



Proportionate inspection

Summary of responses to the consultation and next steps

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education
and care**

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Introduction

From September 2006, Ofsted intends to develop an inspection system for maintained schools that is more proportionate to risk. This responds directly to the Government's agenda for further reductions in inspection and builds on the successful introduction of the current inspection arrangements in September 2005. It reduces the burden of inspection on schools that are achieving very well, and continues Ofsted's focus on achieving better value for money by targeting resources at schools where there is underachievement.

Maintained schools are currently inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 to a published framework for inspection. Schools are inspected every three years, with very short notice, to a grading scale of 1 to 4 (outstanding to inadequate). They receive a two-day inspection by one or more inspectors, depending on the size of the school. School self-evaluation is at the heart of the inspections: although there is some variation in the quality of self-evaluation across schools, the self-evaluation form has proved very successful in identifying the strengths and weaknesses within the school and the action the school is taking to improve the strengths and remedy the weaknesses, which helps the inspector decide how to focus the inspection.

Feedback from schools and inspectors indicates that the new section 5 arrangements have been very effective. Therefore, we do not intend to change them for the majority of schools. However, there is a proportion of schools that have yet to be inspected under section 5 where achievement is high, self-evaluation is good and there is a good track record from the schools' previous inspections. We believe these schools need little inspection and we are proposing to reduce the tariff of inspector days.

Monitoring schools in special measures has been a success story: visits by inspectors undertaken at regular intervals have proved valuable in ensuring that the quality of education pupils receive improves. We intend to continue this practice but to tailor it to meet the needs of schools more closely.

Where a school has been given a notice to improve, an inspection takes place one year later. Ofsted plans to trial monitoring visits in schools given a notice to improve to see whether this will help schools in this situation make sufficient progress to be judged at least satisfactory when they receive a further inspection a year later.

There are a number of schools which, while satisfactory overall, still have pockets of underachievement. Ofsted is trialling approaches to monitoring these schools over the next few months.

Background to the consultation

Ofsted's public consultation was primarily web-based. It was supplemented by a series of meetings with local authorities and by detailed feedback from schools which had taken part in the reduced-tariff inspections trialled in the spring and summer terms. The consultation followed guidance from the Better Regulation Executive.

The consultation process began on 15 March 2006 and ended on 11 May 2006. This report summarises the results.

Responses were received from:

- 381 headteachers
- 68 teachers
- 53 governors
- 36 local authority employees
- 65 education professionals
- 55 'other' including:
 - 2 local authorities
 - 8 national organisations (see below)
 - 1 governor association

National organisations that responded in writing were:

- Association of School and College Leaders
- National Association of Head Teachers
- National Union of Teachers
- National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
- Professional Association of Teachers
- General Teaching Council for England
- Institute of Directors
- Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts

Where the grades were evident from an organisation's submission these have been included in the tally counts given below.

Overview

Higher-achieving schools

Question	Yes	No	No view	Total responses
Do you agree that there is scope to reduce further the weight of inspection for higher-achieving schools?	546	128	15	689
	79%	19%	2%	100%

Question	Half a day	A whole day	Two days	Other	No view	Total responses
What, in principle, is the minimum acceptable level of inspection, within current legislation, for higher-achieving schools?	86	415	136	33	19	689
	12%	60%	20%	5%	3%	100%

Schools with a notice to improve

Question	Yes	No	No view	Total responses
Do you agree in principle that a monitoring visit could promote the progress of a school given a notice to improve?	585	78	26	689
	85%	11%	4%	100%

Respondents opposed to a monitoring visit were asked to comment on this. Many were concerned that a monitoring visit would only serve to increase the pressure on a school trying to improve within a very short time scale and said that Ofsted should only visit, 'as a means of offering advice – not adding extra stress.' Others felt that the local authority should be working with the school rather than Ofsted, for example one commented 'already have LA to do this'.

Respondents who agreed that a monitoring visit could promote progress were asked to comment on how the visit should be organised. Many were in favour of a short notice, focused visit, no sooner than six months after the inspection. The visit should 'address key issues. Test assertions from SEF about progress'.

Satisfactory (grade 3) schools

Question	Yes	No	No view	Total responses
Do you agree that a monitoring visit could promote the progress of a grade 3 school with pockets of underachievement?	554	118	17	689
	81%	17%	2%	100%

Question	12 months	18 months	2 years	Total responses
If you answered yes, at what stage after a section 5 inspection would a monitoring visit be most useful for this purpose?	321	173	63	557
	58%	31%	11%	100%

Question	Yes	No	Total responses
If you answered yes, do you agree in principle that Ofsted should work with local authorities and the regional teams representing the national strategies in planning and undertaking the monitoring visits proposed above?	64	507	571
	11%	89%	100%

Other comments on proportionate inspection

386 respondents chose to offer views on a variety of aspects of the role of inspectors and the inspection process. Some felt that there has been too little time for 'bedding in' the new section 5 inspections. Some expressed disquiet at grading a school as satisfactory but then suggesting that it may not be good enough and, therefore, in some way unsatisfactory.

Other comments included, 'a positive development', 'logical and sensible', and, 'a better use of resources'.

Some concerns were raised on what, and how, data are used to identify higher-achieving schools given the variations in schools, for example one respondent commented: 'schools should be judged on their individual merits, achievements and improvement. It should not be a blanket decision for all schools'.

Key findings

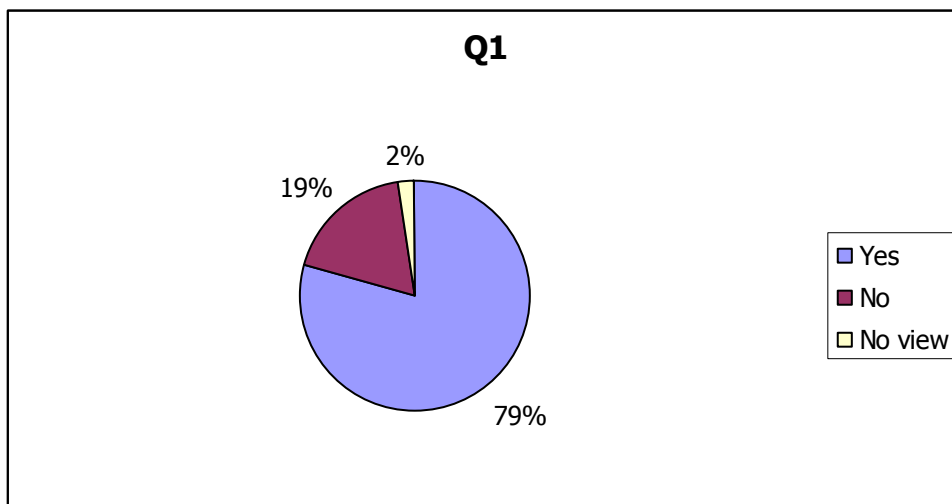
- ❑ The responses from the consultation, including those from national organisations, indicate that there is a high level of support for shorter inspections of higher-achieving schools and for monitoring visits to schools given a notice to improve. This support was endorsed during meetings with local authorities and headteachers.
- ❑ Responses from individuals indicate support for monitoring visits to grade 3 schools with pockets of underachievement but there was strong opposition from the majority of national organisations. There was little support for Ofsted working on such monitoring with local authorities and the regional teams from the national strategies.

A summary of the responses to the consultation

Higher-achieving schools

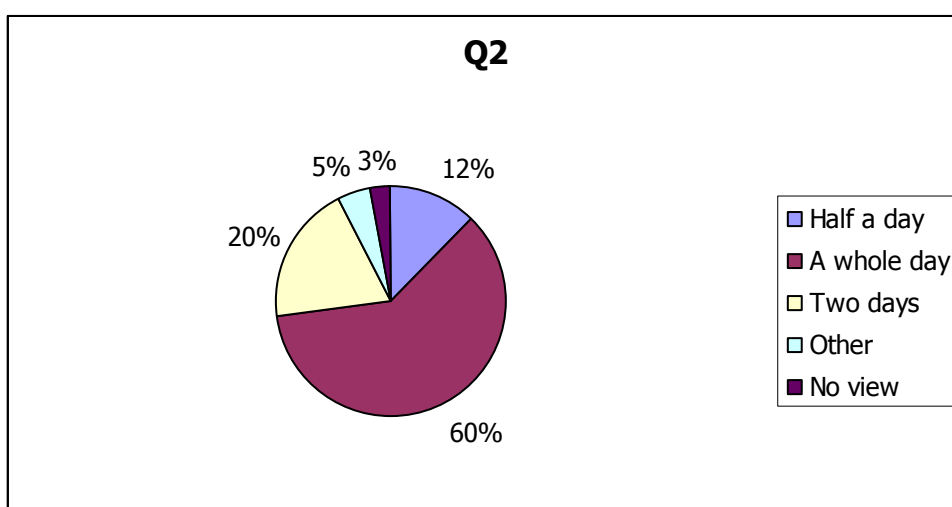
Question 1. Do you agree that there is scope to reduce further the weight of inspection for higher-achieving schools?

This proposal was supported by 79% of all respondents.



Question 2. What, in principle, is the minimum acceptable level of inspection, within current legislation, for higher-achieving schools?

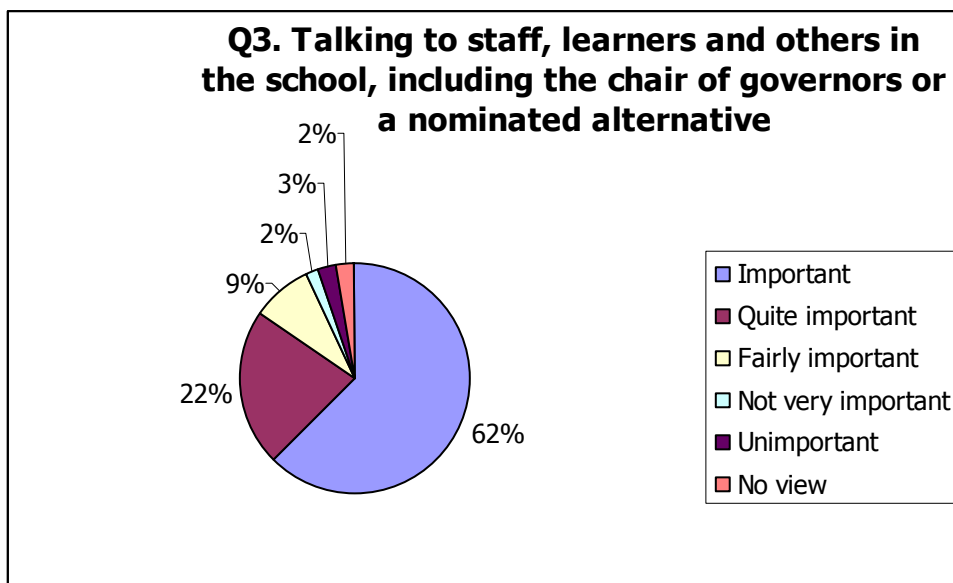
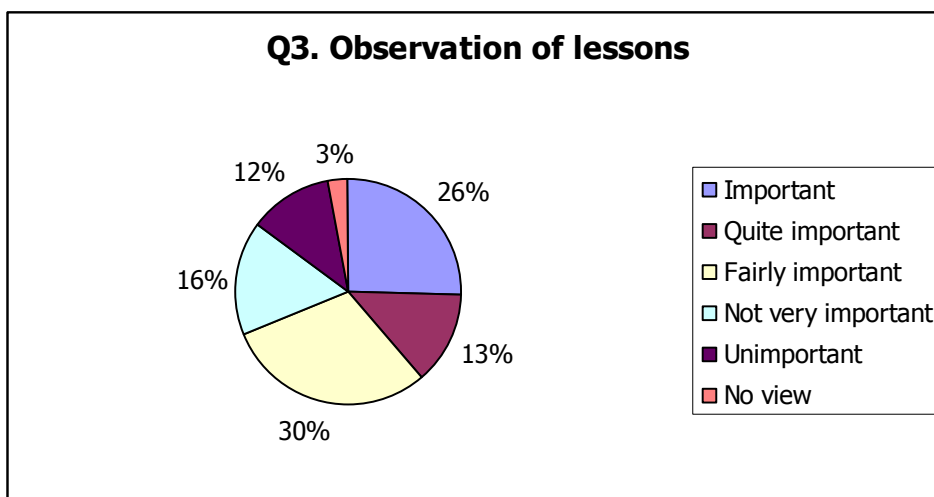
The proposal to reduce the level of inspection for higher-achieving schools to one day or less, was supported by 72% of all respondents.



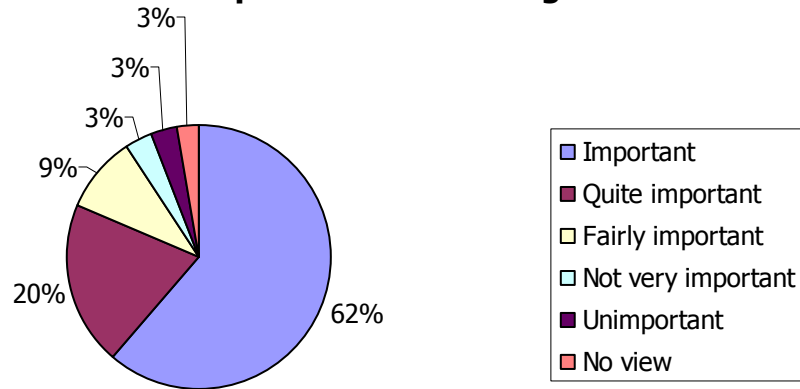
Question 3. On a shorter inspection of a higher-achieving school, which inspection activities would you consider to be indispensable?

The proposal to reduce some aspects of the inspection activities was supported by a majority of respondents. Only a minority of respondents considered observation of lessons and analysing samples of work and records to be of high importance.

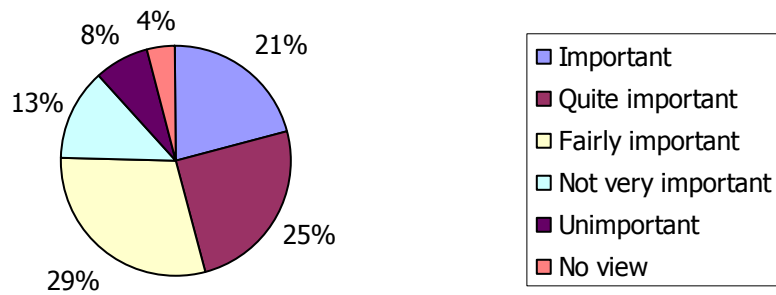
The inspection activities considered most important by 84% of the respondents were talking to the staff, pupils and governors. 82% considered tracking the school’s processes of self-evaluation and performance management to be of importance.



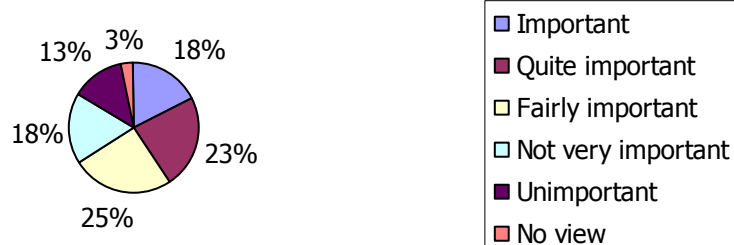
Q3. Tracking school processes, such as self-evaluation and performance management



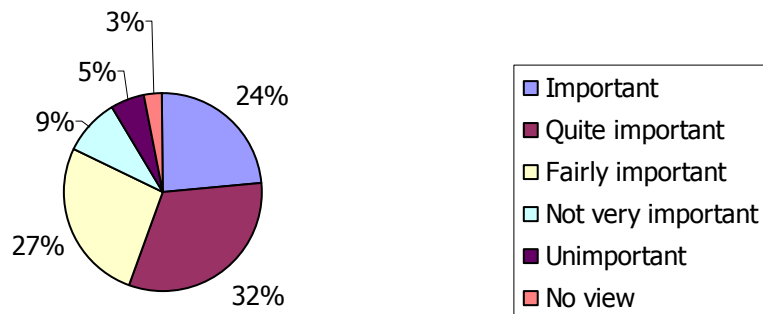
Q3. Analysing samples of work



Q3. Joining meetings, such as school council or management meetings and directly observing management processes, such as the monitoring of teaching

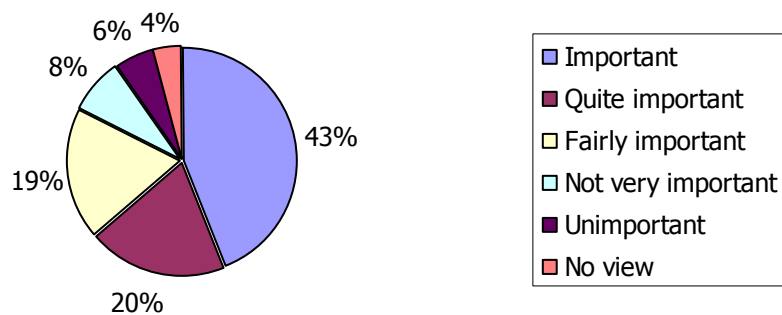


Q3. Analysing records relating to learners, such as those with special educational needs

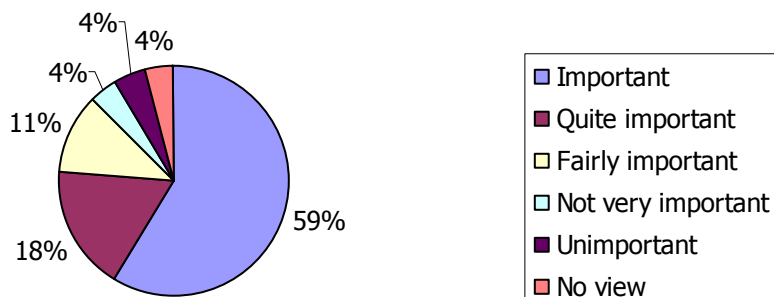


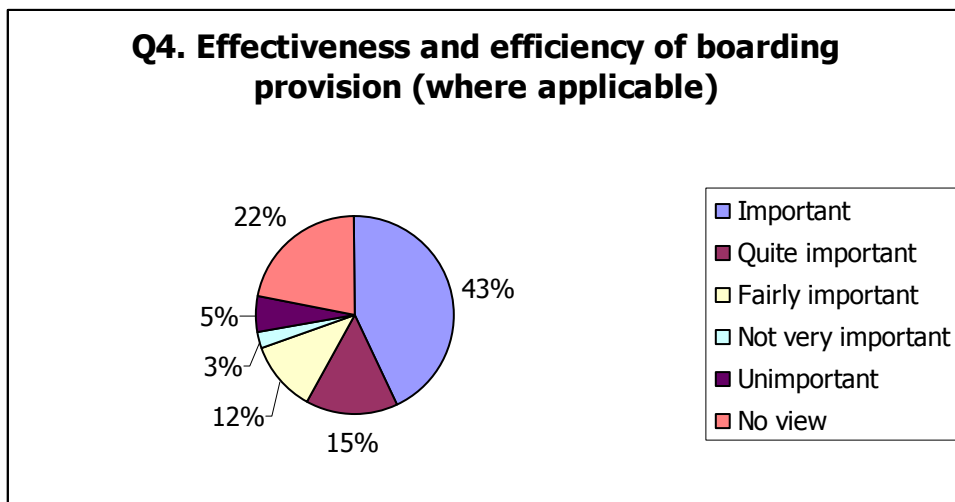
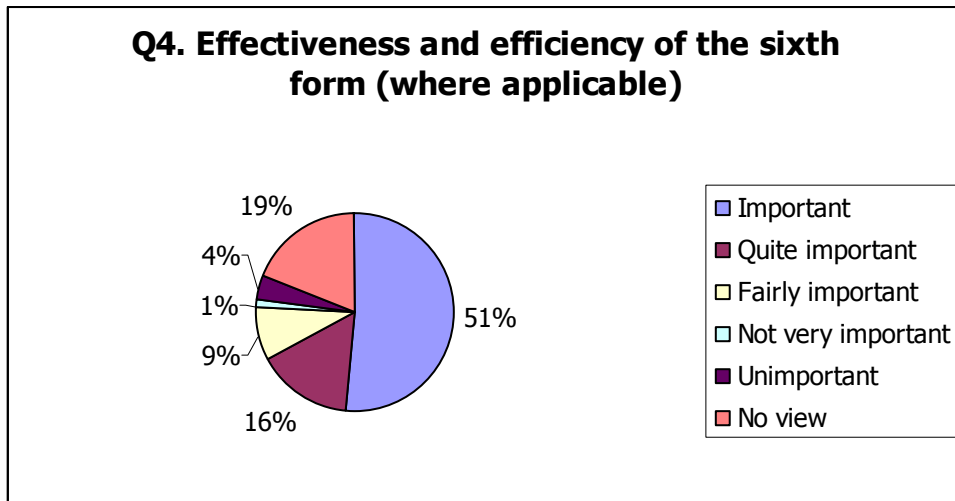
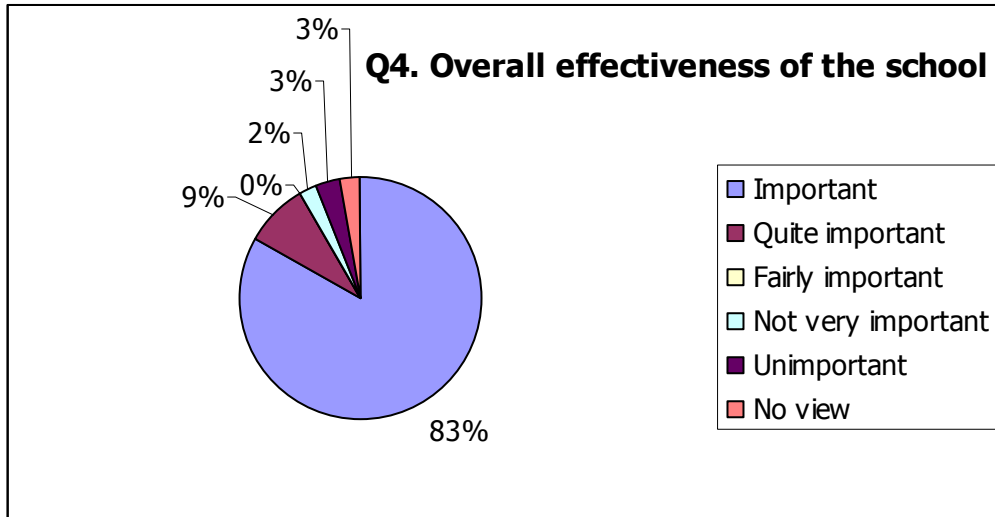
Question 4. For a shorter inspection of a higher-achieving school within current legislation, what should the report contain?

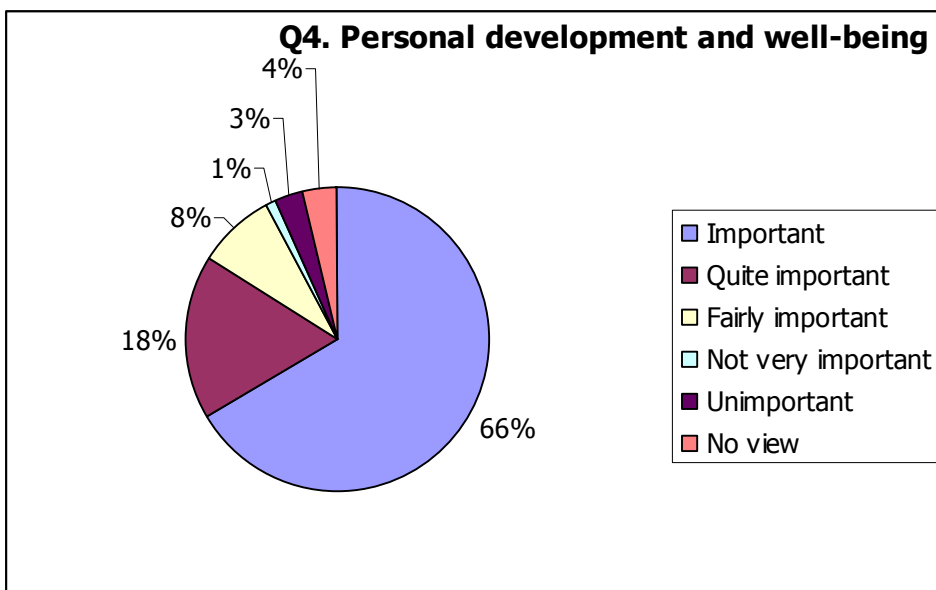
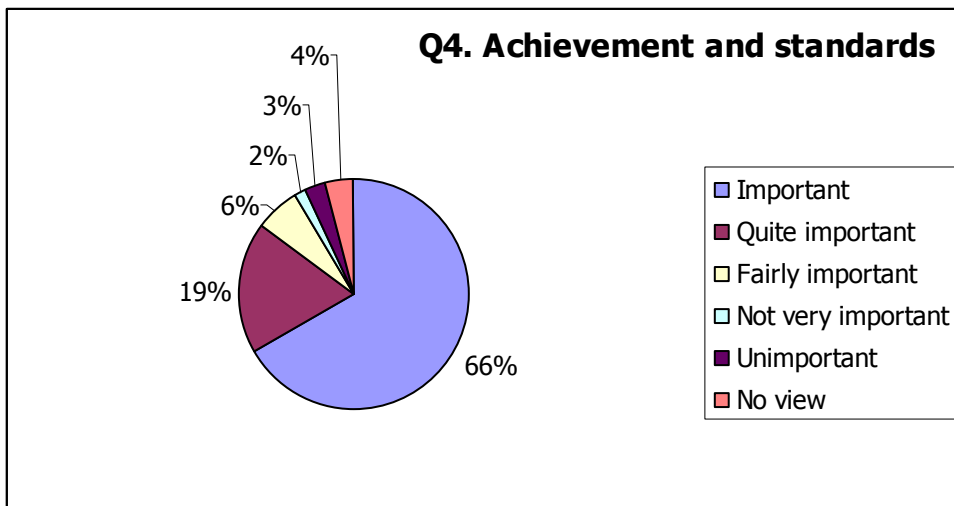
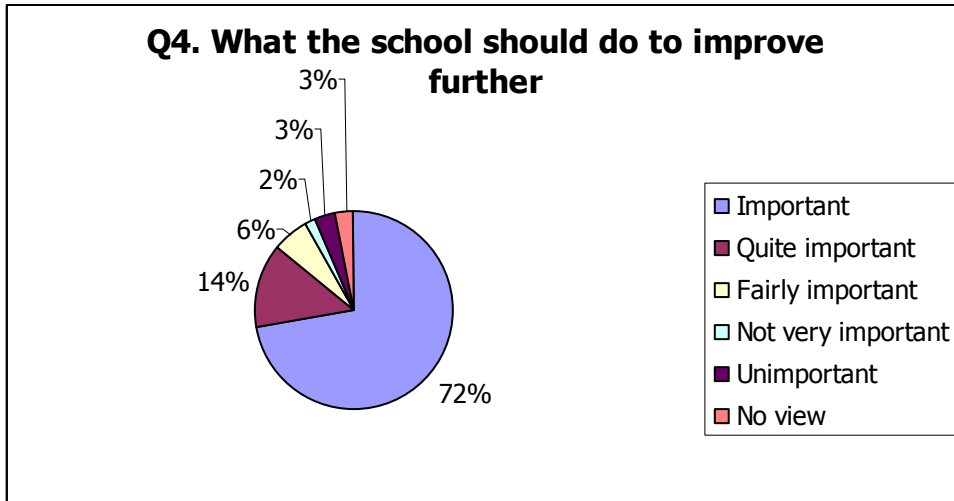
Q4. Description of the school

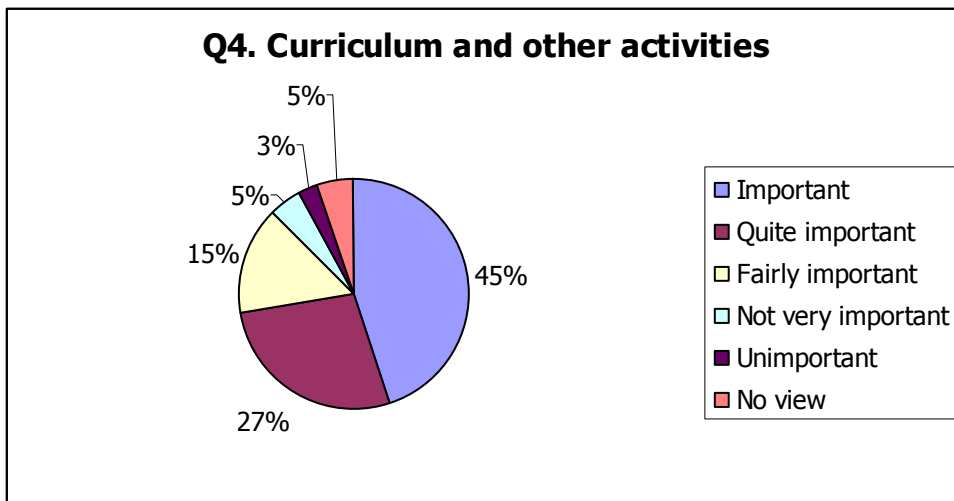
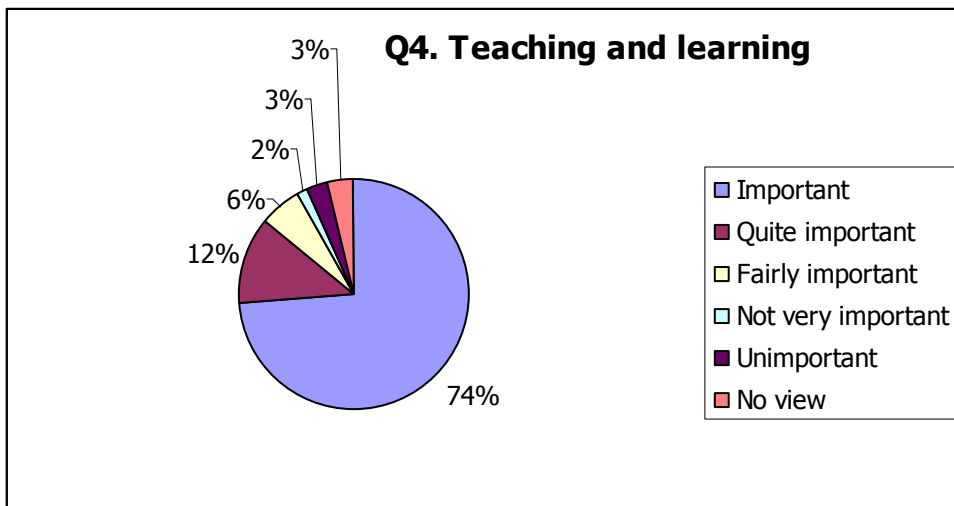
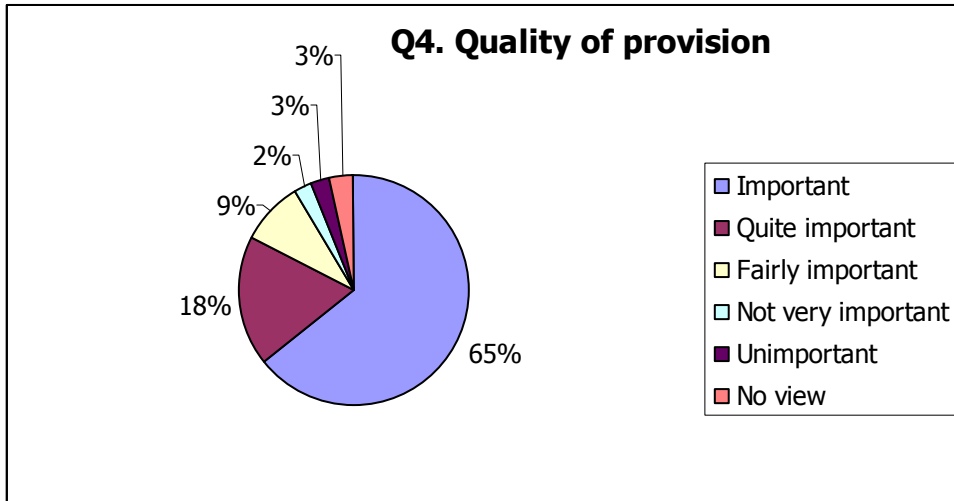


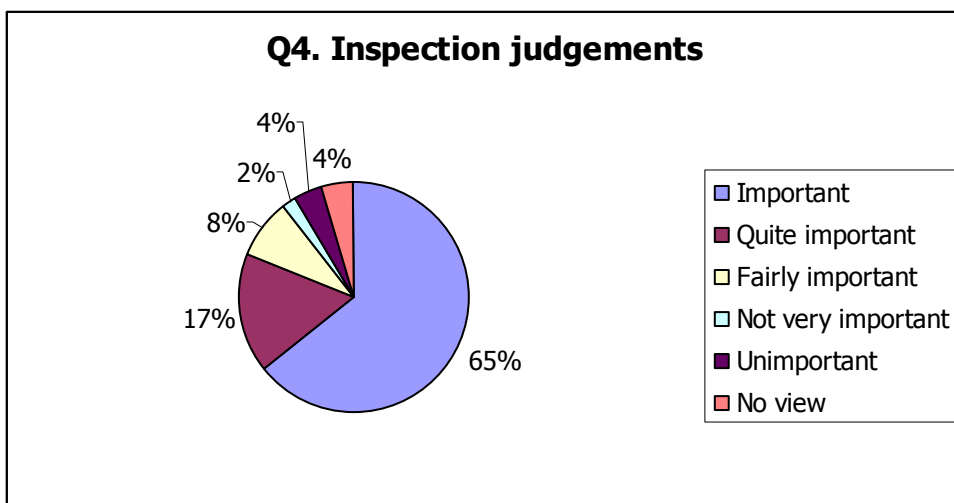
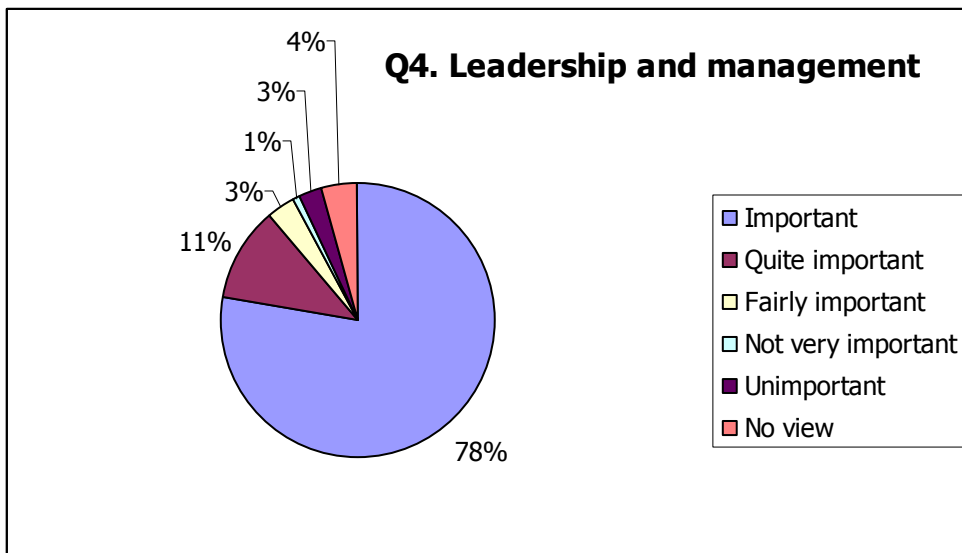
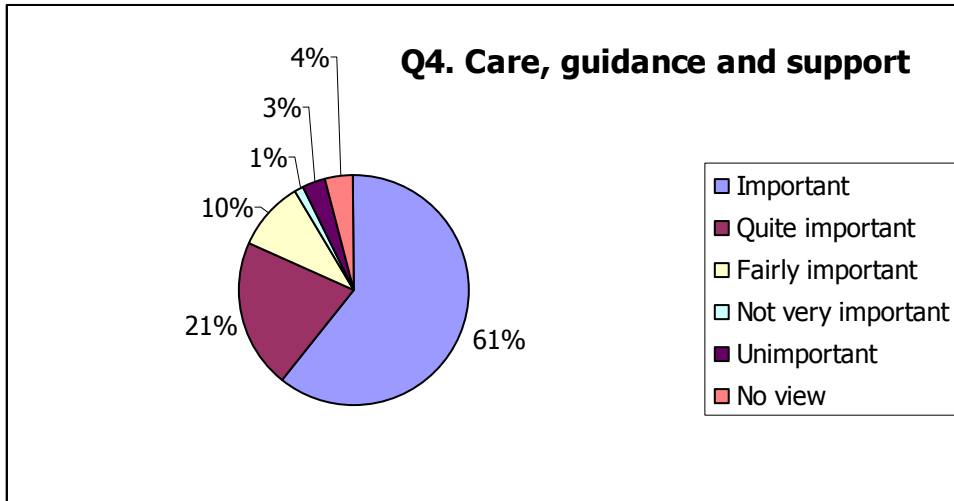
Q4. Key for inspection grades











Summary

There was strong support for the proposal to reduce the weight of inspection for higher-achieving schools.

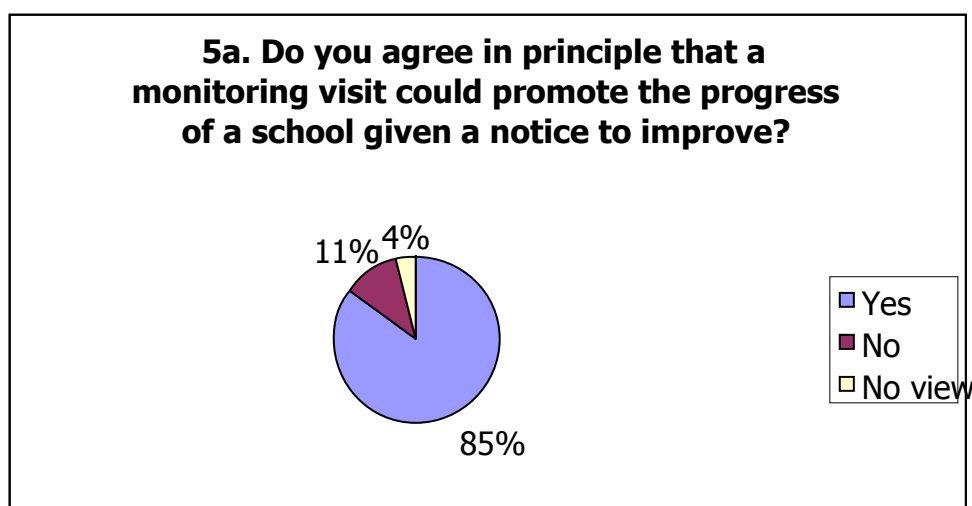
Respondents felt that:

- talking to staff, learners and others and tracking school processes such as self-evaluation and performance management were the most important features of a shorter inspection
- the most important element of a report is the paragraph on the overall effectiveness of the school.

Schools with a notice to improve

Question 5. Do you agree in principle that a monitoring visit could promote the progress of a school given a notice to improve?

The proposal to trial monitoring visits was supported by **85%** of respondents.



Summary

Respondents were asked to comment only if they were against the proposal. Of the 15% who disagreed, just under half gave the reason that they felt that another inspection would increase the stress on schools already under pressure and 17% felt that this is a role designed for the local authority and not Ofsted.

Question 5b. If you agree, how should the visit be organised to promote the school's progress most effectively?

Respondents were asked to comment.

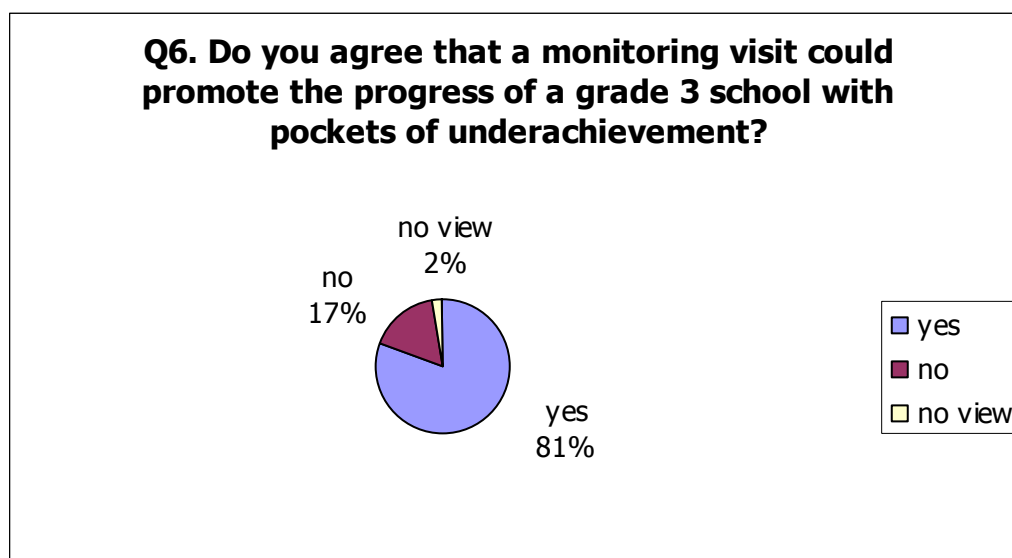
Summary

Respondents who were in favour of monitoring visits felt that short notice, regular, focused visits were preferable and would allow a good working relationship to be built up between inspector and school.

Question 6. Do you agree that a monitoring visit could promote the progress of a grade 3 school with pockets of underachievement?

If yes, at what stage after a section 5 inspection would a monitoring visit be most useful for this purpose?

If yes, do you agree in principle that Ofsted should work with local authorities and the regional teams representing the national strategies in planning and undertaking the monitoring visits proposed above?



Q6. If yes, at what stage after a section 5 inspection would a monitoring visit be most useful for this purpose?



Q6. If yes, do you agree in principle that Ofsted should work with local authorities and the regional teams representing the national strategies in planning and undertaking the monitoring visits proposed above?



Summary

There was support from individuals for the proposal to monitor schools judged satisfactory but with pockets of underachievement, but strong opposition to this from the majority of national organisations.

- 81% felt that a monitoring visit could promote the progress of a grade 3 school, but less than half agreed to the proposal to make this visit within a year of the section 5 inspection.
- 9% of respondents are in favour of Ofsted working with local representatives to monitor progress.

What Ofsted intends to do next

The recent consultation exercise, together with feedback from discussions with schools and local authorities, indicates strong support for Ofsted's proposals.

As a result, Ofsted intends to:

- proceed with inspections of higher-achieving schools using a reduced tariff of inspector days
- give all schools with a notice to improve a monitoring visit six to eight months after the last inspection
- continue the work being undertaken to tailor monitoring visits to schools in special measures, both in style and depth, to meet the schools' needs
- continue trials to monitor the progress of schools judged 'satisfactory' until March 2007, to enable the process to be evaluated and reviewed with the intention of implementing a monitoring programme in 5% of 'satisfactory' schools from the summer term 2007.