⁴²) about the need for a broad and rich curriculum to reinforce pupils' skills in and development in literacy and mathematics. The second was for HMCI to promote more good teaching by challenging, through speeches and the 2001/02 Annual Report,⁴³ whether teaching that is 'satisfactory' is good enough

⁴¹ *Inspection impact paper: an evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies 1998–2002; effect on national policy*, Ofsted website, 2004.

⁴² 'The general educational progress of children and their competence in the basic skills appear to have benefited where they were involved in a programme of work that included art and craft, history and geography, music and physical education, and science, as well as language, mathematics and religious and moral education, although not necessarily as separate items on the timetable.' *Primary education in England, a survey by HM Inspectors of Schools*; DES, HMSO, London 1978.

⁴³ *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 2001/02*, Ofsted, 2003.

to promote improvement in standards across all groups of pupils. This challenge has been reinforced by the new handbook for the inspection of nursery and primary schools⁴⁴ that provides illustrative benchmarks for all grades of teaching including, for the first time, a clear distinction between teaching that is satisfactory and that which is good (Table 3).

Table 3. Guideline descriptions of good and satisfactory teaching in primary schools.

1999 primary inspection handbook	2003 primary inspection handbook
<p>Satisfactory or better teaching</p> <p><i>The teaching of basic skills and subject content is clear and accurate,</i></p>	<p>Good teaching</p> <p><i>Most pupils make good progress and achieve well. Teaching methods are imaginative and lead to a high level of interest from most pupils. Individual needs are well catered for, and teaching assistants make a significant contribution. Adults relate well to pupils and expect them to work hard. The level of challenge is realistic and pupils are productive. Staff understand the next steps pupils need to take in their learning and they provide a wide range of activities. In the Foundation Stage, child-initiated experiences and direct teaching are balanced well. Staff help children to feel secure, gain confidence and communicate with others. Adults are skilled in helping children to extend their play, develop their ideas, persevere and extend talk and thinking.</i></p>

⁴⁴ Handbook for inspecting nursery and primary schools, Ofsted 2003.

using clear explanation and demonstration, and involving all pupils. The organisation of the lesson allows most pupils to keep up with the work and to complete tasks in the time available. Staff interact with pupils to check their understanding and to ensure they remain on task. The relationship between the pupils and teacher is such that pupils can get on with their work and know how well they have done.

Satisfactory teaching

Most pupils' learning and progress are at least satisfactory. Teaching is accurate; teachers have a secure understanding of the curriculum and the teaching of key skills. They seek to make work interesting and varied and they involve pupils productively. Pupils understand what they are expected to do, and tasks have sufficient challenge to keep them working well, independently or cooperatively. Relationships are constructive and there is sensitivity to the needs of individuals and groups. Teaching assistants are adequately managed and are effective. Children enjoy participating in suitable activities. A well-ordered atmosphere is maintained and pupils have some scope to make their own choices and use their own ideas.

61. Emerging evidence supports a prediction that, as a result of describing degrees of effectiveness more specifically in the latest (2003) school inspection framework and revised handbooks than in previous versions, there will be a discontinuity in the annual trend of teaching and other grades. There could be a drop in the proportion of grades for good or better teaching being awarded by inspectors in the first year or more, until the system responds by ensuring that more teaching is at least good. Increasingly, schools are likely to raise their own standards of teaching as they build on the gains of the national strategies and develop the other areas of their curriculum.

62. In interpreting the 'stubborn statistic' (paragraph 55) it should also be noted that nationally approximately 20% of primary pupils are identified as having some form of special educational needs while at primary school. It seems likely that many such pupils may require additional support to develop their skills further and that good teaching is likely to be essential to promote their higher achievement. Further research, including the use of inspection findings, is needed to throw more light on the 'plateau' in national assessment results and the extent to which it is possible for schools in challenging circumstances to boost performance without narrowing the curriculum they offer.

63. This turns the spotlight on school leadership and the management of innovation and change. Trends in the quality of primary school leadership are similar to the profile for good teaching. In 2002/03, 77% of the leadership and management of primary schools was judged good or better and 5% was unsatisfactory or poor. This leaves over one in five primary schools with leadership and management that are no better than satisfactory, which may raise some questions about the capacity of these schools to improve. At Key Stage 3, improvements in attainment have been less notable than in Key Stages 1 and 2, but the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 or above in all three core subjects rose, between 1996 and 2003, by 11 percentage

points in English and science and 13 percentage points in mathematics. At GCSE, there has been a steady increase in the proportion of pupils achieving 5+ A*–C grades (51.3% of pupils last year, although the proportions of pupils achieving 5 A*–G and one A*–G have remained almost static) (Figure 7). The PISA 2000 OECD survey also provides supporting evidence indicating that the performance of students aged 15 years in England in literacy and numeracy is relatively high in comparison with that of other countries in the survey.

Figure 7. Percentage of 15-year-old pupils achieving 5+ A*–C, 5+ A*–G, and 1+ A*–G GCSE grades or GVNQ equivalent.

64. The quality of secondary teaching observed has improved greatly since Ofsted inspections began. In 1994/95, about one lesson in five seen by inspectors was judged unsatisfactory. This figure has improved to the extent that now only one lesson in every 20 seen in secondary schools is regarded as unsatisfactory, very similar to the picture in primary schools. Over eight out of ten secondary schools are well led and managed (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Secondary full inspections: percentage of schools with good or better leadership and management.

Are results damaged by inspection?

65. Research relating to secondary schools that were inspected mainly in the first cycle, from 1993 to 1997, has suggested that inspections may have inhibited the performance of some schools in the year of inspection⁴⁵ or immediately after the inspection.⁴⁶ The analyses were complicated by the fact, not recognised in the studies, that samples of schools inspected year by year tended to have a disproportionate number of lower-achieving schools, starting from the first year of Ofsted inspections, since schools known to be of concern to HMI were brought forward for early inspection.

66. It is quite possible that the performance of some schools inspected in the first cycle was affected detrimentally by being involved in an inspection for the first time. Schools in that cycle had one year's notice of inspection and some prepared so heavily for it that they may have been distracted from their day-to-day activities. Staff were reported to be tired or stressed⁴⁷ and often felt drained after the inspection. The system was new and provoked anxiety, especially in weaker schools with a long history of low attainment or other problems. Headteachers were not used to the level

⁴⁵ Cullingford C. and Daniels S., *Effects of Ofsted inspections on school performance* in 'An inspector calls', ed Cullingford, Kogan Page Ltd, 1999.

⁴⁶ Shaw I., Newton D.P., Aitken M. and Darnell R., *Do OFSTED inspections of secondary schools make a difference to GCSE results?*, British Educational Research Journal, 29, 1, 2003.

⁴⁷ Fitz-Gibbon C.T. and Stephenson-Foster N.J., *Is Ofsted helpful?* in 'An inspector calls', ed Cullingford C., Kogan Page Ltd., London 1999.

of accountability involved and the need to maintain the focus of their staff on teaching and learning rather than, for example, on the writing of copious documentation.⁴⁸

67. In order to investigate whether schools' overall results suggest that they performed any differently before, during and after the second cycle of inspections, and to determine whether there is any evidence of an immediate dip in results as suggested by some commentators, a simple analysis involving all secondary schools inspected each year, over a long period, has been undertaken recently.⁴⁹ The aim was to investigate the relationship between a school's Key Stage 4 results in the year prior to the inspection (y-1) and the two years following on from the inspection (y+1 and y+2). Inspected schools were compared with all schools, rather than those schools that were not inspected. Neither methodology changes the mean differences appreciably.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, this analysis cannot explore changes in schools' relative effectiveness over time using value-added approaches since matched databases were not available for most of the years involved.

68. The first test was to compare the Key Stage 4 results of inspected schools one and two years after their inspection with their results in the year before inspection. Table 4 shows that approximately twice as many schools have higher results a year after their inspection than immediately before they were inspected than have lower results. The ratio is somewhat higher, as expected, after a longer interval. It is clear, therefore, that the majority of schools do not show a performance dip after inspection and that in general results tend to be rising year on year. It should be noted that the analysis does not look at the size of any changes, but just whether results were above or below those in different years.

⁴⁸ *Inspection quality 1994/95* (p15) Ofsted with Keele University and Touche Ross, Ofsted 1995.

⁴⁹ Ofsted, to be published.

⁵⁰ This was checked by recalculating the figures.

Table 4. Percentage of secondary schools whose results one or two years after their inspection were above, below, or the same as the year before the inspection.

Inspected schools – Percentage change 5 A*– C							
Year before to 1 year after					Year before to 2 years after		
Year	Schools	Above	Below	Equal	Above	Below	Equal
1993/94	453	63.6%	30.6%	5.8%	70.8%	24.4%	4.8%
1994/95	421	56.1%	38.2%	5.7%	60.9%	33.9%	5.2%
1995/96	413	58.1%	34.2%	7.7%	69.6%	29.7%	0.7%
1996/97	486	62.0%	37.1%	0.9%	69.2%	29.4%	1.4%
1997/98	358	65.9%	33.1%	0.9%	68.5%	30.2%	1.3%
1998/99	417	67.3%	32.4%	0.3%	69.8%	29.5%	0.6%
1999/00	357	58.9%	39.8%	1.3%	64.0%	35.5%	0.5%
2000/01	362	61.8%	37.7%	0.5%	63.2%	36.0%	0.9%
2001/02	332	63.8%	35.2%	1.0%			

69. The second analysis was to see how the proportion of inspected schools that had better results in the year(s) after their inspection compared with the results of all schools in the same years. The results for Key Stage 4 are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Differences in the performance of pupils in inspected secondary schools and all schools between the year before and the year after the year of inspection

Difference (all schools - inspected schools)

5 A* to C

	Above	Below	Equal
Y93/94	-0.5%	0.6%	-0.1%
Y94/95	2.4%	-2.9%	0.5%

Inspected schools have done better than the national

Y95/96	-0.5%	1.3%	-0.9%
Y96/97	-2.4%	2.5%	-0.1%
Y97/98	1.1%	-1.1%	-0.0%
Y98/99	-1.1%	0.4%	0.8%
Y99/00	1.8%	-1.6%	-0.2%
Y00/01	1.2%	-1.6%	0.4%
Y01/02	-2.1%	1.9%	0.2%
	-0.2%	-0.4%	-0.6%

Inspected schools have done worse than the national

70. The results in Table 5 show that, in some years, a higher proportion of inspected schools improve over a two-year span than all schools; in other years, the proportion is lower. There is little significance to be read into this except to say that inspection is neither a catalyst for instant improvement in GCSE results nor a significant inhibitor. The actual inspection year was avoided in the study because of the possible effect of the timing of the inspection within the year.⁵¹ The mean attainment of pupils in the inspected sample of schools was less than the England mean, during, before and after the inspection. Some of the schools included in the sample inspected in 1993/94 were selected for inspection because they were of concern to HMI. It follows that the 1997/98 cohort represented many of these low-achieving schools, since 88% of the schools inspected in 1997/98 were also inspected in 1993/94. A comparison of the free school meal percentages show that the median percentage for schools inspected in 1997/98 is about two percentage points higher than the average for England, and that this occurs in 2001/02 as well.

71. The analysis of results has been extended to include years y+3 and y+4 for those years where it is possible to do so. Examination of these data indicates that the pattern of relatively small 'within cohort' differences seems to be repeated here, with no real differences existing before or after the inspection year for each inspection cohort.

72. The same analysis for Key Stage 3 results shows that for y-1 to y+1 there is little difference between the inspected schools and all schools in the percentage of pupils achieving Level 5+ in mathematics and science. For results in the Key Stage 3 English tests, inspected schools performed less well than schools nationally for five out of the six years. The y-1 to y+2 picture is somewhat different. At Key Stage 3, the majority of the indicators show that more inspected schools showed an increase compared to schools nationally.⁵²

⁵¹ Cullingford C. and Daniels S., *Effects of Ofsted inspections on school performance* in 'An Inspector Calls', ed. Cullingford, Kogan Page, 1999.

⁵² Ofsted research data.

73. The second investigation focused on the results for the five or more A*–C indicator. The table below shows inspection years organised by row; the figures refer to the difference between the percentage of pupils gaining five or more A*–C grades in all schools and the percentage in the group of schools inspected in that year. For instance, for those schools inspected in 1995/96, the attainment in 1995 was 0.4 percentage points less than for those schools that were not inspected; 0.1 percentage points lower in the year following the inspection, and 0.2 percentage points higher two years after the inspection. Where the results are shown in bold there is a significant difference between the inspected schools and the schools that were not inspected.⁵³

Table 6. Five or more A*–C GCSE indicator.

		5 or more GCSE results in academic year ending								
		1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Inspection in academic year ending	1996	0.4	0.3	0.1	-0.2	0.0	-0.1			
	1997		-0.4	-0.2	-0.9	-0.8	-1.1	-1.7		
	1998			4.6	5.5	5.1	4.8	4.5	4.6	
	1999				1.5	1.8	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.8
	2000					0.4	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.9
	2001						-0.5	-0.3	-0.9	-0.6
	2002							2.7	2.7	2.1
	2003								1.3	1.6

74. The results indicate that, in general, there is little difference between those schools that were inspected and all schools. While there are some differences, their scale is small and insignificant statistically. There are, however, some notable differences for the cohorts of schools inspected in 1998 and 2002 insofar as those schools that were inspected appear to have significantly lower levels of attainment than those schools that were not inspected. The 1998 cohort was at the beginning of the second cycle of inspections and included a disproportionate number of less effective schools. The 2002 sample is also quite skewed. The same analysis conducted with the GCSE point score indicator shows a similar pattern, with little in the way of significant differences, but with 1998 and 2002 as, again, the exceptional groups.

⁵³ The difference between inspected schools and all schools reported is significantly different if there is less than a one in twenty chance of the difference occurring through natural variation.

75. It should be noted that the two groups of schools are not entirely independent. For instance, the group of schools that were inspected in 1998 will have as their comparator some of the schools that were inspected in 1997. The findings indicate no significant difference in the results of inspected schools in the year or two after inspection compared with other schools. Whatever the effects found by other research in relation to the first cycle of inspections, these simple analyses fail to show any consistent evidence that results spanning the inspection event over the last eight years are either enhanced or depressed relative to other schools.

76. It is argued that the effects of inspection have contributed alongside other factors to school improvement over time, reflected in the upward trend in the achievement of five or more high grade GCSE passes at Key Stage 4 in 58 to 67% of schools over two years to 61 to 71% over three (Table 4). It is also likely that the introduction of inspection and publication of the framework had an impact on all schools because all knew that they would be inspected within four years (in the first cycle) and many engaged in preparation and review in advance.

Monitoring and improvement of schools causing concern⁵⁴

77. The law requires that HMCI corroborates all judgements made by independent inspectors that schools require special measures. HMI and additional inspectors (AIs) appointed by HMCI, therefore, monitor schools causing concern and reinspect schools in special measures when HMI judge that the school has improved sufficiently not to require these measures. This process ensures that there is automatic follow-up to the initial inspection and close and continuing contact between Ofsted and schools causing concern. This is intended to reflect proportionality in following up inspections, focusing on the schools that are judged most in need of additional inspection visits. Different types of 'school improvement inspections' are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7. Schools monitored by Ofsted.

Designation or category	Nature of inspection	Outcomes
School in special measures (formal designation after inspection)	Termly monitoring	Inspection and report stating that special measures are no longer required
Inadequate sixth form (formal designation after inspection)	Termly monitoring	Published report after two years removing 'inadequate' categorisation
Schools with serious weaknesses or which are underachieving	Inspected by HMI to ascertain progress	Insufficient progress may result in special measures

⁵⁴ Inspection Impact Paper: *The impact of school improvement inspections*, Ofsted, 2004.

Schools facing challenging circumstances	Monitoring of progress and action taken to raise attainment	Feedback and letter to the school
'Fresh start' schools; schools facing exceptionally challenging circumstances; academies and their predecessor schools	Periodic visits to assess progress of schools involved in specific initiatives	Feedback and letter to the school; information to the DfES

78. School improvement inspections focus on the school as an individual institution, and the process of improvement within it. Inspectors spend much of their time in the school observing lessons. The priorities for evidence-gathering and evaluation are determined in the light of the school's specific situation, but include: the standards achieved by the pupils; the quality of teaching and learning, and other aspects of the education provided by the school; the leadership, management and efficiency of the school; and the pupils' attitudes, behaviour, attendance and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspectors usually evaluate the impact of the LEA and other external bodies in promoting the school's improvement.

79. The starting point for the impact of school improvement inspections is the interaction between HMI and the headteacher. From the initial contact with a school onwards, HMI seek to establish a professional relationship with the headteacher founded on mutual respect. HMI's role is to reach unequivocal judgements on the school's progress, which may include communicating hard messages, at the same time as ensuring that a productive dialogue can be maintained. While most headteachers valued the support and challenge provided by HMI visits, a minority felt criticisms were unjustified. This has occasionally soured the relationship between the school and the lead inspector, making the school less willing to act on the issues raised by HMI and slowing the pace of change. Occasionally, Ofsted may change the lead inspector if this is judged to be appropriate for the school.

80. The inspections aim not only to analyse and evaluate the extent of the school's progress, but are also intended to accelerate its improvement. Constructive engagement with the school, even where hard messages have to be given, is an important element of Ofsted's approach, as illustrated in the following cases.

Effects on leadership and management

Primary school in special measures

After a new headteacher took up his post in the school midway through a lengthy period in special measures, HMI's judgement was that he lacked the focus and capacity to lead the school forward. The governors were distressed by this judgement, but immediately after a further visit confirmed this a few weeks later, the chair of governors suspended the headteacher, and the LEA provided alternative arrangements that were ultimately successful.

Secondary school in challenging circumstances

HMI reported serious concerns, particularly about the leadership and management of the school, and recommended a return visit. The LEA intervened and the headteacher resigned. Two deputy headteachers took over as acting headteachers. When four HMI returned six months later, the school had been transformed by a leadership team which had galvanised the whole staff by concentrating on the basics: discipline, lesson planning and homework.

Instilling focus and direction

Fresh start secondary school

On the first visit to this school, HMI identified serious weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school and in the quality of teaching. The recently appointed headteacher had focused on improving the school's image within the local community and had not given sufficient priority to improving the management and teaching. The school's management group was fragmented and there was tension between the headteacher and the governing body.

The headteacher used the very critical feedback from the first visit to focus the work of the senior managers better. By the time of the second inspection, the headteacher, senior management team and governors shared a common vision for the school's development. Together they had established clear leadership, prepared a meaningful action plan and brought about a significant improvement in the quality of teaching. Although much remains to be done, the school is now well focused on raising standards and has improved its capacity to become self-evaluating.

Effect on quality of teaching

Small primary school in special measures

There were three teachers (in Years 2, 4 and 5) whose teaching was judged to be weak. The weaknesses were mentioned orally and in writing to the headteacher and the LEA. As a result, the Year 2 and 4 teachers left after a period of support from the school. The Year 5 teacher was supported by the school and the LEA and she is now teaching much better with younger pupils. The school is now ready to be removed from special measures.

81. HMI regularly provide seminars for schools causing concern. A pilot survey of the headteachers of these schools supports Ofsted's conclusion that this work itself promotes improvement.⁵⁵ They valued the action-planning seminars which, for many, had helped to set the agenda for rapid improvement by stressing the urgency of the task that lay ahead. For schools subject to special measures, a recent analysis found that there was a statistically significant correlation between the quality of the school's action plan (as judged by HMI) and the length of time that it remained

⁵⁵ Inspection Impact Paper: *The impact of school improvement inspections*, Ofsted, 2004.

subject to special measures. It appears, therefore, that the advice given at the seminars can help to shorten the time before the pupils receive an acceptable or better standard of education and achieve higher standards.

82. The impact of HMI monitoring visits was described by one headteacher as *'necessary but painful'*. The visits were seen to ensure that schools maintained a rigorous focus on addressing the key issues for action in their inspection report. Headteachers were unanimous in describing the professionalism of their lead HMI, who was well aware of the effect of the visits on staff and worked hard to minimise stress and give support. Contact from HMI between visits was also seen to be very helpful.

83. Taking schools to which special measures have been applied, in the first 10 years of Ofsted's work, 1,288 schools were identified as requiring special measures. Of these, 1,098 (over 85%) were judged to have improved sufficiently to emerge from this category, but 190 (14.8%) did not – and were closed (Table 8). It is clear that removal from this category was most likely to occur in primary schools, with improvement relatively less likely in pupil referral units (PRUs).

Table 8. Outcomes of special measures.

	Primary	Special	Secondary	PRUs	Total
Removed from special measures	799 89.6%	114 77.0%	167 76.6%	18 60%	1098 85.3%
Closed	93 10.4%	34 23.0%	51 23.4%	12 40%	190 14.6%
TOTAL	892	148	218	30	1288

84. There is no doubt that most schools improve markedly following a period of being subject to special measures. This is particularly the case for primary schools. Indeed, some develop innovative and successful practice, which puts them at the leading edge within their LEAs. All special measures schools have another section 10 inspection within two years of being removed from special measures. Only a small proportion of schools (below 2%) that emerge from this category have deteriorated subsequently. By July 2003, 15 schools had been made subject to special measures for a second time.

85. The improvements observed in such schools, from the inspection that designates them to the next inspection after they have left the special measures category, are in most cases substantial. Figure 9 shows the improved standards of most special measures secondary schools at the time of the later inspection carried out in 2002/03. The improvement in standards is noticeable, with one school now exceeding the national average.

Figure 9. Percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*–C grades in GCSE when the secondary school went into special measures and when they were inspected in 2002/03, two years after coming out (Some schools closed during this period).

86. The extent of improvement in the quality of teaching observed in special measures schools, as assessed by inspectors, is likewise substantial (Figure 10). It should be noted that action plans are strongly encouraged to focus on the quality of teaching and learning.

Figure 10. Percentage of unsatisfactory or poor teaching in lessons in secondary schools at the time of going into special measures and their inspection in 2002/03, two years after coming out.

87. Improvements in primary school teaching are found to be equally marked (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Percentage of unsatisfactory or poor teaching in lessons in primary schools going into special measures and from all that were inspected in 2002/03 two years after coming out.⁵⁶

88. The nature of more effective teaching in improving schools and the role of HMI and other agents in contributing to the improvement of teaching is summarised below.

HMI/AI interaction with improving schools⁵⁷

HMI monitoring and support of teaching	Improving schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides the school with an external assessment of the quality of teaching • is based on a larger sample than can be achieved in a short space of time by the school itself • considers elements of teaching in detail, such as planning, questioning and the school's approach to building literacy skills • highlights weak areas – such as questioning - as issues for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exhibit an increased proportion of good and very good teaching aimed at raising attainment <p>Improvement results largely from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a focus on planning • a well-structured programme of monitoring and development • variety of teaching approaches • a style that promotes independence and involves pupils

⁵⁶ The negative representation for the seventh school from the left in Figure 10 represents a worsening in the amount of unsatisfactory teaching after coming out of special measures.

⁵⁷ Inspection Impact Paper: *The impact of school improvement inspections*, Ofsted, 2004.

<p>development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> assesses the quality of learning and rate of progress in lessons, thus helping move the school's focus from teaching also to learning <p>The impact of this work in increasing the sophistication of the school's own analysis of teaching is usually evident in improvements noted in the subsequent inspection.</p>	<p>actively in their learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> matching work well to pupils' needs and abilities. <p>LEA and external consultants and advisers often make a valuable contribution to developing subject expertise and teaching skills.</p>
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89. High-calibre leadership is usually needed to improve the school sufficiently to bring it out of special measures. Figure 12⁵⁸ shows the dramatic improvement in leadership and management from the time the school was found to require special measures until the inspection after it has come out. It should be noted that many such schools experience a change of headteacher or other senior managers following inspection where the school's leadership was judged to be weak.

Figure 12. The improvement of leadership and management in special measures primary and secondary schools between their s10 inspection in 2002/03 and the previous one.

90. The characteristics of leadership needed to transform schools that are failing their pupils, and the contribution of HMI to the process, are shown below.

Leadership issues

HMI/AI monitoring of, and support for, leadership	Factors associated with effective leadership of improving schools
<p>involves a relationship with headteacher which combines both support and challenge</p> <p>evaluates leadership robustly, including the headteacher's capacity for rigorous self-evaluation, and helps to set the agenda for improvement.</p> <p>The majority of headteachers respond quickly to such evaluation and this</p>	<p>ability to evaluate the school's progress objectively and rigorously</p> <p>ability to prioritise, headteacher's ability to define a clear and unequivocal direction for the school's development, which is widely understood by the whole school community</p> <p>capacity to inspire loyalty and build positive relationships</p>

⁵⁸ Ofsted's inspection data.

<p>hastens the pace of improvement but, in some cases where the capacity for change is lacking, the process results in changes in personnel.</p> <p>HMI also use their extensive knowledge of schools in similar circumstances to describe successful improvement, raising expectations and building the school's belief in the possibility of success.</p>	<p>ability to stand back, creating a judicious balance between speedy improvement and manageability</p> <p>growing confidence of headteachers as they tackle all aspects of personnel management</p> <p>broadening of leadership to include senior and middle managers, who lead a subject or an area</p> <p>governance which promotes greater accountability for the school's performance.</p>
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91. In many cases, HMI's use of evidence to arrive at judgements, which then guide the priorities for improvement, demonstrates an approach which is then adopted by the headteacher and the senior managers. An HMI visit can also provide an opportunity to assess staff and pupils' perceptions of the school and come to understand the morale of those in the school and their will to improve.

92. Oral feedback following a monitoring inspection is a fundamental element in the process of improvement. This session offers the headteacher, senior managers and governors detailed exemplification, underpinning HMI's judgements. These findings can provide the stimulus or lever for action which is needed; for example, they can spur an LEA or a headteacher into taking action which they might otherwise have hesitated to take. The monitoring letter, following a visit, provides a record of progress, pointing to the next stage of improvement. The letter is a blend of judgement and supporting exemplification which many schools use as a model to guide their own recording of developments. In addition, senior managers discuss the letter's main judgements with all staff, focusing on the priorities for action.

93. Assuming that pupils in schools that close transferred to other schools, it is estimated that approaching a million pupils are likely to have benefited from improvements in education through changes arising from the introduction of judgements about special measures over the past 10 years. Likewise, many other pupils can be seen to have benefited from the improvement since inspection achieved by schools with serious weaknesses, underachieving schools, schools with inadequate sixth forms and secondary schools not subject to a formal designation where pupils' attainment was low.

94. In considering the experiences of schools at the start of the second inspection cycle, Fidler & Davies (1998) argued that:

Although the stigma of being in one of the 'failing' or 'serious weaknesses' categories is undesirable it may be the only way in

which a school has a good chance of redressing the situation. This is likely to be the case where a school has been in a poor state, for whatever reason, for a long time. The school may simply have lost the capacity to improve without a great deal of outside assistance'.⁵⁹

95. A pilot survey of headteachers of schools that have recently come out of special measures assessed the impact of monitoring on schools in special measures.⁶⁰ It showed that, while the majority of schools find the process helpful and HMI supportive, there are some areas, such as oral feedback to schools, where more clarity and consistency are needed. The following extract from a letter written in response to proposals for changing the school inspection arrangements gives a headteacher's view of a school being monitored while in special measures.

Letter from a secondary school headteacher to HMCI, March 2004⁶¹

Our college was placed in special measures two years ago and has received regular inspections by HMI throughout this period. These inspections have supported the establishment of very rigorous systems of monitoring and self-evaluation which now provide a firm basis for our college's continuous improvement. This will stand us in good stead for years to come.

The regular HMI inspections we have received have been rigorous, challenging and highly respected by colleagues who have valued their contribution to college improvement. The period of time spent in 'special measures' has been painful for all concerned. As I joined the college only recently I have the privilege of being able to look retrospectively on a process that has undoubtedly led to a transformation in the quality of education we are providing for our students. If this is the outcome of a regular inspection process, supported by rigorous monitoring and evaluation, then it is a process to commend to others.

...their (the HMI team's) skill in challenging schools to achieve better for the pupils they serve is exceptional, leaving schools better able to develop and improve their practice...

(The letter also points to the contrast between this way of working and that of the section 10 inspection, which does not involve follow-up by the inspection team.)

96. One way of examining the impact of support and monitoring of schools in special measures is to compare changes in performance with the most similar group – schools having serious weaknesses – at their subsequent inspection. The table below suggests that schools in special measures are significantly more likely to improve and sustain that improvement than schools having serious weaknesses.

⁵⁹ Fidler B. and Davies J. 'The inspector calls again: the reinspection of schools', Chapter 13 in P. Earley (Ed.), *School improvement after inspection*, Paul Chapman, London, 1998.

⁶⁰ Inspection Impact Paper: *The impact of school improvement inspections*, Ofsted, 2003.

⁶¹ Letter to HMCI from Mrs A Cockerham, Principal, Thomas Peacocke Community College, Rye, received prior to removal from special measures (at which point HMI judged that over 50% of lessons observed were good or better).

This is likely to reflect the more intensive monitoring and support they receive, from both the LEA and HMI, allowing also that special measures schools have greater room for growth.

Table 9. Change in Key Stage 4 results of all secondary schools inspected in the 2003/04 school year whose previous s10 inspection identified serious weaknesses or the need for special measures

Compared with designation at previous inspection	Special measures (22 schools)		Serious weaknesses (39 schools)	
	Number	%	Number	%
Improved results	19	86%	27	69%
Worse results	3	14%	11	28%
No change	0	0%	1	3%

97. It has sometimes been said that special measures designation has been unfairly applied to schools serving the greatest areas of disadvantage. There is no evidence of this, and only a minority of such schools require special measures although the proportion entering special measures from free school meal bands 3 to 5 (primary schools) or bands 5 to 7 (secondary schools) are higher than the national percentages. There is also an indication that this outlook is altering. The results for the first half of the 2003/04 academic year show the proportion of primary schools entering special measures band 5 (over 50% free school meals) is lower than in previous years.

Benefits and negative effects of inspection

98. Ofsted's ongoing survey of all inspected schools shows that far more of the headteachers responding to the survey feel that the benefits of their most recent inspection outweigh the disadvantages⁶² than believe the opposite. The differential has increased in recent years. Overall, four times as many of the headteachers of schools inspected in 2002/03 who responded (66%) indicated that the benefits of inspection outweighed the detrimental effects than vice versa. This ratio has increased since 1998/99. Sixty per cent (rather than 40% previously)⁶³ felt that the inspection had more beneficial than detrimental effects, 14% (compared with 22%

⁶² Inspection Impact Paper: *School inspections and their effects: the views of headteachers and teachers* (internal paper), Ofsted, 2003. One form is sent to the headteacher and one to a random teacher in each school after its inspection.

⁶³ Figures in brackets refer to 1998/99.

before) of schools felt that the detrimental effects outweighed the benefits and 25% (a reduction on the 37% formerly) felt that they were evenly balanced.⁶⁴

Figure 13. Responses of schools inspected in 2002/03 to whether the benefits of inspection outweigh the detrimental effects (n=2,801 headteachers, 2,436 teachers from 2,436 different schools).

99. Survey data suggest that the benefits of inspection were viewed more positively by headteachers than by teachers (Figure 13). Five years ago more teachers claimed detrimental effects than benefits; this was never the case with headteachers. Secondary schools have a more positive view of the benefits of inspection than primary schools.⁶⁵

100. There is an association between the way in which the benefits of inspection are viewed and the quality of the school. Figure 14 shows the proportion of primary headteachers who responded to the question about the benefits of inspection classified by the judgement of overall school effectiveness. Headteachers in schools of all types in which leadership and management were judged positively were also more likely to acknowledge the benefits of inspection. The greater tendency of less effective schools to focus on the disadvantages of an inspection rather than how it can be used to move forward may be influenced in part by their unwillingness to come to terms with the findings or the adverse publicity that critical inspection findings attract. Schools identified as having serious weaknesses or requiring special measures are especially likely to be in this category.

101. Difficulties in accepting the validity or fairness of adverse judgements have been noted in research on ineffective schools. Studies of schools that move forward indicate that accepting the need for improvement is a necessary first step for positive change.⁶⁶ The evidence of significant improvement noted above, especially for the weakest schools, following identification and intervention, points to the need for an external perspective which may help schools develop their internal capacity to effect change and promote improvement to the benefit of pupils.

Figure 14. Shows comparisons between the result of inspection judgement of school effectiveness and primary headteachers' responses to the question about the benefits of inspection (n =1,226).

102. The most positive effect of inspection was felt to be that it provided an objective, external view and a focus for the school's development. Schools report such benefits as:

⁶⁴ Responses to question 43 have been kept in the same three categories used in the SIS: 'The benefits from inspection outweigh the negative effects', 'The benefits and negative effects are equally balanced' and 'The negative effects outweigh the benefits'.

⁶⁵ Inspection Impact Paper in preparation.

⁶⁶ Gray J., *Causing concern but improving: a review of schools' experiences*, DfEE Research Report No. 188, 2000.

- school evaluation, providing an independent view of the school's strengths and weaknesses
- a boost to the school's morale in endorsing good and innovative practice
- helping managers to decide on priorities for change
- assisting the drive to raise standards.

103. Recent changes to inspection practice were also viewed positively. One headteacher wrote that, *'There has been a noticeable change in the nature of the whole inspection process which has resulted in it being a far more positive and beneficial experience for a school.'* Another observed, *'a marked difference in approach from previous inspections; feedback to the staff was the most significant positive factor. The inspectors gave teachers ideas and suggestions on how to improve the grades given for classes observed'*.

104. Not all comments were positive. A minority of headteachers, particularly in primary schools, queried the cost-effectiveness of the current system, particularly when they claimed that inspection merely confirmed their own school self-evaluation. A typical comment was: *'Although it has felt good to have a very positive report, it feels like a waste of time and public money to confirm what we already knew, including the key issues, which were all in the school development plan already.'*

105. Some of schools' perceptions about inspection are influenced by their own last inspection which will have occurred, in most cases, some years previously and under a different inspection framework. Incremental changes introduced to inspection procedures are not necessarily tracked by schools, and so the next inspection may appear distinctly different from what they had expected. This points both to the need for Ofsted to do whatever is possible to keep schools up to date about changes⁶⁷ and for schools to take greater account of them as their own management and evaluation systems evolve.

106. An increase in the proportion of schools that affirmed the benefits of inspection occurred during 1999 and was sustained thereafter, following the introduction of a new framework, together with short inspections, in January 2000. Short inspections were introduced for the 20 to 25% of most effective schools, identified from their performance indicators and previous inspection report, with the remainder receiving full inspections. However, many headteachers commented that they were unhappy that a short inspection did not give the lead inspector enough time to observe or find evidence to comment effectively on many aspects of the school.

107. From 2000, Ofsted also reduced the notice of inspection to between six and ten weeks, reduced and refined the amount of information collected from schools

⁶⁷ For example, *Inspecting your school*, Ofsted, May 2004. This guidance for schools provides an overview of current inspection practice and changes to the framework for school inspections from September 2003.

and issued new guidance to inspectors on the conduct of inspection in order to reduce the perceived burden of inspection (associated with increased workload and stress).

108. The reported benefits of inspection also peaked in autumn 2001/spring 2002. This could have been influenced by consultations on third cycle inspections, by the appointment of a new chief inspector or other factors that boosted the morale of schools at this point.

109. The survey evidence indicates a link between the use of self-evaluation and headteachers' views of the benefits of inspection. In 1998/99 fewer than half of the headteachers who responded to Ofsted's surveys indicated that school inspections should be based on self-evaluation. In primary schools, 4 out of 10 headteachers believed that inspection should be based on self-evaluation compared to 6 out of 10 secondary headteachers.

110. Headteachers' views of the use of self-evaluation had changed somewhat by 2003. In 2002/03, 8 out of 10 headteachers said that inspection complemented the school's self-evaluation. However, differences in perception between primary and secondary headteachers remained. In 2002/03, 8 out of 10 primary and 9 out of 10 secondary headteachers indicated that the inspection complemented the school's self-evaluation.

111. Surveys of schools therefore generally show high levels of confidence in the conduct and probity of inspections, with recognition by the great majority of headteachers that inspection teams evaluate schools fairly and accurately.⁶⁸ There are indications, however, that the perceived benefits to schools may be starting to wane. This may be due to schools' greater proficiency in self-evaluation, which the inspection system has itself promoted (see Chapter 4). This suggests that more should be done now to ensure that inspection findings are implemented, perhaps by following them up more closely.

112. Some headteachers, particularly in primary schools, continue to report levels of stress and apprehension among their staff that appear somewhat higher than those found in post-inspection surveys of the teachers themselves.⁶⁹ Whatever the scale, there is little doubt that preinspection apprehension could be eliminated only by giving no notice of inspection. Ofsted has not undertaken detailed research into staff changes at schools and other institutions before or after inspections. Some painful accounts have been reported in the media. There is much evidence of changes of leadership after inspections, usually associated with beneficial effects if the school was a cause for concern. Inspection that acts as a means for promoting support and development or, if necessary, for replacing weak headteachers or teachers can be seen as helpful, both by their colleagues and parents. However, it should be noted that some schools and LEAs report frustration with the very occasional inspections that fail to report on matters – particularly weaknesses – that

⁶⁸ See annex C.

⁶⁹ See annex D.

are recognised locally, thus denying the school and the community the benefit of authoritative support and intervention.

113. The quality of school inspections over the last 10 years has been enhanced through professional development, vigilance, briefings, monitoring, training and other quality assurance measures (see Chapter 5). The model of school inspection has been used as a basis to develop the expertise of inspectors in other sectors. The results suggest it will continue to be important to accord priority to investment in quality and in further development of inspection policy and practice across the system.

What can be learned from schools inspected for the third time?

114. In the autumn term 2003, Ofsted conducted research⁷⁰ into schools that had experienced a third inspection as part of the usual inspection cycle. The schools visited as part of the research generally felt that the inspection arrangements introduced from September 2003 were more rigorous and helpful. They welcomed the enhanced role of school self-evaluation and responded well to the structure of form S4 (the school self-evaluation form) as a way of representing their analysis of their own work. Their views are confirmed by survey returns. Some schools that had not kept abreast of inspection developments approached inspection with attitudes based on their previous inspection, which was five years and two inspection frameworks previously. These schools were not only surprised by the changes to inspection over that period, but some had also committed resources questionably to preinspection consultancy (not always well informed about changes to inspection methodology) and undue preparation.

115. The research confirms other findings that more secondary than primary schools believe they gain from their inspections; they particularly welcome the specialist expertise brought to bear on subject departments. A small minority of secondary schools felt that the impact of their inspection was eroded because the evaluation of the quality of subject teaching was not consistently expert across departments. Variation between subjects is not always recognised sufficiently in inspection reports. Weaknesses reported in the inspection of some primary schools are said to be due to some team members who may not be fully abreast of curriculum developments in this phase. Headteachers generally welcomed the more searching examination of leadership and management, and the focus on governance is providing a greater incentive for governing bodies to become more actively involved in challenging as well as supporting the leadership of the school.

116. The communication of key issues to schools has improved as a result of successive revisions of the framework. Where the reports and feedback are clear and explicit, they are successful in informing the improvement plan and this, in turn, results in effective action by the school. In a minority of cases, where key issues or main inspection findings are unclear owing to imprecise wording, or are not

⁷⁰ Initial findings from research into schools inspected for the third time – to be published.

explained sufficiently well, they do not provide a sufficiently explicit agenda for improvement.

117. Where schools do tackle key issues between inspections, there is evidence that weaknesses in one inspection can be replaced by others if schools focus exclusively on the key issues in the report to the neglect of wider school improvement. Where schools have tackled key issues as part of an overall improvement strategy, the inspection has been more useful to them.

118. The efficacy of a school's response to its inspection appears to depend critically on its leadership. When this is effective, there are clear strategies for managing the inspection and follow-up. These include a preinspection focus on teaching, learning and evaluation, not – as used to happen in the first cycle – on policies, schemes and procedures. Schools, increasingly, are rich in data which are used successfully by effective leaders: directly, in informing teaching, learning and improvement strategies, and indirectly in monitoring improvements in quality.

119. Many schools report that inspection and inspection materials have strong potential for use in professional development of the school leadership and staff, particularly in promoting: self-evaluation; ways of thinking about teaching, learning and assessment; the use and interpretation of data; the development of analytical skills and a stimulus for 'informed improvement' with the aim of raising standards.

120. Inspections can still leave a feeling of anticlimax in some schools, the post-inspection 'blues' in others. Strategies adopted successfully in some schools to manage corporate psychology include: building in a breathing space between the inspection and work on its findings; taking a measured approach to the whole inspection report, involving middle management, rather than a narrow focus on key issues; and working strategically by putting the inspection report into the context of the school's wider planning, development and evaluation. This allows for attention to the big picture as well as systematic and selective work on details.

Commentary

121. Schools most likely to act successfully on inspection findings are those that are ready to learn, self-critical and led capably. Such schools are often highly effective already. Weak schools at the other extreme have little choice but to act on the inspection findings; most welcome all the help they can get. Some of this is undoubtedly provided through the HMI monitoring programme for schools causing concern. Most of these schools go on to make substantial and rapid improvements.

122. There is evidence, particularly from Ofsted's study of schools inspected for the third time,⁷¹ that many schools, perhaps as many as one third, lying between these extremes, lack effective and well-understood strategies for school improvement. Their responses to inspection range from dismissive to selective. In these schools, particularly, knowledge that some form of systematic follow-up will

⁷¹ Research on the improvement of schools inspected for the third time, to be published.

ensue is likely to provide the incentive for action. There is also much to gain from giving a wider range of inspected schools access to the action-planning seminars run by HMI for schools causing concern.

123. There is considerable inspection evidence of improved quality across different inspection cycles for schools, especially among the weakest institutions, and trends in educational standards measured by national tests and examinations support this view. The evidence also suggests that the response of institutions to inspection, particularly in terms of improvement, is related to: the quality of the inspection; the quality of the leadership of the institution inspected; and the implications of the inspection for the funding, esteem or staff of the institution.

3. Improvement in other sectors

This section examines a range of evidence of association between inspection and improvement in some of the other sectors that Ofsted inspects: independent schools, colleges, initial teacher education and local education authorities. It also draws out the links between inspection in these sectors and the provision of advice on policy both to the government and to the sectors themselves. Advice on policy is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Independent sector

124. HMI inspect independent schools other than those belonging to the Independent Schools Council, which have different inspection arrangements. The independent sector includes a very wide range of different types of schools: independent special schools, stage schools, tutorial colleges, international schools, boarding, Steiner schools and those set up to serve various faith communities. The sector contains many schools that are very good, but it also includes schools that are among the worst in the country. This is so because, for almost 60 years, legislation relating to the registration of independent schools, which derived largely from the provisions of the Education Act 1944, did not do enough to force such schools either to improve or close. The loosely worded requirement in the Act to provide 'suitable premises, suitable and adequate accommodation, fit and proper staff, and efficient and suitable instruction' was difficult to enforce satisfactorily, as there were no legally binding definitions of these terms. Anyone could open a school legally by applying for provisional registration without the need for it to conform to acceptable standards. Indeed, if a school were forced to close at the end of lengthy legal procedures, there was nothing to prevent the proprietor re-opening under another name, without making any substantial changes. Once finally registered, the school could be bought or sold, change its population, age range, premises or staff, without any requirement to register afresh. One of the arguments for light regulation in the independent sector was that market forces should result in poor schools going out of business and good schools prospering. But to work effectively a market needs reliable and easily available information, and this was not previously to hand.

125. The Utting Report,⁷² strongly supported by Ofsted, urged the change in legislation brought about by the Education Act 2002. This requires all independent schools to conform to stringent standards; new schools have to meet these before they are allowed to open. Proprietors wishing to make a material change to the nature of a school must seek prior permission. All schools must be inspected regularly and the reports are published. Schools must make these reports available to parents. The procedures to ensure compliance with these regulations are straightforward and speedy, and lead to deregistration if schools do not comply within a reasonable period of time. Ofsted is required to charge an inspection fee, which is set out in regulations.

126. The Education Act 2002 came into force on 1 September 2003. Since this time Ofsted has conducted inspections and published reports on around 60 independent schools. Many of the schools have earned justifiably good reports but, even so, few of them have met in full all the requirements of the new regulations, and some reports have been highly critical of the school's provision. The DfES has asked 95% of the schools so far inspected to produce action plans to deal with areas of non-compliance. Ofsted is required to follow up the progress of these plans. In consequence, many of the schools inspected in the autumn 2003 and spring 2004 have already improved substantially.

127. It is too early yet to assess fully the impact of inspection in the independent sector. However, Ofsted sends a questionnaire to all independent schools after inspection. On a return rate of around 65%, the results of this survey show that 95% of schools professed themselves satisfied with the way their inspection was carried out. An overwhelming proportion of headteachers praised inspectors' courtesy, professional knowledge and the good relationships they established with the school: *'Positive, friendly relationships were established very quickly - staff were encouraged to give of their best by the helpful, knowledgeable, understanding nature of the two inspectors'*; *'Both inspectors were able to put many of the staff team at ease and showed a clear understanding of the difficulties some of our pupils encounter in building relationships with adults.'*

128. In an extremely diverse area of the education market, headteachers also felt that Ofsted's inspectors understood the context of their schools well. One respondent commented, *'I felt comfortable that the inspectors took the time to understand the aims of the school'*; another said, *'We were happy with inspectors who had a very good understanding of our population. The inspection felt supportive of the service we deliver.'* This is an important factor in gaining the respect of the school community and helping them to accept the findings of an inspection. Headteachers welcomed the quality of feedback they received at the end of the inspection and felt that this was both clear and helpful in providing them with an agenda for improvement. Over 90% of headteachers surveyed acknowledged that inspectors gathered a sufficiently wide range of evidence to make secure, accurate and reliable judgements about their schools, and appreciated the quality of the

⁷² Utting W., *People like us; the report of the review of the safeguards for children living away from home*, HMSO, 1997.

published report. However, only around 80% of schools felt that they were able to contribute to the shape of the inspection and, while 95% of them felt that Ofsted's demands for information were reasonable, a fifth of schools, mostly the smallest ones, stated that teachers felt over-burdened by the presence of inspectors. A third of all teachers did not feel they received sufficient feedback. Ofsted has taken these criticisms seriously and is in the process of issuing improved guidance to inspectors.

129. Far fewer new schools have applied for registration in the period since the introduction of the new legislation. Ofsted has handled all these applications within the agreed deadlines, but only those meeting all the new requirements have been permitted to open. Ofsted has also handled a number of applications from proprietors wishing to make a material change to their school. Again, these have been approved only where the intended provision fully meets the regulations. In this way, Ofsted's work has a direct impact on the quality of provision in the independent sector.

Post-compulsory education

Ofsted's post-compulsory education and training inspections span provision for students aged 16 to 19 years, particularly further education, tertiary and specialist colleges and sixth form colleges. They also reach down the age range through the evaluation of the quality of Connexions partnerships and up in the sense that much further education provision, inspected in conjunction with the ALI, involves adult learners. The Post-Compulsory Education Division (PCED) of Ofsted also engages in the inspection of education in prisons and secure units. There is evidence that the inspection regime has had an impact on the improvement of colleges that cause concern, both as evidenced through HMI follow-up monitoring and through the lever of funding, managed by the local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs).

Quality and standards of colleges

130. *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 2002/03* records that most provision in further education (FE) colleges is at least satisfactory in most colleges but is unsatisfactory in about one in ten. Half of all colleges have some unsatisfactory provision, but this often affects a minority of learners and the incidence in 2002/03 was lower than in the previous year.

131. Provision in colleges that has been judged to be less than satisfactory is reinspected by Ofsted and ALI (who inspect work-based learning) two years, or sooner, from the time of the original inspection. The arrangements for monitoring colleges' progress in overcoming weaknesses were established in September 2001 and involved inspectors visiting colleges to report on progress.

132. The focus of the visits has been, primarily, to judge to what extent colleges are rectifying the weaknesses identified in the inspection report. Over the 24 months from the time of the original inspection, each of the areas judged to be less than satisfactory must be examined and reported on. If, during reinspection monitoring

visits, inspectors identify areas of the college that are unsatisfactory, but which were not included in the report or the post-inspection action plan, the weaknesses are recorded and reported to the college and to Ofsted. Similarly, if any particular strengths are identified which were not identified in the full inspection, these too are recorded and reported. All comments and reports are required to be substantiated by evidence.

133. In January 2004, 26 colleges had reached, or almost reached, the end of the stipulated 24 months during which to effect improvements. The total number of grades 4 (unsatisfactory) or 5 (very weak) distributed across the 26 colleges was 57. The number of grades that were raised as a result of reinspection monitoring visits was 52, or 91%. None of the curriculum areas retained a less than satisfactory grade when reinspected and 5 out of 19 work-based learning areas (WBL) – 26% – graded less than satisfactory, retained a grade 4.

134. A total of 88% of the colleges that had some provision graded less than satisfactory in 2001/02 improved sufficiently over the period of reinspection monitoring visits to have all such provision re-graded as at least satisfactory.

Effect of monitoring on improvement⁷³

135. Many colleges were found to have had several areas of unsatisfactory provision. Such provision was usually characterised by a combination of poor teaching, low retention and pass rates, and weak curriculum management. Often, colleges had awarded themselves higher grades for teaching and learning as a result of their own observation of lessons, and higher overall curriculum grades, than those awarded by inspectors. The degree to which colleges acknowledged the findings of the original inspection, the swiftness of action following the inspection, the readiness to heed findings from the monitoring visits, and the involvement of senior managers in responding to the findings of the visits and overseeing developments, played key roles in the extent to which colleges were able to improve.

136. In virtually all cases, colleges reported that the monitoring visits helped them to remedy weaknesses. An external view from inspectors was felt to have assisted them to focus clearly on the actions needed to address shortcomings, and set useful goals to be achieved by subsequent visits. Examples of identified improvements in curriculum and WBL areas in teaching, monitoring individual students' progress, and student retention and achievements during reinspection appear below.

Impact of reinspection monitoring visits on curriculum and WBL areas

At the time of the full inspection of a general further education college, inspectors judged that provision was unsatisfactory in health and social care, general engineering, and construction. They judged work-based learning provision to be unsatisfactory in childcare, engineering, motor vehicle engineering, construction

⁷³ Inspection Impact Paper: *College and other post-compulsory education inspections and their effects: the views of providers*, Ofsted, 2003.

and care. The college heeded the findings of the inspection and took early action to address the identified weaknesses.

The reinspection of unsatisfactory provision took place in the autumn term of 2003, just over 18 months from the time of the full inspection. The college had heeded inspectors' comments during reinspection monitoring visits and had ensured it acted on them effectively.

By the autumn of 2003, all the teaching that was observed was judged to be at least satisfactory. Most of the lessons were well prepared. In the better lessons, clear objectives were shared with students, teachers had developed effective materials for classes that contained students of varying abilities, and through probing questions to specific students they checked regularly that students had understood what was intended. Many students were confident and fluent when discussing topics. Students on WBL programmes underwent early assessment of their learning needs and subsequently received the level of additional support they needed. There were sufficient, qualified assessors, and arrangements for internal verification of work set and marked for students had been greatly improved. Curriculum and WBL management had been strengthened, including the thoroughness and objectivity of observation of lessons by college staff. There were robust arrangements for reviewing and recording individual students' progress, and targets set for students were both meaningful and appropriately challenging. This was also a cross-college weakness. Inspectors examined procedures and practice involved in monitoring students' progress across the college. Students spoke highly of the care and attention received from teachers and tutors.

Achievement improved substantially in all weak courses from the full inspection in 2001 to the reinspection in 2003.

- Teachers devised assignments which required students' key skills to be practised and assessed. Students received additional specific support to help them overcome any difficulties.
- The college introduced an induction programme for employers.
- College staff now visited vocational trainers to check employers' level of understanding and an employment liaison co-ordinator maintained contact with employers.
- Curriculum managers had set clear targets for improving retention and pass rates, and had ensured that almost all of them had been met or surpassed. Weaknesses in the use of appraisal to identify staff development needs had largely been overcome.
- All the senior management team had been fully involved in managing and monitoring carefully the college's work to secure improvement in all eight areas and in the areas that had appeared in the overall list of what should be improved.

Providers' views of the impact of inspection

137. Responses to an Ofsted survey⁷⁴ of the principals of general FE/tertiary colleges were slightly more positive in 2002/03 than in 2001/02. Approximately 71% considered the gains from the inspection outweighed the negative effects, compared with 64% in the previous year. Fewer than 10% judged the negative effects outweighed the gains, compared with more than 12% previously. The most negative responses came from sixth form colleges, where the ratio was 3:1 in favour of gains outweighing negative effects: this showed some decline from the previous year.

138. Responses from independent specialist colleges were positive; approximately 78% considered the gains outweighed the negative effects (an increase in the satisfaction rate of 8 percentage points) and, as in 2001/02, none considered the negative effects outweighed the gains.

139. Positive responses from dance and drama institutions also increased: 86% judged the gains outweighed negative effects (66% in 2001/02) and none considered the negative effects outweighed the gains.

140. Of institutions involved in area-wide inspections of provision for 14 to 19 year olds, responses were received from local LSCs, LEAs, colleges and schools. The most positive were from the local LSCs and the LEAs. All three of each surveyed judged that the gains from the inspection outweighed the negative effects and none reported negative effects outweighing gains. Nine youth services were inspected and 12 Connexions partnerships. In these cases, all respondents reported that the gains outweighed negative effects. The overall results are shown in Figure 16.

Figure 15. Post-16 learning providers indicating agreement/disagreement that inspections resulted in changes to improve quality of provision (n=833 for 2001/02; n=1,013 for 2002/03).

141. In conclusion, nearly four out of five (79%) of respondents considered that the gains from inspection outweighed the negative effects, and only 5% considered the negative effects outweighed the gains. These figures include relatively higher levels of dissatisfaction, regarding gains and negative effects, from sixth form colleges.

Views of local Learning and Skills Councils⁷⁵

142. The local LSCs act for the Learning and Skills Council to fund the post-compulsory education and training sector. Their responsibilities include 'continuing to drive up the quality of teaching and learning, building in the Skills for Life and

⁷⁴ Inspection Impact Paper: *College and other post-compulsory education inspections and their effects: the views of providers*, Ofsted 2003.

⁷⁵ From this point, the findings of the independent report produced for the DfES are paraphrased extensively: Wilson P, Rodger J, Hopwood V and Antill M, *Evaluation of post-16 learning arrangements, final report*; York Consulting, 2004.

Success for All initiatives.⁷⁶ Inspection of providers provides important information about their performance in this sector. In a recent survey,⁷⁷ executive directors of LSCs were unanimous in their agreement that ‘providers understand the inspection process and are engaged in it’. The two major reasons identified by executive directors to support this view were the extent of preparation for inspection and the active way in which providers respond to inspection reports and findings.

143. Evidence from the area studies indicates that learning providers are positive about the overall process, as indicated by the following issues:

- **learning experience** – *learning about issues within your own organisation was stated as a key benefit together with a renewed focus on quality*
- **confidence building** – *the inspection gave the organisation a confidence boost as it confirmed that the college was where it thought it should be.*

However, there appeared to be some frustration that no credit was given for **collaborative work** and that, overall, the inspection was not outward looking enough.

144. Examples of key benefits identified by providers across the curriculum areas covered by inspections included:

- *‘The key area to address was where the quality of accommodation was holding up the quality of teaching and learning’*
- *‘The report identified three or four areas in the college where ICT was strong yet there was no sharing of good practice’*
- *‘We are now more focused on engaging the employer and reducing bureaucracy’*
- *‘The college fell down on lesson observation grades. We have “upped the ante” on this and incorporated more rigorous training and moderation’*
- *‘We were seen as being satisfactory but “a bit dull” in terms of teaching. We are now clear what we need to do to address this’.*

145. Negative points related to the amount of data required for the inspection, diversion from work of inspection nominees, concerns regarding data definitions and measures for the LSC, and the possibility of being assessed by a third body in the

⁷⁶ LSC Grant Letter 2004-05, Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke MP.

⁷⁷ York Consulting survey for the DfES.

case of higher education provision. Positive comments concerned feedback and the increased proficiency of inspectors in providing this.

Impact

146. The 'York Consulting' survey⁷⁸ found that there is a strong level of agreement among both stakeholders and many providers that organisational inspection is a positive and helpful process. Just under three quarters (72%) of providers agreed that 'inspections provide a catalyst for change and improvement'. The main reasons given by providers for agreeing or disagreeing with the above statement are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Reasons why providers agree or disagree that inspection provides a catalyst for change.

Reasons why providers agree/disagree that inspections provide a catalyst for change and improvement (Agreed n = 731; disagreed n = 165)		
Providers agreeing	Respondents	Percentage
'It focuses attention on areas that need improvement'	348	49%
'It is useful to have an outside perspective'	199	27%
'It provides an objective review'	187	28%
'It ensures quality and standards'	116	16%
'It forces providers to concentrate on basic standards'	66	9%
'Inspections act as free consultancy'	48	7%
Providers disagreeing		
'Inspectors do not have a realistic view of what goes on'	40	24%
'It doesn't provide any new information'	40	24%
'It has a negative impact on staff morale'	26	16%
'It increases stress in the workplace'	25	15%

⁷⁸ Wilson P., Rodger J., Hopwood V. and Antill M., *Evaluation of post-16 learning arrangements, final report*; York Consulting, 2004.

147. Some of the explanations associated with negative views may represent frustrations among providers receiving poorer inspection grades. (This is true of some school inspections also.) The concerns felt by providers regarding impact on staff morale or stress have changed little over the year. It is likely that no-notice inspections, as proposed for schools, might help reduce stress and workload.

148. The majority of LSC executive directors (97%) agreed that 'inspection reports to the LSC are helpful in facilitating improvement in learner performance, quality and standards'. However, some other qualitative feedback from executive directors indicates some potential areas for improvement, relating to reliability, consistency and the clarity of reports. Key issues raised by national stakeholders, and also during the area studies, suggest some interest in developing and improving the inspection regime. There is a perception that the system could be made more efficient and less of a burden. Ofsted has responded through plans to provide lighter touch inspections for most providers in the next cycle of college inspections through differentiation.

149. Providers were asked to agree or disagree with the statement that 'inspection had resulted in changes to improve the quality of provision'. The majority (79%) agreed, with 10% disagreeing. This represents an increase on figures from the previous year when 70% agreed and 14% disagreed. This is supported by the changes taking place to the portfolio of provision in individual local LSCs. In particular, work-based learning contracts have been withdrawn in many areas.

Area inspections

150. The York Consulting survey found that all stakeholders that had undergone the new inspections of area-wide provision for the 14 to 19 age range were strongly supportive of the process. Views of the new area inspection framework were wholly positive. Inspection was perceived to provide a stimulus for change and improvement. Seventy-five per cent of learning providers agreed that the inspections 'can contribute to improved planning in an area'. Any uncertainties lie not about the inspections but about their relationship to strategic area reviews, which are planned, conducted and reported separately, and the strategic planning for learners across area boundaries.

Teacher training and development

Ofsted inspects all aspects of the initial training of teachers (the focus of this section) and further education of teachers (see Chapter 7) as well as the in-service training and professional development of teachers.⁷⁹ Ofsted also advises on teacher supply and school management issues such as performance management. This section focuses on initial teacher training (ITT) inspections.

⁷⁹ Inspection Impact Paper, *Making a difference: the impact of award-bearing in-service training on school improvement*, Ofsted, 2004.

Aims of inspection of initial teacher training

151. The establishment of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and the government remit (Education Act 1994) to have regard to inspection evidence and to the quality assessments provided by HMCI had important implications for Ofsted's work. It was required to inspect initial teacher training (ITT), not only to ensure that the requirements of government circulars were being met by each provider, but to provide quality assessments to the TTA which would allow it to compare the quality of training and standards achieved by trainees for all training courses. An assertive programme in the 1990s raised the stakes for the providers of ITT.

152. The growth of more diverse routes to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) such as School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) courses, flexible training routes, and the Graduate Training Programme (GTP), placed further demands on inspection to monitor the quality of new training schemes and the progress of their trainees.

153. The effect of these initiatives was to stimulate a substantial programme of inspections and surveys. Inspections of primary ITT focused on the key areas of mathematics and English, with an additional survey on training to teach science. The secondary programme was a rolling programme which focused on secondary subject training. Ofsted also carried out a separate survey into the Graduate Teacher Programme.

Primary ITT inspections

154. Between February 1995 and July 1996, all providers of primary ITT were inspected to assess the quality of provision in English, mathematics and the quality assurance of training courses. This was the first major round of inspections whose outcomes were used by the TTA to link the funding of provision to its quality. The inspections found that, while ITT was generally at least satisfactory, there were considerable variations in quality. One of the main findings supported the evidence from *The New Teacher in School* survey⁸⁰ that trainees often felt insecure about how to teach reading and mental calculation to pupils.

155. These findings emerged at a time when there was already some disquiet about the achievement of pupils in primary schools in reading and number, as well as an active debate about methods of teaching reading (in particular about phonics) and number. HMCI therefore decided to institute a survey, to be called the Primary Follow-Up Survey (PFUS), with the specific purpose of focusing closely on training to teach reading and number. Between 1996 and 1998, Ofsted inspected the quality of ITT in reading and number and trainees' performance in teaching these subjects, in all 72 providers. The survey found that, although there had been some marked improvement in the training for teaching reading and number, there were still a number of key issues that required attention to raise the standard of training and trainees' performance in these areas. Each provider received a report describing the

⁸⁰ *The new teacher in school*, Ofsted, 1993.

quality of training and trainees' performance. The report identified areas for improvement and required responses in the form of an action plan. At the end of the survey, a detailed report was produced in 1999, with dissemination conferences so that HMI could discuss the findings with providers

156. In order to monitor the progress in primary ITT and to inform the TTA about changes to the quality of provision for individual providers, the PFUS was followed by a further programme of inspections of all providers. These focused on training to teach English and mathematics and were complemented by a survey of 20 providers training to teach science. All providers were visited once in the first two years to inspect mathematics or English and once in the second two years to inspect the second of these subjects.

157. Views on the 'high stakes' nature of teacher training inspection were captured in the 1999 Select Committee report⁸¹ on the work of Ofsted. The Committee was not persuaded that the 'high stakes' nature of ITT inspection necessitated changes to the inspection process, but supported the work Ofsted had begun to reduce the burden of teacher training inspection. The Committee also supported the continued accreditation of providers rather than individual courses.

158. The inspection results show that major improvements in training and trainees' standards had been made between the first two years of the programme and the second two years. SCITT courses shared the general trend towards improvement but, overall, they performed less well than partnerships based on institutions of higher education (HEIs). In particular, trainees' ability to teach English and mathematics was found to have improved markedly: in English, from 72% of courses being good or very good to 93%, and in mathematics, from 82% of courses being good or very good to 94%. At the end of the programme, a report⁸² was published and a dissemination conference was held to discuss the main findings and examples of good practice with providers.

159. The outcomes of the inspections showed that the great majority of providers were now providing good or very good quality training. As a result, Ofsted agreed with the TTA that the programme of inspections should be differentiated so that good or very good providers received a short inspection to check that the previous good quality was being maintained, whereas providers whose quality was satisfactory received a full inspection. In both types of inspection, providers are expected to show how they have responded to the points for action or consideration arising from the previous inspection.

Secondary ITT subject inspections

160. The TTA required evidence about the quality of each secondary subject course of training to inform its funding and accreditation procedures. The secondary

⁸¹ *The work of Ofsted*, Fourth Report of the Education and Employment Committee, The Stationery Office, London, 1999.

⁸² *Quality and standards in primary initial teacher training*, Ofsted, 2003.

subject inspections programme began in November 1996 and, by July 1998, 513 subject inspections had been completed, with a further 49 completed in 1999. Each inspection resulted in a separate report, with points for action and consideration, and a set of six quality grades covering selection, training and trainees' performance in relation to the standards for the award of QTS. The outcomes of the inspections were published in an overview report⁸³ and discussed with subject groups in a series of dissemination conferences.

161. The results showed that most of the provision was good and that the majority of trainees awarded QTS met the standards for QTS at a good level. However, there was wide variation between subjects across all provision and differences between the quality of training and outcomes between the individual subjects offered by most providers. The aspiration of the various frameworks for the inspection of ITT, agreed between Ofsted and the TTA (1996, 1997, 1998), was that all ITT ought to be of good quality. A significant proportion of the training and trainees' performance against the QTS standards failed to match this aspiration, especially in the quality of the providers' own assessments of trainees, and trainees' assessment of pupils. The overview report indicated strengths and common weaknesses in training which enabled each provider to match the individual subject reports and grades received to the overall quality of training and trainees' performance in each subject. The profile of grades for each subject was used by the TTA to allocate trainee numbers to providers according to the quality of training and trainees' performance against the standards.

162. The inspections were followed up in the period 1999-2002 with a further programme for secondary subjects, so that the quality of provision could be reassessed. The inspections were carried out in a similar way to the earlier inspections, except that the quality of the selection of prospective trainees was not inspected. Inspectors also focused on whether the action plans following the previous inspection had been implemented successfully. The inspections resulted in a report for each subject inspected in each provider, containing further points for consideration and action, an overview report⁸⁴ and a series of subject dissemination conferences to discuss the findings and highlight very good practice. The two programmes of inspections enabled some direct comparisons to be made between the quality of provision between 1996 and 1999 and that between 1999 and 2002 for all subjects inspected.

163. Significant improvements were evident in all five of the areas assessed. The greatest improvement was in the assessment of trainees against the QTS standards, which was good or very good in 87% of courses compared to 71% of courses in the earlier inspection. The proportion of courses providing very good training had risen from 22% to 34%. There were significant improvements in trainees' performance against the standards for QTS, in their subject knowledge and understanding and in their teaching and class management, where trainees were judged to be good or very good in 90% of all courses inspected. Although there were still variations in the

⁸³ *Secondary initial teacher training 1996-98*, Ofsted, 1999.

⁸⁴ *Quality and standards in initial teacher training*, Ofsted, 2003.

quality of training and outcomes between subjects, they were less marked than in the previous inspection programme.

164. The results indicated that for around 75% of all subjects the training and trainees' standards were at least good. Based on this improvement in quality, Ofsted agreed with the TTA that secondary inspections should be differentiated so that between 2002 and 2005 those subjects that were judged to be generally good should receive only a short inspection to check that the quality was being maintained.

Graduate Teacher Programme

165. The Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) is an employment-based route into teaching which was introduced in October 1997. Ofsted carried out a survey of this training route between October 2000 and April 2001, by which time 1,480 GTP trainees had been awarded QTS. The survey resulted in a published report⁸⁵ which identified several strengths, recognising that the GTP can be an effective alternative route for training teachers. However, it also highlighted a number of significant weaknesses. It recommended that:

- individual trainees' development needs should be systematically assessed
- training plans should be carefully matched to the full range of individual trainees' needs
- school-based trainers should have the necessary time and training to carry out their role effectively
- rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures should be put in place to make certain that all aspects of the programme are carried out to a high standard.

Impact of ITT inspections and surveys

166. In the foreword to *Qualifying to teach* (TTA/DfES) the chief executive of the TTA and the Secretary of State for Education and Skills praise the improvement of quality in teaching standards. They go on to state:

Against this background, it has been heartening to observe equal and sometimes greater improvements in the standards achieved by newly qualified teachers entering the profession.

167. In working closely with the TTA to monitor the quality of training and provide quality grades as the basis for allocation and accreditation procedures, Ofsted has played a key role in improving the quality of ITT and the standards achieved by

⁸⁵ *The Graduate Teacher Programme*, Ofsted, 2002.

trainees. The inspection reports, which include specific points for consideration and action for each of the aspects of provision being inspected, also enabled each provider to focus on areas for improvement and produce an appropriate action plan. On revisiting the provider, inspectors were able to assess how successful the action plan had been in bringing about improvements. In many cases, improved grades related closely to the specific action taken in response to the previous inspection report. This process provided a powerful lever for raising the quality of training and the quality of trainees' teaching.

168. The inspections themselves enabled inspectors to discuss training with a range of partnership schools and consider how well the training was contributing to the improvement in trainees' teaching. In addition, the availability of individual reports, the discussions with inspectors during inspections, overview reports at the end of each programme of inspections and focused dissemination conferences meant that providers were able to find examples of good practice that they could emulate. Providers were eager to improve and dissemination conferences were well attended and evaluated positively.

169. As a result of the survey carried out into the GTP, a working party was established to consider how the recommendations should be acted upon. The HMI who led the survey was a key member of the working group. The deliberations of the working group led to the TTA's decision to accredit recommending bodies if they could show that they were able to provide appropriate training and quality assurance. Ofsted is currently undertaking an inspection of all substantial designated recommending bodies (DRBs). The reports will inform the TTA's decision about whether the DRBs should become accredited providers.

170. As a result of the improvement in quality in ITT, Ofsted is currently undertaking a programme of inspections, differentiated by the quality of provision being inspected. These inspections focus more on the provider's own quality assurance procedures as a way of maintaining or improving the quality of provision. Evidence to date shows that providers act quickly on the recommendations provided in the management and quality assurance reports and, in almost all cases, have at least maintained the previously identified good quality. Those providers receiving full inspections because some element of training or trainees' standards was judged to be unsatisfactory are also making impressive progress, so that the great majority of training in secondary and primary courses is now consistently good.

171. This substantial long-term programme of inspections of primary and secondary teacher education illustrates how inspection can have a significant impact both on the quality of training and on the standards of the new teachers who will enter the profession. It also demonstrates how inspection can be gradually differentiated to match the quality of provision being inspected, once a baseline of quality is known. Chapter 7 illustrates the effects of the inspection of the training of further education teachers, with particular reference to its impact on government policy.

Local education authorities

Ofsted's inspections of LEAs evaluate the effectiveness with which LEAs, in partnership with other agencies, discharge their prime functions of promoting high standards in schools and supporting social inclusion. Inspection evaluates the means by which LEAs secure continuous improvement in their own performance, and their success in doing so, as well as drawing attention to best practice.

Aims of the inspection programme

172. LEA inspections began in 1996 with a group of pilot LEAs. By the end of 2001, all LEAs had been inspected at least once, fulfilling the first aim of the inspection programme. In February 2001, Ofsted summarised its early findings on the work of the first 91 LEAs to be inspected.⁸⁶ As the first cycle of inspections came to an end, Ofsted developed the methodology, guidance and selection arrangements for the next phase, in conjunction with the DfES Standards and Effectiveness Unit and the Audit Commission. Representatives from the latter on LEA inspection teams contribute particularly to the inspection of corporate leadership and the strategic management of resources.

Inspection and improvement of LEAs

173. The first cycle of inspections of LEAs ended in December 2001. Although the performance of half of all LEAs was judged to be satisfactory or better, it was unsatisfactory in the other half. The second cycle began in January 2002, using differentiated inspection and LEAs' self-evaluation. By July 2003, just over a third of LEAs had been inspected in the second cycle, 36 during 2002/03. The performance of most (86%) of these LEAs inspected in 2002/03 was at least satisfactory and highly satisfactory in over a half (54%).

174. Of the 56 LEAs reinspected jointly by Ofsted and the Audit Commission, about half had been judged as unsatisfactory or worse in their first inspection. Half of this group were found, in the second cycle of inspections, to be performing satisfactorily and the work of a further third was highly satisfactory.⁸⁷ Four LEAs were judged to have made substantial improvements between their first and second inspections. The extent of improvement in LEAs between the first and the second cycle is shown in Figure 17.

⁸⁶ *Local education authority support for school improvement*, Ofsted, 2001.

⁸⁷ In LEA inspections, inspectors make judgements on a seven-point scale which includes 'highly satisfactory' (Grade 3). It denotes provision that is better than 'satisfactory' (Grade 4).

Figure 16. Comparison of overall effectiveness of LEAs in first and second cycle inspection.⁸⁸

175. Weaknesses identified in the first inspection cycle were tackled effectively in most LEAs and a third of them made significant changes to their senior management teams. There is evidence that the report and its recommendations has an impact in stimulating external intervention and/or support, initiated by the DfES, to bring about change within a short period of time. For example, in the case of one LEA, an inspection in the first cycle led to external intervention for the LEA which was the first step in stimulating major changes, including a complete change in the LEA's senior management. A later report in 2001 found improvements in planning, funding, asset management, and a more cohesive relationship with schools. Elements of the strategy for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) were found to be more securely in place and provision for children in public care was much improved. Importantly, however, the report also warned that improvement was not yet secure. Another LEA was inspected initially in 1999 and was found to provide very poor support for schools. The LEA made major managerial and structural changes as a result, including an overhaul of school effectiveness work and an improved strategy for pupils with SEN. Provision improved up to at least a satisfactory standard.

Factors identified by Ofsted associated with LEA improvement

As with schools, strong and effective leadership and management are crucial in effective LEAs. Building good relationships with schools and partners within and outside the LEA also contributes significantly to progress. Collaboration and co-ordination are key factors in securing improvement in LEAs' support for social inclusion. With improving strategic management of education, particularly in aspects of corporate planning, the best LEAs increasingly play a significant role in community leadership through contributing to a range of local partnerships.

The best relationships between LEAs and schools are built on goodwill, mutual respect and a balance between challenge and support. In a few LEAs, schools are reluctant to recognise the role of the LEA both in challenging them and supporting their performance and improvement. The majority of LEAs, however, are making considerable efforts to strengthen partnerships and to support schools' autonomy.

176. The changes described were brought about by a number of parties, most notably new senior management teams. Consequently, measuring Ofsted's contribution to improvement is problematic. However, without the inspection of such bodies, it is likely that the very weak performance of some LEAs would have continued for some time longer, with a consequent negative impact on the provision of support for schools and pupils.

⁸⁸ Annual Report, *Standards and Quality 2002/2003: the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools*, Ofsted, TSO, 2004.

LEAs' views of the effectiveness of inspection

177. As part of Ofsted's continuing evaluation of its own work, a questionnaire seeking the views and opinions of the LEA is sent to chief education officers a month after its report has been published. During 2002/03, questionnaires were returned by all but one LEA inspected. Responses lead, where appropriate, to improvements in the inspection methodology and instruments.

178. The latest survey showed that LEAs inspected in 2002/03 found Ofsted's guidance materials very helpful when conducting self-review (100% agreeing or strongly agreeing). They considered the inspection plan useful in outlining the inspection's requirements and in translating issues for inspection into a programme for the inspection itself. Arrangements for gathering evidence and conducting interviews were considered by most LEAs to be satisfactory, and inspections were carried out according to the code of conduct set out in the framework. Almost all LEAs felt that the chief education officer was kept suitably informed of the emerging strengths and weaknesses during the inspection. Six LEAs, however, did not agree that the interviews were conducted rigorously and professionally. Since these criticisms related largely to interviews conducted by recently recruited additional inspectors and LEA attached officers, Ofsted responded by refining training for these groups, as well as strengthening the induction of and mentoring for new HMI.

179. In most LEAs, the final inspection feedback meeting was viewed as very helpful in allowing LEAs to seek clarification, and respond to judgements. Frank and open discussions at these meetings served to engender confidence in the accuracy and veracity of the final report. All LEAs agreed that they received the draft report in sufficient time to prepare a thorough response and inspection findings were almost always seen as fair and accurate; three-quarters of LEAs considered that the inspection team's recommendations were appropriate and worded helpfully. A quarter of LEAs, however, did not agree. The most common criticism related to recommendations that lacked clarity, and which therefore did not help in effective action planning. As a result, Ofsted has strengthened procedures for its internal scrutiny of reports, with greater attention being paid to the clarity of the recommendations

180. Almost all LEAs reported that the inspection supported areas of the LEA's work; half of LEAs agreed strongly that the inspection contributed to the LEA's overall development; three fifths of LEAs considered that the inspection triggered an acceleration of action in areas where improvements were necessary. In terms of the effectiveness of communication, three quarters of LEAs judged that the inspection enabled officers and elected members to understand the issues, while well over four fifths of LEAs felt that the inspection helped partners and stakeholders to understand their strengths and areas for development. Just over half of LEAs considered that the inspection provided good value for money; six LEAs did not make a judgement, and only one LEA viewed value for money as less than satisfactory.

181. Overall, LEAs are positive about inspection. The majority of LEAs are very satisfied with the inspection, the inspection teams and the outcomes. The rigorous procedures are considered by most LEAs to have helped them make further

progress. LEAs appreciate the continuing refinements and developments in inspection frameworks, especially the increasing emphasis on LEAs' self-evaluation, as well as the use of differentiated inspection. Ofsted's publication of its guidance material and criteria for inspections enables LEAs to benchmark their own performance and to drive self-improvement. Almost always, inspection findings are seen by LEAs to be fair and accurate.

LEA support for school improvement

182. At the beginning of the inspection cycle, inspectors found that LEAs were often having difficulty in satisfactorily defining their school improvement functions, particularly their processes for monitoring, challenging, supporting and intervening in schools. During the period 1998 to 2001, a major Ofsted report⁸⁹ stated that many LEAs refocused their work so as to give support that was better matched to need. The triggers for intervention in schools' work by LEAs have become clearer. It has become less common for LEA staff to use lesson observation as a major source of evidence. Instead, they make increasing use of other sources of evidence, such as Ofsted reports, thus making better use of their own time.

183. LEAs have also significantly improved the performance management of school improvement work since 1998. Whereas on average it was unsatisfactory in the authorities inspected at that time, by 2001 it had generally become very sound. The ability of school effectiveness services grew steadily over the period as authorities defined the services' work better and often staffed them with better-qualified personnel. For example, headteachers who also had a background in inspection, either as registered inspectors or through other Ofsted training, often made the most effective link advisers, but they were also expensive to recruit, particularly at secondary level. By 2002/03, 68% of local authorities inspected were giving highly satisfactory or better support for school improvement, compared with 20% on their previous inspection. One measure of the impact of this is that LEAs have contributed to a reduction in the number of schools requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses.

184. By 2002/03, half of all LEAs inspected provided at least highly satisfactory support for school leadership and management, an improvement on the previous inspection. The best LEAs build support systematically on the school's self-evaluation; they know their schools well and target support where it is needed. An increasing number of LEAs provide high quality data for schools to use in their own self-evaluation. HMI have found no direct relationship between the quality of an LEA and standards reached by its pupils in core subjects at Key Stage 2 or in GCSE results. The more effective LEAs, however, are found to exert many quantifiable effects on aspects of education that, in time, should contribute to higher achievement. Many notable effects include support for literacy and numeracy, attendance, and – most convincingly – the effects on the quality of school management and efficiency. In their report HMI concluded, in short, that LEAs

⁸⁹ *Local education authorities and school improvement 1996–2001*, Ofsted and the Audit Commission, HMI, 2002.

probably have an effect on some aspects of schools' and pupils' performance, but the effect is not great, and it is clearer in absolute terms than in terms of incremental improvement.

185. HMI monitoring inspections of schools causing concern can trigger improvement in LEA effectiveness, as the following example shows.

HMI influence on LEA effectiveness

Primary school subject to special measures

At the time of the first monitoring inspection, HMI judged that a weakness of the LEA's statement of action was that it lacked any strategies for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the actions taken. Two months later, the LEA made its own monitoring visit to the school and the subsequent report included a section evaluating the effectiveness of the support which it had provided. The link adviser confessed that 'it was really hard to do'. On the next visit, HMI were able to judge that the LEA's support for the school had improved from satisfactory to good.

186. Ofsted's contribution to the improved performance of LEAs cannot be distinguished easily from the many external and internal pressures and influences to which they have been subject. The DfES's code of practice for LEA school relations and its policy paper⁹⁰ defined how LEAs should promote school autonomy and should intervene in proportion to schools' needs. The Local Government Act 2000 set a new democratic framework for councils, and there have been a number of other important systemic changes. Inspection shows that LEAs have learnt new ways of working to meet the government's new definition of their role in supporting school improvement.

187. HMI have identified, however, the beneficial influence of the dissemination of good practice through the Education Network, an association of LEAs, and coordination of training through the virtual staff college. HMI have also pointed to impediments to progress which include, for example, weaknesses in the national system for LEA and school funding, a reluctance among some LEAs to encourage schools to develop their capacity as customers (which has recently shown signs of improving) and the burden of having to produce an increasing number of plans to demonstrate how they will achieve various national objectives.

188. The variable response of schools to their inspection reports (Chapter 2) suggests that there would be potential benefits from further LEA involvement in following up and monitoring schools that have had inspections but which do not fall into the various specific categories denoting concern. The association between schools' implementation of inspection findings and the quality of leadership and management suggests that priority should be given to the leadership and middle management of those schools that have obvious potential for further improvement.

⁹⁰ *The role of the local education authority in school education*, DfES, 2000.

Commentary

189. Ofsted's accrual of inspection duties in respect of many independent schools and the complex range of provision beyond the age of compulsory education has prompted significant moves towards a unified inspection system for education providers. The Common Inspection Framework grew from and is closely related to the inspection framework for maintained schools, which also provides a basis for the framework for independent school inspections.

190. Current developments in the school inspection system, aimed at lighter, more frequent inspections, provide the opportunity create a core framework that might be applied even more widely to other sectors. The requirement would seem to be for a framework that is minimalist, written in an accessible style, that can be used (through the provision of specific additional guidance) to inspect a range of providers for learners aged from 3 to 19 years. One challenge is to ensure that reduced institutional inspections meet properly the needs of those who use the provision, ensuring that all have equitable access to learning and opportunities to achieve. The sectors discussed in this chapter show much evidence of planning or action to reduce the intensity or resource requirements of inspection. Further evaluation will need to assess whether such inspections add sufficient value and have sufficient impact in the future.

191. The teacher education sector is closely attuned to the requirements of school inspections, the national strategies and the range of initiatives that apply to schools. There is some evidence from visits to schools inspected for the third time that very little attention is given during initial teacher training to the inspection work of Ofsted, school self-evaluation and the implications of these for the professional teacher. Newly qualified teachers are otherwise quite sanguine about the inspection of their schools, since they are used to observation and feedback.

192. There is some evidence that the bureaucratic demands of inspection in sectors such as post-compulsory education and LEAs now exceed those in schools. Action is desirable to reduce such burdens, through simplifying and rationalising policy and planning documents (with which LEAs are particularly inundated) and streamlining data collection and exchange. Ofsted should consider, when lightening its inspection regimes, whether there is a danger of relying too much on documentary evidence and performance data at the expense of first hand evidence of service to users.

193. In view of the variable responses by schools to their inspections, there is a case for closer LEA involvement in following up many or all school inspections unless, that is, follow up becomes part of the role of inspectors.

4. Inspection and the development of self-evaluation

The ability to undertake frank and accurate self-evaluation (or self-assessment) and to act on the findings is regarded widely as central to the improvement in quality of education providers. Some commentators have argued⁹¹ strongly that their accountability should rest on self-evaluation, perhaps externally validated, others that it should replace inspection. This section considers evidence of Ofsted's position on self-evaluation, the part played by internal evaluation in inspections, and what Ofsted has done to promote effective self-evaluation and assess its quality.

Self-evaluation across inspection sectors

194. There is evidence⁹² that Ofsted has influenced considerably the development of self-evaluation, since many of the current approaches to evaluation used in institutions and LEAs are based on the inspection frameworks or the documentation that accompany them (see Chapter 7). Self-evaluation is well embedded in many institutions but has been found through inspection to be of variable quality. Research has also found evaluation to be poor in the context of school improvement initiatives.⁹³ Ofsted's inspections of schools, colleges and LEAs take account of self-evaluation evidence, particularly at the stage when the inspection is being planned.

195. A cross-divisional working group within Ofsted recently surveyed the types and quality of self-evaluation in the different inspection sectors and the use that inspectors make of the information from providers' self-evaluation.⁹⁴ This chapter focuses principally on self-evaluation in the post-compulsory and school sectors.

Self-evaluation in post-compulsory education

196. In **further education and sixth form colleges** self-evaluation, termed self-assessment, has a very high profile and is well embedded in their quality assurance procedures. Self-assessment has increased in scope and importance over the past eight years. In the early days of inspection, there was no requirement to produce a self-assessment, but many principals provided a personal statement. Under the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), inspection was designed increasingly to validate colleges' self-assessment. Ofsted did not continue this practice since the

⁹¹ Wragg EC and Brighouse T, *A new model of school inspection*, School of Education, University of Exeter, 1995.

⁹² Davies D and Rudd P, *Evaluating school self-evaluation*, Local Government Association Research Report, NFER, 2001.

⁹³ Barber M and Dann R (eds.) *Raising educational standards in the inner city: practical initiatives in action*, Cassell, London, 1996.

⁹⁴ *Inspection impact paper: self-evaluation in the sectors inspected by Ofsted*, 2003.

approach to 'validated self-assessment' was recognised⁹⁵ as impairing the objectivity of inspection judgements, which were too influenced by those of self-assessment. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) now requires colleges to produce an annual 'Self-Assessment and Development Plan' which must address all the quality statements in the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). Typically, the plan sets out judgements, graded evaluations and the evidence base to support them.

197. HMI find evidence of the benefits of self-assessment in those colleges that tackle it most consistently. For them, self-assessment is an integral part of their planning and their strategies to improve quality. In the transitional period from FEFC to Ofsted inspection, such colleges continued with self-assessment, even when not required to do so, because they recognised its usefulness as a tool for improving quality. Colleges expect to make accurate judgements on all the elements that inspectors judge, and HMI report reasonably good alignment between colleges' self-assessed grades and those of inspectors, particularly in respect of the quality of curriculum areas. Where this is not the case, inspectors find that colleges are more likely to over-estimate than under-estimate the quality of lessons observed. This is borne out by a survey of post-compulsory education and training providers:

*A key area that has been identified by inspectors as a weakness in provider self-assessment reports is that provider observations of their own teaching result in much higher grades than those awarded by inspectorates. They would thus have the view that the inspection process should continue to take account of self-assessment, but not to rely on it.*⁹⁶

198. For a few providers, there is a disincentive to be frank if the self-assessment is used as the basis for inspection findings. The survey quotes one provider's concerns about being too honest with the LSC at risk of gaining a poor grade for their review. They were therefore considering the development of two self assessments: one to be used externally and one more critical one for internal use. A similar view has been reported to Ofsted by a few schools. Any indication, which is currently not evident, that this view was more widespread would be a major concern.

199. The survey of area inspections⁹⁷ found that:

FE principals indicated that colleges had been undertaking self-assessment long before it was introduced by the LSC and they considered it an integral part of quality monitoring in the sector. The general perception is that schools have been slower to take self-assessment on board, but local LSC contacts have indicated that there was early positive feedback from those who had gone through the process. In particular it had helped with preparation of Ofsted

⁹⁵ By government and a range of parties, including HMI who worked on both FEFC and Ofsted inspections.

⁹⁶ York Consulting Report (see earlier) and HMI evidence.

⁹⁷ As above.

inspections. This view was backed up by consultees from the schools sector.

200. The extent of evaluation based on the observation of teaching and learning in colleges has grown substantially under the influence of Ofsted inspections. In the early days of college self-assessment there was much resistance to it. This has been largely overcome and there is more confidence and innovation, for example in voluntary pairing of colleges for lesson observations. About one college in ten is judged to have excellent self-assessment procedures, involving peer review and the seeking of learners' views. Many colleges invest heavily in consultancy and training in self-evaluation and most have appointed senior staff with responsibility for organising it.

201. Self-assessment now works successfully in the most effective colleges. There is, however, scope for further improvement. In HMCI's Annual Report for 2002/03, quality assurance and self-assessment were judged good or very good in 40%, satisfactory in 43% and unsatisfactory or poor in 17% of the 125 colleges inspected. This degree of variation supports the case that validated self-assessment cannot replace inspection.

202. Ofsted does not set out to report on the basis of validating the college's self-assessment, as was the practice during the previous inspection regime. However, HMI and colleges report that Ofsted takes due note of it, particularly when judging leadership and management. Ofsted's focus is primarily on evaluating outcomes and standards. At the pre-inspection stage, the reporting inspector compares the college's self-assessment statement and grades with other available information and data in order to write a pre-inspection commentary. All the inspectors have a copy of the relevant sections of the self-evaluation statement, which they use to prepare for gathering evidence and conducting interviews. They compare the self-evaluation judgements and grades with their own inspection findings to decide how self-critical each department is and its capacity for improvement. The inspector with responsibility for reporting on the corporate judgements of the quality of leadership and management in the college collates these individual judgements.

203. In the sections on leadership and management, most reports refer to the quality of self-evaluation, but much less so than previously when a statement about the validity of the college's self-assessment was required in each paragraph. Previously, the discussion with the provider was largely about the self-assessment report; now, self-evaluation is just one of the elements discussed and commented on where it is significant.

204. Self-assessment has also been promoted in related sectors. **Connexions** partnerships were asked to complete a self-assessment schedule before their inspection, judging their strengths and areas for development against the quality statements in the inspection framework and identifying key evidence to support these judgements. Inspectors use the completed schedule to raise hypotheses and to provide a focus for the main inspection week. The self-assessment also gives the reporting inspector some insight into the quality assurance capability of the partnership. The Connexions Service National Unit at the DfES has subsequently incorporated a self-assessment process within the overall arrangements for

performance management. This continues to require partnerships to make judgements and indicate evidence against the inspection framework criteria. The outcomes are intended to help partnerships to write an improvement plan. Self assessment is also a part of **Area Reviews** of 14 to 19 provision.

205. Similarly, the **Youth Work** inspection framework in September 2001 introduced an expectation that providers would conduct self-assessment linked to the framework. Inspectors report that providers have found this useful in helping them to set an agenda for improvement and that they are getting better at using it. It is too early to make reliable judgements about its impact on improving the quality of provision systematically, but inspectors take the view that it is becoming a useful tool for providers' quality assurance. The introduction of self-assessment requirements in **prisons and secure units** is less advanced. The Adult Learning Inspectorate, which leads the inspection of education and training in prisons for adults, is taking steps to familiarise all prison managers with the principles and requirements of the Common Inspection Framework.

Self-evaluation in maintained schools⁹⁸

206. In the 1992/93 Annual Report, the first published since Ofsted was created, the Chief Inspector highlighted the need for the headteachers and senior staff of primary schools to implement strategies to monitor their schools' work systematically to evaluate the standards of achievement, curricular strengths and weaknesses and the quality of teaching and learning. This was echoed in secondary schools, where a main weakness was *'the failure to keep a close track of what happened in classrooms in order to raise standards'*.

207. Improvement in school self-evaluation was so slow that, even by the time of the 1999/00 Annual Report, monitoring and evaluation in one quarter of secondary schools and a similar proportion of primary schools were still judged to be weak. By 2002/03, however, the proportion of schools in which the monitoring and evaluation of teaching were judged to be weak had been halved. Currently, around 12% of schools are judged to be weak in this area.

208. Measures introduced by Ofsted to encourage and support schools and other institutions to improve self-evaluation have had a positive impact in the last four years, together with the efforts of LEAs and other agencies. Ofsted has encouraged schools to develop their evaluation and appraisal techniques through guidance⁹⁹ and the production and dissemination of training materials.¹⁰⁰ These materials were franchised out to local authorities and other training providers and are used widely in helping teachers to develop the skills of classroom observation, the analysis of children's work, the use of data and other techniques.

⁹⁸ *School evaluation matters*, Ofsted/DfES, 1998, gives an account of the development of school review and self-evaluation.

⁹⁹ *School evaluation matters*, Ofsted/DfES, 1998.

¹⁰⁰ *Helping schools to carry out self-evaluation*, Ofsted/DfES, 1998.

209. In 2001, Ofsted developed the 'Headfirst' programme for the NCSL, a course for headteachers in self-evaluation and school improvement. Over 1,000 headteachers and deputies have undertaken this programme, which also counted towards recognition as an accredited school inspector. The evaluation of the pilot course, in which 60 primary school headteachers appointed within the previous two years took part, found that:

Headteachers found the course very useful. In particular, it was felt to be particularly useful for new headteachers, although one headteacher said much of the course content was already familiar to her. Headteachers felt challenged, with one describing the course as having 'forced me to push the boundaries of my skills'. Headteachers now feel more confident in their school self-evaluation work and subsequent action planning. However, several headteachers felt that the course was over too soon.¹⁰¹

210. Headteachers identified a large number of areas in which the course had made a difference to their work in school, resulting in changed direction or focus. Examples included:

- a greater focus on the scrutiny of pupils' work;
- a greater focus on areas that data suggested need improvement such as speaking and listening, problem solving
- enhanced arrangements for lesson observations with more focused feedback to teachers designed to bring about improvements in teaching and learning
- the annual use of the self-evaluation form as part of the school's self-evaluation arrangements
- more thorough monitoring and evaluation of the school's work, including a changed approach to monitoring new policies
- empowering the governing body to take a more strategic role in school improvement.

Development of a national self-evaluation instrument

211. The national school inspection programme has sought to promote self-evaluation. Schools have been required, since the start of regular inspections, to fill in four forms before the inspection, one of which is a self-evaluation form (form S4). The quality of self-evaluation submissions was evaluated¹⁰² in 2001. The most

¹⁰¹ 'Evaluation of the pilot Headfirst course', Ofsted paper for the National College of School Leadership, 2002.

¹⁰² Hume D, *Summary report on the quality of school self-evaluation (A survey of headteachers' responses to form S4)*, Ofsted 2002.

perceptive responses, found in about 30% of schools, were fully evaluative and provided good evidence to support assertions about the quality and standards of the school. Many others were of mixed quality, providing good evidence for some claims, but on the basis of inspectors' findings, lacking rigour or candour in others. A final 30% of responses were found to be poorly completed. In these schools *'the leadership team may undertake some monitoring of results and observe some lessons, but they provide no evidence that they have properly interpreted and acted on their findings'*.

212. In order to encourage more frank and rigorous self-evaluation, Ofsted amended the self-evaluation form with effect from September 2001 to encourage an evidence-based approach. The questions, and the guidance on how to answer them, encourage schools to show how effective they are, **how they know this**, and what they will do next. The form asks schools to deal with each of the main questions in the school inspection framework and to assess themselves against the seven point scale used by inspectors. This form was piloted in many hundreds of schools and was well received.

Headteachers' views of the school self-evaluation form piloted from September 2002¹⁰³

The overwhelming view of headteachers is that the new pilot form S4 is a considerable improvement on the previous form. Most headteachers found it easier to use, enabling clearer self-evaluation. Comments included:

- *'Thought provoking, Made us analyse in detail our school effectiveness'*
- *'An excellent form that allowed me to explain the strengths and development needs of the school in a concise yet thorough way'*
- *'A very productive form – certainly challenging in a creative way'*
- *'The form is well structured and allows you to provide a good overview of your school'*
- *'Experience of this type of form will undoubtedly clarify our thinking'*

Criticisms of the form tended to cluster around problems with the software and the constraints some headteachers felt it placed on them in giving a full and accurate picture of the school.

213. Suggestions made by headteachers were incorporated into the final version of the form, used for inspections since September 2003.¹⁰⁴ Headteachers used to write very detailed and personal accounts of their school's context, development and priorities. The evaluations, aided by the new form, have become more disciplined

¹⁰³ Internal evaluation of the use of form S4.

¹⁰⁴ This form, used by schools since September 2003, is published on www.ofsted.gov.uk

and self critical. Increasingly, schools have incorporated form S4 into their improvement planning cycle as an annual summary, which is often communicated to a wider readership, whether or not the school is about to be inspected. This suggests that they are finding the process helpful.

214. Before developing the new form S4, Ofsted produced training materials¹⁰⁵ to assist schools with self-evaluation, which were widely used by over 100 licensed training providers, including many LEAs. All LEAs have developed approaches to self-evaluation for their schools; most have adopted the Ofsted model represented by form S4. As part of their support for schools, many have adapted inspection forms and used the seven-point grading scale to train school staff. LEAs which have also provided contextualised performance and benchmarking data and have robust systems for agreeing targets for improvement have given self-evaluation a high status and helped their schools to map their own improvement. However, although all LEAs have procedures in place, only a fifth of LEAs inspected recently were found to have effective programmes to support school self-evaluation.¹⁰⁶ The effectiveness of LEA systems is judged through LEA inspections (see Chapter 3).

Effectiveness of school self-evaluation

215. In his Annual Report of 2001/02,¹⁰⁷ HMCI commented on *'notable improvements in how well schools undertake monitoring and evaluation and the steps they take to improve teaching. Senior staff are no longer reluctant to enter that once private domain, the classroom, and more and more teachers accept that the observation of lessons can be a valuable tool, not a threat to their professionalism'*. Inspection has certainly played a part in changing that culture.

216. The Annual Report for 2002/03 confirmed that the monitoring and evaluation of teaching are effective in almost three secondary schools out of five, but remain weak in one eighth of secondary and one fifth of primary schools. This suggests ongoing unevenness in the capacity of schools to undertake rigorous self-evaluation.

217. A common feature of successful schools is that self-review has been well integrated into the annual improvement planning cycle and is complemented by performance management. Reviews of the work of departments, year teams and of teaching throughout the school are conducted rigorously and evaluated against school aims and targets. In turn, the conclusions feed into development planning, which links school and departmental plans with priorities that are mainly focused on raising standards.

218. Where monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, schools lack coherent strategies for developing teaching. Although classroom observation takes place, evaluations lack precision and there is no systematic

¹⁰⁵ *Helping schools to carry out self-evaluation*, Ofsted/DfES, 1998.

¹⁰⁶ *Local education authorities and school improvement 1996–2001*, Ofsted, 2002.

¹⁰⁷ *Standards and Quality 2002/03: the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools*, Ofsted, 2003.

process for following up the evaluations with target setting, support, advice, coaching or training and further monitoring. Action is not taken in a sufficiently rigorous way and does not lead to improvement. Other weaknesses include the poor use of performance data and a lack of consistency across the curriculum. The effect of this is that some subject leaders do not set sufficiently challenging targets for their subjects and too easily accept low levels of achievement from all or some groups of pupils.

219. There is a strong association between the quality of schools' self-evaluation and s10 inspection judgements about the strengths of their leadership and management. In an attempt to avoid circularity, Ofsted briefed all registered inspectors in 2001 on the desirability of a different member of the team coordinating the corporate judgements on leadership and management, where this was feasible.

220. The use of the revised self-evaluation form introduced into inspections from September 2003 provides an opportunity to investigate more closely the relationship between the school's judgements about its quality and the considered view of the inspection team. Table 11 shows how the two views compare for the overall effectiveness grades of schools inspected at the beginning of the third cycle. The sample includes a higher proportion of weaker schools than the national sample since this was also the case in the first year of the previous two cycles.

Table 11. Comparison of inspection and self-evaluation judgements of the overall effectiveness of secondary schools (n=115).

		School self-evaluation grades				Totals			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Inspection grades	1		2						2
	2	4	9	4					17
	3	1	20	23	7		1		52
	4		4	19	9	1			33
	5			4	3				7
	6				4				4
	7								0
			5	35	50	23	1	1	0

221. The data show that 36% of schools (41 schools) had the same view of their effectiveness as their inspection teams. The majority tended to regard their effectiveness more favourably than inspectors by one grade (51%) or two (11%). A minority (13%) judged themselves more harshly by one grade, or in one case, by three grades. This initial analysis raises some concern about the leadership of the 11% of schools whose views of their own performance are substantially more favourable than those of inspectors, that is to say by a factor of two grades.

222. It could be argued that overall effectiveness is a composite and therefore complex judgement. Analysis of the more specific judgements on: achievement; teaching; the curriculum; leadership and school improvement suggest that schools tend to be more generous than inspectors in judging five of these aspects, particularly the quality of their curriculum and the extent of their improvement since the last inspection (Figure 18). Caution should be exercised in interpreting the leadership data since the inspectors' grades relate to the leadership and management of the school and the school grades to the leadership of the senior management team.

Figure 17. Comparison of mean grades awarded by secondary schools and by their inspection teams (n=115). Grade 1 represents excellent; 2 is very good; 3 is good; 4 is satisfactory.

223. The data also allow investigation of possible reasons for a mismatch between the two sets of judgements. Inspection teams could come to the wrong conclusion, but since their judgements are corporately decided by large teams (at least in inspections of secondary schools), are based on wide experience of visiting many schools, and are open to challenge, it is regarded as reasonable to use them as a benchmark. A limited further investigation of judgements on teaching shows that the 50% complete correlation between the views of schools and inspectors is higher than with more global judgements of overall effectiveness (Table 12). Thirty-six per cent of schools grade their teaching one grade higher than inspectors and 8% one grade lower.

Table 12. Comparison of inspection and self-evaluation judgements¹⁰⁸ of the quality of teaching in secondary schools (n=115).

		School self-evaluation grades						Totals
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
Inspectio n grades	1							0
	2	3	8	3				14

¹⁰⁸ Using the seven point scale: excellent=1; very good=2; good=3; satisfactory=4; unsatisfactory=5; poor=6; very poor=7.

	3		23	35	6	1			65
	4		3	12	13				28
	5		1	2	3	1			7
	6				1				1
	7								0
		3	35	52	23	2	0	0	115

224. An initial examination of the seven schools that over-rate their teaching by two grades shows that leadership and management are usually no better than satisfactory (Table 13). Ofsted's evidence shows that self-evaluation has long been identified by inspectors as one of the weakest areas of school management. Its link with the improvement of quality, demonstrated particularly in colleges of further education, suggests that the quality of self evaluation is likely to be a good indicator of the capacity of leadership to improve a school.

Table 13. Discrepancies between self-evaluation and inspection ratings and quality of leadership and management in schools.

School	School grade -teaching	Inspection grade - teaching	Leadership (inspection)	Management (inspection)
A.	Very good (2)	Satisfactory (4)	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
B.	Very good (2)	Unsatisfactory (5)	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
C.	Good (3)	Unsatisfactory (5)	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
D.	Very good (2)	Satisfactory (4)	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
E.	Good (3)	Unsatisfactory (5)	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
F.	Satisfactory (4)	Poor (6)	Poor	Poor
G.	Very good	Satisfactory (4)	Good	Satisfactory

	(2)			
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225. Ofsted's data suggest that there is a similar pattern in primary schools except that these schools are found to judge the quality of their teaching more accurately than secondary schools. Recent inspection reports also indicate that monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning are tackled successfully in about four-fifths of **primary schools**. Weaknesses are often associated with poor delegated management.

226. In effective primary schools, where performance management has been introduced successfully, evaluation connects well with established policies for monitoring, appraisal and evaluation. Teachers have specific targets for improvement, linked to the progress made by pupils during the year, which provide them with a clear understanding of what needs to be done. The process is supported by effective professional development. In such schools, performance data are collected and analysed comprehensively. Relevant comparisons are made with similar schools, trends are identified and challenging targets are set. In less effective primary schools, classroom observation is not supported by any whole-school agreement about what constitutes good teaching and has too little impact on the standards of pupils' work because targets for improvement are not followed up with sufficient rigour. It is likely that the promotion of monitoring and self-evaluation through inspection and the dissemination of inspection methodology, together with the emphasis placed on monitoring, evaluation and performance management in successive inspection frameworks, have contributed to improvements in these aspects, as have common frameworks for teaching, such as those of the NLS and NNS. The annual objectives set for headteachers by governing bodies are crucial outcomes of the evaluation and planning processes and should therefore be available to inspectors as important evidence.

227. For schools generally, the comparison of their self-evaluation judgements with the external perspective provided by inspection grades, which are now published in reports, enables them to calibrate their views of their own performance.

Commentary

228. Inspection evidence and surveys of schools, colleges and other providers suggest strong support for promoting approaches to self-evaluation that are closely related to the aspects considered by external evaluation. Ofsted's various inspection frameworks can provide appropriate agendas for self-evaluation. They have been generally welcomed by schools and regarded as valuable tools for institutional development. The feature they share most closely is their focus on outcomes for learners.

229. The use of evaluation to help shape inspection to the context and work of the provider is established securely in the inspection of LEAs, schools and colleges, and increasingly in teacher education and early years inspection. In school inspections, for example, the inspection team is given the explicit instruction that the inspection should be tailored to the performance and circumstances of the school, taking account of:

- the statutory requirements for inspections as interpreted in the inspection framework, *Inspecting Schools*;
- the performance of the school and trends in its performance
- any specialist status that the school has
- the management needs and wishes of the school, informed by forms S1 and S4
- the need to disseminate good practice across the education system.

230. The advantages of compatible inspection and self-evaluation approaches become greater if, as happens in some schools and all colleges of further education, self-evaluation reports based on the Common Inspection Framework are produced annually as part of the quality improvement and development planning processes. Self-evaluation is not, therefore, an end in itself, but an essential ingredient of improvement planning and organisational management.

231. Proposals to use the school self-evaluation report as part of an annual report to parents that may replace the governors' annual report require consistency of approach if parents are to compare schools systematically. Questions remain about the reliability and validity of self-evaluation for such use rather than the internal quality improvement purpose that self-evaluation can serve well.

232. Some alternative approaches¹⁰⁹ to self evaluation advocate either a different set of criteria or schools themselves deciding what it is most important to evaluate. The first approach suffers the disadvantage of being at variance with the basis of external evaluation expressed through national inspection frameworks, thus creating extra bureaucracy for providers and reducing the extent to which external and internal evaluation can contribute together to the school's development. There is also an apparent lack of specificity about some models proposed, particularly in relation to the core processes of teaching, leadership and outcomes for learners.

233. Equally, a self-selected approach to self-evaluation would fail to give users comparative information about different providers and thus would appear to run counter to the principles of accountability for equity, entitlement and achievement in a publicly-funded education service. The approach used by Ofsted gives the provider an opportunity to incorporate any additional features of special importance. Core features are found in the inspection and self-evaluation themes of other inspectorates in which each theme or aspect is further defined by quality criteria, indicators or standards.

234. Self-evaluation now plays a significant part in all inspection arrangements. The increased proficiency of schools, colleges and local authorities in undertaking and recording self-evaluation or self-assessment findings regularly offers the

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, MacBeath J. *Schools must speak for themselves*, NUT/Routledge-Falmer, London, 1999.

opportunity for this to become an annual activity, the outcomes of which are accessible to the community and inspectorates. There would then be no need to require evaluation especially for inspection purposes, removing both an element of inspection-related work and one of the barriers to reducing the notice of inspection. Ofsted will need to be vigilant, however, as the contribution of self-evaluation to the inspection process becomes more prominent, to guard against any 'halo' effect, in which self-evaluation grades have an undue influence on the judgements of inspectors. This is particularly important given the evidence that institutions tend to make more favourable judgements of their own practices. For these reasons, validated school self-evaluation should not be regarded as a substitute for inspection.

235. Some schools and colleges use the Business Excellence or other models, and many have been awarded 'Investors in People' recognition or a Charter Mark. There are also software-driven approaches promoted by consultants, management information software houses and a virtual Education Action Zone. The Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers and the Hay Group's Transforming Learning scheme have introduced the concept of '360 degree feedback' to headteachers and teachers and promoted new management styles and ways of leading schools. However, it must be recognised that there has been little, if any, evaluation of the impact of these on outcomes for learners. Ofsted would be well placed to undertake such an exercise.

5. Inspection quality improvement

Inspection must be rigorous and reliable to be of value. It must also be conducted sensitively and professionally. This chapter examines evidence of improvement of inspection, particularly in relation to the perceptions of those whose work is inspected. There is evidence that the quality of school inspections, which have always been founded on consensual frameworks, has improved during the last ten years. Ofsted has recognised and addressed specific areas of weakness that became apparent in the first cycle of school inspections and has modified its frameworks and procedures to reflect both feedback from and improvements in all the sectors it inspects. One significant drawback of the inspection process is the apparent anxiety that impending inspection can cause among some providers and the extent to which some teachers may become distracted from their core work to undertake preparation for inspection, for whatever reason.

Ofsted's quality assurance processes and their effect

236. Inspections in all the sectors overseen by Ofsted are conducted, with few exceptions, by trained inspectors who have relevant qualifications and experience that relate to the type of provider and matters being inspected. The main exception is the inclusion by law of one trained lay inspector in each school inspection. One commentary surmises:

Lay inspectors were probably created as a symbolic representation of the public interest and as a reminder from government to teachers and inspectors that they should not claim exclusive rights to the ownership of the education process.¹¹⁰

237. As things turned out, lay inspectors added a dimension to the inspection process:

Headteachers particularly appreciate the lay inspector's ability to ask the unexpected question and their good interpersonal skills.¹¹¹

Table 14. School inspector workforce (other than HMI).

Registered inspectors	Team inspectors	Lay inspectors	Total*
784	4109	338	5224

¹¹⁰ Ferguson N., Earley P., Fidler B. and Ouston J., *Improving schools and inspection: the self-inspecting school*, Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd., London, 2000.

¹¹¹ *Inspection Quality 1994/95*, Keele University and Touche Ross, Ofsted, 1995.

* Seven lay inspectors are also registered inspectors.

238. All inspectors (Table 14) are trained to use the appropriate inspection framework that underpins the evidence they gather, the formation of judgements, the way they conduct themselves and how they communicate findings, both orally through feedback and through the written reports. Each framework incorporates a set of quality descriptors, criteria or standards that are acknowledged and very largely endorsed by those working in the sector. In addition to initial training (through one of several routes) and assessment, every section 10 inspector must undertake five days of professional development each year, the composition of which is determined by Ofsted.

239. Each framework contains a list (or schedule) of the aspects of provision that will normally be included in the inspection and the criteria, which are intended to ensure that inspectors and those working in the sector are clear about what constitutes good practice and the basis for judgements. Frameworks are published only after periods of consultation. They may be supported by research¹¹² or national standards,¹¹³ competencies or benchmarks.

240. Ofsted responds, where possible, to concerns expressed about the frameworks. For example, earlier frameworks encouraged the practice of reporting outcomes against national norms; Ofsted acted to include, from January 2000, indicators in inspection reports showing comparisons with similar schools. Concerns about the inspection of special schools and schools with high levels of pupil mobility have been addressed, where appropriate, through additional guidance for inspectors.¹¹⁴ In evidence to the Select Committee, both HMCI and the Secretary of State denied that the framework would be used by schools in such a way as to become an 'orthodoxy'; the Committee agreed with this view.

241. There is evidence that some providers appear to believe that they should do things (such as lesson planning) in a particular way because 'Ofsted wants it'. This tends to be a feature of weaker schools or those having less confident or capable leadership. Such schools sometimes feel there is greater security in what one headteacher of a school in special measures described as a '*teaching by numbers format*' whereas others have felt that innovative, or even risky, strategies were the only way to secure the improvements that would bring their schools out of special measures. In its inspection handbooks and other publications, Ofsted sought to counter such misapprehensions about an educational orthodoxy. Examination of inspection evidence and reports across a range of schools demonstrates that a variety of teaching approaches have been awarded high grades for the quality of teaching.

¹¹² Sammons P., Hillman J. and Mortimore P., *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools*, Institute of Education, University of London, for Ofsted, 1995.

¹¹³ *National Standards for Childminding and Day Care*, DfES, 2000.

¹¹⁴ Through *Update*, Ofsted's regular bulletin for inspectors, available on www.ofsted.gov.uk

242. Inspectors, whether they are HMI or independent inspectors, are trained in their work, briefed on the requirements of specific frameworks or exercises, updated on changes of techniques through a range of communications, and subject to performance monitoring. Both Ofsted and inspection contractors impose strong quality assurance regimes on inspectors.

243. Ofsted has consistently monitored the conduct of school inspection and the competence of reporting since the beginning of the inspection system. It sets quality standards with which inspectors and the contractors that employ them must comply. All lead inspectors have been visited on site by HMI, some of them on many occasions, and their performance assessed. The contractors that employ independent inspectors must satisfy Ofsted about their quality management arrangements. Inspectors are, arguably, inspected and assessed considerably more than most teachers. Monitoring is recognised as one of the important mechanisms that feed into quality improvement:

*Ofsted itself is showing a praiseworthy concern for monitoring its inspection programme and adjusting procedures in the light of experience...the long term health of the model will depend on the extent to which Ofsted succeeds in discharging its own culture of improvement.*¹¹⁵

The conduct of inspection teams and rigour of their findings receive high ratings from providers as seen in Table 15. There is, however, a small proportion of institutions that submit complaints about particular inspections and reports, each of which is examined by Ofsted or its agents, as described later.

Accuracy of inspectors' judgements

244. The value that accrues from inspection depends on the reliability and consistency of inspectors' judgements. Inspection is neither a social science nor a totally subjective process. Rather, it is a disciplined enquiry that seeks out evidence, weighs it according to certain agreed precepts and makes judgements in line with what the evidence will support. Ofsted subscribes¹¹⁶ to the former Senior Chief Inspector Sheila Browne's statement that:

The basic principle has always been close observation exercised with an open mind by persons with appropriate experience and a framework of relevant principles.

Internal reviews and evaluations point to a high degree of reliability and validity in inspectors' judgements.

245. Ofsted has undertaken a number of exercises to test the correlation between judgements made by pairs of school inspectors who see the same lessons. In such

¹¹⁵ Maw J., *The Ofsted inspection model*, Cambridge Journal of Education, 1995.

¹¹⁶ *Inspecting schools: handbooks for inspecting nursery and primary schools, secondary schools and special schools and pupil referral units*, Ofsted, The Stationery Office, 2003.

exercises, pairs of inspectors record judgements separately and without discussion.¹¹⁷ There is an acceptable degree of complete correlation for such open-ended judgements and, where pairs of judgements differ, it is very rarely by more than one grade on a seven-point scale. Critics have rightly pointed out that, at the boundary between satisfactory and unsatisfactory, accuracy is particularly important. Ofsted has undertaken several studies to examine this. For example, in one exercise in 1998 which was the subject of an internal paper, 73 lessons were observed by HMI paired with independent inspectors. The degree of correlation remained high, but in the one in five lessons in which judgements differed by a grade, the less favourable grade was, usually, awarded by the HMI. This suggests that the chances of an independent inspector awarding an unjustifiably critical grade for a lesson are low. Where there are differences of opinion, the findings suggest that school inspectors tend to give the benefit of the doubt where there is conflicting evidence. In addition, it should be noted that where a lesson is rated unsatisfactory, inspectors will usually observe another lesson taught by the teacher concerned.

246. Ofsted has tightened and made clearer the boundary between grade criteria in two successive revisions of the inspection handbooks since the original dual observation study was conducted in 1997. HMI have also undertaken several international exercises, particularly with the Netherlands,¹¹⁸ which have shown that the criteria and instruments of each inspectorate are capable of being used consistently by inspectors in both countries and of both English and Dutch nationalities.

247. Inspections are secured by a range of quality assurance measures. For contracted-out inspections, these include: HMI monitoring of inspections and reviews of reports and evidence; the keeping of quality and activity track records of inspectors; the duty of the reporting inspector to check that evidence recorded on inspections, particularly observational evidence, tallies with inspectors' judgements; contractors' quality assurance measures; the requirement for inspectors to present their findings orally to the school, and enabling the school to check a pre-publication version of the report. In practice, this adds up to a searching quality assurance system, which carries high stakes for inspectors and contractors in the cases where quality falls below the required level. HMI find that 99% of inspections and 96% of reports that they monitor reach the prescribed quality standards.¹¹⁹ HMI who visit inspections, scrutinise the evidence and listen to the deliberations of the inspection team confirm that the inspection judgements they witness are consistent with the evidence. In 2002/03, over 98% of inspections and 95% of reports met Ofsted's quality standards fully.

248. Ofsted periodically tests a sample of inspection judgements. This is done not only by on-site monitoring of 5% of inspections but also through the analysis of

¹¹⁷ Matthews P., Holmes J.R., Vickers P. and Corporaal B., *Aspects of the Validity and Reliability of School Inspection Judgements of Teaching Quality*, Educational Research and Evaluation, 4, 2, 1998

¹¹⁸ Recorded in an unpublished paper by van de Grift W. and Corporaal B., *Do English and Dutch school inspectors judge lessons in the same way?* See also Chapter 7.

¹¹⁹ Ofsted performance data 2002/03.

inspectors' evidence, including statistical analysis of all the grades given by the most active inspectors. Such analyses are used to identify any unusual patterns of behaviour, such as the art specialist who has never judged a lesson as unsatisfactory. Such behaviour triggers an investigation by HMI. Over 40 independent registered inspectors have resigned or been removed from Ofsted's register since 1998 because they were no longer considered fit, proper, competent or effective as inspectors.

Providers' views of the quality of inspections

249. Most of Ofsted's inspection sectors invite providers to evaluate the processes and outcomes, normally through post-inspection questionnaires. Table 15 summarises a range of recent data.

Table 15. Views of providers about the quality of inspections.

Criterion	Respondents	Agree/strongly agree with proposition	Date of survey	Number of respondents	Response rate
Inspection conducted well	Headteachers	90%	2002/03	2811	73%
Inspection conducted well	Teachers	88%	2002/03	903	63%
Inspection conducted well	Chief education officers	94%	2002/03	32	97%
Fair and accurate judgements	FE Colleges	89%	Spring 2003	86	92%
Fair and accurate judgements	Headteachers	90%	2002/03	2811	73%
Effective feedback	Teachers	76%	2002/03	903	63%
Effective feedback	CEOs	84%	2002/03	32	97%

250. Satisfaction ratings of around 90% are regarded as very good in service industry terms (high-street banks average 60 to 70%),¹²⁰ particularly for an activity that carries much weight and importance and may be seen as intrusive or stressful by some. Annexes C and D show the responses of headteachers and teachers for inspections completed in 2002/03. In terms of judgements, fewer than 10 school inspections had been annulled because of the report being seriously misleading after 45,000 inspections. All the school response indicators have shown an improving trend since the first cycle of inspections, when, for example, only about two thirds of primary, special and nursery schools were satisfied with the management of their inspection and the quality of relationships established with inspectors.¹²¹ The satisfaction ratings for Ofsted school inspections today are similar to those measured in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Netherlands.¹²²

251. One concern which can be raised about high satisfaction ratings is that inspectors' judgements may be too lenient. It is highly likely that most institutions, given knowledge of the date of their inspection, take all possible steps to present themselves as well as they can. Inspection therefore is more likely to observe better practice than may be typical. Recent evidence from pupils in secondary schools (Chapter 8) tends to support this hypothesis.

Responding to dissatisfied schools

252. As Table 15 shows, about 90% of the headteachers and chairs of governors of schools are satisfied with the way their inspections are carried out and regard the findings as fair and accurate. A small percentage of headteachers have mixed views, and about 5% are dissatisfied. Some of these, about 2%, make a formal complaint about their inspection or challenge the report. There is some correlation between dissatisfaction with the inspection and critical inspection findings, although this is not always the case. Some schools found to require special measures, for example, have recognised the appropriateness of this outcome, which may come as a relief or trigger the support or changes they need. HMI always follow up returns from dissatisfied schools, and this normally helps the school to come to terms with the findings.

253. While the complaints procedures are rigorous, open, well documented and subject to a final arbitration by an independently-appointed adjudicator, some complainants remain dissatisfied when it becomes impossible to resolve assertions about aspects such as attitude, behaviour or conversations when these are equally strongly defended by those against whom they are made. The more serious matter of appealing against judgements can be tested by examining whether the evidence is recorded on which judgements were based and examining its quality. Scrutinies of

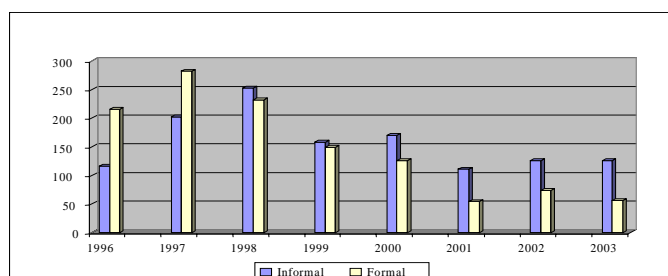
¹²⁰ Comparative advertising data published by First Direct.

¹²¹ Keele University and Touche Ross, *Inspection quality 1994/1995*, Ofsted, 1995.

¹²² Evidence discussed with these other inspectorates in January 2004.

evidence are required rarely (less than one inspection in a hundred in the case of schools).

Figure 18. Number of informal/formal complaints about school inspections.



254. The number of informal complaints received rose during the years 1997 and 1998 and then declined in the year 1999 and reduced subsequently in line with a smaller annual number of inspections in the second cycle. In the year 2002/2003, Ofsted dealt with 48 formal complaints, about half of which were upheld, and responded to 166 informal complaints. The proportion of complaints (5%) was slightly higher than in the previous year. The main reasons for complaints about school inspections were and remain about the conduct of the inspection or inspectors and the nature of the judgements whereas, before 1998, the majority of complaints were about the quality of inspection reports. Eight complaints were referred to the Independent Complaints Adjudicator for Ofsted and ALI in 2002. Three were upheld, one partially so, and four were not upheld.¹²³

255. Unfortunately, it takes only one weak inspector to erode the inspection. A headteacher with experience of leading two different schools through their inspections offers examples of improvement¹²⁴ through well conducted inspections that in both cases were slightly marred by a weak team member, although no complaint was made. First, the positive evidence of improvement:

My experience as the headteacher of two secondary schools which underwent inspections convinces me that the work of Ofsted has a positive impact on the quality of education. To support this assertion I shall cite just two examples where I believe there is evidence that inspection led to school improvement.

¹²³ Independent Adjudicator for Ofsted and the ALI, *Annual Report 2002*, available from www.ofsted-aliadjudicator.co.uk

¹²⁴ Communication from a former headteacher.

During the inspection of the first school in 1995, attendance was identified as an area of weakness. Careful scrutiny of registers and procedures highlighted inaccuracy and lack of concern on the part of staff; the senior colleague responsible for this area was suffering from a long-term illness and I had failed to identify or address the issue. The inspection prompted a complete overhaul of attendance procedures with subsequent monitoring and staff training. More generally, we were able to attract funding to support a 'work scholarship scheme' designed to improve attendance rates for a disaffected group of year 10 and 11 pupils. In this case inspection brought about improvement by identifying a weakness of which the school was unaware; and prompting an immediate and vigorous response.

At the time of the inspection of the second school in 1999, governors and senior staff were aware that science was an area of weakness. However, inspection provided a detailed analysis of shortcomings in teaching, curriculum provision and department leadership, informed by good subject-specific knowledge not possessed by senior managers. The inspection prompted a staff restructuring, the appointment of a new head of department and a complete overhaul of schemes of work and assessment procedures; results improved in the following years. Inspection brought about improvement by adding to senior managers' understanding of an area of weakness; and providing them with a powerful mandate to take the tough decisions needed to address it.

256. But he goes on to comment that in the inspection of both schools:

...there were instances where inspection did little to bring about improvement; in each case one inspector on the team failed to identify significant weaknesses in teaching and subject leadership. In both cases the verbal feedback and written report were characterised by a blandness which key staff interpreted as at least satisfactory. This subsequently militated against the efforts of senior managers to bring about change and improvement; the respective heads of department asserted that 'Ofsted said we were all right' – and in a way it had.

257. The inadequacy of one team member did not annul the overall usefulness of either inspection. But the comment reinforces the need for inspection to be authoritative and rigorous if it is to support improvement.

Steps taken by Ofsted to improve inspection and reduce bureaucracy

258. The conclusions from Select Committee reports and Ofsted's quality assurance systems, including the HMI monitoring of school inspections, are used to improve the system. In the case of schools, the main vehicles are training for inspectors and further guidance for them issued through Ofsted's publication of *Update*, which is available to all on Ofsted's website.

259. Some teachers' associations have claimed that Ofsted places an unacceptable burden on teachers in preparing for inspections.¹²⁵ It should be noted that Ofsted makes no direct or specific demands on teachers, apart from the headteacher, when preparing for an inspection. The results of recent post-inspection surveys show that a substantial majority of teachers tend to agree, or strongly agree, with the proposition that *'the demands placed on them for information and documentation were reasonable'* (Table 16). There is also evidence that teachers' perceptions are most favourable in schools that are well led and managed, but that they feel under greater pressure to prepare material for the inspection in schools with unsatisfactory leadership and management. It appears that some schools generate extra workload for teachers prior to inspection that is not requested or required by inspectors. This may indicate apprehension or a desire to present the school at its best.

260. There is evidence that Ofsted has worked to minimise the amount of paperwork required from schools before or during the inspection. In the first inspection cycle, schools were asked to provide copies of all their policies, plans, schemes of work and other materials before the inspection. There was very long notice of inspection, up to a year in many cases, and such requirements placed considerable demands on the staff and the school. There was considerable evidence at the time that the announcement of inspection was used by schools as a significant prompt to rewrite a lot of standard documentation or, indeed, draft it for the first time.

261. In all successive revisions of the school inspection framework and associated guidance for inspectors, the list of documents required from the school has been gradually reduced. This has been accompanied by a reduction in data required of schools and the provision of more, centrally-held data through the performance and assessment (PANDA) reports issued to inspectors and schools. Ofsted does not wish classroom teachers to divert any of their energy or time to preparation for inspection. Ofsted's guidance on inspection documentation that has applied since January 2000 is to the effect that:

With the exception of forms S1 to S4, the documentation required by inspectors is limited to what could reasonably be expected to be available. Documentation should not be written specifically for the inspection as this puts an undesirable burden on staff. [Inspecting Schools: the Framework, October 1999]

Teachers' perceptions of inspection and its demands

262. There is no doubt that inspection has been widely perceived to be a source of apprehension and stress in teachers. Many commentators and surveys have explored this issue. There are indications, however, that inspection is becoming a less intrusive and more constructive process. A recent study from the DFES Implementation and Review Unit states that:

¹²⁵ Submissions by teachers' associations to the Education and Schools' Select Committee, that met to consider the work of Ofsted on 5 November 2003, included the following assertion: 'There has been an increase in the inspection burden on schools and teachers.'

...the Ofsted inspection process is potentially stressful for schools no matter how successful they may be. Informal discussions with headteachers suggest that since the first round of inspections in the mid-nineties (1993), familiarity with the requirements has made the process more manageable. In an attempt to reduce workloads further, Ofsted now requires less documentation than was previously the case.

263. Politicians' views complement this perspective:

*We have moved a long way since Ofsted was set up. Schools no longer view the inspection process as a negative one; the inspection framework is a good tool to aid evaluation and, for many teachers, the mere external confirmation that they are doing a good job is valuable in itself... The process must evolve, however, into one of continuous improvement. After all, if schools ever stand still again, who knows what the politicians might dream up!*¹²⁶

264. Writing in the NUT's Education Review (spring 2001), Barry Sheerman MP, Chairman of the Education and Skills Select Committee, is in a particularly good position to take a view of inspection.

I feel strongly that inspection is part of educational improvement and that the accountability mechanism is maturing and developing a positive direction... Much of the unhappiness with inspections can be largely attributed to a failure to explain what we have been seeking to achieve over the years since the new inspectorate came into being.

265. For the last eight years, Ofsted has surveyed every school inspected about its inspection experience as part of its quality assurance and improvement procedures. A set of data for inspections in 2002/03 is shown in annex C. Ofsted's analysis of returns¹²⁷ from one teacher selected at random from each school inspected in 2,436 schools (a 63% return) inspected in the school year 2002/03 showed that 88% of the sample of teachers were satisfied with the way their inspections were carried out (Table 16). Eighty per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the demands placed on them for documentation and information were reasonable and only a small minority of teachers (one in seven) felt they were over-inspected.

Table 16. Teachers' views of inspection (see also annex D)[N=2,436].

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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¹²⁶ Phil Willis MP, then Liberal Democrat spokesman for education and employment.

¹²⁷ The returns are from the School Inspection Survey that has issued post-inspection questionnaires to schools and teachers after every inspection since Easter 1996.

1. Overall, I am satisfied with the way in which the inspection was carried out.	42	46	4	5	3
15. Teachers were not aware of the overall quality of their lessons after receiving feedback.	3	10	9	38	38
16. The demands placed on you for documentation and information were reasonable.	24	56	9	7	3
19 Teachers were not over-inspected, either in lessons observed or through other activities.	24	47	11	11	4

266. It is likely that some of the demand of inspection is perceived rather than directly attributable to the inspection process itself. This may be because of the climate associated with inspection, or 'being Ofsted' that has developed over the years. It is probable that some teachers believe that the next inspection will resemble the last one, which took place for most schools four to six years previously. Some teachers may therefore assume that the paperwork they need to prepare for the next inspection is similar to that which they prepared last time, perhaps in a different school, and perhaps in response to management anxiety rather than Ofsted's requirements. In the intervening time, inspection has been improved and requirements further reduced. This hypothesised that there is likely to be an historic view of past inspections, which may have adversely influenced some teachers' views of the current inspection.

267. Ofsted makes it very clear that teachers should, as far as possible, go about their normal work during inspection although it is understandable that they should want to show themselves and the school at their best. If there are real bureaucratic demands, therefore, they are likely to come from within the school. If this is the case, one would expect more capable and confident management to be effective in reducing requirements on teaching staff to a minimum. Experience of earlier inspections suggests that headteachers who are anxious about how the school might be seen in inspection may be more likely to require additional preparation from their teachers. This is borne out by the survey of schools inspected for the third time.¹²⁸ (See also Chapter 9.)

268. The results indicate that teachers perceive the demands on them to be more reasonable in schools that are well led and managed than those where leadership and management are less effective. Ofsted has tested this relationship. The grades given for the inspection judgement on the leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff were grouped into the categories very good, good,

¹²⁸ Impact Paper: *The effect of inspection on schools inspected for the third time*, to be published.

satisfactory and unsatisfactory. These results were cross-tabulated with the teachers' responses to the statement 'the demands placed on you [the teacher] for information and documentation were reasonable'. These responses were in the range 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Non-responses to the question were not included in the analysis.

269. The charts below show how teachers' responses to the question about preparation for inspection (x axis) relate to inspection judgements about the effectiveness of the schools they work in (y axis).

Figure 19. Primary teachers' views about the extent to which the preparation required for inspection was reasonable, classified according to the quality of their leadership and management.

Figure 20. Secondary teachers' views.

270. Overall, the results show that the great majority of teachers agreed that the demands placed on them were reasonable. The analysis also suggests that the poorer the inspection judgement on leadership and management in a school, the more likely it is that its teachers will consider the demands of inspection unreasonable. It is important to note that the number of schools being judged unsatisfactory for leadership and management was small. Again, this is particularly true in the secondary phase. As a result, care should be taken when interpreting the data from these groups.

271. The survey findings do not provide support for claims that inspections are a major burden on teachers. Rather, they suggest that the demands are seen as reasonable by most. The quality assurance arrangements operated by both Ofsted and inspection contractors should ensure that no individual inspector breaches Ofsted's requirements by asking teachers or schools to provide additional material for the inspection.

272. Evidence from the study of schools inspected for the third time, Select Committee reports and surveys of teachers suggests that, while there is a high level of respect for Ofsted and recognition that inspections are conducted with considerable professionalism, the apprehension felt by many teachers stems from a combination of:

- misconceptions or lack of information about how inspections currently work and what is or is not required of schools, stemming from: ITT; teachers' associations; sections of the teacher-orientated media, and rumour
- poor management of teaching staff before and after the inspection
- the climate in which the context and style of messages from the government and the current Chief Inspector are influential

- the quality of the relationship between inspectors and those they are inspecting. The tone is set at the first visit of the lead inspector to the provider
- reliance on anecdotal comments and the focus of the media on specific schools in difficulty, or complaints by individuals that cannot provide a reliable picture of inspection experience in most schools.

Repeated inspection

273. On entering the third inspection cycle for schools, and engaging in the reinspection of LEAs and colleges, Ofsted is questioning whether more of the same is the best way forward. If inspection is contributing to school improvement, then full inspections should reflect the law of diminishing returns.

274. Analysis of improvement between the first and second and the second and third inspections of 170 secondary schools inspected for the third time in 2003 points to the gains being smaller after the second inspection, although the evidence on a school by school basis varies considerably (Figure 22).

Figure 21: Difference in the percentage of good or better teaching between the first and second inspection and the second and third inspection in secondary schools

275. There are some indications that full inspections may not be necessary for many schools which have improved consistently over the three cycles. Even when considering the least successful schools, further full inspection may not be the best catalyst for improvement, although it may be important for public accountability and to retain parental confidence. Ofsted's 2004 consultation on proposals for future inspection arrangements reflects a commitment to review its inspection systems on a regular basis.

Ofsted's role in developing inspection arrangements for children's services

276. The government has charged Ofsted with leading a cross-inspectorate project to develop an integrated framework for the inspection of children's services in response to the proposals in the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*, September 2003, expected to emerge in new legislation.

277. The first aim is to produce an effective model for the integrated inspection of children's services in each 'top-tier' local authority area in England, covering those services potentially involved in Children's Trusts and wider partnerships. The intention is that inspections will provide judgements of the quality and outcomes of services and of how effectively they combine, in order to promote improvement in service delivery and in management capacity

278. To achieve this aim, the development of an inspection approach needs to connect with different performance assessment regimes, inspection approaches and

management structures when providing a structure for organising inspections of universal, targeted and specialist services for children. This will raise new challenges for the quality and consistency of the inspection practice of joint or service-specialist teams. The intention is to provide reports which:

- present a picture of how things are for children in an area, plainly written for a wide readership, including a young readership
- evaluate and rate the contributions that services make, separately and together, to positive outcomes for children, and the value for money those contributions represent
- say what should be done to improve those contributions.

279. The second aim is to improve the coordination of the inspection of education and care in schools and other settings so as to lead to a full and efficient assessment of their quality. This will mean pursuing convergence and some rationalisation in the frameworks and methods for inspecting education and care in establishments.

Commentary

280. In his speech on the 60th anniversary of the 1944 Education Act, the 'Butler Act', HMCI spoke of the potential of the 2004 Children Bill to rival the 1944 Act in its implications.

We are about to embark on major change, guided by Every Child Matters, which will bring us full circle, back to the overriding principles of the 1944 Act. These principles are to focus on the whole child, taking into account their social and welfare needs and not just their academic or other aptitudes. The gestation of the 2004 Children Bill has been carefully and thoughtfully managed, as was the 1944 Act, which is why I suspect future historians will identify these two pieces of legislation as having had the most influence on education in the twentieth and early twenty first centuries.¹²⁹

281. The proposed legislation has considerable significance for Ofsted and the work of other inspectorates, not least in the design of inspection systems and in safeguarding the quality of inspections. Already, inspectorates are changing, merging, working in partnership and evaluating not only institutions and organisations but the quality of broader provision (such as education and training 14 to 19) across areas and regions. It follows that inspection teams either have to be multi-disciplinary or composed of versatile generalists.

282. The multi-disciplinary approach has advantages. HMI have worked successfully with a range of additional inspectors; the Audit Commission; the Adult Learning Inspectorate; the Social Services Inspectorate and HM Inspectors of

¹²⁹ Speech given by David Bell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, on Wednesday 21 April 2004 at the Palace of Westminster, London.

Prisons, to mention a few. HMI and childcare inspectors are evolving ways of assessing the quality of care and nursery education in the 'combined inspection' of day care and other providers. In such contexts, inspectors not only provide leading expertise in their fields (in which they have usually been practitioners) but, increasingly, contribute to the wider evaluation of the provision concerned. The well-established inclusion of lay inspectors in school inspection teams also added a different perspective to the inspection of schools.

283. If the natural consequence of inspecting in partnership is eventual cross-over, where any member of the team can inspect anything, to which the inspection of Children's Services points the way, the advantages in terms of efficiency and cost benefit are immediately evident, but there are significant risks, particularly if the remit of inspectors is not simply to audit compliance but to contribute to improvements in the quality of what is inspected. Here, as reflected in the secondary headteacher's observations, one inexperienced inspector on a team can harm its credibility and usefulness.

284. Inspection that is based on assessing compliance can be relatively brief, but arguably it takes more than a health check to add value through the thorough diagnosis that leads to developmental feedback in order to inform, promote and expect improvement. The extensive and formative piloting of Ofsted's proposed new inspection arrangements will show what is possible.

285. The two other major challenges highlighted in this section are the reduction of teacher stress and the need to improve the validity of inspections by seeing providers as they really are. Both intentions would be served by the reduction of notice of inspection to an absolute minimum and introducing some variance in the interval between inspections. The reduction of notice is a key feature of Ofsted's plans for the future of inspection.

6. Improvement of early years provision

The Care Standards Act 2000 transferred responsibility for the regulation and inspection of provision for childcare from local authorities to Ofsted. The remit to create a national regulatory body which, together with administrative and support functions would treble the size of Ofsted, commenced in autumn 2001, with the formation of Ofsted's Early Years Directorate (EYD). Fortunately Ofsted had gained experience in the inspection of funded nursery education during the previous five years. The successful expansion and quality improvement of early years provision, particularly pre-school education, by successive governments since 1995 has been strongly reinforced by Ofsted inspections and subsequent regulatory activity.

Introduction of funded nursery education in non-maintained settings

286. In 1995, the government introduced funding through a voucher scheme to enable more parents to gain access to part-time nursery education for children aged 4 years in non-maintained nursery provision, for example private nursery schools and playgroups. Ofsted was given the statutory duty to inspect and report on this funded nursery education. Until this point, these settings – which numbered over 30,000 – had not been subject to any external scrutiny of their educational provision.

The nursery education voucher scheme introduced two important conditions designed to secure high standards and good-quality provision for 4 year olds. First, it has established a set of Desirable Learning Outcomes which dovetails into the national curriculum for children of statutory school age. Second, it has extended national inspection into the private and voluntary sectors of pre-school education.¹³⁰

287. In 1997, the incoming government extended the provision to 3 as well as 4 year old children and discontinued the voucher scheme in favour of funding the increased number of nursery places through the nursery education grant. Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships (EYDCPs) were later established within local authorities to undertake the planning of early years provision and the implementation of the government's National Childcare Strategy. Ofsted inspections provided accountability for the funded provision and informed parents about the quality of education provided. Inspection reports were public documents, available on the Ofsted website and displayed to parents.

288. The effect of the inspections on the quality of educational provision was substantial, for they ensured that providers had to provide education that complied with national expectations set out initially through the Desirable Learning Outcomes (later to become the Early Learning Goals of the Foundation Stage curriculum) in six areas of learning.

¹³⁰ *The quality of education in nursery voucher settings*, Ofsted/DfEE, 1997.

289. Since, in practice, inspections evaluated provision for all children when looking at provision for funded children, the curriculum objectives and goals were adopted as a basis for the education of all children in the settings, whether their places received public funding or not. The inspection regime, therefore, resulted in an unintended but significant benefit. Section 5 (later to become s23 and s122) inspections provide a good example of policy development and independent inspection working in tandem to secure policy development and raise quality and standards.

Inspection system and its outcomes

290. In order to inspect funded nursery provision, Ofsted trained and accredited a new cadre of over 2,000 registered nursery inspectors and put the work out to competitive tender using an external contracts manager (Group 4 plc). Quality assurance was an obligation of all parties: inspectors; inspection providers; and the contracts manager. Ofsted set and monitored the quality standards, trained, re-trained and registered the inspectors, and followed up poor provision.

291. The inspection of the first 700 settings in 1996/97 showed that just over half (55%) of the institutions inspected had overall strengths in promoting the desirable outcomes. Some weaknesses were noted in over 44% of settings as a result of being inspected for the first time. Institutions in the first category were reinspected two to four years later; those with some weaknesses were reinspected within one to two years. The proportion of institutions with many weaknesses was less than 1%. The progress of these providers was monitored by Ofsted and they were subject to early reinspection.

292. The first full cycle extended from April 1997 to March 1998. Nearly 60% of the institutions inspected had overall strengths in promoting the desirable outcomes. Some weaknesses were observed in 40%. Provision was again judged to be poor in 1% of institutions. Inspection covered nearly 16,000 settings in a wide range of categories. Unsurprisingly, the evidence showed that independent schools and private nursery schools were most likely to ensure that 4 year olds made satisfactory progress towards the desirable learning outcomes¹³¹ and that pre-school playgroups found it hardest, although 49% of these met the quality criteria.

293. Inspections continued on a large scale up until July 2001. It is of some significance that the ratio of new providers that made satisfactory provision for children to progress to the desirable outcomes (later, Early Learning Goals) remained at about the 60% level, with approximately 40% having weaknesses in each cycle of inspection. Reinspection of previously inspected providers, however, showed that about 80% consistently provided satisfactory provision with 20% having weaknesses. It is argued that the inspection regime, together with providers' increased familiarity with successive inspection frameworks and the possibility of losing funding, led to the demonstrable improvement of providers after their first inspection.

¹³¹ Established by the DfEE in relation to six areas of learning for children by the age of 5 years.

294. The inspection evidence revealed variations in the degree of attention that settings paid to each of the six areas of learning and gave a national picture, for the first time, of relative strengths and weaknesses in providing for learning in different types of setting. In order to provide children with a broad and balanced educational programme, over 2 out of every 10 settings needed to improve the quality of provision for language and literacy, mathematics, and knowledge and understanding of the world. By 1999/00, the inspections also encompassed 3 year olds, requiring re-training of all registered nursery inspectors.

295. Trends in the quality of provision in each of the six areas of learning are shown in Table 17. It is noticeable that personal and social development was always a strength of provision, and that provision for language and literacy (later communication, language and literacy) made the biggest improvement through the five years. The inspection frameworks placed increasing emphasis, over time, on literacy, numeracy and social development.

Table 17. Settings judged good in relation to the six areas of learning for 3 and 4 year olds.

Areas of learning	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00	2000/01*
Personal and social development	86%	91%	94%	96%
Physical development	77%	84%	83%	91%
Creative development	75%	82%	90%	93%
Mathematics	69%	73%	80%	86%
Language and literacy	65%	71%	78%	85%
Knowledge and understanding of the world	60%	72%	79%	90%

*The Desirable Learning Outcomes in this year had become Early Learning Goals, responding to the new Foundation Stage Curriculum.

296. Ofsted's report for 2000/01 commented that:

*The greatest improvements were made by playgroups. In the 1999/00 report 61% of playgroups were classed as good providers while in 2000/01 this increased to 82%, reflecting considerable improvement on the previous reporting period. This is a strong indicator that the sector has responded to inspections and has implemented strategies to improve the quality of the provision.*¹³²

297. All individual inspections resulted in structured feedback on the day of the inspection and published reports, which gave a clear indication of strengths and weaknesses. The reports were primarily aimed at EYDCPs in order that they could examine how they would discharge their responsibilities for providing training, advice and guidance in the light of the reports and their findings.

298. This inspection regime resulted in the improvement of weaker providers. It also introduced a form of preinspection self-assessment and gave all these nursery education providers an insight into the approaches used by inspectors. Many providers used the Ofsted inspection handbooks as a basis for the professional development of their staff.¹³³

299. The quality grading system: *fully meets, meets but with some weaknesses or does not meet* the required quality standard, led to palpable improvement of many settings by the time of reinspection.

¹³² *Nursery education: quality of provision for 3 and 4 year olds 2000/01*, Ofsted, 2001.

¹³³ Meetings with inspection providers.

300. The system had the additional benefit of providing a cadre of registered nursery inspectors, some of whom subsequently joined Ofsted's staff as childcare inspectors or more senior managers. A second major benefit was that it tested inspection methods and instruments prior to Ofsted taking on responsibility for 'combined' childcare and nursery education inspections of day care providers. This programme of inspections was deferred from August 2001 to allow Ofsted to prepare for its new remit to regulate and inspect childminding and day care.

National early years childcare and education provision

301. Since September 2001, Ofsted has been responsible for regulating childminding and day-care provision for children aged up to 8 years, taking over regulatory functions from local authorities. Ofsted has four main regulatory functions:

- **registration** of providers, to ensure that those providing childminding and day care are suitable to do so and that their provision meets National Standards and relevant regulations
- **inspection** of providers, to ensure that they continue to be suitable
- **investigation of complaints** against providers, to check whether their registration should continue
- **enforcement** action to ensure that providers comply with the National Standards and relevant regulations.

302. By March 2003, Ofsted had inspected all the childminders and day-care providers who transferred from local authority regulation in September 2001. In April 2003, following a transition phase, Ofsted started a two-year programme of Children Act inspections. These not only assess *compliance* with the National Standards for Childminding and Day Care, but Ofsted's childcare inspectors also judge the overall *quality* of care. The programmes were not established without encountering teething problems, particularly in meeting targets for the high volume of inspections and regulatory events.

303. Providers receive oral feedback at the end of each inspection so the reports that are provided contain no surprises. Reports are sent to childminders and day-care providers. Ofsted publishes the reports on day-care providers on its website and is taking steps to make information about childminders available to *bona fide* enquiries.

304. Overall, the provision of care in the settings inspected in the transition phase was unsatisfactory in just over 120 out of nearly 100,000 providers. Ofsted decides on a case-by-case basis what should happen to bring about improvement. This ranges from immediate enforcement activity, including the setting of conditions, or required action - to the setting of conditions or required actions, with a further inspection arranged within a very short time.

305. The decision to change Early Years inspections from what started as a compliance model, against the 14 National Standards, to one that also assessed the quality of care, was a significant step in promoting quality improvement. Quality grades are good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory, but unsatisfactory providers normally fail registration requirements. Two in five (42%)¹³⁴ of all providers are good and 57% are satisfactory. It is too early to gauge improvement on reinspection or the effect of these quality gradings on the childminder market. The quality gradings for different types of childcare settings are shown below.

Figure 22. Quality of childcare by type of setting (percentage of settings inspected).

306. The adoption of a quality as well as a compliance assessment will allow the 2003–2005 inspections to provide national and regional baseline pictures of quality. There were fears that the introduction of an Ofsted inspection regime would deter prospective childminders. The evidence is to the contrary and, overall, the number of registered childcare providers increased by about 6% over the year. This takes account of providers who stopped offering childcare over the same period. As the 2002/03 Annual Report points out,

*the evidence is that childcare providers are building well on the sound performance seen during the transition phase (September 2001 to March 2003). Almost all providers make satisfactory provision. However, the proportion that provides good care ranges from under two fifths in the case of childminders and out-of-school settings to a half in full day care.*¹³⁵

307. Ofsted inherited over 300,000 files and records from 150 local authorities in September 2001. The data from these have been ‘cleansed’ by Ofsted staff to create an electronic database of 100,000 active providers of childcare. For the first time, Ofsted is able to track changes in the number of providers and registered childcare places. Detailed statistical information is now available. Basic statistics on the size of the market are published quarterly on Ofsted’s website, and extensive local information is available for each local authority and the DfES, in addition to an update on latest published reports and planned forthcoming inspections.

Inspection and regulation to National Standards

308. Since Ofsted was given the registration function in July 2001 and inspections from September 2001, every childcare provider in England has been expected to meet the National Standards for Childminding and Day care. This has had a significant impact on the quality of the service that parents are able to expect throughout the country, removing variation based on nothing more than where a child lived. In addition, parents have clear ways to ask questions about the sort of service they can expect through Ofsted’s national helplines and website.

¹³⁴ Early Years Directorate analysis for April 2003 to March 2004.

¹³⁵ *Standards and quality 2002/03: the Annual Report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools*, Ofsted, 2004.

Encouraging quality improvement

309. Since April 2003, inspection reports have included a straightforward grading scale of 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'unsatisfactory', together with recommendations on how providers can improve the quality of the care that they provide. These reports also give useful information to parents, allowing them to make informed choices between the childcare options that are available. Given that parents can access details of the grading received, providers have strong incentives to improve the quality of their care.

310. It is not appropriate to make any firm overall judgements about the quality of providers during the two-year inspection programme; given that available data covers only half of the programme, it is unclear whether the quality of providers graded so far reflects all providers. For example, it may be the case that inspectors have tended to focus first on providers about whom they have concerns. Thus, while a statistically significant number of providers have already been graded, it would be unwise to treat any results as typical.

311. Continuing the practice used in the inspection of funded nursery education, inspectors include in their reports recommendations that can help even the 'good' providers improve the quality of what they do. The collation of grades across a large sample also gives ministers information about the success of their policies. This is especially true for the government's aim to increase the availability of high-quality childcare. At a local level, such collations are intended to help local authorities determine their training and development programmes.

Partnerships and impact on policy

312. Ofsted regulates childcare providers under Part XA of the Children Act 1989 and its associated regulations. The DfES has policy responsibility for setting the legislative framework under which Ofsted delivers these regulatory functions. However, the DfES continually looks to Ofsted for advice in terms of how the legislative framework works in practice. Through this liaison, Ofsted is able to shape government policy on the regulation of childcare. There are many examples where Ofsted has had an impact on the development of early years policy. Three of these show how this can happen in different ways.¹³⁶ Sometimes, Ofsted identifies the need for change. For example:

Ofsted proposed that there should be new regulations which allow HMCI to disclose information to parents about complaints that have been made against registered childcare providers. As part of Ofsted's work in relation to investigating complaints, it was clear that HMCI was constrained by data protection legislation as to the amount of information he could disclose to parents who had made a complaint to Ofsted about their childcare provider. Ofsted and its legal advisers convinced the DfES of the need for such information

¹³⁶ Information from the Ofsted Early Years Directorate.

to be shared, not only with parents but also with other organisations who may be involved in the regulation of children's services (such as child protection agencies and the police). As a result, new regulations have been drafted which, after public consultation, should give HMCI new powers to share information where this is in the best interests of the child.

313. In other cases, Ofsted's advice contributes to the successful implementation of a new government policy.

The DfES has proposed a number of new initiatives that meet government and treasury objectives in terms of increased childcare places and greater access to tax credits for parents. Ofsted works closely with the DfES, as it develops these new initiatives, to ensure that they will work effectively. An example of this is the Home Childcarer's Scheme for which Ofsted worked closely with the DfES to influence a Code of Practice with which all home childcarers must comply. This Code is used by home childcarers to prepare themselves for approval as a home childcarer. It is also the basis on which Ofsted's childcare inspectors decide whether or not a person is suitable to be approved as a home childcarer.

314. Ofsted's advice also influences the shape of intended legislation.

Proposed changes to Part XA of the Children Act would have had significant consequences for the way in which childminders were registered. The intention was that childminders should be able to register jointly (rather than individually as is presently required). This would have had a major impact on Ofsted's capacity to take enforcement action against an individual without this affecting the person with whom they were jointly registered (for example, a couple registered jointly as childminders where one is no longer suitable for registration but the other remains so) and would have had other implications. Ofsted's advice resulted in the proposal being dropped from the Bill.

Role of the National Consultative Forum

315. Ofsted's National Consultative Forum (NCF) for the early years was formed prior to the formation of Ofsted's Early Years Directorate in 2000. At present, the forum, which meets quarterly, consists of representatives from Ofsted, the DfES and the large Early Years organisations: Kids Club Network, the Day Care Trust, the National Childminding Association, Play Link, the National Day Nurseries Association and the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

316. The main purposes of the forum are to:

- receive feedback from provider associations on arrangements to regulate childcare, play and funded nursery education provision in England

- receive feedback on the views of parents, where applicable
- communicate intended development of the regulatory processes to the main provider associations
- jointly identify issues requiring guidance and/or policy development.

317. The benefits of the NCF have been numerous. For example, it allowed members of the NCF to bring to Ofsted's notice some providers' view that Ofsted had quotas relating to the awarding of a quality grade. As a result, Ofsted was able to clarify that this was not the case, doing so through its monthly external bulletin, an update for early years professionals working in local authorities, children's information services, organisations representing childcare providers, government departments and agencies, childcare charities and interest groups.

Separating targets to develop the childcare market from the regulatory responsibility

318. Local authorities have the aim of increasing the availability of affordable, high-quality childcare. Ofsted has the responsibility of regulating that childcare. By separating the target to develop the childcare market from the responsibility to regulate it, conflicts of interest are avoided. The clarity of this division of responsibility helps to ensure that children are safe, well cared for and take part in activities that help them develop and learn.

Provision of local statistics

319. In order to assist local authorities in supporting providers and promoting quality improvement, Ofsted provides a web-based service for each local authority through which it is able to retrieve a variety of inspection information. This includes:

- an automated weekly email alert which will note the publication of any new inspection reports or other items
- copies of s122 nursery education, Children Act and combined inspection reports published in the current week, for both day-care providers and childminders in their local authority
- an archive of previously published reports for their local authority, together with a search facility that will allow retrieval of reports according to a number of search criteria
- a listing of s122 nursery education and/or combined inspections that Ofsted has scheduled in their local authority for the following three months
- a regular statistical profile of the quality and standards of childcare provision in each local authority (being planned).

Providers' satisfaction with the registration and inspection process

320. In 2003 Ofsted published its results of a survey of its most recent survey of the providers' satisfaction¹³⁷, carried out in November 2002. The main findings relating to providers' assessments of their experience of the registration and inspection processes. In terms of *registration*:

- 82% of returns agreed that the information in the application pack was helpful and easy to understand
- 58% indicated that the regional centre dealt with their enquiries promptly
- 83% said that the people who dealt with the enquiries were courteous and helpful
- only 49% indicated that Ofsted gave them clear reason for any delays to their registration.

321. Almost all providers were satisfied with the registration visit:

- 98% agreed that the inspector was professional and courteous
- 93% agreed that the inspector clearly explained what Ofsted would do next
- 91% agreed it was made clear to them what they needed to do next.

322. Overall, 6 out of 10 (59%) were satisfied with the registration process. Just under 8 out of 10 (79%) agreed that the information they received before their inspection was helpful and easy to understand. Respondents who provided a childminding service (84%) were much more likely to indicate this than those who offered sessional day care (75%), full day care (76%) and out-of-school day care (77%). Over half (56%) of providers agreed that the regional centre dealt with their enquiries promptly. Seven out of 10 (70%) indicated that the people who dealt with their enquiries were courteous and helpful.

323. The majority of providers (97%) indicated that the inspector was professional and courteous and looked at all relevant aspects of their work. Over 9 out of 10 (94%) agreed that the inspection was carried out in a way that caused minimal disruption.

324. Again the majority agreed that the inspector clearly explained the outcome of the inspection (96%) and that they were given enough opportunity to ask questions (98%). Over 9 out of 10 (94%) indicated that it had been made clear to them what they needed to do next.

¹³⁷ Undertaken by MORI in November 2002.

325. After the inspection visit 9 out of 10 (91%) indicated that it was clear from the report what actions, if any, they needed to take as a result of the inspection. Overall 3 out of 10 (30%) received a copy of the report for checking within less than 3 weeks, 4 out of 10 (37%) between 3 to 5 weeks and a further 3 out of 10 (29%) more than 5 weeks.

National Audit Office report

326. Childminders and day-care providers are mostly positive about their Ofsted inspections and welcome Ofsted's new approach to inspection,¹³⁸ according to a National Audit Office (NAO) report. The NAO report concludes that most childcare providers found their inspection was efficient and caused minimal disruption. Ninety per cent were satisfied with the inspection process overall and the majority of providers found inspectors to be professional, courteous and clear in their explanations of what improvements should be made. Ofsted intends to use this report to seek ways in which it can improve further the way it carries out inspections.

327. Ofsted is able to draw together information from individual inspection reports to produce synoptic reports on the childcare sector. Since September 2001 two such reports have been published¹³⁹, together with leaflets that are helpful to the sector, such as the *Building better childcare* series.

Early excellence centres: bringing together childcare, nursery education and family support

328. The first early excellence centres (EECs) were established in 1997/98. Most are based on maintained nursery or primary schools, some on non-maintained nursery settings. They are an innovative development for young children and their parents and carers, bringing an integrated approach to education, day care, social support and adult learning. A number of centres also provide one or more of the following childcare services:

- full day care for babies and young children under three years
- sessional care such as playgroups
- crèches
- before- and after-school care, such as an extended day for nursery children or for primary-age children from local schools.

329. The EECs have paved the way for some elements of Children's Centres and Extended Schools. They also anticipated aspects of the concept of 'Children's

¹³⁸ *Early Years: Progress in developing high quality childcare and early education accessible to all*, National Audit Office, 2004.

¹³⁹ *Early Years, Early Days*, Ofsted 2002, and *Early Years: the first national picture*, Ofsted, 2003.

Services', as articulated in the DfES Green Paper *Every Child Matters*.¹⁴⁰ Between autumn 2001 and summer 2003, Ofsted evaluated 23 of the centres and two Early Excellence Networks, using a modified framework for school short inspections, to see how well they fulfil their intended purpose and to pilot the multi-disciplinary inspection of education, care and adult learning.¹⁴¹

330. The main evidence of improvement through inspection in relation to the inspection of these 23 centres is that centres that were either established or inspected later than the first seven pilot EECs were found by inspectors to be of better quality overall. Several centres reported that they had learnt from the early pilot centres and from the Ofsted inspections of these centres as well as from the considerable additional support that was provided by the DfES and some LEAs before, during and after their establishment. The inspection of EECs also provided Ofsted with an opportunity to involve a range of HMI together with childcare inspectors in inspection teams. This identified the need for training and more joint working in order to ensure that inspectors from different backgrounds reached consistently valid and reliable judgements.

Commentary

331. Early years activity represents a large-scale inspection system within Ofsted. The need to regulate approximately 100,000 childminding and day-care providers means that the work is very demanding in terms of meeting performance requirements. Early years inspections, like those of other sectors, reflect principles of effective inspection systems through evidence that they:

- promote quality while securing standards of compliance
- focus on maximum efficiency through monitoring performance against targets
- consult interest groups and using the feedback to inform or improve
- influence the development of policy
- are customer-focused in seeking views of the service Ofsted provides
- are cost-effective through maximising the home-based working of inspectors and minimising the need for office accommodation (see Chapter 9).

¹⁴⁰ *Every child matters*, Department for Education and Skills, 2003.

¹⁴¹ *Children at the centre*, Ofsted, 2004.

7. Systemic improvement and policy advice

This chapter takes a wider view of the question about the difference Ofsted has made. It examines evidence of Ofsted's impact on the education system as a whole. Through its thematic surveys and subject inspections, Ofsted evaluates the implementation and impact of government policies, such as the National Strategies for raising attainment. Ofsted also produces a range of influential and authoritative reports on topical or intractable educational issues. The evidence suggests that reports such as these have all exerted a powerful influence on the system and on policy development.

The evaluation of Ofsted's contribution to policy and impact on systemic improvement is explored through a small number of case studies in different phases of education. Ofsted both contributes to and benefits from international links and hosts many visitors from overseas. The chapter concludes with a perspective on this work.

Ofsted's influence nationally

Ofsted's influence on policy development and evaluation

332. There is evidence that Ofsted, through its inspection programmes, use of data and evidence and deployment of HMI, is not only an instrument of public information and accountability but also a catalyst for change. These mechanisms are interdependent. Open reporting of all inspection findings not only holds those inspected to account, but also keeps education and care, as important services, in the public eye. The cumulative evidence of inspection, together with thematic inspections that are often highly focused, provide HMCI with the foundation to undertake two prime duties: to prepare an annual report on the quality and standards of education and to provide advice to the secretary of state on matters concerned with education and childcare.

333. There is a complex web of interactions through which inspection makes a difference to the education system and the key players that are responsible for improving it. For example, Ofsted's inspection of funded nursery education from 1996 to 2000 contributed to the development of the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage and the National Standards for Childminding and Day Care. It also informed the development of more radical policies for providing for young children and their families, and secured the basis for developing the system for regulating and inspecting childminding and day-care provision that was added to Ofsted's responsibilities.

334. HMCI has illustrated Ofsted's impact on the education system as a whole, citing three examples.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Address by HMCI on improvement through inspection, March 2004.

The first is that through the thematic surveys and subject inspections undertaken by HMI, we evaluate the most challenging issues in education. Our reports on access and achievement, the implementation of the National Strategies, the underachievement of African-Caribbean boys, the education of Traveller children, the training of further education teachers have all exerted a powerful influence on the system. Our findings feed into policy development, and we are evaluating the extent of this.

Through HMI subject specialist advisers, Ofsted provides an unique, evidence-based perspective on teaching and learning, quality and standards of all the main subjects of the curriculum. HMI engage in regular discussions (formal and informal) with officials from the DfES, other government departments and agencies (such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) awarding bodies, the national strategies, or the TTA) and professional associations in their subject, and in this way can use the outcome of inspection to influence thinking or policy.

HMI also give talks, write articles and host conferences for teachers which give them the opportunity to disseminate inspection findings and have an impact on the intellectual climate in their subject. Much of this impact is hard to quantify, but there are indications of the type and scale of such influence.

Independence and impact of Ofsted's advice and publications

335. Major Ofsted reports, including HMCI's Annual Report, are sent in hard copy to all schools in the relevant phase and to all interested parties such as LEAs, universities and colleges, government departments and agencies and relevant professional associations. The extent to which these are read is the subject of a recent survey by MORI.¹⁴³

336. Ofsted publishes many thematic reports whose content ranges from studies of important aspects of education and care provision, which tend to illustrate good practice, to evaluations of government policy initiatives. Messages from the latter may be helpful (or occasionally unwelcome) to the DfES, which sees a draft of each report before publication, and can comment on the way findings are presented. The DfES cannot, however, change the findings, which are rooted in inspection evidence, nor insist on editorial changes.¹⁴⁴ The same protocols apply to the thematic studies – which often relate to policy initiatives – undertaken by HMI and commissioned by the DfES. Ofsted's impact on educational policy is discussed below.

¹⁴³ MORI survey commissioned by Ofsted, 2004.

¹⁴⁴ Discussion with the editors of Annual Reports.

337. The independence of HMCI from direct ministerial control can be seen as a reflection of strong and confident national governance of education, which is prepared to have the quality of educational provision and the effect of its policies examined independently. Trenchant statements on educational matters bring to public attention matters that a government may not have the evidence for or the inclination to pursue, but Ofsted's reporting leaves ministers free to comment or respond as they see fit. In the case of incompetent teachers, for instance, the government reviewed the procedures for dismissing them, making it possible for governors and LEAs to do so more expeditiously.

338. It is one reflection of the perceived influence of the inspection system that officials at the DfES see the inspection frameworks as powerful vehicles for promoting policy initiatives. In the first school inspection framework, for example, schools' compliance with the National Curriculum was a priority. The 'Key Issues' raised in inspection reports more often than not drew attention to areas of non-compliance, commonly information and communications technology and design and technology (in primary schools). Latterly, other aspects have come to the fore, particularly the leadership and management of schools, self-evaluation and performance management (discussed below). Further, in keeping with the national agendas for educational and social inclusion, inspectors are required to report on the relative underachievement of any specific groups of pupils and on any barriers to the achievement of racial or other minorities.

Case study 1: the impact of the HMI evaluation of the National Literacy Strategy in primary schools

339. In May 1996, the government set up its Literacy Task Force to develop a strategy for raising standards in literacy. It was responding to Ofsted's findings, reported in *The teaching of reading in 45 inner-London primary schools*¹⁴⁵ that standards of literacy were not high enough. The final report of the Task Force, published in August 1997, recommended, among other things, that: '*Ofsted should examine the impact of the literacy strategy in a substantial representative sample of primary schools in the years 1999 to 2002*'.¹⁴⁶ A fuller account of the impact of Ofsted's evaluation is published separately.¹⁴⁷

340. The purpose of Ofsted's evaluation was twofold:

- to evaluate and report on the effects on teaching and learning as a result of the extensive training and development that the National Literacy Strategy was putting in place

¹⁴⁵ *The teaching of reading in 45 inner London primary schools*. A report by Her Majesty's Inspectors in collaboration with the LEAs of Islington, Southwark and Tower Hamlets, Ofsted, 1996.

¹⁴⁶ *The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy*, DfEE, 1977.

¹⁴⁷ Inspection Impact Paper, *An evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, 1998-2002: effect on national policy*, Ofsted, 2004.

- to assess the effects of these changes through:
 - observing and making judgements on the quality of teaching and learning
 - the results of the national curriculum tests at Key Stages 1 and 2
 - specially commissioned tests taken by pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 in the sample schools.

341. Ofsted has published nine reports on the national strategies which were sent to all primary schools in England, as well as two reports on the strategies in special schools. It also released five related papers on its website and provided internal papers for the DfES.

342. There is evidence that evaluation by Ofsted provided critical insights into the quality of teaching, leadership and management within the Strategies. In a paper presented to an international conference in 2001,¹⁴⁸ Michael Barber cited Ofsted's 'regular monitoring and extensive evaluation' as one of the 'chief elements' in achieving the government's 'ambitious objectives'.

343. Ofsted's findings can be tracked into action taken at the level of policy and provision for professional development in many aspects of the work of primary schools, including support for the teaching of phonics and improvements in leadership and management, especially by headteachers and co-ordinators for English and mathematics.

344. Through its inspection of and reporting on the national strategies, Ofsted provided annual national overviews of the strategies' strengths and weaknesses against which schools are able to compare their own progress and performance. The reports identified clear priorities for professional development at national, LEA and school level by setting out points for action. They focused professional and public attention on the teaching of English and mathematics, receiving extensive media coverage, thereby contributing to debate about what works and what does not in teaching. Further, the reports also provided a means for Ofsted's independent s10 inspectors to keep up to date with developments to inform their work in schools, contributing to consistent reporting. Most importantly, however, the evaluation as a whole held the DfES to account for its policies and, indirectly, for its expenditure on literacy and mathematics, most recently by asking the question whether, in the longer term, the strategies are helping to raise standards.

¹⁴⁸ *Large scale education reform in England: work in progress*, School Development Conference Paper, Tartu, Estonia, 2001.

Case study 2: missing pupils at Key Stage 4

345. Although achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 has been rising steadily in recent years, Ofsted has been concerned about a range of issues at this stage. One in 20 pupils left secondary school without any qualifications at GCSE level. The progress of different groups of pupils varied widely, with boys doing less well than girls and some pupils of minority ethnic heritage achieving badly. A large number of pupils became disaffected with school during Key Stage 4: deteriorating attendance and behaviour, together with many exclusions from school, caused concern. In addition, significant numbers of pupils were not on school rolls at Key Stage 4 and were not registered as being educated elsewhere.

346. To investigate these issues, HMCI commissioned an evaluation of the range of provision available for pupils at Key Stage 4. HMI evaluated a range of provision for 14–16 year olds in 6 LEAs. This included mainstream schools, special schools, pupil referral units, units similar to pupil referral units but not registered as such, alternative education programmes run by the voluntary and private sectors, training providers and FE colleges. The settings visited were chosen on the basis of the diversity of courses they offered.

347. The inspection report, *Key Stage 4: towards a flexible curriculum*, was published in June 2003. While highlighting successes in some of the areas visited, it also found that the quality of provision and outcomes varied widely. In particular, Ofsted estimated that there were 10,000 pupils in Key Stage 4 missing from school rolls and drew attention to inadequacies in the curriculum of those pupils taught in settings other than schools.

348. The report recommended:

- the establishment of a system to register alternative education and evaluate the quality of educational programmes
- the need for LEAs to ensure that all alternative education centres were registered as pupil referral units
- the production of national guidelines to define the curriculum, including the types of qualifications to be offered and nature of assessments, in alternative education programmes
- the establishment of better tracking systems for pupils missing from school rolls.

349. The report created much interest from the media. Emerging findings were discussed with the DfES and the report led directly to the establishment of a DfES unit focused on the needs of young people who do not attend school. The unit has carried out detailed auditing of the alternative provision in every LEA, establishing a database of providers. It has identified that there are approximately 75,000 pupils who do not attend education in Key Stage 4.

350. The survey raised many issues that were subsequently addressed in the DfES paper, *14–19 Excellence and opportunity*, taken forward by the Tomlinson working group for 14–19 reform. Hundreds of alternative providers are now being registered as independent schools, or pupil referral units, which previously were not in these categories. The proposed inspections of children’s services will investigate action for children and young people who are at risk of not achieving their potential because they are missing from mainstream education, training or employment. In addition, the Secretary of State for Education and Skills instructed the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to develop criteria for curriculum guidance for alternative education providers. This is a powerful example of the direct impact of Ofsted’s work in informing government policy directly, particularly in promoting educational and social inclusion.

Case study 3: the subjects of the curriculum

351. A considerable amount of Ofsted’s inspection of subjects in recent years has been commissioned by the DfES to evaluate the impact of new guidance or strategies aimed at improving standards. This is true of the inspection of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy in primary schools and their effect on other subjects and of the evaluation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. There have been major inspections of music, including of the music services provided by LEAs, especially following the government commitment to wider opportunities and standards funding. The Sports Strategy and the pursuit of an entitlement to two hours of high-quality PE and games a week has led to the focused inspection of the various strands of this strategy. Major investment in ICT, in terms of equipment and staff training, has led to an extended evaluation of the impact of these initiatives and of the use of ICT across the curriculum. The effectiveness of drugs education initiatives has been the subject of inspection, as has personal, social and health education more generally. The pathfinder schools, piloting the new approaches to enterprise learning, have been inspected, as has the new subject of citizenship. Broad initiatives from the government on promoting creativity and education for sustainable development have been subject to evaluation by subject inspectors, as have developments in qualifications, such as the new GCSEs in vocational subjects and the new specifications brought in at AS and A2 level, including Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education.

352. In all these cases, the DfES sought Ofsted’s independent evaluation of the changes and, in each of these areas, subject inspection has followed an externally commissioned agenda. Here the question of the impact on the schools and providers visited is secondary to the impact of the reports and feedback from inspection on the policies and strategies themselves. There is ample evidence that the publications resulting from these inspections have shaped subsequent training and guidance for teachers and schools. In many cases, specialist HMI act as assessors to the project boards and steering groups for such initiatives, and can inject evidence from inspection into their deliberations as policy is being formed. The substantial reshaping of the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) training for teachers in ICT; the use of Ofsted’s inspection of both RE in schools and of Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education (SACRE) in the discussion of a new national curriculum for RE; or the outcomes of the inspection of LEA music services and of the Wider

Opportunities initiatives in music, drawn on in framing the music manifesto – all these provide clear evidence

353. Such examples are numerous across a range of subjects. Officials who are recipients are emphatic in pointing out that this evidence-based and impartial advice, from inspectors who visit schools and classrooms constantly, is very important to them, is not easily available from others and complements any other evaluations they commission. The main complaint is that the pressure of the inspection programme sometimes makes it hard for HMI to attend meetings of steering committees or project boards organised by DfES officials or directors of the various subject strands of the national strategies.

354. Sometimes there is a long time lag between the commissioning of a subject inspection project and the eventual published report being produced, and some better mechanisms for interim findings to be fed back in time to make fine adjustments to strategies and policies would be welcomed by officials. There is also, at present, no formal method whereby those who commission subject inspections are asked to feed back how far the inspection met their intentions in setting it up, or which – if any – recommendations might be acted upon and how. Such feedback should form part of Ofsted's monitoring and evaluation of its impact.

355. Subject inspection also has an impact on the development of the curriculum and of tests and examinations, which are overseen by the QCA. This is especially evident in the use made of subject inspection outcomes in the annual monitoring reports of the QCA. Unlike the QCA's own evidence, drawn mainly from questionnaires and focus group meetings, where teachers comment on the curriculum and assessment in the subject, Ofsted's reports evaluate directly the standards achieved and the quality of teaching seen in classrooms. QCA officials stress the value they attach to such inspection outcomes when they are considering changes to the curriculum or to assessment, and the value they attach generally to the authority of HMI subject expertise, supported by inspection data.

356. HMI who are Specialist Subjects Advisers (SSAs) have been involved as assessors in some scrutiny in relation to QCA's work in the maintenance of examination standards over time, and can occasionally attend meetings of the test development groups for key stage tests or comment on draft examination specifications or papers, but their direct impact on test and examination development has been limited in recent years (in contrast to the role of HMI prior to the establishment of Ofsted). This activity has not been a priority in HMI programmes of work, and it therefore represents a gap in the potential impact of subject inspection work on the regulation of standards in subjects. Inspectors regularly scrutinise pupils' work in some depth on subject inspection visits, and note the standards achieved in different test and examination classes, but the feedback from this evidence into the work of examination boards and the QCA is very indirect at present. This is regretted by some QCA officials, who note that the complete absence of HMI assessors from any of the awarding meetings at AS and A2 in any subject in summer 2002 left Ofsted unable to comment as fully as it might have done about the standards being set or the procedures being followed. The opportunities created by an increased volume of subject inspection, perhaps across a stratified sample of schools each

year, would make any outcomes on topics such as the standards reached in qualifications and tests far more reliable.

357. Subject inspection is also influential in shaping the work of a wide range of subject associations, advisory teams in LEAs and training courses for teachers, since the issues raised in subject reports help to set agendas. This has not been formally investigated as part of this evaluation, but anecdotal evidence abounds. At LEA level, whole music services or Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE) sometimes base their action plans on the feedback from an Ofsted inspection of their work.

358. Subject-specific inspection is reported on mainly through web publications and it is possible to look at the number and pattern of 'hits' for each such publication to gain some degree of insight into scale of interest, if not impact. For example, the report *Good Assessment in Secondary Schools* and the accompanying thirteen subject-focused 'good practice' reports were published on the website and also sent to all secondary schools in March 2003. In the five months from March to July 2003, there were over 10,000 hits for this series of reports. ICT attracted the most (over 1,250) while each of the core subjects recorded over 1,000, and each National Curriculum subject recorded over 500.

359. The impact made by Ofsted's subject publications is often considerable in terms of training and support for teachers and trainee teachers, policy developments and curriculum or examination changes. To give a few examples from a range of subjects, many of which could be replicated across the curriculum:

- training materials used by the national strategies at both primary and secondary level draw heavily on the outcome of Ofsted's inspections
- guidance for schools from the DfES, the QCA and other departments or agencies often draws on the outcomes of inspection. For example, the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of the new subject of citizenship have been used directly by both the DfES and the QCA in affirming the nature of the subject and clarifying expectations for schools
- considerable evidence¹⁴⁹ of the use of Ofsted's subject reports by initial teacher education providers, LEA subject advisers and their associations, as well as other professional associations
- awarding bodies, working under the direction of QCA, make use of subject inspection outcomes in developing examinations and tests.

360. The work of SSAs and other HMI who are specialists in particular subjects has tended to follow a separate track from the inspection of subjects carried out in

¹⁴⁹ Inspection Impact Paper : *The impact of subject inspections by HMI and additional inspectors*, Ofsted, 2004.

s10 inspection of schools. From January 2000 to August 2003, a significant contributory factor was that subjects were not specifically reported on in the 20 to 25% of very effective schools that received only short inspections. The identification of best practice in subjects required sampling of subject work in the most successful schools. The reinstatement of subject inspection in all schools from September 2003 should allow a more complementary approach to subject inspection and more efficient use of resources. The role of subject specialist HMI will change again under proposals for the future of inspection, where subject inspection will need to take place as a mainstream activity alongside the proposed short inspections that will not examine subjects in any depth. Regular discussion between Ofsted, the DfES, the QCA and other agencies will mean that the future inspection programme for subjects can be shaped to provide much of the information needed by policy makers without the need for much separately commissioned work.

Case study 4: the inspection of training for teachers in further education¹⁵⁰

361. In 2001 the DfES introduced regulations requiring all teachers in FE to achieve a recognised qualification appropriate to their role. Before this, no teaching qualifications were required in FE. All courses leading to such qualifications had to be based on standards for teaching and supporting learning published by the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO). To support continuing professional development in colleges, the DfES allocated substantial resources to colleges through the FE Standards Fund (£80 million in the financial year 2001–02). Ofsted became responsible for the inspection of FE teacher training in 2001.

362. In contrast to ITT for primary and secondary teachers, FE training had received little recent independent scrutiny through inspection. FE teacher training was frequently just one minor component of larger institutional inspections and was rarely reported upon in a specific or detailed way in reports.

363. The DfES accepted Ofsted's advice that a survey of current provision would be of more use than an immediate cycle of inspections of FENTO-endorsed providers and would provide an evidence base for decision-making. The survey was carried out during the academic year 2002/03 with the help of members of the ALI. The institutions visited were selected to give a representative sample of types of provision. The number chosen, 8 HEIs and 23 FE colleges (most of the latter working in partnership with the HEIs), was sufficient to give a reliable evidence base, while not making excessive demands upon inspection time.

364. The inspection report was published in November 2003. While highlighting some strengths in provision, it raised a number of important concerns and concluded that the current system of FE teacher training did not provide a satisfactory foundation for professional development for FE teachers at the start of their careers. It made a number of recommendations for fundamental reform.

¹⁵⁰ Inspection Impact Paper: *The inspection of training for teachers in further education*; Ofsted, 2003.

365. Ofsted had discussed the emerging findings regularly with the DfES throughout the year. On the same day that the report was published, the DfES published its consultation paper on *The future of initial teacher education for the learning and skills sector*. In his foreword, the minister of state wrote:

Ofsted's survey inspection report is a useful and timely description of initial teacher education provision for FE colleges... This consultation is both our response to Ofsted's recommendations, and a catalyst for a wider improvement strategy for initial teacher education.

366. It is unusual for the DfES to respond so quickly to inspection findings and the fact that it dealt with all the major findings in the report indicates the significance of the inspection and its substantial and immediate impact on policy. Immediately following publication of the report, HMI were involved in major dissemination events. These included sessions at annual conferences of the Association of Colleges and the University Council for the Education of Teachers, which involved many of the staff who will be most influential in ensuring change in colleges and HEIs. HMI also contributed to DfES regional consultation conferences where the inspection findings were discussed with wider audiences.

367. In many of the courses inspected, return visits to institutions during the year revealed positive developments in management of the programmes and in aspects of training. It seemed highly likely that the inspection provided the stimulus for this review and change. In some instances, evidence for impact was clear and unequivocal. For example, lack of basic data on the entry qualifications of trainees resulted in many providers being unable to respond effectively to trainees' particular needs. At the time of the first visits, tutors in only 2 out of 31 institutions could provide accurate information on trainees' qualifications in literacy and numeracy. By the end of the inspection, all had the information and most had put in place systems to ensure that the equivalent information would be available and used for future cohorts of trainees.

368. As a matter of established practice, at the end of the inspection, the main strengths and weaknesses for each provider were set out in a letter to the principal of the institution. However, in the case of one of the largest providers of FETT in the country, the weaknesses identified were so serious that the letter was copied to the DfES. This resulted in a rapid response from the provider, tackling the main issues through, for example, new teaching appointments, more secure arrangements for work placements and increased numbers of observations of teaching practice.

369. In most respects, this survey provided a model of how inspection can have a major impact on policy. Important features were its timing, which matched DfES priorities; regular and productive liaison with DfES officers, including the sharing of emerging findings; deployment of inspectors with expertise in teacher training and further education, and collaboration with ALI; a suitable lead-in time to ensure effective planning and preparation; and clear inspection objectives.

370. While there is some clear evidence of the impact of the inspection on the providers involved, since the focus was on policy development and on building a picture of the FETT system as a whole, collection of such evidence for individual

providers, on a systematic basis, was not considered as an objective of the inspection. This could have been built into the inspection methodology quite easily and possibly should be a feature of future surveys of this kind.

The impact of Ofsted: an international perspective

Ofsted has attracted considerable international attention as interest in developing quality assurance systems has grown. Ofsted's techniques and frameworks have been of particular interest, although the contracted-out approach to procurement of inspectors remains something of a novelty. Ofsted in turn has gained from discussing alternative evaluation regimes and engaging in cooperative development work and research, particularly with European partners. This section draws on a recent survey of international visitors to give a flavour of the effect of Ofsted's international links.

Introduction

371. Ofsted's international policy has two broad aims:

- to support Ofsted's corporate goals of providing high-quality inspection and advice, both in respect of schools and across its other remits, including LEAs, post-16 education and early years
- to get independent, reliable and relevant information about effective practice in other education systems into the hands of colleagues within Ofsted and, when appropriate, the wider educational community.¹⁵¹

372. These aims are met by ensuring that an international perspective is brought to Ofsted's inspection work, by a commitment to the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI) and through bilateral international cooperation with a number of states. As far as possible, Ofsted maintains a visible international presence and responds to requests for consultancy in other countries.

373. Internationally, there is a wide and growing interest in developing quality assurance systems in education with a particular focus on whole school evaluation and school improvement. This section includes examples of different aspects of Ofsted's international work, in particular:

- the effect of Ofsted's briefing to policy makers from other countries and limited consultancy
- international co-operation on inspection research.

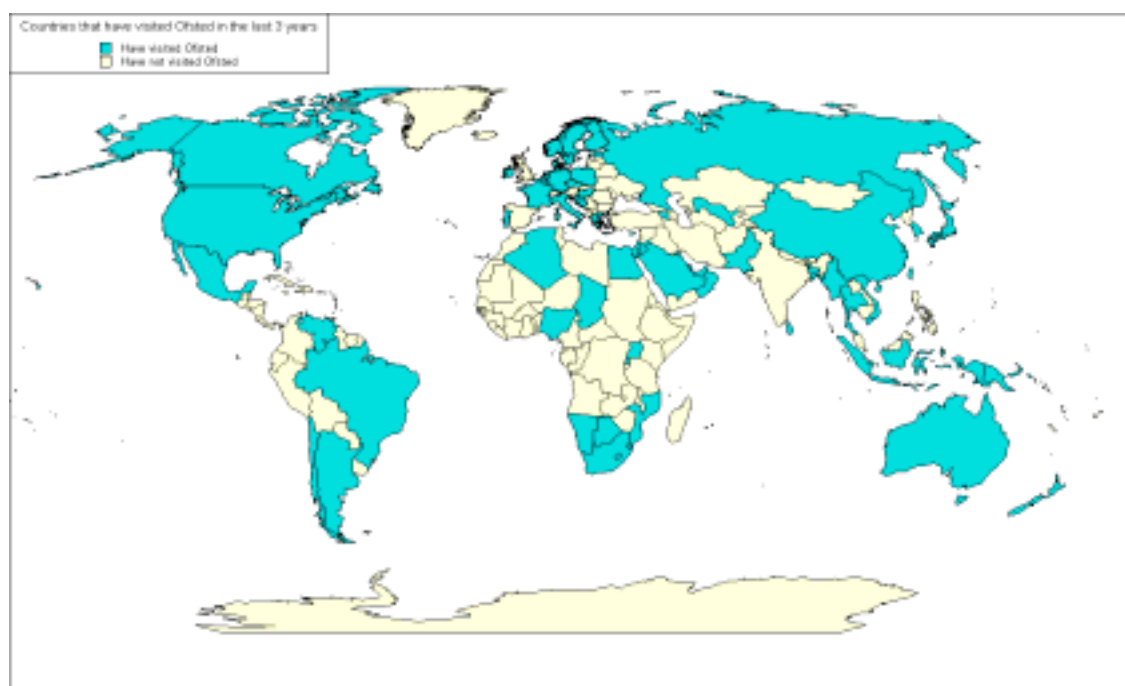
¹⁵¹ Inspection Impact Paper, *The impact of Ofsted: an international perspective* (internal paper), Ofsted, 2004.

Briefing and consultancy with policy makers from other countries

374. In 2002/03 alone, Ofsted received over 50 groups of visitors from over 30 countries. Countries represented by visitors since 2000 are shown in Figure 24. Visitors are interested principally in learning about the work of Ofsted generally, but some have specific issues they wish to explore in detail. These commonly include the:

- role of inspection in bringing about school improvement
- management and methodology of inspection
- criteria and methodology for evaluating specific aspects such as leadership and management
- management of inspection databases.

Figure 23. Countries whose delegations have visited Ofsted since 2000.



375. Often, visits are prompted by national reviews of evaluation procedures, and are intended to inform policy development and the drafting or implementation of legislation. Programmes always include meetings with key Ofsted staff and may entail visits to other departments or government agencies, discussions with other UK inspectorates and visits to schools or colleges, occasionally to join inspections in progress.

376. Meetings with overseas delegations provide opportunities to discuss comparative approaches to inspection and evaluation in other education systems.

Discussions contribute to Ofsted's understanding of inspection systems and the review of inspection practice.

Benefits to Ofsted's visitors

377. In February 2004, Ofsted contacted 59 countries represented through visits to Ofsted in the past two years. Fifteen countries responded to a survey questionnaire. In addition, the British Council, which sponsors many links, has conducted its own small-scale informal survey of international projects where contact with Ofsted has been a crucial part of the development process.

378. All the visitors who responded felt that **the aims of their visit had been met very well.**¹⁵² Visitors appreciated:

- discussions, which they felt were open and frank and helped them understand Ofsted's policies and practices
- publications and reports that were made available to them, which they found very helpful and intended to disseminate to colleagues in their own organisations
- opportunities to develop links that they could follow up later.

379. Particularly interesting is how visitors feel they benefit from their knowledge of Ofsted's inspection system and what they perceive as its strengths and weaknesses.

Responses from overseas visitors to the questions: Have you adopted any of Ofsted's ideas or procedures, or do you plan to?

'After I came back I put the ideas that I learnt from Ofsted into practice. In seminars for our educational inspectors from the East China area, I stressed how Ofsted resolved the realistic problems in primary and secondary schools, and how they offered advice on policy to the British government.'

'We do not plan to have inspections [like those used by] Ofsted but it was good to hear the experience of dealing with school improvements. The idea behind the Norwegian national tests is that these tests should provide information how to improve the teaching and learning - through good tests and then how to then co-operate with teachers and schools. So it is not the same but still it was helpful to gain insight into your experience.'

'Now I am a member of a professional committee focused upon school evaluation and inspection in the Metropolitan Tokyo Board of Education. In this committee we developed our new school evaluation scheme to improve the quality of education. We discussed your way of school evaluation and how we could adopt Ofsted ideas and procedures.'

¹⁵² On a scale: very well; quite well; not sure; not very well; not at all.

'We are highly likely to incorporate Ofsted ideas into improvements to our own review procedures. We are impressed with the mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies used and the general accessibility of the final report.'

380. Although some visitors were not directly responsible for policy in their countries many felt their meetings in Ofsted had helped inform decision-making. Some intended to incorporate features of Ofsted inspections into their own review procedures. In Qatar, for example, the Minister of Education is now looking to use an inspection model as a means of improving schools. In Malta, features of Ofsted's inspection approach are likely to influence the country's reform programme. Indonesia is setting up a de-centralised inspection system and has been engaged in discussions with Ofsted. At least one province in South Africa has established its own 'Ofsted'. The Ofsted model has also influenced the methodology for the inspection of international schools; in Spain, for example, close links with the British Council have led to the development of an inspection regime covering international schools in Spain. Many of Ofsted's publications and reports are now used as resources in other organisations around the world. Some countries have translated Ofsted's publications, especially frameworks for inspection and guidance.

381. Overseas visitors frequently comment on what they see as distinctive features and strengths of Ofsted's inspection approach:

- its independence and transparency
- the mix of quantitative and qualitative elements in the inspection methodology
- the accessibility of inspection reports to parents and others
- the systematic approach that provides a national picture of schools in England
- a high-quality, professional approach
- the monitoring of schools causing concern.

382. Equally, visitors comment on possible weaknesses, including:

- more emphasis on control than direct involvement in developing and improving schools
- a tension between self- and external evaluation
- a danger of reducing inspection to a summary of judgements, masking the 'true substance of the school'
- too much highlighting of failing schools in the media
- the risk of variability in the quality of judgements.

Responses from some overseas visitors to the question: What do you think are the main strengths and weaknesses in Ofsted's inspection work?

'Well organised, professional evaluation.'

'I think the Ofsted system is very effective for the schools which are having a problem in the field of school management. A weakness of Ofsted's work might be the money that is needed to undertake detailed inspection and provide enough inspectors for the team.'

'Strengths: independence of Ofsted; a large and professional agent with expertise in school inspection. Weaknesses: so far, not yet discovered in just a short visit.'

'In my point of view, the main strengths lay in Ofsted's clear-cut work function and responsibility, which was guaranteed by the system of contract between Ofsted and its inspectors. I learnt a lot from the experience of Ofsted, which I think can be put into our educational practice, of course, only if we adjust some of the experience according to our country's reality.'

'Seen from the outside, Ofsted's procedures may seem to be of a rather controlling nature, with less emphasis being put on developing and improving schools. Also, it would be interesting to see school-based evaluation (self-evaluation) procedures combined with the inspection routines. In my view, the strength of Ofsted's procedures lies in the systematic work that is done, which contributes to providing updated information on the school system and the functioning of the schools. I read Ofsted's web pages quite frequently, with great interest.'

'Among the strengths are the transparency of the procedures, the on-site inspection, the mix of methodologies and the accessibility of the final report. Among the 'weaknesses' (that is, elements we would not take up) are the sensationalising in the media of so-called 'failing schools'. We would want to put review reports on the website for parents and others wanting details of the school but not encourage a naming and shaming approach. I realise that OFSTED may have limited control over how the press treat this information – the goal would be to avoid further damage to the school while guiding its improvement.'

'You have helped schools improve in their efforts of self-evaluation, which is a very important improvement. This probably leads to a general improvement of school quality in your country.'

383. Although Ofsted's website is intended primarily for its audience in England, about 2% of all 'hits' to the site are from non-UK sources.

Extended involvement with individual countries

384. Ofsted has contributed to conferences in many parts of the world, and recent workshops in countries that include China, Estonia and Malta. Three specific

examples of international cooperation are included here. The first involves a partnership for nearly 10 years with the Dutch inspectorate focusing on the comparison and cross-validation of inspection methodologies and the characteristics of primary school teaching and learning¹⁵³ in language and mathematics in the two countries as illuminated through inspection. The collaboration has provided a basis for wider international studies of teaching and learning.

385. Second, Ofsted has worked with Gulf States, particularly Oman and Qatar, to help develop an evaluation framework (Oman) and evaluate pilot school evaluations (Qatar). There is continuing interest by states in the United Arab Emirates to develop evaluation systems.

386. More recently, Ofsted has developed close working relationships with South Africa, facilitated by the British Council. The South African policy for whole-school evaluation draws from Ofsted's inspection frameworks and instruments, but has its own distinctive features and cultural identity. Links, centred on national developments, have been forged with the provinces of Gauteng and the Free State, and the national evaluation agency UMALUSI. The contributions of Ofsted staff include: work with educators, provincial education departments and schools; in-service training workshops for evaluators; and presentations at major conferences. In turn, South African evaluators have visited Ofsted, taken part in inspections and evaluated Ofsted's processes.

Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI)

387. Ofsted plays a full part in the work of SICI, a consortium of 20 countries and states across Europe. Until recently, Ofsted held the secretariat of SICI and has initiated or contributed to workshops on the:

- effect of inspection
- inspection of information and communication technology
- PISA study
- inspection of citizenship.

388. Beyond this, Ofsted has made a significant contribution to the debate across Europe about the role of inspection and the importance of focusing on the outcomes of education as well as the processes. Following the publication of the PISA results, for example, Ofsted supported policy-focused conferences in, for example, Germany, Italy and Switzerland on raising standards.

389. These links form part of a two-way process. Having access to 'critical friends' across Europe supports Ofsted's ambition to improve its own performance and to

¹⁵³ Van de Grift W, Matthews P, Tabak L, and Rijcke F, *Collaborative research into the inspection of teaching and learning in England and the Netherlands*, Ofsted, 2004.

provide up-to-date advice based on as wide a range of evidence as possible. For example, collaborative studies of the education of six year olds, and vocational education post-16, have been undertaken by Ofsted in several European countries.

390. Ofsted took part in a European Union-sponsored comparative study of approaches to the inspection of self-evaluation across Europe, contributing from the standpoint of its methodology. The evidence suggests that Ofsted draws from this range of international experience in its own continuing development.

Commentary

391. Ofsted's thematic inspection exercises can be seen to make an important contribution to the quality assurance and development of national education strategies. They are commissioned by the DfES or instigated by HMCI and inform policy development or serve to prompt review and redirection of existing policies. This function is particularly important in a period of innovation and change, aimed at the national priority of improving the quality and standards of education for all. It also provides a measure of accountability for the considerable resources that are directed at national strategies and other developments.

392. Ofsted is not the only evaluator commissioned by government. The effect of major innovations is often the subject of commissioned research, whose findings are thorough but often take a long time to emerge. At the other extreme, the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) provides a model of rapid assessments of the impact of policies, usually in relation to targets and indicators. Ofsted's unique contribution appears to be the informed diagnosis largely based on first-hand evidence of policies in action at the level of providers. Thus Ofsted's findings speak directly to practitioners as well as to government.

393. Ofsted conducts much in-house research and data analysis in support of inspection exercises, HMCI's speeches and Annual Report, the development of e-PANDAs (Performance and Assessment Reports) for providers, responses to Parliamentary Questions and a range of enquiries from the DfES and other departments. Data are also provided for recognised researchers, whose applications are considered on the merits of their proposals. The potential of the database appears not to be fully exploited because of resource constraints, and building a stronger collaboration with the research community may offer a way of maximising the use of inspection data.

394. Thematic studies invariably result in publications that are used and valued by providers for the good practice they contain. The publications reflect the breadth and depth of expertise that resides in Ofsted through Her Majesty's Inspectors and disseminate that expertise across the system and in a way that can be – and is – accessed by individual providers. The work of HMI subject specialists illustrates the wide scope of their contribution to education. Ofsted has not developed a mechanism for capturing and reflecting on its website the outstanding practice found in the day-to-day inspection of providers, beyond providing the full inspection report. Such a development might help further in the dissemination of good practice.

395. Ofsted undertakes a range of beneficial activities at the edges of its capacity, of which its international work is a clear example. Other initiatives have included the *Headfirst* programme for training headteachers in evaluation and improvement techniques, based on the Ofsted inspection approach. This work has been successful and headteachers testify to the value of inspector training or involvement in inspections to the leadership and management of their own schools.

8. Public information and accountability

Education is a publicly accountable service of fundamental importance to learners, their parents and a wide range of stakeholders, and inspection is means of ensuring this accountability, informing parents and as far as possible safeguarding the entitlement of young people to a satisfactory or better educational experience. This chapter evaluates what the public understand about Ofsted and how well it meets the needs of parents. It analyses parents' and pupils' views of inspection. Ofsted's openness and communications are examined, with particular reference to the Annual Report and other publications. The text concludes with a comment on the role of the chief inspector.

Public understanding of Ofsted

396. The most recent independent survey¹⁵⁴ of public perceptions of Ofsted included over 2,000 adults and was conducted in October 2003. This found that three quarters of the adults sampled had heard of Ofsted. As would be expected, respondents in households with at least one child aged 15 or younger were more likely to have heard of Ofsted than respondents in households with no children (78% versus 72%). As the age of the respondent's eldest child increased, so too did the likelihood that they had heard of Ofsted. Over half (53%) of parents with children aged 11 to 15, and a higher proportion of more socially advantaged parents, felt they knew something of what Ofsted did (Figure 24).

Figure 24. Responses to the question: 'How much do you feel you know about what Ofsted does?' (n = 1,402: those who have heard of Ofsted).

397. Respondents with at least one child in the household aged 15 or younger are significantly more likely to claim to know at least a fair amount about what Ofsted does (51%) than those with no children (40%).

398. As the age of respondents' eldest child increases, so too does their knowledge about Ofsted. The number of respondents who say they know at least a fair amount about what Ofsted does rises significantly to over half among parents of a child aged 11 to 15 years (54%) or 6 to 10 years (51%), compared to 45% with an eldest child in the 0-5 age group. Unsurprisingly, this indicates that the salience of Ofsted (and so proper knowledge of its role) increases for parents/guardians of a school-age child. Again, there is variation by social class. More advantaged adults (ABs) are significantly more likely to say that they feel they know a great deal or fair amount about what Ofsted does (60%) than the least advantaged (DEs) (28%).

399. Two in five (42%) of respondents felt that Ofsted did a good job of inspecting schools, colleges and childminders, compared to 15% who thought that Ofsted was

¹⁵⁴ By MORI using a randomly chosen sample of 2,068 adults.

doing a poor job. The remaining respondents could not say either way, no doubt reflecting their relatively low awareness of what the inspectorate does. The data suggest that, in general, the more that people believed they knew about Ofsted, the more likely they were to think it was doing a good job. Significantly, two-thirds of respondents (66%) who knew at least a fair amount about Ofsted's work believed that it was good at it, compared to 18% who believed the inspectorate did a poor job.

400. When considering improvement through inspection, two-thirds of respondents (68%) who felt they knew at least a fair amount about Ofsted's work also said that it helped schools and colleges to improve either a great deal or a fair amount. This compares with a lower proportion (29%) of respondents who said they knew a fair amount or more about Ofsted but believed its impact on schools and colleges was minimal or non-existent.

401. The findings also tended to support anecdotal evidence that more advantaged parents, and mothers in particular, were likely to be actively engaged in selecting a suitable school for their child, with inspection findings forming part of the evidence they considered during this process. On this evidence of social class differentials, Ofsted does not register strongly in the awareness of less advantaged or well-off parents. The picture may be changing, according to initial findings from a government survey of parents of children aged three to four years,¹⁵⁵ which found that: *the initiative of which most parents were most aware was Ofsted inspections of childcare providers, day nurseries and playgroups (71%)*.

Public accountability of schools and other providers: information for parents and parents' views of inspection

402. The first requirement of inspection is that it results in the publication of a rigorous report that gives a fair, accurate and impartial evaluation of the effectiveness of the institution inspected. Ofsted's inspection reports on schools, colleges, teacher education providers, LEAs and childcare providers have given parents, students and any other interested readers ready access to independent assessments of quality and standards. This is a major change from the pre-Ofsted world of HMI in which schools, for example, were inspected very infrequently and there was no systematic mechanism for bringing inspection findings to the attention of parents.

403. Currently, parents have a potentially significant role in school inspections. They are invited to a meeting with the lead inspector before the inspection. Attendance at these meetings varies greatly, but on average is low, particularly in secondary schools. In a recent survey of parents of children in secondary schools¹⁵⁶, only 10% of parents with children at one of a sample of 170 secondary schools attended the meeting with the lead inspector. Virtually all who did found it worthwhile, citing the opportunity it gave to express their views, hear what other parents thought

¹⁵⁵ *Support for parents: messages from research*, Department of Health, Jessica Kingsley Publications, 2004.

¹⁵⁶ Survey of a sample of parents in 170 secondary schools inspected in autumn 2003.

and have the inspection explained to them. Those who did not attend identified barriers such as work commitments, childcare, prior engagements or being too busy. In primary schools, parents with very young children often found it difficult to attend. Parents also saw less reason to attend if they had no concerns about the school or if they had already completed the questionnaire for parents which they are invited to complete. In the same sample of parents, 68% recalled receiving the questionnaire and 61% said they had returned the completed form.

404. After the inspection, the governing body must send every parent a summary of the inspection report, written by the inspection team, and keep parents informed about the action taken as a result of the inspection.

405. The requirement for inspectors to provide and the governing body to distribute a summary of school inspection reports for parents, as well as sending a copy of the full report to the LEA,¹⁵⁷ has provided an important means of accountability for the local community. In March 2004, Ofsted surveyed a sample of parents associated with the first 170 secondary schools to be inspected for the third time in autumn 2003.¹⁵⁸ Eighty-five per cent of the 649 parents who responded said they would find out, if possible, what the inspection report said if choosing a new school for their child. Seven per cent were not sure and the same proportion said they would not, most because they preferred the 'word of mouth' approach: judging the school on its local reputation.

Parents' views and use of summary inspection reports

To the question of whether they found the Ofsted summary report helpful, 24% of parents said that they found the summary 'very helpful' and 48% found it 'quite helpful'. Only 8% of parents found the summary report 'not very' or 'not at all' helpful. Ten per cent were 'not sure' and 10% did not respond.

Most parents responded with an emphatic 'no!' when asked if there was anything in the report that they did not understand, although there were both positive and negative comments on the layout, content and quality of particular summary reports. Suggested improvements included views that:

- 'there should be a separate report for each school year (group) so that strengths and weaknesses could be outlined'
- 'the summary should consist simply of a one or two page summary of action points'
- 'quantities should be expressed more specifically: for example, it said 'over 30%' but did not say how much over'

¹⁵⁷ The report is also sent to the local Learning and Skills Council if the school has a sixth form.

¹⁵⁸ Survey of parents associated with the 170 secondary schools inspected for the third time in Autumn 2003.

- 'the summary could be more detailed about exactly what and where improvements could be made.'

One respondent tellingly said: 'Would prefer an Ofsted summary and not one from the school.'

406. Parents surveyed strongly favoured the policy of inspection: 93% thought that schools should be inspected 'from time to time'; only 1% disagreed and the remainder were not sure. Underlying this highly positive response is a significant perception by parents that some aspects of inspection need changing. There is a widely held view among parents that schools are not observed working normally at the time of inspection. They cite evidence of:

- teachers who are apprehensive about the inspection
- the amount of preparation that takes place
- tidying up and improvements to facilities
- pupils being exhorted to behave in particular ways
- the school being unnaturally better during – and sometimes in the run-up to – inspection.

407. While strongly supporting the principle of inspection, preferably – as some respond – at frequent intervals so as to provide more up-to-date reports, many parents believe that inspectors do not see the school as it really is, but as one in which inherent weaknesses may be disguised. Ofsted recognises the preparation that takes place for inspection but points to the steps inspectors take to explore beneath any veneer: looking at work pupils have done some time before the inspection, discussing the school with pupils, and probing the recent performance of the school. There is little doubt that inspections tend to see institutions at their best owing to the advance notice and resulting careful preparation. In amplifying their responses, many parents favoured unannounced spot checks, possibly conducted at random. Parents are aware of the over-preparation that in some schools can generate stress among teachers, and they question the validity of inspection findings when schools have had six weeks or more to prepare. Parents' views of the current inspection system are shown in Figure 26.

Figure 25. Parents' responses to the question: Do you think Ofsted does a good job at inspecting schools? (Sample of parents of children at secondary schools)[n=649].

408. Despite their reservations about some features of inspection, the majority of parents believe that it leads to school improvement. In the group surveyed (described above) 56% of parents thought the school would improve as a result of the inspection, 17% thought it might, 16% were not sure; 7% did not think it would and 1% were adamant that it would not. Just 2% did not answer this question. Sixty-eight per cent of the sample of parents of children attending secondary schools remembered a previous inspection, usually of a primary school attended by one or more of their children. Of this group, 15% said the school had got much better and

50% a little better after the inspection. Thirty-two per cent saw no change and only 3% said the school had got worse or much worse.

409. Parents, at least, believe that inspection contributes to school improvement. When asked for evidence, many parents who believe the previous school had become better focused on more enjoyable lessons for pupils and improved management, facilities, and communication with parents. Many comments were non-specific and referred only to the school improving those areas that were recommended in the report by the inspectors. A large number of parents made similar comments such as: *'The school has carried out improvements suggested by the inspectors,'* and *'The school has made some improvements that were recommended in the report, but still has a long way to go. But without any more money, this may prove difficult for the school'.* Nine out of ten parents in the survey believed that an inspector should return to the school to see whether improvements had been made.

Parents' views of school improvement – sample of responses

Many parents stated that schools had changed for the better, with higher standards of teaching, better relationships between teachers and students and also, an overwhelming response noting the improvements in children's behaviour and the way schools deal with discipline and punishment.

- *'More money released by LEA to fund improvements to the structure of the building.'*
- *'Parents are much better informed of things going on in the school - business plan produced, dealt with matters in a long-term plan.'*
- *'The primary school in my opinion was a very good, disciplined and well-run school, which my daughter thoroughly enjoyed throughout. After a good Ofsted inspection, there was a positive and proud atmosphere throughout the school, which gave an air of confidence to the pupils.'*
- *'The school worked hard to improve on the points that were on the weak side, like attendance and punctuality.'*
- *'More specialist teaching and fewer mixed-year classes.'*
- *'More strict on students with poor behaviour or attitude problems.'*
- *'Monitoring systems put in place. Management shake-up which resulted in more flexibility and innovation.'*
- *'Special needs were improved, as was the leadership of the headteacher.'*

Some parents, though, were concerned that improvements were not sustained. These parents noted a distinct change in the initial stages after the inspection but were disappointed to note that the school had 'reverted back to the old ways' after a short period of time.

410. By fulfilling parents' general wish that schools should be inspected and reports published, it can be hypothesised that inspection has a significant role in helping to maintain confidence in state education, thus helping to retain pupils – particularly from more socially and economically advantaged families – in the state-maintained system. This in turn may improve the balance of school intakes which is associated with better school performance. Currently, there is concern in inner-city areas about middle class flight. Regular public inspection can be seen as an important lever which is highly relevant to current government concerns to improve the delivery of public services.

Pupils' perceptions of the impact of inspection on improvement

411. Pupils who were members of school councils in the first 170 secondary schools inspected in the third cycle, were asked to complete a questionnaire about four months after their inspection.¹⁵⁹ The 760 returns give an indication of pupils' perceptions of inspection in autumn 2003. To the question: did your lessons change during the inspection? Thirty-nine per cent said their lessons were better; 49% said they were taught in the same way as usual; 4% said they were worse; 3% said they repeated work done earlier and 5% did not know. Many students responded to the invitation to record what the changes were.

The views of pupils who said that lessons were better than before the inspection

The general views of the pupils were that the teachers' behaviour changed and in most cases improved to the benefit of the pupils. Most pupils noted their teachers became 'nicer' towards them and more understanding and patient in classes.

Many pupils remarked on the behaviour of other pupils, which also seemed to improve while the inspectors were visiting the school. Some pupils behaved better and there was considerable difference in the interaction between the teachers and the pupils.

This may partly be due to the fact that many pupils commented on how their teachers had given them several 'warnings' prior to the inspection so all made a special effort to 'behave in the way the teachers wanted' them to.

Only a small proportion who wrote a comment did not notice a difference. These commented that their school and lessons were good before, so there was no need to change anything just because the inspectors were there. This was most definitely a minority opinion though.

- *'Yes, we all went quiet and the teachers behaved in a nice, normal way – the inspectors didn't get the chance to see how poor our normal lessons are.'*
- *'Teachers were more worried at the prospect of being inspected during lessons,*

¹⁵⁹ Research into schools inspected for the third time, to be published.

so were keen to be seen doing the right thing (setting homework, encouraging class participation).'

- *'Teachers were just going over what we had already been taught, so we knew it already.'*
- *'Teachers did not chat or joke with the students the way they normally do – they appeared to be more professional.'*
- *'Lessons had specific plans and we were told in advance what we would be doing.'*
- *'One teacher who is usually boring and strict made the lesson more fun and he was more happy and friendly. I preferred the lesson and learnt lots more.'*
- *'Teachers were more strict, but also 'played up' to the inspectors to make them look like better teachers than they actually are. We were expected to work harder than usual but the teachers didn't shout or lose their tempers when the inspectors were there.'*
- *'There was a greater variety in the lessons – teachers who usually just teach from the front or ask students to make notes from books, used other materials.'*

412. In some schools, pupils seemed to be left unaware of the findings of inspection. Around 60% said they had been told by the school what the inspectors found. Fifty-four per cent had read the summary of the report sent to parents but it is likely that some of these were prompted by the survey to do so. When asked whether pupils thought the inspectors' judgements about the school were fair and accurate, 448 responded (presumably because they were in a position to do so for the reasons given above), of whom 27% said the judgements were *very*, and 51%, *quite* fair and accurate. Twelve per cent did not think they were. Ten per cent were *not sure*. Respondents covered all ages from 11 to 18 years: 59% were female and 40% male with 1% not answering this question.

413. Pupils were asked whether they thought that the inspection would help the school to improve. The majority felt it would, to a greater or lesser extent, with 22% saying *a lot*, 37% saying *a little*; 24% saying *not sure*; 11% saying *not much* and 5% saying *not at all*. The majority of comments that supplemented the response were to the effect that quite a lot had changed already since the inspection, most favourably but some less so.

Pupils' views of lasting changes

Many pupils commented on improved facilities within their school such as decoration of the classrooms, better toilet facilities, cleaner playground, more improved technology equipment and lockers for each student. There was mention of changes in dealing with discipline and homework which had either been restructured or increased. Changes to timetables were also mentioned on a number of occasions, as was a stricter stance taken by teachers on pupils' uniforms.

Some pupils mentioned new headteachers and the impact they had on the school after the inspection had taken place. A new initiative called 'S for Success' had been introduced into one school. Pupils also made specific references to changes in subjects, in particular drama and religious education.

Many pupils felt that teachers in general had reverted back to the way they taught prior to the inspection which made them believe they had 'put on an act' for the inspectors. Lessons were not as varied and the teachers started being less patient and understanding with them. However, some pupils commented that the school was more relaxed now the inspection was over and that the teachers seemed far less 'stressed' and 'preoccupied'.

There was a mixture of responses, with some pupils commenting on their pleasure at the changes and others feeling less positive about them.

- *'The teachers are concentrating more on dealing with bad behaviour.'*
- *'One heavily criticised department has made improvements to the quality of the lessons.'*
- *'I think my school has taken on board what the inspectors said and are changing things that need improving.'*
- *'All the teachers have reverted back to how they were before the inspection so standards have dropped again.'*
- *'We now have a new and very aggressive headteacher who has bombarded us with more rules.'*
- *'The children are really naughty again now and the teachers shout lots more.'*

Those who did not notice any changes after the inspection, commented that the reason for this was either that the school had ignored any recommendations, or that the school was already performing well and therefore did not need to change. Two contrasting responses by the school were also reported.

- *'The headteacher gave an assembly about how wrong you (the inspectors) all were!'*
- *'The inspectors' judgements were read out in assembly so we all know what they are having to improve on.'*

Accountability of some other sectors: initial teacher training¹⁶⁰

414. Government Circulars and guidance have increasingly emphasised the minimum standards of performance that trainees should demonstrate before being

¹⁶⁰ See Chapters 3 and 7.

awarded qualified teacher status (QTS), as a means of ensuring that ITT courses provide high-quality training and accurate rigorous assessment of trainees' competence to teach. The Teacher Training Agency (TTA), as part of its remit, must have regard to inspection evidence and quality assessments provided by HMCI when making decisions about funding and compliance with current requirements.

415. Ofsted has carried out a rolling programme of inspections, leading to reports and quality grades, which have made major contributions to the TTA's decisions about the allocation of training places and accreditation of new providers. The reports have also guided providers to ways of improving training.

Local education authorities

416. The inspection of LEAs has served to open up to public scrutiny those organisations' support to their schools and pupils. The inspection reports offer elected members and council tax payers a searching evaluation of just how effective an LEA has been in providing support for such areas as school improvement or special educational needs. Critical inspection reports usually result in the DfES initiating intervention in order to effect more rapid improvement. Judgements from inspection reports are taken into account by the DfES in its oversight of LEA work.

Impact of Internet publication

417. There is great interest in the quality and standards of education and care providers. By meeting that interest, and providing for independent accountability, inspection raises the visibility of education and the expectations of its customers, particularly parents and learners. This certainly provides a pressure for improvement, manifest most obviously in the exercise of parental preference for the school of their choice, but also in the selection of post-16 and ITT courses by students.

418. The Internet has helped greatly in the dissemination of inspection findings. Ofsted's school and college inspection reports now¹⁶¹ reach the website www.ofsted.gov.uk shortly after the governing bodies receive them. Ofsted leads the world in providing public information about publicly funded education, at provider level. Electronic publication means that interested readers can readily find out about any school, college or other provider that interests them.

419. The Ofsted website is one of the most popular government sites, attracting around 150,000,000 hits in the year to May 2004. The site incorporates around 5,000 inspection reports published each year, 6,500 day-care reports and nearly 1,000 other inspection reports. The site was voted best corporate website in the Government Internet Forum Awards for 2003. New development work in 2003 included the publishing of new inspection reports for day-care providers, improvements to the coverage and accuracy of the search engine, and the addition

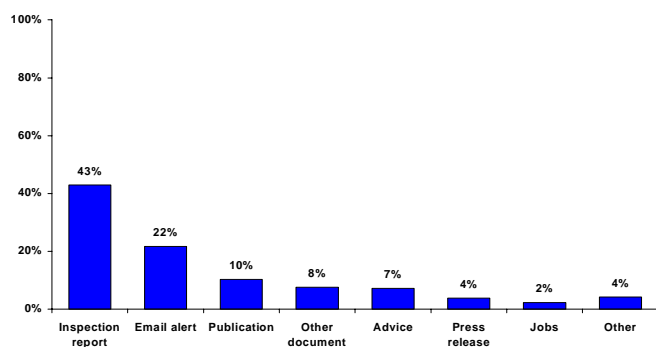
¹⁶¹ It used to take up to two months to complete the loading of an inspection report on the website.

of a library to support partner organisations involved in the Every Child Matters policy.

420. A survey was recently undertaken¹⁶² to establish whether the Ofsted website is meeting stakeholders' needs in terms of content, design and navigation. The results reveal that 90% of the 207 visitors who voluntarily completed a questionnaire during a visit to the website are happy with the information it provides. Visitors do not always find the report they are looking for, but several recognised that the short time delay between inspection and publication was the main reason for this. The most common reason by far for visiting the Ofsted website was to look for institutional inspection reports.

421. Conclusions from the data are tentative owing to the relatively small number of respondents to the survey. Figure 27 shows the number of respondents in each of the nine groups. The site is popular with parents, who accounted for a third of those completing the survey. The small numbers of respondents in the remaining groups make it unrealistic to draw firm conclusions from a further breakdown of responses within visitor type. Forty-three per cent of respondents visited the website to look for inspection reports and 22% visited because of being alerted through email to new information. A third of respondents said they visited the website weekly while a further third said that the visit was their first.

Figure 26. Reasons for accessing the Ofsted website (207 responses).



422. Asked if they would recommend the Ofsted website to other people, 89% of respondents replied that they would. Fifty-five per cent of respondents visited the Ofsted website for personal use, 38% for work use and 7% visited for a friend or

¹⁶² Inspection Impact Paper: *Ofsted's website*, Ofsted, 2004.

relative. Around 90% of respondents in each category found the information provided by Ofsted useful.

Ofsted as a service provider

423. It is worth considering Ofsted's contribution in terms of what the world of education in England would look like if it did not exist. Some of those disenchanted with the experience or policy of inspection would have positive views on this. Soon after school inspections entered their third cycle, HMCI rhetorically questioned¹⁶³ whether, if Ofsted had not been established in 1992, we would now have a system where:

- *parents are able to find an independent assessment of any school in the country*
- *every governor, headteacher or principal, teacher, parent and student has access to a diagnosis of their school or college that, for the majority, is within the last three years*
- *intending teachers compare the quality of training providers before deciding where to apply, and know that their training will be quality assured*
- *career teachers can compare their schools with others, draw ideas from them and get an insight into the quality, standards and challenges of schools they may wish to work in*
- *virtually all publications on school choice – and many schools in their own documentation – quote inspection findings*
- *researchers can mine reports and Ofsted's database for information*
- *if a school, college or LEA inspected in the previous year is outstanding, or has improved considerably, the Annual Report will pay tribute to the fact*
- *if a school, college, childminder or LEA is not doing its job well, there is a requirement for action to improve the quality of provision*
- *any provider that causes concern will be followed up.*

424. The point was made more strongly by an experienced former secondary headteacher:

¹⁶³ Speech at National Education Show, Birmingham, March 2004.

*It is interesting to invert the question about the impact of inspection and ask about the impact of non-inspection. As someone who worked in secondary schools from 1976 until 2003, and on occasions saw appalling practice that offered young people a very poor deal, I cannot speculate on the possible demise of inspection with equanimity. To remove the discipline and rigour of open and external scrutiny would put in jeopardy the hard-won improvements of the last ten years. Inspection may need to change, but it would pass away at our peril!*¹⁶⁴

425. A by-product of the contracting-out of the section 10 inspections of schools has been the development of a private sector, quality assured market, capable of delivering a wide range of DfES and government initiatives in addition to inspection: for example advice on performance management in schools, threshold assessment, training and development for teachers and headteachers, and interventions in the work of LEAs. The market also provides skilled and economic consultancy services to schools, which regard them as credible because of the work they have done for Ofsted. Consultancy may cover school improvement, developing and delivering action plans and supporting governing bodies.¹⁶⁵

HMCI's Annual Report to parliament

426. The most widely recognised publication about education and care in England is HMCI's Annual Report which is published by order of parliament. This was established a few years before Ofsted¹⁶⁶, but became enshrined as a statutory duty in the Education Act 1992. The Annual Report provides a comprehensive review of the quality and standards of education across all sectors and, inevitably, chronicles the effects of the stewardship and policies of different administrations.

427. Ofsted issued a questionnaire with every copy of the 2002/03 Annual Report, distributed in February 2004, in order to evaluate its impact. The following responses, analysed by MORI, are based on 928 completed questionnaires received by 18 March 2004.¹⁶⁷ More than half the respondents found the overall content of the Annual Report *accessible* (54%) and *informative* (60%). A substantial minority found it *useful* (41%) *thought-provoking* (40%) and *interesting* (32%). Fewer than 10% chose adjectives such as *irrelevant* (6%), *superficial* (5%), *backward-looking* (7%), *boring or negative* (9%). The parts of the full report that commanded most interest were those relating to *nursery and primary education* and *school improvement strategies*. The main findings in the summary report and HMCI's commentary also attracted much interest. Less interest in education in independent schools and post-compulsory education probably reflected the smaller size of these sectors.

¹⁶⁴ Communication from a former headteacher, now an HMI.

¹⁶⁵ Internal evidence from Ofsted's Contracts Management Division.

¹⁶⁶ Bolton E, *HMI 1976 to 1992*, in 'School Inspection', (Eds. Brighouse T. and Moon B.)Pittman, London,1995.

¹⁶⁷ Inspection Impact Paper, *Users' views of HMCI's Annual Report*, Ofsted 2004.

428. The Report can claim to give value, with 52% of readers saying that there was about the right amount of information and 41% identifying too much. Turning from the Report generally to the chapters and sections of greatest interest to the readers, 69% felt that it was about the right amount of information and only 7% said too little. The previous Annual Report included a CD-Rom containing a wealth of data together with Word files that provided much extra information about strengths and weaknesses in the subjects of the curriculum. This resource was under-used, with only 9% of readers claiming to use the CD-Rom a fair amount or a great deal. The proportion has improved to 33% in the Annual Report for 2002/03, published in 2004.

429. In terms of the structure of the report, the majority (60%) wanted the Report structured by phase, with each phase divided into aspects (as now). There was greatest interest (80%) in leadership and management, teaching and learning, the curriculum, assessment and school improvement. Support, care and guidance (60%), resources and accommodation (61%), and governance (64%) were of relatively less interest. The Report is considered most useful for setting the reader's organisation in a national context (65%), followed by its use as a reference manual (58%) and as an aid to internal monitoring and evaluation in subject or curriculum areas (43%).¹⁶⁸

Raising issues of public interest and concern: the role of HMCI

430. The post of HMCI was created by the Education Act 1992 on a fixed-term contract to head a non-ministerial government department. Previously, the HMI Senior Chief Inspector (SCI) was a senior post in the education department. Public utterances by the SCI were relatively rare, the focus of their office being strongly on advice to ministers and the department.

431. Since Ofsted was established as a separate department, holders of the office of HMCI have commented more frequently and publicly on a range of educational issues of national interest and concern. This aspect of the role gained particular prominence since 1994, when HMCI could draw increasingly on rapidly accumulating inspection evidence and data. It is to the credit of successive governments that the freedom of HMCI to comment publicly on matters of education and, more recently, childcare does not appear to have been fettered. Indeed, HMCI's job description (see illustration below) provides for such commentary as well as advising the secretary of state, as set out in statute. The weight of evidence available to HMCI gives added authority to his pronouncements, although this evidence and its use have been questioned occasionally.

HMCI's core responsibilities

Ensuring that early years provision, schools, youth work, further education, local education authorities and teacher training are inspected, and childcare is regulated, as required by legislation and as requested by the Secretary of State for Education

¹⁶⁸ Inspection Impact Paper, *Users' views of HMCI's Annual Report*, Ofsted 2004.

and Skills.

Providing authoritative, independent and soundly-based advice to the Secretary of State about the performance of pupils and students and the quality of the education and childcare within Ofsted's remit.

Ensuring that managerial, financial and personnel systems are in place to enable achievement of objectives and acting as accounting officer responsible to parliament for the public funds administered by Ofsted.

Managing the contracted-out system of school inspections, including the registration and enrolment of independent inspectors.

Managing the inspection work of HMI to ensure timely advice on current policies and developments in childcare, schools, colleges, LEAs and teacher training institutions.

Working effectively with other bodies including the Adult Learning Inspectorate and Audit Commission to ensure that joint and best value inspections and reports are of high quality.

Answering any matters relating to Ofsted raised by Members of Parliament through Select Committees, Parliamentary Questions, correspondence and in debates.

Contributing to continuing public debate on education and childcare.

432. The impact of Ofsted is very likely to be less if the holder of the Office of Chief Inspector did not speak unequivocally about educational issues. All chief inspectors have on occasion raised concern about parts of the system. There have been occasions, however, in which an adversarial or polemic style has engendered an adverse reaction to the issue in particular or the inspection system more generally. The Select Committee¹⁶⁹ is not slow to react if the medium, such as a particular style, threatens to detract from the message.

433. The news and policy departments of Ofsted and the DfES naturally liaise in the matter of major speeches, press releases and the launch of significant publications, largely with the aims of avoiding clashes with ministerial announcements or speeches and maximising impact. In this spirit, the two departments co-operate so as not to take each other by surprise.¹⁷⁰

434. Ofsted is an instrument of national government, but has direct local impact. Almost every week in term time, most local papers in the country carry stories about the inspection of a local school or college. The great majority of these articles give much greater prominence to the successes of the school than to any weaknesses.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ *The work of Ofsted*, Fourth Report of the House of Commons Committee for Education and Science, TSO, 1999.

¹⁷⁰ Information from Ofsted.

¹⁷¹ Analysis to follow.

This probably reflects in part the way schools manage the release of their reports and present the findings, and their relationships with the local press. (Reports on colleges of further education, providers of initial teacher training and LEAs are released centrally by Ofsted.) Reports which are of interest to readers locally also form a very significant database for HMCI which allows him (or her) to speak authoritatively from a national perspective.

435. Ofsted's public visibility owes much to the high profile of education, particularly over the last seven years, and - for rather longer – to the impact of the Chief Inspector of the day. By way of illustration, HMCI's Annual Report for 2002/03, launched in February 2004, resulted in coverage by:

- ten national newspapers and the education press
- 47 local and regional newspapers
- national television coverage: BBC 1pm News, BBC 6pm News, BBC News 24, Sky, Channel 4, Channel 5 and ITV News, and BBC Newsnight
- features on 20 radio programmes including the BBC 'Today' programme.

436. Over the years, successive chief inspectors have drawn attention to matters of national importance, including some that were highly unpalatable to some of their audience. These have included, for example:

- an estimation that 15,000, some 4%, of teachers were incompetent
- reservations about the effectiveness of Education Action Zones
- criticisms of the quality and relevance of educational research
- an assessment that many children are not well prepared for school
- the discovery that at least 10,000 (and probably many more) young people have disappeared from the school system between the ages of 14 and 16 years
- major weaknesses in the initial training of further education teachers.

Commentary

437. Ofsted has been very successful in making informed and impartial information about the quality and standards of education available to the public, not least through a heavily used website. Parents, particularly, approve of inspections and value the information that reports provide, especially in helping them to choose a school. They

readily identify the improvements they would like to see in school inspections. Poor or indifferent schools, colleges and local authorities have been identified and their progress followed up. Successful practice has received more attention since 1994 through the publication of the names of successful and most improved schools. The dissemination of what constitutes effective practice serves the interests of learners, parents and taxpayers and provides sources of guidance that can be helpful to those involved in improving provision.

438. Parliament expects public accountability through the publication of inspection reports, and performance indicators such as comparative tables, to be both a guide to those choosing schools and a stimulus for improvement. There is no doubt that the availability of published reports is welcomed by those parents who research their choice of school. The evidence from surveys of parents suggests that inspection can help to maintain and may improve public confidence in state education.

439. Parents also support strongly the principle of inspection, although many believe that schools should not be given the opportunity to prepare for inspection. The same arguments could be applied to further education colleges and, no doubt, LEAs. There are many precedents for inspection without notice in other sectors, particularly in care and custody, where no notice is given of some inspections.

440. There is little evidence of parents having a strong voice in school affairs except through their representation on the governing body or through a parents' association that is influential as well as supportive. The most direct way in which parents and students can influence school or college performance is through the exercise of choice, since this affects the provider's income and ultimately its viability. This certainly happens in the case of schools that cause concern, where enrolment often falls for a time, and in schools that are highly effective and can become over-subscribed. It has to be recognised that those parents most likely to exercise choice are the socially advantaged.

9. Value for money

The Treasury has asked departments to assess the costs and benefits of government inspection activity. The prime minister has established a cabinet committee, the Public Services Expenditure (Inspection) or PSX(I) Committee to oversee this work. This chapter provides an initial analysis of the cost of inspection regimes which can be related to the benefits described in earlier chapters. The costs of compliance for providers are also discussed briefly.

Costs of inspection

441. Ofsted has analysed its inspection costs in relation to school inspections, school improvement inspections, thematic inspections of schools, further education, teacher education and LEA inspections.

442. The costs of Ofsted inspections relative to government funding for the sector inspected are shown below. It can be seen that in all cases the ratio of money spent on external evaluation is very small. It tends to be lowest for further education colleges and highest for teacher education, which carries out many other surveys related to the performance, management and professional development of teachers in addition to inspecting colleges.

Table 18. Costs of Ofsted inspections relative to government funding for different sectors.

	£ millions		% ratio
	Government funding*	Ofsted spend**	
1998/99	19,752	80.1	0.41%
1999/00	19,922	51.1	0.26%
2000/01	21,271	61.6	0.29%
2001/02	23,445	72.3	0.31%
2002/03	24,864	72.6	0.29%

*Based on 90% of LEA funding

**Excludes school improvement and thematic

inspections

Further education

	£ millions		% ratio
	Government funding	Ofsted spend	
1999/00	3,752	1.3	0.03%
1998- /99	3,580	1.5	0.04%
2000- /01	4,237	1.9	0.04%
2001/02	5,842	6.7	0.11%
2002/03	6,633	8.4	0.13%

Teacher education (includes the inspection of professional development)

	£ millions		% ratio
	Government funding	Ofsted spend	
1998/99	211	3.5	1.66%
1999/00	232	3	1.29%
2000/01	313	3.1	0.99%
2001/02	412	3.1	0.75%
2002/03	428	3.6	0.84%

443. The cost of LEA inspections was £4.2 million in 2002/03. For school inspections, the Ofsted budget for 2002/03 was £72.55m against a total schools budget of nearly £25m: which equates to 0.29% of the schools' budget. Schools do not pay for their inspections. The cost of a school inspection every five or six years is therefore only a small fraction of 1% when compared with the funds they would receive over that period.

444. The average equivalent spending per pupil per year was £1.87 in 2002/03 (Table 19). This means that the school inspection regime equates to around £20 in total per pupil over the 11 years of compulsory schooling. During this time, their provider(s) will have had at least two school inspections. It should be noted that the cost of inspection per pupil is lower in secondary than in primary schools.

Table 19. The costs of Ofsted inspections.

Year	Annual spending on maintained schools (£m)	S10 budget (£m)	Number of schools inspected	Average cost of a school inspection	Average annual cost per pupil
1998-99	£19,752	£80.6	6,232	£12,925	£2.10
1999-00	£19,922	£51.1	4,747	£10,761	£1.32
2000-01	£21,271	£61.6	4,841	£12,717	£1.58
2001-02	£23,445	£72.3	4,240	£17,666	£1.86
2002-03	£24,864	£72.6	3,864	£17,474	£1.87

445. In 2002–03, the average cost to Ofsted of the inspection of a further education college was about £41,000 and the inspection of an LEA was £118,000. Ofsted has begun to explore with other UK and Dutch education inspectorates the possibility of benchmarking inspection costs. The nature of the different systems and their outputs adds to the complexity of this project, which could not be completed as part of this evaluation.

Benefits of inspection

446. Evidence of the positive impact of inspection on educational quality and standards has been discussed in depth in the previous chapters of this report. To summarise, the benefits of inspection are seen first in terms of *outcomes* in the form of:

- publication of inspection reports
- distribution of summaries of the report to all parents (in the case of schools)
- completion of statutory post-inspection action plans
- accrual of unparalleled information and data for Ofsted's database and for LEAs

- a major contribution to HMCI's Annual Report

second, in terms of *improvement* as described in the rest of this report, for example:

- contribution of inspection to the improvement of providers
- influence on and reinforcement of policies and their implementation, for example, the National Strategies
- identification of providers causing concern
- celebration of very good and improving providers
- provision and dissemination of evidence that forms the basis of policy advice
- promotion of self-evaluation in all providers

third, in terms of *users*:

- learners and cared-for children
- parents
- communities
- educators and carers (providers)
- managers (such as governing bodies)
- funding authorities
- departments and agencies of government
- ministers, the government and parliament.

447. Market forces, reflecting the availability and cost of suitably qualified professionals to act as inspectors, have recently driven up the cost of school inspections (Table 19). Ofsted believes that several factors have contributed to rising costs. The greater focus on inspection quality has meant that the most competent and effective inspectors are in heavy demand and can charge premium rates. There is a smaller pool of inspectors and less competition for inspection work. Moreover, many inspectors are more attracted to more lucrative work in other parts of the education system. Nevertheless, the cost of external quality assurance continues to equate to a very small proportion of educational spending.

448. One measure of improvement in terms of benefits to learners relates to the improvement of schools causing concern as a result of identification and remediation. Schools deemed to require special measures over the last ten years failed to provide an adequate education to the one million or so pupils that passed through them in this time. (There have also been improvements in underachieving

schools and those with serious weaknesses.) If these learners were the only beneficiaries of Ofsted's £70m+ spend on the s10 inspection programme, the one-off equivalent per capita cost of £700 is less than a quarter of what their school would receive for one year's pupil-related income.

449. Against the benefits of inspection some adverse effects should be noted. Foremost is the perception that inspection is stressful, leading to reports of inspection avoidance by a small minority of teachers. Inner-city schools in disadvantaged areas have historically found it difficult to attract and retain staff. This may become harder if schools' reputations are affected when they are identified as requiring special measures or having serious weaknesses. Reports of increased stress and other adverse effects are particularly associated with weaker institutions.

Costs incurred by providers when inspected

450. Ofsted has reduced the notice of school inspections to 6 to 10 weeks in an attempt to reduce stress and the effort devoted to preparation. The requirements are for the:

- governors to be consulted about the inspection. This is done through a short form which is discussed and returned within a few days, usually with the chair acting for the governing body
- governing body to invite parents to a meeting with the lead inspector, which in practice is administered by the school.

In addition,

- the school is invited to distribute questionnaires to parents and pupils
- the headteacher is asked to complete a self-evaluation form and furnish two other sets of data, most of which can be downloaded from a school's management information system. Most schools have welcomed the self-evaluation approach, which can be time-consuming but which they regard as worth doing anyway, usually annually. In 2002/03, 90% of headteachers responding to the school inspection survey agreed or strongly agreed that 'the inspection complemented the school's own self-evaluation'. There are no requirements for teaching staff to do any additional preparation for inspection, although it is recognised that, in practice, most do
- schools incur some photocopying or printing costs, particularly in respect of the summary of the inspection report, which governors are required to send to parents, but these reports are very short (four pages or less).

451. At the other extreme, LEAs receive long notice of inspection: up to one year. They produce a mass of evidence, largely in terms of plans, strategies and policies, which are often assembled, analysed and cross-linked on a CD-Rom.

452. The calculation of compliance costs, that is to say, the costs of any response to the inspection process that detracts from time better spent, is difficult in schools, for three reasons:

- much of the preparation done by teachers is undertaken in their own time rather than in contracted hours
- there is evidence that preparation for inspection in recent years actually results in improvement
- it is difficult to ascribe responsibility for what teachers feel they must do to meet Ofsted's requirements when the evidence suggests that their preparatory work is done voluntarily or at the request of the school.

453. Ofsted has visited over 30 schools to seek evidence of costs and benefits as part of this evaluation. Cost analysis is not particularly informative. A set of views from a secondary school will illustrate the issues.

Costs and benefits of a secondary school inspection: post-inspection interviews with members of the school

Costs

Preparation for the most recent inspection. Three heads of departments (HoDs) described:

- Greatest emphasis on lesson planning and analysis of performance data. Some updating of departmental papers.
- Great variation in preparation time, from 'most of the summer holidays and evenings since then' to 'an hour after school in the evenings and two to three hours at weekends.'
- Pressures to prepare come from (a) the senior management team (SMT) and (b) the teachers themselves. The main pressure from SMT was to carry out comprehensive analyses of data and get paperwork in order. Lack of analysis of data was an issue in the previous inspection.
- Self-induced pressure stems from wanting to put on a good show and achieve 'good' lesson grades. HoDs produced additional documents to prepare for questions they thought the inspectors might ask. They were influenced by SMT who felt that inspectors would need documentary 'proof' of the school's assertions.
- Preparing for the inspection was seen as inducing teachers to do things that they should be doing all the time, but do not have time for.

The headteacher (HT) felt that:

- Completing the self-evaluation before the inspection had been particularly helpful. Before the introduction of the new self-evaluation form, the school completed its own preinspection commentary. Now the self-evaluation form is used across the school and all departments contribute. The HT bought in independent inspectors before inspection to work with departments. While this was intended to help prepare for inspection, it nonetheless had some wider benefits.

Other costs to the school or department

- Departments incurred some photocopying costs.
- The school bought the time of several inspectors to help departments in preparation for inspection. More time was spent monitoring lessons before inspection, although this is becoming

a more established routine.

Benefits

Personal benefits from the inspection. At a personal level, the HoDs saw few benefits to them.

- One commented that it was beneficial for good and very good teaching to be recognised.
- Two HoDs were strongly supportive of the need for and effect of inspection.

Benefits to the school: views of senior managers

- Agreement from two out of three HoDs and deputy headteacher (DHT) that inspection has been beneficial. The headteacher (HT) felt strongly this was the case. It has been seen a 'wake-up' call. HT's view is that this school would have coasted on, changing very little, if inspection had not prompted action.
- HT (who had been in the school for all three inspections, but HT for the most recent only) felt that the school would have continued to have a pastoral emphasis owing to its disadvantaged catchment area. Inspection had helped the school to focus more on teaching, learning and standards. This was not the only lever; performance tables are seen as another. Recently, the school has focused on teaching and learning and expecting more from pupils.
- All agreed that most of the changes had occurred recently and that the impact of the first inspection in 1994 had been very limited. This was attributed to the newness of the system, uncertainty about the future direction of the school and the perception that the senior managers at the time were not the right people to drive the kind of change needed, being more interested in community and pastoral matters than raising standards achieved by pupils.
- The new (2003) inspection handbook was very helpful, especially the benchmark quality descriptions.

Views of pupils in Year 9

- A cross-section of pupils in Year 9 commented on lessons being different (better) during the inspection. In particular they commented on different ways in which lessons were conducted, with more discussion and varied activities and less copying down of work. (There had been comments in some earlier reports

about narrow teaching approaches.)

- Pupils felt that the better teaching had continued since the inspection.

What do you feel about inspection generally?

- General agreement about the value of inspection in holding schools to account and prompting action to improve.
- Although this school did not respond very well to the first inspection, the general view is that inspection does have an effect on quality and standards and prompts specific action when the school might have otherwise coasted.
- Greater consciousness that as time has gone on inspection has had more of an impact for several reasons. First, it has challenged the limited extent of improvement in the school. One department was found particularly lacking and action is now planned. Second, the process is seen by HT as having become much sharper. The handbooks are seen as particularly valuable in helping with self-evaluation.
- The HT felt that the training he had undergone in inspection techniques had been particularly helpful to his school. Other staff concurred with this.

454. The messages are fairly simple. Ofsted can do little more to reduce inspection costs and the work put in by teachers without eliminating notice of inspections. If schools have notice of inspection, most teachers will do extra preparation voluntarily. They tend to do this in their own time, so it interferes with their lives rather than their work at the school. Often, however, the pupils benefit from more interesting and better constructed lessons (as survey findings reveal), some of which improvement is sustained after the inspection.

Costs and benefits of other HMI inspection visits to schools

455. HMI or additional inspectors employed by HMCI make over 4,500¹⁷² inspection visits to schools distinct from the s10 inspection programme. Typically these visits are conducted by one person, otherwise a very small team. This programme cost nearly £30m, or £666 a visit. The trend in HMI visits, compared with reported school inspections, is shown in Figure 27.

¹⁷² 2002/03 total.

Figure 27. Trends in the numbers of school inspections (s10) and other HMI visits to schools.

456. The patterns of inspection are easily explained. The substantial decrease in s10 inspections after 1997/98 coincided with the beginning of a new, six-year reinspection cycle for primary and special schools after completing the first cycle within four years. The rise in HMI activity in 1987/88 was largely due to: a 100% increase in monitoring schools causing concern; the evaluation of the new literacy and, later, numeracy strategies, and an inspection focus on subjects in excellent schools during the peak period of 2000/01. This last of these exercises was designed to compensate for the lack of subject-specific evidence from the most effective 22% of secondary schools that, from January 2000, received short inspections.

457. It is striking, nevertheless, that over 8,000 maintained schools, one third of the total, are being inspected each year in one form or another. On average, therefore, every school currently hosts an inspection visit no less frequently than once every three years.

458. These inspections exert a particular pressure on secondary schools, many of which receive several HMI visits a year for different purposes. In 2002/03, after allowing for the 3,864 s10 inspections, 1,445 monitoring visits¹⁷³ to schools causing concern or in challenging circumstances, and 500 visits to primary schools in which the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies were monitored, more than 2,500 HMI visits to schools took place for purposes such as the inspection of subjects and thematic studies that form the basis of much of the advice described in Chapter 7 of this report.

459. There is little evidence that the substantial annual HMI presence in schools that have been inspected in a previous year is exploited by following up previous inspection findings and providing leverage to their implementation. The pursuit of such a strategy would add to the agenda for the visit and, possibly, its length. Not to do so displays a lack of synergy in Ofsted's work in relation to schools and local authorities. It misses a powerful opportunity to encourage the implementation of inspection findings and does not use HMI in the most efficient or effective way.

Value added to service provision

460. The third evaluation report by the University of Toronto makes clear the difficulties of assessing the cost-effectiveness, cost benefits and value for money of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, even when the (then) DfEE asked

¹⁷³ 750 visits to schools in special measures, 350 serious weaknesses, 15 inadequate sixth forms, 100 having challenging circumstances and 30 fresh start schools.

specifically for such evaluation (p112). Appendix C of that report is also illuminating about value for money. In discussing outcomes, the report notes:

*Education has many outcomes, both for individuals and for societies. These may include knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviours, both for individuals and groups. People may disagree, sometimes strongly, about which of these outcomes or goals are most important. None of this is meant to suggest that outcomes cannot or should not be measured. Gathering data about how well we are doing is a fundamental part of any considered effort about how to improve schooling. It is, however, a difficult thing to do and we should be particularly cautious about excessive reliance on any single measure as an indicator of how well we are achieving complex and difficult goals.*¹⁷⁴

Organisational efficiency

461. In his review of public sector relocation,¹⁷⁵ Sir Michael Lyons made the case for dispersals of staff outside the London and South East locations on grounds of cost and effectiveness. The report quotes a 2002 survey¹⁷⁶ that revealed that the average cost of a workstation in London was £13,134 compared with an average outside London and the South East of £7,934. Although its costs are much lower than those reported in the Lyons study, Ofsted has not only pursued a programme of rationalisation, but has also taken the extra step of dispensing with dedicated office space for any of its field inspectors.

462. Before 2002, there were 11 regional offices for the 240 members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate; 4 of those offices were based in London and the South East. HMI are now home-based workers whose needs are serviced by three remote support centres in the north of England.

463. Similarly, when assuming the responsibility previously held by 150 local authorities for the regulation and inspection of childcare, Ofsted made home-based workers of all 1,500 childcare inspectors, most of whom had previously been office-based. Childcare inspectors related to childminders and day-care providers in a limited geographical area close to home. The work of early years regulation and inspection, which is responsible for about 100,000 providers, is sustained by eight regional offices and a small headquarters staff in London. Ofsted is now one of the biggest employers of networked home-based staff in the country. While the cost of information technology equipment and support services is higher than for office-based workers, at a conservative estimate this approach has saved at least £3 million per year in office accommodation costs and related expenses.

¹⁷⁴ *Watching and learning 3*, University of Toronto, 2003.

¹⁷⁵ *Well placed to deliver? Shaping the pattern of government service*, HM Treasury, HMSO 2004.

¹⁷⁶ *The total office costs survey*, City University Business School, Actium Consult and Cushman & Wakefield Healey & Baker, 2002.

Commentary

464. The costs of inspection to those inspected appear to fall into the categories of compliance costs, which in raw terms could be considered very small for childminders, fairly small for schools and large for LEAs, and the 'climatic costs', induced by the anticipation of being inspected, that are much larger for schools than compliance costs.

465. These climatic costs stem from management pressure, the high stakes associated with inspection and the professional desire to be seen at one's best. The evidence suggests that the 'voluntary' work done in preparation for inspection is itself a force for improvement, even in schools inspected for the third time. If this preparation was costed and reimbursed, it would require a very substantial resource.

466. There are human costs in all Ofsted's inspection regimes, mitigated only by the unsystematic evidence that providers and users tend to benefit rather than be disadvantaged by, for example, staff changes, particularly at leadership levels.

467. In terms of gross operational costs and benefits, the per capita equivalent of school inspections for a pupil, whose schools have been inspected at least twice through his or her passage through them, is not great.

468. Excluding short visits by HMI, most educational providers do not have a heavy burden of external inspection and audit. Most are inspected at infrequent intervals and have internal audit at most once a year. The costs of at least one third of Ofsted's operation have been market-driven at the express wish of parliament.

Conclusions

Overview

469. The creation of Ofsted was a bold initiative that has come to have a profound effect. As the instrument of regular inspection of educational and childcare provision, it has earned the confidence of government, the general approbation of parents and the respect, if not affection, of many who work in education. Inspection is intrusive, and can trigger responses ranging from a welcome to apprehension, but has gradually become accepted as an established and influential part of the education system.

470. Ofsted's achievements have been recognised and its impact increased through being assigned extra responsibilities, marked most recently by a remit to co-ordinate the development of inspection arrangements for children's services. Ofsted has been recognised by government as having fulfilled its statutory functions to the letter. Through assessing the effectiveness of past and current practice, this evaluation finds that Ofsted has made a substantial contribution to the improvement of the education system and – to a variable extent, alongside other powerful factors – to education providers. Despite its achievements, it is recognised that Ofsted should not be complacent and has room for further evolution as a learning organisation. This synopsis and the implications that emerge represent an attempt to map Ofsted's effectiveness and highlight areas for improvement.

Purpose of inspection

471. Political and professional, but not necessarily public, expectations of inspection have changed greatly over the last 10 years. In some senses pressures to change Ofsted's role have overtaken the statutory provisions that govern its work. Politically, the establishment of a Cabinet Committee¹⁷⁷ to examine the work and cost effectiveness of inspectorates signals the importance attached to their work and the expectation that inspection will lead to the improvement of service providers (see the Principles in annex A). This report shows that such assumptions of direct causality are unrealistic without greater powers of follow-up or intervention that would almost certainly change the nature of inspection and inspectorates. Inspection does promote improvement, but more by professional influence, fair and accurate reporting, and informed analysis and comparison than by direct intervention.

472. Professional expectations of education providers are typified by the desire to demonstrate public accountability through self-evaluation, laudable in terms of the professional growth that self-assessment can promote, but not yet credible as the only mechanism, since it lacks objectivity and varies greatly between institutions. The public, particularly parents, support inspection but want up-to-date reports on

¹⁷⁷ The Public Services Expenditure (Inspectorates) or PSX(I) Committee.

schools. There is a general desire to reduce unnecessary stress and workload for teachers, particularly in primary schools. It is recognised that even though there are no requirements for additional work, the anticipation and 'high stakes' of inspection are bound to lead to some apprehension.

473. Ofsted is constitutionally rather different from those inspectorates that are either aligned to their sponsoring departments, as Her Majesty's Inspectorate used to be, or non-departmental public bodies, answerable through a board or commission. Ofsted was not established as an instrument to create and deliver government policy, but as a separate department that would undertake independent inspection of the education system and provide impartial advice to ministers, at arm's length from the (now) Department for Education and Skills. HMCI has powers to decide what should be inspected and how, within the broad aspects prescribed by law.

474. In practice there is an indistinct boundary between national executive and advisory functions. Ofsted has been strongly instrumental in the development and delivery of some policies, such as the literacy strategy (led initially by a former HMI), which it has also evaluated. This raises the issue of whether Ofsted could be said to be inspecting its own advice. The thrust of current government policy which looks for improvement of providers by, rather than through, inspection may be seen as potentially accentuating such circularity. There may be a need to revisit and, if necessary, redefine Ofsted's role so as to achieve greater clarity of purpose. At the operational level, there has been a pronounced distinction between the independent inspectors who are required to carry out school inspections mindful of the distinction between inspection and advice, and HMI who tend to exercise greater licence (often to good effect, as in the case of school improvement inspections).

Improvement through inspection

475. This evaluation finds considerable evidence that Ofsted has made a strong contribution to the improvement of providers in all sectors, but most notably over the last decade in schools and initial teacher training. The improvement reflects the impact of inspection in conjunction with other major developments in the curriculum, assessment, leadership and management of institutions and more recently the national strategies and standards for teaching. Inspection has provided the evaluation, leverage and accountability that have helped to embed such initiatives in educational practice. There is evidence from national trends and international comparisons of attainment levels of an associated rise in educational standards in both primary and secondary sectors over much of the period since 1992.

476. Nonetheless, there are many institutions, particularly unremarkable schools (which are neither highly effective nor a cause for concern), which do not always follow up or make the best use of inspection findings. Responses to inspection tend to be most focused and effective where funding is at stake, as in colleges of further education and ITT providers, or exposure is higher, as in weak LEAs and schools requiring special measures. In the majority of schools, where there are few serious concerns, the extent to which inspection findings are followed up depends on the quality of the school's leadership, the quality of the inspection and the clarity of

reporting. Evidence suggests that around two thirds of all findings are wholly or partially implemented by schools, with the most and least effective schools making greatest use of them, although for different reasons.

477. The lack of automatic external follow-up to the inspection of schools where the management is not proactive can reduce the impact inspection has on them. This is not the case in colleges, partially due to the direct interest of the local LSC. Where Ofsted undertakes follow-up, particularly in the case of providers that cause concern, such monitoring or reinspection contributes substantially to improvement. Experience in Scotland where there is automatic follow-up of the extent to which inspection findings are tackled indicates higher levels of implementation. More frequent contact by HMI with schools and other providers in England, whether through earlier reinspection or other types of visit should help to improve the extent to which findings are implemented.

478. Ofsted's current inspection regimes therefore do promote improvement but more by providing the evaluation and diagnosis that helps providers to understand how effective they are and what they need to do to improve¹⁷⁸ than by return visits, intervention or the developmental interaction that some practitioners would favour. A move towards greater interaction by, say, locally or regionally-based inspectors who have ongoing links with providers can potentially foster improvement, as demonstrated by HMI monitoring of providers that cause concern. The drawback of such approaches is that they could also impair Ofsted's function as the organisation expected to undertake independent and impartial inspection. There are lessons to be learned here from weaknesses in the duality of function of some LEA inspectorate/advisory services of years past, and from the contrasting approaches to inspecting further education colleges of the former FEFC inspectorate and those of Ofsted and the ALI that replaced them. There is an active industry, in the form of public organisations and the private sector, devoted to supporting educational improvement. To be effective, however, such endeavours – as well as the efforts of the providers themselves - need to be informed by the clear and impartial diagnosis that inspection should bring. The accountability requirement of Ofsted inspectors to users is to evaluate the quality of service they are getting and to identify any areas of weakness as well as strengths.

Informing policy and practice: systemic improvement

479. There is evidence that the views of Ofsted make a valued contribution to policy development and evaluation nationally and locally. Thematic evaluations, many of which are commissioned by the DfES, have frequently led to changes in strategy or approach, as exemplified in Chapter 7. Ofsted's evidence is equally important to the work of the Teacher Training Agency and the local Learning and Skills Councils, contributing to their functions and deployment of resources, and to LEAs. Subject inspection evidence and reports on different aspects of the curriculum are widely used by practitioners. Inspection evidence on, for example, improving city

¹⁷⁸ Supported by the requirement for providers to plan the action they will take after an inspection.

schools and the achievement of minority ethnic pupils has influenced school development and improvement planning and self-evaluation strategies.

480. To achieve greater influence on practice, Ofsted is committed through its strategic plan to enhancing the dissemination of its findings and this evaluation supports this aim. It has produced a wide range of authoritative publications, but where these have been accompanied by dissemination mechanisms, their impact has been greater.

481. One significant loss to the system when Ofsted was created was the annual programme of DES/HMI Short Courses which – together with intensive conferences on the Curriculum, Organisation, Staffing and Management of (secondary) Schools (COSMOS courses) – was perceived to provide leading edge development for practitioners. Such events and mechanisms as Ofsted is able to mount have been greatly valued (as found in evaluation feedback from participants). They include action planning seminars, a range of conferences and the dissemination of inspector training and self-evaluation materials through the National College for School Leadership and licensed training providers. Such provision, which can be largely self-financing, is particularly valued when there is strong HMI involvement.

482. Ofsted has established a comprehensive, world-class database for education. The Ofsted inspection database is unique in providing in-depth coverage of all public education providers across England. This enables detailed analysis of the state of education, particularly in the influential Annual Report of HMCI, which now includes an accompanying CD of inspection data for external analysis. Pressures on the use and analysis of the database, however, have perhaps inhibited its use in external educational research, which has not taken full advantage of Ofsted's data. Nevertheless, many researchers do use school inspection reports and judgements to assist in the sampling of institutions for a variety of studies.

483. The database has been effectively managed and has a long proven ability to provide rapid answers to specific questions, such as Parliamentary Questions or briefings for HMCI, at short notice on specific topics.

484. In contrast, some HMI evaluation exercises are quite lengthy affairs. Their long lead time risks reducing their influence on real-time policy making, even though they have provided a valuable service by identifying and disseminating effective practice.

Public information and accountability

485. As the first legislative plank in the Parents' Charter, a prime function of HMCI is to ensure that school inspections lead to reports to parents. Parents also make an active contribution to the inspection, particularly through attending a pre-inspection meeting with the inspector or completing the questionnaire that is used by many as a surrogate. Surveys reveal that parents support inspection but want more up-to-date reports on schools and a mechanism that is less stressful to teachers, particularly in primary schools. Ofsted's proposals for changes to the inspection system go some way to meeting these needs. Some parents would prefer to see inspections

conducted at random, giving no notice to the school. It is not known whether some parents might feel disenfranchised, as a consequence, by having less opportunity to meet inspectors, but there may be partial solutions to this.

486. Ofsted has significantly enhanced the public availability of information about all aspects of the education system, aided of course by the Internet. The publication of the frameworks for inspection and consultation over their development has increased transparency and made explicit the basis for judgements about quality and standards. Governors, parents and those who work in education and care make significant use of inspection reports on individual institutions. Inspection evidence can be seen to enhance consumer confidence and many parents view school inspection as important to maintain and improve the quality of education. Similar trends are evident in other sectors.

Increased user involvement and benefits

487. Ofsted's strategic plan for 2004-2007 shows a strong commitment to inspecting for the benefit of children and young people aged 0–19 years and their parents or carers. The plan states:

*We are committed to promoting the highest quality of education and care, to help enable all children and young people to reach their full potential and be well prepared for adult and working life. We shall provide the public with frank, timely and accurate assessments of the provision available to them; educators and carers with a diagnosis of what is working well and what needs to be improved; and the government with rigorous assessments of the quality and standards of education and care, and the effect of its policies.*¹⁷⁹

488. Ofsted's inspection methodologies, some of which are under review, reflect this emphasis to a large extent, although there is more that could be done. Ofsted has consistently sought to involve parents and learners in inspections. Parents have had access to the statutory meeting with inspectors although many do not take advantage of this opportunity in relation to the school inspections. Ofsted has pioneered the use of questionnaires, firstly for parents and more recently for pupils and students in schools, to allow them to comment on the quality and standards of their institutions. It has also developed mechanisms to listen to users' views in its inspection of colleges, initial teacher training (ITT) and local education authorities (LEAs). This promotes openness and accountability and provides an important source of evidence of the quality of the provider.

489. Responses from learners indicates that not only do they have a perceptive view of the quality of their learning and how well they are taught, but that inspection can lead to improvement in the quality of their educational experiences. Inspection can be seen to have a major role in representing and safeguarding their interests. Evidence indicates that in many weak institutions a long history of problems has

¹⁷⁹ Ofsted's *Strategic Plan 2004-2007*, Ofsted, 2003.

often been evident and only clear identification and requirement for action provided a sufficient impetus to initiate significant change.

490. Ofsted's impact is most directly seen in the numbers of learners who have benefited from the identification and subsequent improvement of the quality of their institutions following inspection. For example, improvements in the quality of education provided to pupils in schools in special measures are estimated to have benefited at least 1 million pupils since Ofsted began, while other pupils have seen improvements in schools originally identified as having serious weaknesses. School improvement monitoring by Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools (HMI) has made an important contribution to the progress of these schools. There have been parallel benefits for students aged 16 to 19 as a result of identification of weaknesses in 72 further education colleges. Three quarters of the colleges found to have unsatisfactory provision have been shown on reinspection to have responded effectively. Inspection has also contributed strongly to the improved quality of ITT in most institutions.

Self-evaluation

491. Ofsted has influenced the rigour of monitoring and self-evaluation in most of the sectors inspected. Ofsted has done much to promote effective self-evaluation by educating and training providers, acknowledging the role of others such as the LSC and LEAs. In doing this, it has developed effective and well-received self-evaluation instruments, built these into the methodology of inspection and used the quality of self-evaluation of one of the litmus tests in judging management. The process has evolved to a point where annual public display of provider self-evaluation is a real and practical possibility. The main beneficiaries of self-evaluation, however, should be the provider and its users. Self-assessment is a particular feature of the planning and quality improvement processes of post-compulsory education providers and many schools. Inspection should consider the provider's competence in evaluation and development when judging its capacity to improve.

492. The replacement of external evaluation (inspection) by validated self-evaluation, however, would be problematic for a number of reasons discussed earlier in this paper. Self-evaluation is bound to be more subjective than inspection, and its findings, where they diverge, tend to be more positive. College inspections have drawn back from the validated self-assessment approach since the latter days of FEFC inspections, but the value of self-assessment in internal development has been demonstrated clearly. Recent developments in school self-evaluation have been welcomed by schools, but more because they see it as intrinsically worth doing than because inspection invites it.

493. The purposes of monitoring, evaluation and improvement are also encouraged by Ofsted's pioneering work in providing schools, colleges and LEAs with the best available comparative performance data for use in internal monitoring and review. LEA profiles and institutional performance and assessment (PANDA) reports have been welcomed and widely used by providers, although it is recognised that further development of robust value-added indicators is also required.

Inspection benefits outweigh the disadvantages

494. The perceived benefits (as reported by those inspected through surveys following inspection) attributable to inspection, feedback and reporting outweigh the perceived negative effects in the majority of institutions. In the case of schools, four times as many headteachers and twice as many teachers judge benefits to have outweighed drawbacks than *vice versa*. There is evidence of significant improvement following inspection in institutions in other sectors and it is concluded that inspection often acts as a stimulus for improvement. A recent survey of pupils confirms earlier evidence that the quality of education (teaching, learning and behaviour) is often better in the inspection week than it was before the inspection. Pupil reports suggest that such improvements are sustained after the inspection in some but not all schools.

495. Evidence suggests that inspection, which only impacts on a provider occasionally, is perceived to contribute to the stresses and workload of teachers, mainly in the run up to inspection, when notification of an impending inspection raises apprehension in many teachers or senior managers, who often respond by undertaking extensive preparation. Adverse perceptions of inspection have in the past been compounded by excessive media focus on specific high profile inspections (particularly under the controversial but short-lived government policy of 'naming and shaming' failing schools), or by experience of an inspection that occurred some years before. In the first inspection cycle, particularly, many institutions that were at the time given up to one year's notice of inspection, instituted requirements for new policies, schemes of work, departmental reviews and other products for the first time.

496. More recently, however, there is much evidence that the great majority of teachers regard their inspection as something that was undertaken very professionally and was not as disturbing as they had been led to believe. While apprehension can be generated by perceptions of the inspection experience and its possible consequences, none of the additional work undertaken by teachers, and little of the expense incurred by schools, is either required or encouraged by Ofsted. There is evidence, however, of an association between weaker management of institutions and an adverse reaction to inspection by those whom they manage, and indication that management in some such institutions can use the prospect of inspection to demand a wide range of additional documentation/preparation from staff.

497. There appears to be little more that Ofsted can do to reduce stress and unnecessary preparation to a minimum, while retaining the benefits of rigorous external inspection, than to make inspection more of a routine event, undertaken at irregular intervals and without notice. This would have the additional benefit of enabling inspectors to see the provider in more of a normal state, which would be of greater service both to the accuracy of inspection judgements and the interests of users. Inspections without notice are common in other industries, especially where care, health and safety issues are at stake. A degree of randomness in inspection would remove the predictive element through which some providers still prepare for a year, and would help to embed inspection as a routine rather than special event. The advantages of very short or zero notice of inspections would appear to outweigh

the disadvantages, which include the challenge of consulting key stakeholders with minimal notice. Parents favour such an approach although their views on the possibility of having less opportunity to meet inspectors are not known. The excessive documentation once produced by many schools in the first cycle of inspections has been actively discouraged by Ofsted. Opportunities should be taken to reduce such requirements in the inspection of some other sectors.

Ofsted as a learning organisation

498. The frameworks for inspection for different aspects of Ofsted's work have developed over time and are subject to consultation. Ofsted draws on research, evaluates many aspects of its own performance and consults and collaborates with inspectors in other systems. It uses this information to refine and develop policy and practice in order to become a better organisation, improve its inspection systems and processes, and enhance their impact and thus to enhance the quality of education across different sectors and providers. Ofsted's organisational structure rests on a number of functional divisions that until 2003 tended to work as largely independent entities. Recent restructuring, with the creation of one Education Directorate (and a new Finance Directorate), has encouraged greater dialogue and cooperation. Staff surveys show not only what has been achieved but also where more work is needed. Ofsted has built its processes on the foundations of HMI and has developed sound business practice in working with contracted teams. Ofsted also demonstrates a high degree of independence and assured consistency of purpose in inspecting and reporting impartially and providing commentaries that speak from the basis of extensive evidence. The recent leadership has sought to maintain independence and rigour, while building constructive relationships with professionals. Nonetheless, there are indications of some stresses in an organisation that has grown so rapidly and Ofsted is using staff surveys in an effort to examine and explore ways to improve its internal working.

499. Ofsted has moved some way towards the user in its inspection arrangements. A longitudinal view of all its frameworks shows a move away from a focus mainly on compliance towards a greater concern with effectiveness. In school inspections, for example, responsibility for compliance has been placed firmly in the hands of governors, who complete a self-reporting instrument. The inspection emphasis in the early days of Ofsted was on compliance of schools with national curriculum requirements (to ensure pupils received an entitlement curriculum and experienced satisfactory standards) and teaching, based on a list of competencies. Inspection has moved on from verification with more than a hint of auditing compliance with statute, to a concern for quality and effectiveness. Thus most aspects of the work of schools are now judged in terms of their contributions to learning and other outcomes. The perceptions of users are taken more strongly into account through a focus on educational inclusion, the views of pupils and students, and the recognition of achievement in the round. In most inspection sectors, self-evaluation is a key element of the inspection process. Ofsted's inspection systems have proved sufficiently flexible to respond to the increasing diversity of educational providers, but the focus is on providers themselves to demonstrate to inspectors any innovations they have undertaken and the benefits that they feel accrue from these.

Value for money

500. Evidence indicates that Ofsted is generally regarded as an efficient and effective department. Confidence in the quality of Ofsted's work and ability to deliver has led to significant increases in its remit, which now includes ITT providers, colleges, LEAs and childcare providers. Ofsted has been successful in fulfilling its remit to provide a model for rigorous inspection, public reporting and well-informed advice across the sectors it inspects and meets its performance and budgetary targets. It has had a major impact on many aspects of education. The perceived independence and quality of Ofsted's evidence ensures that it receives serious attention from both media and policy makers.

501. Some commentators perceive inspections as expensive. There are, however, few good comparative benchmarks to support this conclusion. Ofsted has met challenging performance targets in the education sector within the budget allocated to it and is making good progress in the massive task of regulating childcare. In these senses it is cost effective. It has also operated a very low growth budget and met Treasury quality and performance targets. Although the inspection budgets are sizeable (Chapter 9), they represent a very tiny proportion of the annual budgets spent in the sectors inspected (well under 0.5% for schools and colleges, slightly greater for ITT at around 1.5%). For schools, calculations indicate that the cost of inspection is around £20 per pupil over the period of compulsory schooling (age 5-16); equivalent to less than £2 per year. Pupils are likely to experience at least two school inspections during this time.

502. On this basis and in relation to the improvements in education quality and standards it is concluded that Ofsted's inspection procedures represent good value for money and its plans for the future inspection of colleges, local authorities and schools should improve this further. Nonetheless, steps are planned to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness in several inspection fields.

503. All Ofsted's inspection regimes have been tailored to a greater or lesser extent to what is known about the effectiveness of the provider. The approach, however, has been cautious and its evolution unsystematic. The proposed arrangements for the inspection of schools and colleges in the future take advantage of the extensive evidence and data that is now available on all educational institutions to reduce the size of inspection but not obviously to improve proportionality. Practical examples of proportionality include differentiation of fieldwork in LEA inspections in order to focus particularly on those authorities that cause concern; revision of the arrangements for inspecting further education colleges the second time around, with a lighter touch approach to effective providers; a three-year period (from 2000-2003) in which a binary inspection system applies to schools in which the 20 to 25 percent most effective schools underwent a short inspection; and variation of interval between inspections according to risk. Ofsted should consider whether greater proportionality and flexibility could be reflected in the proposed changes to the school inspection system and the inspection of other providers. One way would be to regard the basic inspection as diagnostic, with scope to enlarge or add to it, or follow it up with more rigorous evaluation if needed. A second challenge for small scale inspections is to ensure that they continue to

communicate with and address the needs of the least confident or advantaged of those who use the education system by probing issues of equity and educational and social inclusion.

504. Overall, the range of evaluation evidence available indicates that Ofsted has had a positive impact on the quality of the education providers which it has inspected during the last decade. Inspection, like other aspects of the service, cannot stand still and needs to evolve further, without losing the benefits of the rigour and external perspective it provides. A greater emphasis on self-evaluation, proportionality and a move to no notice inspections should provide scope for further contribution to improvement across all sectors. Short notice or unannounced inspections should reduce the likelihood of some institutions undertaking excessive and unnecessary preparation with associated increased stress and workload. It should be recognised, however, that self-evaluation, while potentially offering benefits in terms of professional development and improvement, unless carefully planned, can be very time consuming and is likely to add to workload in school. Self-evaluation models need to be clearly framed, focus in schools and colleges on the core activity of teaching and learning and require limited additional documentation.

Evaluation judgements

The authors conclude that the evidence on which this evaluation is based supports the following judgements against the 10 government principles set out in annex A. Wide circulation of the draft report internally and to researchers, and colleagues in the DfES and, particularly, the Office for Public Service Reform enabled the assessment to be validated. A four point scale is used: very good; good; fair and poor.

Table 20. Evaluation of Ofsted’s impact against the OPSR inspection principles

OPSR principles of inspection	Evaluation
Contribution to improvement	Good
A focus on outcomes	Very good
A user perspective	Good
Proportionate to risk	Fair*
Self-assessment	Very good
Impartial evidence	Very good
Criteria	Very good
Openness	Very good

Value for money	Good
Continual learning	Very good

*Plans for the future inspections of schools, colleges and other providers show promise of greater efficiency and proportionality than at present.

Implications: issues for consideration

- i. Ofsted and the government need to consider the implications of an apparent tension between the purposes of inspection, established in statute and the Inspection Principles described by the Office for Public Service Reform, with particular reference to responsibility for the improvement of service providers (Chapter 1).
- ii. Ofsted should consider what more could be done to integrate inspections with other inspectorial visits in order to follow up the findings of inspection within the resources available and promote improvement through inspection more strongly (Chapter 2).
- iii. Self-evaluation or assessment is a necessary part of the development planning and quality improvement of providers, not an end in itself. It can contribute usefully to planning an inspection and can act as an indicator of management competence. Too great a reliance on self-evaluation findings, however, can render inspection unreliable. For these reasons, therefore, inspection should continue to promote and provide training in self-evaluation and judge its quality, but not use validated self-evaluation as a proxy for inspectors' judgements (Chapter 4).
- iv. More should be done to inform users, particularly learners, about inspection findings. Ofsted should consider whether and how appropriate summaries of inspection reports could be provided to pupils of school age, and students in post-compulsory and teacher education as is already done by some institutions. Parents strongly favour inspections and many make use of inspection reports in selecting schools, but they would welcome more up-to-date reports on their schools, preferably annual reports (Chapter 7). Ofsted should also consider how socially and economically disadvantaged parents might become better informed about its work.
- v. New models of inspection should continue to ensure that there are practical arrangements for involving learners and parents in the inspection process and seeking their views during the inspection visit (Chapter 6). Parents and learners should always have avenues for expressing their views and experiences to inspectors.
- vi. Ofsted, funding providers and responsible authorities should together seek to maximise the impact of all inspections, recognising that the main conditions or levers for implementation of inspection findings include (Chapters 2 and 3):
 - competent and effective inspections
 - clearly reported findings and areas for improvement
 - understanding and acceptance of the findings by the provider
 - leadership that can generate and implement a strategy for implementing inspection outcomes, including effective action planning

- identification of any resources and support needed to effect improvement
- planned external follow-up to assess the progress made
- high stakes, where inspection has the potential to affect funding or public esteem for the provider.

vii. Improvement strategies should give greater priority to providers whose performance does not cause concern but is not judged as good or effective, and should focus on building the capacity to improve (Chapters 3 and 4).

viii. Ofsted should seek opportunities to reduce inspection reliance on the provision of documentary evidence in some sectors, particularly the inspection of local education authorities, or children's services provision in the future, in order to reduce the demands made on such providers (Chapter 6).

ix. There is a strong case for giving little or no notice of inspections, in order to reduce pre-inspection stress and increase the validity of inspection judgements that are based on observation of providers at work. This need not preclude the use of the development plan as a starting point, self-evaluation evidence nor opportunities for users to give their views. Such a strategy would also be ineffective if the interval between inspections is too predictable (Chapter 7).

x. Stronger mechanisms including further research are needed to test regularly the reliability and consistency of inspectors' judgements so as to assure their accuracy, including (Chapters 4 and 5):

- judgements of the quality of teaching and learning
- the 'halo' effect of using self-evaluation or self-assessment evidence
- judgements about curriculum leadership.

xi. Ofsted and the Department for Education and Skills should continue to promote national approaches to self-evaluation that are consistent with known characteristics of provider effectiveness and the criteria used by inspectors. These approaches should give priority to outcomes for learners, teaching and learning and inclusion, be evidence-based and be carefully focused so as to ensure that additional workload is kept to a minimum. (Chapter 4).

xii. Ofsted's evidence base has greater potential for use by external researchers but is not heavily used by them (Chapter 7). Ofsted should investigate ways to create stronger links with the most capable researchers in order to maximise the potential of their complementary data.

xiii. Ofsted's technical and operational collaboration with other inspectorates, both in the UK and overseas, has been beneficial and should continue (Chapter 7). Ofsted

has much expertise that may have wider applicability in the evaluation of public and private services or other quality improvement schemes (Chapter 4).

xiv. Subject to statutory constraints, Ofsted should take greater steps to tailor inspections to the needs of institutions and their users, through regular risk assessment, leading to proportionate inspection. Ofsted should also be mindful of the need to safeguard individual entitlement and equity through an inspection process that is sufficient to do justice to diversity issues and inclusion (Chapters 5 and 9).

xv. Ofsted should seek opportunities to ensure greater cohesion between its inspection regimes, not only through continuing the development of common frameworks, but also through ensuring that institutional inspections and thematic inspection visits complement, reinforce and inform each other (Chapter 9).

xvi. Ofsted should continue to speak and report frankly about issues in education and care on behalf and in the interests of those who use and rely on this provision, while giving the best possible quality assessment to those who provide it (Chapter 8).

xvii. When evaluating government policy initiatives, Ofsted needs to be on its guard to ensure that its closeness to policy development does not render subsequent evaluation of the implementation of policy either partial or circular in the sense that it provides a justification of the policy (Chapters 1 and 7).

xviii. A future evaluation of this type should focus more on the impact of inspections on sectors that have yet to enter a second cycle, and quality improvement in the early years and provision for diverse needs. It should also focus more on the impact of inspection on special schools and pupil referral units, which have not been covered in detail here.

Annex A: the government's policy statement

The government's policy on inspection in public services is set out below.

Definition

Inspection of public services is an external review that should:

- be independent of the service providers
- provide assurance, to ministers and the public, about the safe and proper delivery of those services
- contribute to improvement of those services
- report in public
- deliver value for money.

Applicability

The government recommends that there should be a process of inspection wherever inspection has the potential to provide assurance about whether standards in public services are being met and to contribute to their improvement, and where it can be demonstrated that the benefit of inspection outweighs the cost. Inspection is particularly relevant to public services delivered at a significant cost to public funds, to public services where safety is an issue, where a failure in performance could cause loss or damage to end users who rely on the services, or where failure in performance could compromise the ability of other public service agencies to deliver a high quality of service.

Principles

Public services inspection should:

- a. pursue the purpose of improvement
- b. focus on outcomes
- c. take a user perspective
- d. be proportionate to risk
- e. encourage self-assessment by managers
- f. use impartial evidence, wherever possible

- g. disclose the criteria used for judgement
- h. be open about the processes involved
- i. have regard to value for money, including that of the inspecting body
- j. continually learn from experience.

These principles are expanded on the next page.

Duty to collaborate

Inspectors should work with other inspectors, with auditors and with regulators, and where appropriate make use of each other's findings so as to minimise the burden and maximise the benefit of review. Sponsoring departments should facilitate this process of co-operation.

The principles of inspection

The principles of inspection in this policy statement place the following expectations on inspection providers and on the departments sponsoring them:

1. **the purpose of improvement.** There should be an explicit concern on the part of the inspectors to contribute to the improvement of the service being inspected. This should guide the focus, method, reporting and follow-up of inspection. In framing recommendations, an inspector should recognise good performance and address any failure appropriately. Inspection should aim to generate data and intelligence that enable departments more quickly to calibrate the progress of reform in their sectors and make appropriate adjustments.
2. a **focus on outcomes**, which means considering service delivery to the end users of the services rather than concentrating on internal management arrangements.
3. a **user perspective.** Inspection should be delivered with a clear focus on the experience of those for whom the service is provided, as well as on internal management arrangements. Inspection should encourage innovation and diversity and not be solely compliance based.
4. **proportionate to risk.** Over time, inspectors should modify the extent of future inspection according to the quality of performance by the service provider. For example, good performers should undergo less inspection, so that resources are concentrated on areas of greatest risk.
5. Inspectors should encourage rigorous **self-assessment** by managers,. Inspectors should challenge the outcomes of managers' self assessments, take them into account in the inspection process, and provide a comparative benchmark.
6. Inspectors should use **impartial evidence.** Evidence, whether quantitative or qualitative, should be validated and credible.

7. Inspectors should disclose the **criteria** they use to form judgements.
8. Inspectors should be **open** about their processes, willing to take any complaints seriously, and able to demonstrate a robust quality assurance process.
9. Inspectors should have regard to **value for money**:
 - inspection looks to see that there are arrangements in place to deliver the service efficiently and effectively
 - inspection itself should be able to demonstrate it delivers benefits commensurate with its cost, including the cost to those inspected
 - inspectorates should ensure that they have the capacity to work together on cross-cutting issues, in the interest of greater cost effectiveness and reducing the burden on those inspected.
10. Inspectors should **continually learn** from experience, in order to become increasingly effective. This can be done by assessing their own impact on the service provider's ability to improve and by sharing best practice with other inspectors.

Annex B: Ofsted's principles of inspection

The following principles apply to **all** inspection activities carried out by or on behalf of Ofsted. They are intended to ensure that:

- the findings of inspection contribute to **improvement**
- the process of inspection promotes **inclusion**
- inspection is carried out **openly** with those being inspected
- the findings of inspection are **valid, reliable and consistent**.

Principles

- ❑ Inspection acts in the interests of children, young people and adult learners and, where relevant, their parents to encourage high-quality provision that meets diverse needs and promotes equality.
- ❑ Inspection is evaluative and diagnostic, assessing quality and compliance and providing a clear basis for improvement.
- ❑ The purpose of inspection and the procedures to be used are communicated clearly to those involved.
- ❑ Inspection invites and takes account of any self-evaluation by those inspected.
- ❑ Inspection will, as far as possible, minimise disturbance to the work of the institution concerned.
- ❑ Inspection informs those responsible for taking decisions about provision.
- ❑ Inspection is carried out by those who have sufficient and relevant professional expertise and training.
- ❑ Evidence is recorded and is of sufficient range and quality to secure and justify judgements.
- ❑ Judgements are based on systematic evaluation requirements and criteria, are reached corporately where more than one inspector is involved and reflect a common understanding in Ofsted about quality.
- ❑ Effectiveness is central to judging the quality of provision and processes.
- ❑ Inspection includes clear and helpful oral feedback and leads to written reporting that evaluates performance and quality and identifies strengths and areas for improvement.
- ❑ The work of all inspectors reflects Ofsted's stated Values and Code of Conduct.

- Quality assurance is built into all inspection activities to ensure that these principles are met and inspection is improved.

ANNEX C: OFSTED SCHOOL INSPECTION SURVEY

2002/2003 FORM 1: Headteachers [N=2801, a 72.5% return]

Please indicate your satisfaction with the way the inspection was carried out and the quality of the inspection report

OVERALL SATISFACTION

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
1 Overall, I am satisfied with the work of the contractor	59	32	4	3	2	0
2 Overall, I am satisfied with the way the inspection was carried out	61	29	4	4	2	0
3 Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the inspection report	55	33	4	4	2	2
4 Overall, I am not satisfied that the inspection will help the school to move forward	3	6	11	28	49	1
5 Overall, the inspection complemented the school's own self-evaluation	59	31	4	3	2	1

THE CONDUCT OF THE INSPECTION

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
6 I was satisfied with the work of the registered inspector	71	20	3	3	2	1
7 I was satisfied with the work of the lay inspector	49	34	6	6	2	1
8 I was not satisfied with the work of other members of the team	3	7	6	24	56	4
9 Good professional relationships were established with the school and governors	66	35	4	3	1	1

THE JUDGEMENTS MADE ABOUT THE SCHOOL

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
10 Judgements about the school and its main strengths and weaknesses are fair and accurate	55	36	4	3	2	0
11 The key issues do not provide a sound basis for future action	2	5	7	26	54	6

EVIDENCE GATHERING

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
12 The pre-inspection commentary did not fairly reflect the most important issues for the school	3	7	6	28	54	2
13 The team gathered a sufficient range and quantity of evidence to support the judgements made	46	38	7	6	2	1

COMMUNICATION

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree no Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
14 The oral communication of inspection findings was clear and helpful	63	28	3	3	2	1
15 The report is fair and accurate and gives a clear and convincing picture of the school	56	31	5	5	3	0
16 There was <u>not</u> a good match between the oral feedback and the written report	2	5	4	21	67	1
17 The summary report is <u>not</u> an accurate reflection of the principal findings in the main report	1	3	4	22	70	0

FEEDBACK

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree no Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
18 Feedback on lessons identified strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning	35	50	8	4	2	1
19 Teachers were <u>not</u> aware of the overall quality of their lesson(s) after receiving feedback	2	8	8	38	42	2

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE INSPECTION

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree no Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
20 The demands placed on you for information and documentation were reasonable	33	48	7	8	3	1
21 You were <u>unable</u> to contribute to the shape of the inspection	2	4	6	27	59	2
22 Inspectors were thoroughly prepared, understood the context of the school and age range of the pupils concerned	52	32	7	6	3	0
23 Teachers were <u>not</u> over-inspected either in the lesson(s) observed or other activities	35	41	8	10	4	2

THE EFFECTS OF INSPECTION

43 Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the effects of inspection?

The benefits from inspection outweigh the negative effects:

1

The benefits and negative effects are equally balanced:

2

The negative effects outweigh the benefits:

3

ANNEX D: OFSTED SCHOOL INSPECTION SURVEY

2002-2003 FORM 2:

TEACHERS [N=2436, a 63.1% return]

OVERALL SATISFACTION

Please indicate your satisfaction with the way the inspection was carried out and the quality of the inspection report

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
1 Overall, I am satisfied with the way the inspection was carried out	42	46	4	5	3	0
2 Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the inspection report	36	49	6	5	3	1
3 Overall, I am not satisfied that the inspection will help the school to move forward	3	8	14	36	37	2
4 Overall, the inspection complemented the school's own self-evaluation	40	45	6	5	3	1

THE CONDUCT OF THE INSPECTION

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
5 I was not satisfied with the work of the inspectors that I met	3	6	7	31	53	0
6 Good professional relationships were established with the school	43	41	8	4	4	0

THE JUDGEMENTS MADE ABOUT THE SCHOOL

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
7 Judgements about the school and its main strengths and weaknesses are fair and accurate	34	53	6	5	2	0
8 The key issues do not provide a sound basis for future action	2	7	9	38	39	5

EVIDENCE GATHERING

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
9 The team gathered a sufficient range and quantity of evidence to support the judgements made	27	46	12	10	4	1

COMMUNICATION

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
10 The oral communication of inspection findings was clear and helpful	36	44	8	6	3	3
11 The report is fair and accurate and gives a clear and convincing picture of the school	35	46	8	7	4	0
12 There was <u>not</u> a good match between the oral feedback and the written report	3	8	8	31	47	3
13 The summary report is <u>not</u> an accurate reflection of the principal findings in the main report	1	4	7	32	52	4

FEEDBACK

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
14 Feedback on lessons identified strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning	29	52	8	6	3	2
15 Teachers were <u>not</u> aware of the overall quality of their lesson(s) after receiving feedback	3	10	9	38	38	1

THE MANAGEMENT OF THE INSPECTION

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
16 The demands placed on you for information and documentation were reasonable	24	56	9	7	3	1
17 You were <u>unable</u> to contribute to the shape of the inspection	5	11	14	33	33	4
18 Inspectors were thoroughly prepared, understood the context of the school and age range of the pupils concerned	39	41	9	6	4	1
19 Teachers were <u>not</u> over-inspected either in the lesson(s) observed or other activities	24	47	11	11	4	3

THE EFFECTS OF INSPECTION

39 Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the effects of inspection?

- The benefits from inspection outweigh the negative effects: 1
- The benefits and negative effects are equally balanced: 2
- The negative effects outweigh the benefits: 3

Annex E: *Inspection Impact Papers* – internal papers on aspects of the impact of Ofsted

Papers marked * are referred to in the text of this report and are published on the Ofsted web site, www.ofsted.gov.uk. The remaining papers also provided useful evidence, some of which is incorporated in the report. They may not all be published separately.

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Constantine C. and Matthews P., *Self-evaluation in the sectors inspected by Ofsted*, Ofsted, 2003.

Cross-Durrant A., and Singleton D., *The impact of reinspection monitoring in colleges.*, Ofsted, 2003.

*Dawe P. and Rosen M., *The impact of subject inspection by HMI and additional inspectors*, Ofsted, 2003.

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*Hadley F. and Gould C., *Making a difference: the impact of award-bearing in-service training on school improvement*, summary of Ofsted report, Ofsted, 2003.

Harris P. and Sylvester P., *The impact of Ofsted's work on key stage 4 curriculum development since 2000*.

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*Knighton D. and Gould C., *The inspection of training for teachers in further education*, Ofsted, 2003.

*Malley G., *Ofsted's website*, Ofsted, 2004.

*Matthews P., *The impact of Ofsted: mapping the territory*, Ofsted, 2003.

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Rucki P., Key T. and Sykes A., *The impact of Ofsted: an international perspective*, Ofsted, 2004.

* Somlo R., Leo E and Matthews P., *Pupils' and parents' views of the effects of inspection on improvement*, Ofsted, 2004.

Steadman C. and Singleton D., *Quality assurance and the evaluation of post-compulsory education inspections 2002 to 2003*, Ofsted, 2003.

Steadman C. and Singleton D., *College and other post-compulsory education inspections: the views of providers*, Ofsted, 2003.

Sykes A. and Key T., *Changes in inspection arrangements since 1993*, Ofsted, 2004.