



# **The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools**

**Standards and Quality in Education 1998/99**

Laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment pursuant to Section 2(7)(a) of the School Inspections Act 1996

Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 8 February 2000

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## **Annex 1**

### **Inspection evidence**

#### **Section 10 inspections**

The Section 10 inspections of primary, secondary and special schools were carried out by registered inspectors. There were 4,520 such inspections: 3,508 of primary or nursery schools, 704 of secondary schools, 239 of special schools and 69 of pupil referral units.

#### **HMI inspections**

During the year HMI made some 4,550 visits to schools. These included more than 1,200 monitoring inspections of schools in special measures and about 400 inspections of schools with serious weaknesses. There were over 450 inspection visits to independent schools. They also included inspection of the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy in 350 primary schools.

The sample of schools inspected by HMI included all types, but the sample was not chosen to be representative of the different types of school in England.

HMI inspected LEA support for school improvement in 29 LEAs, under Section 38 of the Education Act 1997. Two of these were revisits.

HMI inspected a range of initial teacher training, including 82 subjects offered by 48 secondary providers, and English or mathematics and one specialist subject by 29 primary providers.

HMI also inspected a range of youth work and adult education provision: full inspections of adult education in three LEAs; full inspections of youth work in nine LEAs; evaluation of family learning in 28 local authorities and separate inspections to review access to aid participation in adult learning by disadvantaged groups in 13 LEAs.

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### OFSTED publications 1998/99

#### PRICED PUBLICATIONS

The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspectors of Schools 1997/98	0-11-254799-8	£11.90
Modular GCE AS and A-level examinations 1996-1998	0-11-350107-2	£6.95
Primary Education 1994-1998 - A review of Primary Schools in England	0-11-350106-4	£22.95
Special Education 1994-1998 - A review of Special Schools, Secure Units & Pupil Referral Units in England	0-11-350108-0	£14.95
Modular GCE AS and A-level Examinations	0-11-350107-2	£6.95
Inspecting Schools - Handbook for Inspecting Primary & Nursery Schools	0-11-350109-9	£15
Inspecting Schools - Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools	0-11-350110-2	£15
Inspecting Schools - Handbook for Inspecting Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units	0-11-350111-0	£15

#### UNPRICED PUBLICATIONS

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Inspecting Schools: The Framework	HMI 214
LEA Support for School Improvement - A Framework for the Inspection of LEAs (revised July 1999)	HMI 121
Lessons Learned from Special Measures	HMI 176
MORI Report - Survey of School Inspection	HMI 165
MORI: The Impact of School Inspections Children's Views	HMI 175
Primary Follow-Up Survey of the Training of Trainee Teachers to Teach Number and Reading	HMI 193
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Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties in Mainstream Schools	HMI 208
Quality of Education: Developments Since 1997-99 in the Private, Voluntary & Independent Sector	HMI 178
Raising Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils - Schools & LEA Responses	HMI 170
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SEN Code of Practice: Three Years On	HMI 211
Standards in the Secondary Curriculum 1997-98 (12 leaflets)	HMI 162

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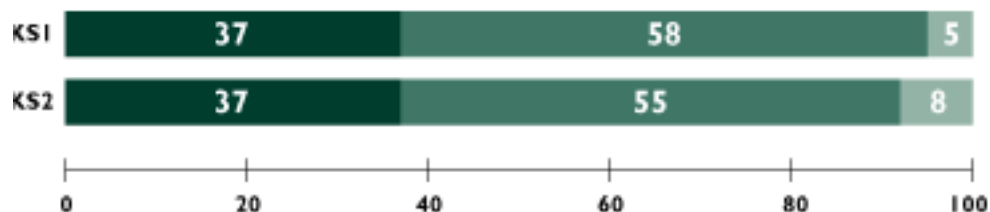
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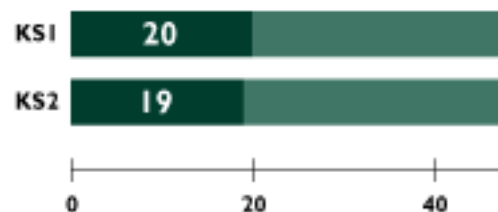
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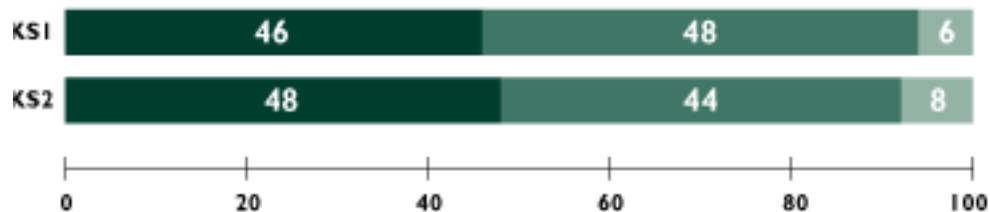
## Art



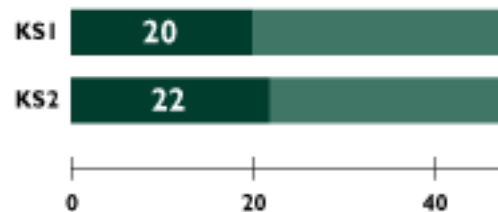
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## English



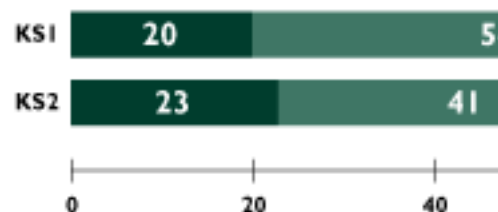
## Geography



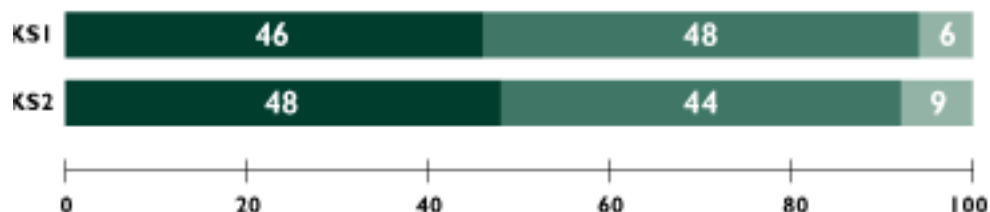
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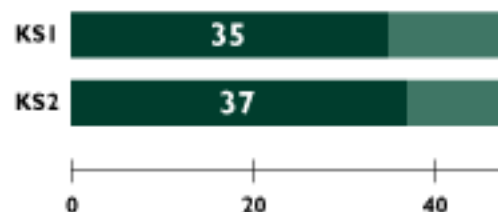
## Information technology



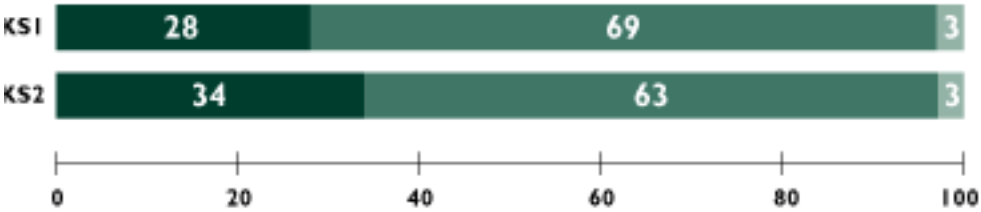
## Mathematics



## Music



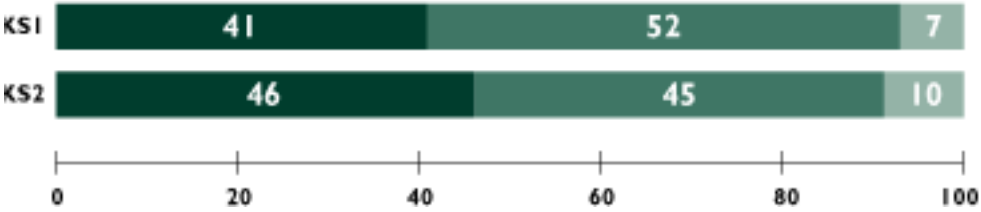
Physical education



Religious education



Science

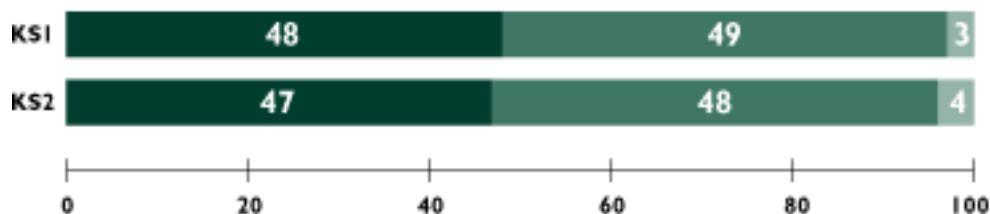


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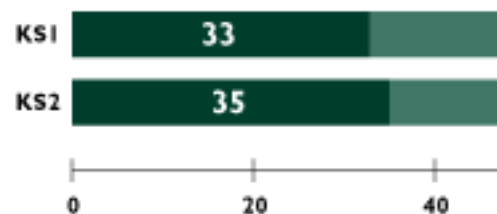
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# Annex 4: Statistical summary Teaching in primary schools 1998/99 (percentage of schools)

## Art



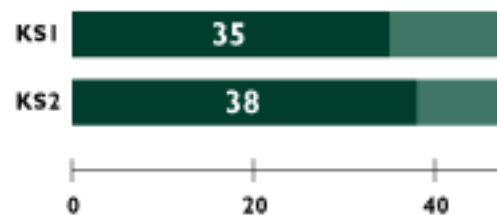
## Design and technology



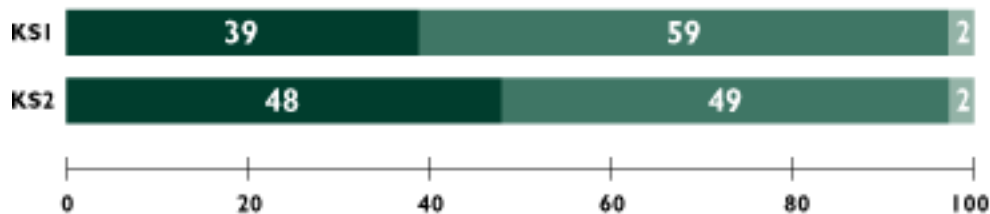
## English



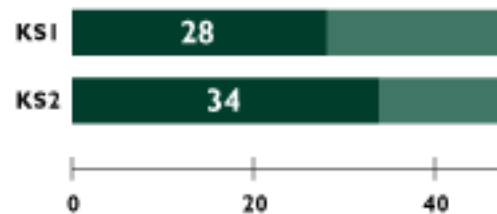
## Geography



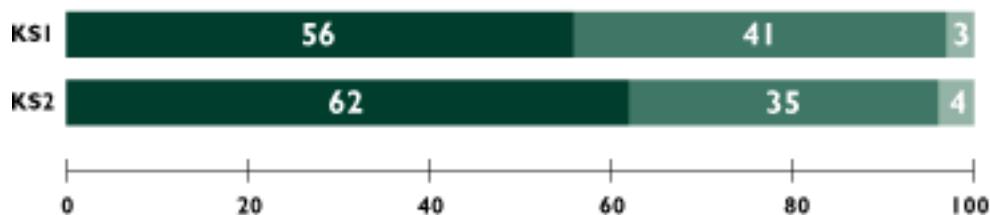
## History



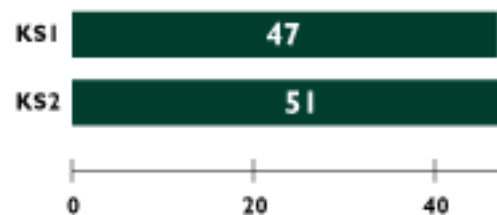
## Information technology



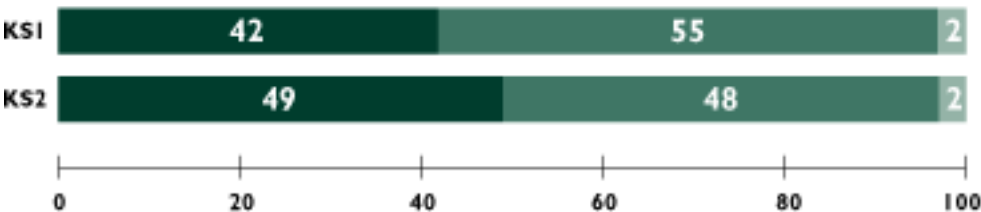
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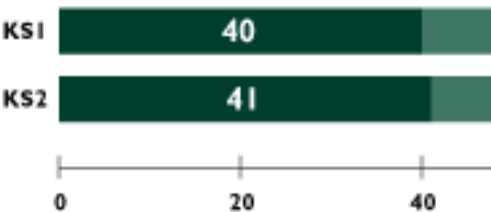
## Music



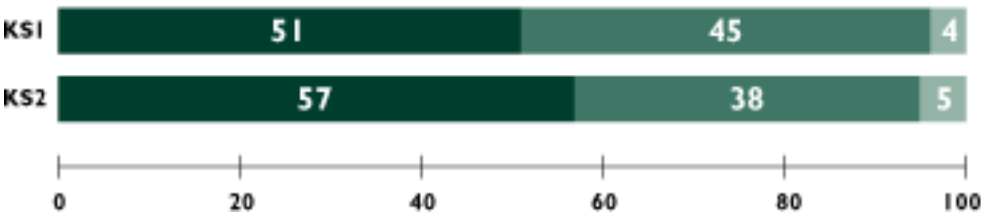
Physical education



Religious education



Science



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The Rt Hon David Blunkett MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for Education and Employment  
Sanctuary Buildings  
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February 2000

*Dear David,*

I have pleasure in submitting to you my Annual Report as required by the School Inspections Act 1996.

The report begins, as usual, with a commentary on some of the issues of importance. The second section contains the evidence from the year's inspections across the range of matters which fall within my remit.

I hope the report will be of interest to parents, teachers, headteachers, governors and policymakers, as well as contributing to the public debate on standards and quality of education.

As last year I am arranging for a copy of the report to be sent to every maintained school in England.

*Yours truly,*  
*Chris*

CHRIS WOODHEAD

# Preface



## **This Report draws on three sources of evidence:**

- **Section 10 inspections carried out by registered inspectors;**
- **inspections carried out by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI);**
- **research reviews commissioned by OFSTED.**

The 1997/98 Section 10 inspections provide evidence on the standards, quality and efficiency of over one-sixth of secondary schools and over one-quarter of primary and special schools. This year saw the first re-inspection of secondary schools and the completion of the first inspection cycle for primary and special schools. HMI have focused their inspections on the work of local education authorities (LEAs), teacher education and training, adult education and youth work, developments such as courses leading to General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and important matters such as the education of pupils with special educational needs. The Report also takes into account research commissioned by OFSTED on, for

example, homework in schools.

Full details of the evidence base are given in Annex 1.

The re-inspection of secondary schools enables me to identify improving schools.

The schools below stand out amongst the many that have improved their quality of education and the standards achieved by pupils since the previous inspection.

### *School name*

### *Postal town*

### *LEA*

Alder Grange High School	RAWTENSTALL	Lancashire
Alsop High School	WALTON	Liverpool
Angleley School	CRANBROOK	Kent
Barking Abbey Comprehensive School	BARKING	Barking & Dagenham
Baverstock GM School	KING'S HEATH	Birmingham
Beardwood School	BLACKBURN	Blackburn with Darwen
Bishop Barrington Comprehensive School	BISHOP AUCKLAND	Durham
Bretton Woods Community School	BRETTON	City of Peterborough
Chadwell Heath School	ROMFORD	Redbridge
Chatham Grammar School for Girls	CHATHAM	The Medway Towns
Christ Church CofE High School	ASHFORD	Kent
Erith School	ERITH	Bexley
Gable Hall GM Comprehensive School	STANFORD-LE-HOPE	Thurrock
Harlescott School	SHREWSBURY	Shropshire
Harrow (formerly Gayton) High School	HARROW	Harrow
Hurlingham and Chelsea School	FULHAM	Hammersmith & Fulham
Lady Lumley's School	PICKERING	North Yorkshire
Malbank School and Sixth Form Centre	NANTWICH	Cheshire
Morecambe High School	MORECAMBE	Lancashire



Morpeth School	TOWER HAMLETS	Tower Hamlets
North Manchester High School for Girls	MOSTON	Manchester
Poole High School	POOLE	Poole
Ruffwood School	KIRKBY	Knowsley
Southfield School	KETTERING	Northamptonshire
St Aidan's County High School	CARLISLE	Cumbria
St John Bosco High School	LIVERPOOL	Liverpool
St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School	KING'S NORTON	Birmingham
Stratford School (GM)	FOREST GATE	Newham
The Beacon School (GM)	BANSTEAD	Surrey
The Beauchamp College	OADBY	Leicestershire
The Bishop Bell CofE School	EASTBOURNE	East Sussex
The City Technology College	KINGSHURST	Solihull
The Clarendon School	TROWBRIDGE	Wiltshire
The Eastwood School	LEIGH-ON-SEA	Southend-on-Sea
The Hollins County High School	ACCRINGTON	Lancashire
The Robert Napier (GM) School	GILLINGHAM	The Medway Towns
The Robert Smyth School	MARKET HARBOROUGH	Leicestershire
Villiers High School	SOUTHALL	Ealing
Walderslade Girls' School	CHATHAM	The Medway Towns
Whitstone Community School	SHEPTON MALLET	Somerset
Wood Green School	WITNEY	Oxfordshire

As in previous years, I am identifying a number of schools which are shown by inspection to be providing a good quality of education and achieving high standards. All the secondary schools listed have received outstanding inspection reports. In addition, some have excellent General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results which they have sustained over a number of years. Others have GCSE results which are good, given the circumstances of the particular school.

<i>School name</i>	<i>Postal town</i>	<i>LEA</i>
Bedale High School	BEDALE	North Yorkshire
Beechen Cliff School	BATH	Bath
Bingley Grammar School	BINGLEY	Bradford
Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School	HATFIELD	Hertfordshire
Borden Grammar School	SITTINGBOURNE	Kent
Bottisham Village College	BOTTISHAM	Cambridgeshire
Bournville School	BIRMINGHAM	Birmingham
Burntwood School	WANDSWORTH	Wandsworth
Chelmsford County	CHELMSFORD	Essex
High School for Girls		
Chipping Campden School	CHIPPING CAMPDEN	Gloucester
Clitheroe Royal Grammar School	CLITHEROE	Lancashire
Colchester Royal Grammar School	COLCHESTER	Essex
Coloma Convent Girls' School	CROYDON	Croydon

Colyton Grammar School	COLYTON	Devon
County Upper School	BURY ST EDMUNDS	Suffolk
Cox Green School	MAIDENHEAD	Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Fakenham High School and College	FAKENHAM	Norfolk
Fowey Community College	FOWEY	Cornwall
Graveney School	TOOTING	Wandsworth
Greenbank High School	SOUTHPORT	Sefton
Hillview School for Girls	TONBRIDGE	Kent
Ilford County High School	ILFORD	Redbridge
Keswick School (GM)	KESWICK	Cumbria
King Edward VI	KING'S HEATH	Birmingham
Camp Hill Girls' School		
Light Hall School	SHIRLEY	Solihull
Linton Village College	LINTON	Cambridgeshire
Norham Community Technology College	NORTH SHIELDS	North Tyneside
Old Swinford Hospital	STOURBRIDGE	Dudley
Oldbury Wells School	BRIDGNORTH	Shropshire
Oxted County School	OXTED	Surrey
Parliament Hill School	CAMDEN	Camden
Penrice School	ST AUSTELL	Cornwall
Plessington Catholic High School	BEBINGTON	Wirral
Robert Pattinson GM School	NORTH HYKEHAM	Lincolnshire
Sir John Lawes School	HARPENDEN	Hertfordshire
South Wilts Grammar School for Girls	SALISBURY	Wiltshire
St Anthony's Girls' School	SUNDERLAND	Sunderland
St Ivo School	ST IVES	Cambridgeshire
St John Fisher RC High School	NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME	Staffordshire
St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School	BRISTOL	City of Bristol
St Mary's RC High School	CHESTERFIELD	Derbyshire
St Nicholas RC High School	HARTFORD	Cheshire
St Patrick's RC High School	ECCLES	Salford
St Paul's School for Girls	EDGBASTON	Birmingham
St Peter's Collegiate School	WOLVERHAMPTON	Wolverhampton
St Peter's RC High School	ORRELL	Wigan
St Saviour's and St Olave's School	SOUTHWARK	Southwark
Standish Community High School	STANDISH	Wigan
Tewkesbury GM School	TEWKESBURY	Gloucester
The Corbet GM School	SHREWSBURY	Shropshire
The Downs School	COMPTON	Newbury
The Folkestone School for Girls	FOLKESTONE	Kent
The Greensward School	EPPING	Essex
The Henrietta Barnett School	HAMPSTEAD	Barnet

	GARDEN SUBURB	
The John Roan School	BLACKHEATH	Greenwich
The Rochester	ROCHESTER	The Medway Towns
Grammar School for Girls		
The Romsey School	ROMSEY	Hampshire
The Roseland Community School	TRURO	Cornwall
The Skinners' School	TUNBRIDGE WELLS	Kent
The Windsor Boys' School	WINDSOR	Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Varndean School	BRIGHTON	Brighton and Hove
Watford Grammar School for Girls	WATFORD	Hertfordshire
West Bridgford Comprehensive School	WEST BRIDGFORD	Nottinghamshire
Wirral County Grammar School (Girls)	BEBINGTON	Wirral
Wootton Upper School	WOOTTON	Bedfordshire
Wymondham College (GM)	WYMONDHAM	Norfolk

I am also pleased to be able to identify particularly successful primary, middle and nursery schools. In these schools pupils achieve high standards in literacy and numeracy and make an excellent start to their education.

<i>School name</i>	<i>Postal town</i>	<i>LEA</i>
<b>Primary Schools</b>		
Anchorsholme County Primary School	THORNTON-CLEVELEYS	Blackpool
Arnside National C of E School	ARNSIDE	Cumbria
Barugh Green Primary School	BARUGH GREEN	Barnsley
Biddick Hall County Junior Mixed School	BIDDICK HALL	South Tyneside
Billinge and Winstanley	BILLINGE	St Helens
St Mary's RC School		
Birches Green Infant School	ERDINGTON	Birmingham
Boldmere Infant School	SUTTON COLDFIELD	Birmingham
Boughton Heath County Primary School	GREAT BOUGHTON	Cheshire
Bournes Green County Junior School	SOUTHEND-ON-SEA	Southend-on-Sea
Bramcote Hills Primary School	BEESTON	Nottinghamshire
Broughton in Amounderness	BROUGHTON	Lancashire
C of E Primary School		
Charlestown County Primary School	CARLYON BAY	Cornwall
Christ Church C of E School	CHORLEYWOOD	Hertfordshire
Cockwood Primary School	STARCROSS	Devon
Darrick Wood Infant School	ORPINGTON	Bromley
English Martyrs' RC Primary School	LITHERLAND	Sefton
Episkopi Primary School	CYPRUS	
Etchingam C of E School	BURGH HILL	East Sussex

Garrick Green First School	OLD CATTON	Norfolk
Garstang County Primary School	GARSTANG	Lancashire
Gawcott First School	GAWCOTT	Buckinghamshire
Hadley Wood Primary School	HADLEY WOOD	Enfield
Hazelwood Infant School	PALMERS GREEN	Enfield
Henley School	HENLEY	Suffolk
Hiltingbury Junior School	CHANDLERS FORD	Hampshire
Holmes Chapel County Primary School	HOLMES CHAPEL	Cheshire
Humshaugh C of E First School	HUMSHAUGH	Northumberland
Kobi Nazrul Primary School	TOWER HAMLETS	Tower Hamlets
Laneshaw Bridge County School	LANESHAW BRIDGE	Lancashire
Lindal and Marton Primary School	LINDAL	Cumbria
Lyndon Green Infant School	SHELDON	Birmingham
Manor Infants' School	BARKING	Barking & Dagenham
Marlborough County Primary School	FALMOUTH	Cornwall
Mayplace Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School	BEXLEYHEATH	Bexley
Moat Farm Junior School	OLDBURY	Sandwell
Netherthong Junior and Infant School	NETHERTHONG	Kirklees
Nunthorpe Primary School	NUNTHORPE	Redcar and Cleveland
Our Lady of Fatima Junior and Infant School	BIRMINGHAM	Birmingham
Our Lady of Grace Junior School	DOLLIS HILL	Brent
Parklands Junior School	ROMFORD	Havering
Peter's Hill Primary School	AMBLECOTE	Dudley
Priory School	SLOUGH	Slough
Ramsden Infant School	BARROW-IN- FURNESS	Cumbria
Roseacre Junior School	BEARSTED	Kent
Sandford Hill Primary School and Hearing Impaired Unit	LONGTON	Stoke-on-Trent
Scargill Infants' School	RAINHAM	Havering
Seagry C of E School	CHIPPENHAM	Wiltshire
Somerhill Junior School	HOVE	Brighton and Hove
South Farnham County Junior School	FARNHAM	Surrey
St Anne's Catholic Primary School	CHERTSEY	Surrey
St Bartholomews's C of E Primary School	SYDENHAM	Lewisham
St Benedict's RC School	GARFORTH	Leeds
St Francis de Sales Infant School	TOTTENHAM	Haringey
St Francis RC Junior and Infant School	GORTON	Manchester
St Giles' C of E (Aided) Infant School	ASHTEAD	Surrey
St John The Evangelist RC Primary School	BILLINGHAM	Stockton on Tees

St Joseph and St Theresa Primary School	CHASETOWN	Staffordshire
St Joseph's Junior School	REDDISH	Stockport
St Joseph's Primary School	ROSSINGTON	Doncaster
St Joseph's RC Primary School	LEEDS	Leeds
St Joseph's RC Primary School	BLAYDON-ON-TYNE	Gateshead
St Martin de Porres RC Junior and Infant School	BIRMINGHAM	Birmingham
St Mary's RC Junior School	NEWTON-LE- WILLOWS	St Helens
St Peter's C of E Junior School	BIRMINGHAM	Birmingham
St Peter's C of E Primary School	PADDINGTON	Westminster
St Teresa's RC Primary School	HARTLEPOOL	Hartlepool
St Vincent's RC Primary School	NORDEN	Rochdale
Stanley RC (Aided) Primary School	STANLEY	Durham
Stocksbridge Junior School	STOCKSBRIDGE	Sheffield
Stubbins County Primary School	RAMSBOTTOM	Lancashire
Sun Hill Infant School	ALRESFORD	Hampshire
The Grange Infant School	SHREWSBURY	Shropshire
The R A Butler Infant School	SAFFRON WALDEN	Essex
Trafalgar Junior School	TWICKENHAM	Richmond-Upon-Thames
Twickenham Primary School	KINGSTANDING	Birmingham
Weeley St Andrew's GM C of E Primary School	WEELEY	Essex
Westgate County Primary School	WESTGATE	Lancashire
Weston Coyney Infants' School	WESTON COYNEY	Stoke-on-Trent
Weston Hills C of E School	WESTON HILLS	Lincolnshire
Whiteheath Junior School	RUISLIP	Hillingdon
Willows Primary School	LICHFIELD	Staffordshire
Withnell Fold County School	WITHNELL	Lancashire
Worlds End Infant School (NC)(SU)	QUINTON	Birmingham
Wrockwardine Wood Infant School	WROCKWARDINE WOOD	Shropshire

*School name*

*Postal town*

*LEA*

### **Middle Schools**

Hagley Middle School	HAGLEY	Hereford & Worcester
Hugh Sexey Middle School	WEDMORE	Somerset
Thomas A Becket Middle School	WORTHING	West Sussex
Tylers Green Middle School	HIGH WYCOMBE	Buckinghamshire

*School name*

*Postal town*

*LEA*

### **Nursery Schools**

Cleator Moor Nursery School	CLEATOR MOOR	Cumbria
George Dent Nursery School	DARLINGTON	Darlington
Padgate County Nursery School	PADGATE	Warrington

Rawmarsh Nursery School	RAWMARSH	Rotherham
Stanley Nursery School	STANLEY	Wakefield
Whitnash Nursery School	LEAMINGTON SPA	Warwickshire

I am also pleased to name highly effective special schools this year. In similar terms to the schools named above, they demonstrate the best in this highly diverse and important sector of education.

<i>School name</i>	<i>Postal town</i>	<i>LEA</i>
Cambridge School	HAMMERSMITH	Hammersmith and Fulham
Clare Mount School	MORETON	Wirral
Cloughwood School	NORTHWICH	Cheshire
Crevesford School	BARNSELY	Barnsley
Ethel Tipple School	KING'S LYNN	Norfolk
Exhall Grange School	COVENTRY	Warwickshire
Freemantles School	CHERTSEY	Surrey
Fulford Cross School	FULFORD	York
Gibfield School	COLNE	Lancashire
Glebe Special School	WHITLEY BAY	North Tyneside
Glyne Gap School	BEXHILL ON SEA	East Sussex
Greenbank Residential School	NORTHWICH	Cheshire
Heathlands School	ST ALBANS	Hertfordshire
Hinderton School	WHITBY	Cheshire
Horton Lodge School	LEEK	Staffordshire
Oaklands School	ISLEWORTH	Hounslow
Pendower Hall School	NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE	Newcastle upon Tyne
Piper Hill High School	NORTHENDEN	Manchester
Priory School	SOUTH NORWOOD	Croydon
Southfield School	HATFIELD	Hertfordshire
St Anthony's School	CHICHESTER	West Sussex
Swiss Cottage School	SWISS COTTAGE	Camden

As last year, OFSTED is delighted to recognise the very substantial improvement in schools that have been removed from special measures during the year covered by this Report.

<i>School name</i>	<i>Postal town</i>	<i>LEA</i>
Abbey Farm Middle School	THETFORD	Norfolk
Acorn Nursery (Special)	LIVERPOOL	Liverpool
Alderman Jackson School (Special)	KING'S LYNN	Norfolk
All Saints C of E First School	BRADFORD	Bradford
Ambergate School (Special)	GRANTHAM	Lincolnshire
Ashton St Peter's GM C of E Primary School	DUNSTABLE	Bedfordshire

Aylands School (Special)	ENFIELD	Enfield
Baliol (Special) School	SEDBERGH	North Yorkshire
Brancaster C of E Primary School	BRANCASTER	Norfolk
Brindale Primary School	BRINNINGTON	Stockport
Brookfield (Special) School	CHELTENHAM	Gloucester
Brooksby Primary School	NOTTINGHAM	City of Nottingham
Cawston C of E Primary School	CAWSTON	Norfolk
Christ Church C of E Primary School	BATTERSEA	Wandsworth
Clatterbridge School (Special)	BEBINGTON	Wirral
Cliffey House School (Special)	HANLEY CASTLE	Worcestershire
Colby Primary School	COLBY	Norfolk
Dalton Junior School	HUDDERSFIELD	Kirklees
David Lister School	HULL	Kingston-upon-Hull
Edinburgh Primary School	WALTHAMSTOW	Waltham Forest
Epinay (Special) School	JARROW	South Tyneside
Flamstead Primary School	FLAMSTEAD	Hertfordshire
Forest Gate Centre		Northamptonshire
Fred Nicholson Special School	DEREHAM	Norfolk
Gainsborough Primary School	NEWHAM	Newham
Garston C of E Primary School	LIVERPOOL	Liverpool
Geoffrey Chaucer Comprehensive School	SOUTHWARK	Southwark
Glenmere Primary School	WIGSTON	Leicestershire
Griffin Manor School (Special)	GREENWICH	Greenwich
Harborne Hill School	BIRMINGHAM	Birmingham
Hickling First School	HICKLING	Norfolk
Hockwold Primary School	THETFORD	Norfolk
Holmefield First School	HOMEWOOD	Bradford
Holyhead Primary School	WEDNESBURY	Sandwell
Isaac Newton School	HULL	Kingston-upon-Hull
Kemsing County Primary School	SEVENOAKS	Kent
Knighton Fields Primary School	LEICESTER	City of Leicester
Lea Green School and Centre (Special)	WALTHAM FOREST	Waltham Forest
Lea Infant School	SLOUGH	Slough
Leeds and Broomfield C of E Primary School	MAIDSTONE	Kent
Lilian Baylis School	LAMBETH	Lambeth
Little Ilford School	NEWHAM	Newham
Lowry High School	SALFORD	Salford
Luttons Primary School	WEST LUTTON	North Yorkshire
Massey Hall School (Special)	WARRINGTON	Lancashire
Meadow Wood School (Special)	WATFORD	Hertfordshire
Millbrook Community School	MAYBUSH	Southampton
Mitchell Brook Primary School	WILLESDEN	Brent

Morningside Primary School	HACKNEY	Hackney
Mortimer School (Special)	STREATHAM	Lambeth
New Hinksey First School	OXFORD	Oxfordshire
New Penshaw Primary School	HOUGHTON	Sunderland
	LE SPRING	
Newnham Croft Primary School	CAMBRIDGE	Cambridgeshire
Newport Junior School	WALTHAM FOREST	Waltham Forest
Oaklands Nursery School	NEWCASTLE	Staffordshire
Oxhey Infants School	BUSHEY	Hertfordshire
Pinfold Street Primary School	WEDNESBURY	Walsall
Potternewton Primary School	LEEDS	Leeds
Richmonds Infants School	SHOEBURYNESSE	Southend-on-Sea
Rodmell C of E Primary School	RODMELL	East Sussex
Roe Lee Park Primary School	BLACKBURN	Blackburn with Darwen
Rough Hay Primary School	DARLASTON	Walsall
Rowdeford School (Special)	ROWDE	Wiltshire
Sandgate School (Special)	KENDAL	Cumbria
Shaw Park Primary School	HULL	Kingston-upon-Hull
Skerton Primary School	SKERTON	Lancashire
Slated Row School (Special)	WOLVERTON	Milton Keynes
St Alfege with St Peter's Primary School	GREENWICH	Greenwich
St Barnabus and St Paul's	BLACKBURN	Blackburn with Darwen
C of E Primary School		
St Cuthbert's (VA) C of E Junior School	GATESHEAD	Gateshead
St George's C of E Primary School	BATTERSEA	Wandsworth
St Hugh's High School	GRANTHAM	Lincolnshire
St John's RC Junior School	KIRKDALE	Liverpool
St Lawrence (VA) Lower School	RUSHDEN	Bedfordshire
St Mary of the Angels	WESTMINSTER	Westminster
RC Primary School		
St Mary's and St Joseph's	BLACKBURN	Blackburn with Darwen
RC Primary School		
St Matthias' C of E Primary School	HACKNEY	Hackney
St Monica's RC Primary School	HACKNEY	Hackney
St Oswald's RC Primary School	ACCRINGTON	Lancashire
St Paul's with St Michael's	HACKNEY	Hackney
C of E Primary School		
St Stephen's C of E Primary School	LAMBETH	Lambeth
Staveley Junior School	CHESTERFIELD	Derbyshire
Sunfield Independent Special School	CLENT	Worcestershire
Sutton Manor Community	SUTTON MANOR	St Helens
Primary School		
Talbot House School	CRAMLINGTON	Northumberland
(Independent Special)		



The Pupil Referral Unit	KINGSBURY	Brent
The Sneyd High School	NEWCASTLE	Staffordshire
Three Crowns School (Special)	WALSALL	Walsall
Uffculme (Special) School	BIRMINGHAM	Birmingham
Undercliffe Middle School	BRADFORD	Bradford
Upbury Manor School (GMS)	GILLINGHAM	The Medway Towns
Upottery Primary School	HONITON	Devon
Victoria Primary School	LEEDS	Leeds
Wark C of E (Aided) First School	HEXHAM	Northumberland
Warren Hills County Primary School	COALVILLE	Leicestershire
Watergate School	LEWISHAM	Lewisham
Welshampton C of E Primary School	ELLESMERE	Shropshire
West Gate Community College	NEWCASTLE	Newcastle upon Tyne
Windmill School (Special)	BRIXTON	Lambeth
Woodseats Primary School	SHEFFIELD	Sheffield
Woodside Middle School	BRADFORD	Bradford
Woodstock Primary School	LEICESTER	City of Leicester
Worsley Mesnes Primary School	WIGAN	Wigan



# Commentary

This is my fifth report as HMCI. Coinciding as it does with the completion of the inspection cycle, it offers an opportunity to review developments since the publication of my first report in 1993/94.

Three main points need to be made. The first is that the performance of teachers and pupils stands in sharp contrast to that of four years ago. Teachers are now teaching better, and pupils, as a consequence, are learning more. The re-inspection of secondary schools has highlighted the progress that some schools have made and I am pleased to identify those with a particularly good record of improvement at the beginning of this report. That said, as in every previous year, inspection shows that while some schools are outstandingly successful, others perform badly. To an extent this is inevitable, but the gap in achievement between schools serving similar communities continues to be too wide. Education remains, as I said in last year's report, "too much of a lottery". This is a second, and very significant, issue. Then, third, there is the unsurprising fact that the basic challenges are still very much those we faced when I wrote my first report. The quality of teaching has improved, but further progress is needed if, for example, the Government's literacy and numeracy targets are to be achieved. So, too, with leadership in schools. The headteacher is the critical figure in the drive to raise educational standards. We have many committed, highly effective heads. We need more. It is upon these two imperatives that the policy agenda should focus.

I have emphasised the achievements of the service in each of the reports I have published since 1993/94, and I have done so with increasing confidence. The statistics this year speak for themselves. In 1993/94 the quality of teaching was judged to be less than satisfactory in 25 per cent, 30 per cent, 19 per cent and 17 per cent of lessons in Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. This year the comparable figures have fallen to 8 per cent, 8 per cent, 10 per cent and 7 per cent. Teaching is now deemed to be good in over half of the lessons observed in each key stage. Teachers are now expecting more of their pupils. They are planning and preparing more effectively and teaching in a more challenging, direct way. More headteachers (though not yet enough) are monitoring the quality of teaching in their schools. More pupils, as a consequence, are achieving their potential. In particular, more children are making better progress in mathematics and English in primary schools. The Literacy and Numeracy initiatives are enabling many teachers to teach more effectively. In a number of primary schools, some of which serve areas of severe disadvantage, we have seen spectacular improvements in reading. The task now, for most primary schools, is to build steadily on these foundations and, for those directing the strategies, to continue to improve them in the light of experience.

Pupils continue generally to have a positive attitude to learning. Behaviour of pupils is unsatisfactory in only 2 per cent of primary schools. It is unsatisfactory in 6 per cent of secondary schools, which is too high. However, relationships are generally good. Most schools provide well for social and moral development of pupils. Teachers do much to ensure that pupils have a clear grasp of what constitutes right and wrong behaviour. Attendance figures in most schools are above 90 per cent, with schools working hard to ensure regular attendance, at times despite the difficulties posed by condoned absence.

The improvements highlighted by the second round of inspections of secondary schools are encouraging. Most schools have tackled the issues identified by inspectors in the first report. Seven in ten schools have an upward trend in examination results; nine in ten have a higher proportion of good teaching. More pupils are now staying on at school and most sixth forms provide a good-quality education. GNVQs have improved. The new assessment regime is clearer and more rigorous and this has led to improved standards in the work inspected.

A worryingly high proportion (8 per cent) of special schools continues to be made subject to special measures. There have, however, been some encouraging developments in special schools. In particular, the teaching in schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties has improved. HMI in OFSTED have carried out a study of successful practice in these demanding schools which we shall be publishing in the near future.

Considerable improvement has, therefore, been made in a number of areas. Inspection, however, has found that there is still substantial underachievement in about one in ten primary and secondary schools. About four in ten pupils leaving primary schools did not achieve level 4 (the level expected of 11 year olds) in English and in mathematics tests, and one in ten did not even reach level 3. In Key Stage 3, where the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is now highest, about four in ten pupils do not achieve level 5. The achievement of boys continues to cause concern. Their achievement in reading and particularly writing is significantly weaker than that of girls at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. There is still, therefore, much to do in a significant number of schools.

An encouraging number of schools are now being removed from special measures. The proportion of schools that fail their inspection remains, however, much the same as in previous years - about three per cent of primary and secondary schools, and eight per cent of special schools. Those secondary schools that failed this year had generally made little or no improvement since their previous inspection. In one recently failing school serving a disadvantaged area, standards had spiralled downwards to a point where only 6.6 per cent of pupils achieved five or more A\* to C grades. Nearly a third of the pupils registered at this school failed to gain a single GCSE pass. Attendance was well below the national average and the unauthorised absence rate was over twelve times the national figure. The quality of teaching was a serious weakness. One-third of all lessons, and half of the mathematics lessons, were less than satisfactory. The main weaknesses were that teachers lacked sufficient knowledge of their subject, planning was often poor and the work set was insufficiently challenging. The school had not addressed weaknesses identified as Key Issues in the previous report.

I am fully aware that teachers working in schools in socially disadvantaged areas can face enormous difficulties. The rich do not, however, have a monopoly on intelligence and poverty can never be an excuse for school failure. It is the children who have no books at home, whose parents cannot or will not read to them, who need school most. More privileged children are likely to be better prepared for education, but the fact that a child is eligible for a free school meal ought not to have any relevance when it comes to learning to read. This is not pious exhortation. We know from inspection and test and examination results that schools working in difficult circumstances can achieve exceptional results. In recent years there has been a clear trend of improvement in such schools. A number of secondary schools, for example, with very disadvantaged intakes have increased their examination results by over 4 GCSE points per year in the last four years, compared with a national trend of less than one point per year. Ways must be found to replicate the strengths of such schools. It is deeply depressing that some schools like the one described in the previous paragraph have deteriorated since their first inspection. The LEAs responsible must ask themselves why this has been allowed to happen. If two hundred of the schools that failed their inspection can be turned round, why cannot all? The Government has taken firm action to ensure that schools in special measures and with serious weaknesses receive proper support from their local authorities. If the LEA cannot deliver, then alternative forms of provision must be found. The drive to raise standards for the children who need education most must not be allowed to grind to a halt in a mire of professional incompetence and political indecision within the LEA.

The key to raising standards in schools where achievement is currently too low is obviously to improve the quality of teaching and the strength of leadership provided by the headteacher. We have now inspected every school in the country. We know what makes a good teacher and headteacher. It is not, therefore, research into the nature of teaching and school leadership that is needed, so much as new thinking about how we can use our current knowledge better.

Good teachers have a secure understanding of the subjects they teach. The evaluation, for example, of the literacy initiative has revealed that the problem in schools where standards in reading are low is that teachers simply do not know what to do. Their initial training may have given them a vague sense of different methods, but they lack the specific, day-to-day understanding of what knowledge and skills need to be taught when. It is exactly the same at A level: students who are taught by teachers who do not have a firm intellectual grip upon (and, indeed, a personal enthusiasm for) their subject-matter are unlikely to make good progress. Good teachers have, moreover, high expectations of their pupils. They plan effectively. They deploy a variety of different teaching methods in a skilful and pragmatic fashion. They achieve high standards of discipline. They both plan and assess pupils' work thoroughly, using assessment to inform planning for future lessons. There is, of course, nothing new in this account. There is nothing, moreover, that is problematic theoretically. The challenge for the teacher is, as it always has been, to turn the words that are so easy to write on the page into the difficult reality of day-to-day action. For the policymaker, it is to rethink current approaches to the training and support of teachers so that more teachers teach more effectively.

So, too, with leadership. Successful schools are invariably led by men and women who are aware of the gap between what should be, and what is, happening, who have the determination to tackle problems, and, more generally, the determination to develop a culture which takes nothing for granted. They recognise that only so much can be done at once and they have the courage, whatever the pressures, external and internal, to prioritise. They deal with decisions with down-to-earth management efficiency, and, most important of all, they themselves know what constitutes high-quality teaching and educational excellence. We do not have enough such headteachers. Indeed, educational leadership is judged to be weak in one in eight primary and one in seven secondary schools. These are disturbing figures. Too many headteachers do not really know what is happening in the classrooms of their schools. They do not know because they do not have a rigorous and systematic approach to monitoring standards and evaluating the quality of teaching. This is a fundamental weakness, for, without this, development planning is clearly impossible and target setting little more than a pious aspiration. The key challenge for school management over the next few years is to exploit the potential of appraisal and self-evaluation. Appraisal in many schools has lacked rigour. The conclusions of the appraisal process have not been followed through into management action which benefits the appraisee and the school. The situation with self-evaluation has become similar. A minority of schools have, as indicated

above, had the courage to cut through the obstacles to an honest identification of the really important issues. Too many have not.

What, then, can be done to increase the number of good teachers and good headteachers? The contribution of initial teacher training (ITT) is clearly vital. Inspection shows that ITT for primary schoolteachers has focused more sharply on the teaching of number and reading. There have been some marked improvements in key areas such as the attention given to mental arithmetic and phonics. The Primary Follow-up Survey nevertheless identified some key weaknesses. The majority of trainees are still uncertain about how to plan for and use phonics appropriately in the teaching of reading over a period of time. Many trainees have difficulty in planning and pacing a structured sequence of lessons for reading and number. The assessment of trainees has improved, but it is not always sufficiently rigorous or accurate and does not always cover fully the standards for qualified teacher status. Rigorous inspection of ITT must therefore continue so that institutions of higher education can remedy the weaknesses that remain. Each and every student who leaves a training institution must, as a minimum, feel confident in dealing with the day-to-day practicalities of classroom teaching. This is not yet the case.

LEAs now have the opportunity to make a real contribution to the improvement of teaching and leadership in schools. In that the cycle of LEA inspection only began in 1997/98, this Annual Report does not draw upon a balanced sample of LEAs. Some interesting conclusions nevertheless emerge. Good LEAs meet their statutory obligations. They neither seek to replicate the work of OFSTED nor do they second-guess the management decisions of headteachers and governing bodies. They devolve a high proportion of the resources available for education to schools. They target intervention in those schools which cannot manage their own destiny, and, having listened to the views of headteachers, ensure that the majority of schools have access to high-quality, value-for-money support which from time to time most headteachers will want. It is an important but sensibly minimalist role.

The weakest LEAs inspected in this sample had no clear concept of their role. They had failed to listen to headteachers, to define the respective roles of school and authority, or to establish how and when intervention would occur when schools failed to deliver acceptable standards. They retained too much money and had no clear idea of whether the services they provided represented good value for money. They tried, typically, to do too much, in the process confusing schools and dissipating energy. They failed to meet their own statutory responsibilities. Such LEAs, and next year's Report will give a clearer idea of their number, have some way to go if they are to deliver what the Government now expects from them. At present they are making little or no contribution to the standards agenda. Indeed, they are damaging schools because they are wasting resources and managing change badly.

Traditionally, the only strategy beyond the work of ITT institutions and LEAs to improve the quality of teaching and leadership has been the publication of good practice in the hope that it will seep through the system. Some such publications have had some effect, but most have not. The Government is right, therefore, to look for new solutions. The Green Paper *Teachers Meeting the Challenge of Change* proposes fundamental changes for the longer term, including incentives for excellence in leadership and in training, more flexible models of initial teacher training and a systematic approach to professional development.

The most dramatic innovations thus far are the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. These strategies are unique in that, for the first time, the Government has offered firm guidance not only on what should be taught but also on how children should be taught to read, write and calculate. Those who believe telling teachers how to teach is an affront to their professional dignity because it treats them as "technicians" rather than professionals are seriously misguided. The overwhelming majority of teachers involved with the Literacy and Numeracy Projects have welcomed the way in which the Frameworks for Literacy and Numeracy have brought together up-to-date knowledge of what needs to be taught and the best methods of teaching it. Teachers' confidence and competence in teaching fundamentally important areas of work, notably phonics and mental mathematics, which had suffered much from weak teaching in the past, have been enormously strengthened. However, the National Literacy Strategy has huge in-service training implications. Not surprisingly, while the picture is broadly positive, there have been problems maintaining the quality of this training in some local authorities. It has not been easy to keep the focus on phonics because of the reluctance of a minority of LEAs and schools to recognise its importance.

The next stage in the Government's drive to improve teaching will focus on the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to raise educational standards and equip teachers and pupils with the skills they will need in the twenty-first century. The Government is right to find very substantial extra funding for this initiative. Information technology is the subject taught least well in primary and in secondary schools. About one-third of schools in both sectors show substantial underachievement. There is a huge gap between those schools which teach the National Curriculum requirements for information technology effectively and those which, for various reasons, do not. A small amount of work involving communication and data handling is very good, but there is much that is mediocre or poor and makes only trivial use of expensive facilities and information sources. Much of the existing investment is, therefore, wasted, largely because in many

schools teachers lack confidence and training to teach the subject well and other teachers are unable to apply ICT to the subjects they teach. In taking advantage of the new funding for ICT, schools must establish clear priorities for training and for monitoring the quality of training. They should also make full use of the ideas and guidance in the scheme of work for Key Stages 1 and 2 recently published by the DfEE and QCA. OFSTED will continue to monitor closely and report on the impact of the Government's initiative in ICT.

The Beacon school initiative is a further example of new government thinking in the drive to improve the quality of teaching and leadership. It is too early to comment from inspection evidence, but in principle this seems a highly promising development. We now know which schools are the most successful and we are therefore for the first time in a position to draw upon their expertise in a systematic way. Such schools have the potential to make a very significant contribution to initial and in-service training and to the training of prospective headteachers. Teachers and headteachers who are themselves doing the job have an expertise and credibility that nobody outside schools can possibly claim. It is worth therefore seeing how a bottom-up approach can complement the traditional dissemination of good practice from on high.

It is clear that we have reached a critical point in the Government's drive to raise educational standards. Significant progress has been made in recent years. Much, nevertheless, needs to be done if the Government's vision of a world-class education service is to be realised. We must, in particular, continue to focus on raising standards in the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and IT. These are the foundations upon which a culture of lifelong learning must be built, and, at present, standards are simply too low for us to be confident that the foundations are secure. There is, however, every reason for optimism. Nobody now questions the need to raise standards. Fewer take refuge in socio-economic explanations of school failure. Most within the profession accept that the beliefs about education and teaching which have dominated practice for the last forty years must be, at the least, questioned. The culture is now less self-indulgent. We have a new and rigorous focus on what actually works. As a consequence, teachers will be able to achieve more at less personal cost. More pupils will realise their potential, and, as a nation, we can contemplate the likelihood of a more socially cohesive and economically prosperous future.

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on this site.

# *Secondary schools*

## **Educational standards achieved**

**76.** Standards in secondary schools have continued to improve gradually. The average GCSE points score per pupil in maintained schools has risen from 35.6 in 1997 to 36.8 in 1998 on this site.

# *Sixth forms in schools*

## **Educational standards achieved**

**161.** One-quarter of young people aged 16-18 are in school sixth forms and a similar proportion are in further education. The participation of this age group in education has doubled over the last 15 years. There are now almost 400,000 students in school sixth forms, a growth of nearly 10,000 over the last year. In maintained sixth forms about three-quarters of students are studying for GCE A levels, one in ten Advanced GNVQ and one in ten Intermediate GNVQ. The proportion following Advanced GNVQ courses has trebled over the last four years. Overall, school sixth forms account for over two-thirds of those students completing full GCE A-level programmes and more than a quarter of students completing the Advanced GNVQ.

**162.** There is evidence of continued, gradual improvement in standards in sixth forms. GCE A-level results have improved slightly. The average points score for students taking two or more GCE A levels was 17.6 in 1998 compared to 17.0 in 1997<sup>16</sup>. The average points score was similar for boys and girls. However, since on average the boys started from lower levels of prior attainment than the girls, the boys have made greater overall progress and closed the gap that existed at GCSE. This improved progress is most marked amongst high ability students. The average points score per subject entry for Advanced GNVQ courses has matched those for GCE A levels.

**163.** The chart opposite shows inspectors' judgements of progress in lessons. There has been a slight improvement on last year, reflecting a corresponding improvement in the quality of teaching. Students make good progress in the majority of GCE A-level and Advanced GNVQ lessons, and in two in five Intermediate GNVQ lessons. Many students have made substantial improvements in attainment over a year or two on GNVQ courses, after little prior success in GCSE.

**164.** Small sixth forms tend to recruit students with lower prior attainment and those pupils tend to make less progress than students in large sixth forms. Inspection reports on small sixth forms show that inadequate teaching time, co-teaching of different year groups or courses, weak development of students' organisational and analytical skills and poor information technology provision contribute to slow progress. However, inspection also provides examples of small sixth forms with good-quality provision and high standards.

**165. ACHIEVEMENT IN GCE A LEVEL** lessons is predominantly satisfactory or better. The best students in all subjects show a consistently high level of scholarship, work well under pressure and perform equally well in timed written exams, practical work and coursework assignments. The weakest students in GCE A-level classes usually cope with the basic techniques required for the syllabus and have a reasonable grasp of the subject matter. Overall standards required of students and levels of demand are the same for modular and corresponding linear syllabuses. Features such as more regular assessment and feedback, and the opportunity to resit modules, have nevertheless contributed to a higher pass rate amongst weaker students in modular than in linear syllabuses. More able students generally perform equally well on linear and modular syllabuses.

**166.** The large majority of Advanced **GNVQ** students are committed and conscientious. They work effectively both independently and as part of a team and are able to organise both themselves and others. Frequent contact with the world of work, and business, promotes a high level of self-reliance and interpersonal skills. The best distinction portfolios match GCE A-level grade A performance, showing mature work of impressive range and depth. These students can synthesise a variety of material and analyse complex ideas, but pass and merit students are often uncritical of the evidence they collect.

### **Chart 16** - Lessons in Sixth Forms: Progress (*percentage of lessons*)

**167.** The revised unit structure of the new **GNVQ** assessment model, which is currently in the pilot stage, is encouraging greater rigour and has led to improved standards within the vocational areas. Advanced work is at least satisfactory and there are examples of good standards in art and design, business studies and information technology. At Intermediate level, standards are again generally satisfactory and often good in art and design. Inspection of portfolios in the summer term by HMI found improvements in standards, as compared with the current model, and a good equivalence with standards on comparable GCE A-level or GCSE courses. The new specifications have encouraged better analysis in students' work, though there are still too many examples of direct copying from secondary sources.



168. Within the new GNVQ model, standards in key skills <sup>17</sup> have been broadly satisfactory, though with considerable variations between schools. Performance on the set assignments, which form the external component of assessment for key skills, has generally been poor, particularly in application of number. Some schools however, have been able to prepare their students effectively for these assignments and have achieved better results.

169. The proportion of registered students gaining a full GNVQ varies considerably across schools. It is typically above three in five, with a further one in five staying the course but receiving only a part award. Some students are able to complete the award by returning to school for a further term or year after the notional end of their course, since there is no time limit on when the GNVQ has to be completed. Full award completion rates in schools are higher than the national figure, where just over half of students complete the award. Non-completion is usually due to ineffective course organisation and monitoring of students as they work on assignments, though students are also tempted from courses by employment opportunities.

170. Overall, the quantity, quality and consequently standards **OF ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMES** vary widely. Because of the limited provision in some schools, a significant minority of sixth-form students, particularly those on GNVQ or two GCE A-level programmes, are taught for only half of the 25-hour week. A small number of students have the opportunity to take a wide curriculum of more than three Advanced courses, together with an assessed enrichment programme. In schools that teach the International Baccalaureate, students are given this opportunity and are stimulated to high achievement across a body of knowledge and skills which is much more extensive than the normal sixth-form workload. Once committed to such demanding regimes, students show effective time management and good study skills. The more they have to tackle, the better they can cope.

171. The **RESPONSE AND ATTITUDES** of students engaged in post-compulsory education in schools are mainly very positive. There is, however, variation as the same individuals are observed from subject to subject, according to the quality of teaching, the extent of prescription and the pace and expectations generated. The well motivated sixth form sets the tone in a school. This is often a key factor in a school's determination to establish a small sixth form and make it work.

## Quality of education

### Teaching

172. Section 10 inspections show that there has been a significant overall improvement in sixth-form teaching over the last year. The proportion of lessons judged very good or excellent has risen from 15 per cent to 22 per cent whilst the proportion judged unsatisfactory has fallen from 5 per cent to 3 per cent. The quality of teaching improves markedly from Year 11 to Year 12 and is better again in Year 13.

173. The chart below shows inspectors' judgements of the different aspects of teaching. The pattern is similar to last year, but with a substantial improvement in teachers' use of day-to-day assessment. Low expectations and poor management of homework are characteristics of weak sixth-form teaching. In general, GCE A-level lessons would benefit from a broader range of teaching approaches, and GNVQ work would benefit from more direct teaching, which is encouraged by the new assessment model for GNVQ.

**Chart 17** - Quality of Teaching: post-16 (*percentage of schools*)

174. Teachers on **MODULAR A-LEVEL COURSES** have raised their expectations of Year 12 students much earlier in the course and sharpened their course organisation to meet the requirements of these syllabuses. Day-to-day assessment has necessarily improved in preparing students for regular module examinations.

175. Teachers are finding the new **GNVQ ASSESSMENT MODEL** easier to manage. Where teaching arrangements for a GNVQ course involve four or five teachers, it is difficult to achieve coherence and consistency in teaching. In some GNVQ subject areas which are new to the curriculum, teachers' own knowledge is not always fully secure across the whole subject specification. Many GNVQ teachers need more help with curriculum planning, teaching methodology and assessment. Teaching quality in key skills ranges from excellent to poor, but many teachers are uncertain about their role in teaching these skills.

### Curriculum and assessment

176. Most schools, including some **SCHOOLS WITH SMALL SIXTH FORMS**, provide a post-16 curriculum that meets the needs of their particular students. Some small sixth forms do this by providing essentially vocational courses with GCE A-level English and mathematics in addition. By contrast, others are forced to limit their curriculum in an unsatisfactory way. Some offer limited science/non-science GCE combinations. A few abort courses that are grossly undersubscribed, with the

result that, for example, some sciences operate but not others, leaving a limited range of miscellaneous subjects. Combination of Year 12 and Year 13 teaching is sometimes necessary for budgetary reasons. A small sixth form inspected in 1993 was said to be "requiring rationalisation" with "unacceptable curriculum entitlement" cited as a matter of "major and urgent concern". It was re-inspected this year when it had 71 sixth-form students on roll; over the last three years only half of the GCE A-level entries have resulted in a pass grade and the sixth form continues to be a drain on resources.

**177.** In some areas, collaborative arrangements between sixth forms, often in association with further education colleges, enable schools to provide a wide range of courses economically. Students benefit from remaining within their "home" schools as a social base and for an enrichment programme, whilst being able to choose from a good range of subjects and levels of course as well as interacting with a large number of other students in good-size classes. Schools with large sixth forms have less to gain from collaborative arrangements, but they do enable schools to offer subjects such as law and history of art which would not otherwise be viable.

**178. MODULAR GCE A-LEVEL COURSES** are increasingly common, and in 1998 represented over half of A-level entries in schools. They are better suited to some subjects than others and function most successfully in mathematics, physics, chemistry and biology. They are not well suited to modern foreign languages where almost all schools enter candidates at the end of the course. The complete move to modular syllabuses in geography has resulted in some fragmentation in the way in which topics are covered.

**179. ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMES** range widely in quantity and quality, though teaching on non-examination work is as good as elsewhere in the sixth form. In a minority of sixth forms, large as well as small, there is virtually no provision beyond examination courses and even students on three GCE A-level programmes sometimes have more than 10 hours of non-contact time each week. The rationale for what is provided compulsorily or offered on a voluntary basis is not always strong. In some schools, general studies GCE A- or AS-level syllabuses provide a basis for a well-structured course. The tiny minority of schools operating the International Baccalaureate provide a comprehensive range of contrasting and overarching studies without sacrifice of depth.

**180. COURSEWORK** for GCE A level is usually organised well and assessed to a high professional standard. It generally follows through appropriately from coursework in Key Stage 4. Where practical examinations in the sciences have remained of the same nature for many years, they fail to build sufficiently on practical skills developed in Key Stage 4. In both coursework and practical examinations in the sciences, assessment criteria have insufficient scope to promote or reward the higher skills of which the best students are capable.

**181.** The new **GNVQ ASSESSMENT MODEL** is improving the quality of curriculum planning by simplifying requirements and procedures, though late arrival of materials left planning haphazard in some schools. Teachers are able to increase the vocational content of courses. The new assessment and grading approach is leading to more manageable and accurate assessment. However, externally set benchmark assignments have taken up too much time on Intermediate courses. With Advanced courses, teachers have tended to delay formal assessment as long as possible. External set assignments are making an important contribution to the rigour of key skills assessment. However, the burden of key skills assessment at Intermediate level needs to be reduced and simplified. The purpose and range of key skills assessment should be carefully reconsidered, in order to retain and encourage the appropriate application of key skills within the vocational contexts.

**182.** Approaches to the new pilot **KEY SKILLS QUALIFICATION** have varied considerably in the A-level centres involved. This has been a consequence of a lack of clarity about the purpose of the proposed qualification. Some schools have used the qualification to develop students' key skills, whilst others have viewed it merely as a means of accrediting existing skills.

**183.** Except in church schools, statutory requirements concerning **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND ACTS OF WORSHIP** in post-compulsory years are usually disregarded. Students and their teachers cannot see any rationale for this regulation, which is not matched by a corresponding regulation for those in 16-19 education in the further education sector.

### Student support and guidance

**184. GUIDANCE** to students entering the sixth form is usually sound, but a significant minority are encouraged to take courses for which they have insufficient prior attainment and which they then find too demanding. This is common in small sixth forms where there is an inevitable concern to make up numbers. As students with low attainment at GCSE move successfully through Intermediate GNVQ, they are sometimes unwisely guided into Advanced courses with insufficient attention to their competence in key skills. Sixth-form tutors are generally efficient in monitoring attendance, coursework commitments and progress in subjects. Some schools make effective use of value-added predictions based on pupils' GCSE

results to monitor pupils' performance in their GCE and GNVQ courses and more could usefully do so.

**185. CAREERS** lessons are provided through tutorial sessions, general studies and various enrichment programmes. These are usually supported by programmes of visits to universities, open days and careers fairs. Nearly all students intending to go on to higher education are well informed. However, schools are much less effective at supporting students in finding out about occupations and work options available. Often students' knowledge about these options is limited, but exceptions include GNVQ students who can describe working conditions in detail and have a good knowledge of local and national job markets and the organisation of the workplace. Overall, careers education and guidance is unsatisfactory in about one in four schools. Work experience placements are on offer to a growing minority of students. These are well conceived and usually give good value for the time and effort involved.

#### Management and efficiency

**186.** The great majority of sixth forms are well managed. Schools are adopting a more rigorous approach to evaluating the success of their sixth form and making increased use of value-added indicators to judge effectiveness. The management of sixth forms is most effective when the head of sixth form has clearly defined responsibilities and is a member of the senior management team.

**187.** GCE A level continues to serve the needs of many sixth-form students well. However, schools have rightly broadened their curriculum to meet the needs of the increasing numbers of pupils staying on. Schools were understandably cautious in the early days of the GNVQ, but the motivation and achievements of the students have confirmed the value of these qualifications in the sixth-form curriculum. Schools need to continue to review their curriculum to ensure that they provide properly for the needs of present and future students.

**188.** In large sixth forms there is no difficulty covering the cost of provision. Indeed, there are some situations where large sixth forms subsidise work in main school. In small sixth forms, managers are too easily persuaded by staff, students and their parents to timetable small groups which drive the sixth-form budget into deficit. In a few small sixth forms an over-ambitious curriculum is offered, which results in corner-cutting in teaching both in the sixth form and in the main school.

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16 Provisional DfEE data, 1998. The points score per pupil is calculated by allocating two points for an E, four for a D, up to 10 for an A for each subject taken; and half the number of points for an AS subject.

17 The three mandatory key skills are communication, the application of number and information technology.

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# Special schools

189. Evidence for this report is drawn from Section 10 inspections, from an HMI inspection exercise examining good practice in schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and from other inspections by HMI. Most of the schools inspected were for pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties and for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, but hospital schools, schools for pupils with sensory impairment, for those with speech and language disorders, and those with autism and other disabilities, were also inspected.

## Educational standards achieved

190. Standards in special schools have continued to rise. There has been a marked improvement in schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is a considerable achievement for schools working in this particularly difficult sector. Pupils' progress is often particularly good in early years classes in all types of school. Schools' adoption of the "Desirable Learning Outcomes" guidelines has resulted in raised standards.

### Chart 18 - Progress in Special Schools (*percentage of schools*)

191. Pupils make satisfactory or better progress in English in nine in ten special schools. Progress is better this year, particularly in schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Pupils' progress in speaking and listening has improved in schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The amount of drama taught within English has increased and this has contributed to the improvement in speaking and listening, not least in developing pupils' confidence and fluency.

192. There has been a slight overall improvement in pupils' progress in reading, most noticeably in schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Good progress by pupils in reading is closely associated with a structured and systematic approach to the teaching of reading in all types of school. Poor progress is associated with the absence of a whole-school policy for reading development and with the lack of a suitable range of appropriate books, particularly for older pupils. The most substantial overall improvement is in pupils' progress in writing. This is satisfactory or better in more than eight out of ten schools. Written policies and schemes of work for writing are becoming more common, and increased attention is being paid to handwriting, spelling and grammar in subjects other than English.

193. Pupils' progress in mathematics is satisfactory or better in nine in ten schools overall, but in only three-quarters of schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. An increasing number of pupils take nationally accredited courses. In schools of all kinds, a narrow interpretation of the mathematics programmes of study denies pupils the opportunity to make progress in practical mathematics. Progress in science is satisfactory or better in nine in ten schools. An increasing number of schools teach science well, and practical work has improved.

194. Progress in design and technology is satisfactory or better in eight in ten schools. It is least satisfactory in schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties and with emotional and behavioural difficulties, where specialist teaching and facilities are less common. Pupils make satisfactory progress in information technology in only half of special schools. Lack of progress is often due to the poor use of equipment available and to the lack of schemes of work.

195. Pupils make satisfactory or better progress in geography in more than eight in ten schools and in history in slightly less than eight in ten. In modern foreign languages pupils make satisfactory progress in little more than one-third of schools. This reflects the fact that the subject is still being established as part of the curriculum. Standards are rising most quickly in schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, where increased attention is given to reading and writing in the foreign language.

196. Progress in physical education is satisfactory or better in nine out of ten schools. Pupils' achievements in swimming are particularly good. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in art in almost all schools, and are making use of a widening variety of art media such as scraper board, batik, photography and printing rollers. Increased use is being made of "artists in residence" who are employed to lead workshops with pupils, raise teachers' expectations and widen the range of pupils' experiences. In at least eight out of ten schools pupils make satisfactory or good progress in music. Pupils make sound progress in religious education in seven in ten schools. This represents a considerable improvement over time.

197. Pupils' progress in personal, social and health education is satisfactory in the few schools where the subject is planned

and taught in a sufficiently structured manner to enable judgements of progress to be made by the school or the inspection team. In many schools where a strong emphasis on personal, social and health education is claimed, the subject is not effectively planned and co-ordinated, and pupils' progress is not assessed or recorded.

## Quality of teaching

### **Chart 19** - Quality of Teaching in Special Schools (*percentage of lessons*)

**198.** The improvement in the quality of teaching is continuing. The quality of teaching is now judged to be good in more than half of lessons.

**199.** In all schools, the most commonly identified component of good teaching is the high quality of teachers' planning. In the best practice, the aims for the lesson are shared not only with the other members of the teaching team, particularly the learning support assistants, but also with pupils. Team planning, involving learning support assistants and therapists, is a particular strength in schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties and for pupils with physical disabilities.

**200.** Teachers' subject knowledge is strongly associated with good-quality teaching in all types of special schools. It is particularly important in Key Stages 3 and 4 in schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Conversely, a lack of subject knowledge is identified as a factor reducing the quality of teaching in almost half of all special schools. Subjects such as music, design and technology and modern foreign languages pose problems in terms of staff expertise for many schools, especially small schools with a limited number of teaching staff.

**201.** An accurate match of lesson plans to the needs of all pupils in the teaching group is a strength of the teaching in one-third of schools, but less than half of schools make effective use of assessment information in planning lessons. This is an improvement on previous years, but many schools continue to have difficulty in making this essential link between assessment and planning.

**202.** Learning support assistants are usually effectively deployed. The schools making most effective use of such staff invest in training courses aimed at their needs and include learning support assistants in general staff training programmes. As a result, learning support assistants in these schools take responsibility successfully for small groups of pupils for activities as varied as survival cookery and computer sessions.

## Curriculum

**203.** Special schools are giving more attention to securing coverage of the whole range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education and are giving priority to the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Nine in ten schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties now offer all of these subjects to all pupils. The teaching of a modern foreign language to Key Stages 3 and 4 is the most frequent omission. Schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties have the greatest problems in providing the full National Curriculum, with one-third of schools omitting one or more subjects for some or all of their pupils. Music and information technology are the subjects most frequently missing from timetables.

**204.** Schools are achieving a better balance among subjects, but only half have developed the process satisfactorily. Schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties have moved most in offering a balanced curriculum. There is no detailed national guidance on what constitutes the ideal balance for pupils of different ages and disabilities. Schools must, therefore, evolve and justify their own rationale. Too often, the curricular balance is decided at the level of individual teachers who sketch out a class timetable, which is then modified for individuals as they are withdrawn or re-grouped for various purposes. In the absence of any monitoring, the timetables of individual pupils can become seriously unbalanced.

**205.** The attention given to the National Curriculum programmes of study for each subject has also improved considerably, but is satisfactory in only half of schools. Schools for pupils with moderate and with severe learning difficulties have shown the greatest advance. The subject least likely to be taught across the full range of the programme of study is information technology, but there are also weaknesses in the planning of design and technology, science and music. These difficulties stem largely from class teachers' lack of specialist subject knowledge, while the improvement is associated with developing quality of schemes of work and the increasingly effective monitoring by subject co-ordinators.

**206.** Schools are increasingly successful in supporting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The great majority meet moral, social and cultural needs (including the multicultural aspect) satisfactorily, and provision is judged to be good in half of schools. Although provision for spiritual development is improving, one in five schools gives inadequate attention to this aspect of the curriculum.

### **Chart 20** - Assessment and Recording in Special Schools (*percentage of schools*)



## Assessment and recording

207. The assessment and recording of pupils' progress remain a cause for concern in many schools and show little sign of improvement. Almost one in five schools has no whole-school policy for assessment and recording, and overall practice is satisfactory in only half of schools.

208. The most common feature of unsatisfactory assessment and recording is that each class teacher uses a different approach, so that records are discontinuous, with no effective picture of progress over time. In schools with improving assessment there is usually a teacher with a post of responsibility for assessment and recording, and some means of monitoring each teacher's practice.

209. The preparation of individual education plans causes many schools difficulty. Only half of schools have established a satisfactory cycle of effective target setting and review within individual education plans. The writing of relevant and quantifiable targets is the most common problem. There are wide variations in teachers' ability to do this effectively, even within the same school.

210. Schools' perceptions of the nature and purpose of individual education plans vary greatly. Some regard them as opportunities to set a small number of indicative targets for the pupil in key areas of weakness, while others prepare the individual education plan as a comprehensive teaching plan. The absence of a national consensus or guidance on the nature of the individual education plan in the context of the special school gives rise to much uncertainty and anxiety as to the acceptability of adopted practices.

211. Pupils' access to external accreditation at Key Stage 4 and post-16 continues to vary widely. The best provision is in schools for pupils with physical disability, with visual and hearing impairment, and with speech and language problems. Only about half of schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and of those for pupils with moderate learning difficulties offer a satisfactory or good range of accreditation for their pupils at Key Stage 4. The latter group of schools is making strong efforts to broaden further pupils' opportunities for accreditation.

## Management and efficiency

### **Chart 21** - Leadership and Management in Special Schools (*percentage of schools*)

212. Leadership and management are satisfactory or good overall in four in five schools. The best leadership in all types of school is characterised by senior management teams which provide strong direction but which also involve all staff in decision-making, so that agreed policies are more likely to be put into practice consistently. Managing change is a constant process in special schools, and the most successful management teams regard the analysis of needs for change and planning of responses as their primary functions.

213. In contrast to the more favourable overall picture of management, over half of schools have weaknesses in curricular leadership and management. Schools with otherwise effective leadership and organisation have significant shortcomings, including in some cases a lack of co-ordinators for National Curriculum subjects. The great majority of schools are still at an early stage of monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. Only one school in five makes effective use of planned classroom observation.

214. About six in ten governing bodies are satisfactorily involved in the general management and planning process of their schools, but only one in 20 is effective in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Governing bodies and school management teams find it difficult to visualise a meaningful monitoring role for the governors within the complex and highly specialised professional environment of the special school. Thus they often feel unable to take the first steps in putting the role into practice.

215. The ratio of pupils to teachers varies widely within groups of similar schools. This is justifiable to a degree, as the populations of pupils with different learning difficulties vary. Low numbers of teachers in some schools are balanced by higher than usual numbers of learning support assistants. However, there are undue variations in overall funding between schools working with similar populations. These variations are not directly reflected in standards achieved by pupils.

216. More schools plan their finances effectively, for example by costing initiatives in their development plans. Half of schools now do this. The timespan of school development plans is extending, so that seven in ten schools now have plans which extend beyond one year. While unforeseen external budgetary changes may upset the fine detail of such plans, longer-term financial planning enables initiatives to be prioritised and funding to be used more flexibly.

217. The most effective development plans include criteria for the success of each initiative. These enable the senior management team and governing body to evaluate the plans, and to establish a cycle of target setting and review for the whole school. Schools are increasingly aware of the need to evaluate the outcomes of management initiatives by improvements in pupils' progress, but few are able to do this because of a lack of effective means of assessing and recording pupils' progress.

#### Accommodation and resources

218. The lack of specialist subject accommodation continues to limit pupils' progress in many special schools. Only six in ten schools have satisfactory accommodation for science, although provision is improving, particularly in schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A similar proportion of schools has suitable accommodation for design and technology. One in four schools has unsatisfactory accommodation for music. Less than half of schools have satisfactory accommodation for physical education. The best provision is in schools for pupils with physical disabilities. Only one-fifth of schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and with emotional and behavioural difficulties have satisfactory changing and gymnasium provision. Where on-site facilities are poor, some schools, particularly those for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, make use of community sports facilities, and often make a virtue of the enhanced social integration which this brings.

219. Less than half of schools have a library at present. Schools for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties are actively developing libraries, but there is little sign of improvement in schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Even where they have libraries, many schools have difficulty in planning their use effectively, so that the resource is underused.

220. Schools of all kinds continue to build up learning resources to enable them to teach the full National Curriculum programmes of study in every subject. All types of school have made improvements in resources for English, and these are satisfactory or better in three-quarters of schools. In contrast, resources for mathematics are sufficient in less than half of schools to support the teaching of numeracy and to provide a suitable variety of practical experiences.

221. Two-thirds of schools have adequate learning resources for teaching the full programmes of study in science, design and technology and information technology. Resources for geography, history and physical education are adequate in a little more than half of schools. Increasingly effective use is being made of the local environment to support practical work in both geography and history. Religious education is the subject with the least satisfactory levels of resource; only one-third of schools have sufficient books and materials.

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# *Schools requiring special measures and schools with serious weaknesses*

222. Since 1993 a total of 717 schools have been made subject to special measures. This represents about 3 per cent of all secondary schools and primary schools, 8 per cent of special schools and 6 per cent of Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Of all of these schools, 55 have closed, and 143 have since been removed from special measures because they made the necessary improvements and now offer an acceptable standard of education.

223. The picture for 1997/98 is a little different from previous years. The number of new schools being identified as failing to provide an acceptable standard of education shows a rising trend in primary and secondary schools. There are contributory factors which account for this. First, 1997/98 was the last year in the four-year cycle for inspecting primary schools, and included a number of schools whose inspection had been deferred, sometimes because of particular internal difficulties. Second, this year has been the first of a new cycle for inspecting secondary schools and, of the schools inspected, around 40 per cent were placed in the programme because national indicators and previous inspection reports had shown them to be weak. Following these inspections, 4 per cent of secondary schools were made subject to special measures. These were schools which had made little or no improvement since the first inspection, or in which the quality of education had deteriorated.

224. Primary schools subject to special measures continue to differ in size, type and socio-economic circumstances. Just over one-third have intakes with high levels of disadvantage in and around large cities, and in most of these schools the standards achieved in one or more key stages are unacceptably low. This is often reflected in poor National Curriculum test results. However, other cases include very small rural schools, some schools in more advantaged areas, and nursery schools. There are examples of schools where national test results are average or above, but where many able pupils are seriously underachieving, because teachers fail to make lessons sufficiently challenging. A particular problem for some small primary schools is the considerable impact that one weak teacher can have on the overall education provided.

225. About half of secondary schools subject to special measures have intakes with high levels of disadvantage. Standards of attainment in these schools are low, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and examination results are often well below average.

226. Special schools subject to special measures vary in size, age range and disability provision. However, almost half of the schools placed in special measures last year provide for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and cover at least three key stages. A significant difference this year is the increasing number of schools with a wide disability intake that have been made subject to special measures or have serious weaknesses. The wide ranges of disability are often the result of LEAs' reorganisation, or closure of certain types of special schools in line with inclusive education priorities. This results in a redesignation of remaining special schools to provide, on an area basis, for a wider range of special educational needs. Such schools provide for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate, severe or complex learning difficulties, and autism. In addition, many of these schools are small in size (under 60 pupils on roll). The combination of these factors adversely affects all aspects of the schools' management and places undue demands upon planning and upon the expertise of staff.

227. The common weaknesses of schools subject to special measures remain similar to previous years: a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching; poor progress made by the pupils; and inadequate leadership and management, causing the school to fail to provide satisfactory value for money. In a number of schools there are poor relationships between different groups of the school community, dissatisfaction among the parents and a high staff turnover. Poor behaviour and attendance are common features in the secondary and special schools, but less so in the primary schools. Many of the primary and special schools have failed to implement the National Curriculum sufficiently, and too little has been done to develop teachers' inadequate subject knowledge.

228. All schools subject to special measures have undertaken a programme of improvement based on their action plan. The best plans identify precise targets to be achieved over a specific timescale, with success criteria that describe actual improvement. For example, a school might set itself a percentage target for children reaching a particular National Curriculum



level by a certain time. The majority of schools have made satisfactory or good progress against their action plans. Sometimes this progress is rapid and due to changes in key senior personnel, but at other times improvement has depended on sustained efforts being made over a longer period of time. The improvements that schools have made quickly relate to systems and structures, and to the consistent implementation of whole school approaches for example some schools have improved pupils' behaviour in this way. Special schools have improved their planning and provided a closer match and relevance of activities to age and ability levels. Residential special schools, usually providing for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties or complex learning disabilities, have instigated more effective behaviour management strategies and improved the working relationships between education and care staff.

229. The improvements that have often taken longer to achieve have been in tackling weak teaching, or in raising pupils' attainment. Local and national projects focusing on literacy and numeracy have improved the structure and pace of lessons, although it is too soon to measure the impact of this on standards. A few schools have improved national test and examination results relatively quickly, but in most cases these improvements are slow to emerge. Where schools are being considered for closure or reorganisation, the resulting uncertainty often impedes their progress.

230. Steps have been taken this year to ensure that schools subject to special measures receive their first monitoring visit by HMI after about six months, whereas previously it was more commonly 12. It is too early to evaluate fully the impact of this action, but initial evidence shows that schools requiring special measures now make quicker progress in the initial stages. Most schools value the termly monitoring visits of HMI, and use them as an opportunity to review progress and pinpoint areas where further work is needed.

231. In the best instances, LEAs have prepared clear statements of action and have supported schools in special measures effectively, establishing guidelines that clarify the range of strategies they will use. Using the data and other information already available about the school, a number of LEAs are identifying and supporting weak schools ahead of a registered inspector's judgement. Increasingly, there is a growing understanding of which actions are likely to produce the required improvements in underachieving schools. This has helped to shorten the time between the original judgement that a school needs special measures, and the improvements actually being made. The 1997 OFSTED publication *From Failure to Success* looks in detail at what has helped schools in special measures to improve. Some LEAs respond less well, often by failing to strike the right balance between monitoring the school's progress and offering well targeted advice on how to improve.

232. One strategy that has been used by some LEAs is to second an experienced and successful headteacher into a school, to provide strong leadership. There are examples where this has proved very successful, and some where it has been less effective, particularly where unclear or unrealistic timescales have been used. A number of detailed case studies of this approach to school improvement were presented in the OFSTED publication *Making Headway* (1998).

233. Building on the work started in 1994, since September 1997 inspectors conducting Section 10 inspections have been required to state in the report if the school has serious weaknesses. Over 500 schools have been found to have serious weaknesses and with this formal designation they cannot say any longer that they did not realise they were in this category.

234. Many of the strategies that have helped schools with serious weaknesses to improve are similar to those used in schools subject to special measures. Some schools have grouped pupils according to attainment in order to raise standards. In primary schools this tends to be for English and mathematics, but in secondary schools it can extend to other subjects. Schools are analysing performance data more systematically, especially results from national and standardised tests, and are using these to measure progress and set new targets for individual pupils. In many schools, pupils are explicitly shown how they might improve their own National Curriculum levels, or GCSE grades. Many special schools have improved the clarity of the objectives on pupils' individual education plans and tackled weaknesses in their coverage of the National Curriculum.

235. The progress made by secondary schools with serious weaknesses has been slower than that of other schools. Improvements to systems and structures have been positive, and there has been much worthwhile staff development. However, some schools struggle to improve levels of pupils' attendance or to raise standards consistently.

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# *The education of young people who have disengaged from mainstream education*

236. During 1997/8, OFSTED's work on identifying effective strategies for countering disaffection with education, and thereby for combating social exclusion, has concentrated primarily on young people from 14 onwards who have left, or are in danger of leaving, education and training prematurely or whose lifestyles and behaviour place them at considerable risk. Evidence has been drawn from a range of inspection: an evaluation of the initial stages of 17 DfEE-funded New Start partnerships, which began in autumn 1997; inspection of detached (ie street-based) work aimed specifically at such young people in six local authority youth services, serving highly disadvantaged metropolitan boroughs; inspection of Pupil Referral Units; inspection of the quality of education provision for young people in secure accommodation; and, with the Prison Inspectorate, inspection of education programmes within seven Young Offender Institutions.

237. The 17 **NEW START** partnerships, involving schools, LEAs, training and enterprise councils, careers companies and youth services, in all regions of the country, have been funded by the DfEE for a period of 18 months (autumn 1997 to spring 1999). Their focus is young people aged 14-17 who are likely to opt out of education and training, both pre- and post-16, and who are among the 50,000 young people who leave statutory schooling each year without any qualifications. This group not only includes those who truant or who are excluded from school but also those who reluctantly remain within the system, without enthusiasm or self-confidence, and who inevitably never achieve their potential.

238. In the early months the Projects have wisely concentrated upon building and strengthening the foundations of the local partnerships. Following a research phase, often taking the form of an audit alongside a consultation exercise to which young people themselves make a major contribution, each partnership has developed an action plan which sets the parameters for the implementation phase. Speed of progress in drawing up these action plans has varied from area to area, with the subsequent implementation being subject to delay in a number of instances. Where the timetable has been successfully met, however, it is usually because the partnership has been able to build on previous work of this nature, often extensive, and has seen its function as lending cohesion, rigour and permanence to what was previously short-term, insular and fragmented. Indeed, one of the prime aims of New Start is to ensure that practical action, where appropriate, is embedded into the mainstream work of all the partners and can therefore be sustained when funding comes to an end.

239. Some of the most promising indications of sound preparation include: involving young people closely in determining the causes of disaffection; collaborative planning by a range of agencies; closer links between schools and the youth service; improved support, guidance and mentoring for young people which will continue to be available post-16; and, in some areas, the instigation of specialist training for teachers and others working with this particular group. Inspection during 1998/99 will focus on whether these carefully planned initiatives are implemented effectively and, most importantly, whether they are monitored thoroughly to keep them on track. In the past, few providers have demonstrated the ability to manage initiatives and review outcomes equally rigorously. For this reason the New Start projects are attempting to do things differently.

240. In the survey, in six local authority **YOUTH SERVICES**, of detached projects with young people perceived to be at risk, there were only a small number of examples of effective work. In these cases, staff had successfully harnessed the enthusiasm of diffident young people, involving them in long-term activities such as the establishment of a young people's centre in their neighbourhood, thus developing their organisational and interpersonal skills as well as channelling their energies constructively. Work had been well planned and researched, often as a result of sound partnership with other agencies. Through the good links which young people had established with youth workers, they were able to gain access to appropriate information, support and advice on education, health, finance and housing. However, much detached youth work lacked rigour, structure and clear objectives. Even in the best work, there was an absence of effective procedures for evaluating what had worked and why.

241. Pupils in **PUPIL REFERRAL UNITS** (PRUs) generally make at least satisfactory educational and behavioural progress although, as would be predicted, their attainments are generally considerably lower than would be expected for their age and ability. An increasing number of PRUs, however, are offering some courses leading to a nationally accredited qualification; a small number of reports indicate that some pupils have gained a GCSE grade A\*-C in one or two specific subjects - notably in art, occasionally in mathematics or English. More than eight out of ten PRUs are successful in improving pupils' behaviour,

promoting positive attitudes to education and fostering good relationships. Teaching is satisfactory or better in a similar proportion of lessons. The quality and use of assessment, however, are less than satisfactory in four out of ten PRUs - in common with findings in educational and behavioural difficulty special schools. The size and nature of PRUs, including the part-time provision that they make, create particular problems for the development of a broad and balanced curriculum; four out of ten units fail to offer this. Similarly, while many individual pupils have begun to attend regularly, often after very long periods of previous non-attendance, the overall levels of attendance are significantly below 90 per cent in nine in ten PRUs.

242. Over the last three years there has been an expansion of places for **YOUNG PEOPLE IN SECURE**

**ACCOMMODATION.** Whilst there is evidence of an improving status for education and firm aims are stated about the vital role of education within the overall provision of each unit, in reality there are factors which frequently prevent these aims from being met. Little educational information is provided by local authorities when young people are admitted and with variable quality of initial assessments it is difficult for staff in secure units to plan work effectively and demonstrate that pupils are making some progress. However, in a few secure units, the young people do make significant progress, with opportunities for external accreditation, including GCSE. Attainment is frequently low because of absences from previous educational establishments. A high proportion of young people have learning difficulties, with poorly developed literacy and numeracy skills. Staff are not specifically trained, in most secure units, to be able to address these difficulties and there is need for more effective collaboration between care and education staff.

243. Much of the teaching is sound, with five out of the 23 units inspected having good or very good teaching. Six units had less than satisfactory provision and some are being re-inspected with Social Services Inspectors approximately one year after the last inspection rather than waiting for the next triennial inspection. Secure units report difficulty in recruiting new staff, as is the situation in many schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. However, most have a sufficient number of teachers, although there are inevitable difficulties with subject coverage. There is some particularly effective teaching in units which draw on specialist teachers appointed to both the secure unit and an open unit on the same site. The curriculum is generally becoming more broad and balanced, with planning based on National Curriculum programmes of study. However, careers education and guidance and assessment, recording and reporting are often weak.

244. In **YOUNG OFFENDER INSTITUTIONS**, high standards were achieved by a substantial number of young prisoners who had the opportunity to attend good lessons. Unfortunately, owing to insufficient provision, these circumstances are rare. A few sessions occupied participants on totally inappropriate tasks such as tracing or cutting out pictures; these tasks were neither educational nor successful in countering disaffection. Attainment was at least satisfactory, and sometimes good, in basic skills, art and information technology. Generally, however, young offenders make insufficient progress because of the overall shortage of provision and a lack of variety in the curriculum offered.

245. In a minority of Young Offender Institutions, the quality of educational provision is good and supported well by the management. In most institutions, however, it is inadequate for the needs of young prisoners. In a minority of cases, that which is available is badly organised. The curriculum has insufficient breadth. Needs analyses are rarely undertaken and expectations are commonly too low. Careers and employment guidance for young prisoners is of very variable quantity and quality and is limited in effectiveness by lack of collaboration with services in offenders' home areas.

246. Education is generally accorded low status in Young Offender Institutions. Good resources are frequently not exploited fully because of lack of communication and co-operation between the rest of the regime and the education department. This often results in low numbers in classes, late arrivals and regular disruption to lessons. This unsatisfactory situation demands urgent remedy. Young prisoners need to gain practical, marketable skills, including, for many, much higher skills of literacy and numeracy, as a means of reducing the risk of re-offending.

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# *Youth work and adult education*

## *Youth work*

### **Educational standards achieved**

247. During 1997/98, HMI carried out full inspections of three LEA youth services, a survey of detached youth work in six metropolitan boroughs and a national inspection of the training of part-time youth workers. The achievement of young people who took part in this local authority youth service provision was good in just over half the sessions inspected and unsatisfactory in about one in eight. These are very similar proportions to those found in inspections of local authority youth services in 1996/97.

248. In the services inspected, achievement was particularly good in art, performing arts and other practical sessions. In well-focused discussions, participants improved their knowledge and understanding of issues related to substance abuse, sexuality and gender. Most of the sessions targeted on the interests of minority ethnic groups led to effective participation and achievement. In all three local authorities inspected, young people with learning difficulties made effective social and educational progress. The unsatisfactory provision often contained repetitive programmes with limited educational content which presented little challenge for the young people. As a result, they often became unruly and achieved little.

249. In the National Voluntary Youth Organisations (NVYOs) funded by the DfEE standards have improved steadily over the year. The care and detailed attention that NVYOs have paid to identifying appropriate targets have been crucial factors in enabling them to assess and improve standards of achievement. A number of organisations, however, are still insufficiently clear about the educational purpose of the activities that they provide.

### **Quality of education**

250. The quality of provision in three local authority youth services inspected was good in just over half of the sessions and unsatisfactory in one in seven. Where youth workers knew participants well enough to understand what participants already knew and could do, and were able to plan activities with them which built on these strengths, provision was effective. Similarly, when senior managers and youth workers regularly evaluated the quality of sessions, good practice was consolidated and weak practice rectified. Detached youth work generally made a worthwhile contribution to health education, the avoidance of substance abuse and crime diversion. The causes of poor sessions were generally youth workers' lack of awareness of young people's needs and management's failure to identify and remedy poor work.

251. The best staff had a good knowledge of their local communities, both urban and rural, and had high expectations of the young people with whom they worked. These young people showed a strong allegiance to the club or project and developed the qualities of persistence, fortitude and determination to succeed. While allowing young people to develop in an informal environment, youth workers were able to identify and maintain appropriate boundaries. By contrast, unsatisfactory or poor work was often found where staff were acting solely in a policing or containing role. Names of young people were not known, or not used, and much of the work was unplanned or unstructured.

252. Aiming work at priority groups, including disaffected young people and those with learning difficulties, was generally successful. However, in some instances, insufficient account was taken of locally identified needs related to minority ethnic groups, unemployed young people and single parents, with a resulting absence of appropriate provision. There is still much to be done to plan provision on the basis of sound assessment of need and to involve young people directly in planning programmes of activities.

253. The reduction in full-time staffing in several areas had a negative effect on the quality and regularity of support as well as the co-ordination of in-service training. Staff development is often of good quality but insufficiently focused on the specific needs of the service. The initial training provided by most services for their part-time staff offers good opportunities for training youth workers to relate their theoretical knowledge to their practice in the workplace and to develop skills of planning and evaluation. There is insufficient clarity in the standards that are expected of newly trained youth workers.

254. Programmes of youth work in the NVYOs were sound but a number had too rigid a structure for the informality of youth

work. Planning and evaluation were usually good, partly because of the requirement of the funding scheme for clear targets and indicators with formal and regular self-evaluation. Most of the NVYO schemes are specifically targeted at disadvantaged and disaffected groups. Much of this work, including some within Young Offender Institutions, has been very effective. Many organisations show considerable skill in curriculum development and most are successful in adapting their work to specific needs, though there is a wide variety between the best and the weakest work.

255. In the NVYOs, support, development and training for staff have been vital elements in the improvement of youth work. Many organisations, however, underestimated the time required to train volunteers. Specific allocation of funding for training has ensured that it takes place, but occasionally the training itself has not been at the right level for the staff involved. Some, however, was very good, raising the quality of youth work throughout the organisation.

### Management and efficiency

256. There is sometimes a marked variation in quality between different elements in a local authority service and these inconsistencies require attention. Quality assurance needs to be more systematic and comprehensive. Some of the new youth services lack focus, often because they are led by officers without relevant professional experience. They are sometimes in departments other than education and elected members lack the knowledge and experience to offer informed support. Links between local authority services and voluntary youth organisations are usually good, though links with schools are not well developed. The resources available to youth services are usually effectively managed. Budgetary cuts this year have led to reductions in staffing and provision. Most youth services in unitary authorities have suffered budgetary reductions following separation from larger authorities.

257. The management of most NVYO schemes is good, with clear organisational structures and identified lines of accountability. In some organisations, however, despite appropriate policies, management is tenuous because regions or individual units are largely independent. Frequently, leaders of a scheme cannot adopt a line management role. Other organisations face the difficult task of changing people's perceptions of their work with young people, owing to long-held traditions that activities and competitions are in themselves youth work. A number have been successful and others are improving slowly.

## Adult education

### Educational standards achieved

258. In the three full service inspections, a survey of modern foreign language learning and thematic inspections of access, participation and family learning conducted in 26 local authorities during 1997/98, standards of achievement were good or very good in 70 per cent of classes and unsatisfactory in one in 20. Adult learners are committed, enthusiastic and perceptive about their learning needs and achievements, which are spread evenly across the whole curriculum.

259. Given skilled and knowledgeable guidance and support, disadvantaged adults who achieved little in their schooldays succeed well on a range of courses carefully designed to meet their needs. Basic education students given the chance to set their own goals and learn at their own pace, when it suits them, quickly discover their own ability and aptitude for learning, gain confidence and start to expand their ambitions. Prisoners on a range of courses achieve and progress, gaining skills, knowledge and qualifications, particularly in art and information technology.

260. Achievement is generally high in art and craft classes and many students make rapid progress in information technology and business-related subjects.

### Quality of education

261. The quality of teaching was good or very good in 70 per cent of classes and less than satisfactory in only 8 per cent. Most tutors are skilled, knowledgeable, trained enthusiasts and some are active, successful practitioners of the subjects they teach. Sessions are generally well planned with clear, appropriate objectives, a good pace and challenging content that extends students. Conversely, in poor classes the teaching is insufficiently demanding, ill-prepared or has confused objectives. In poor modern foreign language classes tutors talked at length in English, giving students little or no opportunity to use the language they were learning. These tutors lacked specialist language teaching training and updating. General adult education qualifications do not ensure specialist language teaching skills.

262. There is a clear correlation between high-quality teaching and specialist curriculum leadership for modern foreign languages. More generally, the resourcing of curriculum leadership and development bolsters quality and enables services to develop innovative, diverse and responsive curricula.



## Access and participation

263. In some parts of the country adults have little or no opportunity to learn locally, but good services go to considerable lengths to support courses close to where people live or work. They also provide specialist adult educational guidance and information. These services know their communities well and work hard to provide appropriately, for instance offering particular daytime courses in areas with large retired populations. Pressure to accredit courses in order to secure funding is deterring some modern foreign language students.

264. Many services now strive particularly to reach under-represented and disadvantaged groups by researching their needs, eliminating barriers to participation and providing an appropriate curriculum in the local community. Parent education, family literacy, information technology and business skills courses have all successfully attracted and retained new students. Some courses enable students to improve their quality of life and contribute more to the community. Others take students on to higher-level learning in other institutions.

265. Many services do not have the resources or the contacts to develop such provision alone. They generally require successful partnerships with schools, social services, the voluntary sector, business, training and enterprise councils and other agencies. Indeed, services committed to providing access generally manage to do so through a range of partnerships.

266. In a number of new unitary authorities, adult education has been linked into lifelong learning policies and is now seen as integral to the overall raising of achievement. Provision for disadvantaged groups, particularly in family literacy, numeracy and parent education, has developed rapidly.

267. Adults in prison have limited access to education and training. In many cases, only one in five prisoners is able to participate in education. Few prisoners have adequate induction interviews to diagnose their educational needs and inform them about what is on offer. Although the core curriculum of the Prison Education Service emphasises basic skills, insufficient thought has been given to their teaching. Basic skills are mostly taught in isolation, which is rarely productive, when they could be integrated with the teaching of other subjects. Linked basic skills support also needs to be offered in prison workshops, to help raise levels of attainment. In some prisons, financial pressures are reducing the curriculum, with the loss of valuable courses in subjects like art and music. Few establishments now offer evening classes.

## Management and efficiency

268. There is an unacceptable degree of variation in how local authorities manage their responsibility to secure provision for certain aspects of adult learning. Some devolve this responsibility without adequate central oversight or monitoring, failing to ensure general access or consistent quality. Whereas the best local authorities make good use of the potential for links between adult and school education, unmonitored devolution to community schools whose main focus is school-age children and their parents can result in failure to provide for other sections of the community. Other local authorities manage efficiently, with a light touch, within an agreed framework of standards and expectations. Local authority funds for adult education are generally reducing year on year. Well managed services have diversified their funding bases and entered into partnerships so that provision is secured. These services have good financial monitoring and are run efficiently and effectively.

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# *Independent schools*

269. The evidence for this section of the report is derived very largely from OFSTED's role in advising the DfEE about the suitability of independent schools for initial and continued registration under the 1996 Education Act. For this purpose every independent school is visited by HMI at least once every five years, some more frequently. In the past year, HMI made registration visits to 411 schools. These schools represent a wide cross-section of the independent sector. Seven schools, which had been identified as causing serious concern from previous visits, received inspections leading to published reports.

270. In January 1996 there were 2,264 independent schools in England which catered for the full-time equivalent of 546,787 pupils. These numbers have been fairly static for the last few years. While the number of pupils in the independent sector remains relatively stable, there has been an increase in the number of children under three in some schools. About one in five independent schools has such children, some of whom can be as young as six weeks. The concerns raised last year about the poor quality of provision and care for a significant minority of these pupils still remain.

271. Nursery settings in independent schools are exempt from local social services inspections under the Children Act 1989, although HMI are asked to apply criteria from the Children Act in their registration inspections. The future arrangements for the regulation of early education and day care will need to ensure that the welfare of children in independent nursery settings is given due attention.

## **Statutory requirements**

272. Independent schools are statutorily required to meet acceptable standards as regards the instruction, the proprietor and staff, suitability of premises and accommodation and - in the case of boarding schools - pupils' welfare. Of the 411 schools visited, 60 caused considerable concern. These represent about 2.5 per cent of independent schools - a reduction on last year's figures. Thirty-two did not meet these requirements for instruction, 20 did not adequately ensure pupils' welfare, 30 had poor accommodation, 9 had inappropriate or dangerous premises and 15 had problems related to the suitability of the proprietor or weak management. Some schools failed to meet the requirements in more than one of these areas. Only 12 of these problematic schools were accredited members of one of the associations within the Independent Schools Council. Of these, nine had problems of overcrowding or poor accommodation and only three had poor instruction. All schools which fell below the level of acceptable standards received a letter from the DfEE requiring them to give evidence of progress on their shortcomings within three months. Action from DfEE and OFSTED led to a Notice of Complaint proceeding against four schools with very serious deficiencies. One of these has since closed and three remain under close scrutiny.

## **Educational standards achieved**

273. Although most of the provision in independent schools for under-fives is at least satisfactory, some is poor, being overcrowded, unhygienic, insecure or unsafe. This is a cause for particular concern because increasing numbers of schools are admitting very young children and babies. Provision is particularly poor in institutions that seek to evade inspection by local social services by admitting, or claiming to admit, just over the minimum number of statutory aged pupils.

274. Independent schools generally achieve highly in public examinations. In 1997, 85 per cent of pupils achieved five or more higher grades at GCSE and an average points score of 53, which is equivalent to just over ten grade Cs. There are considerable variations across schools. For example, in 10 per cent of schools all pupils achieved five or more higher grades, but in some 5 per cent - usually small schools serving particular religious or ethnic communities - no pupils achieved five higher grades. Schools with sixth forms perform better than those without, with regard to the more able pupils. However, schools without sixth forms achieve better with the lower attaining pupils. At GCE A level the average points score for pupils attempting two or more subjects was 23, which is slightly higher than that in selective maintained schools (22).

275. Schools which exist for a primarily religious purpose differ significantly from the rest. In Jewish schools, the religious aspects of the curriculum are often very demanding and intellectually rigorous. However, while speaking and reading skills in English are often well developed, writing skills tend to be poor. Seventh Day Adventist schools have a commitment to raising standards in the minority ethnic community they serve, as well as providing a Christian education; they vary in their success. Schools within the Christian Schools Trust also vary widely. Some aim to provide the National Curriculum from a Christian perspective and those with secondary pupils prepare them for the GCSE. In most of the established Muslim schools, especially

day schools, standards are satisfactory and there are signs of improvement. Standards in the secular curriculum of some newly established schools and of a significant proportion of the boarding schools are a cause of some concern.

276. Academic standards are high in the music schools that are participating in the government-funded Music and Ballet Schools Scheme. Schools within the ballet scheme have satisfactory to good academic standards and good or very high standards in dance. Stage schools are not part of this scheme and their academic standards are variable, and in some cases low.

277. Most independent tutorial colleges cater entirely for post-16 students and are not therefore required to register as a school. About 30 colleges, however, take a small number of pupils of statutory age and about half of these were visited to check on their suitability. Some do not make appropriate arrangements for a broad and balanced curriculum for their school-age pupils and provision for pupils with special educational needs is sometimes inadequate. Three of the colleges gave cause for serious concern.

278. Boarding schools overall do not perform as well in external examinations as day schools, but this may be linked to the number of overseas students admitted. Schools which are members of a recognised association perform significantly better than those which have no affiliation. Single-sex schools generally perform better than mixed schools.

### **The quality of education**

279. Teachers in well established secondary independent schools are knowledgeable about their subject and this leads to high expectations, a good pace of work and, on occasion, scholarship. The best teaching draws out pupils' reactions, invites opinion, challenges them to make judgements and to take the initiative. The minority of weak teaching is characterised by poor planning of lessons, leading to inappropriate activities. Some pupils whose first language is not English are particularly disadvantaged by poor planning.

280. In the best schools the curriculum has breadth and richness. Pupils have access to a wide range of subjects and this is supplemented by extra-curricular activities which add significantly to the pupils' education. In some schools, however, the curriculum is restricted by the small size of the school, the lack of a clear philosophy or lack of appropriate accommodation. For example, the free choice given to pupils in some schools can lead to a lack of breadth and balance in the subjects they take in Key Stage 4. Other schools do not have the specialist accommodation to teach the full range of subjects within design and technology, sometimes reflecting their history as a single-sex school.

281. The philosophy and organisation of some of the religious schools lead to weaknesses in their secular curriculum. For example, Jewish boys' schools have a narrower curriculum than girls' schools. In the former, the secular curriculum can be confined to only English, mathematics and "general knowledge" because of the time given to teaching Hebrew studies. Many of the small Accelerated Christian Education schools with a wide age-range of pupils have difficulty offering a sufficient range of subjects. This is a particular problem in practical science and modern foreign languages. In the majority of the established Muslim day schools design and technology, information technology and music are often under-represented; physical education and art can also be limited in scope. In Muslim boarding schools the curriculum continues to be narrow, with the core subjects of mathematics, English and some science, in addition to physical education, often being the only non-religious provision.

282. Most stage schools attempt to provide a broad education but some find this difficult. Pupils' professional studies can occupy half of their time, thus reducing the time for academic studies. Some Steiner schools lack facilities for teaching science, but schools in the Steiner Fellowship now have a policy which takes account of the National Curriculum.

283. It is a matter of concern that in a few schools some foreign national pupils do not have full access to the curriculum. This is sometimes because of a lack of support for their English language needs. Their progress in learning the English language is not helped by their being sometimes socially isolated mostly with other pupils whose first language is not English, as a result of boarding provision at weekends.

284. The majority of schools have satisfactory arrangements for assessing pupils' work and progress. One in seven schools lack clear and effective procedures to mark, assess and report on pupils' work. Often these weaknesses stem from a failure to identify clearly the intended learning outcomes of the curriculum. Half of the schools with weak provision are unusual in type: schools with a religious foundation, foreign schools or those catering for specialisms such as the arts.

285. While there are no statutory requirements concerning pupils' welfare in day schools, HMI look for effective policies and procedures for child protection and for dealing with bullying. In the vast majority of schools the welfare of pupils is satisfactorily safeguarded.



## School management

286. Independent schools are generally effectively managed, but there are considerable variations. Weak management is often, but not exclusively, associated with the smaller, sometimes more specialist, schools. These schools have few, if any, systems for effective management and depend excessively on established daily routines.

## Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

287. Many independent schools are well staffed. Indeed, a major factor in parents opting for the independent sector is often the small class sizes and the attention given to individual pupils. The quality or the sufficiency of staffing can be poor in schools where the fees are low or where they rely on voluntary help. Staff appraisal schemes are not well developed in most schools. In the better schools there are very good opportunities for staff development, but in the smaller or privately owned schools this is often a neglected feature, the owners citing costs as a major impediment.

288. The well-established schools often have excellent accommodation and facilities. Some small preparatory schools have difficulty in providing the full range of specialist accommodation, for example in design and technology and science, although an increasing number are developing better facilities for information technology.

289. The provision of resources for learning varies from excellent to very poor, generally depending on the school's income. In schools charging high fees the pupils have access to very good-quality resources and equipment. In others, particularly the religious schools or very small schools, routine resources and books can be in short supply.

## Boarding provision

290. There has been considerable improvement in the support for pupils' welfare in boarding schools compared with last year. This is mainly due to the continued work of social services department inspectors working with the schools, but partly also to the response of schools to the publication of the Utting Report. The Boarding Schools' Association has started a programme of validated training for boarding staff at Roehampton which is helping to raise standards of provision in member schools.

291. About nine in ten of the boarding schools inspected provide satisfactory support for their pupils. A high proportion of the schools where support for pupils' welfare is unsatisfactory are not finally registered with the DfEE. One-third of the schools where there are long-term serious concerns are preparatory schools. These concerns mainly involve failure to conform with the requirements of the Children Act 1989. The proportion of schools with clear complaints procedures has improved from 67 per cent last year to 88 per cent this year. Ineffective child protection procedures and policies are reported from only one-quarter of the boarding schools this year as opposed to one-third last year. The percentage without any child protection policy or procedure remains steady at 10 per cent. There continue to be health and safety concerns in about one-third of boarding schools visited, but only about 14 per cent now have no health and safety policy. The proportion of schools with overcrowded dormitories remains at about 20 per cent, but the percentage with insufficient or unsatisfactory showers or baths has decreased from 15 per cent to just over 10 per cent. Sadly, the proportion of schools reported to be making inadequate checks on the suitability of staff has not fallen.

292. Most schools visited had at least satisfactory boarding accommodation and in over half it was good. However, a quarter of secondary boarding schools have features which are unsatisfactory, and this proportion rises to almost a half in those schools which have recently opened.

## The private inspection of independent schools

293. The associations which belong to the Independent Schools Council are implementing substantial reforms to their inspection frameworks from January 1999, on the basis of which OFSTED has been able to recommend to the DfEE that, if they implement these arrangements successfully, they are likely to be able to produce secure and reliable reports and to advise the DfEE about the suitability of their member schools for registration. This is a new departure, involving self-regulation for the 1,350 schools which fall within the Independent Schools Council. HMI will monitor the effectiveness of this arrangement closely and will advise Ministers on whether the inspections provide a secure basis for confirming the continued registration of the schools.

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# *Teacher education and training*

## **Primary initial teacher training**

294. Training to teach reading and number was inspected in about 75 per cent of primary providers in 1997/98, to complete the Primary Follow-up Survey, which was extended to cover all providers over a two-year period. In the 1997/98 inspections, trainees were assessed for the first time against the new standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Providers also introduced the Teacher Training Agency's Career Entry Profile for all trainees who successfully completed their initial teacher training (ITT) course.

## **Reading**

295. Many providers were already adjusting their courses in anticipation of the National Curriculum for ITT which became a requirement in September 1998. They were beginning to use a range of methods to audit trainees' subject knowledge, including more rigorous scrutiny at interview, the use of commercially-produced materials linked to the QTS standards, and tests of language and linguistic terminology. However, the methods are not yet sufficiently systematic and rely too much on trainees' self-assessment.

296. Courses mostly provide trainees with reasonable or better preparation to teach the basic skills of literacy and familiarise them with the National Curriculum programmes of study for reading. Some do not pay sufficient attention to the level descriptors. This is often reflected in the trainees' weaknesses in assessment and recording. Training for the National Literacy Strategy and the literacy hour is included in almost all courses, and has improved the trainees' teaching of reading to whole classes.

297. Even though courses have paid greater attention to preparing trainees to teach literacy, the majority of trainees are still uncertain about how to plan and teach phonic work appropriately in the teaching of reading. This is a serious weakness which needs to be addressed for trainees specialising in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stage 2. It is misguided to assume that the latter will not need rigorous training in the teaching of reading.

298. The extent of trainees' experience across the full age-range has been a cause for concern. The majority of trainees specialising both in early and in later years courses have insufficient opportunities to teach and assess pupils outside their specialist age-range to meet the requirements of Circular 14/93. Even where this experience is specified as part of the training, mentors and trainees do not always ensure that it takes place. This affects the trainees' ability, for example, to teach the more able readers at Key Stage 1 and struggling readers at Key Stage 2. A substantial minority of trainees on courses for the age range 3-8 have very limited experience of teaching in nursery settings. Those who have appropriate experience, however, often show a very good understanding of how to teach literacy to young children and how to build on this at Key Stage 1.

299. Very good training in information and communication technology is a strength only of a small minority of courses. These courses enable trainees to develop their own information and communication technology skills and to use them successfully in the classroom. More often, however, not enough attention is given to the use of information and communication technology to teach reading, and trainees have very few opportunities in schools to put any skills they have into practice.

300. Class teachers generally provide good support for trainees. However, a widespread problem in school-based training for the teaching of reading is that trainees have insufficient opportunities to work with good teachers of reading. In some schools, trainees benefited from working with co-ordinators of English and of special educational needs, but such opportunities are not widespread.

301. For most aspects of reading taught at Key Stages 1 and 2, the trainees' knowledge is at least sufficient and sometimes good. However, knowledge of linguistic terminology, including the terminology required to teach reading and to discuss language more generally, is a particular weakness for a substantial minority of trainees. A minority of trainees still have unacceptable weaknesses in their own spelling and punctuation.

302. Trainees have benefited from the focus on the National Literacy Strategy and from the time dedicated in schools to the teaching of reading. However, shortcomings in medium-term planning and in the setting of clear learning objectives for individual lessons are common. Objectives tend to be too vague or general, and are sometimes couched purely in terms of

activities rather than what is to be learned. Even the best trainees experience difficulty in planning to teach reading over an extended period. Increasingly, trainees were gaining experience of teaching a 'Literacy Hour'. In these cases the management of whole class teaching and group work was often of good quality. Some trainees are beginning to make effective use of a plenary session to review pupils' work, but this remains an area for development.

303. Trainees' skills in assessment and recording show some improvement since last year, but remain relatively weak. They have a generally good knowledge of the attainment of individual pupils, gained through informal assessment, but they do not use this knowledge effectively. The lack of clear objectives for lessons makes it difficult for trainees to assess rigorously whether pupils have achieved what they intended them to learn.

304. Trainees' record-keeping has improved, but it still varies in its usefulness. Most trainees are required to keep detailed records for a small group of pupils. The best trainees are able to take on the schools' record systems and sometimes to improve them; they keep reliable and manageable information. On a small number of courses, the majority of trainees keep minimal records. They do not fully understand their purpose and are not able to use them in the planning of lessons.

305. Most trainees are familiar with statutory assessment and reporting requirements. Some have direct experience of national tests or have helped to prepare pupils for them. Trainees' understanding of these has been improved significantly when they have had discussions with class teachers. Familiarity with the tests is inconsistent on some weaker courses, where trainees vary widely in their confidence and experience in using the level descriptions. Many schools do not recognise the important part they can play in ensuring that trainees understand the statutory requirements.

306. Trainees' experience of preparing and presenting reports to parents is variable. Many providers now require trainees to report on at least one pupil, but a minority of courses require improvement in this area. Trainees rarely attend parents' evenings, although many take part in simulated reporting.

## Number

307. Most courses are designed well to enable trainees to meet the standards for the award of QTS. On all courses the training to teach number is strongly emphasised within the overall provision for mathematics. The preparation for trainees to teach place value and to make use of correct number vocabulary, notation and conventions, is particularly good. The development of mental methods and strategies is a prominent feature of most courses and trainees are shown the limitations and advantages of different approaches to doing calculations. Taught sessions often introduce effective ways to use calculators and information and communication technology in the teaching of number. However, trainees do not always get sufficient opportunity to put the knowledge gained into practice in schools. A small minority of courses still do not teach trainees how to recognise and remedy pupils' number errors and misconceptions.

308. A good number of providers had already made changes to courses in anticipation of the ITT National Curriculum for mathematics which became a requirement from September 1998. The development of trainees' own mathematical knowledge continues to be an important issue and trainees' knowledge of number is frequently audited at the start of training. A few providers have also introduced some form of screening tests of number knowledge as part of their selection procedures. Many providers have effective formal support systems for improving trainees' subject knowledge. On a quarter of courses there are weaknesses in the way that trainees' knowledge is monitored and assessed, and some providers rely too heavily on trainees to address their own needs through self-supported study.

309. Weaknesses remain in the arrangements made for trainees to observe the teaching and assessment of pupils of differing abilities across the full primary age- range. These are frequently due to the limited amount of time that trainees spend outside their specialist age phase. There are, however, examples of good practice in this area. Many providers ensure that trainees spend a sufficient amount of time in their non-specialist sub-phase and carry out particular number-related tasks and activities during their time in classrooms.

310. Trainees specialising in the early years are more confident and knowledgeable about the number work at Key Stage 2 than are later years specialists about the early stages of development in number. A minority of all trainees have limited knowledge of the progression in number between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 or of how to extend the learning of advanced pupils at Key Stage 2. Those trainees on courses for the age range 3-8 generally have a very good understanding of how to develop numeracy skills in young children and of how to build on the work of nursery and reception classes at Key Stage 1 and into Key Stage 2.

311. Schools continue to develop their understanding of their role in training and a small number of mathematics co-ordinators are becoming involved in observing trainees and monitoring planning documentation. However, more still needs to be done to make sure that all trainees observe and work with good teachers of mathematics and receive sharply focused subject feedback

on the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching of number. The overwhelming majority of providers set assignments and directed tasks which are directly linked to school-based work and to the subject and professional knowledge needed for teaching number.

312. Most trainees are able to make appropriate conceptual links between number and other areas of mathematics such as data handling, probability and measures. Increasingly, trainees are using the lesson structure and materials of the National Numeracy Project to help them with their planning to teach number. In many cases this has led to an improvement in trainees' ability to set specific learning objectives for their lessons to ensure effective teaching. Nevertheless, on about one course in eight, trainees often set objectives that are too broad or they couch objectives in terms of activities to be covered rather than knowledge to be learned or concepts to be understood. An important weakness is that a significant minority of trainees do not have sufficient opportunity to plan and teach a sequence of lessons.

313. More attention has been given to ensuring that trainees have experience of teaching number to whole classes. Many trainees introduce their lessons well, engaging pupils' attention successfully and making use of effective questioning skills. A significant minority of trainees have difficulties in organising the use of time effectively and some experience difficulties in organising the transition between whole class teaching and group work or give insufficient time to plenary sessions. Better trainees are becoming increasingly skilled at evaluating the achievement of learning objectives to improve their teaching and their planning of the content and methodology of lessons.

314. In over one-third of courses weaknesses remain in trainees' competence in the assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress. Good practice in assessment, recording and reporting is often associated with very clear guidance about, for example, lesson planning or record-keeping, and with rigorous monitoring to ensure that trainees are putting recommendations into practice.

315. Almost all trainees keep records of their assessments of pupils' performance; however, these vary in quality from excellent to barely adequate, and a tiny minority of trainees, even on some of the better courses, keep hardly any records of number work. Weaker trainees are often unsure what to record or why they have to record at all. The better trainees use their records of assessment to organise or reorganise ability groups, to differentiate work in planning lessons, to identify common errors and misconceptions and to help review systematically what they have taught.

316. Most trainees are familiar with statutory assessment and reporting requirements. Those trainees placed in a Year 2 or Year 6 class during the testing period will have direct experience of national tests, but few providers request that partnership schools ensure that all trainees have some experience of the administration of the national tests or discuss them with appropriate teachers. Most trainees have at least an adequate understanding of the expected demands of pupils in relation to the level descriptions and most are able to assign levels to their pupils' work.

317. Many trainees draft simulated parental reports on a small number of pupils, often as part of a directed task. It is rarer for trainees to contribute to the actual written reports, but if they are in their placement school at the appropriate time, they are sometimes consulted by class teachers who are compiling such reports. Only a minority of trainees have actually observed at a parents' evening or made oral reports to parents. Many courses seek to compensate for this by including an oral feedback simulation during the course, but this is by no means universal and many trainees do not have any practical experience of oral reporting approaches.

### **Secondary initial teacher training**

318. In 1997/98 OFSTED completed a two-year programme of secondary subject inspections which covered every provider and used the joint OFSTED/Teacher Training Agency Framework. A small number of individual subject inspections were carried over for inspection in 1998/99. The focus was the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) route to QTS. OFSTED will be publishing an overview report with subject-specific detail later in the academic year. The findings and issues outlined here are preliminary.

319. The number and quality of applicants for teacher training continue to vary markedly according to subject, region and provider. Recruitment in English and history is very good and there has been little or no difficulty in meeting the targets set by the Teacher Training Agency. Recruitment in geography is less buoyant, with newer courses in particular experiencing some difficulties in meeting their targets. In science, design and technology and mathematics, under-recruitment is almost universal and many science courses have very few trainees who are specialists in physics. In design and technology and physical education there are problems in recruiting appropriately qualified trainees because many of the applicants have degrees whose content is not well matched to the requirements of the National Curriculum. A majority of the trainees in English, history and geography have upper second class degrees or better. In shortage subjects such as science, for example, it is common for fewer than half to have those qualifications.

320. Completion rates are generally good, with over nine in ten trainees acquiring Qualified Teacher Status. Principally in mathematics, but also in science, withdrawal rates were relatively high during 1997/98, the second year of the inspection programme. In mathematics one-quarter of the trainees failed to acquire Qualified Teacher Status. In the case of mathematics, financial pressures leading to withdrawal were the dominant reason for failure to achieve QTS, whereas in the case of science, trainees failed because they made insufficient progress in meeting the QTS standards.

321. The quality of the training is at least good in three-quarters of courses. The training programmes provided 'centrally' in the partnerships, that is in the universities, colleges or, in the case of school-centred training, the lead schools, are usually good. Programmes are generally well planned and effectively taught, with a good coverage of relevant topics. However, in science and design and technology, partnerships are sometimes overambitious about the number of specialist areas they are able to prepare individual trainees to teach effectively at Key Stage 4. In physical education, most patterns of training emphasise trainees' strengths at the expense of areas in which they are insecure. Support for trainees in partner schools has generally improved, although pockets of poor practice remain. In some subjects the focus of the training in schools is mainly on developing the skills of classroom management, with insufficient emphasis on teaching and assessing the knowledge, understanding and skills specific to that subject.

322. The inspection has revealed some areas which require further emphasis or development in training. These vary from subject to subject but include the following: the provision of direct experience of post-16 teaching; the development of trainees' subject knowledge, especially where the focus of the degree is not closely aligned with what is taught in schools; literacy and numeracy skills, especially where they are part of a subject, for example numeracy in geography; and the development of trainees' information technology teaching capability. There is a need for closer co-ordination between centrally-provided programmes and work in schools on some courses so that the two elements complement and reinforce each other.

323. The quality of feedback on trainees' teaching skills and class management is often good or very good from both school mentors and tutors from the central institution. Some feedback provided, for example by mentors, tends to underemphasise subject-specific issues related to pupils' understanding, effective learning and assessment. Many mentors are extremely hard pressed for time, and have neither allocated nor protected non-contact time to meet their training responsibilities.

324. The procedures used to audit the trainees' subject knowledge vary and are often not systematic. Mentors need to be drawn fully into this process of making judgements about the extent and depth of trainees' subject knowledge and the remediation which may be required. Where the audits are carried out by the central institution, for example, the results are not always communicated to the trainees' partner schools.

325. Providers' assessments of trainees are becoming more detailed and sharply focused on QTS standards. Most partnerships have made good progress in converting systems from those based on the previous competences to those based on the new standards, and within a very tight timescale. A small number of providers have been slow in adapting to the pace of change in policy. Nearly one-third of courses need to improve the quality of their assessment and fewer than one-fifth of courses were rated as very good in this aspect of provision. In a minority of partnerships a greater consistency among mentors in assessing trainees' performance is needed, promoted and supported by moderation carried out by subject specialists.

326. Written assignments set for trainees are usually well conceived, appropriately focused on classroom practice, carefully and helpfully marked and accurately assessed. In some subjects, the more consistent use of assignments as evidence for meeting the standards is needed, as well as more regular communication of trainees' attainment in assignments to mentors.

327. Regular target-setting is now a standard feature of training practice. The quality of targets set is variable, but there were some indications of improvement during the course of the two-year cycle. The best practice is becoming very good, the targets being precisely defined, appropriate, specific to the trainee, and realistic.

328. Trainees' subject knowledge was very good in one in five courses, and good in a further two-thirds. In science and design and technology the weaknesses are associated with the breadth of subject knowledge which is required. Knowledge of the National Curriculum and how it operates in schools is less well developed in some subjects, including science, where trainees have been overdependent on schools' schemes of work. Other areas which require improvement also include the trainees' knowledge and understanding of vocational courses and the links between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Trainees' knowledge of key skills, relating to reading, writing and knowledge of information and communication technology, is variable and heavily dependent on the schools in which they have been placed.

329. Trainees' skills in planning and teaching are generally good. One-sixth of courses were rated as very good and a further two-thirds as good. Trainees usually have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, are able to achieve good standards of



classroom control, and strive to establish and maintain safe and purposeful working environments in their classrooms and laboratories. Medium-term and longer-term planning are generally good but much affected by the quality of departmental practice. Some departments have comprehensive schemes of work of their own and this can mean that trainees have limited opportunities to undertake independent planning. Daily lesson planning is detailed, often imaginative and usually covers the relevant requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study.

330. Areas needing further development in planning include: consistency in establishing clear learning objectives for lessons and sequences of lessons, appropriate to the full range of ability, including, in particular, high-attaining pupils; the use of assessment information from previous lessons and marked work to guide planning and future learning; more explicit identification of National Curriculum and syllabus coverage in planning, of assessment strategies, and of provision for differentiation and progression in learning; more awareness of how to stimulate intellectual curiosity as well as how to generate enthusiasm for the subject; and a more analytical approach to pupils' errors and misconceptions.

331. The standards achieved by trainees in assessment, recording and reporting are more variable than for the other standards. While just over half of courses were rated good, and about one-tenth very good, one-third were judged to require significant improvement. Trainees' proficiency depends very much on their experience in partner schools, and the trainees' weaknesses often reflect practice in schools where they are placed. The strengths of trainees' performance in assessing, recording and reporting include generally good-quality marking of pupils' written work, with effective monitoring of the understanding of individual pupils during lessons, particularly those with special educational needs; appropriate oral feedback during the course of lessons; and good understanding in applying the level descriptions of the National Curriculum and of grade criteria for GCSE. The trainees also keep clear, full records of work submitted, and grades, marks and levels awarded, and show a good understanding of the range of assessment data which can be used to target teaching and diagnose difficulties. Where opportunities are provided, the trainees are able to prepare good-quality reports for parents and they often make effective contributions to parent consultation evenings. Areas of their assessment and recording practice to which trainees need to give further attention include: more specific evaluations of lessons in relation to the achievement of learning objectives; greater precision in assessing pupils' levels of attainment; and the consolidation of this by sufficient experience of making judgements alongside experienced teachers.

### **National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH)**

332. The National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH) is an initiative of the Teacher Training Agency; it provides a qualification which is designed to prepare aspiring headteachers for their roles as professional leaders of schools. The national training and assessment programme is based upon the National Standards for Headteachers, developed by the Teacher Training Agency, which set out the key knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes that are required of headteachers.

333. During the summer term of 1998, OFSTED carried out a small-scale inspection of NPQH training which involved visits to a small sample consisting of 22 candidates. During the visits structured interviews were carried out with candidates and a range of documentation was scrutinised. Where candidates were aspiring headteachers, the headteacher or nominated senior member of staff from their existing school was also interviewed. Inspectors looked for evidence of school improvement related to NPQH.

334. All the candidates visited had had a wide range of experience within different schools. Many of them were deputy headteachers in primary, secondary or special schools, two had already obtained headships and a further two were acting headteachers. Candidates embark on training with varying expectations about what the course will offer. The training often does not address issues in sufficient depth to meet their diverse needs. One-third of the candidates considered that training sessions were too undifferentiated and inflexible, especially where they failed to take sufficient account of their prior management experience. In response to such concerns, a new accelerated route to the qualification, for those candidates who are close to obtaining a headship, is being trialled from September 1998.

335. The headteachers in candidates' own schools do not generally have enough information about NPQH or what the programme requires candidates to do. Headteachers rarely play a major part in the training and assessment processes and they often feel that their experience is not used fully.

336. Those candidates who reported greatest benefit from participation have grown in confidence, improved their analytical skills and have greater knowledge and understanding of strategic planning. The training has significantly improved their management and leadership skills.

337. Candidates undertake assessment tasks that are intended to lead directly to school improvement. Where tasks have been designed and completed well, they have clear benefits for pupils' learning. However, starting points for assessment tasks do

not always meet the particular circumstances of candidates and there is a danger in such circumstances that participation in NPQH is seen as a burden to schools rather than a support.

338. NPQH training has not been running long enough to allow its full impact to be evaluated. Changes to the content of courses and access to the qualification have already been made in response to candidates' evaluations of the training, and their impact will be subject to further inspection.

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# Local education authority support for school improvement

339. The 1997 White Paper *Excellence in Schools* sets out a new role for LEAs. For each school the LEA should:

- analyse recent test, examination and inspection data;
- compare results and progress with data from other schools;
- monitor parental and local concerns;
- agree annual targets;
- check that the school's approach to improvement planning meets national standards set by the DfEE.

If an LEA has concerns about a school's performance it should intervene to secure good standards. Where, however, schools are performing successfully there should be no intervention. LEAs need to know how their schools are performing; they must exercise sensible judgements as to when and how to intervene; and they must possess the managerial skills to bring about improvement. Legislation has given LEAs greater powers to equip them for this new role, but also places new requirements on them, in particular cyclical planning for improvement. The government has also proposed a new code for relations between LEAs and schools to ensure that schools receive effective support and are suitably challenged without being subject to unnecessary intervention. 'Fair Funding' will require LEAs to delegate money for curriculum support to schools and retain only what can be shown to be necessary to meet statutory requirements. These arrangements will need to be open and transparent and must lead to more money being delegated to schools.

340. HMCI has acquired new powers to inspect LEAs' contribution to school improvement. A five-yearly inspection cycle began in January 1998, following a period in which certain pilot LEAs agreed to be inspected. This summary draws on six inspections conducted under the new statutory powers and four pilot inspections, one of which had been requested by the Secretary of State. These ten LEAs do not represent a balanced sample of the 150 authorities in England: three of the first six to be inspected statutorily were chosen because of the relatively low performance of their schools and two because of their schools' high performance. In addition, this summary takes account of the inspection revisit made to one LEA at the request of the Secretary of State in order to identify progress made since its inspection the previous year. Evidence is also drawn from other HMI surveys of particular aspects of provision in a wider range of LEAs, and from the evaluation of all reorganisation proposals made by LEAs.

## LEA support for school improvement

341. The quality of the LEAs' contribution to school improvement varied greatly. In the most effective LEAs, it was clear that schools had benefited in many detailed ways from the involvement of the LEA but there was no clear evidence that this led directly to an appreciable rise in standards across the authority. The better LEAs, Surrey, Birmingham and North Somerset, had a relatively clear sense of purpose. They met their major statutory obligations, managed services well, supported schools well with performance data, and for the most part successfully implemented their main objectives. By contrast the weakest LEAs, despite the considerable resources they were given, achieved little in support of school improvement. Manchester and Hackney did not fulfil certain fundamental statutory responsibilities concerning pupils' basic rights and needs, and lacked a clear vision of their own role and purpose. Despite this range of quality, all of the authorities inspected, except for two of the weakest, were showing signs of improvement, albeit not always very great, in some or all of the above respects.

## The role of the LEA and the planning and management of provision

342. In general, the LEAs inspected were attempting to establish a more precisely defined role in relation to school improvement, taking account of new government policy. Those LEAs which had a clear and reasonable vision of their role had consulted appropriately with their schools. Other LEAs were still developing their role; in the case of Manchester, neither clearly nor coherently. Crucially, most of the LEAs needed to define what they meant by the partnership they claimed to have



with schools, specifying the respective roles of the school and the authority. They also needed to be clearer about how and when the LEA would intervene if schools were not improving or were deteriorating. The re-inspection of Calderdale showed that, despite the recommendations of its earlier OFSTED report, the LEA had not been able to dispel the mistrust and hostility some schools felt towards it and still needed to develop more transparent decision-making and better consultation with schools.

343. Few of the LEAs inspected set out their costs clearly, allocate resources precisely to priorities, or do enough to check that they spend their money well. The demands of 'Best Value' and 'Fair Funding' will require a significant change. Many will find it difficult to move from incremental budgeting which has been complicated by ill-defined service costing and complex recharging practices, to a position where all money retained centrally is required to be earmarked for a particular purpose.

344. The effectiveness of LEAs' planning varied widely. Two LEAs tried to do too much. Despite its relatively clear sense of purpose, Birmingham was running too many initiatives and projects. More would have been achieved if it had focused more energy on raising standards in literacy and numeracy in primary schools. Hackney had too many plans for too many purposes, not linked clearly enough to the overall purposes of the LEA. In Manchester the service plan lacked a clear rationale, and at one time there were far too many priorities - over 50. With so many priorities and no clear means of identifying which were the most significant, they were in effect not priorities but rather a set of aspirations which may or may not be realised.

345. In order to plan effectively, LEAs must have: a clear idea of the schools' needs; a clear picture of the performance of all pupils and of all significant groups of pupils; a detailed understanding of the implications of local and national priorities; and a rigorous, unsentimental assessment of the capacity of their own services to deliver. Such information was not always available, and most of the LEAs inspected were unclear about what they could reasonably expect to achieve. However, Birmingham and North Somerset authorities had sound procedures for measuring their own progress towards meeting their objectives.

346. Four of the ten LEAs, Birmingham, North Somerset, Surrey and Kingston, managed their service provision well. They identified and to a large extent met schools' various needs, ensured that schools had realistic expectations of what they could provide, and maintained or were developing sound quality assurance procedures. Where provision was less well managed, LEAs tended to respond to schools' demands rather than their needs, which sometimes resulted in questionable value for money. There was evidence of inconsistency in the provision of services, or of an over-complex array of projects, indicating a need for better direction and co-ordination. Often such projects were grant funded and the money was rightly conditional on certain objectives being met. These objectives were not always easily reconcilable with the main thrust of the LEA's strategy. In Hackney and Sandwell, for example, undue complexity and waste of effort resulted from the need to seek funds from various sources. However, there were signs in all but the worst LEAs of senior officers giving greater attention than previously to consistency, accountability, and quality assurance. A survey of schools in 21 authorities indicated that special educational needs services and building maintenance tended to be less well regarded than most other aspects of LEA provision, and were on average rated by headteachers as less than adequate.

347. Most of the LEAs inspected were taking reasonable steps to meet most of their statutory obligations, and acting appropriately to ensure that their schools did so too. In each of the following important areas there were at least two LEAs that were failing to discharge their responsibilities adequately: provision of school places or out-of-school provision; appropriate and timely statementing of pupils with special educational needs; and teacher or headteacher appraisal.

### **The use of performance data**

348. LEAs are increasingly providing schools with performance data in order that they can evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses. Most of the LEAs inspected produced a useful range of statistical information in a manageable form. This often included comparisons with similar schools and value added measures. Surrey produced high-quality information that was considered useful by most schools, but was slightly over-ambitious and some schools found the data daunting. By contrast, Manchester provided insufficiently detailed data to meet schools' needs. In general, the data proved helpful to schools, particularly in targeting specific groups of pupils whose progress needed to improve. It was also of great value to the LEAs themselves in identifying trends across the authority and pinpointing schools where intervention was needed.

349. Most LEAs provided schools with helpful guidance and training in the use of performance data. Primary schools generally needed this more than secondary schools; many of the latter already had extensive experience of analysis of examination and test results. However, schools needed more help in using the data for setting performance targets which acknowledged pupils' present attainment and also incorporated a reasonable degree of challenge.

350. A further survey of a group of 25 LEAs serving areas with varied ethnic composition showed that only about half of these had any useful data on the attainment of different ethnic groups. Only one-third monitored the attainment of ethnic

groups comprehensively. Those that did were generally in London or other metropolitan areas and had, at best, important management information for focusing initiatives and keeping parents and local communities well informed. Those that did not were in a weak position for implementing national policy on the needs of ethnic minorities. However, many LEAs had plans to remedy this deficiency in the near future.

## **LEAs and Section 10 inspections**

351. Some of the LEAs inspected continue unnecessarily to divert significant amounts of scarce resources to pre-inspection advice and "support", partly because schools ask for it and partly because both LEAs and schools want to ensure a favourable report. About half of the LEAs inspected provided a significant amount of support to schools before their OFSTED inspection, but there was little evidence that such support promoted real improvement in the schools. Support for schools after their inspection varied in quality and effectiveness. Some authorities were better at supporting primary than secondary schools and several did not always identify weak schools' need for help, or did not allocate resources to support them. Overall, there was a general need for greater clarity about what development support schools were entitled to expect from their LEA, and to what extent the LEA matched its provision to schools' needs.

352. The LEAs inspected tended to give better support to schools identified by OFSTED or the LEA itself as having serious weaknesses, although there were sometimes inconsistencies where the LEA lacked clear criteria for identifying serious weakness or where its procedures were patchy. By contrast, Sunderland agreed action with a school and co-ordinated a programme of support. This meant mobilising a range of services to meet the school's needs, maintaining close contact with governors and senior management, and monitoring the progress made by the school.

353. The LEAs inspected met their statutory obligations with regard to schools requiring special measures. They generally had clear procedures and gave good, constructive support, though they were not uniformly effective in rescuing schools in difficulties. Surrey and North Somerset, in particular, took a broad range of action to help such schools, including supporting weak teachers, improving schools' curriculum planning, and monitoring their progress. LEAs' secondment of headteachers into schools subject to special measures was beneficial in the majority of cases. It stabilised these schools, raised morale and began the process of change. LEAs responded better to urgent crises when they had written policies for such eventualities, and had briefed the secondees well. However, the schools from which the headteachers were seconded sometimes suffered and LEAs had not always done enough to protect these schools.

## **Support for improving the quality of teaching**

354. LEAs' contributions to improving the overall quality of teaching varied significantly from authority to authority. Not surprisingly, the inspections found that if improvement in teaching is to occur, it must be led by the school itself. Nevertheless, LEAs had a largely positive impact in schools in half of the LEAs. Although there were certain strengths in the others, the quality and impact of their work varied too much. In the most successful LEAs, in-service training matched the schools' identified needs, and in three of these authorities advisory teachers or consultants also worked with headteachers, training them to observe lessons and evaluate the quality of teaching. In general, LEAs tended to focus their initiatives on the primary phase, probably wisely because many of the secondary schools felt that they could obtain better advice or consultancy from elsewhere. Even so, the LEA's work was sometimes hampered by gaps in the expertise of the advisory team, or by a lack of awareness in poorly managed schools of what improvements were necessary.

355. All of the LEAs inspected attempted, with varying degrees of success, to support primary schools in the drive to improve standards of literacy, and when it was implemented, to assist with the development of the National Literacy Project, particularly in weaker schools. The main flaw in this support was that it was often insufficiently focused on improving the quality of teaching by giving teachers a clear evaluation of their performance. LEAs need to make sure that the main literacy initiative is well co-ordinated with services for bilingual pupils and pupils with special educational needs. In some LEAs there was confusion about the respective roles of these services. At the same time, schools need to be selective and have the flexibility to decide which of the LEA's services best serve their priorities.

356. LEAs are not as advanced in supporting improvements in numeracy, reflecting the national timetable. In only two authorities was this a very high priority at the time of inspection, but it was clear that six of the ten LEAs were making a positive contribution to improvement, albeit only a slight improvement in two of them. Again, the main effort has rightly been focused on the primary phase.

## **Reorganisations**

357. The majority of proposals made by the full range of LEAs to the Secretary of State regarding the reorganisation of

schools concerned uncontroversial matters, such as the addition of a nursery to a primary school or the enlargement of a school to meet local population change. These were usually well-presented proposals and they were normally accepted by the government. However, the quality of the long-term organisation of school places varied considerably across LEAs. Some authorities showed considerable knowledge of their schools and made plans which had a clear reference to educational standards, whereas others sought to rationalise the provision of places without proper heed to the implications for quality or, sometimes, to local needs and perceptions. Proposals to close seriously weak schools or those requiring special measures did not always provide a solution which offered realistic hopes of long-term improvement. Furthermore, some local planning had been too drawn-out and had led to instability and uncertainty in schools.

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# Annex 1

## Inspection evidence

### Section 10 inspections

The Section 10 inspections of primary, secondary and special schools were carried out by registered inspectors. There were 7,284 such inspections: 6,218 of primary or nursery schools, 645 of secondary schools, 317 of special schools and 104 of Pupil Referral Units.

### Section 5 inspections

From the inception of Government funding for nursery education in 1996 to the end of December 1998, OFSTED has carried out over 20,000 inspections of settings in receipt of funding for four-year old children. In addition to the published reports on each setting, OFSTED has written two overview reports on the quality of funded nursery provision. A third publication is planned in 1999.

### HMI inspections

During the year HMI made over 3,300 visits to schools. These included more than 1,400 inspection visits to schools with serious weaknesses or requiring special measures and over 400 inspection visits to independent schools. They also included investigations of, amongst other things, the teaching of the National Literacy Project in primary schools, good practice in schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and modular GCE A levels.

The sample of schools inspected by HMI included all types, but the sample was not chosen to be representative of the different types of school in England.

HMI inspected LEA support for school improvement in ten LEAs, six under new statutory powers and four pilot inspections.

HMI inspected a range of initial teacher training including secondary subject training and training for teaching reading and number in primary schools. In addition, HMI carried out an inspection of National Professional Qualification for Headteachers training.

HMI also inspected a range of youth work and adult education provision: full inspections of adult education in three LEAs; full inspections of youth work in three LEAs; grants to national voluntary youth organisations; education provision in young offenders' institutions; a survey of modern foreign language learning; and access, participation and family learning in 26 local authorities.

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# Annex 2

## Interpreting inspection evidence

Evidence from Section 10 inspections for 1997/98 has been compiled from a number of distinct sources:

- judgements on individual lessons - graded on a seven-point scale;
- judgements on features of the school such as the progress made by pupils - also graded on a seven-point scale;
- written evidence supporting these judgements;
- published reports;
- information on the schools provided by the headteacher.

All of these sources of evidence were used to produce this report. The quantitative judgements have been based on grades provided by inspectors which have been checked against supporting textual information. A summary of these grades is contained in Annex 7.

### Standards achieved by pupils

Inspectors make two separate judgements of standards achieved by pupils:

- attainment - how well pupils are achieving in relation to national standards or expectations;
- progress - the gains pupils make in knowledge skills and understanding.

When judging attainment inspectors judge whether the proportion of pupils achieving the national expectation is below, broadly in line with or above that which is found nationally. This comparison with norms is a key part of the measurement of standards and provides important information for the school being inspected. However, because the inspection grades for attainment are made in comparison to a national norm, when aggregated nationally they can only produce a distribution about that norm. They cannot produce a measure of the national level of attainment of pupils. In this report, evidence from national tests and examinations is used to provide a quantitative measure of the national level of pupils' attainment. Inspection evidence is used to identify key strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment and the school factors contributing to high and low attainment.

While attainment provides an important component of evidence on the achievement of pupils, it provides only a partial picture of the effectiveness of the school. Able pupils who are achieving levels which are above the average could still be underachieving if they do not make the progress that they should. Conversely, pupils of low ability may be doing well if they are making good gains, even though their attainment is below the average for pupils of a similar age. Pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties in special schools will invariably be attaining at well below the national level, but in effective schools they will make good progress. Progress is, therefore, a valuable indicator of the impact and effectiveness of the school.

Inspectors judge the progress made in individual lessons. They also make overall judgements for each National Curriculum subject and for each key stage and for the school as a whole. These judgements are based on a range of evidence - lesson observations, written work, pupil interviews and test and examination results - and therefore provide a rounded view of achievement. These overall judgements have mainly been used to provide the evidence for the educational standards achieved by pupils in individual subjects and in the school as a whole. Lesson grades have been used occasionally when finer detail is required, for example of variations across years within a key stage.

### Interpreting grades

Inspectors use a seven-point scale when grading progress and other features of schools. Grades 1-3 indicate very good or good

progress where most pupils achieve better than expected. Grade 4 indicates satisfactory progress where most pupils achieve reasonably well. Grades 5-7 are used where progress is unsatisfactory or poor and most pupils underachieve. For other features of the school, grades 1-3 generally indicate a strength that promotes high standards, grade 4 indicates neither a strength nor a weakness, implying sound standards. Grades 5-7 indicate a weakness which promotes low standards. In the charts in this report, grades 1-3 are grouped and displayed as good/very good, and grades 5-7 are grouped and displayed as unsatisfactory/poor.

**The quality of teaching**

Direct observation in lessons provides the clearest view of the quality of teaching. Inspectors use a seven-point scale to judge the quality of teaching. Grades 1-3 indicate very good or good teaching that promotes high standards. Grade 4 is satisfactory teaching that promotes sound standards and grades 5-7 are unsatisfactory or poor teaching that promotes low standards. In this report lesson grades have generally been used to provide quantitative overviews of the quality of teaching.

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# Annex 3

## The sample of schools

HMCI's Annual Report gives an evaluation of quality and standards in English schools during the 1997/98 academic year. The main evidence base for this evaluation is inspections carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996.

There were 6,218 primary schools and 317 special schools inspected during the 1997/98 academic year and these schools were broadly representative of English primary schools as a whole. The schools inspected were essentially those that had been randomly allocated to the fourth year of the initial cycle of inspection at the commencement of the cycle. Using the inspection evidence for these schools as an indicator of quality and standards in English schools including comparisons with earlier years was, therefore, straightforward.

In the case of secondary schools, there were 645 schools inspected during the 1997/98 academic year but these schools were not, overall, representative of English schools as a whole. This year was the first year of the second cycle of school inspections. In planning the programme for this cycle HMCI ensured that schools to be inspected during each year include:

- a balanced sample including all relevant types and displaying the full range of performance as judged in previous inspections;
- within the balanced sample schools which are likely to be models of good practice;
- schools whose performance was weak at the time of the previous inspection or whose performance has declined significantly. These schools are inspected earlier than they would otherwise be.

Whilst the earlier inspection of weak schools means that there was a disproportionate number of these schools inspected in 1997/98, the balanced sample of schools has ensured sufficient evidence to enable a full and representative picture of English schools to be obtained from inspection evidence.

To enable a representative picture to be obtained it has been necessary, in the evaluation of the inspection evidence, to weight data about different types of schools in proportion to their numbers in the total school population. At the same time, the higher rate of inspection of weak schools enables a sharper focus on quality and standards in the weakest schools and on the weaknesses in the schools that need to be remedied in order to raise standards.

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# Annex 4

## 1998 Key Stages 1 and 2 test results

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## Annex 5

# Achievement of boys and girls in single-se schools

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## Annex 6

# Average GCSE improvement trend per ye 1995 and 1998 against eligibility for free s

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# Annex 7

Statistical Summary

Progress in Primary Schools 1997/98 (percentage of schools)

Statistical Summary

Teaching in Primary Schools 1997/98 (percentage of schools)

Statistical Summary

Progress in Secondary Schools 1997/98 (percentage of schools)

Statistical Summary

Teaching in Secondary Schools 1997/98

Statistical Summary

Inspection Grades for Primary Schools - 1997/98

Statistical Summary

Inspection Grades for Secondary Schools - 1997/98

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# Annex 8

## GCSE scores for different subjects in seco schools

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**\* Subject definitions for these subjects have changed since 1997.**

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# Annex 9

## OFSTED Publications 1997/98

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### PRICED PUBLICATIONS

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The Annual Report of Her Majesty's  
Chief Inspector of Schools

**0 10 283598 5 £10.30**

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Secondary Education 1993-97:  
a review of secondary schools  
in England

**0 11 350099 8 £22.95**

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Guidance on the inspection of Nursery  
Education Provision in the Private,  
Voluntary and Independent Sectors

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Educating the Very Able

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Recent Research on Gender and  
Educational Performance

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Artists in Schools: A Review

**0 11 350103 X £9.95**

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Standards of Achievement in Advanced  
GNVQs in Sixth Forms 1997

**0 11 350098 X £4.95**

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The Arts Inspected: Good Teaching in  
Art, Dance, Drama, Music  
(Available from Heinemann,  
telephone 01865 311366)

**0 43 530232 9 £14.99**

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Homework: Learning from Practice

**0 11 350104 8 £11.95**

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Part One General National Vocational  
Qualifications: Final Report

**0 11 3500105 7 £6.95**

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## **UNPRICED PUBLICATIONS**

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Corporate Plan 1998

**HMI 164**

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School Evaluation Matters

**HMI 127**

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Standards in the Primary Curriculum 1996-97  
(pack of subject leaflets)

**HMI 129K**

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Changes to the National Curriculum in  
Key Stages 1 and 2 in Primary and Special Schools

**HMI 128**

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Assessing the Core Subjects at Key Stage 2

**HMR/050/98/DS**

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How Teachers Assess the Core Subjects  
at Key Stage 3

**HMR/1/98/NS**

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Making Headway

**HMI 143**

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The Quality of Education in Institutions  
inspected under the Nursery Education  
Funding Arrangements

**HMI 142**

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Making Complaints to OFSTED

**HMI 144**

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Educational Research: A Critique,  
by James Tooley

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**HMI 147**

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Inspection 98: Supplement to the inspection  
handbooks containing new requirements  
and guidance [for inspectors]

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**HMI 145**

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Inspection 98: Briefing for Schools on the  
New Inspection Requirements

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**HMI 149**

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Inspecting Subjects 3-11

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**HMI 148**

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Making the Most of Inspection:  
fully revised version 1998

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**HMI 088**

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School Inspection:  
A Guide for Parents: revised 1998

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**HMI 089**

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Inspection of Manchester LEA

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**HMR 88/98/LEA**

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Accent on Adults: A Survey of Modern  
Foreign Language Learning by Adults

---

**HMI 152**

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Work Related Aspects of the Curriculum  
in Secondary Schools

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**HMI 160**

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National Survey of Careers Education  
and Guidance: Secondary Schools

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**HMI 150**

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National Survey of Careers Education  
and Guidance: Special Schools and  
Pupil Referral Units

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**HMI 151**

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Setting in Primary Schools

**HMI 163?**

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Proposals for a Differentiated System  
of Inspection: Consultation Paper

**HMI 153**

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The Training of Part-Time Youth Workers

**HMI 162**

---

The Teaching of Reading to Hearing  
Impaired Children in Mainstream Schools

**HMI 159**

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The National Literacy project: An HMI Evaluation

**HMI 157**

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The National Numeracy Project: An HMI Evaluation

**HMI 158**

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The Teaching of Physical Education in  
Primary Schools

**HMI 161**

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The Inspection of Initial Teacher Training:  
The Primary Follow-Up Survey 1996 to 1998

**HMI 165**

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is at: **<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>**

The website also carries OFSTED reports on nurseries, teacher training institutions and certain LEAs, as well as a selection of Inspection Guidance and other publications.

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# INTRODUCTION

The last survey by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) of primary education in England<sup>1</sup> was published in September 1978 by the Department of Education and Science. It was based on a random, stratified sample of 542 schools and it was conducted by a small team of HMI who made visits to all the schools in the sample.

The final section of the 1978 survey was entitled "Looking Forward" and concluded:

*Taking primary schools as a whole, the curriculum is probably wide enough to serve current educational needs. But the demands of society seem likely to continue to rise; literacy and numeracy will no doubt remain matters of great interest but priorities may well change within these areas and in other parts of the curriculum. The immediate aim, especially for the average and more able pupils, should probably be to take what is done to greater depth rather than to introduce content that is new to primary education. To do this it is important to make full use, on behalf of schools as a whole, of teachers' strengths and to build on the existing knowledge of individual teachers without losing the advantages that are associated with the class teacher system.*

These concerns about the quality and standards of primary education were taken up in another well known report. In December 1991 the Secretary of State asked Professor Robin Alexander, Jim Rose HMI (Chief Inspector for Primary Education) and Chris Woodhead (Chief Executive of the National Curriculum Council) to "review available evidence about the delivery of education in primary schools" in order "to make recommendations about curriculum organisation, teaching methods and classroom practice appropriate for the successful implementation of the National Curriculum particularly in Key Stage 2".

The focus of the report, entitled *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools*,<sup>2</sup> was teaching: its quality; subject expertise, teaching roles and staff deployment; and initial training, induction and in-service training. In some respects the report anticipated changes to the organisation of the curriculum in primary schools:

*Over the last few decades the progress of primary pupils has been hampered by the influence of highly questionable dogmas which have led to excessively complex classroom practices and devalued the place of subjects in the curriculum. The resistance to subjects at the primary stage is no longer tenable. The subject is a necessary feature of the modern primary curriculum.*

*There is clear evidence to show that much topic work has led to fragmentary and superficial teaching and learning. There is also ample evidence to show that teaching focused on single subjects benefits primary pupils.*

A major issue addressed by the report was how to secure sufficient subject expertise in primary schools to keep pace with pupils' developing abilities and meet the expectations of the National Curriculum:

*The extent of subject knowledge required in order to teach the National Curriculum is more than can reasonably be expected of many class teachers, especially but not exclusively in the upper years of Key Stage 2.*

*Every primary school should, in principle, have direct access to specialist expertise in all nine National Curriculum subjects and in religious education.*

The report made recommendations about effective methods of teaching and of classroom organisation, and about the deployment of teachers beyond the traditional "one teacher one class" model:

*The organisational strategies of whole-class teaching, group work and individual teaching need to be used more selectively and flexibly. The criterion for choice must be fitness for purpose. In many schools the benefits of whole-class teaching have been insufficiently exploited.*

*Primary teaching roles are currently too rigidly conceived and much greater flexibility in staff deployment is*

*needed. We recommend the introduction of semi-specialist and specialist teaching in primary schools to strengthen the existing roles of class teacher and consultant. There is a particular case for concentrating specialist teaching at the upper end of Key Stage 2.*

Twenty years on from the review of primary education, and approaching a decade after the publication of the "Three Wise Men" report (the *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice* report came out around Christmas 1992), OFSTED is in a strong position to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the maintained primary schools in England and on the issues confronting them.

### **The four year review: the evidence base**

Following the Education (Schools) Act 1992, the first cycle of inspections was completed in July 1998. By this time every primary school in England had been inspected and inspection reports, including a summary report for parents, had been published. This four-year review of primary education is based principally on the evidence from the inspections of primary schools carried out by registered inspectors and their teams. The number of primary schools inspected increased each year, reflecting the growth in the number of inspectors qualified to conduct inspections, and the involvement of many "Additional Inspectors"<sup>3</sup> employed by OFSTED between 1995 and 1997 on short-term secondments and trained to inspect by HMI.

The scale of the evidence base from these inspections including individual lesson observation forms to the published inspection reports on over 18,000 primary schools is colossal. Over the period of the first inspection cycle, about 200,000 pre-Key Stage 1 lessons were inspected, 400,000 at Key Stage 1 and over 650,000 lessons at Key Stage 2, a total of over 1,250,000 lessons inspected over the four-year period. This has created a unique record of primary school education in England at the end of the twentieth century.

This review also makes use of a wide range of other evidence available on the standards of achievement in English primary schools and the quality of education provided. It draws on the National Curriculum test data for the four years, providing an increasingly accurate picture of standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. It draws on the findings from HMI inspection surveys carried out during the same period, for example: the inspection of the teaching of reading in three local education authorities and the inspection of the teaching of number in three local education authorities; the evaluation reports on the National Numeracy and Literacy Projects; and surveys of aspects of pedagogy such as the use of specialist teachers at Key Stage 2 and the use of setting in primary schools.

The review also reports on the findings of the inspection of primary-phase initial teacher training, especially training to teach reading and number; and the progress made by schools identified as having serious weaknesses or requiring special measures. In other words, while the review draws principally on the extensive database released by the Section 9 and Section 10 statutory inspections, it also draws on a considerable range of other data and inspection evidence. Finally, it refers to research commissioned by OFSTED, such as that into international comparisons. Above all, it takes as its theme the drive to raise standards through school improvement.

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**1** *Primary Education in England, A Survey by HM Inspectors of Schools*. DES, 1978.

**2** Alexander R, Rose A.J., and Woodhead C. (1992) *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools. A discussion paper*. DES.

**3** For further information see *The Additional Inspector Project*. OFSTED, 1997.

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# Chapter 1

## MAIN FINDINGS AND COMMENTARY

### 1.1 Main findings

- The quality of education in primary schools has improved over the four years of the inspection cycle. More pupils are achieving higher standards by the time they transfer to secondary school; the quality of teaching has improved; and headteachers, teachers and governors now give greater attention to raising standards and improving their schools. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement, particularly in literacy and numeracy, in most schools. About 3 per cent of schools fail to provide an acceptable standard of education, with a further 8 per cent having serious weaknesses.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the basic threshold of Level 2<sup>4</sup> in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 has remained at about 80 per cent over the four years. There has been a modest improvement in standards of mathematics, rising from 78 per cent at Level 2 in 1995 to 84 per cent in 1998. About one in five pupils, therefore, has not achieved the expected standards in the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and mathematics at transfer from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.
- At Key Stage 2 there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in English and mathematics. This proportion has risen by about 15 percentage points over the four years. A similar improvement is needed over the next four years if government targets are to be met by the year 2002.
- While there has been some increase in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 3 or better, about one in ten pupils leaves primary school without having achieved Level 3. These pupils are poorly equipped to face the demands of the secondary curriculum.
- More pupils reach the expected level of attainment in reading than in writing. It is a particular concern that there is a considerable gap between the achievement of girls and boys, particularly in writing, where in 1998 girls outperformed boys by 16 percentage points. There are few signs that this gap is narrowing.
- Progress varies as pupils move through school. They make good progress in the earlier years, but there is a dip in Years 3 and 4, the beginning of Key Stage 2. Progress then improves and is greatest in Year 6.
- Pupils make good progress in three in ten schools. In about six in ten schools they make satisfactory progress, although it is unlikely that this rate of progress will be sufficient to ensure that four out of five pupils will reach the national targets for English by 2002. There was substantial underachievement in one in 14 schools at Key Stage 1 and one in ten at Key Stage 2.
- Standards of achievement have improved in most subjects over the past four years. Nevertheless, serious problems remain with design and technology and are even more acute in information technology in over four in ten schools.
- The greatest challenges are faced by schools serving disadvantaged areas. The link between low attainment and disadvantage is strong and persistent. There are, however, schools which achieve well against the odds; and for any given level of socio-economic factors there is a wide variation between the performance of the best and worst schools.
- Over the four years of the inspection programme the quality of teaching has improved, with 1998 being the first year in which the teaching of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was better than the teaching of all other subjects. The proportion of good teaching has risen at Key Stage 2 to over one-half, and that of overall unsatisfactory teaching has fallen to one in 14 schools. This improvement is striking, but there are still over a quarter

of a million pupils in schools where the teaching is unsatisfactory.

- Several factors underpin this improvement. There has been an improvement in teachers' knowledge, skills and understanding of the subjects they teach. As teachers have become more familiar with the programmes of study, their planning has improved and learning objectives have been more precisely defined. Above all, there has been an increase in the amount of direct, whole-class teaching. This is not an easy option, however, and requires a secure subject knowledge, clear instructive teaching and skilled questioning.
- The quality of leadership and management is good or very good in just over half of schools; it is weak in about one in eight schools. There is a strong link between the quality of the leadership and management and the quality of the teaching. Important aspects of leadership are the sense of educational direction given by a headteacher, the extent and impact of the monitoring of the work of teachers, and the evaluation of curriculum initiatives. The weakest aspects of leadership and management have been the monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice.
- The role of governors has changed in recent years; the demands made of them are greater and their responsibilities are clearer. The overall picture is one of governors supporting their schools positively and effectively, and dealing with their duties with dedication. There is considerable variation in practice, however, and in about one-quarter of schools the governors are poorly placed to influence the education provided.
- Headteachers are particularly successful at establishing a positive ethos in their schools. This is one of the great strengths of English primary schools, and is illustrated by many positive indicators. The behaviour of pupils is good in four out of five primary schools, and poor in only 2 per cent of schools. Virtually all primary schools are orderly, safe communities in which children are taught to respect each other, their teachers, other adults and property.
- Attendance, too, is good in the vast majority of schools, falling below 90 per cent in only about 4 per cent of schools. Most schools work hard to ensure regular attendance and have effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance.
- Most schools adapted well to implementing the National Curriculum by meeting the expectation that the curriculum should be broadly based, balanced and relevant. More recently, the strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy has meant that primary schools have had to review their priorities and to consider the balance between the essential basic skills of literacy and numeracy and the rest of the curriculum.
- Wide-ranging topic work, in which elements of several subjects were taught, has given way over the four years to work which focuses on a single subject. This has contributed strongly to the improvement in work in most subjects. At the same time it has helped pupils to apply or consolidate their skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Greater and more effective use of assessment data has helped schools to establish targets for improvement and to analyse more precisely the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching programmes. Not all schools make the best use of the data available, for example to analyse the performance of different groups of pupils.
- The quantity and quality of learning resources are inadequate in one in ten schools; resources for teaching English are a particular cause for concern, although there has recently been a significant reallocation of spending priorities towards literacy. Accommodation is good in less than half the schools, but there has been a significant move in recent years to make school grounds and buildings more secure. Most schools have sufficient qualified and experienced teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum, although the pupilteacher ratio rose in each year of the inspection cycle.
- There has been, in recent years, a marked improvement in the attention given on initial teacher training courses to training in the teaching of reading and number work. Mental calculation and phonics are now given a greater and more appropriate priority.
- The main issues facing the training partnerships are how to ensure consistency in assessing the trainees; and how to ensure that trainees receive comparable training experiences of sufficiently high quality.

## 1.2 Commentary and recommendations

Primary schools are getting better. Taking primary education, pre-five to eleven plus, as a whole, while there is still too much unevenness in the system, it is irrefutable that more teachers are teaching more effectively than was the case four years ago.

There is more good practice in every subject of the National Curriculum and in government-funded provision for under-fives. As a result, more children are getting a better primary education and the nation is receiving a better return for its £6.5 billion annual investment in our primary schools.

This overall picture of progress is drawn from an unprecedented amount of information about the performance of pupils and teachers in primary schools and about such important matters as the resources and management systems which support them. As a nation, we almost certainly lead the world in the amount of information we hold on school and pupil performance, particularly when the data from national tests are added to that of inspection.

Impressive though this information base may be, it is of little value unless it can be used to improve practice and raise standards. It is all too easy to become 'information-rich and action-poor'. What is at issue is how we make best use of this rich information about primary schools to accelerate the raising of standards, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged areas. Progress is being made, but it needs to be faster and more extensive if we are to meet the Government's targets for primary education for 2002.

The significance of those targets invites comment because they stand as a proxy for national concerns, as well as for national confidence in those who teach in our primary schools and those who provide for primary education. The targets recognise the priority that primary schools must give to raising standards of English and mathematics, at the heart of which are pupils' achievements in literacy and numeracy.

The widespread belief that standards of pupil achievement in primary schools have been too low for far too long is strongly supported by this review. What most people have in mind when the issue of low standards of achievement is discussed are standards of reading, writing, number knowledge and the skills of calculation – the foundation work of primary schools. Whatever might be said about changes in the national tests and in the Framework for Inspection over this four-year period, there has been sufficient stability in both to indicate that standards in these crucially important areas in 1994 were woefully low. They are now much better, though not yet good enough if our children are to have the best chances of leading fulfilled lives and succeeding in a world economy where high educational standards will continue to be of paramount importance.

Perhaps the message that most needs to be heeded from the inspection of primary schools over the last four years is that the primary phase, which covers the greater part of statutory education, is not only important in its own right but also has a crucial "make or break" influence on what follows. Insofar as it is possible to make like-for-like comparisons, primary schools serving similar socio-economic populations can vary to the extent that over two years' difference can be made to a pupil's progress, depending on the school he or she attends. All of these points argue that we must continue to strive for much greater consistency in the quality of our primary schools.

Primary schools know full well that they must give top priority to making sure that their pupils are taught the "basic skills" as effectively as possible. Many schools, however, continue to struggle with the long-standing problem of providing a broad and balanced curriculum, of which the statutory National Curriculum and religious education are but a part, while giving sufficient attention to what has become an enlarged programme of basic skills. For example, the latter now includes information technology along with the traditional skills of literacy and numeracy. Schools have to decide how time is to be apportioned to these priorities, so that the curriculum does not become so narrow as to stultify pupils' wider progress in subjects such as art, music and physical education or so broad that little or nothing is taught very well. The most successful schools are efficient users of the time available for teaching and are imaginative in what they do to extend teaching and learning time through, for example, homework and extracurricular activities.

Of all the issues facing primary education over the last four years, the teaching of reading has almost certainly caused the greatest professional debate and public concern. Despite the introduction of a detailed framework for teaching reading and other key aspects of literacy within the National Literacy Strategy, how best to teach the early stages of reading remains a contentious issue, albeit from a much changed perspective about the central importance of teaching phonics. The professional debate has shifted markedly. Few, if any, now seriously disagree with the well researched position which insists that children must be taught essential phonic knowledge and skills from an early stage. The debate is no longer so much about whether to teach phonics, but rather about how to teach phonic knowledge and skills efficiently and effectively so that children can enjoy early success and read effortlessly. Inspection and test results show that the vast majority of children are capable of achieving these goals by the end of Key Stage 1.

Many teachers need to update considerably their knowledge of phonic work in order to teach it well. This reflects a period of neglect of this crucial aspect of reading in both initial and in-service teacher training. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the phonic component, ie the "word level" work in the literacy hour of the Government's National Literacy Strategy, is often the weakest aspect of the teaching of reading and continues to need urgent attention in many schools.



The importance of phonic work attaches to more than reading. Over this four-year period it has become clear that children's writing skills also require more attention and are heavily dependent upon an understanding of phonics, the effective teaching of spelling and handwriting, and opportunities for wider reading.

Two serious problems in many primary schools, highlighted by HMCI's Annual Reports and by this review, are the considerably poorer literacy performance of boys in comparison with that of girls, and the dip in the overall performance of primary pupils which has occurred persistently in Year 3 and to a lesser extent in Year 4. Common sense suggests that each of these problems compounds the other. Given that differences in pupil achievement emerge at an early stage and can widen alarmingly, the close monitoring of pupil performance deserves more attention. Although some schools consistently monitor pupil performance for example, to address gender and ethnic concerns for many this is not a well developed practice.

It is difficult to spell out exactly how the gender differences in achievement might be overcome. For boys, it is likely that more thorough teaching of the basic skills of reading to help them to achieve early success, accompanied by more appealing reading material and more challenging opportunities to write about interests other than fictional stories, would help to close the gap. The national initiatives to encourage parents to do more to support reading at home, combined with schools' efforts to enlist the help of parents, are also showing promising results.

The dip in the performance of certain year groups of pupils, most often Years 3 and 4, goes unheeded in too many schools. Whatever the reasons for this uneven pattern of performance by year group, the problem needs to be taken seriously because many Year 3 and Year 4 pupils, especially boys, are often at a critical stage in consolidating hard-won skills of reading and writing. Headteachers should be wary of deploying the least experienced or the weakest teachers in a particular year group such as Year 3 in the hope that any ground lost by the pupils in these year groups can be made up later.

Schools must also address two other important variables that influence pupil performance, which are different but often overlapping: ethnicity and poverty. Over the period of this review, some primary schools have amply demonstrated that it is possible to raise pupils' achievement despite distinctly unpromising social and economic home backgrounds. In the case of schools containing pupils from ethnic minorities, many of whom have to learn English as an additional language, there have been some spectacular successes, showing how focused, well-structured teaching can accelerate learning so that pupils achieve good standards of literacy and numeracy, and much else, by the age of eleven. The attitude which prevails in these successful schools is a powerful intolerance of underachievement and a refusal to accept variables related to pupils' home backgrounds as an excuse for a lack of progress. All that said, it must be acknowledged that teachers in these circumstances often face problems which many others simply do not have to tackle to anything like the same extent. These conditions are certainly sufficient to justify additional resources, for example to allow schools to employ teaching assistants. Indeed, inspection shows that well-trained teaching assistants are a key resource and are used very effectively in many primary schools. More importantly, there is a clear case for assuring better pupilteacher ratios in schools serving areas of social and economic disadvantage, especially at Key Stage 1.

In one sense this review provides a glance in the rear-view mirror to make sure we are not overtaken by the mistakes of the past and are better prepared for what lies ahead. We would do well to remember that primary schools have been through a period of considerable turbulence. Primary school teachers, for example, bore the brunt of curricular reform. The National Curriculum and its assessment were introduced first into primary schools, closely followed by a new inspection regime. They had to accommodate other major reforms, such as more open enrolment and an enlarged responsibility for managing their budgets. In many respects these reforms have been welcome, and indeed essential. However, there has hardly been a breathing space for primary schools since the 1988 Education Reform Act, let alone over the last four years, during which one reform has had the time to settle down before others have followed, or changes have been made to those already introduced. All of this suggests that primary schools would benefit from a period of greater stability in which to consolidate and build upon what, arguably, has been the most extensive programme of educational reform in living memory.

Primary teachers, and particularly primary headteachers, have had to become much more management-minded as responsibilities for devolved budgets and school resources, including staffing, have grown. The most effective headteachers are good managers but are not infected with "managerialism", as if management existed to serve itself. They understand the difference between leadership and management. In order to reduce bureaucracy, to focus upon monitoring and raising standards of pupil achievement, and to create a context for teachers to give of their best, they challenge themselves with such questions as, "What am I managing for?" and "How will proposed changes benefit the pupils and improve what exists already?"

Primary schools, because they are relatively small institutions, have to manage both the benefits and the obstacles arising from their size. On the one hand they gain from a keen sense of teamwork, in which the whole staff can communicate easily and, given good leadership, respond swiftly to agreed changes in policy and practice. On the other hand, it is clear that their

expertise, for example in providing consistently high-quality teaching in all the subjects and aspects of the curriculum, is often fully stretched. The average-sized primary school is rarely able to employ sufficient teachers to have a one-to-one co-ordinator for each subject, or time for subject co-ordinators to carry out important aspects of their role, such as monitoring teaching, during the school day.

The use of topic work, whereby several subjects are integrated under a common theme such as "ourselves" or "buildings", which many teachers found difficult to manage and which led to much superficial work for many pupils, is now far less common. Teachers are focusing more rigorously upon the programmes of study for each subject and planning lessons accordingly. The demise of broadly based topic work and the stronger emphasis on subject teaching, encouraged by the National Curriculum, have required a greater command of subject knowledge on the part of primary teachers. To expect class teachers to teach every subject to pupils who may well, by the end of Key Stage 2, be achieving beyond Level 4 in the core subjects, is a tall order.

Over the last four years some primary schools have begun to take steps to organise pupils and teachers in different ways, so as to make better use of the subject expertise available in the school. In many schools there is now a greater use of teachers with particular expertise to teach classes other than their own. Music and physical education have long been treated in this way, but the approach now often encompasses other subjects.

The wider use of specialist teaching has been accompanied by an increase in grouping pupils by ability for some subjects, particularly English and mathematics at Key Stage 2. This has often been done by creating ability sets from more than one class, thus making it easier for the teacher to plan and match the work to the developing abilities of the pupils and the requirements of the National Curriculum. While these arrangements for deploying teachers and organising pupils do not in themselves guarantee success, they offer considerable potential for good teaching to be made available to more children than may be the case where, typically, one class teacher teaches all the curriculum to the same class for at least one school year.

Given the clear link between teaching quality and pupil achievement, the availability of teachers with sufficient subject expertise remains a key issue for primary schools. Because they have a thorough grasp of the subject matter that they are required to teach, good teachers are not only able to set high expectations but they also understand the incremental steps, ie the progression, that pupils have to make to fulfil curricular expectations. They are thus well equipped to promote both continuity and progression in the primary curriculum. Unfortunately, all too often the subject expertise available within a school remains underused because the teachers concerned are confined to working with their own class.

By one means or another, primary schools have had to build expertise to keep pace with the fast-growing field of information and communication technology as well as teaching the programme of study for information technology. Information technology remains the weakest subject in the primary curriculum overall, although there is evidence of high attainments and exemplary work by many pupils in a few schools. We are thus unwittingly developing two populations of pupils, with those who are able to benefit from IT-literate homes and from schools where information technology is well taught rapidly outpacing those where neither of these conditions applies.

Primary education is essentially a person-to-person service in which teachers and pupils alike benefit from constructive feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of their work, together with clear guidance about what they need to do to improve. Sadly, however, the appraisal of teaching remains a seriously weak feature in primary schools, as in schools in general. Despite or perhaps because of the close teamwork that is a feature of many primary schools, there seems to be a reluctance rigorously to appraise teachers, including headteachers, with the intention of managing performance to raise pupil achievement.

It is by no means unusual, however, for headteachers, teachers and governors to press for more feedback about their work from inspectors. There is, it seems, an unresolved tension between the reluctance to tackle school-based appraisal and the appetite for more and better feedback, particularly about teaching, from inspection. Some progress might be made on resolving this tension were more schools to consider using the OFSTED Framework and Guidance for Inspection to align their appraisal requirements more closely with the inspection criteria for judging teaching quality. The issues of performance management will be thrown into sharp relief as a result of developments stemming from the recent Green Paper.<sup>5</sup>

Surveys of parents' views conducted by OFSTED over this four-year period show that they are concerned about their children's achievement and what they often describe as their children's "happiness" at school. Many, for example, suggest that homework ought to feature more strongly in the programme for older primary pupils and would like clearer information about their children's progress. High on their list of concerns, of course, are children's safety and welfare. They seek reassurance that bullying and racial discrimination will not be tolerated. Inspection shows that the great majority of primary schools are safe and orderly communities in which children are taught to respect each other, their teachers, other adults and property. Norms of

good behaviour, fairness and an understanding of right and wrong actions are generally well established in primary schools. Attendance rates are generally good.

Insidious harassment and bullying are difficult for schools to deal with and call for constant vigilance, clear policies and decisive action, including the creation of a climate which makes it easy for children to tell their teachers about these problems rather than suffer in silence. While overt bullying, discrimination and harassment are not tolerated, and the vast majority of primary schools rightly take a stand on these issues, it is difficult for them always to hold the line against poor relationships which may exist in the neighbourhood. Although pupils may behave well in school, the school cannot so easily inoculate them, for example, from prejudice which may persist outside its gates. Clearly, a greater all-round effort must be made to support schools in these respects, drawing upon the experience of the most successful local networks which some schools enjoy.

Though a cliché, the picture which emerges from this four-year review is one of cautious optimism. Primary schools are much more focused than ever before on raising standards of pupil achievement and less willing to tolerate professional weaknesses and ideologies that depress pupils' progress. They need to build on their successes through the relentless pursuit of better-quality teaching consistently applied in all year groups.

It follows that the temptation to pour more educational quarts into primary pint pots should be resisted in order to give primary schools the opportunity they need to develop the quality of their work and capitalise on the reforms set in place.

The Government is making a determined effort to raise standards of pupil achievement through a broad range of policy initiatives and reforms that are either in place or in the pipeline. The findings of this four-year review point to four main recommendations for the continued improvement of primary education and the achievement of the ambitious national targets. These recommendations are not, of course, exhaustive, but all those involved with primary education should:

- provide a period of stability for primary schools to implement fully and consolidate the extensive programme of reforms, rather than introduce more that is new to an already stretched system;
- make sure that the expectations and priorities for primary schools are clearly understood, manageable and adequately resourced;
- give top priority to supporting the work of teachers in their classrooms. This will require far more robust teacher-appraisal arrangements than presently exist, linked to targeted training and close monitoring of the applications and outcomes of that training, in order to determine how well it advances pupils' progress;
- audit the use of the considerable resources that the Government has put into, and plans to put into, primary education, so as to make sure those resources support the priorities for which they are intended.

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**4** Level 2 is the level 'expected of seven-year-olds'. Level 4 is the level 'expected of eleven-year-olds'. Taken from: *Results of the 1997 NC assessments*. DfEE, 1997.

**5** *Teachers Meeting the Challenge of Change*, DfEE, 1999.

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# Chapter 2

## PRIMARY EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

### 2.1 The schools, the pupils and the teachers

In 1994 there were 18,679 maintained primary schools providing full-time education for 3,944,635 pupils. In 1998 the number of schools had fallen to 18,230 (a fall of 2.4 per cent) and the number of full-time pupils had risen to 4,109,624 (a rise of 4.2 per cent). There were about 83,000 more boys than girls receiving full-time primary education in 1998. The number of pupils receiving part-time education, almost always in nursery schools or as pupils under the age of five in nursery or reception classes in primary schools, rose from 267,385 in 1994 to 317,193 in 1998 (a rise of 18.6 per cent).

The number of pupils aged between five and ten attending independent schools rose from 185,200 in 1994 to 198,300 in 1998. In percentage terms this has remained virtually static, at around 5 per cent of the pupil population. OFSTED has some statutory responsibilities for inspecting independent schools, but this review does not report on this work. There are also relatively small numbers of pupils outside of the traditional school system, generally referred to as pupils "educated otherwise", perhaps being taught at home by their parents. In addition, there are excluded pupils, pupils in referral units, pupils for whom home tuition is provided, and pupils being educated in hospital schools or by social services. It is hard to establish a precise figure for the number of pupils falling into these categories, but it is probably about 8,000.

While the large majority of pupils are educated in local education authority maintained, non-denominational, combined infant and junior schools, there is some variation in the types of school.

As illustrated in Chart 1, 9 per cent of primary schools are first schools, with pupils usually transferring at eight or nine (the end of Year 3 or Year 4). Twelve per cent of schools are infant schools, with pupils transferring to junior schools at the end of Year 2. There are now only 191 middle "deemed primary" schools, with pupils transferring after Year 7.

Chart 2 shows that one in four schools (including grant maintained schools) has denominational links (either LEA controlled or voluntary aided status) with the Church of England; just under one in ten schools is Roman Catholic.

As indicated in Chart 3, 62 per cent of schools are LEA maintained, and under 3 per cent are grant maintained. Of the schools with denominational links, 57 per cent are voluntary aided, 43 per cent voluntary controlled. In terms of the numbers of pupils, 64 per cent are in through primary (infant and junior combined) schools, and 10 per cent are in first or middle schools. Seventy-two per cent of pupils are in non-denominational schools, 17 per cent in schools with Church of England status and 10 per cent in Roman Catholic schools. Seventy per cent of pupils are in LEA maintained schools, 3 per cent in grant maintained schools, 17 per cent in voluntary aided schools and 10 per cent in voluntary controlled schools.

Chart 4 illustrates the considerable variation in the size of primary schools; 3.3 per cent of schools have less than 50 pupils on roll.

For just under 7 per cent of the pupil population English is an additional language (EAL); these pupils attend in any significant numbers about one-quarter of schools. Four-fifths of primary schools have less than 5 per cent of EAL pupils; 6 per cent of schools have over 40 per cent of EAL pupils.

In 1998 the percentage of pupils identified by schools as having special educational needs, and included on their registers of special educational needs, was 19.9. Over the period of the review, the percentage of pupils in mainstream primary schools with Statements of Special Educational Need has risen slightly, from 1.2 per cent in 1994 to 1.5 per cent in 1998. Roughly twice as many pupils in junior schools have Statements of Special Educational Need than in infant schools.

The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals has remained relatively steady, averaging about 24 per cent of the pupil

population. The percentage has been slightly higher in infant schools than primary schools. By the end of the four-year period, there had been an increase of six percentage points in the number of schools with up to 10 per cent free school meals; the changes are illustrated in Chart 5.

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is not, of course, evenly distributed throughout primary schools. For example, 41 per cent of schools have 10 per cent or less of their pupils eligible for free school meals, whereas around 11 per cent of schools have over 40 per cent of their pupils eligible for free school meals.

The number of full-time equivalent qualified teachers remained virtually unchanged over the period 1994 to 1998, reaching 181,394 in 1998. Ten per cent of these teachers are headteachers. There are considerably more women teachers than men teachers: 152,764 women in 1998, compared with 28,630 men. In other words, only 16 per cent of teachers in primary schools are men. Furthermore, the number of male teachers has fallen by 2,000 over the four years, and continues to decline as a proportion of the teaching force.

Over the four-year period there has been a significant change in the balance between men and women headteachers. In 1994 there were nearly equal numbers of men and women headteachers: 9,247 men, 9,435 women. By 1998, however, the number and proportion of women headteachers had risen considerably: 7,951 men, 10,362 women. As a proportion, about 57 per cent of headteachers are women, compared with 50.5 per cent in 1994.

The major change in staffing over the four years has been in education support staff. Numbers have increased significantly, by about 40 per cent, from 41,117 in 1994 to 58,055 in 1998. There have been increases in the numbers of most categories of education support staff; there are now 29 per cent more nursery assistants, and 52 per cent more special needs support staff. The numbers of support staff for minority ethnic pupils have risen by 35 per cent over the last two years. There has also been a rise of about 13 per cent in the number of administrative or clerical staff, reaching a total of 19,565 in 1998, of which the majority were secretaries, but an increasing number (about 1,500) were bursars.

English primary schools, then, are extremely diverse: in size, age range, location, population; in buildings, resources, staffing and traditions; and in links with churches and local authorities. While it is possible to construct a statistically average primary school, it is misleading to assume that there is such a thing as a typical primary school.

**Chart 1 : Types of school as at 1998**

**Chart 2 : Denomination as at 1998**

**Chart 3 : Types of control of schools as at 1998**

**Chart 4 : Numbers on roll in primary schools (January 1998)**

**Chart 5 : Primary schools banded by number of pupils eligible for free school meals, 1995 and 1998**

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# Chapter 3

## EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS: AN OVERVIEW

### 3.1 National Curriculum test results

Since 1995 all maintained schools have been required to test pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, and the national figures have been reported annually by the DfEE. Devising annual tests with different test items that set the same standard each year poses very considerable challenges. Despite these, the tests are now firmly established in primary schools and provide an increasingly reliable picture of attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Test results are used to identify the National Curriculum level that pupils have achieved. They are also used by inspectors as one of the key criteria against which to judge pupils' progress and a school's effectiveness.

Initially, Level 2 at Key Stage 1 and Level 4 at Key Stage 2 were the levels that "average pupils" were expected to reach at the end of the respective key stage. The proportion of "average pupils" who should achieve these levels was not identified, but in 1995 and 1996 these levels were reported as the levels expected of the "typical pupil". Then, in 1998, the Government set national targets for English and mathematics, to be achieved by the year 2002. These targets identified the proportions of pupils to achieve Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2: 80 per cent in English, and 75 per cent in mathematics. These figures are much higher than those previously achieved, and present a formidable challenge for schools. However, the importance to be given to literacy and numeracy is reflected in these targets. The basic skills of literacy and numeracy are so vital to the continuing education of pupils that in future the large majority of pupils should achieve what was expected of "average pupils" only five years ago.

#### Standards at Key Stage 1

Charts 6, 7 and 8 show pupils' performance in the Key Stage 1 tests over the past four years. The percentage of pupils reaching Level 2 (the level expected of seven-year-olds) has remained constant at about 80 per cent in reading and writing. In spelling, in 1995 and 1998, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 2 was 66 per cent, significantly lower than the proportions for reading and writing. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 2 has increased steadily but not greatly, reaching 84 per cent in 1998. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics, but in reading, writing and spelling at Key Stage 1, girls do substantially better. The difference in the number of girls and boys reaching Level 2 is about 10 percentage points, and this gap shows no signs of narrowing. It indicates that the underachievement of boys in literacy begins in the first few years of their education, and eventually this leads to many boys transferring to secondary schools with weak literacy skills that are often insufficient to cope with the demands of the secondary curriculum.

While the fact that four in five pupils reach Level 2 is in many ways encouraging, three points need to be made. First, one in five pupils does not reach this basic threshold. Second, Level 2 covers a wide range of attainment. It is subdivided into three grades, namely 2A, 2B and 2C, with 2A being the most demanding. However, many of the pupils who reach Level 2C at Key Stage 1 do not go on to reach Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2; the QCA has recently recommended that schools should look on grade 2B as the expected level of attainment for most children at the end of Key Stage 1. In 1998, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 2B or above was comparable to that of pupils reaching Level 4+ at the end of Key Stage 2. Third, there has been no appreciable improvement in standards in English at Key Stage 1, as measured by the national tests, over the last four years; many schools with Key Stage 1 pupils are not affected by the national targets because they are Key Stage 1 schools only.

**Chart 6 : Percentage of pupils achieving each level in the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum test/task (English: reading)**

**Chart 7 : Percentage of pupils achieving each level in the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum test/task (English: writing) 199598**

**Chart 8 : Percentage of pupils achieving each level in the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum test/task (mathematics) 199598**

**Standards at Key Stage 2**

Charts 9, 10 and 11 show pupils' performance in the Key Stage 2 tests in English, mathematics and science. A number of key points stand out. There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 in mathematics and English. This proportion has increased by about 15 percentage points over the four years: a similar improvement is needed over the next four-year period if Government targets are to be met by the year 2002. It is a matter of concern that the trend of improvement has weakened in 1998. This is particularly the case in mathematics, where the proportion reaching Level 4 fell in 1998, in part due to the additional demands of the new mental arithmetic test. There has also been some increase in the proportion of pupils achieving Level 3 or better, but about one in ten pupils still leaves primary school without having achieved Level 3.

Within English, there are considerable differences in test results for reading and writing at Key Stage 2. Writing is significantly weaker. Information on these components of English has only been available for the last two years, but in 1998 71 per cent of pupils achieved Level 4 for reading but only 53 per cent for writing. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls in English is wider than at Key Stage 1, and this gap has not reduced over the last four years. The differential achievement of boys and girls in the Key Stage 2 English tests is illustrated, for 1998, in Charts 12 and 13. Boys' achievement in writing is particularly weak, with only 45 per cent reaching Level 4 in Key Stage 2. This pulls down the overall performance of eleven-year-old pupils. It follows that the improvement of boys' writing will be of crucial importance if the Government's targets for English are to be achieved.

**Chart 9 : Percentage of pupils achieving each level in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test (English) 199598**

**Chart 10 : Percentage of pupils achieving each level in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test (mathematics) 199598**

**Chart 11 : Percentage of pupils achieving each level in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test (science) 199598**

**Chart 12 : 1998 Key Stage 2 test results for reading**

**Chart 13 : 1998 Key Stage 2 test results for writing**

## 3.2 Inspection evidence on achievement

Inspection also provides evidence of improvement in the standards achieved by pupils over the last four years, although changes in the inspection Framework make direct comparisons difficult. In 1994/95 inspectors judged that standards of achievement, taking account of pupils' capabilities, were unsatisfactory or poor, and that there was therefore substantial underachievement, in one in ten schools at Key Stage 1 and one in six at Key Stage 2. In the revised Framework used since 1996, the judgement that is closest to standards taking account of pupils' capabilities is the judgement of progress. In 1997/98 inspectors judged that pupils made good overall progress and achieved well in three in ten schools at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In about six in ten schools pupils made satisfactory progress, but there was substantial underachievement in one in 14 schools at Key Stage 1 and one in ten at Key Stage 2.

Charts 14 and 15 illustrate that pupils are learning more in lessons. Chart 14 shows the progress made in lessons for 1997/98. Chart 15 shows the proportion of lessons in which progress was judged to be good in the last two years of the review period. Two points stand out. First, progress varies as pupils move through the different years in a primary school. Pupils make good progress in the earlier years, but there is a dip in Years 3 and 4, the beginning of Key Stage 2. Progress then improves and is greatest in Year 6, perhaps because this is where primary schools often deploy their strongest teachers and where the National Curriculum tests now provide a sharp focus for the work. The second point is that, across all years, pupils made more progress in 1997/98 than in 1996/97.

The rate of progress made by pupils varies considerably between subjects. Charts 16 and 17 show progress for both key stages



in the National Curriculum subjects and religious education for 1997/98. Pupils are now making the most progress in the core subjects, reflecting the high and appropriate priority that schools are now giving to these subjects. Despite this additional attention to the core subjects, there is no evidence of a decline in the non-core subjects, with the exception of information technology. Inspectors report that standards achieved by pupils have risen gradually in most subjects over the last four years. Nevertheless, problems clearly remain with the rates of progress in some subjects. There is, for example, substantial underachievement at Key Stage 2 in design and technology in over one in four schools and in information technology in over four in ten schools. Progress in religious education and geography is good in less than one-quarter of the schools.

**Chart 14 : Lessons in primary schools 1997/98: progress**

**Chart 15 : Percentage of lessons with good or better progress, comparing 1996/97 and 1997/98**

**Chart 16 : Progress in Key Stage 1 in 1997/98**

**Chart 17 : Progress in Key Stage 2 in 1997/98**

## 3.3 Variation in the results achieved by primary schools

The variation in the results achieved by different primary schools is striking, and is illustrated in Chart 18. The average National Curriculum level for a sample of primary schools has been plotted against eligibility for free school meals, which remains a useful indicator of the level of disadvantage in a school. The chart shows that as disadvantage increases, the achievement of pupils reduces significantly. However, for any particular level of eligibility for free school meals the achievement of pupils varies considerably, by about one National Curriculum level overall. Given that pupils are expected to progress at about one level every two years, this means that pupils in low-achieving schools are about two years behind pupils in schools with similar levels of disadvantage that achieve well.

A further analysis of similar schools confirms this variation. Chart 19 shows a group of schools with similar characteristics across a number of indicators: number on roll; eligibility for free school meals; proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs; and the proportion of pupils with English as an additional language. For this group of schools the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 ranged from about 16 per cent to 65 per cent.

**Chart 18 : Average level achieved by pupils in 1998 Key Stage 2 tests against eligibility for free school meals for a random selection of primary schools**

**Chart 19 : Percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or above at Key Stage 2 English in 1998 in a sample of 13 schools with similar characteristics**

## 3.4 Schools serving disadvantaged areas

Few schools with high levels of disadvantage achieve results which are above the national average. The link between low attainment and disadvantage remains strong and persistent. However, as Chart 20 shows, between 1995 and 1998 schools with high levels of disadvantage have made a significantly larger increase than other schools in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 at Key Stage 2. While these schools have had considerable scope for improvement and many have a long way to go before they reach the national average, it is encouraging that their results are rising, and rising faster than results in more advantaged schools.

**Chart 20 : Difference between 1995 and 1998 Key Stage 2 English Level 4+ results by average free school meal bands**

## 3.5 The achievement of pupils from ethnic minorities

The standards achieved by pupils from ethnic minorities have improved over the last four years. Although the performance of Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils in the early years of schooling remains depressed, once they become proficient in the



English language their attainment often matches or exceeds that of English first language pupils from similar backgrounds. For example, the OFSTED report on the teaching of reading in 45 inner-London primary schools<sup>6</sup> showed that Bangladeshi pupils achieved lower standards in Year 2 than any other minority ethnic group, but that they made good progress and by the end of Key Stage 2 their performance was very similar to other groups. White pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds performed less well overall than any other group. More recent evidence from the National Literacy Project showed that no ethnic minority group had a significantly lower performance than the average. Black Caribbean pupils, who often underachieve in secondary schools, generally make a sound start in primary schools.

In some areas, there are specific concerns about the underachievement of other ethnic minority groups, such as pupils of Turkish and Somali origin. Sometimes this is part of a more general anxiety about the underachievement of refugee pupils. Gypsy Traveller pupils are frequently hampered by poor attendance and are the group most at risk in the education system. Not surprisingly, when they are able to benefit from a settled period in a primary school, their progress improves, sometimes markedly.

## 3.6 International comparisons

An important impetus to the drive to "raise standards" has been given by the increasing availability of international comparisons of educational attainment, and by the increasing awareness of different approaches to teaching across the world. Significantly different systems of education appear to yield significantly different outcomes in terms of academic achievement.

Approaches observed in other countries have sometimes been tried in England. The approach to teaching reading known as "Reading Recovery" was developed in New Zealand and received some UK Government funding for a pilot project in England. The Gatsby Mathematics Project used in Barking and Dagenham is based on a system followed in Swiss primary schools. Furthermore, several study visits have been made by HMI, for example to Hungary, the Czech Republic and Holland, and a review of international surveys of educational achievement was commissioned by OFSTED from David Reynolds and Shaun Farrell.<sup>7</sup>

Reynolds and Farrell acknowledged the difficulties in making international comparisons. It is not easy to compare the performance in different countries of similarly aged pupils in the same skills, bodies of knowledge or tests. It is also not easy to disentangle the relative impact of a range of non-educational influences on the achievement of pupils: social, cultural, economic and familial factors are of major importance in explaining performance. Reynolds and Farrell focused on mathematics and science, subjects on which wider, cultural influences might be assumed to be least marked. They concluded that the educational systems of different societies are key factors in determining their educational achievement. For England, the comparative studies suggest<sup>8</sup> that:

- performance in science is rather better than that in mathematics;
- overall performance in mathematics in England is relatively weak, with strengths in data handling and geometry, and considerable weaknesses in arithmetic and number operations;
- this performance deteriorated relative to other countries between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s;
- English children show a very wide range of achievement, with a greater proportion of low-achieving pupils than many of our economic counterparts.

Despite all the problems of comparability, the conclusion remains that the performance of English children, at the ages of nine and thirteen in important aspects of the core subjects, excluding science, is disappointing when compared with that of children of the same age in many other countries, particularly some on the Pacific Rim (China, Korea, Taiwan) but also some closer to home (Switzerland, the former USSR, Hungary).

It is also a feature of the English system that formal education, including the teaching of computation, reading and writing, starts earlier than in most other societies, and that English students spend longer in compulsory schooling than is often the case elsewhere.

Evidence from this review of international surveys is supported by the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)<sup>9</sup> of pupil performance, which again points to long-standing weaknesses in the performance of English nine- and thirteen-year-olds, particularly in number. This growing weight of evidence has been to a large extent behind the increased focus on numeracy, underpinned by, for example, surveys such as The Teaching of Number in Three Inner-urban LEAs<sup>10</sup> by

HMI.

Inevitably much debate has been prompted by such international comparisons, seeking answers to questions such as:

- what are the reasons for the superior performance of Pacific Rim countries?
- what are the reasons for the superior performance of certain European countries as against England?
- what are the reasons for poor performance that relate to the nature of the English educational system?

It is widely agreed that there are a variety of factors responsible for the high achievement scores of Pacific Rim pupils. Among the cultural factors suggested are the high status of teachers, the emphasis on effort and working hard, the high aspirations of parents for their children, the high calibre of newly trained teachers and the high level of commitment from children keen to do well.

Among the **systemic** factors thought to be important are the higher quantities of school time (for example, the school years in Korea and Taiwan have 222 days, compared with 190 in England); greater emphasis on homework; the prevalent belief that all children are able to acquire certain core skills in core subjects, and that there should be no "trailing edge" of low-performing pupils; and a concentration on a small number of attainable academic goals.

Important **school** factors are the use of mixed-ability classes in the early years at school ("basic skills in an egalitarian setting"<sup>11</sup>); the use of specialist teachers; the possibility of teachers working collaboratively with each other, frequent testing of students' skills in core subjects; and direct quality monitoring of the work of the teachers by the principal.

Key **classroom** factors include mechanisms to ensure that things are taught thoroughly and learned first time round; the use of the same textbooks by all children, channelling teachers' energies into classroom instruction and the marking of homework; and a "well ordered rhythm to the school day",<sup>12</sup> with frequent breaks and well managed lessons.

While some of the factors described above have been outside the immediate control of those responsible for shaping educational policy and practice, some are not. It is relatively easy to learn from school and classroom practice, and visits by educationalists including HMI to observe successful practice in some European countries are influencing developments such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. For example, from Switzerland<sup>13</sup> is noted the high proportion of high-quality, interactive, whole-class teaching; the use of textbooks linked to substantial teachers' manuals; the coherent planning of work; and a concentration in primary schools upon basic number work. From Hungary<sup>14</sup> is noted more formal classroom teaching, with more teacher direction, and more whole-class interactive instruction; high expectations and greater lesson pace; and national guidelines that expect teachers to move to advanced topics quickly.

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**6***The Teaching of Reading in 45 Inner London Primary Schools*. OFSTED, 1996.

**7** Reynolds, D and Farrell, S (1996) *Worlds Apart? A review of international surveys of educational achievement involving England*. London: HMSO

**8** Mathematical studies:

1964 *The IEA First International Mathematical Study* (FIMS)

1982/83 *The IEA Second International Mathematics Study* (SIMS)

1988 *The IAEP First International Assessment of Mathematics* (IAEPM 1)

1990 *The IAEP Second International Assessment of Mathematics* (IAEPM 2)

Science studies:

1970/72 *The IEA First International Science Study* (FISS)

1983/85 *The IEA Second International Science Study* (SISS)

1988 *The IAEP First International Assessment of Science* (IAEPS 1)

1990 *The IAEP Second International Assessment of Science* (IAEPS 2)

**9***Third International Mathematics and Science Study*. NFER, 1996 and 1997.

**10** *The Teaching of Number in Three Inner-urban LEAs*. OFSTED, 1997.

**11** Reynolds and Farrell, *ibid*, p 55.

**12** Reynolds and Farrell, *ibid*, p 55.

**13** Bierhoff, H J, (1996) *Laying the Foundation of Numeracy: A Comparison of Primary School Textbooks in Britain, Germany and Switzerland*. London: National Institute for Economic and Social Research.

**14** Burghes, D, "Britain gets a minus in maths", *Sunday Times*, 14 May 1995.

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## Chapter 4

# THE QUALITY OF TEACHING

## 4.1 The quality and impact of teaching

Since the Education Reform Act 1988, primary schools have had to respond to a climate that has become far more focused on outcomes in terms of pupil achievement than ever before. The present Government's "standards agenda" has strongly reinforced the need to combat underachievement. Inspection findings for primary schools over the last four years clearly show that the most important input within the control of the school for promoting high achievement is the quality of the teaching. Indeed, the fact that the vast majority of that teaching for a given class is in the hands of one teacher for all or nearly all of a school year places a considerable responsibility upon the primary school class teacher.

Good teaching in primary schools makes a very significant difference. For example, in schools with the lowest proportion of good teaching, about 10 per cent fewer pupils reached Level 4 compared with pupils in a matched sample of schools in similar socio-economic circumstances and an above-average proportion of good teaching.

The 1978 report<sup>15</sup> contrasted "traditional" with "progressive", and "formal" with "informal" styles of teaching. Teaching styles were defined as either "mainly didactic" or "mainly exploratory". By 1994 the task of the primary school classroom teacher had been redefined, driven largely by the implementation of the subject-based National Curriculum. The curriculum had been defined in terms of the content, skills and concepts to be learned and taught, the National Curriculum being a common curriculum for everyone, "from Penrith to Penzance" in the words of the then Secretary of State. The consequences have been demanding of teachers' time and expertise and have led to an increased emphasis on planning, to ensure that the specified programmes of study are covered; an increased focus on separate subjects rather than topics which encompass elements of several subjects; greater precision to assessment; and a greater willingness to consider what form of teaching is likely to be the most appropriate for a given objective or group of pupils.

The language used to describe teaching has changed too. There are now fewer references to the "exploratory work" and "extended studies" arising from "spontaneous incidents", which featured in inspection reports of 20 years ago. Inspection reports now make explicit references to features of teaching such as "demonstration" and "instruction". The curriculum is quite clearly now being "taught". This, in turn, has raised the importance of considering how a subject is best taught, reinforcing the crucial role of effective teaching in achieving high standards across a broad and balanced curriculum.

Since the publication of the first Handbook for the Inspection of Schools<sup>16</sup> the central importance of teachers and their teaching has been recognised, and the criteria which summarise the key components of the quality of teaching have been defined and published:

*Teaching quality is to be judged by whether clear goals are set for the group and for individuals, by the extent to which activities are well-planned and presented in a range of ways, have suitable content, and engage and motivate all pupils enabling them to make progress at an appropriate pace, and by the extent of arrangements to improve teaching quality.*<sup>17</sup>

The guidance provided in the first inspection Handbook set out the evaluation criteria, amplified to illustrate features of good and unsatisfactory teaching. Good teaching was described in these terms:

*Where teaching is good pupils acquire knowledge, skills and understanding progressively and at a good pace. The lessons have clear aims and purposes. They cater appropriately for the learning of pupils of differing abilities and interests, and ensure the full participation of all. The teaching methods suit the topic or subject as well as the pupils; the conduct of the lessons signals high expectations of all pupils and sets high but attainable challenges. There is regular feedback which helps pupils to make progress, both through thoughtful marking and discussion of work with pupils. Relationships are positive and promote pupils' motivation. National Curriculum attainment targets and programmes of study are taken fully into account.*

*Where appropriate, homework which extends or complements the work done in lessons, is set regularly.*<sup>18</sup>

The current Guidance on the Inspection of Nursery and Primary Schools<sup>19</sup> is even more clear in its emphasis on the importance of teaching:

*Teaching is the major factor contributing to pupils' attainment, progress and response. Evaluation of the quality and impact of teaching is central to inspection.*<sup>20</sup>

The Handbook requires inspectors to judge<sup>21</sup> the extent to which teachers:

- have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subjects or areas that they teach;
- set high expectations so as to challenge pupils and deepen the pupils' knowledge and understanding;
- plan effectively;
- employ methods and organisational strategies which match curricular objectives and the needs of all pupils;
- manage pupils well and achieve high standards of discipline;
- use time and resources effectively;
- assess pupils' work thoroughly and constructively, and use assessments to inform teaching;
- use homework effectively to reinforce and/or extend what is learned in school.

## 4.2 The quality of teaching: inspection evidence

Notwithstanding changes to the grading system and adjustments to the evaluation criteria, it is clear that over the four years of the inspection programme the quality of teaching has improved. In 1994/95, in around two in five lessons the teaching was good or very good, in two in five lessons the teaching was sound, and in one in five lessons the teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. Teaching was poorer in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1, and the weakest teaching of all was in Years 3 and 4, where 22 per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory.

Chart 21 shows that by 1997/98 the picture had changed; the proportion of good teaching had risen at Key Stage 2 to over one-half (53 per cent) and that of unsatisfactory teaching had fallen to one in 14 primary schools (7 per cent). This improvement is striking: nevertheless, the figures suggest that there are still over a quarter of a million pupils in schools where the teaching is unsatisfactory, and around two million pupils in schools where the teaching is no better than sound. Given that the Government's targets for English and mathematics for 2002 are demanding and that most schools have some way to go before these are met, it is clear that there can be no relaxation in the drive to raise standards by improving the quality of teaching. It is unlikely that the "sound" teaching seen in many schools will be sufficient to enable them to achieve the ambitious targets which have been set.

### **Chart 21 : Teaching in primary schools 1996/97 and 1997/98**

#### **The quality of teaching in subjects**

Charts 22 and 23 illustrate that the overall improvement in the quality of teaching applies to the teaching of almost all subjects.

For the first time, in 1997/98 the quality of the teaching of the three core subjects was better than the teaching of any other subjects, and the quality of the teaching of English and mathematics was better than that of science, at both key stages. The teaching of English and mathematics is now good in just over half the schools at Key Stage 2. This reflects a significant improvement since 1994/95, when the teaching of mathematics and English was good in only just over one-third of schools and was poor in one in five schools.

Several other features stand out. First, despite a general concern being voiced about the teaching of the arts and physical education in state schools, the quality of the teaching of music, art and physical education is very rarely weak and is better

than the teaching of geography, history and religious education. Second, the quality of the teaching of religious education has improved over the four-year period, assisted considerably by the new style of Agreed Syllabus, recognisably in line in many cases with the format of the National Curriculum, with attainment targets and levels to be achieved. Third, the teaching of technology, whether design and technology or information technology, remains weaker than any other subject. If anything, the quality of the teaching of technology is deteriorating. In many schools other priorities are seen as more pressing, or the demands of increasingly sophisticated technology overwhelm or are ignored by teachers without sufficient training and support in the subject.

**Chart 22 : Quality of teaching by subject: 1994/95**

**Chart 23 : Quality of teaching by subject: 1997/98**

### **The quality of teaching by year group**

Charts 24 and 25 illustrate that the four-year period has seen not only an improvement in the teaching of most subjects, but also an improvement within all year groups. The proportion of poor teaching has fallen throughout primary schools and the proportion of good teaching has risen. The best teaching is reported, throughout the period, in nursery classes and classes with reception-age pupils, and in Year 6. The weakest teaching remains in Years 3 and 4, although the percentage of weak lessons seen in these year groups has halved.

**Chart 24 : Quality of teaching by year group 1994/95**

**Chart 25 : Quality of teaching by year group 1997/98**

### **The quality of the teaching of newly qualified teachers**

Chart 26 shows the difference between qualified teachers who have taught for more than one year and newly qualified teachers. As expected, more experienced teachers teach better than newly qualified teachers. The gap in performance is similar across all subjects and encouragingly small.

**Chart 26 : Quality of teaching in primary schools: qualified teachers with more than one year's experience and newly qualified teachers**

## **4.3 The teaching of minority ethnic pupils<sup>22</sup>**

Annual Reports over the past four years have generally reported positively on the provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language, and on the impact of the extra support provided under Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966. For example, from 1996/97:

*When Section 11 staff are well deployed they have an important and positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The work of bilingual assistants and teachers continues to be greatly valued by schools, especially in three areas: the support of young or early stage learners of English; the improvement of home/school relationships; and the advice they can give in the investigation of bilingual pupils thought to have special educational needs.*

Most schools are engaged in a wide range of initiatives to improve provision and raise attainment, but few monitor the impact of these activities systematically and rarely do they have a specific ethnic focus. Most schools have equal opportunities policies and, especially in inner-city schools, policies on education for diversity. There is, however, too much variation in the way they are implemented and how they influence the work of the school. Sound intentions are not always translated into effective day-to-day practice. Saying that prejudice is unacceptable is not helpful unless it is backed up by agreed procedures for dealing with racist behaviour. Schools with Gypsy Traveller or Pakistani pupils seem particularly slow to underpin policies with systems to translate them into action.

In order to identify underachievement, diagnose need and take action, schools need accurate information about aspects of pupils' performance. Very few primary schools currently make effective use of the increasing amounts of data available to raise the attainment of minority ethnic pupils. Understandably, there is some fear of reducing expectations held by teachers of pupils of some ethnic minority groups; there are also some difficulties in establishing appropriate ethnic group categories.

Increasingly, local education authorities are providing their schools with an analysis of their National Curriculum assessment results, but the nature of this analysis varies considerably, with only a minority (mostly in urban and metropolitan areas)



including ethnic data. Even where schools do receive good-quality data analysed by ethnicity, few make constructive use of it. There is a need for further training and guidance on how to analyse and respond to such information.

A majority of schools, when pressed to comment on the attainment of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, rely on "hunches" or "general impressions"; when tested, however, these were sometimes proved wrong and revealed the presence of unhelpful stereotypes.

At a time of considerable educational change, involving for many schools a change of approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy, many primary schools are implementing strategies designed to raise the attainment of all pupils irrespective of their ethnicity. Schools will need to evaluate how effective these strategies are for particular groups of pupils, for example those with low or even non-existent levels of spoken English. They will need to consider with even more care than in the past how to deploy their specialist bilingual and Section 11 staff in order to make the most effective use of their skills.

Three important messages emerge from inspection evidence. First, there is a need to analyse data about attainment, attendance and behaviour and to respond precisely to the outcomes of the analysis; second, there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies for improving the attainment of different groups of pupils; and, third, given that the attainment of bilingual pupils is measurably improved when they have attained fluency in the English language, teaching pupils to be literate in English should be given the highest priority in all schools.

## 4.4 Taught time

The total teaching time per week varies markedly from school to school. This feature inevitably begs the question of what is the relationship between the amount of taught time and the quality and standards of pupils' work. The overall number of lesson hours is not prescribed, although guidance is given.<sup>23</sup> It is suggested that governing bodies of all maintained schools should take as a general rule to good practice:

- 21 hours for pupils aged five to seven;
- 23.5 hours for pupils aged eight to eleven.

Data provided by schools about the amount of taught time per week is not always based on immediately comparable data, as schools interpret the phrase "taught time" in a number of different ways. There is often uncertainty about what should be included or excluded in the statistics: for example, acts of worship, registration time, movement between classes, and so on.

Charts 27 and 28 show the extent of the variation in 1997/98. The charts suggest that almost one in five schools at Key Stage 1 and three-fifths of the schools at Key Stage 2 teach less than the suggested number of hours each week. There are signs, however, that for some pupils in some schools the length of the school day is being extended through regular homework and "homework clubs", after-school supported study and, in addition, summer schools.

Few schools have a clear rationale for the allocation of time to subjects. In a survey into taught time conducted by HMI,<sup>24</sup> only one in ten schools had attempted to prescribe how much time should be spent teaching each subject and none had monitored actual practice. It seems likely that schools will now be in a better position to report how time is allocated, assisted by the move to teach subjects discretely and the more precise identification of the time spent teaching literacy and numeracy.

In all of the primary schools surveyed, the reported time spent on teaching the core subjects averaged 57 per cent of the taught time, but varied from 40 per cent to 75 per cent. Schools found it particularly difficult to define how much time was spent teaching English; often they felt that much of the work in other subjects was contributing directly to progress in English. During Key Stage 2, two-thirds of schools spent between 4.5 and 6.0 hours on English; between 4.0 and 5.1 hours on mathematics; and between 2.6 and 3.6 hours on science.

The time spent on non-teaching activities varied considerably; on average, over two hours each week were spent on registration and movement around school. While time for this is clearly necessary, schools need to ensure that it is not excessive, since the opportunity costs are considerable and teachers feel under pressure to "fit in" all the subject requirements.

There is little clear relationship between the total amount of taught time and overall achievement in terms of test results in the core subjects; inspection evidence suggests that the critical factor is how effectively time is used within the school day. Where the amount of taught time was relatively low, however, schools were more likely to allocate insufficient time to some subjects and to have imbalances within and between subjects.

Despite inconclusive evidence about the relationship between the length of taught time and pupils' educational achievement, it is clear that an adequate amount of time for a given subject is a necessary but not sufficient condition for producing work of quality. It is equally clear that where taught time is well below the recommended minima, schools often give their pupils short change in terms of the breadth, depth and balance of the curriculum provided.

**Chart 27 : Total teaching time per week for Key Stage 1 (1997/98)**

**Chart 28 : Total teaching time per week for Key Stage 2 (1997/98)**

## 4.5 The characteristics of good teaching

The principal themes of this section are the characteristics of good teaching, the features of which are the most important variables within the control of a school. The current inspection Framework sets out the criteria by which teaching is to be judged. Chart 29 shows the overall strengths and weaknesses of the teaching at Key Stages 1 and 2, and the changes usually improvements over the last two years.

The changes are striking, particularly over the past two years. In overall terms there is now less poor teaching and more good teaching than in 1996/97. Teachers' planning has improved considerably, more so at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1; expectations are higher; and there have also been considerable improvements in the management of pupils, in the choice of methods and organisation, and in the use of time and resources. Although still weak, teachers' day-to-day assessment and their use of homework have also improved, although there is a long way to go before these aspects of teaching are handled as competently as the rest.

In schools where the teaching is judged to be good or very good overall, it is clear that inspectors are making this judgement on the basis of a combination of strengths which together promote high standards. Typically, there is a consistently, high quality throughout the school. For example, **Wellesley First School** in Norwich:

Teaching is a strength of the school. It has several effective features:

- teachers and headteacher have high expectations;
- the whole staff plan the year's programme together. As a result their individual lesson planning benefits, helping to create a clear pattern of development and progress for the children;
- teachers assess their own teaching and the work of individual children in each lesson so they may plan future work better. They keep very good records of what children achieve. Effective assessment makes them aware of what the children know, understand and can already do;
- lessons have a clear structure, which the children understand and can follow;
- teachers have good knowledge in most subjects and support each other in subjects in which they feel less qualified;
- teachers explain very carefully to classroom assistants and volunteer adults what they are expected to do, especially in relation to children with special educational needs;
- teachers interact well with the children's learning and have good relationships with them;
- the whole school sets children the values and standards required and encourages effort in them.

**Chart 29 : Quality of teaching 1996/97 and 1997/98: Key Stages 1 and 2**

### Subject knowledge

Teachers' subject knowledge is strongly associated with high standards of pupils' achievement. In virtually all of the lessons where standards are good or very good, teachers' subject knowledge is judged to be satisfactory or good. Where teachers have good subject knowledge, they are more confident in planning and implementing work, more skilled at asking relevant questions, providing explanations and using the National Curriculum programmes of study, and more successful in providing demanding work for the more able pupils. They also have a good range of analogies and alternatives for presenting and illustrating knowledge so that pupils can understand the content of the subject. Inspection evidence indicates that in over two-fifths of the unsatisfactory and in half of the poor lessons, teachers' weak knowledge of the subject is a significant factor in pupils' low attainment. In these lessons, the teachers often have only a limited familiarity with the programmes of study,



concentrate on the transmission of factual information and focus their work on too narrow a range of National Curriculum levels. In the worst examples, incorrect information is given to pupils.<sup>25</sup>

The issues of subject expertise, teaching roles and staff deployment were highlighted in *Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools*,<sup>26</sup> which proposed that every primary school should, in principle, have direct access to specialist expertise in all National Curriculum subjects and in religious education. It concluded that:

*Primary teaching roles are currently too rigidly conceived and much greater flexibility in staff deployment is needed. We recommend the introduction of semi-specialist and specialist teaching to primary schools to strengthen the existing role of class teacher and consultant. There is a particular case for concentrating specialist teaching at the upper end of Key Stage 2.*

This does, of course, run counter to the deep-seated commitment in English primary schools to the "one teacher, one class" organisation in which the pastoral role and the security of continuous contact with a single teacher are given a very high priority.

The demands placed on primary school teachers, particularly at Key Stage 2, in teaching ten subjects<sup>27</sup> and religious education have been recognised and considered by inspectors throughout the four-year period. Primary school classes almost always contain pupils with a wide range of attainment and often have pupils from more than one year group. It is usual for attainment towards the end of Key Stage 2 to range over three or four National Curriculum levels in the core subjects and to cover work as high as Level 5 and sometimes Level 6. The class teacher in a primary school has to meet far wider curricular requirements than subject teachers in secondary schools, usually without the support structures of a subject department, and with much less non-contact time.

These pressures have been reported in each of the last four Annual Reports from HMCI, for example:

*In over half of the schools, the teachers have a good command of the subjects they teach. The demands of subject knowledge do, however, become greater as pupils get older, and by Key Stage 2 teachers in one in eight schools have insufficient subject expertise, particularly in information technology, design and technology, mathematics, science and religious education. This prevents them from teaching key aspects of the subjects in sufficient depth.*<sup>28</sup>

*A lack of subject knowledge often limits teachers' objectives and the challenge for pupils. Some teachers, for example, steer away from more complex topics in science in which abler pupils could flourish. In teaching geography there is sometimes a reluctance to organise investigations of features of the local area. In religious education, when the teacher lacks sufficient knowledge of the beliefs and practices of the major religions, work often fails to convey the significance of religious belief for everyday life.*<sup>29</sup>

Inspection has shown a steady improvement in teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. As Chart 30 illustrates, by 1997/98, while the proportion of primary schools in which subject knowledge was good remained at about one-half of the schools, subject knowledge was judged to be weak in around one in 20 schools.

Not surprisingly, teachers' knowledge and understanding varies from subject to subject; the extent of this is illustrated in Charts 31 and 32. Encouragingly, class teachers' subject knowledge of English, mathematics and science is at least satisfactory in most schools, although the preparatory training courses for the National Literacy Project revealed a considerable need for teachers to receive more training in the teaching of reading, particularly phonological awareness. Modern languages are frequently taught by teachers with good knowledge of the chosen language, but the sample is small. The weaknesses of subject knowledge in design and technology, and above all in information technology, stand out starkly: in only one in five primary schools is there good subject expertise in information technology at Key Stage 2; in Key Stage 1 the figure is even lower, at around one in six.

The case is strongly made, therefore, that the attainment of high standards by pupils requires teaching by teachers who have a good grasp of the subject itself, fully understand the requirements of the National Curriculum, and know how to teach the subject effectively. Two further elements of subject expertise play their part. First, in primary schools subject expertise is often acquired through personal effort, interest and enthusiasm, rather than studying for a formal qualification. Second, the best teaching brings with it more than just subject expertise. For example, it remains the case that there are some teachers with good academic qualifications in a subject (they "know their stuff") but fail to teach it well. In other words, subject knowledge is a necessary but not sufficient condition of good teaching. The most successful teachers have a contagious enthusiasm for their subject.

Schools secure good subject expertise in a range of ways. For example, they identify strengths and weaknesses and seek to support teachers with gaps in their subject expertise through in-service training. They provide curricular support through detailed schemes of work which help teachers to secure progression in a subject. They conduct an audit of staff expertise and make as much use as they can of new appointments to fill gaps in particular subjects. They also seek to make the best use of the expertise at their disposal.

**Chart 30 : Teachers' knowledge and understanding, 1997/98**

**Chart 31 : Teachers' knowledge and understanding: KS1, 1997/98**

**Chart 32 : Teachers' knowledge and understanding: KS2, 1997/98**

**Using subject specialists to promote high standards at Key Stage 2**

A feature of the last four years has been a growing recognition of the considerable professional expertise to which schools have access, and the development of a range of strategies to make use of this expertise. It has, however, been one thing to acknowledge the expertise available; it is another to make the best use of it. In 1996/97 HMI were asked to investigate how schools approach these issues;<sup>30</sup> some schools are clearly more successful than others in using specialist knowledge to promote high standards throughout the school rather than just in the class taught by the particular expert.

In summary, HMI found that

- the quality of the teaching of subject specialists was almost always better than that of non-specialists;
- features of the best teaching by specialists were a confident command of the subject, a driving pace to lessons and extremely ambitious and unusually high expectations, invariably met by pupils;
- the most successful approaches to using subject expertise involved a combination of direct subject teaching by a specialist, with strategies to enable the specialist to influence the work of the school as a whole;
- the most successful approaches were carefully managed and did not rely on ad hoc arrangements between staff;
- small schools were able to arrange for exchange of expertise with relative ease. They also recognised the telling impact which the use of a specialist could make in a short space of time;
- large schools were more likely to have teachers who did not have full-time class responsibilities, allowing for greater scope for deploying expertise; and they had greater access to a wider range of expertise;
- it was often the medium-sized schools, with around ten teachers, which found it most difficult to make effective use of subject specialists;
- the lack of non-contact time was the most significant constraint on the effective use of subject expertise in half the schools in the survey, no non-contact time at all was available for subject co-ordinators;
- the exchange of classes between teachers sometimes had an adverse effect, when pupils in the class of a skilled and sought-after subject specialist teacher suffered through receiving teaching of variable quality from other teachers.

There were notable exceptions, but the overall picture was disappointing and indicated a considerable underuse of talent: for example, physical education specialists limited in their contribution beyond their own class to some after-school games clubs; the theology graduate teaching religious education only to her own class; and teachers back from 20-day mathematics or science courses with little opportunity to influence practice in their subject beyond ordering and organising resources or writing guidelines.

**Expectations**

A recurrent theme of Annual Reports is that of the need to raise teachers' expectations. For example, from 1994/95:<sup>31</sup>

*Teachers should expect more of their pupils in all key stages. They set the right pace and degree of challenge and motivation in only a little over half of schools. Intellectual challenge is commonly weak in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. In many primary schools, teachers' expectations decline through the key stages. In Key Stage 2 they are too low in over a half of schools. In design and technology, for example, pupils are rarely called upon to use knowledge and understanding from other subjects, including science.*

*The technical vocabulary and design suggestions that Key Stage 2 pupils can deploy far exceed teachers' expectations.*

There are signs that expectations are rising. Nevertheless, by 1997/98 expectations were high in only two schools in five and were poor in one school in six at Key Stage 2. The raising of expectations remains one of the key issues still to be addressed properly. HMI inspection of the National Literacy Project revealed that the Framework for the teaching of reading and writing was helping teachers to raise their sights:

*In the vast majority of schools, the use of the Framework is producing a more consistent, whole-school approach to the planning and organisation of the Literacy Hour and has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.*<sup>32</sup>

Likewise, the National Numeracy Project has not only increased the enthusiasm that many teachers had for the teaching of mathematics, especially oral and mental work, but it also helped raise their expectations of what pupils could achieve.

### **Chart 33 : Teachers' expectations in primary schools 1996/97 and 1997/98**

Good teachers set high expectations because they have a good knowledge of the subject they are teaching. They know how to plan sequences of work to a sufficient depth and how to match the content to what the pupils already know. Good teachers also make their expectations explicit. For example, in **Elliston Infant School**, Cleethorpes:

*Teachers signal high expectations both of achievement and behaviour. They make it clear to the pupils what is expected of them, how much time is available and emphasise the importance of concentration on the task in hand.*

The themes of pace and challenge run through inspection reports when the teaching is predominantly good. For example, **Kea County Primary School** in Truro:

*In the best lessons the teachers have enthusiasm, a high expectation of the pupils and a good knowledge of the subject. In these lessons teachers use time very effectively and the emphasis is on pupils working hard but also having fun. Excellent lessons are well thought out and planning is clear, producing work that is interesting and purposeful. Pupils enjoy the quick pace and intellectual challenges of these lessons. In one particularly good science lesson in Key Stage 2, pupils made very good progress in designing their own experiments to measure the effects of exercise on heart rate and in their understanding of the reactions of the body. In many lessons there are good links to other subjects and pupils are challenged, extending their knowledge and understanding.*

While the pace of work expected of the pupils is a common theme in inspection reports when the teaching is good, an important factor about the pace of a good lesson is that it is determined by the teachers and not the pupils. There is more to expectations than just the setting of a lively pace. Pace and intellectual challenge, moreover, are not the same thing. The two usually go together, however, and generally contribute to the sustaining of interest in a subject and to the good use of time.

A demanding and fast pace is the characteristic of challenge most frequently commented upon, but the most effective teachers are able to vary the pace and adapt it according to the requirements of the lesson and the response from the pupils. Good teachers are prepared to slow down the pace of lessons to allow for pupils to respond, but are not afraid to accelerate it, for example during a period of direct instruction. One lesson note commented: "teacher managed pace well, at times injecting dramatic speed and then slowing it down to give the pupils opportunities to reflect on video and discuss with partner".

### **Setting**

One response of schools to the need to match work to levels of prior attainment has been to group pupils in sets for certain subjects. The grouping of pupils with similar attainment levels into sets is increasing. This is seen particularly in mathematics and English in Years 5 and 6. Setting reduces the range of attainment within a teaching group and consequently can help teachers to plan work more precisely and select appropriate teaching methods. Where inspectors refer to setting, their comments tend to be brief but in almost every case they are positive. For example, from **Christ Church CE Junior School**, Wolverhampton:

*In Year 6 pupils are set, according to ability, for English and mathematics. Setting, together with further differentiation for each group, results in work being finely matched to challenge pupils of all ability levels, including those with special educational needs.*

A radical solution to the questions of how to raise standards from an already high level has been taken at **Priory School**, Slough. The school serves an area of some social deprivation, including inner-city overspill. Standards are very high, well above average at both key stages, but the school believed there was scope for further improvement and brought in an external consultant to offer advice on what the school should do next. The developments have been radical, and have involved the use of setting and streaming, linked to the deployment of subject specialists throughout the school:<sup>33</sup>

*From Key Stage 1 onwards the pupils are streamed according to attainment, and each class is set demanding academic targets. At Key Stage 1, with the exception of music which is taught by specialists throughout, the classes are taught all subjects by their class teacher. In Years 5 and 6, pupils work in mixed-ability classes for some subjects, but for the core subjects they are taught in attainment-related sets. The largest sets are the "top" sets, with the lower sets having smaller numbers. Extra staffing enables the three classes per year to be split into four sets for the core subjects.*

*In the core subjects the top sets are taught by subject specialists. This enables the most able pupils to be taught by subject specialists who can handle not only the technical understanding required by the more complex programmes of study, but also can answer the challenging questions from these able groups. The quality of the teaching in these sets is very high. It is not unusual to see pupils working at Level 6.*

*The school is frustrated but not overwhelmed by constraints. For example, it would like to extend the use of subject specialist teaching and setting to Years 3 and 4, and would like to tackle the teaching of history and geography in the same way as the core subjects.*

HMI conducted a survey of setting in primary schools in 1997/98.<sup>34</sup> This showed that the incidence of setting has been increasing, that most schools use setting in Years 5 and 6 only, and that the higher the number on roll, the more likely the school is to use setting in one or more year groups. It appears that about six out of ten schools at Key Stage 2 set for at least one subject, principally mathematics and English. Virtually all schools that set did so with the explicit intention of raising standards. Setting was regarded by most of the headteachers in the survey schools as a way of catering for the needs of all pupils. It was seen as a means of challenging the most able and moving them beyond the national expectation, as well as a way of providing smaller, more focused teaching groups for the least able. Setting was also popular with the teachers, because the narrower range of attainment in sets enabled them to focus more easily on specific learning objectives, better matched to the needs of their pupils, and allowing more direct teaching to be used.

The most common reasons for not setting were practical ones: the small size of the school; the uneven composition of year groups; and the lack of either spare accommodation or additional staff, both of which are necessary if extra sets are to be formed. Very few schools avoided setting because of ideological objections such as preferring to maintain the tradition of one teacher to one class, or to teach the core subjects through integrated topics.

A very large proportion of the schools inspected demonstrated a clear trend of rising standards for pupils of all abilities once the use of setting had become established. All but a handful of the schools visited by HMI achieved higher scores in national tests in setted subjects in 1997 than they did in 1996, and most headteachers ascribed a good deal of the credit for improvements in standards to setting. Setting does not, by itself, guarantee success in raising standards, nor can it compensate for poor teaching. Safeguards need to be built in to avoid low self-esteem and the negative labelling of pupils which can occur in lower sets.

Setting tended to polarise the quality of the teaching: it was frequently either very good or poor, depending on whether or not the teachers had taken advantage of the opportunity to engage in focused, direct teaching with pupils of similar attainment levels. Without these teaching strategies in setted lessons, the characteristics of weak teaching became more pronounced and the potential advantages of setting were not achieved.

The quality of teaching in mathematics and English was highest in the "top sets" in all age groups, reflecting the fact that upper sets were frequently taken by subject co-ordinators or specialists. In mathematics, the least effective teaching was seen in the lower sets, while in English and science the weakest teaching was found in middle sets where three or more sets had been formed. The relatively better quality of lower-set teaching in English compared with mathematics is consistent with the frequent deployment of the special educational needs co-ordinators to lower English sets.

Schools usually went to great length to avoid labelling pupils as either high or low attainers through the sets to which they were allocated. However, pupils were found almost invariably to have a very good idea of the relative ranking of the sets that they were in. Nevertheless, in discussion, the vast majority of the pupils saw advantages to setting, accepted the purpose and fairness of their allocation to a particular set and liked having more than one teacher. They saw this, towards the end of Key

Stage 2, as a good preparation for secondary school. Very few examples of either elitism or negative self-image were found, although evidence suggests that there were more boys than girls in lower sets, particularly in English.

HMI evidence, therefore, endorses the Government's view, set out in the White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, that schools should not be wedded entirely to mixed-ability teaching and that setting "is worth considering in primary schools". Where teachers understand its potential and modify their teaching techniques accordingly, setting can be a very successful way of organising teaching groups; carefully implemented and properly managed, setting facilitates direct, whole-class teaching and provides a powerful lever for raising standards.

### Planning and preparation

At the beginning of the four-year cycle, inadequate planning as a factor associated with weaker teaching was highlighted as a concern in the Annual Report. Since then, there have been improvements in teachers' planning and, although planning was still weak in one in five schools in 1996/97, in 1997/98 this proportion had fallen to one in seven schools.

Several factors seem likely to have contributed to this improvement in planning. First, the Handbook for Inspection sets out clearly the characteristics of good planning:<sup>35</sup>

*Good planning means that the teaching in a lesson, or sequence of lessons has clear objectives for what pupils are to learn and how these objectives will be achieved.*

Second, increasingly schools are following schemes of work, either produced commercially or within the school, which set out progressively the objectives for subjects and which can be built directly into teachers' plans. Third, projects such as those for literacy and numeracy have been influential in setting out in some detail the objectives on a termly basis for each year group.

In the 10 per cent of primary schools with the highest percentage of good teaching, the good quality of the planning was a positive feature highlighted in every report. Where planning was most effective, it identified objectives (sometimes described as targets, aims or goals) for individual lessons. A feature of the best teaching was the sharing of the objectives by the teacher with the pupils; they knew what they were going to do and why. For example, **Morpeth County First School**, Northumberland:

*There are many characteristics of the effective teaching, but the most significant is the sharing of the lesson aims and purposes with the children at the start of every lesson. This, together with a clear indication of how pupils could measure their own success within their learning, focuses teaching specifically on identified learning tasks and helps pupils to know what is expected of them.*

And **Fair Oak Junior School**, Hampshire:

*The quality of the teachers' planning is good. Due attention is paid to the National Curriculum programmes of study and to religious education. A particular strength is the planning which takes place within year groups and in the subject groups which include teachers from all year groups. The teachers' objectives and high expectations are usually made very clear and they are shared with the pupils. The planning makes clear what resources will be needed and what the pupils are expected to do.*

There are increasing numbers of schools with **schemes of work** which set out for every subject what is to be taught to which year group at which point of the year. The following example is taken from the scheme of work for music, spring term, Year 6 at **Priory School**, Slough. It offers sufficient detail to show a teacher what objectives should be set, what National Curriculum links can be made, and what activities the pupils should actually undertake:

#### Objectives: by the end of Term 2 in Year 6 the children:

- will have continued to learn an instrument in a small group;
- will have listened to a variety of popular music composed in Britain from 1930 to the present day;
- will have continued to work with, and learn about, chords, keys and intervals;
- will have composed a tune for a song to be played over a chord sequence;
- will have continued to sing in a variety of groups focusing on learning to sight sing.



## NC refs Activities

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1 a, b                | 1. Continue to work with instrumental teachers in small groups.  |
| 2 e, f, g             | 2. Focus on folk songs written in Great Britain, learn and sing the songs, perform some of them from memory and perform them with accompaniments from music and chord symbols.   |
| 3 a, b                | 3. Compose a melody for a set of words to an unknown folk song. The melody must fit to a chord sequence. Although the work is an individual task, it can be discussed in groups. |
| 4 a, b, c, d, e, f    | 4. Rehearse the songs in groups and record them using staff notation and audio-visual equipment.   |
| 5 a, b, c, d, e, f, h | 5. Listen to different performers' versions of a famous folk song, eg <i>Scarborough Fair</i> , and discuss the differences and similarities.                                    |
| 6 a, c, d, e          | 6. Listen to the original recordings of the words their compositions were based on, and discuss similarities and differences.  |
7. Listen to a variety of popular music written in Great Britain from about 1930, starting with war songs and moving on to rock and roll, big band, jive, music from the 1960s and 1970s, punk and up to the 1980s and 1990s.
  8. Focus on the music of prominent groups from this time, for example Abba, The Beatles, Elvis and Queen.
  9. Study the effect electronic equipment has had on the popular music and learn how to use a keyboard.
  10. Continue to sing a variety of music and learn how to sight sing.

Most teachers prepare for most lessons well. A feature of the well organised primary classroom is the availability and accessibility of appropriate basic resources, the tools of everyday classroom life: papers, pens, pencils, crayons, scissors, glues and so on. Individual lessons are usually prepared well often a time-consuming task but one that can make all the difference to the quality of a lesson.

While many primary school teachers have made extensive use of published schemes for mathematics and aspects of English, there has been a general reticence about the use of textbooks on a regular basis, although with careful selection and imaginative use these can provide valuable and informed background material. There has, however, been a steady growth in recent years, supported by the increasing availability of photocopiers, of the use of worksheets. As with textbooks, these can play a useful role, but there are dangers: too often the tasks require little more than completing sentences or lists of words; storage of completed worksheets can be a problem; and, at worst, they can be little more than low-level holding activities contributing nothing to progress colouring-in exercises and wordsearches, for example.

## Methods and organisation

### Chart 34 : Methods and organisation in primary schools

In the last two years of the review period, inspectors reported a significant improvement in the selection by teachers of the most appropriate teaching methods (see Chart 34), and reports indicate that the feature which makes the most difference is the extent of **direct, whole-class teaching**. There is an assumption, however, that this appears to be something new. It is not. Good teachers have always recognised the place of good direct teaching and HMI have always commented on its impact and the need for its inclusion as part of the teacher's repertoire. On the other hand, a feature of much unsatisfactory teaching is the inability of the teacher to get the balance right between individual, group and whole-class work.

*Some teachers did little or no direct teaching but acted largely as servicers or supervisors of the pupils' tasks... The most common organisational weaknesses stemmed from the teachers' failure to vary their favoured grouping strategies which resulted in too much, or too little, time spent on whole class teaching or on individual work or on group work.*<sup>36</sup>

Recognition of the value of good, direct whole-class teaching may not be new, but inspection and international comparisons indicate that there is, or has been, a reluctance in English primary schools to teach a whole class, and a preference for individual work or group activity in an attempt to meet perceived differences in pupils' rates of learning.

The National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy set out to build on the experiences of the literacy and numeracy projects, in which direct teaching to either the whole-class or to small groups was a key element of the methodology. The influence of the projects has spread beyond the project schools and local education authorities. Inspectors are already reporting the occurrence of more frequent, regular and sustained daily sessions of whole-class teaching, aimed

especially at raising standards of literacy and numeracy. In mathematics, for example, there is greater attention to the rapid and accurate recall of number facts and to the learning by heart of multiplication tables through whole-class methods. Daily sessions, brisk and sharply focused, in which number facts are taught, practised and used, are becoming more widespread.

Even before the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy in September 1998, many primary schools had anticipated the strategy by introducing a daily **Literacy Hour** which required carefully planned and timed elements of direct teaching to the whole class, some group work with the teacher directly teaching one or two groups, and a closing plenary in which the teacher checks that what has been covered is understood and requires pupils to share their work with each other. For example, **Christ Church CE Junior School**, Wolverhampton:

*In most lessons, whole class teaching is used effectively to introduce the lesson. In many lessons this introduction is stimulating and motivates pupils to make the appropriate links between previous learning and the work currently to be undertaken. Most lessons have a good structure, with opportunities for individual or collaborative work focused appropriately to specific abilities to maintain interest and ensure a brisk pace of learning. Review time at the end of the lesson is used well to check, consolidate and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.*

It is, however, very clear that teaching the class together for part of a lesson is not an easy option and requires a secure understanding by the teacher of what is to be taught, clear instructive teaching, skilled questioning and discussion if all pupils are to make consistent progress. Without these features in place, inspectors report overextended introductions to lessons and teachers spending far too long simply talking to the class.

### Questioning

Skilled questioning is a key competence of the good teacher. Good questioning is at the heart of good whole-class teaching of pupils with a range of abilities, including pupils with special educational needs, EAL and very able pupils. It was, for example, identified as the most significant aspect (highlighted in 58 per cent of the good or very good lessons) of pedagogy by HMI in Primary Matters, essential to assessing pupils' knowledge and to challenging their thinking. For example, in the inspection survey of the Teaching of Number in Three Inner-urban LEAs,<sup>37</sup>

*Good teaching took place in just over a third of the lessons. In these lessons the pupils listened carefully as the teacher emphasised key aspects in the work and they responded eagerly when questioned or challenged to explain in their own words. In one lesson involving a class with a high proportion of pupils who were learning English as an additional language, the teacher began by teaching the whole class. They worked on the addition and subtraction of two numbers to make a sum or difference of 12. Pupils were encouraged to say what they thought would happen as the two numbers increased or decreased and to justify their answers "Why did you do that?" They willingly provided alternatives, and corrected errors, responding positively to the high expectations set for them.*

In schools in which the teaching was good or very good, questioning was the aspect of successful teaching most frequently mentioned. It is used by teachers for a number of reasons. The first is as a form of assessment, that is to test pupils' understanding of a subject. This is increasingly seen by teachers of the Literacy Hour as a part of the initial whole-class teaching; the teacher can use questions to gauge whether the whole class has understood a particular issue or instruction, and to pinpoint with individual pupils just what has been learned and what needs further work. Second, questioning helps teachers to reinforce learning. Third, it is used to develop and probe understanding, and to move pupils' minds and imaginations forward, often linked to an object or a story... "What do you think lies under the stone?" ... "I wonder what we shall see when I turn the page." Finally, questioning can be used to encourage reticent or reluctant pupils to participate in lessons.

### Management of pupils and discipline

The management of pupils and the achievement of high standards of discipline are at least satisfactory in the large majority of schools; in only one school in 20 were these aspects weak in 1997/98. Nevertheless, the impact of poor behaviour – often by a small minority of pupils – on the quality of the education within a school can be considerable; the poor behaviour of a few affects the learning of everyone. There are several examples of inspection reports in which this serious issue is spelt out quite clearly. For example,

*There is a clear difference between the consistently good attitudes and behaviour of the under-fives and of the pupils at Key Stage 1, the mostly satisfactory behaviour seen in Years 3 and 4, and the frequently poor, unacceptable behaviour by a small minority of pupils in Years 5 and 6. This unruly behaviour, usually by two or three boys in the upper classes, has serious implications for the work of the school. It affects*

*adversely the attitudes, behaviour and personal development of the other pupils, and often prevents learning from taking place. It also affects staff morale and is of great concern to parents.*

An outcome of the introduction of the National Literacy or Numeracy Projects was a positive impact on the behaviour of the pupils and on their attitudes to their work. The vast majority of pupils responded well to the Literacy Hour with its familiar organisation and structure. In nearly nine lessons in ten, pupils from Reception to Year 6 applied themselves well and showed improved confidence and positive attitudes to their work. In general, the interest in reading and writing and levels of motivation were high. The structure of the Literacy Hour meant that pupils were clear about basic routines, particularly when undertaking group work, and this aided class control and promoted good behaviour. Where there were examples of pupils having negative attitudes to literacy, these were strongly associated with slow-paced teaching and ineffective classroom management, often resulting in boredom, disinterest and an inability to work independently.

It is easy to overlook that one of the essential preconditions of good teaching is the appropriate **organisation** of the classroom. Some of the most effective feedback to teachers from headteachers, inspectors and advisers has been related to classroom organisation. If there is to be whole-class teaching using a whiteboard, can everyone see the board easily? Are seating arrangements comfortable and do they ensure immediate eye contact with the teacher? What are the benefits of pupils sitting on a carpeted floor rather than on chairs at their tables? If a 'big book' is used, is the text large enough for everyone to read it? Can everyone hear the teacher?

### **The quality and use of day-to-day assessment**

#### **Chart 35 : Quality and use of day-to-day assessment in primary schools**

It is difficult for teachers to gauge the level at which work should be set without a clear knowledge of what pupils already know. Primary schools cope rather better with the statutory requirements for assessment than the less formal day-to-day assessment of pupils. Although there has been some improvement in the use of day-to-day assessment, as illustrated in Chart 35, it is still a weakness in almost one-third of schools. Schools have quite understandably moved away from the huge quantity of checksheets and ticklists which characterised much of the early assessment work related to the National Curriculum, but they are much less clear about what should replace them. There is, however, a strong association between good teaching and good assessment.

Examples of good practice can be found. Often the school which is successful at its day-to-day assessment is one which is also successful in its more formal assessment arrangements; the distinction between formative and summative assessment fades in these schools. Even in schools with successful assessment approaches, the issue of an unacceptable workload, or one which does not yet justify the time and effort spent, remains. Note, for example, the final sentence of the "assessment" section of the report on **Ramsden Infant School**, Barrow-in-Furness:

*Procedures for the assessment of work and progress are a strength of the school. There is a timetabled programme for review and assessment throughout the key stage, which is consistently used by all staff. This enables changes in pupils' attainments to be closely monitored and effective steps planned to meet specific needs. Targets are set and reviewed carefully within the set timespan. In their planning, teachers use information gathered very effectively to promote pupils' development. Records of progress and achievement are maintained in both the core and foundation subjects. The development plans in each subject indicate that strategies are in hand to address this, such as collecting moderated examples of pupils' work in portfolios. Record keeping is related to coverage of the programmes of study and there is a useful record of achievement.*

*Pupils' work is marked regularly and conscientiously. Pupils receive feedback during lessons orally and written in their books, including appropriate praise, encouragement and suggestions for improvement. Staff are consistent in advising pupils how they can improve their work and in expecting high standards. In English and mathematics there is consistency between teacher assessment and results of National Curriculum tests. The amount of work undertaken in assessment is considerable and the school has rightly planned to review and evaluate all assessment procedures.*

An important feature of schools in which the implementation of the National Literacy Project was successful was the detailed assessment of what pupils knew, in order for the teacher to plan accurately a structured programme for the teaching of reading.

### **Homework**

Only one-quarter of schools make good use of homework. Reading scheme books are taken home by pupils in most schools,



and many teachers ask pupils to learn and practise spellings and multiplication tables at home. However, practice is often inconsistent from one class to the next, and this is frequently raised as a concern by parents in their response to inspection questionnaires and at parents' meetings. In the completion of questionnaires prior to an OFSTED inspection, parents are more likely to express disquiet about homework than any other issue. In a recent scrutiny of over 1,500 primary schools from which data was obtained from parents' questionnaires, in just over half (51.42 per cent) of the schools parents registered a "significant" level of dissatisfaction with the homework that their child is expected to do.

A small but growing number of schools hold regular "homework clubs" after school. These schools are often in disadvantaged areas where some pupils find it hard to get the necessary support or facilities for working at home. Despite the voluntary nature of attendance at these sessions, schools have often been surprised at their popularity. Typically, a very good working atmosphere is established and pupils are able to continue with or complete work started in lessons, and receive extra help with areas in which they are having some difficulties. Year 6 pupils are sometimes given opportunities to revise issues likely to be encountered in the National Curriculum tests.

The place and value of homework have been debated widely in recent years, often in the context of concerns about the amount of time children spend watching television or playing computer games rather than reading or doing "school work". The Government's White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*, recognises the valuable role which well organised homework could play in raising standards, and proposed that national guidelines on homework should be drawn up for schools. A survey conducted by HMI<sup>38</sup> in 1994 concluded that:

- *where staff, pupils and parents treat it seriously, homework has the potential to raise standards, extend coverage of the curriculum, allow more effective use to be made of lesson times and improve pupils' study skills and attitudes to learning;*
- *in general, many pupils and their parents saw work done at home as a valuable and essential part of school work, and as helping to create a partnership between home and school;*
- *there was little systematic and regular monitoring of the implementation of homework policies by the schools and, consequently, there was little knowledge of their impact or effectiveness.*

Although, from the HMI survey quoted above, it is impossible to provide firm evidence of any improvement in standards, many teachers and parents believed that homework had a direct effect in enhancing pupils' knowledge and understanding. They felt that where the school had a well-devised and systematic homework policy, the attendant sense of purpose encouraged pupils to respond maturely. Most Year 6 pupils valued the opportunity to become accustomed to homework in preparation for entry to secondary school, which, they felt, would be "a much more demanding regime".<sup>39</sup>

## 4.6 The characteristics of schools with good teaching

Of the primary teachers observed by inspectors on five or more occasions during inspections in 1997/98, 67 per cent taught no lesson where the teaching was unsatisfactory and 50 per cent of teachers taught mostly good lessons. In other words, poor teachers are rare. There were only 3.2 per cent of teachers, equivalent to about 6,000 teachers, whose teaching was unsatisfactory in over half of the lessons observed.

It is exceedingly unusual for a school to have no good teaching. For example, of the 2,682 schools (primary and secondary) inspected in the academic year 1997/98, only one school was reported as having no examples of good teaching. Chart 36 shows the proportion of good teaching found in the schools inspected in 1997/98. In over half the schools inspected, over half of the teaching is good. In only 3 per cent of schools is less than one-quarter of the teaching good.

**Chart 36 : the proportion of good teaching in the schools inspected in 1997/98**

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<sup>15</sup>Primary Education in England, A Survey by HM Inspectors of Schools. DES, 1978.

<sup>16</sup>Handbook for the Inspection of Schools. OFSTED, 1992.

<sup>17</sup> ibid, p 11.

- 18** *ibid*, Guidance, p 21.
- 19** *The OFSTED Handbook. Guidance on the Inspection of Nursery and Primary Schools*. OFSTED, 1995.
- 20** *ibid*, p 67.
- 21** *ibid*, p 66.
- 22** Much of the material in this section is taken from the HMI report, *Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils*. OFSTED, 1999.
- 23** DES Circular 7/90.
- 24** *Taught Time*. OFSTED, 1994.
- 25** *Primary Matters. A discussion on teaching and learning in primary schools*. OFSTED, 1994.
- 26** London, DES 1992.
- 27** On the advice of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (now Qualifications and Curriculum Authority), information technology and design and technology are now treated as separate subjects.
- 28** *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 1995/96*. OFSTED, 1997.
- 29** *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 1994/95*. OFSTED, 1996.
- 30** *Using Subject Specialists to Promote High Standards at Key Stage 2*. OFSTED, 1997.
- 31** *Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, 1994/95*. OFSTED, 1996.
- 32** *The National Literacy Project: an HMI evaluation*. OFSTED, 1998.
- 33** *Using Subject Specialists to Promote High Standards at Key Stage 2*. OFSTED, 1997.
- 34** *Setting in Primary Schools*. OFSTED, 1998.
- 35** *The OFSTED Handbook. Guidance on the Inspection of Nursery and Primary Schools*. OFSTED, 1995, p 68.
- 36** *Primary Matters*. OFSTED, 1994.
- 37** *The Teaching of Number in Three Inner-urban LEAs*. OFSTED, 1997, pp 19 and 20.
- 38** *Homework in Primary and Secondary Schools*. OFSTED, 1995.
- 39** *ibid*, pp 9 and 10.
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# Chapter 8

## THE EDUCATION OF UNDER-FIVES

### 8.1 Standards of achievement and the quality of teaching

The Framework for Inspection requires inspectors to evaluate aspects of the education of pupils under five as follows:

*For pupils under five, the report must contain an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses in attainment, pupils' attitudes, teaching and other provision across the areas of learning.*

The inspection of under-fives work covers a wide range of types of national provision and also takes account of the variable time that pupils may spend in designated "reception" classes. Inspection takes account of the work of mixed-age classes where under-fives and over-fives are in the same class, and the fact that some pupils who are still not five years old may well have moved from the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning<sup>47</sup> into the programmes of study of the National Curriculum.

Pupils made good or very good progress in about half the nursery sessions inspected. In less than one school in 20 is the progress of under-fives in nursery classes judged to be poor. Chart 49 illustrates that in the large majority of schools pupils make at least satisfactory progress towards achieving the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning, and that over the past two years the rate of progress made by pupils in reception classes has improved. Many pupils, particularly those entering school with low levels of attainment, make particularly good progress in their first year or so at school. However, in some schools there is a continued focus on the Desirable Outcomes, when pupils particularly the more able have already achieved them. For these pupils, more advanced knowledge and skills should be developed.

The quality of teaching in both nursery and reception classes was good in over 45 per cent of the lessons observed throughout the period, and considerable improvement is reported. Chart 50 illustrates this. Indeed, the greatest proportion of lessons in primary schools in which the teaching is good or very good has consistently been in nursery classes, closely followed by teaching in reception classes. Improvement has been particularly noted

in the development of more detailed curriculum planning and greater co-operation between classes with the same year groups. This helps address the issue of inconsistency of practice and provision within a school, one of the concerns raised in one in eight schools with under-fives provision in 1994/95. The establishment of the Desirable Outcomes has helped clarify the nature of the early years curriculum for many teachers, and this has led to a greater consistency in planning.

However, the quality of the teaching of under-fives has been a cause for concern in a significant number of small schools (with less than 100 pupils). Many teachers find it hard to set work of appropriate challenge and range for a class in which there are under-fives working towards the Desirable Learning Outcomes and older pupils who are being taught the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. The provision is more likely to be weak in those classes where there are only a few pupils under five. There is a danger that these pupils are either moved on too quickly towards National Curriculum work or given an insufficiently structured early-years experience. Inspection reports on small schools frequently include reference to the variation in the quality of the provision for the youngest pupils in such schools, but there are signs that the issue is being addressed by an increased provision of teaching assistants for these pupils, which is particularly effective when the assistant has NNEB training.

Good use of teaching assistants is a consistent feature of effective under-fives provision, especially since 1995. There has been an increased emphasis on the provision of training for teaching assistants in nurseries and on the careful deployment of all available adults. For example, at the **Margaret McMillan Nursery** in Islington:

*All staff including teachers, nursery nurses and assistants build on their existing skills, knowledge and understanding to enable them successfully to further the children's learning in the areas of the curriculum*

*and promote the values of the school. There is a very strong sense of community, and all the staff work well together and share responsibilities. Their consistency of approach makes a significant contribution to the good standards of attainment and of behaviour.*

*To provide the well planned and structured staff training and in-service training programme, use is made of the good expertise available at the school. The commitment to staff development is a significant strength, and this is evident in the very good quality of the provision and teaching.*

A significant development has been the improvement in the balance between under-fives work directed by the teacher and that undertaken within free or guided choice by the pupils. This is an interesting development in the light of the current debate about the nature of early years education. Again, the improvement in planning and the use of the Desirable Outcomes may be supporting the trend towards a more appropriate balance between direct teaching and free play.

Planning has improved in its thoroughness and consistency over the four years of the review period. Daily planning is generally better than longer-term planning, but in more than one in ten of nursery classes insufficient attention is given to the setting of objectives in the plans. On the other hand, there has been a significant reduction in practical activities which lack a clearly specified purpose. Where the purpose of activities is clearly established and children's work given more structure, teachers achieve a closer match between the work and pupils' abilities.

The quality and use of assessment has also improved over time. The range of assessment procedures has grown and teachers are increasingly skilled in techniques of observation. But a feature of the reports on the most sophisticated and successful assessment methodologies is usually a comment about the demands they place on busy teachers. For example, **Merrivale Nursery School**, Nottingham:

*The assessment, recording and reporting arrangements are excellent. The school uses an effective range of techniques and recording systems in order to assess accurately the progress of individual children. Assessment is firmly rooted in sound observation techniques, whereby three children each session are closely observed by staff. In this way all children are assessed over a period of two weeks. These observations cover academic success, social interaction and behaviour.*

*The staff come together eight times a week to discuss and record these observations, which are transferred to the children's records and are central to the assessment, recording and reporting system. Two members of staff also focus on a particular activity each day in order to make detailed observations of both children and tasks. Information about the children's involvement in specific tasks is marked on checklists so that staff can be sure that all children have been actively involved in all aspects of the curriculum. In addition to this, the school uses other appropriate assessment procedures. These include a baseline assessment and a special folder in which work worthy of note is selected by both staff and children. These are collected and compiled into a book which the children take with them when they leave.*

*The school also uses procedures, for example the "pride vine", which is a large display of records of achievement. The school records and displays the academic, physical or social activities a child is working towards... The assessment, recording and reporting systems used by the school are valuable but demand a great deal of time from the staff.*

**Baseline assessment** has developed throughout the four years of the review period. About one in eight reports referred to its use in 1994/95, compared with half of the reports in 1997/98. The introduction of baseline assessment is helping schools to focus more sharply on starting points, against which progress can be measured and planned. For example, in 1997/98, the limited language skills of pupils on entry were reported in two in five schools as a cause for concern.

The overall picture of the quality of teaching, planning and assessment is one of developing detail and rigour, with an increased focus on identifying the strengths and weaknesses in individual pupils' performance.

**Chart 49 : Progress by pupils under five, 1996/97 and 1997/98**

**Chart 50 : The quality of teaching in reception and nursery classes**

## 8.2 The curriculum

Reporting on trends across the four years of the inspection cycle has to take account of the introduction of the Desirable

Learning Outcomes in 1996. The curriculum for the under-fives has been carefully developed by many schools during the four years. The use of the Desirable Outcomes has provided a clearer focus for work, which, together with improved planning and assessment, has produced a more rigorous view of what knowledge and skills children should develop and how this is to be done. Remaining weaknesses include the slow pace of work in a small minority of classes, a feature much more frequently mentioned than work being too demanding of the under-fives. Where excessively demanding work for the youngest pupils is noted, it is almost always in those classes which include older pupils as well as reception-age pupils. Inspectors very rarely report that pupils are being pushed too early into the National Curriculum or that they are being given unduly "formal" work.

Provision for pupils' **personal and social development** is a major priority and a considerable strength of the work of most schools. Schools place a high priority on the promotion of a positive attitude to learning, good behaviour and a lengthening concentration span. Schools are particularly successful at helping young children settle to the routines of school life. This is a wide-reaching aspect of the inspection of nursery classes and schools, and is often reported on most clearly in the section on attitudes, behaviour and personal development. For example, at the **Dorothy Gardner Centre**, Westminster:

*The nursery is a hive of activity. Children often initiate their own activities and are able to sustain concentration for long periods. During role play in the construction area and in the home corner, they initiate lengthy sequences of events, including rescues from top-storey fires and cures for hospital-bed ailments. Children are responsible for the tasks they set themselves, but readily request help when needed. They respect property and tidy up after themselves. They appear happy, and on the few occasions a child is in distress, staff quickly resolve the problem.*

*Children celebrate a range of religious and cultural festivals. Visiting the Hindu temple during the celebration of Diwali, they experience feelings of wonder at the majesty of the building and a sense of awe by being present during a ceremony.*

Standards in **language and literacy** (formerly reported under English) have risen throughout the period of the first inspection cycle, and they were at least satisfactory in 85 per cent of schools by 1997/98. The proportion of schools with good achievement in language and literacy rose from 16 per cent to 28 per cent during the four years of the review period. Nevertheless, there are overall weaknesses in language and literacy in one in eight schools.

The quality and range of provision for language work in a school with good practice in this area is illustrated in the report on **Strong Close Nursery School**, Keighley:

*A high priority is given to the language and literacy area of learning. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving levels at least appropriate to their abilities, with many achieving levels which are high. Teaching takes account of those pupils for whom English is a second language; dual language texts and materials are provided, and this enables pupils to make good progress.*

*In both small and large groups, pupils listen attentively, talk about their experiences and confidently share ideas. They listen well to stories, songs, nursery rhymes and poems and respond enthusiastically when questioned about them. Most have learned some songs and rhymes by heart and many are confident in reciting these to others in the group. Pupils demonstrate an increasing awareness of a wider range of vocabulary in many areas of learning. They follow instructions and verbal directions effectively and show by their responses that they have understood key words and ideas.*

*Pupils enjoy books and handle them appropriately, particularly some of the tiny "pop-up" books which require great care. They generally realise how books are organised and most systematically turn pages correctly from the beginning of the story, making relevant comments as they move through the text. Most know that pictures carry meaning and many demonstrate an understanding that print also carries meaning. Many recognise their own names and sometimes they recognise their friends' names. Pupils are beginning to recognise letters of the alphabet by both the shape and sound and a few are beginning to apply this knowledge when reading.*

*Pupils' understanding of the writing process is developing well. They show awareness of the different purposes of writing and often communicate their learning using pictures, symbols and some familiar words and letters. Most are developing appropriate control of pencils and pens. A significant number of pupils can write their own names with a reasonable level of accuracy.*

The development of speaking and listening skills has been given high attention, although many schools need to promote more intensively a broadening of children's vocabulary. The vast majority of pupils engage in early reading and writing activities,



which include some elements of phonic work, letter recognition, reading familiar words and name writing. On the whole, however, this aspect of the programme is less systematic than it needs to be.

The range of **mathematics** seen in schools with good practice is summarised, for example, in the report on **Clervaux Terrace Nursery School**, Jarrow:

*Pupils achieve high standards in the wide range of mathematical experiences which are provided in the nursery. They make good use of the many opportunities to investigate and learn about number in activities such as number songs, in the sorting and matching of objects, and in a wide range of counting and ordering tasks which are an integral feature of the school day. Even at snack time, pupils are keen to count out fruits or crisps and to compare their sizes. Pupils have a very good knowledge of space and shape. They learn to make patterns and can use correct mathematical language to describe them.*

The great majority of schools teach children to recognise and write numbers and to count, recognise mathematical shapes and use simple mathematical terms to describe shape, position, size and quantities. Shopping activities usually form part of an early mathematics programme, but pupils are not always taught the necessary skills to enable them to succeed.

**Knowledge and understanding of the world** is the broadest of the six areas of learning, and involves early historical, geographical, environmental, scientific and technological learning. Many schools find it hard to cover the full range satisfactorily and it is the area in which the fewest schools secure good provision and response. Most schools tackle this area by integrating the various strands into a topic such as "homes", and often use visits to local places of interest to back up work undertaken in class.

**Creative development** receives a high priority in most under-fives classes and is at least satisfactory in over nine in ten schools. Art and music are generally well developed. **Physical development** is generally well promoted in terms of developing children's co-ordination and movement skills through using tools and a range of materials requiring increasingly complex manipulative skills. Weaknesses are usually a result of restrictions on space and equipment, either indoors with climbing apparatus, or outdoors where space may be limited or non-existent. Schools with cramped or unsatisfactory accommodation often take imaginative steps to overcome these difficulties and cope despite the problems. Nevertheless, the gap between the good and poor provision for physical development is very wide.

The absence of policies for some curriculum areas (or subjects) was a feature of about two in five schools for the first three years of the present period. This is a particular cause for concern when core areas such as mathematics and language and literacy are involved. Although the proportion fell to one in five in 1997/98, it is still too high.

The provision of a "broad and balanced" curriculum for under-fives has been increasingly observed over the four years. In the best examples, schools are clearly making decisions about the balance of the curriculum in the light of their assessment of the needs of their pupils. For example, at **Powers Hall County Infant School**, Witham:

*Pupils' attainment on entry to the nursery and early years classes is often below expectations for the age group... The early years curriculum places an appropriate and necessary emphasis on developing the children's skills in language and literacy, and mathematics, and on their personal and social development.*

## 8.3 Partnership with parents

The partnership between schools and the parents of the youngest children is strong in the great majority of schools. Parents are generally welcomed into nursery and reception classes at the start of a session, and are encouraged to take an interest in their children's progress, the work being undertaken, and to discuss any problems with the teacher. This is usually backed up by newsletters and noticeboards, and many schools provide written or photographic explanations of the purposes of the various activities provided, indicating to parents how they can help their children at home.

Inspectors have increasingly raised concerns about the number of children arriving late for the start of sessions in early years classes. While attendance is not compulsory before statutory school age, the disruptive impact of late arrivals is significant. Late arrivals in the year when many schools first admitted younger four-year-olds, or "rising fours", when the nursery voucher scheme was introduced nationally, has presented many schools with an issue that they are addressing but which is still not resolved.

## 8.4 Issues

In the last year of this four-year period, changes in government policy had the potential to affect previous practices significantly. The introduction of early years development plans and the associated partnerships to match provision with need across the range of pre-school services, came too late to have an impact on inspection reports. Similarly, it is too early to report on the impact of the support given to integrated child-care and education services, notably through the Early Excellence Centre programme.

However, by the end of the inspection year 1997/98, some references were beginning to be made to the implementation of a "literacy hour", and to a lesser extent a mathematics lesson, for pupils towards the end of their reception year. The few comments made were positive and referred to the appropriately and sensitively staged introduction of such work with young children. Other early signs are of materials such as "big books" being used for story sessions in younger reception and some nursery classes as a means of very gradually introducing the literacy resources and practices used elsewhere in the school. From the evaluation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Projects, there was no evidence of the literacy hour or numeracy lesson being introduced too rapidly in reception classes during the pilot stage of these schemes.

Particular challenges exist when reception-age pupils are taught in mixed-age classes with older pupils, especially in small schools or schools where teaching support is limited. The issue has been resolved to some extent by the introduction of the Desirable Learning Outcomes, which have helped teachers of such classes by distinguishing between the curriculum appropriate to children under five and those over five who are engaged on the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. It is proving to be less of a problem in language and mathematical work than in knowledge and understanding of the world, where scientific work across mixed age groups is most commonly noted as a problem.

Improvements in planning, especially since the advent of the Desirable Learning Outcomes, are significant. Yet there remains a number of schools where policies, schemes of work and overall planning have significant gaps for example, where subjects or areas lack relevant schemes of work. In 1997/98, one in five schools with early years provision had insufficient or inadequate documentation to support the curriculum for under-fives.

## 8.5 Section 5 inspections

During the 1994-98 period, Section 5 nursery voucher (later nursery grant) inspections were established. These nursery inspections covered non-local education authority provision operated by providers in the private, independent, voluntary and social services sectors. After a pilot phase in four local education authorities (Norfolk, Westminster, Wandsworth, and Kensington and Chelsea) in 1996/97, the scheme was launched nationally in 1997. The Section 5 inspections use a different inspection framework and process from that of Section 10 inspections of local education authority provision, and the findings of the two approaches cannot be compared statistically. Section 5 inspections assess how far the nursery's programme promotes the Desirable Outcomes, has weaknesses or is poor. It is a judgement on whether pupils are likely to have achieved the Desirable Outcomes by the age of five. By contrast, Section 10 inspectors judge the current achievements of the pupils in relation to the Desirable Outcomes or to the National Curriculum if this is considered appropriate.

Over the period of this review there has been a determined effort by the Government to provide non-statutory nursery places for all children from the age of four. More recently, the Government has announced a programme of expansion of non-statutory nursery education to include places for three-year-olds. In step with these developments, and at the request of the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, OFSTED has inspected the quality of provision in all publicly funded pre-school settings for four-year-olds in primary school reception classes.<sup>48</sup> Inspection has taken full account of a key condition of funding, notably that all these settings should promote the Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning.

An emerging issue in several schools and other institutions is the growth in services for parents and pre-school children which are not subject to OFSTED inspection and yet which significantly extend the provision for example, adult education (often informally organised), parent and toddler groups, "drop-in" services, before- and after-school clubs, and other services. These can have a major impact both on the education provision for the children and on links with the wider community.

Given the diversity of settings receiving funding, it is not surprising that some have found it easier to meet the requirements of the funding than others. Table 1 shows how well the various types of setting promote the Desirable Outcomes for Learning.

Across all types of setting, moreover, some of the areas of learning have proved more difficult to promote than others. Table 2 shows in rank order the areas of learning where the promotion of the Desirable Outcomes was secure, across all institutions.

Despite a great deal of debate about what should constitute an appropriate curriculum for early years education and how it should be taught, the introduction of the Desirable Outcomes for Learning has undoubtedly helped providers in at least two

ways. It has helped them to plan and prepare a more coherent, broad and balanced curriculum which takes account of young children's physical, intellectual, emotional and social development. It also dovetails sensibly into the start of the National Curriculum. Furthermore, inspection itself has helped to focus the attention of providers on advancing the strengths and addressing the weaknesses of their programmes. For the most part, they have responded quickly and positively to the key issues for action identified in the published report of their inspection.

As the provision of early years places expands, the Government's intention to match the increase in the capacity of the system to improvements in the quality of education, irrespective of the type of setting, will depend principally upon the availability of well trained teachers and other staff responsible for the day-to-day planning and implementation of the programme. The range of qualifications held by early years staff is wide, and the Government's intention for registered providers to involve a qualified teacher in their plans from September 1999 should help to improve the consistency of provision across the sector.

Clearly, the dependency of young children on adults for care and welfare is greater in these settings than at any other time in the education service. It follows that early years settings must do more than provide education even in its broadest sense. They must demonstrate and reassure parents and others that young children are safe and well cared-for. The Government is conducting a wide-ranging consultation on these matters and at the same time encouraging, through targeted funding, innovative, integrated early years services such as Early Excellence Centres. These approaches should do much to overcome the historical problems of piecemeal provision which have dogged this sector of education for so long.

The value of good early years provision is beyond dispute. Among other things, it promotes children's personal and social development, inspires confident learning, and boosts self-respect and respect for others. It is key to the formation of positive attitudes which ensure that children are well disposed to statutory schooling and which are of fundamental importance to children's educational success as a whole. It also provides crucial opportunities to promote close ties with parents and thus set the direction for continued support from home, which is vital for children's progress at school.

**Table 1 : The percentage of nursery settings, by type, likely to promote the Desirable Outcomes for Learning 1997/98**

Areas of learning	Playgroup	Private nursery school	Independent school	Local authority day nursery	Private day nursery	Other
Personal and social development	83.5	87.5	89.7	94.1	86.9	91.3
Language and literacy	54.3	80.8	94.3	65.0	73.9	69.8
Mathematics	59.4	82.6	91.8	66.9	74.7	76.1
Knowledge and understanding of the world	52.7	68.3	81.0	69.2	64.6	68.0
Physical development	77.0	72.5	80.4	82.3	78.0	80.2
Creative development	72.9	75.3	80.0	82.3	77.0	80.2

**Table 2 : The average percentage of nursery settings likely to promote the Desirable Outcomes 1997/98**

Personal and social development	86%
Physical development	77%
Creative development	75%
Mathematics	69%
Language and literacy	65%
Knowledge and understanding of the world	60%

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**47** *Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning*. SCAA, 1996. The Desirable Outcomes are goals for learning for children by the time they enter compulsory education, which begins in the term after a child's fifth birthday. The Desirable Outcomes cover children's development in six areas of learning: personal and social development; language and literacy; mathematics; knowledge and understanding of the world;

physical development; and creative development.

**48** Inspections of private, voluntary and independent sector nursery settings were carried out under Section 5 of the Nursery Education and Grant Maintained Schools Act 1996. Inspections of local education authority and grant maintained schools with four-year-olds were carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996.

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# Chapter 9

## SMALL SCHOOLS

### 9.1 Small schools: a distinctive element of the primary education system

There has been a debate about the most effective size of school since at least the 1960s, when the Plowden Report<sup>49</sup> suggested that small schools lacked the resources to provide an effective education, limited pupils to a narrow range of opportunities and were unable to provide the necessary range of specialist teacher knowledge for the primary curriculum. The arguments and discussions continued; ten years later it was suggested that a school needed at least eight teachers to provide an adequate range of subjects and that every school should be large enough to provide all pupils with a "broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum".<sup>50</sup> The arguments against small schools were summed up as "The three Cs: curriculum, culture and cost".<sup>51</sup>

Some parents, of course particularly those living in rural areas and without access to convenient transport had no choice in the matter and the local village school was automatically the one to which they sent their children. Other parents, against the trend of the education reports of the day, specifically chose to send their children to small schools. They appreciated the special qualities, such as the "family atmosphere", that many small schools provided.

Researchers, therefore, began to look more closely at the small schools that had survived the rounds of closures and amalgamations. They found that small schools could provide a caring, stable environment where pupils' progress could be tracked more closely and problems identified earlier than in larger schools.<sup>52</sup> The professional isolation of teachers was perceived rather than real, with teachers in small schools just as likely to have attended courses, observed colleagues at work, had visits from advisers and worked with peripatetic staff as teachers in larger schools.<sup>53</sup> Small schools benefited from their place in the local community, and teachers had more frequent informal discussions with parents; closer links were established between home and school; and pupils did not have to adjust to a series of teachers.<sup>54</sup>

Undoubtedly the dual role of headteachers of small schools, combining a considerable class teaching commitment with management responsibility, makes great demands on those headteachers, especially at times of major policy shifts. Nevertheless, the substantial teaching role enables headteachers to have a more direct influence on curriculum development and a closer working understanding of the processes of change; pupils of different ages can work together when appropriate; and clustering arrangements between groups of small schools widen the opportunities for interaction and the sharing of ideas and experiences of staff and pupils.<sup>55</sup>

With the introduction of local management of schools, small schools initially had to manage with a budget based largely on the number of pupils on roll. Many small schools had to campaign to stay open as local education authorities began to rationalise their provision, targeting small schools with high unit-pupil costs. A report by the Audit Commission in 1990 estimated that within the primary sector there were 900,000 surplus places, with a considerable proportion of them in small schools.<sup>56</sup>

This chapter draws together principally evidence from inspection reports, but refers also to inspection evidence from HMI and analysis of National Curriculum test data. For the purposes of this chapter, a "small school" is defined as one with up to 100 pupils; where the distinction is possible, these schools are split into "very small schools" with fewer than 50 pupils and "small schools" with between 51 and 100 pupils. Only pupils of statutory school age are included in these figures. There are about 2,700 small schools, of which about 700 are very small.

About two-thirds of small schools are church schools, generally affiliated to the Church of England; there are few small Roman Catholic schools. The percentage of ethnic minority pupils in small schools is relatively low, with few having more than 5 per cent. The exceptions are usually schools with considerable numbers of Gypsy and Traveller pupils.

## 9.2 Standards of achievement

Pupils in small schools are not disadvantaged in comparison with those in larger schools simply because of the size of the school. Small schools are capable of providing an effective education, and many are among the most successful schools in the country. At the same time a disproportionate number of the smallest schools have serious weaknesses or require special measures.

In the end-of-key-stage National Curriculum tests, small schools achieve on average higher scores than larger schools. The very small schools, while also achieving test results well above the average overall, are more variable in their performance. The schools in the 51100 band are the most successful. For example, in the 1998 National Curriculum English tests at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils in schools with between 51 and 100 pupils achieved results around six percentage points higher than those in larger schools. Several factors contribute to this positive picture: the quality of the school and its teaching, of course, but also the fact that the majority of small schools are in relatively affluent areas with above-average indicators of socio-economic advantage. Among the schools of between 51 and 100 pupils, the most effective are the small, rural, church primary schools in advantaged areas, typically within commuting distance of towns and cities. The range of achievement of small schools is, however, very wide; some small schools achieve an average level of almost Level 5, while there are others averaging just over Level 3.

When National Curriculum test data is used to compare small schools with others in similar socio-economic circumstances, there is little difference in performance; if anything, the balance of judgement moves in favour of larger schools. In other words, factors other than size probably have a greater overall influence on standards in small schools. On the other hand, many parents choose to send their pupils to small schools for a wide range of reasons, such as the ethos of the school, the attention that parents consider can be given to the particular needs of their children, and the links that the school maintains with its local community.

Small schools and, in particular, very small schools have small cohorts of pupils in each year group. The results of the end-of-key-stage National Curriculum tests can inevitably fluctuate widely from one year to the next, because the scores of one or two pupils can have a significant influence on a school's results. For this reason the Key Stage 2 results for cohorts with less than eleven pupils are not published separately.

From an analysis by school size of the results of the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results, several features emerge:

- In the performance tables of the 1996/98 Key Stage 2 results for English, mathematics and science, there were between 20 and 30 small schools each year in the highest-achieving 100. This is at least twice the number that might have been expected on purely statistical grounds; and it does not include those successful very small schools with cohorts of less than eleven pupils and whose results were not published.
- At the other end of the scale, there were between three and ten schools in the table of the lowest-scoring schools. Again, these numbers do not include the very small schools, but the presence of some of these in the "serious weakness" and "special measures" categories would increase the number of small schools in the bottom 100.
- The number of small schools in the list of successful schools published in HMCI's Annual Report has included a larger number of small schools than would have been expected.
- The number of small schools (51100 pupils) which have been judged to require special measures or to have serious weaknesses is a little below the average for all schools, but the number of very small schools requiring special measures is much greater than the average. The number of very small schools with serious weaknesses is higher than the average.

## 9.3 The quality of teaching

The quality of the teaching in small schools is slightly better than in larger schools; the influence of the teaching of the headteacher, which may account for as much as one-third of the teaching seen during an inspection, has a very strong, and usually positive, impact on the overall judgement about the quality of the teaching in a small school. Overall, the teaching in schools with between 51 and 100 pupils is marginally stronger than in schools of other sizes. By contrast, the quality of the teaching of the under-fives in small schools often compares unfavourably with the rest of the

teaching in the school and with the national picture. The teaching of the under-fives is more frequently unsatisfactory than in



larger schools. Chart 51 illustrates the quality of the teaching according to the size of the school.

There is no evidence to suggest that pupils in small schools are disadvantaged because their teachers lack sufficient subject knowledge, understanding and skills to teach the required broad curriculum with appropriate academic challenge. This reflects very well on the arrangements for the in-service training of teachers and headteachers in small schools. For example,

**Delamere CE Primary School, Cheshire:**

*Despite the small number of staff there is an adequate spread of subject specialisms. The school has concentrated its in-service training effort mostly on developing expertise in curriculum areas because of the multiple subject responsibilities of individual members of staff. Teachers are committed to improving their performance and have given a great deal of time to extra training in subjects and other cross-curricular areas such as special educational needs. The school has benefited substantially from this.*

In tackling the challenge of providing sufficient expertise in all subjects, small schools make good use of their strengths, both within their own teaching staff and the local community. There are many examples of the effective use of part-time specialists and volunteers from the community, well planned use of non-teaching staff and good management strategies to enable the teachers to be as effective as possible; for example, teachers exchange classes to enable them to teach their strong subjects to as many pupils as possible. Indeed, in a recent survey by HMI,<sup>57</sup> some of the best examples of the successful use of subject specialists were found in small schools, reinforcing the view that small schools work hard to ensure that their pupils have access to adequate expertise to teach the full range of skills, knowledge and understanding required by each subject.

**West Meon CE Primary School, Hampshire,** recognised the challenges facing three full-time teachers in teaching eleven subjects to classes containing pupils from as many as three year groups. Where necessary and possible, the school brought in outside help, often from the local community, to extend the curriculum or to plug gaps. The small size of the school was exploited as a strength rather than a constraint: all the teachers knew what each other was doing, and all the pupils (about 60) knew all the teachers; they also knew the additional adults, most of whom were living in the village. With so few staff involved, changes could be made relatively easily. The arrangements change from year to year, and a change of staff can make a big difference, but the school was very much alert to subject needs when new appointments were made. In 1997, for example:

- the mathematics co-ordinator took her own class (Years 5 and 6) for mathematics and extended the work of Years 3 and 4 by taking their class once or twice a week;
- this allowed a straightforward exchange with the art specialist, who therefore taught art to all Key Stage 2 pupils;
- a part-time physical education teacher was employed to teach gymnastics to the Key Stage 1 pupils and the Year 3 and 4 class, so that a relatively modest expenditure extended the quality and range of the teaching;
- the Key Stage 1 teacher (the English specialist) took the Year 5 and 6 class for writing once a week and also taught reading skills once a week;
- the part-time special needs teacher took the top class for personal and social education once a week; and once a week the rector (this is a church school) discussed a moral or ethical issue with the Year 6 pupils;
- other volunteers made valuable contributions: a rota of parents and friends heard readers; a play-reading session was taken by a volunteer from the village; and the choir was taught by a local musician.

Small schools usually have classes containing pupils of more than one age group, and sometimes from more than one key stage. The wide range of age and ability in a class places great demands on the teacher, but effective teaching of these mixed-age classes is consistent with the planning and classroom organisation frequently seen in these classes. The behaviour of the pupils is almost always good, and class sizes are usually smaller; teachers know their pupils particularly well, often teaching them for more than one year. Group sizes are smaller, and the teacher can increase the amount of direct teaching provided for a pupil or a group of pupils. Where teaching is weak, ineffective planning fails to take account of the range of age and ability in a class and proper academic challenge is lacking. The potential impact of a weak teacher on the school career of an individual pupil and on the overall quality of a school can be considerable, and much greater than in a larger school where others can compensate to some extent for a particular weak link.

Provision for pupils under five is a cause for concern. Overall judgements made by inspectors relating to all aspects of the quality of teaching are considerably more critical than those given in larger schools, where the quality of the teaching of the youngest children is often the strongest element of the teaching. Teachers clearly find it hard to pitch work of appropriate

challenge and range for a class which contains under-fives working towards the Desirable Learning Outcomes and those older pupils embarking on the National Curriculum programmes of study. On the one hand, there are pupils who have already achieved the Desirable Outcomes and should be moving on to more challenging work; on the other hand, there are pupils who are not given an appropriate early years curriculum and are moved on too quickly. In general, the provision is least effective when there are only a few pupils under five and where these pupils, of necessity, form a minority group within a class of largely older pupils. There are signs of improvement, however, and many schools are supporting the youngest pupils with teaching assistants all the more effective when the assistant has NNEB training.

#### **Chart 51 : The quality of teaching according to the size of the school 1997/98**

## **9.4 The curriculum**

It is well within the capacity of small schools to teach the full range of the National Curriculum. Many do it well, making good use of their environment and the community. They often supplement the strengths of staff with outside help, which provides not only better provision for the National Curriculum subjects but also extends the range of curricular and extracurricular activities on offer; a remarkable number of the most successful small schools offer a modern foreign language, for example. At the other end of the spectrum, however, there is a significant minority of small schools which do not provide a broad curriculum and offer little by way of enrichment or special interest.

The curriculum of small schools at both key stages is generally as broad and as balanced as that of larger schools, but, as has already been reported above, can be weaker for the under-fives. As with the majority of schools, small schools have moved towards a more subject-based curriculum over the four years of the inspection cycle; specialist teachers and members of the local community are frequently involved in the teaching of some subjects, particularly music, design and technology, and physical education. The challenge of teaching numeracy and literacy to mixed-age classes from Frameworks which spell out what is to be taught to specific age groups but which also emphasise the value of whole-class teaching is one with which small schools are beginning to grapple. But, this challenge is nothing new; small schools have always had to choose appropriate content and pedagogy for their mixed-age classes, and inspection evidence shows that they have generally been successful in this.

Most small schools provide a range of extra-curricular activities, and take their pupils on visits, both local and residential. They often go to considerable lengths to involve the pupils in local sports and musical activities, including the opportunities to enable children to play and work with children of their own age from other schools. The quality of such provision depends very largely on the enthusiasm and ingenuity of individual teachers, but it is also related to access to local facilities such as sports halls or leisure centres. Provision is often weakest where local facilities are poor or non-existent, or where a catchment area is very widespread and the pupils have long distances to travel. Curricular provision both in and out of school hours is strongly supported and much appreciated by parents; their involvement in their children's learning is a strength of the large majority of small schools.

## **9.5 The ethos of small schools**

One of the great strengths of small schools is their ethos. Very good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, considerable parental involvement in their children's learning, and strong links with the community all contribute significantly to the establishment of caring, welcoming schools often seen as playing an essential role at the heart of a local community. The best small schools recognise the dangers of isolation and tackle the issue head-on. For example, **Grade-Ruan VC Primary School**, near Helston, Cornwall:

*Cultural education is a strength of the school. Pupils are taught about the historical and living culture of the Duchy and this is well-integrated into all areas of the curriculum. Pupils take part in musical events, in local pageants and festivals and visit local art galleries and museums. They are also taught to understand and respect other cultures. There are good links with other countries: the oldest children go each year on a residential trip to Brittany and attend a partner school. Pupils keep in touch by letters and by facsimile, exchanging data as well as news of more personal interest. There are also links with a school in Kenya. Visitors to the school, such as a Japanese teacher, enhance cross-curricular links. These are well followed-up and enrich the curriculum in many subjects. Although the school is geographically isolated, this has not prevented the staff from ensuring that pupils are well aware of the world outside the peninsula.*

*Links with industry have been established through liaison with the Confederation of British Industries and*



*the Cornwall Education Business Partnership. Particularly noteworthy initiatives have been visits to the Architects' Department and Buildings Office at County Hall, the monitoring of the Global Challenge Yacht Race with the help of British Telecom and work with RNAS Culdrose for a project on the weather.*

The provision for spiritual development in small schools with close church links is stronger than that for larger schools. Schools in less advantaged areas which achieve well are reported to have a particularly strong ethos, often enabling them to handle difficult pupils well.

Even small schools with weaknesses in the teaching or with unsatisfactory standards tend to have a positive ethos, although when things get sufficiently bad for a school to have serious weaknesses or to require special measures then, not surprisingly, weaknesses in the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are reported.

## 9.6 Leadership and management

The majority of headteachers of small schools provide clear educational direction for their school, although as with schools in general there are weaknesses in the leadership in around one school in seven. The role of the headteacher in a small school is, however, different from that of a headteacher in a larger school. Workloads are balanced in a different way for the teaching headteacher; smaller numbers of pupils make some tasks lighter, but others prove more demanding and time-consuming because teaching and management work overlap during the school day. There are also, of course, fewer adults. It is unlikely that a small school will have a deputy headteacher, and the concept of a senior management team is unlikely to be appropriate; the school secretary is likely to have less hours each week than in a larger school. All adults, especially the headteacher, are likely to carry multiple responsibilities, not just in terms of management but for the co-ordination of subjects.

Combining leadership with a substantial teaching role can, however, be a powerful way to influence the process of change. The teaching commitment enables a headteacher to "lead from the front" and to understand the processes involved in curriculum development. It also ensures that the headteacher knows at first hand what pupils know and can do; and it should reveal priorities for spending or training very clearly. On the other hand, weakness or enforced absence through, for example, illness or even secondment to alternative work can have an immediate and depressing effect on a small school.

Good teaching and good management are, not surprisingly, the two most significant characteristics of effective small schools. In practice, this means that the influence of the headteacher is a more than usually important factor in determining the quality of a small school. When the teaching or the management, or both, are weak, there are few ways to cushion the adverse effects. By the same token, however, the strength of the headteacher's influence in a small school also means that change and development can be brought about more quickly than in a larger organisation.

Governors are increasingly aware of the supportive role they can play. In many small schools they, too, have multiple roles, and inspection reports show how strong this partnership can be. At times, however, the governors leave too much to the headteacher and the resulting overload can lessen the effectiveness of the leadership.

## 9.7 Finance and efficiency

Small schools have higher unit costs than larger schools; they cost more per pupil than larger schools, and the cost per pupil rises as the school gets smaller. Judging value for money in a small school is a complex exercise; even successful small schools cost more to run per pupil than larger schools. What is clear, however, is that in most small schools day-to-day administration is efficient and there is usually careful financial planning and budgetary control. In addition, many small schools are particularly good at raising funds in the local community. By and large, small schools spend what money they have wisely and effectively.

Most small schools have sufficient resources to teach the National Curriculum. However, there is a wide spread of provision and the smallest schools often have the weakest resourcing. Local fundraising can play a particularly important role in enhancing the resources of a small school.

The quality of the accommodation in small schools is adequate in three-quarters of the schools. In one-third of the schools the accommodation is good. In an effort to modernise and to provide for the National Curriculum, many small schools have been given new or refurbished premises and now have good facilities. The demise of the outside toilet has been a long time coming, but much appreciated by caretakers, staff and pupils alike especially in winter!

Nevertheless, overall, small schools have poorer accommodation than larger schools, and the smallest schools have the least

satisfactory buildings: one-quarter of the smallest schools and one in five of the small schools have inadequate accommodation. Problems include cramped classrooms; insufficient facilities for the youngest children; a lack of space for outdoor play; and complicated arrangements for physical education, dinners and wet weather playtime. Many of these schools, however, have ingenious ways of circumventing their difficulties, often making good use of alternative local facilities such as church halls.

## 9.8 In conclusion

The features which make a small school successful are often those which combine to make a larger school successful, and inevitably include good teaching and good management. More specific to the small size of a school, and often directly related to the typical rural location and favourable economic circumstances of many small schools, are the close involvement of the local community in supporting the day-to-day work and extra-curricular activities of the school; the strong personal links between parents and the teachers; smaller class size and continuity of staffing; the ingenuity of the staff in overcoming problems with the accommodation, resources or expertise available; the establishment of networks of support from clusters of small schools; and a commitment by parents and the school to achieve the highest possible standards. The strength of "save our school" campaigns in rural areas is testimony to the warmth often felt by a local community for its school.

There remains a sense of vulnerability in small schools, however. If things go wrong and a school's reputation declines, parents are quick to register their protest by moving their children to another school. A weakness in the teaching or leadership can have a devastating impact on the school career of a pupil. It only takes the loss of a few families to have a significant impact on the organisation and morale of a small school. Fortunately, though, such schools form a small minority and, as this chapter indicates, most small schools are achieving standards and providing a quality of education at least as good as those achieved in larger establishments.

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**49** *Children and their Primary Schools* (The Plowden Report). HMSO, 1967.

**50** *Primary Education in England. A Report by HMI*. DES, 1978.

**51** Harrison, Diane A (1995). "Small Schools, Big Ideas: Primary Education in Rural Areas", *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol 43, No 4.

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**54** Hopkins, D and Ellis, P D (1991). "The Effective Small Primary School: Some Significant Factors", *School Organisation*, Vol 11, No 1.

**55** Waugh, D (1991). "Implementing Educational Change in the Small Primary School", *Aspects of Education* (Journal of the Institute of Education), University of Hull, No 44.

**56** Audit Commission (1990). *Rationalising Primary School Provision*. London: HMSO.

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# Chapter 10

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

### 10.1 Provision

OFSTED is publishing separately a four-year review based on the inspection of every special school in England. This chapter reports on the provision in mainstream primary schools for pupils identified as having special educational needs. It also reports on the implementation of the Code of Practice and includes evidence about the provision of "units" for pupils with special educational needs in primary schools. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good in the majority of primary schools (six in ten in 1996/97, for example), and is rarely inadequate.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs was the focus of considerable change between 1994 and 1998. This was mainly as a result of the 1993 Education Act and the subsequent guidance in the Code of Practice<sup>58</sup> on the identification and assessment of special educational needs and in Circular 6/94 on the organisation of special educational provision. A significant and positive change in primary schools has been, over the past four years, the establishment of the role of the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO). The expectations on this role have been substantial, but considerable expertise has been acquired by many SENCOs and their work has been influential and effective. It has generally been the SENCO, with support from the headteacher, who has driven forward the changes required by the 1993 Act and the Code of Practice. SENCOs have established appropriate procedures for keeping a register of pupils' special educational needs and for preparing and revising individual education plans. However, these are time-consuming tasks, and many co-ordinators have been concerned about the time taken by their role; indeed, some have been unable to complete the recommended termly reviews.

The estimations made in 1978 (the Warnock Report<sup>59</sup>), that 20 per cent of pupils would have special educational needs at some time in their school careers and that 2 per cent would have long-term needs which would require a Statement of Special Educational Need, have continued to be reflected in recent legislation. A Statement of Special Educational Need follows a detailed multi-disciplinary assessment of a pupil's needs and sets out the special educational provision required to meet those needs. The statement is a legal document and is kept under statutory annual review. It is expected that pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements, will be educated in mainstream schools if:

- their needs can be met;
- the education of the other pupils is not hindered;
- the placement meets with the wishes of the parents; and
- the placement represents an efficient use of resources.

In January 1998 just under 3 per cent of school-age pupils had a Statement of Special Educational Need and 20 per cent of all primary-aged pupils were identified as having special educational needs, including those with statements. Both the percentage of pupils with a statement and the proportion of these pupils placed in mainstream schools increased steadily throughout the 1990s. Fifty-eight per cent of pupils with statements were placed in mainstream schools in 1998 compared with 48 per cent in 1993. Of the children for whom a statement was first written in 1997, 71 per cent were placed in mainstream schools, compared with 66 per cent in 1994 and 59 per cent in 1992. Roughly twice as many pupils in Key Stage 2 have Statements of Special Educational Need than in Key Stage 1. The majority of schools identify between 10 per cent and 24 per cent of pupils as having special needs; over a quarter of schools identify more than 25 per cent of pupils as having special needs.

There are considerable variations amongst local education authorities in relation to the numbers of pupils with statements. These often reflect a local education authority's policy in respect of the way funding is allocated for the provision of pupils with special educational needs. Some have relatively high percentages of pupils with statements, while others have relatively few such pupils. The proportions vary from over 5 per cent to just over 1 per cent. In addition, the proportion of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need taught in mainstream schools as opposed to special schools differs widely between

local education authorities. For example, a few local education authorities have over 90 per cent of their pupils with statements in mainstream schools. At the other extreme, a few have less than 35 per cent of their statemented pupils in mainstream schools. This is clearly related to the number of special schools that a local education authority has decided to maintain.

## 10.2 Promoting high achievement for pupils with special educational needs

In 1996, OFSTED published the results of a survey<sup>60</sup> conducted by HMI of how schools identified pupils with special educational needs, the provision made for these pupils and their achievements in mainstream schools. In general, HMI found that the quality of teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs had major shortcomings in too many lessons. In particular, the survey found that:

- throughout the primary phase, the quality of teaching and learning and the standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs were frequently too variable, both within and between schools;
- where support was not available, or where it was insufficiently well informed, both the standards of achievement and the quality of education suffered;
- where no extra support was present, pupils with special educational needs benefited no less than others from good teaching, which took full account of the needs of all pupils;
- the most influential factor on the effectiveness of in-class support was the quality of joint planning of the work between the class teacher and the support teacher or learning support assistant;
- all pupils gained from extra in-class support, but pupils with special educational needs gained the most;
- learning support assistants were effective in helping to raise the standards achieved by pupils with special educational needs;
- the quality of educational provision in withdrawal sessions, outside the classroom, was generally sound but focused almost exclusively on literacy skills.

The key features of lessons in which effective learning took place, including withdrawal groups and individual support lessons, were:

- activities which were clearly targeted, focused and challenging for the pupils;
- careful planning, which responded to the specific nature of a pupil's individual learning needs;
- the tracking of individual progress against carefully constructed programmes of work;
- sessions linked to the work being undertaken by the rest of the class, with the class teacher being aware of what was taking place and sharing records;
- teaching which fitted into whole-school approaches, such as concentrating on a school approach to teaching phonic skills;
- time used flexibly so that pupils did not lose their curricular entitlement, for example not always being withdrawn from music.

The following example illustrates good practice where pupils are withdrawn from mainstream classes for individual or group work:

*Ten pupils are withdrawn from two classes in Year 3 and Year 4 as they have similar literacy difficulties. They are achieving around Level 2 for reading and writing, below age-related expectations. The focus is on reading for meaning, writing and spelling, with the specific aim of developing levels of concentration. The work is linked to a whole-school anti-bullying programme. The planning and organisation of the session by the class and support teachers show a thorough understanding of pupils' individual needs. A range of*

*appropriate worksheets, carefully selected, supports reading and writing activities, and computer software with a voice synthesiser encourages independent learning. Pupils enjoy these thrice-weekly sessions, can articulate why they need extra help, but display good levels of self-esteem. They apply previously learned skills to the new words and sentences. Progress is clear, carefully monitored and conveyed to their class teachers.*

At the time of the 1994 survey, the majority of schools were in the process of reviewing their policies for special educational needs in the light of the Code of Practice. While considerable progress was being made, initially the main thrust in most schools gave priority to procedural and administrative detail. Less than half the schools in the survey provided appropriate guidance for class or subject teachers on strategies for teaching the range of pupils with special educational needs.

## 10.3 The Code of Practice

In 1997 HMI published a survey<sup>61</sup> into the implementation of the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs and found that steady progress was being made in almost all primary schools. In particular:

- most schools were aware of the major implications of the Code of Practice for all teachers;
- increased attention was being given to special needs issues in primary schools, especially to the need to provide pupils with special educational needs with a broad and balanced curriculum, including the National Curriculum;
- there was a better match between the educational provision made and pupils' special educational needs;
- schools were more successful at identifying pupils' learning and behavioural problems;
- almost all primary schools had a designated SENCO and best practice occurred when the SENCO had sufficient time to liaise, co-ordinate and support staff throughout the school;
- most schools were establishing procedures for keeping a register of special educational needs, for preparing and reviewing individual education plans, and for liaising with parents, colleagues and external support services;
- local education authorities had produced good-quality guidance for schools on the implementation of the Code of Practice, although there was little assistance on how to apply the guidance effectively.

Some areas of difficulty remained, however, in particular:

- while better identification procedures were in place, teachers were less successful in monitoring the progress of pupils or the effectiveness of the teaching and additional support that pupils receive;
- many schools could not provide detailed information about their funding arrangements for special educational needs, often due to unclear information from local education authorities but more frequently because the school itself did not have a clear rationale for the proportion of its funds which should reasonably be spent to support pupils with special educational needs;
- the majority of special educational needs policies did not comply totally with the statutory requirements. Teachers, and particularly governors, were often unclear about their statutory duties, most often in relation to the statutory requirement on governors to report to parents annually on the success of the school's special educational needs policy and practice;
- changes to the organisation and funding of health authorities had left schools very confused about who is responsible for making provision, and in particular with whom to liaise, for the support of pupils requiring physiotherapy and speech therapy;
- the lack of adequate support from some local education authority support services for pupils with more serious difficulties, although without a statement, which as a consequence often led to a statement being necessary.

Of all the recommendations made by the Code of Practice, the writing and reviewing of individual education plans continued to give the greatest cause of concern to SENCOs, with many reporting that they did not have the time to complete the recommended termly review of individual education plans, especially without access to clerical assistance.



The DfEE, in its most recent publication,<sup>62</sup> recognises the need for further development in special educational needs policy and practice as part of the Government's school improvement strategy. The recommended programme of action sets out an expectation that the proportion of pupils with statements being educated in mainstream schools should be increased over the next four years. In addition, it sets out plans to produce a revised Code of Practice to take effect during the academic year 2000/01.

## 10.4 Additional special educational needs provision or "units" for pupils with special educational needs in primary schools

While a high proportion of pupils with statements are educated in mainstream primary schools, this is often in additional-provision or specially resourced designated "units", usually additionally funded by the local education authority. Much of this provision has been well established over many years. Many local education authorities are increasing this type of provision, sometimes to replace special schools, most often those for pupils with visual or hearing impairment, or physical disabilities.

Additional special educational needs provision is usually for a specific group of pupils, almost always with a Statement of Special Educational Need for example, pupils with hearing impairment, including those who use signing either as their primary means of communication or as a supplement to hearing and lip-reading; visual impairment, including pupils who use braille; speech and language difficulties; and physical difficulties, including those using wheelchairs and with severely reduced mobility.

Admission policies for additional provision are usually negotiated between the school and its governors and the local education authority. In some provision, the placement of pupils has gradually changed for example, increasing numbers of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties in a moderate learning difficulties provision. In the best practice, admission policies are kept under careful review and, where changes occur, staff have opportunities to undertake additional training. Some admission policies emphasise the intention to reintegrate pupils into their own mainstream schools or to retain pupils for a specified length of time, as is often the case for many pupils with speech and language difficulties. In some local education authorities a mismatch of provision between primary and secondary schools leads to considerable difficulties for the placement of pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Additional special educational needs provision is inspected as part of the inspection of the host school. Inspection reports and HMI surveys<sup>63</sup> have indicated much good practice, which has improved over the four-year period, often in line with the positive developments which have taken place as a result of the Code of Practice.

The attainment of pupils in additional provision is usually below and often well below national expectations, but there are exceptions. For example, in a survey of the teaching of reading to pupils with hearing impairment, HMI found<sup>64</sup> that one-third of the pupils attained standards in line with those expected for their ages. In several schools with provision for pupils with visual impairment, it was found that at the end of Key Stage 2 more able pupils who were competent brailers were able to read and write as well as their sighted peers. The emphasis in inspection reports, however, for most pupils with special educational needs is usually on the progress that they as individuals make over time rather than comparisons with national expectations.

Progress made by pupils with a range of special educational needs was judged to be satisfactory and often good. For example, in a survey of provision for pupils with specific learning difficulties HMI found that the pupils made good progress in reading, and satisfactory progress with spelling and writing. The greatest variation in progress reported by inspectors was for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. In some schools there was insufficient planning for these pupils and insufficient challenge in order to raise standards.

In most cases teachers working in specialised provision had additional qualifications in an aspect of special educational needs and they were skilled and experienced mainstream teachers or occasionally had a special school background. In most cases the quality of teaching was sound or better, but there were exceptions. In the best lessons which covered all types of special educational needs:

- individual education plans had targets which were clear and precise, they had a specified timescale for example six to eight weeks and they could be monitored simply, for example by ticking whether the skill had been achieved;

- support staff and learning support assistants were well briefed;
- planning took good account of the individual needs of the pupils;
- activities were well matched to the pupils' needs, ensuring a level of success;
- positive feedback was given to the pupils, spelling out exactly what was good about their work;
- good relationships enabled pupils to feel valued and supported;
- pupils, often as young as seven, knew their targets and strived to reach them;
- day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress facilitated good planning for the next lesson.

Some excellent lessons were seen with pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, in which each had a set of targets in literacy which were assessed at the end of every lesson by recording the skills acquired. The pupils developed a tremendous sense of achievement, which they were proud to share with others.

The majority of pupils placed in additional special educational needs provision had access to a broad and balanced curriculum, and there was no disapplication from the National Curriculum. However, the provision often catered for a wide age and ability range, at worst two key stages and at best two year groups in a single key stage. Balancing integration opportunities in mainstream classes with specialist teaching and the deployment of staff to support pupils was a difficult process which needed continuous monitoring. In many cases it worked well, especially when the support in mainstream classes was well deployed, as in the case of many pupils with hearing, visual and physical difficulties; but integration in mainstream classes was most difficult for pupils with moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. At times there was too much emphasis on core skills at the expense of other areas of the curriculum, while at the same time there were instances of a lack of support for pupils in foundation subjects.

In most cases, pupils were on the register of the appropriate mainstream class. They had opportunities to work in this class and to develop friendships, and they had additional support in withdrawal groups. Much depended, however, on the quality of communication between the specialist teacher and the mainstream teacher so that literacy and numeracy skills, for example, could be reinforced in other curricular areas. In the best practice the specialist teacher joined in the shared curriculum-planning process with other teachers, and there was added strength where this also included the school SENCO. In these situations, staff could share in contributing to the overall provision of the school and, from this, specific projects such as family literacy initiatives sometimes emerged.

In much of the provision for pupils with speech and language difficulties, the joint work between speech therapists, teachers and learning support assistants was excellent in the quality of support it gave pupils. Likewise in the provision for pupils with physical difficulties, the joint work with physiotherapists was equally valuable for pupils' progress. Services from outside the school were well used to develop the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs. Educational psychology services frequently provided good advice on developing individual education plans for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Appropriate attention was usually, but not always, given to developing mobility skills for pupils with visual impairment and the development of their social skills in some schools, but this was not consistent for these pupils.

Assessment practices were usually at least satisfactory, with effective baseline assessment and good-quality individual education plans. While in the survey of the teaching of reading to pupils with hearing impairment in mainstream schools no pupils had been disapplied from the statutory tests completely, in some cases pupils had been disapplied from the written tests but not from teacher assessment. Annual reviews were usually well managed and transition to secondary schools well thought-out.

Partnership with parents was an important goal and in some cases this was very well achieved. In the best practice, teachers made good links with parents, some of whom lived a distance from the school. They provided homeschool books and termly meetings focusing on the progress made by the pupil and social events. In one school with provision for pupils with speech and language difficulties, parents, alongside mainstream pupils and staff, attended classes to learn signing so that they could use it with their children.

The management of additional special educational needs provision was usually good. In the best provision, the specialist staff were committed to, and clear about, their goals. The headteacher had a good knowledge of special educational needs issues and undertook a role in monitoring the quality of the specialists' work. This commitment was also reflected by the governors, who understood the role of the provision and actively supported it in the school. School development planning included development targets for the provision. There was, however, almost no evaluation of the effectiveness of the provision in order

to plan its further development.

In most cases the provision was adequately staffed, with teachers and learning support assistants suitably qualified and experienced. In a number of schools the specialist teacher was also the SENCO for the whole school; where time had been made available this was a valuable role in giving the specialist teacher an overview. It also enabled mainstream staff to see the teacher as a full member of the school's staff. In some schools, however, the specialist teacher promoted a separateness which was not in the best interests of the pupils.

Specialist teachers had sufficient access to in-service training but their choice of professional course was more often focused on special educational needs issues than on subject development issues. There were good examples of in-service training to the whole of a school's staffing, before additional provision was established and periodically as needs or staff changed.

Resources for learning were sufficient overall, except for the use made of information and communication technology for pupils with all types of need. For example, pupils with moderate learning difficulties, who would have benefited from using computers, and in particular concept keyboards, to develop their writing skills, sometimes had no access to this equipment. The underuse of computers for developing reading skills with pupils with hearing impairment delayed progress. However, there was good use of supportive technology such as closed-circuit television to support pupils with visual impairments.

Accommodation for additional special educational needs provision was usually appropriate to the needs of the pupils and in many cases has become available because of falling rolls in the host school. Appropriate modifications have often been made, such as soundproofing to assist pupils who are deaf and improved floor surfaces for pupils with physical difficulties. Inspectors often commented positively on the location of a base room when it was in the heart of the school rather than in a separate building or located at the end of a corridor; location was important to the achievement of a sense of inclusion for pupils with special educational needs.

Funding for the additional special educational needs provision for pupils with hearing and visual impairments was usually centrally managed by the local education authority, which enabled the provision to be managed flexibly as the incidence, age and location of pupils with these disabilities changed. Funding for all other types of provision was often delegated, and in the best practice it was supported by a service-level agreement. In most cases funding was sufficient to meet the needs of the pupils, but it was not always based upon clear criteria for allocation.

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**58***Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs*. DfEE, 1994.

**59***Special Educational Needs Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Education of Handicapped Children and Young People*. HMSO, 1978.

**60***Promoting High Achievement for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*. OFSTED, 1996.

**61***The SEN Code of Practice: Two Years On*. OFSTED, 1997.

**62***Meeting Special Educational Needs: a Programme of Action*. DfEE, 1998.

**63***Promoting High Achievement for Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools*. OFSTED, 1996.

**64***The Teaching of Reading to Pupils with Hearing Impairment in Mainstream Schools*. OFSTED, 1998.

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# Chapter 11

## LITERACY AND NUMERACY

### 11.1 Inspection evidence

In 1994/95 inspectors reported that pupils achieved well in about half of primary schools in English, and in a little over two in five primary schools in mathematics. The Annual Report for 1994/95 concluded that: "In Key Stage 2 standards (in English) require considerable improvement in about one-tenth of schools. In mathematics standards require considerable improvement in about one-sixth of schools." This view from inspection supported claims from researchers involved in international comparisons that English pupils achieved relatively poorly in mathematics in comparison to Pacific Rim societies such as China, Korea and Taiwan.<sup>65</sup>

There is ample evidence to show that the performance of pupils in England lags behind that of many of our international counterparts in important aspects of mathematics. The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)<sup>66</sup> of pupil performance pointed to long-standing weaknesses in the performance of English nine-year-olds, particularly in number. In the TIMSS, the same teachers and pupils took part in both the mathematics and the science assessments of the nine-year-old pupils. These same pupils performed well in science and considerably less well in important aspects of mathematics. The findings, therefore, reinforced the view that it is what schools and teachers do which makes a substantial difference to pupils' performance rather than other factors such as home background or the ability of pupils, which are "outside their control".

In 1993, OFSTED published its report on *Access and Achievement in Urban Education*,<sup>67</sup> which drew attention to the underachievement by significant numbers of pupils and students in urban schools and colleges. One of its themes was that pupils in schools in disadvantaged areas require particularly skilled teaching in oral and written communication, including reading.

OFSTED responded to the growing debate about the teaching of numeracy and literacy by requiring inspectors to report more directly on literacy and numeracy skills in 1994/95 and 1995/96. Charts 5255 summarise inspectors' judgements on literacy and numeracy skills for the two years (1994/95 and 1995/96) at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

On the basis of the inspection evidence, the conclusions from the 1995/96 Annual Report were:

*Pupils' skills in **speaking and listening** are generally good. Pupils listen attentively, talk confidently about their work and express their ideas clearly. In over half of schools, pupils' **reading** skills are good in both key stages, but in just under one in ten in Key Stage 1 and one in eight in Key Stage 2 they are poor. Many pupils are not able to read accurately. Phonic work in particular still needs to be strengthened in many schools. **Writing** skills remain weaker than those in speaking and listening, and are poor in Key Stage 2 in one-fifth of schools: weak spelling and sentence construction, limited vocabulary and lack of attention to improving work by redrafting are the main problems. Too many children continue to leave their primary schools poorly equipped with the essential skills of reading and writing.*

*In mathematics, standards in **number** are good in about half of primary schools, but are poor in one in seven in Key Stage 2. Standards in **shape and space** and **data handling** are generally higher than those in number. In Key Stage 2, pupils spend too much time unproductively repeating work that they have already mastered. This slows progress in Years 3 and 4, but there is an improvement in Year 6. In schools where a substantial amount of mathematics is taught directly to the whole teaching group or class, and pupils regularly undertake oral and mental work, standards are generally higher than where the approach is overwhelmingly that of individual work.*

Inspection evidence, therefore, was beginning to demonstrate a strong relationship between standards of reading, writing and numeracy and the method of teaching. In 1995, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector announced that he would follow up the inspection evidence and the findings of the Access and Achievement in Urban Education report. HMI, working closely with

three local education authorities in London (Islington, Southwark and Tower Hamlets), inspected the teaching of reading in 45 primary schools, 15 from each authority. The inspections concentrated on the teaching of reading in Year 2 and Year 6 in each school, and were backed up by a common test of reading administered by the National Foundation for Educational Research to the Year 2 and Year 6 pupils in the survey schools.

The following year HMI conducted a similar survey into the teaching of number in Year 2 and Year 6 in 45 schools in three other local education authorities (Greenwich, Newham and Knowsley). In both surveys the local education authorities were selected because their publicly available indicators National Curriculum test scores, and General Certificate of Secondary Education grades for English and mathematics were comparatively low. All six authorities face some of the most severe socio-economic conditions in the country, including high proportions of low-income families, areas with high and long-term unemployment, and (in most cases) high proportions of families for whom English is an additional language.

One outcome of the considerable interest in, and concern about, the teaching of literacy and numeracy was the establishment in September 1996 by the DfEE of the National Literacy Project and the National Numeracy Project. The approaches taken by these projects were extended nationally into the National Literacy Strategy in September 1998 and the National Numeracy Strategy from September 1999. Finally, in the summer of 1997 a small number of "Summer Literacy Schools" was established, followed the next year by a larger number of literacy and numeracy summer schools.

This chapter draws principally on five sources of evidence in its review of literacy and numeracy: the two surveys of the teaching of literacy and numeracy in three urban local education authorities; the evaluations, conducted by HMI, of the National Literacy Project and the National Numeracy Project; and initial reports on the 1998 summer literacy schools.

**Chart 52 : Speaking and listening**

**Chart 53 : Reading**

**Chart 54 : Writing**

**Chart 55 : Numeracy**

## 11.2 The Teaching of Reading in 45 Inner-London Primary Schools

In the survey referred to above,<sup>68</sup> intakes of the majority of the schools represent some of the highest levels of disadvantage in the country. They generally had higher proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, higher numbers of pupils with English as an additional language, and both higher pupil turnover and higher staff turnover than the national averages. These are challenging circumstances in which to teach reading and the central problem, reflected in the under-achievement of many pupils in reading, was the wide variation in the quality of the teaching.

Reading scores in the standardised tests were significantly below national norms, and a large group of white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds performed poorly. In Year 2, only about one in five pupils achieved a reading age at or above their chronological age. Almost one in five achieved no score at all. Of those achieving no score at all, about half were from non-English-speaking home backgrounds. In Year 6, two pupils in five achieved a reading age at or above their chronological age; about one-quarter of the pupils in Year 6 were one year or more ahead of their age norms.

However, four out of ten of the pupils in Year 6 achieved reading ages which were two years or more below their chronological age. Black African pupils performed better than other ethnic groups at both Year 2 and Year 6. Bangladeshi pupils achieved low scores in Year 2 but performed better in Year 6. White pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds performed least well and constituted the largest group of underachievers at Year 6.

The commentary on these test results is unequivocal, and the spotlight falls fairly and squarely on the quality of the teaching in the classroom, namely how reading is taught:

*The wide gulf in pupils' reading performance is serious and unacceptable. Some schools and pupils are doing well against the odds while others in similar circumstances are not. It is clear that it is what individual schools do that makes the difference to their pupils' reading performance. It follows that the*

*underperforming schools must do things differently if the large numbers of low-achieving pupils are to receive the quality of teaching they need and deserve to make the progress of which they are capable.*

The survey challenged directly several well established aspects of the teaching of reading, including:

- free reading with little or no intervention by the teacher;
- too much time spent hearing individual pupils read;
- the overuse of undemanding and time-consuming worksheets.

The survey identified the weaknesses of the teaching, including:

- insufficient attention to the systematic teaching of an effective programme of phonic knowledge and skills;
- insufficient attention to the development of reading beyond the basic stages, such as the development of pupils' abilities to question, evaluate and respond in depth to what they read;
- the use of too narrow a range of texts (largely narrative fiction), giving pupils insufficient opportunity to encounter progressively more demanding texts, including reference materials;
- insufficient direct and explicit teaching of specific aspects of reading;
- a lack of any detailed analysis of pupils' errors in reading.

At the time of publication these criticisms of the teaching of reading were seen as a broadside assault on the methods used in many English primary schools. Nevertheless, they have been addressed through the establishment of National Curriculum assessment arrangements such as the use of "running records", and within the Framework and teaching approaches of the National Literacy Strategy.

## ***11.3 The Teaching of Number in Three Inner-urban Local Education Authorities***

As with the survey of the teaching of reading, the schools participating in the number survey<sup>69</sup> were mainly in areas of severe socio-economic deprivation, with high proportions of low-income families and high levels of long-term unemployment.

Scores in the National Curriculum tests for mathematics at both key stages in 1995 were below the national averages in two-thirds of the schools. In 1996, however, many of the schools showed significant improvements in their test results. The pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 also took standardised mental and written number tests. Overall, the mental and written test scores of Year 2 pupils were comparable with the national norms, but the Year 6 pupils performed less well and their scores were below those of the national sample.

In a similar picture to that seen in the reading survey, the test scores indicated substantial variation in attainment between schools. This variation indicated that some aspects of number work received too little attention or that they were badly taught. Too many pupils were ill-equipped to work out basic calculations in their heads, and they were slow and often inaccurate when using pencil-and-paper methods.

The performance of pupils from different ethnic groups showed considerable variation. Black African, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils achieved low scores in both Year 2 and Year 6. The small group of Chinese pupils performed well.

The report comments on the cultural acceptance in England of not having a "head for figures", unlike illiteracy, to which a critical social stigma is attached. Nevertheless, despite the fact that, overall, the schools in the survey scored close to the average in the standardised tests, the variations in standards and in the quality of teaching were, as the report states, "too wide and call for urgent attention".

The variation in the quality of the teaching was striking. At best some excellent teaching was seen in all three of the authorities. In contrast, there was some confused and confusing teaching, leading to poor attitudes, and anxieties about number, in many pupils.

Weaknesses in the teaching of number were highlighted in the report, and included:

- in half the lessons at Key Stage 1 and one-third at Key Stage 2, insufficient attention was given to securing the confident recall of number facts;
- in several schools there was no clear expectation that multiplication tables were to be learned by heart;
- "a debilitating overuse of individual work", often linked with an overreliance on worksheets and published schemes, where reliance on individual work isolated pupils in ways which made it difficult for them to receive any sustained, direct teaching;
- inappropriate expectations in terms of the "pitch" of the work and the pace of the lessons, often linked to weaknesses in teachers' curricular knowledge about how to progress number work. Examples of pupils receiving work that was too easy for them far exceeded those where the work was too hard.

There was another side to the coin, however. Good lessons were seen, with positive features including:

- a higher proportion of time spent teaching the class together, often at the start and sometimes at the end of the lesson;
- a well-judged mix of whole-class, group and individual work, developing a common gain in core knowledge and skills and enabling re-inforcement or extension through individual work;
- clear explanations and instructions;
- the teacher's ability to ask relevant questions and engage pupils in exchanges which promoted confidence and familiarity in using mathematical language;
- good modelling of mathematical ideas and knowledge of using simple resources such as a number line;
- an insistence that pupils should learn number facts and tables by heart.

A recognition of the weaknesses to overcome and the strengths on which to build has been a feature of the National Numeracy Project and its wider dissemination as the National Numeracy Strategy. The importance of tracking progress throughout the primary years, rather than just at the end of the key stages, has been acknowledged by the QCA; schools are now offered up-to-date standardised tests to help monitor pupils' progress more systematically and to help teachers plan their work more effectively.

It was encouraging to find that some schools in the survey were at or close to the national targets set by the Government for primary pupils in mathematics for the year 2002. That is to say, 75 per cent of their eleven-year-olds were achieving Level 4 or above in mathematics. While schools serving the areas of social disadvantage generally did less well than those in schools serving more favourable circumstances, this was not the whole story: some schools serving the poorest areas managed to achieve the national target and have done so since national testing began.

## 11.4 The National Literacy Project

The National Literacy Project was set up by the DfEE in September 1996 and was funded through Grants for Education Support and Training at a cost of £12.5 million over five years. Eighteen local education authorities were involved in the Project, involving initially 266 primary schools. HMI evaluated the Project by visiting a 20 per cent sample of schools.<sup>70</sup> Three visits were made to each school in the sample and over 300 "literacy hours" were observed.

Most of the schools had entered the Project because they had weaknesses in reading and writing, particularly at Key Stage 2. OFSTED inspection reports had also, in many cases, indicated unsatisfactory performance in other key areas, including leadership and management and the monitoring and evaluation of standards of work by both headteachers and subject co-ordinators.

The Project's aims were to raise standards of literacy in primary schools in line with national expectations. It targeted two key areas for improvement:

- the quality of literacy teaching in the classroom;
- the management of literacy throughout the school.

The Project established a detailed Framework of teaching objectives for reading and writing structured as a termly programme based on three levels of work:

- word level: phonics, spelling and vocabulary;
- sentence level: grammar and punctuation;
- text level: comprehension and composition.

The Project also provided guidance on how to teach these three levels of work through a daily literacy hour. Pupils were taught during this time through a mix of whole-class teaching, group teaching and individual work. As part of their work in promoting, managing and monitoring the Project, local education authorities appointed literacy consultants who trained and supported the "key teachers" designated by schools to take the lead in implementing the Project in their schools.

The progress of the pupils in the Project schools was also monitored by the use of nationally standardised tests, taken at the start of the Project in October 1996 and again in March 1998. Pupils also completed a questionnaire to assess their attitudes to reading and to see whether these had changed.

The Project was able to claim some important successes. Teaching improved, and many pupils made good progress. The Project was an important catalyst in the majority of schools in tackling deep-seated problems in literacy. While the picture was mostly positive, some schools remained in a trough of low standards, with only marginal improvement over the first five terms.

The Teaching Framework and the Literacy Hour required focused, direct teaching; both were well received by teachers, who appreciated the clear structure of the Literacy Hour and the detailed teaching objectives of the Framework. The Framework helped to establish demanding and clear expectations for reading and writing in primary schools, an essential precondition to the raising of standards. The Project had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and interest in reading and writing; they recognised the importance of what they were doing and afforded the Literacy Hour a high status.

HMI found that the Project had a clear, positive influence on the teaching of literacy and the test results for pupils in the first cohort of schools indicated that the majority of pupils had improved their reading scores. Nevertheless, HMI also reported that there remained a number of weaknesses in the teaching of literacy, disturbing variations in the standards being achieved in the first cohort of project schools, and insufficient progress being made by a significant minority of schools. These weaknesses were not considered to be intractable, but HMI concluded that if they were to be remedied, they would require:

- stronger leadership in schools where standards had not, thus far, begun to improve. Support from the headteacher was weak in just over one in five schools;
- a faster pace of change in classrooms where the teaching was unsatisfactory;
- a much greater degree of support and a more carefully targeted programme of intervention in the schools with weaknesses in leadership, management and teaching;
- improvements in teachers' knowledge about the teaching of phonics in order to improve the teaching of "word level" work.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses, the overall quality of the teaching was at least satisfactory in seven out of eight lessons, and in half of the lessons the teaching was good. The features of the good teaching can be illustrated by reference to the teaching at **Mary Trevelyan Primary School**, Newcastle upon Tyne, a school achieving test results above the national averages from a pupil population with 83 per cent eligibility for free school meals:

*All teachers are thoroughly well informed teachers of English, confident in their strategies for teaching phonics and spelling and including all aspects of English in demanding lessons. They are very familiar with the Project Framework.*

*All the teachers seen managed the literacy hour extremely skilfully. The class teaching was direct, demanding, involved accurate instruction and engaged all the pupils. Direct teaching was precisely linked to clear objectives. Groups were organised quickly with clear instructions. Pupils were very good at working independently, within a very well organised set of sensible classroom routines.*

*Expectations were universally high, and the Project Framework was helpfully guiding teachers as to where*



*to pitch things. This meant, for example, that much greater emphasis on the vocabulary of English (verb, sentence, adverb, for example) was placed with younger pupils; and the blends of letters ("oo" and "at" in a Year 1 lesson, for example) were used earlier than before. Lessons progressed at a good pace, although the Year 5 teacher was frustrated that the pace was not even faster.*

A small number of schools in the Project were high-achieving primary schools. Schools with outstanding English test results are understandably reluctant to abandon tried-and-tested good practice. Reference to **St Oswald's RC Primary School**, Newcastle upon Tyne, illustrates the tensions as well as the approach taken. HMI noted:

*Appropriate but unusual adaptation of the Project approach to match the particular demands of this high-achieving school. The school is not prepared to discard its previous successful practice which seemed to emphasise depth and quality, features which the school believes could get lost, especially by Year 6 in a 60-minute session.*

*The school has decided to teach "formally" the literacy hour for two lessons a week at Key Stage 2 and for three lessons a week at Key Stage 1. Other sessions are used for extended writing and other literacy activities, including handwriting and spelling. All the objectives of the Framework are covered; this has proved a very useful checklist for the teachers to ensure that their English scheme of work covers everything.*

*The school teaches well beyond the Framework, both in level and depth. Its scheme of work has been mapped against the Framework and at least covers it all. The Year 6 teacher plans her English against National Curriculum Level 5, for example.*

Given the national concerns about the underachievement of boys, the school has emphasised the need for all pupils to write complex and accurate sentences. An example from a Year 6 boy illustrates their success, included verbatim:

The Telegraph April 30th 1912

## **UNSINKABLE?**

***The Telegraph Asked Mr. C. H. Stengel a survivor from the great Titanic accident to write an account on what he felt on the night everything went wrong and here was what he came up with.***

It was a cold night on the 14th April 1912 and I, Mr C. H. Stengel, was enjoying a party with my fellow friends from Belfast as an almighty crash interrupted the party. My friends, Maids and I all made our way out of the room we were occupying passing a clock showing us the time... 11:40pm it was almost midnight. I made my way onto the deck and looked around. I heard an announcement saying the ship had struck an iceberg but I thought nothing of this as the ship was unsinkable... wasn't it?! I went back to my room to inform my friends as to what I saw on deck.

There were big blocks of ice falling from the iceberg and I was beginning to get worried... I rounded my friends up and told them to follow me onto the deck, they obeyed me and followed. We passed the stage and I noticed the band were still playing.

I ran towards the lifeboats and attempted to climb in through the crowds of other people but stopped as a badly aimed shot from a pistol just missed me, only to carry on and hit a bystander. I ran back through the crowds of hysterical women screaming and running wildly. I forgot about my friends for the time being so I ran to the stern, kicked off my shoes and dived into the deep blue sea.

The shock of the coldness of the water was amazing and I'm surprised I didn't die on impact, but still I was alive and that's all that mattered for the time being. Bits of ice were falling all about me but, with a bit of luck and great difficulty I avoided them just... I swam round to the front of the boat passing the hysterical crowds and men jumping overboard as I did in a last hope to stay alive.

Waves were lashing against the side of the boat and the stern rose higher and higher into the air. The crashing of the furniture and belongings smashing and tearing could be heard along with the exploding engines.

I was about to give into the mean and unkind Atlantic ocean when I spotted a wooden lifeboat not far off. I got an adrenalin rush and seemed to find superhuman strength to swim or rather grind out the last few metres toward the small craft but then, I collapsed...

Lucky for me a friend of mine on board the small boat spotted me and reached out to me. She just caught me by the collar as I was sinking along with the ship and she hauled me on board... I was told later I stopped breathing

for a while but thanks to a brave sailor who gave me C.P.R. I survived. I regained consciousness and watched in silent awe and hope the Titanic against a clear black sky with a full moon settled right in the middle of it.

I said a silent prayer for my friends as I watched the Titanic a 66000 ton monstrosity tilt back even further until it was at a right angle with the water.

A strange force made me turn away and I wept hoping at some moment I would be pinched by someone and wake up but this was no dream or even nightmare. It was really happening and there was nothing I could do to change the events of the last few hours of hell.

I turned around to face the ship one more time, just as it sank below the water and there was an eerie moment of silence apart from the sucking of the water as it was sucked down along with the Titanic and many people to nothingness.

I would never forget that night as long as I live and every night since I have prayed to God to thank him for sparing my life from the cruelty of the sea.

Mr. C. H. Stengel was one of about 850 people who survived the terrible tragedy of the Titanic from the 2228 who sailed in her. At about 6:00am the same day the Titanic sank the Carpathia a lifeboat arrived but it was too late.

The gains made by some groups of pupils in schools across the Project, as measured in reading scores, were greater than others; for example, girls recorded greater gains than boys, pupils eligible for free school meals made smaller gains than those who were not eligible; and pupils at advanced stages of the special educational needs Code of Practice made smaller gains than pupils with no defined special need. This finding indicates that the Project did not offer a completely watertight solution to the real challenge of the English system, namely the underachievement of boys in socio-economically disadvantaged areas.

Even after five terms, the rates of progress made by some schools were still not good enough. In the sample of schools visited by HMI, nearly one-third of the Year 6 age groups made less progress than the national average.

The dissemination and implementation of the Project, as with the National Literacy Strategy, relied on the "cascade" model of training. This placed a heavy responsibility on the key teachers, most of whom performed well. But the cascade model only works if the key teachers have the necessary skills and resources, and the support of the headteacher.

The contribution of the consultants was generally good and sometimes outstanding. Most developed an impressive range of skills, essential to sustaining the impetus of the work. Their role has been very demanding indeed, particularly when facing headteachers who were reluctant or unable to implement the Project in their school.

In most local education authorities the support for the consultants was at least satisfactory, and several effective literacy centres and literacy steering groups were set up. In three of the 18 authorities, however, the promotion and management of the Project never fully recovered from an unsatisfactory start because of poor internal communication and a lack of coherent strategies for linking the Project to other priorities. It was at the level of the individual school that the local education authority support was weakest, particularly in those schools which required the most help because they were not making enough progress.

Teachers found it difficult to organise the group-work element of the literacy hour in such a way that they were free to teach one or two of the groups, while the other groups undertook worthwhile tasks rather than low-level "holding" activities: at worst, wordsearches and colouring exercises.

Most schools worked hard to ensure there were adequate resources for the teaching of the literacy hour. Often, this meant diverting money from one priority to literacy in order to increase the stocks of books, particularly "big books" and sets of books used in "guided reading" sessions.

## 11.5 The National Numeracy Project

Two hundred and thirty-three primary schools set about implementing the National Numeracy Project.<sup>71</sup> Over one-fifth of these were located in inner London and a further 46 per cent in metropolitan areas. They were generally in areas of socio-economic disadvantage and the performance of the "numeracy schools" was generally lower compared to schools nationally.

The Project was well received in the vast majority of the schools. In many schools the introduction of the Project's Framework for Teaching Mathematics, with its detailed planning requirements and well-defined learning objectives, required a major change. The quality of planning for mathematics quickly improved and teachers found the Framework structure very helpful,

especially in mixed-age classes. The level of detail offered by the Framework was welcomed by teachers working with pupils with special educational needs.

The initial requirement to devote at least four 50-minute lessons a week to numeracy was implemented speedily. For some schools, this involved allocating more time to mathematics than before, and in a few this was reportedly at the expense of other subjects.

The audit process, which included the identification of targets and how to address them, helped many schools to raise their expectations of what pupils could achieve in mathematics. Many headteachers found target setting difficult, and in about one-third of schools the targets had an insufficiently strong emphasis on standards. In a significant minority of schools, expectations were too low and were unduly influenced by teachers' perceptions of the effects of pupils' backgrounds.

Most schools had sufficient resources to support the Project and were able to fund non-contact time for the co-ordinator and key teachers. As with the literacy project, problems emerged for schools with a high turnover of staff, particularly where new co-ordinators needed to be trained or supply teachers needed to be informed about the Project.

The quality of the teaching improved during the life of the Project and by the end was satisfactory or better in four-fifths of the lessons observed, although the figure of one in five lessons in which the teaching was unsatisfactory is high.

The amount of detailed and systematic planning required by the Project was considerable, and teachers found this to be very time-consuming.

The Project had a positive impact on the teaching of mathematics. Effective direct teaching was evident in most lessons, although not always sufficiently sustained. In particular, many teachers lacked confidence in using questions with the whole class. Teachers began to use the oral work and mental calculation activities as opportunities to develop a much more informed view of pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

Most pupils showed a positive attitude to the mathematics lessons, although their response to the introductory oral work and mental calculations was generally better than the demands of staying on task in the middle part of the lesson. Pupils often lost concentration when they were not working directly with the teacher.

The quality of the training for the teachers has been one of the crucial determinants of success. Again, as with the National Literacy Project, the quality of the headteacher's leadership and management and the status given to the Project have also been strongly associated with its success or failure at school level. Some schools clearly needed greater support than others from consultants and the local education authority in order to improve the quality of teaching and manage change.

## 11.6 Summer Literacy Schools

In 1997, 1,600 pupils took part in Summer Literacy Schools in 50 schools. In 1998, the scheme was extended considerably, involving over 16,000 pupils in approximately 500 schools. The aim was to improve the reading and writing skills of pupils on entry to Year 7 and help prepare them for the challenge of the secondary school curriculum. Summer schools formed part of the National Literacy Strategy and were expected to use the good practice described in the strategy. The pupils targeted were mostly those working at Level 3; in other words, not those one in ten pupils, largely boys, who fail to reach Level 3 in English.

Typically, the schemes involved 30 pupils from the feeder primary schools of a secondary school. The teachers involved were usually secondary school staff, often from the English or special needs departments. Most schools ran for five hours a day, with structured literacy activities during the morning and a range of sporting, technology or drama activities in the afternoon.

The strengths of the scheme included:

- a sense of shared purpose, with highly motivated pupils and good relationships between teachers and pupils;
- generally good co-ordination of the scheme, and careful monitoring by the local education authority;
- good teaching in half of the lessons observed by HMI, and satisfactory teaching in a further 35 per cent of lessons;
- good planning of literacy-related work, generally linked to the Framework for teaching.



Weaknesses included:

- inadequate assessment information from the feeder primary schools;
- some lack of knowledge of the National Literacy Strategy approach on behalf of the secondary school staff involved;
- a minority of reluctant staff, or a lack of continuity because of the use of a great many part-time staff;
- occasional overuse of worksheets or computer programs, reducing the amount of teaching of key literacy skills.

In summary, the vast majority of the Summer Literacy Schools were successful in meeting their objectives and provided good value for money. The quality of literacy teaching, the range of activities and the response of the pupils were all good features in these schools. In a few schools there were weak elements in the provision, mostly associated with too little training and preparation and a limited understanding of the principles and practice of the National Literacy Strategy. These lessons have been taken to heart and incorporated into the guidance for summer school providers in 1999, linking summer schools much more closely to the National Literacy Strategy.

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**65** See, for example, *Worlds Apart? A Review of International Surveys of Educational Achievement involving England*, David Reynolds and Shaun Farrell, OFSTED, 1996.

**66** *Third International Mathematics and Science Study*. NFER, 1996 and 1997.

**67** *Access and Achievement in Urban Education: A report from the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools*. HMSO, 1993.

**68** *The Teaching of Reading in 45 Inner London Primary Schools*. OFSTED, 1996.

**69** *The Teaching of Number in Three Inner-urban Local Education Authorities*. OFSTED, 1997.

**70** *The National Literacy Project. An HMI Evaluation*. OFSTED, 1998.

**71** *The National Numeracy Project. An HMI Evaluation*. OFSTED, 1998.

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# Chapter 13

## SCHOOLS WITH SERIOUS WEAKNESSES AND THOSE REQUIRING SPECIAL MEASURES

### 13.1 Introduction

Since the first inspection of schools according to the Framework for the Inspection of Schools, about 3 per cent (474 to the end of 1997/98) have been put into special measures and about 8 per cent have been found to have serious weaknesses. As a result of being put into special measures the schools have, in almost all cases, made good progress and very significantly improved the quality of the education that they provide for their pupils.

Primary schools subject to special measures are found in the full range of types and contexts of primary schools. Just over one-third are in urban areas where there is an obvious degree of social and economic disadvantage. But schools in suburban and rural areas are also found to be underperforming and when judged against the stated criteria they too are found to require special measures. Small rural schools in some counties form a large proportion of failing schools.

### 13.2 Standards of achievement

The characteristics of failing primary schools encompass all the criteria published in the annex of the Framework for the Inspection of Schools,<sup>77</sup> but low attainment and slow progress of pupils, together with unsatisfactory teaching and leadership, feature more prominently than the rest. In the reports of almost all schools in special measures, there is a reference to low standards of achievement. Most frequently the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are mentioned and, within those, attainment in literacy and numeracy are increasingly quoted. Low standards at Key Stage 2 are cited more often than low standards at Key Stage 1 or in early years classes.

The pupils' progress is judged by the gains in knowledge and skills that they make over time, as indicated in written work or records of progress or in the lessons observed during the inspection. In primary schools in special measures, the percentage of lessons where satisfactory progress is made is frequently less than 75 per cent. The criteria for consideration of failure include reference to the progress of distinct groups of pupils. The two groups most commonly quoted are pupils who have special educational needs and boys. Judgements about the progress of pupils who have special needs encompass the accuracy of the diagnosis of need and the appropriateness of the provision. A common cause of failure is the very slow progress made by pupils whose needs and provision are left entirely to the class teacher. In this respect, they often have too low expectations of progress.

### 13.3 Attitudes and behaviour

Negative attitudes to learning and poor levels of behaviour are often associated with pupils making insufficient progress. Obvious signs of poor discipline may well be in the form of unruly and disruptive behaviour, but there may also be considerable quiet restlessness in class, where concentration is difficult and engagement in work is low. Quantitative evidence of poor behaviour and attitudes is increasingly expressed in the numbers of exclusions, unauthorised absence and unexplained lateness.

### 13.4 The quality of teaching

Invariably in primary schools made subject to special measures there is criticism of the quality of teaching. This is the touchstone of the acceptability of a school's provision. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in failing schools can reach very high levels. The great majority of the weaknesses in the teaching include: inappropriate pitch of work; inefficient use of time; poor assessment of the pupils' progress; and weak lesson planning. These factors are often related to weak subject knowledge, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Poor presentational and organisational skills result in low engagement and poor progress of the pupils. In some schools, difficulties in recruitment and retention of teachers lead to discontinuity and fragmentation of learning.

## 13.5 Management and leadership

Ineffective leadership frequently features in reports of failing primary schools. Inadequate direction, unclear delegation, vague task and target setting, low levels of monitoring, weak analysis of the school's position, and a passive involvement by governors are the most commonly cited descriptions of weak leadership and management. This is manifest in low morale and poor motivation of staff, lack of teamwork and commitment, and inadequate implementation of the National Curriculum.

## 13.6 The improvement process

The improvement process starts with the recognition of weakness and the willingness to act urgently and vigorously to improve the school. The progress of some schools has been hindered by a reluctance to accept the inspection findings and a continued denial of failure. The positive attitude of the staff, led by the headteacher, is critical to restoration.

## 13.7 The action plan

The next important step is the preparation of the action plan. This provides a school with an opportunity to involve the staff in a review of the school's position and to set new shared goals. Clear, practical and manageable strategies for the achievement of those goals are at the heart of a good action plan. Schools where improvement is readily marked have action plans where priorities are clear, responsibilities for parts of the plan are assigned, targets and success criteria are set, and there is effective monitoring and evaluation. Clarity is often reflected in the link between the action proposed and the intended outcome. Occasionally, priorities can be muddled and objectives blurred in the welter of information contained in the plan. It has been important that teachers, governors, local education authority personnel and headteachers all recognise where their contribution fits into the whole plan and how their effectiveness can be recognised and valued.

The setting of quantitative targets is an important yet difficult aspect of action plans. Many schools are rightly keen to set high targets for improved attainment, but they do not want either to be overambitious or to set their sights too low. Target setting has been given added significance with the advent of local education authority and school targets for improved attainment. Where the targets are firmly rooted in the actual performance of pupils, teachers have been able to relate more closely to the objectives and pupils have been more likely to reach the target levels. Teachers also find that targets set as stages of the improvement process are helpful. The coverage and learning of key scientific knowledge or a particular reading skill at certain points of the year, for example, provide the teacher with a clear map for improvement and the recognition of work successfully completed.

## 13.8 Improving management

The progress of a school in special measures is firmly linked to the quality of leadership and management. Strong leadership by the headteacher is the most prominent feature of primary schools that make good progress while in special measures. Questions are asked at an early stage about the capacity of the incumbent headteacher to lead the school's required improvement. In many cases new headteachers are quickly appointed to failing schools. In some instances this is undertaken with the temporary appointment or the secondment of another headteacher from within the local education authority; these are frequently experienced and successful headteachers. A new appointment often helps in the gaining of a fresh and unprejudiced perception and in generating increased impetus for change. This, in turn, leads to changes in staff and the revision of roles and responsibilities.

Incumbent headteachers can also improve. Where clear and detailed guidance and support have been given to the headteacher for example by the local education authority or other external agencies effective leadership has ensued. This has taken the form of additional training focused on managerial and organisational skills, close monitoring by the local education authority,

in-school support in the form of a consultant headteacher, and a personal action plan specifying tasks and targets for improvement in the headteacher's work.

A key feature in developing the management of the school is the extent to which systems and procedures are built to ensure continued and lasting effectiveness. In this respect, self-evaluation of the school's performance can make a significant contribution. Where this is undertaken rigorously and honestly, clear gains have been made. The key ingredient is the knowledge and drive of the headteacher in setting appropriate expectations of teaching and attainment.

Just as the school's reaction to the initial inspection report is crucial to the improvement process, so too is its response to subsequent monitoring visits. Where careful note is made of the evaluations of progress on each key issue and action is geared to address specific points, success generally follows. This occasionally entails altering the emphasis or focus of the school's work.

## 13.9 Improving behaviour

Even if it is not a key issue in the inspection report, many primary schools choose to improve behaviour as a matter of priority. They recognise that the gaining of a calm and studious classroom is a necessary prerequisite to improving learning and achievement. Frequently, behaviour policies are developed or revised and more consistent application of new rules is sought. In some schools the enforcement of a new code of behaviour has led to a sharp increase in the number of pupils excluded for short periods of time before they learn what is expected of them and settle down to improve their behaviour. In many schools the improved behaviour of pupils is the first and most tangible achievement identified, and this is important at a time when teachers are anxious to see early signs of success.

## 13.10 Improving teaching

Improving the quality of teaching can take longer. Planning is often the first aspect to be worked on in order to specify in some detail what needs to be taught at the varying stages. From this the teachers are encouraged to write detailed lesson plans with particular emphasis given to framing learning intentions more precisely. In some cases, the objectives, content and approaches are prescribed by the school and are implemented rigorously by the teachers. This, with some schools, is based on the structure and planning formats developed by the National Literacy and Numeracy Projects. When this is accompanied by effective training and support, there has been marked improvement in the quality of teaching. This is related to increased understanding of what is to be taught and what outcomes can reasonably be expected from the majority of pupils in the class. This in turn is related to more confident teaching, in which more time and attention can be given to listening to, and building on, the responses of the pupils.

## 13.11 Raising standards of achievement

Improving the pupils' attainment is the prime aim of schools requiring special measures and this is the crucial measure against which they are ultimately judged. Raising standards, however, can be a slow and difficult process.

Time and again schools – some in the most difficult of contexts – have demonstrated that achievement from a very low base can be improved significantly. Many headteachers and teachers have been heard to say in the initial stages of special measures that many aspects of the school's work can be changed but they doubt whether standards can be lifted. Yet, often the pupils' achievements have overtaken national averages and expectations. This progress has been gained through much detailed work in planning, monitoring and assessment. Particular attention has been given to the key skills of literacy, oracy, numeracy and information technology. This has frequently entailed a change of culture in the school to focusing on the direct and explicit teaching of knowledge, understanding and skills. This does not imply a narrowing or impoverishment of the primary curriculum. On the contrary, this focus has given a large number of pupils the chance to have greater access to a wider range of activities and a clear sense of success.

## 13.12 The contribution of governors

Governors have helped schools in special measures by contributing to and supporting the plans for change. Strong, well-organised governing bodies are a common feature of schools that make good progress. As with headteachers, changes of chairmanship quite often follow the designation of special measures and this may precede a revision of the whole membership of the governing body. The local education authority often appoints additional governors who have experience and skill in

management and finance. Most governing bodies have developed effective committees for planning developments in the curriculum, personnel, finance and buildings. This is often accompanied by the delegation of subject responsibility to individual governors, who then visit and report on the subject to the governing body. Governors are generally slower, however, in developing effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's overall progress.

## 13.13 The work of the local education authority

Most local education authorities provide sound support for their schools which are subject to special measures, but there is considerable variation in the manner and effect of this support. In almost all schools, much help is given with the preparation of the school's action plan. The local education authorities, through their statements of action, say what they will do to help the school. In this they may commit personnel, money and training to the school. Relatively few schools have their delegated budget withdrawn following the designation of special measures, but some local education authorities do this as a matter of policy. In future, local education authorities will be required to have regard to the Code of Practice on LEA School Relations, which does not allow them to withdraw budgets as a matter of policy but only on a case-by-case basis. Depending on a school's needs, local education authorities often provide subject-specific help in the form of training, which is followed up by practical school-based work from advisory teachers. This help is usually highly valued by the teachers.

The monitoring and evaluation of a school's progress is a major responsibility of the local education authority. It is carried out with varying degrees of success. The best practice is found where a knowledgeable and skilful inspector relates closely to the role of the headteacher, visits regularly and provides detailed, practical advice for sustained improvement. Success is also achieved when the managerial advice is accompanied by support for teachers, mostly through the provision of practical advice from advisory teachers. A major challenge to the local education authority is in its ability to give support without encouraging dependence. The local education authority is rigorously held to account for the commitments made in the initial planning for the school's improvement.

## 13.14 Coming out of special measures

The work that many headteachers, staff, governors, parents, pupils and others have put into their schools to turn them from failure to success must not be underestimated. It has been those primary schools that have been determined to act quickly and decisively to bring about improvement that have made the best progress. Looking for excuses and someone to blame only hinder progress and limit improvement. Most primary schools have improved and have been removed from special measures within two years; indeed, some have reached this goal significantly more quickly.

The transformation in some schools has been quite remarkable, with provision that was poor changing to become good, unsatisfactory teaching replaced by teaching that is all sound or good, and weak leadership replaced by strong and visionary educational direction. If there has been poor behaviour, the new attitudes, enthusiasm for learning and self-discipline have made the schools pleasant places in which to learn rather than ones to avoid.

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# ANNEX 1: THE STATUTORY BASIS FOR EDUCATION<sup>80</sup>

The education system in England is to a large extent governed by Acts of Parliament and related Statutory Instruments. The years before the first full inspection cycle brought an unprecedented amount of reforming legislation, largely enshrined in the Education Reform Act 1988. This Act established the subjects of the National Curriculum and the local management of schools. Issues of accountability were taken further than before through the publication of national test results, the publication of performance tables, and published inspection reports on every maintained primary school in England. The principles and frameworks laid down in successive Acts from 1944 onwards are consolidated in two recent Acts: the Education Act 1996 and the School Inspections Act 1996.

The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) administers the statutory framework that governs the education system, establishes national education policies and works with other central and local government bodies in the implementation of those policies. Advice is provided by Government departments and also by non-departmental public bodies such as the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (formerly SCAA and NCVQ).

Central Government provides the bulk of the finance for the education system, but it is largely administered by local education authorities and the governing bodies of individual schools and colleges. The Funding Agency for Schools is responsible for administering the payment of grants to grant maintained schools; however, by 1998 there were only 502 grant maintained schools, serving 3 per cent of the pupil population.

OFSTED is a non-ministerial government department established in September 1992 by the Education (Schools) Act 1992, now consolidated into the School Inspections Act 1996. OFSTED is headed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), the first of whom was Professor Stewart Sutherland; after Professor Sutherland's return to Scotland, the post of HMCI has been held by Chris Woodhead. HMCI is responsible for securing the inspection of schools; for the registration of inspectors; and for advising the Secretary of State on all aspects of the quality of education and school standards.

The secular curriculum of all maintained schools is inspected by registered inspectors under contract to OFSTED. However, in schools in which denominational religious education takes place, this, and in some circumstances collective worship, must be inspected by a person chosen by the governing body rather than OFSTED.

Much of the evidence in this report is drawn from the substantial database constructed from the first cycle of inspections carried out under the legislation of 1992 and 1996; such inspections are usually referred to as "Section 9" (now Section 10) inspections. Denominational education, inspected separately and not reported on here, comes under "Section 13" (now Section 23).

Much of what happens in schools has been influenced by recent legislation. This legislation inevitably forms the backdrop to much of this report. The principal influences have been on the following.

## The characteristics of the school

- **Admissions:** parents have the right to express a preference as to the school at which they wish their children to attend, and local education authorities and governing bodies must try to meet these preferences.
- **Charging** for admission and education in all maintained schools is prohibited, but there are some exceptions such as individual musical tuition and board and lodging on residential visits.
- **Special educational need provision:** schools must pay regard to the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs. Where a child has been assessed as needing special provision determined by a statement, the local education authority must make and maintain a statement for that child and review it annually.

## Aspects of the school

- **Results of pupils' attainments.** Schools must publish the school and national results of the National Curriculum assessments in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science of seven-year-olds and eleven-year-olds. Schools must also provide at least annually a **written report to parents**, giving details of progress in all subjects and of attainment in nationally assessed subjects.
- **The National Curriculum** applies only to pupils of statutory school age. Maintained schools must teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, and the curriculum must be broad and balanced.
- The overall number of **lesson hours** per week is not prescribed, although guidance is given. Good practice is taken to be 21 hours for pupils aged 57 and 23.5 hours for pupils aged 811.
- **Religious education** in LEA maintained schools (and generally in controlled schools) must be taught in accordance with a locally agreed syllabus. Parents can withdraw their child from all or part of religious education.
- Schools must provide for all pupils to attend a daily act of **collective worship**, which over a term must be broadly Christian in character. Parents may withdraw their child from collective worship. Schools may apply to the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education for a determination that the requirement for Christian collective worship should not apply in the case of the school or any class or description of pupils.

## The management and efficiency of the school

Governors have a general responsibility for the effective management of the school within the framework of national legislation and, in the case of local education authority maintained schools, of local education authority policies. Detailed decisions about the day-to-day running of the school are the responsibility of the headteacher.

The duties of governors now include:

- establishing, with the headteacher, the aims and policies of the school and how standards can be improved;
- helping to draw up the school development plan;
- advising on spending the budget;
- ensuring that the National Curriculum and religious education are taught;
- selecting the headteacher, and appointing, promoting, supporting and disciplining other staff;
- acting as a link between the school and the community;
- drawing up the post-inspection action plan and monitoring how that plan is put into practice.

Local education authorities must maintain schemes under which delegated budgets apply to all LEA maintained schools.

## The role and duties of local education authorities

The period 1994/98 was one in which the roles of local education authorities changed, were increasingly defined and came under public scrutiny. Local education authorities must maintain schemes under which all county and maintained schools have delegated budgets. The Funding Agency for Schools is responsible for administering the payment of grants to grant maintained schools. The accounts of schools with delegated budgets are subject to regular internal audit and must be available for inspection as necessary by local education authorities' external auditors.

Towards the end of the inspection cycle the role of the local education authority was more closely defined in terms of intervention, which should be "in inverse proportion to success" and has been established as a primary role for local education authorities. These responsibilities are now set out in education development plans which include, for example, their progress towards meeting performance targets in their schools, targets for reducing exclusions and unauthorised absences, approaches to tackling schools causing concern, and their plans for implementing national strategies such as that for literacy.

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**80** This chapter draws principally on *School Inspection: a guide to the law*, OFSTED, November 1997, and *School Governors: A guide to the law*, DfEE, 1997.

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# INTRODUCTION

This review is based upon the findings of the published reports on OFSTED inspections of maintained special schools and of approved independent and other non-maintained special schools in England, some 1,300 schools in all, which were inspected in the four-year period beginning in September 1994. Data was obtained from the whole inspection database, and a sample of 100 reports from each year was examined in detail to provide illustrative material and to give some indication of the factors underlying apparent trends. The review also takes account of inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI) on specific themes concerned with special needs, of OFSTED's inspections of local education authorities (LEAs) and of visits by HMI to independent schools which have not yet been approved and have consequently not been included in the inspection cycle. Overviews are provided of inspection findings in relation to pupil referral units (PRUs) and secure units.

In the great majority of special schools it is inappropriate to attempt to judge pupils' attainment against national norms. Indeed, almost all special school reports are prefaced with a note to this effect. Prior to the introduction of the new Framework for Inspection in 1996/97, standards were judged on the basis of pupils' achievements. This measure was a judgement of pupils' attainment in relation to their capability.

The new Framework for Inspection introduced the notion of pupils' progress as a key indicator of standards in all schools. The measure was particularly appropriate for pupils in special schools, and was readily adopted as the principal indicator of standards. The change made the analysis of trends over the whole four-year cycle problematic, although the uniformity of judgements over time on the relative performance of different types of school suggest that the measures were closely comparable in outcome.

Schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) and emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) form the largest groups of schools. Where judgements can be made as to the performance of specific groups of schools, these are the principal groups identified. Where judgements refer to "all special schools", this term includes those for pupils with impairment of sight and hearing; pupils with physical disability (PD), language and communication problems, autism, specific learning difficulties; hospital schools, and schools that individually serve a variety of disabilities.

Inspection is primarily concerned with the quality of the educational provision and the impact it has on the progress and attainment of the pupils. Thus this review concentrates on these prime concerns rather than the effect of the various statutory changes and arrangements which were introduced during the four-year period in question.

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# 6

## ASSESSMENT, RECORDING AND REPORTING

### 6.1 Assessing and recording pupils' progress

The assessment and recording of pupils' progress is essential to the effective functioning of all schools, but the process is especially important in special schools. The small classes and high adult-to-pupil ratios in these schools assume a close match of activity and teaching method to the needs of the pupils. Systems for assessing and recording individuals' progress and their strengths and weaknesses provide the means of identifying these needs in detail. Ongoing assessment provides an insight into the match of teaching methods to pupils' learning styles as well as into rates of learning, enabling profiles of pupils' progress to be built up and monitored. In this way, developing weaknesses can be detected early and addressed before pupils' learning and social development loses its momentum. Records of pupils' progress are also at the centre of the process of accountability of schools to parents, to the governing body and to the wider community. Despite this centrality of assessment and recording within the work of special schools, practice was often weak.

Less than half of special schools had satisfactory practice in assessment and recording. This proportion of schools remained constant over the four years, indicating that schools were not well equipped to improve the quality of their practice. There were variations between types of special school; those for pupils with SLD demonstrated the best practice overall, whilst only a fifth of schools for pupils with EBD had satisfactory assessment and recording systems. A significant number of schools introduced whole-school schemes immediately prior to their inspection, and these often failed to become fully effective in time to be recognised as adequate by the inspection.

In contrast, in early years provision of all kinds, there was a marked improvement over the four-year period. Guidance issued by LEAs on baseline assessment, that issued by the Pre-school Learning Alliance, and the assessment model encouraged by the Portage Association, all contributed to more effective assessment of young children's needs. Teachers' recording moved from mainly subjective comments linked to social and behavioural development, towards objective records of performance that could be used as part of the planning tool for future work.

The national requirements for assessment at the ends of key stages apply to pupils in special schools just as in mainstream schools, unless pupils' statements of special educational needs exempt them from some or all aspects of testing. While only a small minority of special schools exempted all their pupils from all national tests, rather more schools exempted some pupils, or exempted all pupils from some aspect of the assessment, such as the formal paper tests, whilst retaining teacher assessment of pupils' National Curriculum levels. Many schools took a pride in giving all their pupils opportunities to take part in the national tests.

Information from the tests and from teacher assessment of the National Curriculum levels in each subject provided useful broad guidelines for curriculum planning and pupil grouping, but the increments in performance measured by the tests and National Curriculum levels were usually too great to inform planning more generally. Pupils with limited academic capability often made very little progress as measured by the National Curriculum levels. Some schools for pupils with SLD and with PD found difficulty in coming to terms with the implications of the National Curriculum levels for their least able pupils who could spend their whole school career "working towards" the first level. Schools found this situation easier to manage and to discuss with parents when they developed schemes to identify and celebrate small increments of progress within the first levels of the National Curriculum. At Key Stage 4 and post-16, pupils achieved formal accreditation largely according to the degree of emphasis given to the process by their school. This is considered in detail later.

There were many viable approaches to pupil assessment and to recording of progress in the absence of any nationally agreed framework for the process. At a day-to-day level, most teachers maintained some form of cumulative written record of pupils' responses and progress in each subject and in their social and behavioural development. Teachers and LSAs often contributed

notes during the day to narrative records, which were written up at regular intervals to contribute to more formal documents. On occasion, activities were set primarily as assessment tasks, and pupils' performance was recorded in detail.

In the best practice, lesson plans referred to opportunities for individual assessments to be made during the lesson, while longer term plans and schemes of work referred to key elements of units of work or essential concepts which were to be assessed. Schools often had checklists of particular sets of skills against which pupils' progress was recorded and from which further targets were set, as in **Horton Lodge School** in Staffordshire for pupils with PD:

*Baseline assessments and checklists are well used in setting excellent, focused targets, which are then used to very good effect in planning and teaching.*

Samples of pupils' work were often kept; in the best practice these were dated and annotated to form portfolios of material that illustrated progress over time. Increasingly, photographs and even video evidence were coming into use to illustrate pupils' performance. The success of this kind of record depended upon the aptness of the illustrations and the insight offered by the accompanying annotation or commentary into the nature of the advance in progress that was demonstrated. **Larkrise School** in Wiltshire for pupils with SLD had developed a successful system:

*Documentation is of a very high quality and [a collection of] a large range of pupils' work is maintained. The annotation of this work is excellent and gives a clear view of pupils' achievements.*

This kind of illustrative information increasingly contributed to a formal or informal record of achievement, particularly for older pupils.

Whatever the school's approach to the assessment and recording process, consistency between classes was essential if a picture of progress over time was to be built up. In order to achieve consistency, an agreed and documented policy was necessary. In the best practice, the adherence of all staff to the policy was either monitored by the school's co-ordinator with responsibility for assessment and recording or demonstrated by teachers as part of the staff appraisal process.

At the end of the four-year inspection cycle, although not all reports made reference to the presence or absence of a policy, it was evident from sampling that at least a fifth of schools for pupils with EBD and MLD still had no written policy to guide consistent practice in this crucial area of their work. This indicated a very low priority for assessment and recording in these schools. While the majority of schools had a written policy, adherence to this policy throughout all classes in the school did not necessarily follow. For example, the inspection report on a school for pupils with EBD notes:

*While there is a common format for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress and attainment in place, it is not used consistently and a variety of formats are used. A considerable amount of information about pupils performance is gathered by staff, but it is not adequately monitored on a whole-school basis, nor is it used effectively to contribute to curriculum planning or the systematic monitoring of standards.*

This observation draws attention to the limited value of accumulating records which, because of their lack of consistency, are not usable as part of a whole-school information and monitoring system. A great deal of teachers' time was going to waste in this respect in many schools.

A report on a school for pupils with MLD pointed sharply to the need for monitoring of practice in assessment and recording:

*Senior managers have responded to the recently identified need for sound assessment, recording and reporting procedures by developing policy documents designed to support classroom practice. The school has made a senior staff member co-ordinator for assessment. Despite these recent initiatives, the school is unable to articulate a coherent statement of purpose for assessment. There is therefore a serious disparity between the development of policy and the reality of classroom practice. There are examples of references to assessment in termly lesson plans remaining blank and very little evidence of assessment informing either planning or teaching. Teachers ...receive inadequate support and guidance since there is no effective co-ordinated monitoring taking place.*

Reports on a small number of schools drew attention to another unnecessary demand on teachers' time in that new systems for assessment and recording in some schools had been introduced without a review of existing practice, so that the new systems were being used by teachers while the old recording systems were still being maintained. In order to avoid this situation the assessment co-ordinator or senior management team should conduct a complete review of the system whenever new elements are introduced, so that unnecessary duplication is avoided.

Baseline assessments for pupils on entry to school provided a valuable starting point both for programme planning and for the

process of measuring progress. Their value was often unrecognised in schools for pupils with EBD, where pupils were often admitted part way through their school career. For these pupils, records from the mainstream school were often not accessible to the receiving special school or arrived a long time after the admission, following much negotiation. Despite the clear advantages in baseline assessment, few schools for pupils with EBD had a satisfactory scheme in place, and the process was not universally established in other types of special school.

It might be expected that statements of special educational need would provide any required baseline data, but while they have improved over time in their usefulness, statements did not often fulfil this role well. Where schools received pupils from several LEAs, contrasts between LEAs in the usefulness of statements were readily apparent.

While many schools were still struggling to co-ordinate practice in assessment and recording between different classes, a small number of schools had moved ahead to the next stage of development of co-ordination, in that they had established moderation procedures to ensure the comparability of teachers' judgements between classes, key stages and subjects. This was achieved either by direct oversight by the co-ordinator or through the circulation of exemplars of assessed work. In these circumstances, schools were much better placed to make secure judgements about pupils' progress.

Schools also had great difficulty in aligning their assessment and recording systems with the National Curriculum, to relate pupils' progress to National Curriculum levels and to record progress in all subjects. Scrutiny of reports indicated that only a third of schools met these criteria. It was a particular problem in schools for pupils with EBD, where, even towards the end of the four-year period, few schools were taking adequate account of the National Curriculum in respect of assessment and recording. Over the period, schools for pupils with SLD made the most progress (albeit from a low baseline), until, in a recent sample, the assessment and recording systems in half of these schools took satisfactory account of the National Curriculum.

A very small number of schools involved pupils in a degree of self-assessment that contributed significantly to the overall assessment process. **Greenside School** in Hertfordshire for pupils with SLD had developed an unusual degree of self-assessment by pupils:

*Where possible, pupil self-assessment is encouraged and some pupils are able to appraise their own progress. This information is appropriately included in annual reviews and transition reviews which are attended by pupils, parents and professionals.*

## 6.2 Accreditation

Opportunities for accreditation for pupils in special schools increased over the four-year period. This reflected developments in the range of qualifications agreed by School Curriculum and Assessment Authority and, latterly, by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Schools have been cautious about offering additional or alternative means of accreditation as staff have been awaiting national decisions about acceptable Entry Level awards. A small number of special schools were involved in the GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualifications) pilot, which commenced in 1995. This has provided a useful vehicle for developing and accrediting key skills, as well as a good bridging device toward future vocational qualifications.

Schools for pupils with sensory disabilities offered the greatest range of accreditation opportunities, with GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education), YAS (Youth Award scheme), GNVQ and, more recently, Certificates of Achievement, in a variety of subjects. In all types of school, the Certificate of Achievement increased in popularity as it offered a pathway into GCSE courses for pupils who were not yet ready to attempt them. Although schools for pupils with MLD were reported to be exploring suitable pathways of accreditation for their pupils throughout the four-year period, only half of those inspected recently had a satisfactory or good range of accreditation and some offered no form of external accreditation to their pupils. Outstanding results were achieved in a small number of schools for pupils with MLD where teachers had high expectations. For example, 10 of the 20 pupils in Year 11 at one school for pupils with MLD achieved passes in one or more subjects at grades A to G in the year the school was inspected.

The proportion of schools for pupils with EBD offering GCSE courses increased slowly over the four-year period, until at the end of the period, six out of ten schools did so. A third of EBD schools, however, provided a poor range of accreditation. A broad and widening range was offered at **Thornchace School** in Surrey for girls with EBD:

*A good range of GCSEs and other accredited courses such as AEB achievement tests in mathematics and English are available. Staff are investigating the possibilities of introducing the MEG "Science Plus" course at Key Stage 4, which can lead to a Certificate of Achievement in science. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme allows girls to gain additional accreditation in a number of activities.*

Most schools for pupils with SLD, and with PD, provided only limited opportunities for external accreditation. However, in one third of these schools, Records of Achievement were well produced and gave an effective picture of progress and achievement. The Youth Award Scheme improved the quality of their curriculum planning, particularly within post-16 provision.

## 6.3 Reporting to parents

There was very wide variation in practice in reporting to parents. The Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs identifies educational progress as part of the annual review of pupils' statements of special need, while the National Curriculum orders obliged schools to report annually to parents on pupils' progress in each subject of the National Curriculum.

Schools coped more successfully with the former recommendation. The requirement to report on pupils' progress within each National Curriculum subject was often confused with reporting on the range of pupils' experiences within subjects. The reporting task was made more difficult in many schools where assessment and recording systems did not record pupils' progress in a satisfactorily objective way. However, the quality of reporting to parents improved over the four-year period as schools became more skilled in addressing the need to report on pupils' progress in subjects and on their progress in relation to personal targets.

In early years provision, the requirements for all settings to provide information for parents proved successful. Parents commented positively upon this development as they were able to use the information to make more informed judgements about future provision.

## 6.4 Responses to the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs

Almost all pupils in special schools had statements of special educational need, as their statement was usually the key to their admission to the school. The exceptions were pupils who attended special schools for the purpose of assessment, and there was a small number of special schools whose prime function was assessment.

Statements are subject to an annual review. The annual review process is intended to question the continued validity of the provision made in the statement, to review targets set for the pupil at the beginning of the 12-month period, and to set fresh targets for the next 12 months based upon progress made. A cycle of target setting and review is thus envisaged. The annual review is an opportunity for all professionals involved with the pupil to contribute reports on progress and for the parents to add their views, all of which are shared at a meeting of the parents and professionals.

Schools carried out the Annual Review conscientiously, although the quality of target setting and the success with which parents were involved both varied considerably between schools. The degree to which LEAs involved themselves in the review process also varied from virtually nil to the attendance of an LEA representative at most annual review meetings. Close involvement of the LEA was strongly associated with good practice in keeping resource levels and placements for individual pupils under scrutiny. LEAs which had established mechanisms to identify reviews as high or low priorities for officers' attendance managed their responsibilities more effectively.

There is a general expectation that pupils in special schools will have individual education plans (IEPs), even though this is not specifically spelt out in the Code of Practice. The lack of specific reference suggested to some schools, and indeed to a small number of LEAs, that IEPs were not needed for pupils in special schools. This confusion accounted for the lack of IEPs in a small number of schools, but some other schools had simply not yet engaged in the process.

As in mainstream schools, practice in the writing of IEPs varied very widely in terms both of quality and of intended purpose. In part, this reflected a lack of national guidance on the expected nature and purpose of IEPs in special schools. Some schools attempted to summarise each pupil's complete educational programme, while others only stated behavioural targets or used the IEP to clarify provision needed by the child that was beyond the usual provision of the school.

The approach that was most widely favoured and that appeared to be best in line with the intentions of the Code, was to use the IEP to set a small number of key educational and behavioural targets for each pupil for the term, derived from the year's targets in the pupil's annual review. This provided a manageable set of short-term targets that could be agreed with therapists

and also with parents, who could share in the responsibility of helping their child to achieve some of them. It supported the establishment of a cycle of target setting and review, which was very helpful in demonstrating advances in pupils' capabilities.

The performance of all schools in writing IEPs improved towards the end of the four-year period, but by the end of the period, practice was still weak. In a sample from the cohort of schools inspected in 1996/97, only a third of schools produced IEPs with targets expressed clearly enough to enable them to be reviewed effectively. In the cohort of schools inspected most recently (in 1998) half of the 100 schools sampled produced IEPs with clear targets for all pupils. While schools refined their own practice, LEA advisory and educational psychology services offered consultations and courses aimed at raising the quality of IEPs.

**Arden School** in Sandwell for pupils with MLD made good use of IEPs in planning:

*Individual education plans contain specific and relevant learning objectives for pupils in the areas of English, mathematics and personal development, the quality of which are very effectively monitored by the headteacher. There is ample evidence of the very good use made of pupils' individual education plans to effect improvements in pupils' progress through appropriate modifications to the curriculum and teaching strategies.*

Few schools progressed to the level of involving pupils in the setting and review of IEP targets, although this was slightly more common in annual reviews. Where pupils were involved, the sense of involvement and partnership was beneficial and pupils were especially well motivated to achieve the targets. This practice is worthy of wider adoption.

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# 12

## NATIONAL AND LEA ISSUES IN SPECIAL SCHOOLING

### 12.1 Patterns of provision

The present national pattern of provision for special schooling reflects decisions taken by individual LEAs over many years. These decisions have rarely had a consistent long-term aim, as most have been unique responses to changing local and national initiatives and pressures. The LEAs themselves have been subject to various geographical reorganisation, to which special educational provision has had to adapt. As a result, there is no uniformity across the country and the widely varying patterns of provision do not consistently reflect the nature of the LEAs, rural or metropolitan, large or small.

The local patterns of special schools, PRUs, designated special provision in mainstream schools, support services and the extent of the use made by LEAs of non-maintained and independent special schools are thus the result of a series of changes to provision over time. The changes have been influenced by, amongst other things, the creation of larger LEAs in 1974, responses to the Warnock report and the 1981 Education Act and, recently, the reduction in size and increase in number of LEAs. In a few instances there has been an LEA-wide review of disability groups, of trends in special needs and of existing provision which has resulted in a comprehensive reorganisation of special educational provision.

### 12.2 LEA review and reorganisation

The number of LEA-maintained special schools has fallen from 1,253 in 1993 to 1,164 in 1998,<sup>6</sup> while the number of pupils in the schools has risen slightly to 93,500, the highest figure for five years. The average size of maintained special schools has thus risen from 73 pupils in 1993 to 80 pupils in 1998.

In recent years there has been a marked increase in the number of LEAs wishing to modify their provision for special schooling, either to change the nature of individual special schools or to undertake a reorganisation of special schools across the whole LEA. Although a number of the proposals, when fully implemented, will result in the increased inclusion of pupils with SEN in mainstream schools, the majority of proposals are designed to improve the quality of, or to rationalise, the existing special school sector. As a result of the local changes currently planned or under way, there will remain almost as many special schools, but the schools will have improved facilities and will meet local needs more appropriately.

Few reviews involve all special needs provision across the LEA. Some have affected all the special provision within one small geographical area of the LEA, and have had no intended influence beyond that area. In other cases there are plans to reorganise in either one discrete geographical or disability area before further changes are set in train elsewhere. Political as well as financial factors may influence these modes of operating, as LEAs may wish to proceed slowly on grounds of cost or in order to cope with resistance to change, which may be strong. Progress has usually been slower than most LEAs would wish, and proposed changes are often fiercely contested by parents and governing bodies. Proposals to close or reorganise schools for pupils with EBD and with MLD are usually much less controversial than proposed changes to schools for pupils with SLD or with PD.

The impetus for local changes in special schooling results from many factors. The principal influences are summarised below:

#### **Pupil numbers and disabilities**

- a. Most LEAs have seen an increase in the number of pupils with statements of special need; these pupils have been increasingly placed in mainstream schools rather than in special schools. LEAs have encouraged this development, although in some authorities it has resulted in particular special schools (especially those for pupils with MLD and PD) becoming so small as to be scarcely viable from both financial and curricular points of view.

- b. In some LEAs there is spare capacity in a number of special schools and this has encouraged a review of provision, resulting in closure or amalgamations, but in other LEAs the numbers of pupils in special schools have been constant or, in a few cases, numbers have increased. There is no clear pattern of changes with regard to particular disability groups, although the total number of schools for pupils with MLD and with PD has declined. The number of schools for pupils with SLD has remained steady. In some LEAs there has been an increase in special school places for pupils with autism or EBD.
- c. Many schools for pupils with MLD have an increasing proportion of pupils with behaviour problems or of pupils with SLD. The populations of schools for pupils with PD have also been changing, notably to include more pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and other disabilities, and fewer pupils where physical difficulties are their sole disabling condition. There are fewer special schools now for pupils with sensory impairment than four years ago. Some LEA reorganisation proposals are attempts to regularise and plan for these emerging patterns whilst other proposals aim to redesignate schools formally as the outcome of detailed audits of the incidence of particular disabilities.
- d. Many LEAs are noting an increase in the numbers of young children with PMLD; the numbers and proportions of such pupils in schools for pupils with SLD have been increasing in recent years. There is now a small number of schools catering solely for such pupils.

The national pattern that appears to be emerging is that of slightly fewer special schools, while the remaining schools cater for a more complex and challenging population.

### Excluded pupils

There is a growing professional and public concern about the number of pupils excluded from both mainstream and special schools. There has, for example, been a 20 per cent rise in permanent exclusions from special schools in the latter part of the four-year period of this review. This was most markedly of pupils of secondary age, and from schools for pupils with EBD or with MLD. It has influenced LEAs' planning for both PRUs and behaviour support services. However, proposals often do not take sufficient account of the LEAs' existing special schools for pupils with EBD.

### Parental pressure

The views of parents individually and collectively have become increasingly influential. In some instances, parents have been keen to see their children with disabilities receive their special education in mainstream schools, but other parents (usually those of pupils already in special schools) have worked hard to ensure that their children have a place in a special school. Parental lobbying has often acted significantly as a brake on LEAs' closure or amalgamation proposals. Some LEAs have had great difficulty in persuading parents of the benefits of change, and a few have lacked the will to risk extended public challenge.

### Discrete primary and secondary provision

- a. Several LEAs have made proposals designed to reduce the age range in their special schools by reorganising schools so that they are either primary or secondary. This has been easier to achieve in densely populated urban areas where distances between special schools are not very great. The move enables schools to focus more effectively on their selected phase of education. In county and rural areas, where the special school population has either declined or remained static, the opposite movement is taking place. Smaller schools are being amalgamated or remaining schools are taking a broader range of disabilities and sometimes also a wider age range. These latter developments are driven by the need to cope with changing demographic patterns and shifts of the population of pupils with disabilities into mainstream rather than by educational factors. Thus, special schools that are similarly designated may have very different pupil populations in different LEAs, or even, occasionally, within the same LEA.
- b. LEAs have differing views as to whether age-phasing of schools or limiting the range of disabilities for which staff have to plan should be the prime consideration in reorganisation. Some have decided that the priority is to provide separate primary and secondary schools (often with a concomitant increase in the diversity of disability), while others have amalgamated small primary and secondary special schools to produce more viable (but all-age) schools with a narrower and thus more manageable range of disability.

*an LEA in the north of England is planning to rationalise some of its provision for pupils with MLD and SLD so as to yield separate primary and secondary special schools. In one locality, an all-age school for pupils with MLD is to become the secondary school as it has a range of specialist subject rooms suitable for older pupils. The nearby school for pupils with SLD lacks these facilities and so it will become the primary school. Capital costs will be*

*incurred, for example in providing toileting and hygiene facilities for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties in the former MLD school. Staff redeployment and training will be necessary in order to meet the needs of a wider range of disabilities in each school. The advantages will include the provision of a distinctly age-appropriate ethos in each school and the access of all the pupils to specialist subject facilities at Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16.*

- c. Special schools for pupils with MLD and SLD of secondary age are increasingly taking pupils from 11-19 rather than 11-16, and all-age schools are tending to retain more pupils post-16. This trend appears to be associated with changes in the management and funding of colleges of further education in the early 1990s, which have reduced the willingness of some colleges to provide for the pupils, especially those with the more severe disabilities.

### **Local government reorganisation (LGR)**

The rapid expansion in the number of LEAs as a result of the recent creation of unitary authorities has resulted in not only the new LEAs, but also the residual LEAs, needing to re-examine their "inherited" special educational provision. Most affected LEAs have had, or are having, some form of review of special needs provision. Some reviews have been initiated and completed very quickly, whilst others have become very broad consultative exercises that will take some time to complete. The current task of rationalising inherited patterns of provision as a result of LGR is more complex than the limited rationalisation that took place following the 1974 LEA reorganisation. This reflects the very different educational climate in the late 1990s, and the fact that the changes in 1974 resulted in fewer and larger LEAs, whilst today's LGR has established more and smaller LEAs.

### **Travel and cross-border arrangements**

LEAs have always placed pupils in special schools and units in their neighbouring authorities when this arrangement has made the best use of resources, but this activity is increasing as a result of the establishment of more and smaller LEAs. Journey times have increased and become more questionable in terms of their effects on pupils' preparedness for school. Furthermore, the special school transport budget is increasing. LEA reviews often intend to rationalise these inherited patterns of placement, but the decision making can be complicated by the amalgamation of special schools leading towards fewer and larger schools, which in turn increases pupils' journey times and LEAs' transport costs. For some LEAs, this set of pressures increases the appeal of making more provision for pupils with special needs in their local mainstream schools.

### **The OFSTED cycle of inspection**

Many OFSTED inspections of special schools have highlighted problems with unsuitable sites, inadequate specialist subject accommodation, and difficulties in catering for broad ranges of special need and wide age spans. The inspection process has thus often added impetus to LEAs' plans for review and reorganisation, as long-standing deficiencies have been highlighted and have become published in reports as issues which only the LEA can address.

### **PRUs and special schools for pupils with EBD**

Inspections of schools for pupils with EBD that identify them as requiring special measures, or that draw attention to serious weaknesses, sometimes lead to LEAs proposing to close the schools, or may result in a reduction in pupil numbers that renders the schools unviable. Several LEAs, particularly in the London area, have acute problems in staffing their special schools for pupils with EBD, and this factor is also a pressure towards closure of the schools. Some schools for pupils with EBD are being replaced by PRUs where the education provided is usually part-time. There are also pressures in the other direction, as LEAs become dissatisfied with the limited curricular provision and part-time attendance of pupils in PRUs and seek to replace them with special schools. These factors contribute to the continuing state of change in this field.

### **Cost of "out-of-county" pupil placements**

LEAs have become increasingly aware of the size of special needs budgets and have wished to respond to the warnings of the Audit Commission concerning weak systems of accountability for their use of special needs funding. The high cost of placing pupils outside the LEA in independent or non-maintained schools, particularly residential schools, is a frequent target for budgetary review and reduction, especially where placements have been made without consistent criteria and without detailed knowledge of the quality and suitability of the provision.

Arrangements for SEN provision are locally determined and reorganisations are addressing local pressures and responding to immediate needs rather than developing into any uniform or unified national pattern. Thus, recent changes are resulting in increasingly diversified arrangements. This is likely to continue. Whilst there is encouragement from the DfEE for LEAs and the independent and voluntary sectors to co-operate in regional planning, this is slow to develop as LEAs are uncertain as to

who will take the lead in such planning and how joint arrangements can be funded.

## 12.3 Developments in the education of fostered children

The reduction in the number of children's homes run by local social services departments and national voluntary bodies, and the decline in the number of pupils in residential schools, have been reflected in the upsurge in the number of children who are placed with foster-care families away from their home area. Placement with these families is increasingly through independent (non-charitable) companies specialising in this work. Many of the children attend local mainstream or special schools, but a large number of children either will not, or cannot, attend their local schools, including special schools. These private organisations are seeking increasingly to establish their own educational provision for these non-attenders.

This provision is often closer to the curriculum and part-time arrangements that are features of PRUs, rather than to those of special schools. In recent years many of these organisations have sought to have their educational provision registered as day independent schools. Whilst it is encouraging that there is a greater awareness amongst care providers of the negative impact of the lack of schooling, the educational arrangements being established are not always satisfactory, so that many of these vulnerable young people receive minimal and often grossly unsatisfactory tuition. There are often complex problems over funding. For example, if a child is fostered at some distance from his or her home area, the LEA to which the child has moved provides education at a suitable mainstream or special school at no cost to the "home" authority. Should the child move to an independent special school, there is an immediate controversy as to whether the "local" LEA, the "home" LEA or the "home" social services department should pay the fees, which are often very costly. Further central guidance on such matters is required and is in preparation.

## 12.4 Evidence from OFSTED visits to LEAs and inspections of LEAs

### Unitary authorities

OFSTED has made brief visits to 34 new unitary authorities established since 1996 and to 16 of the LEAs of which they previously formed part (the "releasing" LEAs). Half the releasing LEAs planned to review their services for pupils with special needs, including special schools; in half of these authorities, special needs provision was a high priority for review. Releasing authorities were often left with insufficient special school places to meet their perceived requirements, as all but schools for pupils with EBD tended to be located within the (generally urban) new unitary authority boundaries. Provision for EBD was more often located in rural areas, and was thus more likely to be found within the releasing LEA boundaries. Two LEAs had significantly overspent their special needs budgets.

More than half of the unitary authorities claimed to have a disproportionately high number of special school places for their own populations, usually accommodating pupils from their releasing county authorities. Three quarters of the new unitary authorities planned to review services for pupils with special educational needs within the year and half of them regarded this as a strategic priority. The new authorities generally proposed more active policies than their releasing LEAs to place pupils in mainstream rather than special schools.

### LEA inspections

Including eight LEAs inspected as part of the pilot project for the LEA inspection process, 19 LEAs had been inspected and reported upon at the time of writing. All but one LEA had a written policy for special educational needs. However, only one of the LEAs updated its policy on a regular basis. Having been produced at the time of the introduction of the SEN Code of Practice in 1993/94, many LEA policies require updating and regular review. All but one of the special needs policies inspected made general statements in support of the inclusion of pupils with disabilities in mainstream schools. Just one LEA had successfully implemented its inclusion policy by taking particularly serious and sustained measures to put it into practice. Other LEAs had, at most, moved towards developing additional specifically resourced provision in mainstream schools. In two LEAs, this policy was effective in that numbers in special schools for pupils with MLD had declined. This, however, left the LEAs with surplus places and overfunding, which had not been addressed. Resourced provision in mainstream for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties was uncommon and in two LEAs had been resisted by mainstream schools.



Most LEAs fulfilled their statutory duties in relation to pupils with special educational needs with the exception that in 6 of the 19 LEAs, the speed of conducting statutory assessments for statements of special need was unsatisfactory and in two cases completely unacceptable at the time of inspection. All LEAs saw this as a key indicator of performance and all were improving, some at a rapid rate. All but one of the LEAs inspected had criteria in place that pupils had to fulfil in order to be statutorily assessed. The thresholds which were key to the operation of these criteria were not always implemented on a consistent basis. While schools were familiar with the general operation of the criteria, they were frequently unaware of the detail of the thresholds.

Mainstream schools were often unclear as to the basis upon which funding for special educational needs was delegated. This uncertainty inhibited the partnership of mainstream schools in the process of inclusion of pupils with special needs who would formerly have been in special schools. This issue has recently been addressed by the DfEE.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> DfEE (1998) *Special Educational Needs in England: January 1998*. Statistical Bulletin.

<sup>7</sup> DfEE (1998) *Meeting Special Educational Needs: a programme of action*.

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## 9. OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Where additional features are specified for inspection, inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- the overall effectiveness of each feature.

In determining their judgements, inspectors should consider the extent to which:

- one or more specified criteria are met.

## SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### PART C OF THE INSPECTION REPORT

After other SPECIFIED FEATURES, if any, the inspection report will contain data and indicators which are defined by the report template which is in use at the time of the inspection.

### THE INSPECTION OF OTHER FEATURES

The inspection focus for any additional features for inspection, for example a survey of an issue in secondary schools over a particular term, will be specified along with the feature itself.

Each feature specified will be accompanied by:

- an evaluation and reporting requirement indicated by ☐;
- up to three inspection criteria;
- a commentary covering the inspection focus;
- a summary of reporting requirements;
- guidance in the format of this *Handbook*, including sections on the inspection focus, making your judgement, and guidance on the inspection criteria.

#### Note

Different computer platforms view symbols differently, if you are using a Macintosh the symbol will view as ☐, if you are using a PC it will view as ☐.

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## AFTER THE INSPECTION

### THE FINAL TEAM MEETING

111 The main purpose of this team meeting is to arrive at accurate and thoroughly secure corporate judgements about the school, recording these in the *Record of Corporate Judgements*. You, as the registered inspector, need to manage this meeting so that the hypotheses tested out during the inspection are discussed and conclusions reached. You need to bring judgements together so that the culmination of the meeting is the team's overall view of the effectiveness of the school. The strengths and weaknesses recorded in WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL and WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED also need to be specifically agreed by the team.

112 Therefore, all inspectors need to have reflected on their evidence, to have reached their own views, and to be prepared to contribute these at the meeting. This means the meeting must not take place immediately after the inspection finishes. If the inspection finishes at lunchtime, you will need time to complete your *Inspection Notebook* in a FULL INSPECTION, or to gather your thoughts together in a SHORT INSPECTION before a meeting later in the afternoon. If the inspection finishes at the end of the school day, the final team meeting must not be held that day.

113 The meeting must be structured to achieve the goals set out above. In particular, the following areas must be included:

- discussions leading to the completion of the *Record of Corporate Judgements*;
- agreement about the contents of the summary of the inspection report;
- consideration, as a team, whether the school is in need of special measures, has serious weaknesses or is underachieving.

114 We expect that all inspectors will attend this team meeting. We recognise that there will be exceptional circumstances where this is not possible. If that is the case, the inspector concerned must provide the registered inspector with his/her completed *Inspection Notebook* (except the draft text for the report) and any additional points that need to be brought to the attention of other inspectors.

### FEEDBACK TO THE HEADTEACHER AND SENIOR STAFF

115 Your feedback should give senior management an early but firm basis on which to start planning in response to the inspection's findings. In particular, the feedback to senior management should rehearse the significant evidence and judgements about:

- the school's outcomes, particularly standards achieved by pupils;
- the factors which most account for what is achieved, particularly the strengths and weaknesses in teaching in the school;
- the effectiveness of work done by managers and heads of departments;
- the issues identified by inspection as priorities for improving the school.

116 The staff attending the meeting should have the opportunity to clarify any of these findings, ask for further examples of evidence on which particular judgements about the school are based, and explore with inspectors the priorities for action.

117 The feedback to the headteacher and invited staff must be after the inspection has finished. It must not be on the last day of the inspection or even the day after. As the registered inspector, you must leave sufficient time to reflect on the evidence and corporate judgements in order to prepare properly.

118 The headteacher can invite whom he or she wishes to the feedback meeting, but it is usually for the senior management team only. No one other than the staff of the school should normally attend. There may be exceptional circumstances when the presence of an LEA officer as an observer is justified, for example:

- if the school has a temporary headteacher pending a permanent appointment;
- if the headteacher is judged likely to find the inspection findings distressing.

119 In such exceptional circumstances, the school can invite the officer only with the consent of the registered inspector.

120 The formal feedback should not be confused with the interim feedback offered to headteachers towards the end of an

inspection by many registered inspectors. This is helpful to the school in relieving uncertainties and stress.

## **FEEDBACK TO THE 'APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY'**

121 The success of the feedback to the 'appropriate authority', usually the governing body, hinges on how effectively inspectors communicate the main inspection findings clearly and frankly to a mixed audience, many of whom are well-informed but not professional teachers or educators. The same general principles apply to giving feedback to the governing body as to the senior management team, but the presentation to the governing body should have much less detail. The presentation should include a careful explanation of specific matters which should be included in the post-inspection plan. This is to ensure that the governing body is clear at an early stage about what the school should do to improve. It will often help to use visual aids to summarise the main points of the presentation.

122 The governing body for an LEA-maintained school may, if it wishes, invite an LEA officer (or diocesan education officer or similar religious adviser in the case of schools with a religious character) to be present as an observer at the oral feedback to the governing body. In most cases you will wish to include these observers in the dialogue. However, as the registered inspector, you may need to remind observers of their role if they become too assertive.

## **SOME GENERAL POINTS ABOUT FEEDBACK**

123 Formal feedback meetings must take place before the inspection report is finished and as soon as is practicable after the inspection. The content of the oral feedback is confidential and the findings of the inspection should not be released, particularly to parents and the press, until after the 'appropriate authority' has received the report. You may wish to remind those attending these meetings of their confidentiality.

124 The quality of the feedback is an important factor in influencing how the school responds to the inspection findings, and particularly in drawing up its post-inspection action plan for improvement. Effective feedback:

- is well structured, clear, succinct and unrushed;
- makes use of appropriate visual aids to help communicate the inspection findings, especially to governing bodies;
- places greater emphasis on what the school does well and what could be improved, and why, but also covers the relevant reporting requirements in the *Evaluation Schedule*;
- presents a balanced and rounded picture of the school;
- gives well-chosen examples or observations that show you know the school;
- allows opportunities for discussion and clarification of the inspection findings;
- avoids giving detailed advice to the school about how to tackle the improvements that are needed.

125 It is expected that all oral reporting will proceed smoothly and professionally and that feedback will be of value to staff and governors alike. If, however, the behaviour of those at a feedback meeting makes it impossible to proceed with a sensible professional dialogue, you as the registered inspector have the right to confine the feedback simply to the main findings of the inspection and the key issues for action. In extreme cases, you have the right not to proceed with the oral report.

126 The use of tape recorders by headteachers, governing bodies and individual teachers at feedback meetings is entirely at the discretion of the registered inspector. It is reasonable for you not to proceed with a feedback meeting if there is any insistence on their use against your will. OFSTED has no objection to the tape recording of feedback meetings if the registered inspector agrees.

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## Annex 7: Statistical Summary

### Progress in Primary Schools 1997/98 (percentage of schools)





**Figures have been rounded and may not add up to 100 per cent**

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## Annex 7: Statistical Summary

### Teaching in Primary Schools 1997/98 (percentage of schools)





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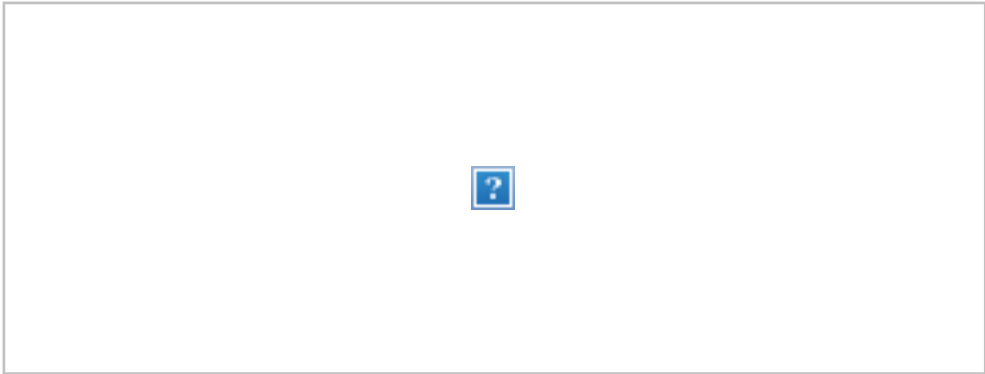
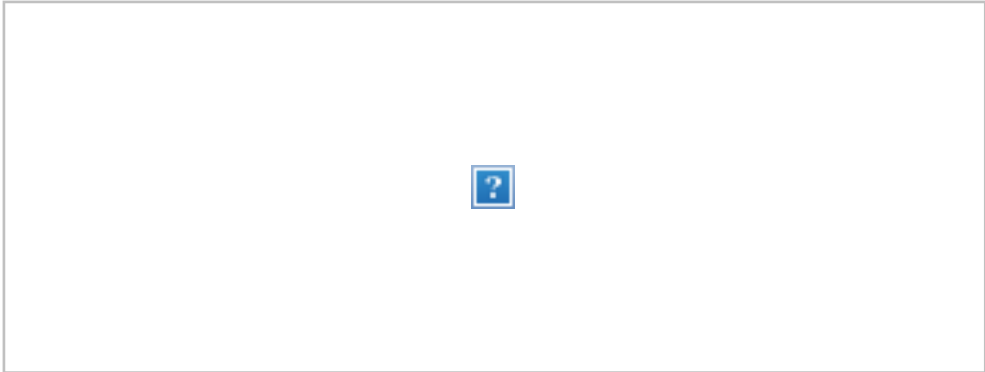
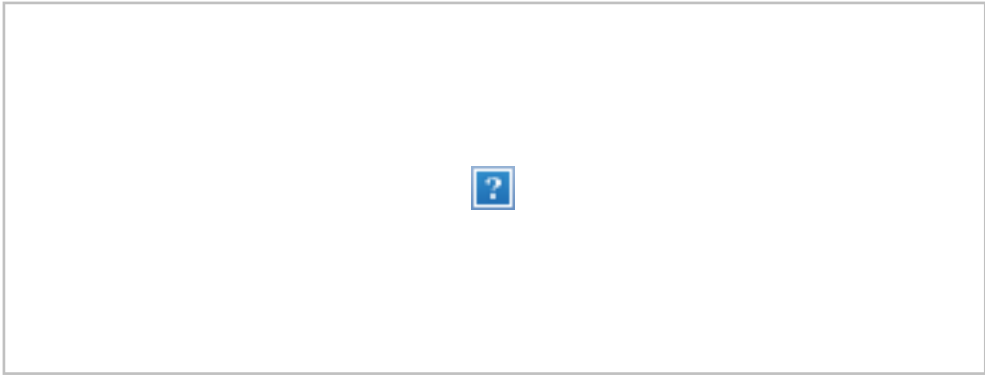
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## **Annex 7: Statistical Summary**

### **Progress in Secondary Schools 1997/98 (percentage of schools)**







**Figures have been rounded and may not add up to 100 per cent**

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## Annex 7: Statistical Summary

### Teaching in Secondary Schools 1997/98









**Figures have been rounded and may not add up to 100 per cent**

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# Annex 7: Statistical Summary Inspection Grades for Primary Schools - 1997/98

## Aspects of the School

## Percentage of Schools

	Inspection grade*	Good/very good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory/poor
<b>Educational Standards Achieved</b>				
4.1.2 Progress	Under Five	53	44	3
	Key Stage 1	30	64	7
	Key Stage 2	30	60	10
	School	32	61	7
4.1.3 Progress of pupils with SEN	Under Five	51	47	2
	Key Stage 1	50	46	4
	Key Stage 2	49	45	6
	School	51	45	5
4.2.1 Attitude		83	15	2
4.2.2 Behaviour		80	18	2
4.2.3 Relationships		88	11	1
4.2.4 Personal development		63	33	4
4.3 Attendance		51	39	9
<b>Quality of Education</b>				
<b>Teaching</b>				
5.1 Teaching	Under Five	67	28	5
	Key Stage 1	50	44	6
	Key Stage 2	53	39	7
	School	55	40	5
5.1.1 Teachers' knowledge and understanding	Under Five	65	28	7
	Key Stage 1	46	49	5
	Key Stage 2	47	46	6
5.1.2 Teachers' expectations	Under Five	64	29	7
	Key Stage 1	42	44	14
	Key Stage 2	43	41	16
5.1.3 Teachers' planning	Under Five	61	29	10
	Key Stage 1	48	39	13
	Key Stage 2	47	39	14
5.1.4 Methods and organisation	Under Five	64	28	9
	Key Stage 1	51	40	8
	Key Stage 2	54	39	7
5.1.5 Management of pupils	Under Five	81	16	2
	Key Stage 1	71	24	5
	Key Stage 2	72	23	5
5.1.6 Use of time and resources	Under Five	63	31	6

	Key Stage 1	48	43	9
	Key Stage 2	51	41	8
5.1.7 Quality and use of day-to-day assessment	Under Five	55	34	12
	Key Stage 1	31	43	26
	Key Stage 2	29	41	30

#### ***Aspects of the School***

#### ***Percentage of Schools***

	<i>Inspection grade*</i>	<i>Good/very good</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory/poor</i>
5.1.8 Use of homework	Under Five	36	62	2
	Key Stage 1	23	68	8
	Key Stage 2	24	57	19

#### **Curriculum**

5.2 The curriculum	Under Five	53	39	8
	Key Stage 1	33	55	12
	Key Stage 2	30	53	17
	School	32	54	14
5.2.1 Breadth, balance, relevance of the whole curriculum	Under Five	53	38	10
	Key Stage 1	32	56	11
	Key Stage 2	30	55	15
5.2.2 Equality of access and opportunity	Under Five	53	43	4
	Key Stage 1	43	51	6
	Key Stage 2	41	51	8
5.2.3 Provision for pupils with SEN	Under Five	62	35	2
	Key Stage 1	62	34	5
	Key Stage 2	60	34	6
5.2.4 Planning for progression and continuity	Under Five	48	37	15
	Key Stage 1	29	39	32
	Key Stage 2	26	37	37
5.2.5 Provision for extra-curricular activities, including sport		53	36	11
5.2.6 Careers education and guidance		68	24	8

#### **Assessment**

5.X Assessment	Under Five	47	39	15
	Key Stage 1	25	36	39
	Key Stage 2	21	35	44
	School	24	36	40
5.2.7 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment	Under Five	54	38	8
	Key Stage 1	33	43	25
	Key Stage 2	29	43	28
5.2.8 Use of assessment to inform curriculum planning	Under Five	45	37	18
	Key Stage 1	23	33	45
	Key Stage 2	20	31	49

#### **Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural Development**

5.3 Provision for pupils' SMSC development		70	28	2
5.3.1 Pupils' spiritual development		48	43	9

5.3.2	Pupils' moral development	83	16	1	
5.3.3	Pupils' social development	80	18	2	
5.3.4	Pupils' cultural development	48	44	8	
Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare					
5.4	Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	66	30	4	
5.4.1	Procedures for monitoring progress and personal development	43	44	13	
5.4.2	Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour	79	17	4	
Aspects of the School		Percentage of Schools			
		Inspection grade*	Good/very good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory/poor
5.4.3	Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance	65	28	8	
5.4.4	Procedures for child protection and promoting pupils' well-being, health and safety	58	33	9	
Partnership with Parents and the Community					
5.5	Partnership with parents and the community	61	34	5	
5.5.1	Quality of information for parents	55	36	9	
5.5.2	Parental involvement in children's learning	56	35	9	
5.5.3	Enrichment through links with community	64	32	4	
Management and Efficiency					
Leadership and Management					
6.1	Leadership and management	54	33	13	
6.1.1	Leadership: clear educational direction for the school	62	25	13	
6.1.2	Support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development	32	33	36	
6.1.3	Implementation of the school's aims, values and policies	58	33	9	
6.1.4	Development planning, monitoring and evaluation	38	35	27	
6.1.5	The school's ethos	76	20	4	
Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources					
6.2	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	36	60	4	
6.2.1	Match of number, qualification and experience of teachers to the demand of the curriculum	35	63	3	
6.2.2	Match of number, qualification and experience of support staff to the demand of the curriculum	55	41	5	
6.2.3	Arrangements for professional development of all staff	42	43	15	
6.2.4	Adequacy of accommodation for effective delivery of the curriculum	46	43	11	
6.2.5	Adequacy of resources (including books/materials/	28	62	10	

equipment) for effective delivery of the curriculum

### **Efficiency of the School**

6.3	Efficiency	56	38	6
6.3.1	Financial planning	52	34	13
6.3.2	Use of teaching and support staff	54	39	7
6.3.3	Use of learning resources and accommodation	53	43	4
6.3.4	Efficiency of financial control and school administration	74	23	3
6.4	Value for money	42	50	8

\* As explained in Annex 2, Good/very good includes grades 1-3, Satisfactory is grade 4, and Unsatisfactory/poor includes grades 5-7.

Figures have been rounded and may not add up to 100 per cent

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# Annex 7: Statistical Summary

## Inspection Grades for Secondary Schools - 1997/98

### Aspects of the School

### Percentage of Schools

Inspection grade\*    Good/very good    Satisfactory    Unsatisfactory/poor

### Educational Standards Achieved

4.1.2 Progress	Key Stage 3	41	50	9
	Key Stage 4	38	54	8
	Post 16	59	39	2
	School	42	50	8
4.1.3 Progress of pupils with SEN	Key Stage 3	47	45	8
	Key Stage 4	41	50	9
	Post 16	48	49	2
	School	43	49	8
4.2.1 Attitude		75	20	5
4.2.2 Behaviour		72	22	6
4.2.3 Relationships		85	13	2
4.2.4 Personal development		62	30	8
4.3 Attendance		44	25	31

### Quality of Education

#### Teaching

5.1 Teaching	Key Stage 3	61	32	7
	Key Stage 4	66	30	4
	Post 16	82	18	0
	School	67	28	5
5.1.1 Teachers' knowledge and understanding	Key Stage 3	80	19	1
	Key Stage 4	83	16	1
	Post 16	89	10	0
5.1.2 Teachers' expectations	Key Stage 3	48	38	14
	Key Stage 4	50	39	11
	Post 16	73	25	2
5.1.3 Teachers' planning	Key Stage 3	62	32	6
	Key Stage 4	65	31	4
	Post 16	74	24	2
5.1.4 Methods and organisation	Key Stage 3	50	42	8
	Key Stage 4	52	42	6
	Post16	65	34	1
5.1.5 Management of pupils	Key Stage 3	80	15	5
	Key Stage 4	80	17	4
	Post16	92	8	0
5.1.6 Use of time and resources	Key Stage 3	51	43	7

	Key Stage 4	53	42	5
	Post 16	66	33	1
5.1.7 Quality and use of day-to-day assessment	Key Stage 3	27	50	23
	Key Stage 4	33	51	16
	Post 16	57	40	3

#### ***Aspects of the School***

#### ***Percentage of Schools***

	<i>Inspection grade*</i>	<i>Good/very good</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory/poor</i>
5.1.8 Use of homework	Key Stage 3	36	49	14
	Key Stage 4	39	51	11
	Post 16	63	35	1

#### **Curriculum**

5.2 The curriculum	Key Stage 3	38	49	13
	Key Stage 4	30	52	18
	Post 16	50	44	6
	School	34	52	14
5.2.1 Breadth, balance, relevance of the whole curriculum	Key Stage 3	38	47	14
	Key Stage 4	29	47	24
	Post 16	52	36	12
5.2.2 Equality of access and opportunity	Key Stage 3	48	42	11
	Key Stage 4	40	42	18
	Post 16	57	38	5
5.2.3 Provision for pupils with SEN	Key Stage 3	54	31	15
	Key Stage 4	45	40	16
	Post 16	47	49	4
5.2.4 Planning for progression and continuity	Key Stage 3	33	49	18
	Key Stage 4	37	50	13
	Post 16	55	41	3
5.2.5 Provision for extra-curricular activities, including sport		75	21	4
5.2.6 Careers education and guidance		65	32	3

#### **Assessment**

5.X Assessment	Key Stage 3	25	48	27
	Key Stage 4	31	50	19
	Post 16	50	46	4
	School	28	50	21
5.2.7 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment	Key Stage 3	39	43	18
	Key Stage 4	47	43	10
	Post 16	65	33	2
5.2.8 Use of assessment to inform curriculum planning	Key Stage 3	17	43	40
	Key Stage 4	23	47	30
	Post 16	41	49	9

#### **Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural Development**

5.3 Provision for pupils' SMSC development		55	36	8
5.3.1 Pupils' spiritual development		22	35	43

5.3.2 Pupils' moral development	80	18	2
5.3.3 Pupils' social development	77	20	3
5.3.4 Pupils' cultural development	48	39	13

#### **Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare**

5.4 Support, guidance and pupils' welfare	69	25	6
5.4.1 Procedures for monitoring progress and personal development	55	35	11
5.4.2 Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour	78	16	6

#### **Aspects of the School**

#### **Percentage of Schools**

*Inspection grade\* Good/very good Satisfactory Unsatisfactory/poor*

5.4.3 Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance	67	22	11
5.4.4 Procedures for child protection and promoting pupils' well-being, health and safety	54	33	13

#### **Partnership with Parents and the Community**

5.5 Partnership with parents and the community	55	39	6
5.5.1 Quality of information for parents	52	40	8
5.5.2 Parental involvement in children's learning	39	43	18
5.5.3 Enrichment through links with community	68	28	5

#### **Management and Efficiency**

##### **Leadership and Management**

6.1 Leadership and management	54	29	17
6.1.1 Leadership: clear educational direction for the school	69	17	14
6.1.2 Support and monitoring of teaching and curriculum development	31	32	37
6.1.3 Implementation of the school's aims, values and policies	54	31	14
6.1.4 Development planning, monitoring and evaluation	31	32	37
6.1.5 The school's ethos	73	19	8

##### **Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources**

6.2 Staffing, accommodation and learning resources	28	56	16
6.2.1 Match of number, qualification and experience of teachers to the demand of the curriculum	55	38	7
6.2.2 Match of number, qualification and experience of support staff to the demand of the curriculum	42	43	15
6.2.3 Arrangements for professional development of all staff	37	37	26
6.2.4 Adequacy of accommodation for effective delivery of the curriculum	31	49	20
6.2.5 Adequacy of resources (including books/materials/equipment) for effective delivery of the curriculum	20	53	27



### Efficiency of the School

6.3	Efficiency	58	33	8
6.3.1	Financial planning	58	25	17
6.3.2	Use of teaching and support staff	52	37	11
6.3.3	Use of learning resources and accommodation	56	39	5
6.3.4	Efficiency of financial control and school administration	81	16	3
6.4	Value for money	49	41	10

\* As explained in Annex 2, Good/very good includes grades 1-3, Satisfactory is grade 4, and Unsatisfactory/poor includes grades 5-7.

Figures have been rounded and may not add up to 100 per cent

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