

Review of the impact of inspection

This report provides an overview of the impact of Ofsted inspections and regulatory activity across education and care settings. Although the direct impact of inspection can be difficult to prove, there is evidence that inspection and regulation make a positive difference to the provision of services in education and care. Ofsted's publications, conferences and advice help to drive improvement across the system as a whole.

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Executive summary

On 1 April 2007 a new Ofsted was created, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. The remit of the new Ofsted covers the full range of childcare and education provision for children and young people, as well as learning and skills provision for learners of all ages. This report is concerned with the impact of the childcare and education work previously carried out by the old Ofsted, the Office for Standards in Education. Although the old Ofsted began with the responsibility for inspecting schools, by 2007 its remit had expanded to include responsibility for the inspection, and in some cases regulation, of childcare, schools, colleges, and children's services provided in local authority areas.

This report focuses on the difference Ofsted makes to childcare and education in England, and how it makes that difference. It uses evidence of improvement over time and draws on the views of those inspected. It is clear that the relationship between inspection and improvement is never a simple one. When Ofsted inspects a childcare provider, school or college and it subsequently improves, it is tempting to claim that the one caused the other. But it is leaders, managers, staff, and the children and young people who use the services, who work together to bring about improvement. However, inspection and regulation do play a part.

By their very existence inspection and regulation keep institutions on their toes. Inspection and regulation help make providers accountable to their users and to the public. Reports have a high profile, and can have serious implications when outcomes are poor. Providers may, for example, lose funding, lose customers or be shut down. Through changes to its inspection regimes in recent years, Ofsted has unashamedly 'raised the bar'; as children, young people, parents, and the public have come to expect higher standards of performance, so has Ofsted.

However, it is not just the fact that inspection and regulation take place that raises standards, but also the way they are conducted. For example, Ofsted requires inspectors to take account of the self-evaluation of providers and to engage in dialogue with those inspected. This two-way process is really valued. The professional knowledge of inspectors serves to increase managers' understanding and ability to monitor work in the future. The managers' self-assessment helps inspectors to focus their work. When inspection outcomes endorse a provider's self-evaluation, the effect is to generate confidence and raise morale. Providers sometimes claim inspections have not identified areas for improvement of which they were not aware. But they usually agree that the recommendations have helped them to clarify their priorities and given them a clear focus for further work.

The impact of inspection is not limited to individual providers. Ofsted also affects the provision of education and care nationally, for example by conducting surveys of aspects of provision, disseminating the findings, and

providing briefings and advice for Ministers. A recent report on inclusion, for example, was a stimulus to local authorities to review their integrated provision for learners with difficulties or disabilities.¹

The report considers aspects of childcare and education where clear improvements in outcomes over several years are, at least in part, directly attributable to inspection. Inspections of initial teacher training (ITT) have taken place since 1994, and since then most providers have moved to a position where their courses are good or better. Judging providers against national standards has increased the proportion of good independent schools, childminders and day-care settings and decreased the number inadequate. Schools in special measures improve more rapidly than before. Newer inspection regimes, such as those for children and young people's services, have rapidly made an impact on systems and attitudes, though it will take longer to make a difference to outcomes.

It is also true that, in places, inspection has not made enough difference. This report shows that those providers judged to be inadequate make the greatest strides in improving provision after inspection. They have to, and they are given considerable support to do so. It also shows that providers whose leadership is strong usually continue to make good progress; they engage readily in dialogue during the inspection, adjust their priorities as necessary, and set clear and measurable targets for improvement. They require little if any support in responding to inspection findings. The same is not true of weaker providers: those whose leadership is no better than satisfactory often improve too slowly, fail to improve at all, or in the worst cases decline. Some vulnerable groups continue to underachieve. There are no grounds for complacency: the impact of inspection whilst often significant remains uneven.

Key findings

- Providers themselves make the improvements; inspection and regulation act as a catalyst.
- Inspection and regulation make a difference to individual providers and to provision nationally, although this difference is uneven.
- Inspection and regulation generate considerable public interest and make providers accountable to users and the wider community.
- Considerable progress has been made in the last three years in reducing the cost of inspection, in targeting resources more effectively and in engaging with providers.

¹ *Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?* (HMI 2535), Ofsted, 2006; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2535.

- Providers found to be inadequate usually improve rapidly, and stronger providers also make good progress; however, too many stand still or decline.
- Engaging institutions directly in the process of inspection and regulation has increased their understanding of their performance and set the context for further improvement.
- Providers value dialogue with inspectors, gain confidence when their judgements and those of inspectors coincide and are better able to set priorities for improvement.
- Inspection of aspects of provision has made a difference across the system as a whole, contributing to national policy and to decisions about spending on educational priorities.

Recommendations

As a result of the findings of this report, Ofsted will:

- continue to develop and refine its methods of assessing the impact of inspection and regulation in order to direct resources to where they can make the most difference
- explore further with users, stakeholders and partners how inspection and regulation can have the most influence on outcomes
- identify, through research and analysis of current successful practice, how inspection can have the greatest possible impact, particularly in promoting capacity to improve in weaker providers
- ensure that different types of inspection support each other wherever possible to maximise their impact.

Background to this review

1. In 2004, Ofsted produced a report in collaboration with the Institute of Education, University of London.² The report made a number of recommendations about inspection. In particular, it recommended that Ofsted should involve users and stakeholders more, promote the use of self-evaluation to help providers build the capacity to improve, reduce the notice period for inspection and the amount of paperwork, and make inspection more proportionate to risk. These recommendations have all been implemented.
2. In the light of these changes, this review considers how inspection is contributing to improvements in standards and achievement, provision and care. It draws chiefly on evidence from the academic year 2005/06, but refers back to previous years where it is important to do so.
3. Some detailed work on the impact of inspection in particular phases has already been published. The report *Early years: safe and sound*, for example, shows the difference that inspection and regulation have made to two of the five outcomes of Every Child Matters: being healthy and staying safe.³ Two studies have also been published which evaluate the processes and impact of the new inspection regime for maintained schools.⁴
4. Ofsted provides an independent, national view of the quality of provision. It reports without fear or favour the findings of its external scrutiny, providing essential public accountability for the spending of taxpayers' money. Its published frameworks share evaluation criteria with the providers, helping them to evaluate their own provision and motivating them to improve to a higher inspection grade. It uses increasingly sophisticated data, the self-evaluation of providers and the first-hand evidence gathered from inspections. All of these factors set a powerful context for Ofsted's influence on improvement.
5. Inspection and regulation of providers of education and care serve three broad purposes. First, they hold the provider to account. Second, they inform users and the choices they make. Third, they act as a driver of

² *Improvement through inspection*, a joint study by Ofsted and the Institute of Education, University of London (HMI 2244), Ofsted, 2004; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2244.

³ *Early years: safe and sound* (HMI 2663), Ofsted, 2006; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2663.

⁴ *Impact of section 5 inspections: maintained schools in England*, a study by the National Foundation for Educational Research; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20060721. *School inspection: an evaluation* (HMI 2373), Ofsted, 2006; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2373.

improvement of the provider and of the system as a whole. Inspection reports on institutions, for example, assess the standards of achievement, the quality of education and care, and the effectiveness of leadership and management they provide.

6. External scrutiny keeps an institution on its toes, and users welcome this. In a recent survey, for example, just 4% of parents said they were not in favour of school inspections.⁵ Four out of five of those whose children's school had been inspected in the previous year felt the inspection was likely to have helped the school to improve. Parents and others can search the Ofsted website for reports on the performance of their local providers and use the information to inform their choices. The scale of their interest can be judged by the 1.7 million visits to the school reports section of the Ofsted website in September 2006 alone, complemented by over 5 million other visits to the site as a whole.
7. Regulation requires the provider to demonstrate that it meets the standards that are required nationally. It is a particular feature of inspections of early years settings, independent schools and providers of initial teacher training. Improvements in the meeting of regulations are particularly striking in these three areas, where evidence is available over a period of time.
8. Changes in inspection frameworks have also affected the quality of provision. For instance, the new framework for maintained schools emphasised the five outcomes of Every Child Matters for children and young people. It stressed the importance of self-evaluation, and was accompanied by more sophisticated data to show how the pupils in one school are performing when their achievements are compared with those of similar pupils elsewhere. The new data enables schools and inspectors to establish more clearly the extent to which a school is adding value to its pupils' education.
9. A key source of information for this report has been the views of those inspected. They point to a number of ways in which changes to the way schools and colleges are inspected have made a difference. Ofsted seeks the views of providers immediately after inspection, and sometimes again after time has elapsed. Comments and survey returns give the providers' view of how they feel inspection has contributed to improvements in standards, achievement, provision and care. Reference to such evidence will be found in most sections of this report.
10. The positive nature of responses from those inspected suggests that increased involvement in the processes of inspection and regulation is

⁵ *School inspections: research study conducted for Ofsted*, final report, Ofsted, 2006. The study was conducted by Ipsos Mori; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20060001.

leading to greater confidence, and that this confidence is a key driver for improvement. Most respondents agree that by creating a framework of accountability, by improving the practice of self-evaluation, by encouraging dialogue throughout the inspection, by testing or confirming an institution's view of itself and by clarifying how it can improve, Ofsted has made a difference.

The impact of inspection and regulation in the different sectors

Early years: childcare and nursery education settings

Introduction

11. Between 1 April 2005 and 31 March 2006, Ofsted undertook a number of initiatives to measure the impact of inspection and regulation on inspectors, providers and outcomes for children. These included:
- surveys of providers and inspectors on the impact of the new inspection framework
 - *Start spreading the news* – a survey of national day-care providers, which identified whether the inspection of one of their settings had an impact on the quality of care offered at the others
 - a review of inspection reports where improvement from the last inspection had been clearly identified
 - analysis leading to the report *Early years: safe and sound*, published in August 2006, which showed the impact of Ofsted's work on the outcomes for children of being healthy and staying safe⁶
 - analysis leading to the publication of *Making a difference* – a report on how Ofsted inspections have improved inadequate care for children.⁷

Key findings

- The majority of national day-care providers have reported that inspection at one setting helped to improve the quality of care and education offered across all their settings, by encouraging them to develop programmes of improvement following inspection.
- Between 2003 and 2005, one in five providers failed to meet one or more of the National Standards, and Ofsted required them to take action to rectify this. This year it was necessary to take this step for only 4% of providers inspected.

⁶ *Early years: safe and sound* (HMI 2663), Ofsted, 2006; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2663.

⁷ *Making a difference* (HMI 2660), Ofsted, 2006; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2660.

- Where childcare was inadequate, Ofsted identified the action the provider needed to take, and then reinspected within the year to check if the required improvement had been made. Most had improved, but it is a cause for concern that 13% remained inadequate.

Background

12. In April 2005, Ofsted introduced a new inspection framework with a four-point grading scale. The descriptors for the scale, now used in all Ofsted inspections, are *outstanding*; *good*; *satisfactory* and *inadequate*. At the same time, the inspections 'raised the bar' – the line separating what is acceptable from what is not. Any provision that fails to meet one or more of the National Standards⁸ is now judged as inadequate unless the impact on children is negligible, or the provider is already taking appropriate action to meet the standard.

The new inspection framework

13. In January 2006, all childcare inspectors were asked to take part in a survey about the new inspections. A postal survey of 1,240 childcare providers was also conducted. Inspectors and providers were asked their views on the effectiveness of the new framework.
14. A very large majority of inspectors responding agreed that the new inspection framework fulfils the responsibility to report on the Every Child Matters outcomes. Inspectors commented that feedback to providers on the impact of their care on the outcomes for children was generally received positively, and that providers' responses indicated that they would act on the inspection findings.
15. Most providers who responded to the survey agreed that reports made clear any actions or recommendations to improve the quality of childcare, and that reports focused on what it is like for a child in their care. Inspectors agreed that inspection reports give parents and providers more information than was the case under the previous framework.

National day care providers

16. In February 2006, a survey was undertaken of the 45 members of the national day care providers' scheme. These organisations operate settings across the country, and offer full day care, crèche provision, out of school facilities or a combination of these. The intention of the survey was to establish whether national providers considered that the inspection of one

⁸ *The national standards for under 8s day care and childminding*, DfES, 2003; available from www.surestart.gov.uk/publications/index.cfm?document=225

of their settings had an impact on the quality of care and education offered in all of them.

17. Of the 21 national providers who responded to the survey, 18 endorsed the findings of their inspections. They reported extending to their other settings the good practice and strengths identified at the inspection of one setting. For example, a number of providers changed or amended written policies and procedures following inspection. Sixteen of the respondents expressed the view that inspection helped to improve the quality of care and education offered at their settings.

Case studies

18. Unless their provision is outstanding, childminders and day-care providers are set actions or recommendations following inspection to improve the quality of their provision. Reports summarise the actions and recommendations set at the previous inspection and identify what the provider has done in response to these. Here are some examples taken directly from inspection reports.

Case study

At the last inspection there were several actions relating to: documentation; training; resources for children aged one to five years; safety and equal opportunity resources. The childminder now maintains a daily attendance record which is accurate and kept up to date. The childminder has enhanced her ability to respond to any serious accidents or incidents by attending an appropriate first aid course. The childminder has obtained information and advice regarding appropriate activities for children under five years and these are now implemented well in her practice. Additionally, the childminder has obtained a good range of resources to meet the needs of this age group. This enhances children's all-round development. The childminder has obtained a sufficient range of resources which reflect equal opportunities. This increases children's awareness of the wider world.

19. However, the picture of improvement is not always as encouraging, with some issues unresolved since the previous inspection.

Case study

The staff team was asked to devise a system for observing and recording what the children do. This issue has not been fully addressed to ensure that children enjoy a broad and balanced range of experiences and play opportunities. The group was also required to ensure that a member of staff takes responsibility for child protection matters. This has been done. The manager has taken on

this responsibility and there is basic understanding of the procedures in place to protect children.

20. Between April 2005 and March 2006 Ofsted carried out 4,777 inspections of nursery education, some of which were integrated with inspections of care. The improvement section in these reports looks at the impact of the actions taken by the provider to tackle weaknesses in the nursery education.

Case study

At the last inspection of nursery education, the provider agreed to improve the staff's understanding and delivery of the Foundation Stage⁹, including opportunities for children to use information technology and to develop their independence. The setting has made excellent progress in achieving these. Staff have undertaken training in the Foundation Stage. They have developed their understanding of the areas of learning and improved their planning. As a result, plans now support staff in creating an exciting learning environment for the children. Children regularly use a computer and staff ensure they provide suitable programs to interest and challenge children at different ages and stages of development. Daily routines actively encourage children's independence. For example, they set the tables for snack and lunch times, serve themselves and wash up their own cups and bowls; they register themselves on arrival and learn to manage their own personal hygiene. Consequently, children no longer wait passively for extended periods of time.

Early years: safe and sound

21. The report *Early years: safe and sound* showed how registered childcare settings help children in staying safe and being healthy, two of the five outcomes which Every Child Matters identified as vital for every child, and which were given a statutory basis in the Children Act 2004. These outcomes have been embedded in Ofsted's early years inspection framework since April 2005.
22. Inspectors found that of the 25,000 childcare providers inspected between April 2005 and March 2006, 97% were satisfactory or better at keeping children in their care safe from harm. Very few (3%) were deemed inadequate. In the same period, 98% of providers were satisfactory or better at helping children to be healthy. Very few (2%) were inadequate.

⁹ *Early years foundation stage: statutory framework and guidance*, DfES 2007; available from www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/foundation_stage/eyfs/.

23. Inspectors noted a wide range of improvements in the way providers support children to be healthy because they have responded to requirements set at their previous inspection. Improvements were seen particularly where the last inspection had identified actions required on first aid, hygiene and record keeping.

Making a difference

24. During the 15 months from April 2005 to June 2006, Ofsted judged 1,100 care providers to be inadequate. At 3%, this is a very small minority of the providers inspected, but it is clearly not good enough for those children and their families. This report showed the impact of inspection on improving the quality of care for those children.
25. In most cases where Ofsted judged provision as inadequate, providers were required to take actions to help them focus on what mattered most to bring about rapid improvement. They were inspected again within a year and it was found that, of the 490 reinspected by June 2006, a very large majority had carried out the actions and improved to a satisfactory or better standard.
26. As a result of Ofsted's inspection and regulation, 10,000 registered places for children in previously inadequate provision are now at least satisfactory. Ofsted has judged that the remaining providers (13%) are still inadequate. This is clearly unacceptable and is the subject of more stringent enforcement action, which is beginning to secure improvement.

Conclusion

27. The inspection and regulation of providers of early years childcare and nursery education have a considerable impact on improving outcomes for children. They have helped to identify strengths and areas of good practice which are then shared with other providers through the publication of surveys, reports and articles. Where providers own more than one setting, the inspection of one setting has an impact on the others. Most early years childcare providers value and act on the actions and recommendations made at inspection in order to improve the outcomes for children. However, more effective action is required in respect of the very small minority of inadequate providers who fail to improve quickly enough.

Maintained schools

Introduction

28. This section summarises evaluation work on the impact of inspections of maintained schools in England carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. Two studies on the impact of inspection on schools have already been conducted and can be downloaded from Ofsted's website.¹⁰ Consequently, this section is less detailed than the others.

Key findings

- Professional dialogue and oral feedback are of crucial importance in helping schools to accept and act upon recommendations for improvement .
- Completion of the self-evaluation form by schools creates a valuable tool to support improvement.
- Schools tend to say that inspections and reports confirm areas for improvement rather than identify new ones, but that they offer a clear agenda for improvement.
- Local authorities echo the views of headteachers that inspection recommendations are generally a good basis for school improvement.
- Most headteachers who have responded to surveys consider that the benefits of inspection outweigh its disadvantages.

Background

29. New arrangements for school inspections were implemented from September 2005. Inspections are more frequent than before and are undertaken with fewer inspectors. Inspectors spend no more than two days in the school and use the school's self-evaluation and performance data as the starting points for a dialogue with the senior management team. Short notice of inspection avoids unnecessary pre-inspection preparation, and helps inspectors to see schools as they really are. Ofsted conducted over 6,000 inspections of maintained schools in the academic year 2005/06.

¹⁰ *School inspection: an evaluation* (HMI 2373), Ofsted, 2006; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2373. *Impact of section 5 inspections: maintained schools in England*, a study by the National Foundation for Educational Research; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20060721.

30. The NFER report commissioned by Ofsted in 2006 identified the elements that those inspected believed to be particularly beneficial aspects of inspection.¹¹ The most significant were:
- it improved their skills of self-evaluation, which they felt to be central to institutional improvement
 - dialogue with inspectors stimulated further discussion and reflection within the institution
 - when the inspection confirmed their own analysis it gave them confidence and boosted morale
 - although they believed inspection rarely identified new actions for improvement, it helped them to prioritise.

The impact of section 5 inspections

31. Surveys have shown that the vast majority of school staff who responded are satisfied with their inspections, and that a higher proportion than under the previous system feels that the benefits of inspection outweigh its disadvantages.
32. The school's self-evaluation form (SEF) plays a key role in the new inspection arrangements. A minority of headteachers regard completion of the SEF as a laborious process, but most, particularly those new in post, value the framework that it provides for evaluating the school's work. Completing the SEF supports the processes of self-evaluation in the school. It represents an opportunity to engage staff and, in the best schools, pupils, parents and the school community. It prompts them to reflect not only on the strengths and weaknesses of provision, but also on how provision affects the learners. Schools generally feel that inspections identify the right issues for action, and give them a clear agenda for improvement.
33. Schools also value the professional dialogue with the inspection team and the oral feedback at the end of the inspection. Joint observations of lessons by an inspector and senior leaders are particularly valued as a means of sharpening the latter's evaluation skills. The NFER study, based on a random sample of 134 schools, found that the overwhelming majority of respondents judged the feedback at the end of an inspection to be 'very useful' (69%) or 'fairly useful' (27%). It offered information about strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunity, through dialogue, for the school to understand and accept the findings. Schools involved in the NFER study commented that the SEF was referred to extensively by

¹¹ *Impact of section 5 inspections: maintained schools in England*, a study by the National Foundation for Educational Research; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20060721.

inspectors, and that there was common agreement on areas for improvement.

34. Confirming areas for improvement that the school had already recognised had a positive effect on morale. In one survey, 31 out of 38 headteachers mentioned this boost to their confidence as an important catalyst for further improvement. While such outcomes are tangible, they are hard to quantify.
35. Measuring the impact of inspection on standards, achievement and other outcomes for children and young people is problematic, because it is difficult to attribute relative weight to the many factors that contribute to change. The headteachers in the survey felt that a variety of internal factors, such as staff commitment or the drive of the senior management team, played a major part in moving a school forward. They identified areas where they had improved their provision as a result of inspection, and where they felt the steps they had taken were likely to lead to improved outcomes for the pupils. Such steps included measures to improve attendance, behaviour, the curriculum and the quality of teaching.
36. Meetings between HMI and officers from each local authority early in 2006 showed that the overwhelming majority of the latter viewed the new inspection arrangements positively. They felt that the recommendations from inspections were usually a good basis for improvement. The two aspects of inspection most often identified by officers as weaknesses were the detail of reporting on the Every Child Matters outcomes and inconsistencies or inflexibility in the use of data.

Conclusion

37. The lighter touch approach to inspection, the framework for self-evaluation created by the SEF and the dialogue based on it are welcomed by most schools. Short notice and a reduction in paperwork help schools to take the inspection in their stride. The new inspection regime is contributing well towards improvement, particularly in giving schools confidence in their own judgements and in sharpening or refocusing their priorities.

Underperforming schools

Introduction

38. Ofsted monitors the progress of schools which are underperforming. Inspectors visit these schools, provide challenge and support, and give pointers to further improvement. Ofsted also runs seminars for schools causing concern. A further group of schools is inspected at the request of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). This section begins by explaining the terms used.

Background

39. Schools judged to be inadequate when inspected are placed into one of two categories, as defined by the Education Act 2005.

Schools requiring **special measures (SM)**: schools which are failing to give pupils an acceptable standard of education and where the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Schools which are performing significantly less well than they might reasonably be expected to are given a **notice to improve (NtI)**. Unlike those placed in special measures, they are judged to have the capacity to improve.

40. Special measures schools are monitored regularly by inspectors for up to two years, and are then reinspected. On each monitoring visit, the lead inspector assigned to the school assesses the progress that has been made against the school's action plan for tackling the areas for improvement identified during the inspection. Judgements are made about the impact of actions taken to tackle key priorities and improve outcomes for pupils. They are recorded in a letter to the school. Special measures are removed when a school can demonstrate that it provides and can sustain a standard of education that is at least acceptable. Removal may happen at any point during the two year period or at the time of reinspection.
41. Schools with a notice to improve receive one monitoring visit between six and eight months after their inspection to judge the progress made in tackling the areas for improvement. In the letter which follows the visit, inspectors acknowledge what has been achieved and what more needs to be done prior to the scheduled reinspection, which takes place 12–16 months after the section 5 inspection. Most are found to have made significant improvement. However, if insufficient progress has been made, the visit can trigger an early reinspection.

42. Schools inspected at the request of the Department for Education and Skills include:
- those where the pupils' behaviour is unsatisfactory
 - fresh start schools: fresh start involves the closure of an existing school with intractable problems and the opening of a new school on the same site
 - collaborative restart schools: fresh start schools which work closely with successful schools in their area
 - academies: all-ability schools established by sponsors in partnership with government and local partners, often in challenging areas where there is a legacy of low attainment
 - academy predecessor schools: schools scheduled to be replaced by academies.
43. The first visit for fresh start and collaborative restart schools takes place around six months after the school opens; subsequent visits are normally termly, until the school's first section 5 inspection (in its third year of operation) or until HMI decide that no further monitoring is required.
44. Academies are usually monitored in their second year of operation, before they have their first section 5 inspection. HMI also lead monitoring inspections of predecessor schools to ensure that they will provide a good platform for the transition to becoming an academy.

Key findings

- The monitoring of schools causing concern contributes significantly to improvement in the quality of education provided for their pupils.
- The monitoring of schools subject to special measures has become more effective over time, so that schools spend less time in the category.
- Schools say that the improvement seminars for those newly made subject to special measures or given a notice to improve provide a firm foundation for effective action planning.
- Monitoring visits to schools inspected at the request of the DfES provide good support and a strong challenge, promoting sustained progress.

The impact of school improvement activity

School improvement seminars

45. Schools placed in a category of concern receive an early invitation to a school improvement seminar led by HMI. Evaluations show that schools welcome the advice they receive, which helps them to clarify their priorities for action. In a survey of 188 participants, over three quarters reported that the explanation of the process of monitoring and the sharing of effective practice were useful. Four out of five rated the seminars as

good or outstanding overall, making specific reference to the usefulness of the individual discussion with HMI in setting clear priorities for improvement.

Special measures

46. A variety of factors contributes to the improvement of schools subject to SM, most importantly the work of the staff and the whole school community. However, the evidence is compelling that the monitoring by Ofsted inspectors plays a significant part in accelerating their improvement. Of the 242 schools subject to special measures at the end of 2004/05, 226 schools (93%) were making the expected progress towards coming out of the category within the two year monitoring period.
47. During the 2005/06 academic year, 181 schools were removed from special measures. A survey of 52 headteachers of these schools identified monitoring visits as a major contributory factor to their success. Four in five of these respondents were clear that the school would not have improved as rapidly without the monitoring visits. They identified the following key features:
- The lead inspector provided challenge, but in a supportive way.
 - The quality of the dialogue led to a good relationship characterised by trust and support.
 - Lead inspectors were understanding, had a thorough and detailed knowledge of the curriculum and did not shrink from conveying difficult messages.
 - The initial evaluation of the action plan helped the school to establish clear priorities.
 - The first monitoring visit highlighted what was good practice and what was not. The school was therefore clear what had to be done to ensure all areas were as good as the best.
 - The visits provided a clear basis for further action.
 - The transparency of the process and the clarity of the judgements helped leadership teams to focus sharply on areas for improvement.
 - Close scrutiny of issues on consecutive monitoring visits increased the momentum of improvement.
 - The regular contact and the challenge helped schools to develop the rigour and accuracy of their self-evaluation.
48. The response from one headteacher is typical of others: 'The special measures process has been a very positive experience and I believe it would have been extremely difficult to have moved the school forward in the time that we have without being in special measures. The process was extremely supportive to me as a new head in making sure the school's response was speedy; prioritising the right areas for development.'
49. From September 2005, all schools still in special measures two years after they were made subject to the category are reinspected. In 2005/06, 125

such schools were reinspected. All but three of these were removed from the special measures category at the reinspection, indicating that they had made sufficient progress. Sixteen of the previous special measures schools were judged to have demonstrated the capacity to improve but had not improved enough to be removed from a category altogether. These schools were given a notice to improve. They welcomed this affirmation of the progress they had made, saying that it had boosted staff morale and acted as a further catalyst for change.

50. The time schools spend in special measures is falling, although on average secondary schools take longer to come out of the category than primary schools. The challenge of leading large secondary schools out of special measures can be more complex. Difficult organisational or personnel issues often need to be resolved before a school can make significant progress in raising the pupils' attainment, and these are of necessity more wide-ranging in a large institution. In the 10 years since the category was created, the rate of improvement has steadily increased. Secondary schools made subject to special measures in 1994/95 took on average 160 weeks to be removed from the category.¹² In 2003/04, the figure was 103 weeks. The corresponding figures for primary schools were 124 weeks and 79 weeks.
51. Schools are inspected again around two years after the removal of special measures. The results of these inspections are impressive: 60% have been judged to be 'good', not simply 'satisfactory'. During the 2005/06 school year, 11 schools previously in special measures were judged to be 'outstanding'. This shows that the improvements that schools need to make to be removed from special measures are not simply a 'quick fix', but are sustained. However, approximately 15% of schools remained in a category of concern following reinspection in 2005/06. Three schools remained in special measures because insufficient progress had been made. An additional 16 schools were given a notice to improve, which reflected their growing capacity to secure further improvement. Twenty-three schools closed.
52. Areas identified as requiring improvement are reassessed during the monitoring visits. Improvement in leadership and management is often a pre-requisite to improvement in teaching. Inspectors give feedback on progress and identify areas for further development. The headteacher and other school leaders, including governors, participate actively in the monitoring visits, a process which helps them to understand the issues and plan for continued improvement.

¹² The figures quoted are the median figures of the interquartile range. For secondary schools, the 25th to 75th percentile range in 1994/95 was from 135 to 191 weeks, and in 2003/04 from 85 to 117 weeks; the corresponding figures for primary schools were from 104 to 151 weeks in 1994/95 falling to 71 to 97 weeks in 2003/04.

53. Since September 2005, lead inspectors have had the discretion to identify additional points for improvement as part of their regular monitoring visits to schools in special measures. School leaders have welcomed this additional focus. Most schools showed good progress in meeting the new targets because the recommendations were specific, few in number and told the school clearly where its next efforts should be directed.
54. In a recent sample of reports on 29 special measures schools in their first year of being monitored, the quality of leadership and management was judged to be good and the capacity for further improvement was strong. Inspection reports consistently refer to the central role of the headteacher in providing clear direction and energetic leadership. By the time schools are removed from special measures the processes of monitoring and evaluation are usually well established. The school's forward planning has clear priorities, and the governing body fulfils its role in providing challenge as well as support. Standards, as reflected in examination and test results, take time to improve because of the legacy of underachievement. Inspectors help schools to remove obstacles to progress, such as unsatisfactory teaching, which stand in the way of improved achievement.

Notice to improve

55. Ofsted conducted trials in 25 schools in the summer term of 2006, prior to the introduction of monitoring visits for notice to improve schools in September. The schools in the trial appreciated the introduction of a monitoring visit to act as a 'health check' and provide early feedback on progress. When this progress was found to be good, schools stressed the importance to them of 'the seal of approval' for the work they were doing. Schools have usually responded effectively when placed in this category. Thirty-five notice to improve schools were reinspected in 2006. Nine of these previously inadequate schools were judged to be good and the rest satisfactory.

Schools in pre-existing categories (legacy schools)

56. These schools were in the categories of concern that existed prior to the introduction of the new inspection framework in September 2005. They were in **special measures**, had **serious weaknesses**, were **underachieving** or had an **inadequate sixth form**, and have continued to be monitored by inspectors. One hundred and fifty-two schools which had been placed in the previous categories were reinspected in 2005/06. Over 90% had made the necessary improvements and were removed from their category of concern.

Fresh start and collaborative restart

57. Ofsted plays a key role in the improvement of schools which have opened under the fresh start or collaborative restart programmes. Seminars for

headteachers in the term prior to opening provide an outline of what to expect and share good practice from headteachers currently in post. A picture emerging from these schools has been the correlation between the effective use of the lead-in time, including attendance at the seminars, and good progress recorded on the first monitoring visit. Over the life of the fresh start programme, more than 90% of the schools have gone on to provide at least a satisfactory standard of education for their pupils. This was demonstrably not the case in the schools they were set up to replace. Five schools have been monitored during 2005/06; three were making good and two satisfactory progress.

Academies

58. Predecessor schools are visited by Ofsted inspectors in the year before they become an academy. Inspectors report on the progress the school has made since its last inspection, its state of readiness to become an academy and the areas which it needs to tackle before the change in status.
59. Between January 2004 and November 2006, HMI made 20 monitoring visits to 18 academies. Thirteen received a standard inspection during the same period. Most academies have a legacy of low achievement, and have made considerable strides in improving morale, behaviour and ethos. Nevertheless, progress remains uneven. Generally, strong leadership has yet to have an impact on teaching and learning, which were common areas of weakness highlighted by the monitoring visits. In all but one of the monitoring visits, HMI identified these as key areas in need of improvement.
60. HMI gave oral and written feedback on the aspects of teaching requiring improvement, which typically included poor use of assessment and weak management of behaviour. In the 13 subsequent inspections, the quality of teaching and learning was judged to be satisfactory or better in 11 academies, a significant improvement for these schools.

Schools where behaviour is unsatisfactory

61. When schools are in a category of concern and the weaknesses include unsatisfactory behaviour, inspectors tackle this aspect as part of their regular monitoring visits. In 2004/05, this applied to 48 schools. HMI visited a further 23 schools where behaviour was judged to be inadequate.¹³ These visits take a similar format to the special measures visits and schools are given points for improvement. Inspectors also share

¹³ *Improving behaviour: lessons learned from HMI monitoring of secondary schools where behaviour had been judged unsatisfactory* (HMI 2377), Ofsted, 2006; available from available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2377.

the good practice found in the monitoring of other schools. There was steady progress between monitoring visits in eliminating unsatisfactory behaviour. For example, of the 23 schools where behaviour was inadequate, only one had failed to make satisfactory progress by the second monitoring visit.

62. The visits underlined the conclusion that low-level disruptive behaviour can be improved 'in a reasonably short time using simple strategies, if everyone uses them'. The identification of this weakness in the inspection and the recommendations for improvement had clearly been factors in promoting effective action: 47 of the 71 schools visited had made satisfactory progress by the time of the first monitoring visit. The visits were said to be particularly effective in focusing the attention of senior leaders on this key priority. Leaders and managers also appreciated the reassurance that doing a few things well was preferable to attacking on too wide a front, and took confidence from the confirmation of progress that the visits provided.

Conclusion

63. The outcomes of the work to improve underperforming schools and the comments of the providers themselves show that Ofsted has made a significant difference to weaker institutions. In the 11 years between March 1995, when the first school to be placed in special measures was judged no longer to require them, and July 2006, 1,783 schools have been removed from the category, thereby benefiting well over half a million pupils in them, as well as those to follow in future years.
64. The monitoring of underperforming schools makes a difference in a number of ways. It provides, in a supportive way, frequent external challenge. Through dialogue with senior leaders and others, it increases understanding of the issues to be tackled and shares the good practice found elsewhere. It helps the school to focus on a few well chosen priorities, discouraging it from spreading its efforts too thinly. Finally, and crucially, it develops the school's knowledge of itself and its understanding of what it needs to do to improve, and to continue to improve. In this way it helps to ensure that progress is sustained in the longer term.

Independent schools

Introduction

65. Ofsted inspects and regulates all independent schools which are not members of independent school associations affiliated to the Independent Schools Council. Independent schools are inspected under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (amended by the Education Act 2005).
66. Inspection and regulation in the independent sector are of central importance to providers. For those schools which make good provision for their pupils, a positive report from Ofsted makes this success available for all to read, and is often quoted by school managers as a source of good publicity. However, for those schools which fail to meet a significant number of regulations, inspection may have serious consequences, as an adverse report may lead to a decline in pupil numbers or even to eventual closure. Furthermore, if the school fails to rectify the shortcomings within a reasonable time it will be served with a deletion order by the regulatory authority (the DfES) and this, too, may force its closure.

Key findings

- Of the 72 schools that responded to a questionnaire following their inspection, 69 found the inspection helpful or very helpful for school improvement, and confirmed that the inspection made very clear what further action needed to be taken.
- Virtually all schools acknowledged that inspection and regulation accelerate the rate of change and improvement.
- External assessment is highly valued and recognised as an important part of school improvement.
- Inspection makes a major contribution to the availability of objective information about independent schools.
- Many independent schools report that they did not have robust monitoring procedures, and have significantly improved them as a consequence of inspection.
- The lead inspector's detailed knowledge, the professional discussion with inspectors, and the feedback to teachers and managers during the inspection all lead to improvement.
- Evidence from schools that have been inspected or monitored on a number of occasions shows that inspection leads to improvement.

Background

67. An independent school is defined as any school providing full-time education for five or more pupils of compulsory school age, or one or more pupils with a statement of special educational need or in public care, and is not a school maintained by a local authority or is a non-maintained special school. There are around 2,400 independent schools and Ofsted inspects about one half of these at the request of the DfES. The schools

are extremely diverse in their size, ownership, ethos, curriculum, premises and student population.

68. Ofsted currently inspects independent schools on a six-yearly cycle, though a regime of shorter, more frequent inspections will begin in April 2008. During the academic year 2005/06, 198 independent schools were inspected by Ofsted, including 86 special schools and 38 faith schools. The inspection begins with a pre-inspection visit by the lead inspector which is used to ensure that the school understands the framework, and to provide an opportunity to discuss issues which the school may wish to raise. During the main inspection, a varied range of lessons is observed and inspectors also examine pupils' work and all relevant school documentation. Discussions are held with managers, staff and pupils. There is an inspection of the premises and accommodation. Oral feedback is given to the school leadership and proprietors at the end of the inspection.

The impact of inspection and regulation on independent schools

69. Sixty-nine of the 72 respondents to a questionnaire about the 2005/06 inspections found inspection helpful or very helpful for school improvement. Virtually all schools contacted in surveys said that inspection accelerates the rate of change and improvement. Almost all respondents agreed that the judgements about the school's strengths and weaknesses were both fair and accurate.
70. Ten out of 22 schools contacted by telephone said that the inspection simply confirmed their own views, but almost all agreed that external assessment was an important part of school improvement. One school drew the analogy between inspection and a quality kitemark. Another commented that parents will often read the inspection report before they consider contacting a school. In this respect inspection makes a major contribution to the availability of objective information about independent schools and in helping parents to reach decisions. Headteachers contacted by telephone tended to say that publication of the inspection report had raised their profile within the community.
71. Once notified of inspection, the vast majority of schools reported that they made good use of the self-audit checklist which identifies the criteria against which judgements will be made. Schools have welcomed the pre-inspection visit when the checklist is often reviewed. With clarification from the lead inspector, some issues can be rectified before the inspection. Several management teams noted that the self-audit checklist brought their attention to priorities for immediate improvement.
72. Although the regulations which schools have to meet do not cover leadership and management specifically, schools invariably report that the inspection stimulated thought and debate and led to better monitoring and evaluation. Several schools involved in the telephone surveys said that

they had implemented monitoring and review procedures as a consequence of inspection.

73. In surveys of their views on the impact of inspection and regulation, headteachers frequently commented that the professional knowledge of the lead inspector is an important factor. This is especially valued by schools of a religious character and by special schools whose pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Professional discussion with inspectors is welcomed. Schools value the relationships which are established with the staff and other personnel, and say that feedback to teachers and managers during the inspection leads to improvement.
74. Evidence from those schools which initially failed to meet regulations and have thus been inspected or monitored on a number of occasions shows that inspection clearly leads to improvement. In the case of one school, the involvement of inspectors over a period of two years moved the school from meeting just 17% of the regulations, including only two of the 27 regulations covering the quality of teaching and the curriculum, to meeting all but two regulations in its 2006 inspection. Within two months of inspection both these matters had been rectified.
75. About half of schools inspected did not fulfil their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). One school did not understand what it had to do, and sought clarification. Another investigated the requirements of the Act following the inspection and sought ways of complying. In doing so it considered the needs of disabled parents as well as students when allocating meeting rooms and pupil accommodation. The school drew up a comprehensive policy which was then shared throughout its group of schools. Inspection and regulation therefore had impact in, and beyond, the school concerned.
76. Occasionally, despite notification, schools do not realise that legislation and requirements have changed, and are grateful when inspectors draw this to their attention. One school had not realised that new arrangements for child protection training required them to update their practice. Inspection brought this to their notice and the school is now fully compliant. In other cases, schools have booked and confirmed attendance on child protection courses while inspectors were still in the school. Ofsted's evidence shows that inspection improves schools' compliance with all child protection matters.
77. Concerns remain about the quality of post-inspection action plans. In the autumn term, 13 of 17 schools, which had not met some regulations, had not submitted action plans within the DfES timescale. Most schools do eventually produce plans, supply evidence that action has been taken, or confirm that action is incorporated into their school improvement plan. The majority of the plans remain weak, failing to describe adequately how action is to be taken, who is to be responsible, or what funds are to be allocated, in order to judge their likely outcome. If a school fails to meet

any regulations impinging on child protection, this is immediately followed up by the DfES.

Conclusion

78. Independent schools recognise the need for inspection, they agree that it leads directly to improvement, and they confirm that inspection helps to ensure that the quality of educational provision improves more quickly than might otherwise be the case. Regulation helps to ensure that almost all schools fully meet the requirements of the DfES.

Colleges

Introduction

79. The first cycle of college inspections, from 2001 to 2005 involved the inspection of most curriculum areas, in addition to wider aspects such as leadership and management, guidance and support, and achievement and standards. The current cycle of college inspections is firmly based on the principles of proportionality and risk. Colleges which are consistently high performing (categorised as 'good') receive a 'light touch' inspection. In these colleges, no curriculum areas are inspected. Colleges categorised as 'outstanding' are not subject to a full inspection if they maintain their high performance.
80. Resources are focused on those colleges which do not perform as well (those graded 'satisfactory' or 'inadequate'), and a sample of curriculum areas is included in the inspection of these colleges. Supporting this more proportionate approach, in September 2005, a programme of annual assessment visits (AAVs) was introduced for all colleges. These visits are designed to monitor headline performance and inform the process of risk assessment.

Key findings

- Evidence indicates that inspection has a positive impact on colleges inspected.
- The link between inspection and improvement can be demonstrated through improved grades between one cycle and the next.
- Two fifths of colleges inspected in 2005/06 had improved their overall performance.
- Eleven of the 12 general further education colleges and all six independent specialist colleges which were previously inadequate and which were reinspected in 2005/06 had improved to be satisfactory or better.
- Colleges were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of inspection and AAVs.
- Inspection assists colleges in identifying strengths and weaknesses and in bringing about necessary improvements.

Background

81. The academic year 2005/06 was the first year of the second cycle of college inspections led by Ofsted. There are currently 372 general further education or sixth form colleges in the sector, plus 68 independent specialist colleges. Of these, 100 were inspected by Ofsted in 2005/06, and for virtually all of them this was their second Ofsted inspection.

The impact of inspection on colleges

82. The impact of inspection on colleges can be measured in a variety of ways. One approach is to compare the grades received by the colleges inspected in 2005/06 with their previous inspection grades. If there are improvements, inspection may well have contributed to them, particularly if this information is combined with the college's evaluations of inspection (see below). Overall, the picture is a very positive one, with just over 80% of colleges inspected maintaining or improving their overall performance. The largest percentage of improving colleges comprises those previously judged 'satisfactory'.
83. By contrast, the performance of just under one in five colleges declined. The largest proportion of these comprised those previously judged 'very good', most of which are sixth form colleges. Ofsted has 'raised the bar' of expectation for college inspections, basing its grades on a wider range of evidence and data, and this is a factor in the apparent decline.
84. There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that inspection encourages colleges to focus on their weaknesses, and that the reinspection process provides an incentive for them to address failing areas or departments. A total of 12 general further education colleges which had been judged inadequate at their last inspection in 2003/04 were reinspected in 2005/06. Of these, 11 improved their overall effectiveness grade, with four colleges making dramatic improvements to move from 'inadequate' to 'good'. Only one college remained inadequate. Six independent specialist colleges previously judged to be 'inadequate' were reinspected and all were judged 'satisfactory'.
85. Forty-two colleges (35 general further education and sixth form colleges and seven independent specialist colleges) had aspects of provision, including work-based learning, reinspected through their annual assessment visit in 2005/06. A total of 99 curriculum areas were reinspected and there were three reinspections of leadership and management. The grades of 90% of the curriculum areas improved to at least 'satisfactory', 15% improved by two grades and one area improved by three grades. Where significant improvements were found, reports make reference to a number of factors, including:
- a strong focus on, and improvements to, learners' success rates
 - good teaching and learning
 - good leadership and management
 - significant improvement in accommodation and resources where this had been identified as a weakness at inspection
 - the effectiveness of actions taken to bring about improvements.

Colleges' evaluations of inspection

86. Ofsted systematically seeks feedback from colleges both at the end of the inspection week and following the publication of the report. The response rate from colleges is high. Eighty-three percent of colleges returned the initial evaluation, and 66% the second. The questionnaires require colleges to grade a number of statements on a four-point scale and allow for detailed comments regarding their experience of the inspection.
87. Colleges are overwhelmingly positive about the impact of their inspection and its contribution to quality improvement. The large majority agreed that the process is fair and supportive in bringing about improvements (93%) and that the positive effects outweigh the negative (88%). Comments such as '[the inspection] has given us the drive to continue to improve the effectiveness of our provision' or that the inspection is 'exceptionally useful to the college in both celebrating success and identifying areas for improvement' illustrate the general view. Ninety-three per cent of colleges valued the professional competence of the inspection team and the robust judgements they reached. A similar proportion felt that the key issues identified in their inspection report provided a sound basis for development.

Colleges' evaluations of annual assessment visits

88. In July 2006, a survey was conducted of all colleges in order to assess the impact of annual assessment visits, and to inform a review of the arrangements for the visits. The respondents were asked to grade 11 statements, to comment on the balance between the gains of the visit and any negative effects, and were given the opportunity to write detailed comments about its impact. Nearly two thirds of sector colleges responded to the survey.
89. Over 94% of the 266 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with each of the 11 positive statements. Eighty-four per cent of colleges thought that the gains from the visit outweighed the negative effects. Ninety-five per cent agreed that the feedback, oral and written, had helped the college to improve. Many colleges commented on the usefulness of the AAV in confirming the thoroughness of their own processes of quality assurance and self-assessment. A smaller but still substantial proportion said that the visit had brought to their attention weaknesses or concerns that would now become a priority in their planning. External scrutiny and challenge were felt to be important levers for improvement.

The *Common inspection framework*, the *Handbook for inspecting colleges* and the college performance report

90. The *Common inspection framework* and *Handbook for inspecting colleges* have together been very influential in the way that colleges evaluate and improve the quality of their provision.¹⁴ The *Common inspection framework* puts the learner at the centre – the focus of all five key questions is on the quality of the learners' experience and on the outcomes for them. In addition, the *Handbook for inspecting colleges* has provided the characteristics of outstanding practice in all key areas – including teaching and learning, achievement and standards and guidance and support. Colleges follow the headings and criteria in the *Common inspection framework* when producing their self-assessment report.
91. Taken together, the *Common inspection framework* and *Handbook for inspecting colleges* have set the agenda and provided benchmarks against which colleges evaluate their own provision in terms of its impact on learners. They have helped colleges to produce effective self-assessment reports and development plans. The *Handbook for inspecting* provides clear pointers for excellence in the sector, and colleges place much store upon it as a guide to quality and improvement.
92. The college performance report, devised by Ofsted and the Learning and Skills Council, is a data report issued to colleges and inspectors. Colleges can examine performance data in relation to national benchmarks by level of study, subject area, age, gender, ethnic background and qualification type. The reports present data electronically and interactively in clear graphics which allow colleges to compare their performance to that of similar institutions. This ease of access to comparative data has enabled colleges to make an accurate assessment of their own provision.

Conclusion

93. All the available evidence supports the view that inspection has a positive impact on those inspected. That colleges are improving is evident, given the improvement in inspection grades and the continuing rise in success rates over recent years. Colleges themselves believe that inspection contributes to these improvements.

¹⁴ *Common inspection framework* (HMI 2434), Ofsted, 2005; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2434. *Handbook for inspecting colleges* (HMI 2651), Ofsted, 2006; available from <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2651>.

Initial teacher training

Introduction

94. Inspection and regulation carry high stakes for providers of initial teacher training. Ofsted inspects them under an agreement with the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) and, in the case of providers of further education teacher training, at the request of the DfES. The grades awarded to providers, other than further education teacher trainers, determine the category into which each provider is placed – and, hence, the level of its funding and ultimately its accreditation.
95. In 2005/06, there were 130 higher education institutes and 65 school-centred initial teacher training providers offering courses leading to the achievement of qualified teacher status; most of these courses also lead to the Post-Graduate Certificate of Education. Fifty-six further education teacher trainers offered courses accredited by national awarding bodies. There were also 110 designated recommending bodies for trainees on the Graduate Teacher Programme, an employment-based route whereby schools train teachers on the job. The designation of recommending bodies is an interim stage on the way to full accreditation. The outcome of each inspection is a recommendation to the TDA that the provider should or should not be accredited.

Key findings

- The inspection of initial teacher training has increased the accountability of providers.
- The link between inspection and improvement is clearer in full inspections, mainly because short inspections tend to involve those whose provision is already strong.
- Inspection has the greatest impact on the weaker providers, especially those where there has been a reinspection.
- Inspection has had more impact on further education teacher trainers and designated recommending bodies than on higher education institutions and providers of school-centred initial teacher training.
- Ofsted reports help to spread good practice and provide a benchmark against which providers can evaluate their provision.
- The unearthing of issues of non-compliance has had a significant impact across the whole initial teacher training sector and beyond.
- Feedback during and following inspection has shaped the agenda for providers' development planning.
- Providers report that inspection has strengthened their commitment to continuous improvement and promoted creativity and innovation.

Background

96. Higher education institutions and school-centred providers offering courses to teach in primary and secondary schools are inspected twice

during a six-year cycle. Following improvements since the system began in 1994, inspections are proportionate to risk, and may be short for the stronger performers or full for the weaker. Further education teacher trainers are inspected once during a four-year cycle, which began in 2004/05, and designated recommending bodies once during a three-year cycle, which began in 2003/04. Any provision judged to be inadequate is automatically reinspected the following year, and failure to improve can lead to a withdrawal of accreditation.

97. In 2005/06, Ofsted inspected and graded 54 primary and secondary training courses at higher education institutions and school-centred provision, and 13 further education teacher trainers. Seventeen designated recommending bodies were visited; three of these were reinspections. In addition, a survey leading to a published report was undertaken of providers offering training courses in vocational subjects. Compared with their previous inspection, grades in 2005/06 went up in nearly one in three providers, remained the same in over a half, and went down in the rest.

The impact of inspection and regulation on higher education institutions, school-centred providers and designated recommending bodies

98. The evaluations of the providers themselves, the assessment of the TDA, the views of the inspection teams and the quality of the post-inspection action plans all indicate that the impact of inspection is greater in full than in short inspections. Unsurprisingly, in 2005/06 the short inspection of higher education institutions and school-centred providers graded good or better showed least evidence of impact, because they already demonstrated the most effective systems for quality assurance and self-evaluation leading to continuous improvement. Inspection helps good providers maintain the quality of what they are doing but is only one of the factors that promote improvement. Their reports, as well as the annual overview report on designated recommending bodies, are often scrutinised by other providers, who draw upon their good practice and use them as a benchmark for their own development.
99. Most providers produce an action plan at the end of their inspection in response to the report. During full inspections in 2005/06, inspectors identified such improvements as the greater involvement of partnership staff in the selection of trainees; improvements in monitoring procedures and communication with partnership schools; the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of professional tutors; and the review of the structure and content of the training programme. This was particularly the case for designated recommending bodies, and was reinforced by a unique feature of their inspections – the post-inspection review of the final report's findings at a meeting of managers and the managing inspector, which served to clarify issues and helped set the agenda for future developments. For the TDA, the action plans are a very useful measure of

the impact of inspection. These improvement documents provide milestones against which the providers' response to the inspection report can be judged.

100. The weaker the provider the greater is the impact of inspection. Where a provider fails to improve the quality of what it offers in response to its inspection report, the TDA will withdraw accreditation for some or all of its courses. In 2005/06, this happened to one primary and one secondary provider as a result of their inspections. Reinspection of the three designated recommending bodies not gaining accreditation at their first inspection had a direct and dramatic impact on the quality of provision. On reinspection, all three were recommended for accreditation.
101. HMI worked in partnership with the Training and Development Agency to define the improvement agenda, especially for weaker providers. For example, inspection visits to placement schools in designated recommending bodies served to model the process of quality assurance and monitoring; the Training and Development Agency in turn provided support in the form of high-level consultancy visits, additional funding and the creation of regional networks.
102. Inspectors noted, at the end of all inspections, many improvements in response to issues raised either in the previous report or during the inspection. Many providers were overhauling their recruitment and selection processes. The selection of trainees was more rigorous. Programmes were devised to meet more closely the needs of individual trainees. Inspection also served to clarify the management arrangements for the partnerships involved in the higher education institutions, school-centred providers and designated recommending bodies, for example by improving communications with the different schools and by setting out more precisely who is responsible for what.
103. The quality of self-evaluation and action planning has improved, especially in school-centred providers and designated recommending bodies. Better procedures have been developed for monitoring training and evaluating provision. Increased use has been made of benchmarking, and the inspection reports of similar providers.
104. The quality of training has also improved in response to issues raised in previous reports. Providers have raised the standards of mentoring, reviewed the quality of placements and developed the structure of training. Several partnerships within designated recommending bodies made arrangements to extend trainees' teaching experience and improve the quality of the second placement after their limitations were identified as an area for development. Providers of all types tightened up their management of these placements.
105. The quality of and coherence between centre-based and school-based training improved as a result of inspection. Effective training and guidance

were also provided for school-based tutors and mentors. Access to resources for trainees improved. The improvement in subject-specific training was confirmed by an Ofsted report into the training of citizenship teachers; this identified rapid improvement in the structure and content of courses, in large part as a result of its inspection reports.¹⁵

106. Furthermore, inspection has sharpened providers' attention to issues of compliance and, when providers are found to be non-compliant, the impact is felt across the whole sector. For example, in 2005/06 when one provider's systems for checking trainees' clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau were found to be non-compliant, the repercussions were felt not only by other providers of initial teacher training but also other university provision, including the medical and social science faculties.

The impact of inspection and regulation on providers of further education teacher training

107. Unlike primary and secondary ITT providers, no regular inspection of further education teacher training took place before the present inspection cycle. This is why the impact of inspection on these providers was greater in 2005/06 than for primary and secondary providers. The longitudinal nature of the inspection often enabled partnerships and institutions to tackle areas for attention identified in the first phase by the time the inspectors came back for the second. Colleges responded positively to inspectors' recommendations, and this led to better coordination, extended teaching experience and improved management of placements.

Providers' evaluations of inspections

108. The evaluation of nearly all providers confirmed that their inspection had a beneficial and continuing impact on the quality of their provision. It gave them confidence in what they were doing and encouraged some of them to be creative and innovative. They often referred to the trust that they had in the rigour of inspectors' judgements and the value that they placed on the professional dialogue with knowledgeable inspectors. In more than one case, Ofsted's recommendations for future action were felt to be particularly helpful because a new management team had just taken over and the inspection had encouraged its members to move forward with confidence. As one provider commented,

'We take all Ofsted inspection findings seriously, find that they are useful, and we follow through with meaningful action plans. In the case of this inspection we are already implementing changes. Quality will be enhanced.'

¹⁵ *Initial teacher training for teachers of citizenship 2004/05* (HMI 2486), Ofsted, 2005; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2486.

109. However, not all of the 31 providers who completed a questionnaire were so enthusiastic. Almost one third, although giving generally positive feedback about impact, were critical of the pressure created by frequent inspections. Three were unconvinced that inspection would actually lead to improvements in quality and therefore felt that it did not justify the cost. Some were uncertain about the data that inspectors sought to assess their self-evaluation and were unclear about what was needed to achieve the top grade. Three providers felt that there had not been the hoped-for dialogue during the inspection process.

Conclusion

110. The inspection of providers of initial teacher training has a demonstrable impact on the quality of their provision. It has heightened their sense of accountability and their awareness of the need to develop effective self-evaluation. It has led to significant improvements in management, quality assurance and training. It has helped to raise the standards achieved by trainees and thereby improved the quality of their teaching. It is greatly valued by the Training and Development Agency for Schools.

Survey inspections of subjects and aspects of education

Introduction

111. Survey inspections of subjects and aspects of education are undertaken by Ofsted to:

- find first-hand evidence of these areas at a wider and deeper level than can be undertaken in institutional inspections
- contribute to the improvement of individual institutions and of the system as a whole
- provide advice to a range of stakeholders and influence policy
- inform the public and hold the public purse to account.

112. In 2005/06, Ofsted carried out two evaluation exercises to assess the impact of:

- the inspection of subjects and aspects of school improvement
- advice to the DfES and other national bodies on policy and practice.

113. In spring 2006, 62 out of 77 schools visited took part in a survey that gathered their perceptions about the usefulness and impact of their recent survey inspections. In addition, views were sought about the impact of Ofsted's advice to partners on national policy and practice. Ofsted also obtained the views of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Division of the DfES about which reports they had found most useful in 2005/06.

Key findings

- Two thirds of schools surveyed reported that the survey inspection had had a positive impact on leadership and management, self-evaluation and the refocusing of priorities.
- Ofsted's advice to the DfES and other bodies such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and TDA influenced new policies and led to the modification of existing ones. This advice is often based on the outcomes from survey inspections.

Background

114. Ofsted contributes to institutional and system-wide improvement, and to national policy and practice in the following main ways:

- a survey inspection programme for subjects and aspects of education
- dissemination of inspection findings through HMCI's annual report; through publications; and through invitation conferences for teachers, local authorities, national bodies such as subject and aspect associations, institutions of higher education, and research communities
- formulation of advice to a broad range of interested parties, including ministers and select committees of the House of Commons.

The impact on schools

115. Sixty-two schools responded to a survey assessing the impact of survey inspections. Results were as follows:

- Over two thirds of respondents said that the biggest impact was on improving the leadership and management of senior staff. The recommendations following the inspection of one subject helped to improve the quality of leadership and management across other areas.
- About a quarter of the schools reported a positive impact on the quality of teaching.
- Two thirds of the schools found the professional dialogue with inspectors very useful. They valued the feedback on their self-evaluation as it either gave them confidence to continue with their plans, or provided a new direction for them.
- Almost all the schools maintained that the areas identified for improvement did not come as a surprise to them, but almost half had changed their plans to deal with existing weaknesses because of what the inspector said.
- Two thirds of the respondents said that they expected further development to arise from the inspection visit.
- A third felt that the identification of the strengths had made a difference to the school as a whole.
- Just under a quarter of the schools felt that it was too soon after the visit to gauge the full impact of inspection, particularly on standards and achievement.

The impact on policy

116. The dissemination of Ofsted's reports on subjects and aspects of education and the advice given by inspectors have exerted some influence on the direction of policy and given rise to a number of initiatives. The publication of inspection findings has also stimulated debate, sometimes shaping the thinking of subject specialist and other professional groups. The recommendations after inspections contributed to improvements in in-service and initial teacher education.

117. The following examples illustrate the above areas of impact.

- Ofsted's input to the influential Steer Group's report on behaviour, and to other national steering groups on behaviour and attendance, contributed to revised statutory instruments and new policy guidance for local authorities (LAs) and schools.¹⁶

¹⁶ *Learning behaviour: the report of the practitioners' group on school behaviour and discipline*, Chaired by Sir Alan Steer, DfES, 2005; available from www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance/about/learning_behaviour.cfm.

- Ofsted's evidence, given in reports and at the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee, influenced policy development in relation to the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). The government's response of October 2006 sets out the action to be taken.¹⁷
- Standards by which to judge effective practice were given in the report *Inclusion: the impact of LEA support and outreach services* and were used as the basis for the DfES guidance to schools and LAs.¹⁸
- Papers developed from business education and history seminars contributed to the approach adopted in the QCA Futures programme and influenced the review of A levels and Key Stages 3 and 4 in those subjects.
- *Developing enterprise in young people* influenced the DfES in establishing a network of schools to share good practice in enterprise education.¹⁹
- The report *English 2000–05: a review of inspection evidence* had a major impact on the Secondary National Strategy, which responded positively to the recommendations relating to the promotion of reading, the development of speaking and listening and the use of libraries.²⁰
- The *Wider opportunities* DVD in music helped to stimulate the financing by the DfES of an improved programme of continuous professional development for teachers in primary schools.²¹
- The report *Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?* was a stimulus to local authorities to review integrated provision for pupils with LDD. It prompted them to concentrate on quality and the outcomes for pupils rather than location.²²
- *Towards consensus*, a report on citizenship, received prominent attention in the press, in parliament, and at the House of Commons Education and Skills Select Committee; it drew attention to the strengths of citizenship provision, and to weaknesses that remain to be tackled in many schools.²³

¹⁷ *Response to report on special educational needs* (Reference Cm 6940), The Stationery Office, 2006.

¹⁸ *Inclusion: the impact of LEA support and outreach services* (HMI 2452), Ofsted, 2005; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2452.

¹⁹ *Developing enterprising young people* (HMI 2460), Ofsted, 2005; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2460.

²⁰ *English 2000–05: a review of inspection evidence* (HMI 2351), Ofsted, 2005; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2351.

²¹ *Tuning in: wider opportunities in specialist instrumental tuition for pupils in Key Stage 2* (HMI 1734), Ofsted, 2004; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/1734.

²² *Inclusion: does it matter where pupils are taught?* (HMI 2535), Ofsted, 2006; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2535.

²³ *Towards consensus? Citizenship in secondary schools* (HMI 2666), Ofsted, 2006; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2666.

- Ofsted's report on continuing professional development for citizenship informed the revision of the criteria for the training programme for 1,200 teachers.
- A survey conducted by Ofsted at the request of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills on *Safeguarding children: an evaluation of procedures for checking staff appointed by schools* led to an announcement by the Secretary of State that all schools and colleges must review their records and demonstrate robust arrangements for record keeping.²⁴ This in turn led to checks on record keeping becoming part of routine inspection.
- The findings and recommendations of a report on *Implementing languages entitlement in primary schools* has strongly influenced the way in which the development programme is being implemented; for example, the provision of funding to local authorities and of training across the country.²⁵
- The report on *Food technology in secondary schools* contributed evidence to ongoing revisions by the QCA to the programmes of study for Key Stage 3 and to the GCSE criteria. It also led to the awarding bodies' review of the coverage of cooking and nutrition in GCSE food courses, and to the TDA's campaign to recruit teachers of food, funding an extra 100 places for training this year.
- As a result of the issues raised in the subject reports, the DfES convened a focus group for geography which developed an action plan for the subject.²⁶ Ofsted's advice on access to fieldwork contributed to the launch of the government's Outdoor Learning Manifesto.²⁷

Conclusion

118. The survey inspection programme ensures that strengths in the system are recognised and weaknesses are publicised and explored. The combination of surveys makes it possible for Ofsted to cross-reference information, see elements from different perspectives and look for similarities and differences. Ultimately, this gives Ofsted and the DfES a view of the system as a whole, rather than the isolated parts.
119. Evidence generated by the inspection of subjects and aspects influences the direction of policy, contributes to the improvement of educational provision and influences professional debate.

²⁴ *Safeguarding children: an evaluation of procedures for checking staff appointed by schools* (HMI 2647), Ofsted, 2006; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2647.

²⁵ *Implementing languages entitlement in primary schools* (HMI 2476), Ofsted, 2005; available from www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2476.

²⁶ *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 2004/05*, Ofsted, 2005; available from live.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/annualreport0405.

²⁷ *Learning outside the classroom manifesto* (DfES-04232-2006), DfES, 2006; available from www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/resourcematerials/outsideclassroom.

120. Ofsted maintains close links with higher education institutions and research communities. These organisations are keen to learn about the outcomes of inspections, and they acknowledge the positive impact Ofsted's work has had on their thinking and work.

Joint area reviews and annual performance assessments

Introduction

121. Joint area reviews (JARs) began in September 2005 and are scheduled to occur once in every authority between 2005 and 2008. They judge the contribution made by local authorities to improving outcomes for children and young people. Annual performance assessments (APAs), which began in June 2005, take place every year and judge the specific contribution to improving outcomes made by the services of each local council.

Key findings

Joint area reviews

- Local authorities confirm that the joint inspectorate approach has reinforced the value of agencies working together to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- The requirement on local authorities and their partners to produce a joint self-assessment has helped the development of common understandings, integrated planning and processes of performance review.
- Providers have generally agreed that inspectors' recommendations will help services to improve.
- Providers thought that the formal feedback given by inspectors on the outcomes of the review was very helpful.

Annual performance assessment

- Councils believe that APAs:
 - supported the work or development of local strategic partnerships for children and young people
 - improved systems for performance management
 - made staff across all services aware of the Every Child Matters agenda and the five outcomes
 - enhanced frameworks for strategic planning.
- The impact of the APA in improving services was judged less favourably: councils said it was too early to assess this.

Conducting JARs and corporate assessment concurrently

- The councils involved did not think that the joint working reduced the burden of inspection or produced significant benefits.

Background

122. Across a local children's services area, JARs evaluate the contribution of publicly funded services to delivering the five main outcomes for children and young people, as described in Every Child Matters. JARs also judge the capacity of these services to improve.
123. JARs are a collaborative exercise involving 10 inspectorates whose brief includes services for children and young people. JARs usually take place concurrently with corporate assessment, which is led by the Audit Commission and looks at the performance of local authorities across the full range of their responsibilities. In 2005–06, 38 JARs were carried out and reports published; this included four pilot reviews.
124. APAs share with JARs a common framework of judgements. However, there are some key differences:
- APA focuses on the local authority's children's services, whilst JARs look primarily at the whole 'public sector collective' locally (with an additional score for the local authority's contribution within this).
 - APA is essentially based on a scrutiny of data and documents, although a meeting is held with the local authority in which issues can be explored, albeit to a limited degree.
 - Unlike APAs, JARs involve fieldwork which includes studies of individual cases, neighbourhood studies, focus groups and interviews. Much of this fieldwork is designed to obtain the views of service users and front line staff.
125. In looking at the impact of the two exercises, therefore, it is important to bear in mind that the coverage and the nature of the experiences (for both providers and inspectors) are different.

Findings from JAR questionnaires

126. Surveys were conducted to gain the views of all providers and inspectors involved in JARs up to summer 2006. The powerful message from all concerned is that the multi-inspectorate approach is the right one. However, there are doubts about the benefits of running corporate assessment and JARs concurrently. Feedback to providers during inspection is felt to be a strength. Providers feel that the demands on them are reasonable, but they do not feel that there has been a reduction in stress and workload compared to the inspections JARs have replaced. Providers give mainly 'mid-point' scores on the accuracy of JAR findings, but they are more positive about the helpfulness of recommendations and are generally satisfied with the quality of reports.

Findings from APA questionnaires

127. Sixty-five councils responded to the questionnaire. In terms of the process of self-assessment, many authorities commented positively on the helpful and challenging focus on outcomes for children and young people. Forty-two councils were positive about the self-assessment, saying that it helped them 'to take a broad view of children's services across the area' or that the exercise 'moved things on'. There were also references to using the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships or Trust Boards to develop the self-assessment. The process enabled officers across services to work together more and assisted the development of a shared understanding of local priorities with partners.
128. Forty-six councils felt that dialogue at the APA meeting was constructive, although a few commented that they would have preferred more challenge.
129. Forty-one councils rated the impact of APAs as good or excellent, although opinions differed on whether the process was helpful in promoting greater coordination of children's services. Many councils made the following, or similar, observations about the APA process. It:
- promoted a common culture with partners
 - helped to reinforce key messages and priorities
 - was helpful in focusing on outcomes
 - was helpful in making the council and partners use a common national framework
 - made all staff across relevant services aware of the Every Child Matters agenda and the five outcomes
 - provided or helped foster a good foundation for the development of the Children and Young People's Plan
 - forced the council, or encouraged it, to undertake a systematic appraisal in a consistent way, across departments and with partners.
130. Other councils commented that the APA process did *not* identify issues, strengths or areas for development of which they were not already aware, or only acted to confirm their existing local analysis. However, some said that external, objective assessment and confirmation of strengths and areas for development were helpful for further development. Many councils made comments to the effect that the APA enhanced their processes of performance monitoring, evaluation and planning, or had been used to bring some of these processes together in a way that they had not been before. Five councils were certain that APA would be helpful in improving the services themselves rather than the processes to plan, monitor and deliver them.

Conducting JARs and corporate assessment concurrently

131. A study was conducted for Ofsted by KPMG. On the whole, councils felt that the processes were comparable to or better than previous inspections they had experienced. Self-assessment was seen as valuable. However, they were critical of inconsistency of approach across the two processes, delays in getting information to councils and a lack of clarity about expectations.
132. The survey concluded that most of those involved considered that there were two separate inspections running at the same time, rather than one joined-up process. None of the councils involved in the evaluation felt that the exercise had reduced the burden of inspection or added value. Nevertheless, providers did feel there was consistency in key messages from the corporate assessment and the JAR.

Conclusion

133. Future evaluative activity will focus more directly on the impact of inspection on service improvement. However, it is acknowledged that identifying this impact will be difficult, given the complex network of provision and the many factors affecting it.

Methodologies used for impact studies

Early years

Approaches were as follows:

- surveys of childcare providers on the new inspection framework in January 2006
- a questionnaire to providers of full day care, out-of-school activities and crèches
- analysis of the data of inspections of providers of childcare and nursery education
- analysis of evidence collected for the *Early years: safe and sound* report.

Maintained schools

- An independent external evaluation of the impact of section 5 inspections was conducted by NFER. The report on strand 1 was published in July 2006. The report on strand 2, involving a further 36 visits, and a questionnaire to 2,000 schools, is published in May 2007.
- Ofsted has conducted its own evaluation of section 5 inspections involving the analysis of inspection data, survey returns, complaints, inspection reports, visits to schools, interviews with parents, pupils, governors and headteachers, a survey of inspectors' views, analysis of inspection grades and meetings with local authority officers.
- Regional inspection providers have conducted visits and telephone interviews with the staff from samples of inspected schools.

Underperforming schools

The impact of inspection of schools causing concern is being measured in two ways:

- analysis of the data for schools going into a category of concern, along with the tracking of their progress following monitoring visits
- surveys undertaken by HMI to evaluate the impact of inspection on specific aspects of school improvement, including academies, fresh start and collaborative restart schools.

Independent schools

The impact of inspection and regulation in non-association independent schools has been measured through:

- analysis of school questionnaires following inspection
- telephone discussions lasting up to an hour with a sample of schools
- an analysis of action plans for improvement.

Colleges

Judgements and evidence were drawn from a number of sources, including:

- published inspection reports of those colleges judged inadequate in 2003/04 and reinspected in 2005/06
- published reports of curriculum areas or aspects of provision which were reinspected in 2005/06
- analysis of college inspection grades for 2005/06
- analysis of college inspection grades based on the composite Record of Main Findings for the 2001–05 inspection cycle
- analysis of college evaluations of inspection
- analysis of questionnaires to all colleges regarding the AAV programme
- judgements and observations of HMI of college self-assessment reports and quality assurance processes.

Initial teacher training

The methodology adopted in this report sought to assess the impact of inspection and regulation by considering:

- judgements and evidence about impact retrieved from inspection reports and evidence notebooks of the short and full inspections of primary and secondary providers of initial teacher training, as well as those offering courses in teaching vocational subjects
- the inspections and reinspections of further education teacher trainers and designated recommending bodies
- thirty-one evaluations by providers of the inspection process and its impact
- the views of trainees, canvassed on every inspection.

Survey inspections

Two surveys were undertaken:

- Seventy-seven schools were contacted, of which 50 were involved in thematic inspections and 27 in subject inspections, during January and February 2006.
- A survey was conducted of the extent of subject specialist advisers' engagement with the DfES and other national bodies such as the QCA and TDA, and its impact.

Joint area reviews and annual performance assessments

Evaluation of the impact of these inspection processes has been gathered from questionnaires, surveys and a specific, commissioned study, as follows:

- detailed evaluations carried out with all 150 local authorities in 2005 in relation to the first APA process

- ongoing and follow-up evaluations of the impact on improvement from providers and stakeholders in areas subject to a JAR in 2005
- an external evaluation by KPMG of the manageability of the process of conducting concurrently JARs and the Audit Commission's corporate assessment
- a survey of the views of key stakeholders in the inspectorate, performance review bodies and central government.