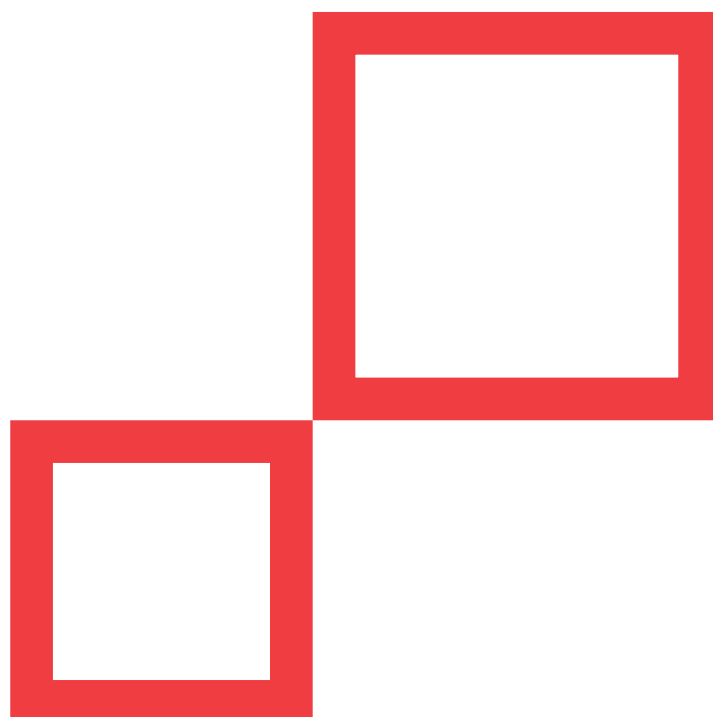


# A New Relationship with Schools



# Foreword

Earlier this year the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) set out our vision for a new relationship between government and schools and for changes for the future of inspection. Our aim is to help schools raise standards – with clearer priorities and less clutter for schools, and more information for parents. Five months on, this vision is taking shape with the development of cutting edge proposals on inspection, and schools and local education authorities (LEAs) actively engaged in helping us shape and test our policies.

This document sets out our intention to change the inspection system, subject to the scrutiny and approval of Parliament. It also sets out accompanying changes we believe will establish a new relationship with schools. In doing so we will improve education for pupils and ensure parents and the public know even more about the schools their children attend.

We set ourselves the task of delivering an intelligent accountability framework, a simplified school improvement process and improved data and information systems. The teaching profession has actively helped us develop the specific changes that will achieve these goals. The Implementation Review Unit (IRU) has remained at the forefront of this work, providing a clear vision of what will have a positive impact on schools. Alongside the IRU we are now working in different ways with 30 LEAs and 89 schools to shape and test the detailed elements.

In addition we have completed structured trials of the new inspection system with schools in 14 LEAs. The resulting proposals, set out in this publication, provide the foundation for achieving the new relationship with schools. The new system will give authority, energy and trust to schools by placing self-evaluation at the centre of the inspection process. The proposed lighter touch and shorter notice will reduce the overall inspection burden on schools, while the increased frequency of inspection will provide information that is fresh and relevant, both for the school's development needs and for parents.

The profession and the public alike have responded with energy and enthusiasm to the new relationship. LEAs and schools have welcomed the direction of reform, and formal responses to consultation have been overwhelmingly positive. This gives us the confidence that we are moving in the right direction.



**David Miliband**



**David Bell**

# Chapter 1

## Our Plans in Brief

### Why do we need a New Relationship with Schools?

Since 1997 we have seen outstanding improvement in education. Excellent teaching and commitment in schools coupled with innovative national programmes such as Specialist Schools and Excellence in Cities has been a combination for success. But now is the time to look again at the relationship between schools and central and local government and see how it might be improved to better address the current needs of the system.

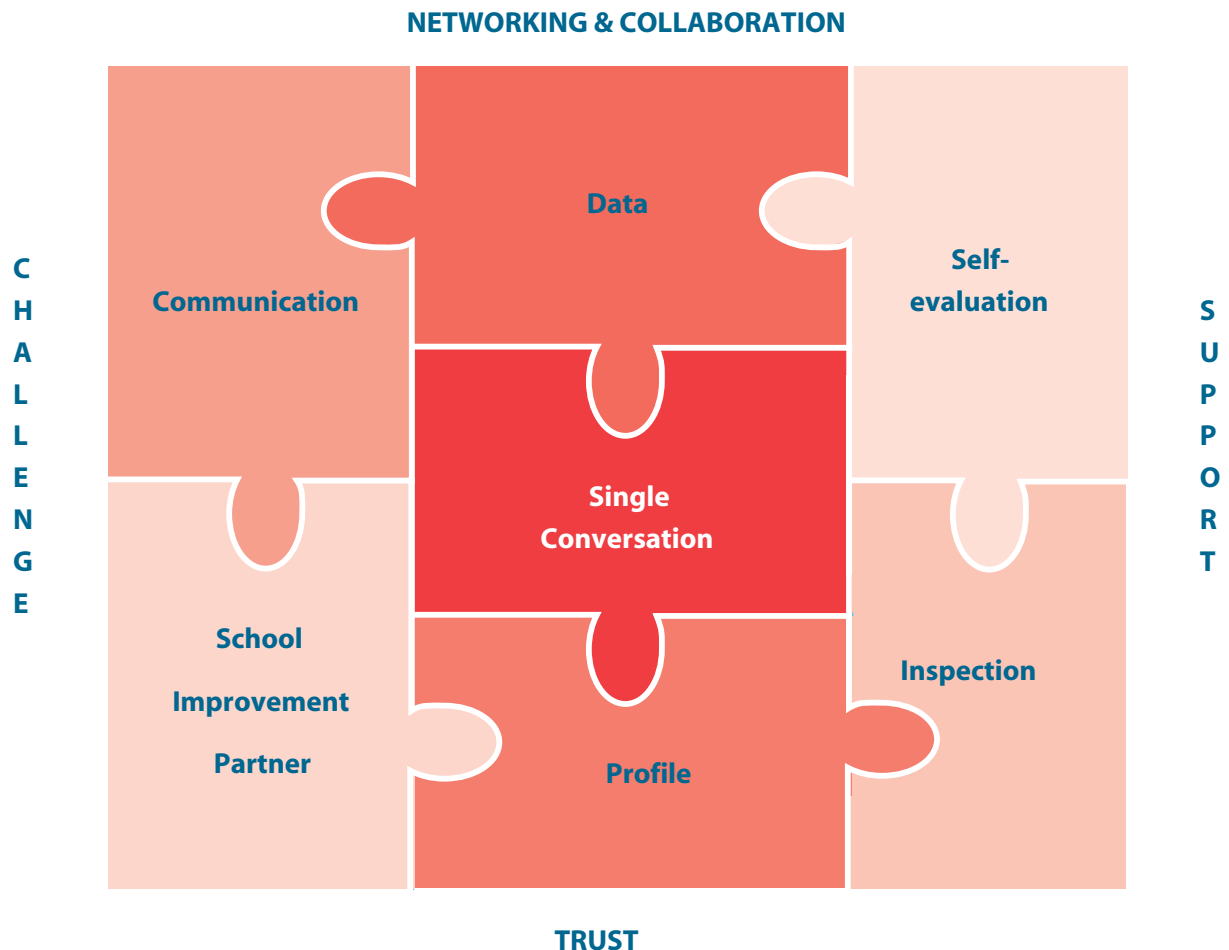
A lot has changed since 1997. Today schools are far more likely to have well established systems in place for self evaluation, development planning and performance management. By the end of July 2004 all schools will have been inspected at least twice by Ofsted. Evidence shows that inspection has underpinned the steady improvement in standards over the last decade. International studies show English schools are close to world class. More and more schools are seeking to offer their students personalised learning tailored to the needs, talents and aspirations of the individual.

In this context the time is right for a new relationship between government and the profession which:

- builds the capacity of schools to be effective learning institutions with rigorous self-evaluation, strong collaboration and effective planning for improvement
- delivers an intelligent accountability framework that is rigorous and a lighter touch, giving both schools and parents the information they need
- makes it easier for schools to access the support they require without duplicative bidding, planning and accountability systems
- puts in place a simpler, streamlined school improvement process based around a school's own annual cycle of planning, development, reflection and evaluation
- enables a unified dialogue to take place between schools and the wider education system.

We propose a cluster of interlocking changes that will affect school inspection, schools' relations with local and central government, schools' self-evaluation and planning, data collection from schools, and communications with schools.

This document describes the new relationship that we will develop with primary and secondary schools. Where the approach is different in primary schools, this is explicitly stated.



## A New Inspection System

Ofsted launched a major consultation, *The Future of Inspection* in February 2004. The great majority of responses welcomed the proposals and informed the development of them.

Subject to the scrutiny and approval of these proposals through parliament, the main features of the new inspections will be:

- shorter, sharper inspections that take no more than two days in a school and concentrate on closer interaction with senior managers in the school, taking self evaluation evidence as the starting point

- shorter notice of inspections, to avoid schools carrying out unnecessary pre-inspection preparation and to reduce the levels of stress often associated with an inspection. Shorter notice should also enable inspections to review the school in an environment much closer to the schools more usual working pattern
- smaller inspection teams with a greater number of inspections led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). Furthermore, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) will be accountable for all reports, including those written by non-HMI led inspection teams
- more frequent inspections, with the maximum period between inspections reduced from the current six years to three years, though more frequently for schools causing concern
- more emphasis placed on the school's own self-evaluation evidence, as the starting point for inspection and for the school's internal planning, and as the route to securing the regular input and feedback from their users – pupils, their parents and the community – in the school's development
- a common set of characteristics to inspection across all phases of education from early childhood to 19
- a simplification of the categorisation of schools causing concern. We intend to retain the current approach to schools that need special measures and remove the labels of serious weakness and inadequate sixth form, replacing them with a new single category of improvement notice for schools where there are weaknesses in the progress of pupils or in key aspects of the school's work.

The proposals are set out in more detail in Chapter 2. The experience of the new inspection system, in the field trials that started last term, is summarised in Chapter 3. Consultation responses are in the appendix.

The overall effect of these changes will be to lighten the burden for schools without losing any of the rigour of inspection. Schools' capacity to assess their own strengths and weaknesses will be greatly reinforced. Parents and the public will gain a clearer picture of schools' work. The spotlight will be focussed more sharply on the essentials of how well schools are developing their pupils' learning and personal growth.

## THE MAIN CHANGES AT A GLANCE

Current system	New system
6–10 weeks' notice before an inspection	2–5 days' notice
Relatively large inspection teams visiting for around a week	Small teams visiting for no more than 2 days – around a quarter of the current inspection weight
A maximum 6-year interval between inspections	A maximum 3-year interval
Inspections cover: standards and quality of education; leadership/management; and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Inspection reports will, as now, cover the standards and quality of education, leadership/management; and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the context of the 5 outcomes set out in <i>Every Child Matters</i>
Most schools undertake some form of evaluation, but it is not structured across all schools nor part of the inspection process	Inspection evidence will start from a school's self-evaluation
Collection of a wealth of information – extensive use of lesson observation	Focus on core systems and key outcomes, informed by lesson observation and other indicators of pupils' progress – self-evaluation evidence at the heart of the inspection
Inspections usually conducted by registered inspectors	HMI leading many inspections and involved in all inspections
Registered inspectors responsible for some inspection reports, HMI for others	HMCI accountable for all inspection reports
Detailed and relatively lengthy (30 pages +) inspection reports produced	Short, sharp reports (around 6 pages) focused on key outcomes with clearer recommendations for improvement
Reports produced within 40 days of the inspection event	Most reports will be with the governing body, at least in draft, by the end of the week of the inspection
Schools required to prepare a separate post-inspection action plan	Schools feed their intended actions into the school development plan
Various categories of schools causing concern – special measures, serious weaknesses, underachieving and inadequate sixth forms	Rationalised system with two categories – special measures and improvement notice

## A New Emphasis on Schools' Self-Evaluation

Intelligent accountability should be founded on the school's own views of how well it is serving its pupils and its priorities for improvement. This is what is meant by school self-evaluation.

Our proposals for a new relationship with schools offer the opportunity to make strong self-evaluation common practice in all schools. Many schools and LEAs have already developed strong routines of self-evaluation, but others have not. There is a lot of variation in the effectiveness, regularity and depth with which schools review their work. The time is right to stimulate every school to embed strong self-evaluation in its day-to-day practice.

We do not want to weigh down school self-evaluation with excessive bureaucracy. We intend to replace the current four forms with a new single self-evaluation form (SEF) which schools will be expected to keep up to date at least annually. This will be a standard form that captures data about the school that inspectors can use to inform their inspection visit. It will be for schools to develop their own process of self-evaluation and to fit the completion of the SEF into their core systems as best suits them. Ofsted and the DfES jointly will give very simple guidance on how schools can judge whether they are doing it well.

We believe there are six acid tests of effective self-evaluation:

- it asks the most important questions about pupils' learning, achievements and development
- it uses a range of telling evidence to answer these questions
- it benchmarks the school's and pupils' performance against the best comparable schools
- it involves staff, pupils, parents and governors at all levels
- it is integral to the school's central systems for assessing and developing pupils and for managing and developing staff
- it leads to action.

The professional associations are working with our encouragement to develop a range of tools, aids and training in self-evaluation which schools can pick and choose from, and similar work is also being carried out by the Primary National Strategy. Through the primary trials we will be exploring if there are additional ways that we can support primary schools to carry out their self-evaluation.

## A Simplified Approach to School Improvement

Many staff in schools complain that they work in a 'bidding culture', in which there are too many programmes and initiatives that distract them from the essentials of school improvement. Our intention is to simplify the demands on schools so that:

- every school is able to have a single conversation about its development priorities, its targets and its support needs
- the school's targets are set against a clear picture of national priorities and are based on rigorous self-evaluation and local needs
- there is a continuing simplification and rationalisation of funding support for school improvement
- a single plan, based on a school's self-evaluation, will satisfy all monitoring requirements
- schools are held accountable for pupil outcomes, not process measures or filling in the correct form.

Work is in progress within the DfES and with key national agencies including the Learning and Skills Council and the Specialist Schools Trust to reduce burdensome bidding and reporting requirements. The work has four aspects:

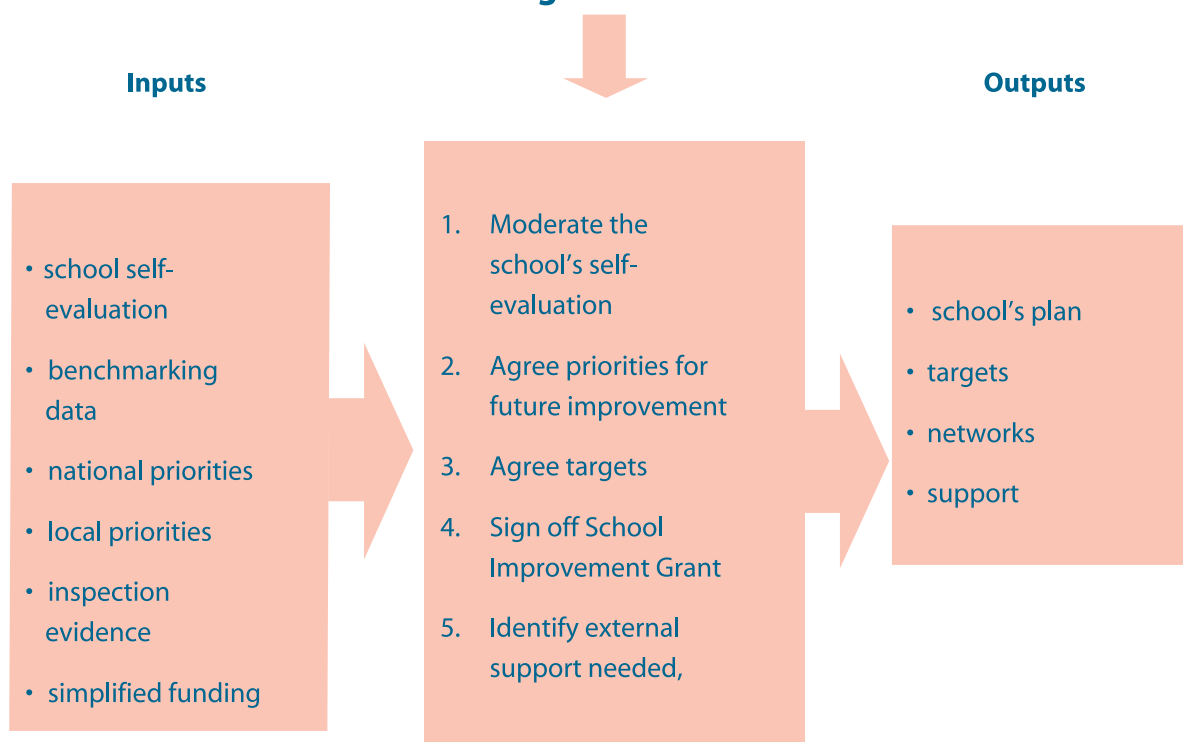
- 1 reviewing separate programmes to put together as much of the funding as possible into a single improvement grant, to cut out multiple accountabilities and to harmonise the output measures
- 2 identifying a single set of data for school improvement, to inform the schools' self evaluation and its interactions with its external partners in school improvement
- 3 restructuring the DfES to reduce central costs and to make for a more strategic direction to its work
- 4 trialling a 'single conversation'.

We are serious about these changes. As evidence of our intention to work with schools in a different way in future, the Department will reduce the number of its staff by a third between now and 2008. The outcome will be a centre which is less prescriptive and more strategic; that builds local capacity and reduces central control.



# NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHOOLS

## The Single Conversation



## School Improvement Partners

For secondary schools, we are working with six trial LEAs on a 'school improvement partner' (SIP) – a credible and experienced practitioner, in many cases someone with current or recent secondary headship experience. There are major challenges in establishing this new role. With the six LEAs we are hammering out solutions that can be trialled over the coming academic year. The new role will make an opportunity to create a stronger force for school improvement by:

- involving experienced serving heads in leading the process of reform
- offering every school a searching, professional, supportive challenge from outside in a way that is sensitive to the school's circumstances
- building the collective capacity of the school system.

Probably the most important challenge is how we can make the most of experienced serving headteachers as SIPs. The first group has been identified – some headteachers who will continue to run their schools but will work as SIPs for around 40 days a year; some headteachers who are able to work out of their schools full time for a period; some ex-heads working as independent consultants; and some LEA advisers with the right track record. A critical question for SIPs, whose main jobs are in school, is how to ensure their schools continue to be well led in their absence.

Another challenge is to define the job of the SIP, so that it gets the right balance between challenge and support. We have developed a job description with a high-level consultative group. The job will concentrate on building the school's capacity to drive improvement in its performance. The SIP's contribution will be evidence based and will focus on the school's plans and targets. He or she will:

- identify the needs of the school, using the school's own evaluation and evidence from other sources
- agree the school's priorities for improvement, and help the school align those with national and local priorities
- offer support and access to support from outside, including access to useful networks
- act as the main conduit between the school and the external agencies of local and national government.

The SIPs will be supported by brisk training, a national accreditation system, and local and national back-up. We are working with the National College for School Leadership and others to develop these, and we expect practitioners in the trial areas to help us shape this critically.

Many of those we are talking to point to the opportunity this new role offers to extend the professional development of headteachers, and to give headteachers a bigger lead in the national drive for school reform. They propose new ways for senior school staff to contribute to the management and leadership of the school system, in which leadership of a school is combined with bouts of external work for the wider school system, whether as SIPs, as inspectors, as a leaders of collaborative activity or in other roles.

For primary schools, we are working with our three primary trial LEAs, and two associates, to establish who within the LEA, or acting as an agent of the LEA, is best placed to hold the single conversation. The objectives of the single conversation, and the need for it to be carried out by a credible and experienced practitioner, are the same for both primary and secondary schools.

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS

- in secondary schools:
  - mainly experienced headteachers, working part time out of school or on secondment
  - others with senior education experience
- in primary schools, drawn from the range of professionals who are already supporting primary schools
- national accreditation and training \*
- “critical friends”, skilled in diagnosis of schools’ needs, and in building schools’ capacity
- accountable to Local Education Authority (or Children’s Trusts)
- local and national back up

\* For primary schools we are exploring how School Improvement Partners can be trained and quality assured to ensure that the single conversation is carried out consistently and effectively

## Better Communication

We have set ourselves the goal of improving the way in which we communicate with schools. We are changing our approach from an ‘old-style’ based on paper and on prescription, to a ‘new style’ communications model, based on involvement, participation and information delivered at the right time in the right way. New forms of communication will put schools in charge of the information they receive. We are stopping the batch of paper we automatically send to schools each month.

We want all web services for schools to be integrated, co-ordinated, and managed in line with a single set of standards and procedures and accessed through one portal with one username and password for all schools. We need to tidy up – we need a thorough ‘spring clean’. We want to provide a world-class information service with television, internet and magazines each playing to their respective strengths, but working together for schools.

The first 4,000 schools (all in the south west of England) started using the on-line ordering system at the start of June. Those schools are no longer receiving the monthly paper mailing, but are receiving regular email notification that enables them to order what they want when they need it. The new system has been piloted, and has shown that it gives schools control, flexibility and choice. All school staff now have access to the full range of resources, not just the school secretary and head. It will be rolled out region by region, with the aim of nationwide coverage by early 2005.

## School Profile

Equally important is how schools communicate with stakeholders, especially parents. As part of the new relationship we want to provide high quality information about schools to parents and the general public which gives them a broad and balanced view about what a school offers its pupils. We are currently consulting on the idea of a school profile which would make available, in one simple accessible document, key information about the school, its progress, and its priorities.

The Government launched the school profile consultation in March. Views are still coming in and it is too early to announce decisions about the content of the profile. It is clear, however, that most people welcome the concept. They want a short, objective document that presents the breadth of what a school offers its pupils and its community, combining standardised data provided by the centre with the schools' own description of their work.

There is an opportunity now to improve the quality of schools' accountability to parents. Instead of legal requirements to inform parents, imposed from the outside and of limited value to parents, schools should have incentives to involve parents in the best ways that support their children's learning. Our intention therefore is to reinforce the involvement of parents by:

- expecting schools to give a voice to parents in the regular evaluation of the school's performance
- giving parents fuller and more accessible information through the profile and more frequent inspections.

We intend at the same time to deregulate some statutory requirements that are of limited value to parents:

- we will remove the statutory requirement for an annual meeting by governors with parents. In most schools these are sparsely attended, and a poor substitute for real involvement by parents in the life of the school
- we will, subject to the consultation on the profile, remove the statutory requirement for an annual report by governors to parents

- we will simplify the requirements for schools to publish a prospectus, so that parents can see the essential information they need in the profile and the burdens on schools are lightened.

## Improved Data

As part of the new relationship, we are reviewing the data that DfES, other Government departments and national education partners collect from schools. Where these organisations are asking for data that schools do not collect and use for their own purposes, we are reviewing rigorously whether the burden imposed on schools justifies the value of the information and the use made of it. Through the *Protocol on Data Sharing and Rationalisation in the Schools Sector*, the DfES and national education partners have agreed that there needs to be a clear business case if schools are to be asked to collect information that they themselves do not need.

The DfES is already working with protocol partners to achieve a reduction in the burdens of data collection from schools. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) previously collected pupil registration data from schools each December, in order to produce mark-sheets for the summer's tests. Similar information was also collected through the DfES pupil level annual school census (PLASC) survey in January. QCA agreed to obtain the data needed to produce mark-sheets from PLASC. It is estimated that this saved one hour's administration in every maintained school.

It is planned that as much school and LEA data as possible will be collected through four censuses. These will cover pupil, adult workforce, school-level and LEA data. In line with the principle of 'collect once, use many times', data from these censuses will be transmitted through LEAs to a national data warehouse. The DfES, other Government departments and national education partners will get the school data they needed from the warehouse, rather than sending separate surveys to schools.

The DfES and Ofsted are working side by side to make the school improvement data we provide to schools simpler, timelier and easier to use. This work builds on the considerable progress already made on the establishment of PLASC and the Pupil Achievement Tracker.

## Field Trials

We are engaging schools and LEAs directly in the design and the development of the new systems. The new inspection framework is being tested in 14 different LEAs in a broad range of school settings. The DfES is working with eight of these LEAs and 89 schools to trial different aspects of the new relationship. Teachers, heads and LEA officers are closely involved with the development of the policy and are advising officials on what will, and will not, work at school level. In addition to the eight main trial LEAs, 22 other LEAs have been invited to participate as associate LEAs, working on specific areas of policy development.

Care has been taken to choose a variety of LEAs and their schools that will test the new relationship in different contexts. The LEAs invited to take part in the trials represent a cross section of large and small, rural and urban, metropolitan, shire county and unitary settings. We have also attempted to obtain a broad mix of school type, size and context.

During the next academic year, the schools will test as many aspects of the new relationship process as possible. The trials will broadly follow a two phase model, with work to develop and define the key elements ongoing until September 2004, followed by structured field trials of different aspects of the new relationship. While our engagement with schools and LEAs is still at an early stage it has already thrown certain important issues into sharp relief. Work so far has highlighted the importance of local coordination across a range of different partners including other parts of the local authority.

In addition to this work at local level, all the emerging findings from the trials are being discussed with the practitioners' panel of the IRU, which is reporting its conclusions on the trials with its recommendations directly to Ministers.

Both the recommendations of the IRU and the evaluation of the trials will lead to adjustments and revisions of the new policies before we attempt to undertake a national roll out of the new relationship with schools. We are confident that through careful and systematic engagement with heads, teachers and colleagues in LEAs we can build a new relationship that really addresses the needs of education in the 21st century.

## Chapter 2

# Inspection Proposals in Detail

Ofsted launched a major consultation in February 2004 on the future of inspection. At the heart of this reappraisal is the belief that inspection can further support the improvement of schools through more regular and much lighter engagement, linked directly to the schools' own cycle of self-evaluation and planning. This new approach to inspection forms a major part of a more intelligent accountability for schools. It offers a substantial reduction in burdens on schools, but no less of the rigour established by Ofsted in its first decade.

This chapter sets out in detail the changes to inspection that we propose. In many respects, those we consulted confirmed that our proposals are right – their views are set out in the appendix. In a few important respects, the views we received have helped us to modify the original proposals. The proposals will continue to develop in light of the experience of the trials.

### **Notice of Inspection**

There is a widespread view among schools that too much notice of inspection is currently given; response to the consultation from parents groups questioned why any notice is given at all. Broadly, the more notice given, the greater the risk that the school spends unnecessary time and money on pre-inspection preparation, which may, in extreme cases, result in the inspection failing to arrive at a wholly accurate picture of the school. The much greater risk is that the school's normal work may be disrupted for weeks in advance of inspection.

The proposal is, therefore, to give as little notice as is practicable. The Secretary of State for Education and Skills has agreed that 2-5 working days offers a pragmatic solution. What this means is subject to interpretation in the light of experience. Heads have commented that about a week is required to make sensible arrangements in order to ensure that the inspection runs smoothly. At present, what is being piloted is a pattern of notification to staff towards the end of a week (during the pilot phase the headteacher is given more notice), with the inspection running from the following Tuesday lunchtime to Thursday lunchtime. This can certainly be made to work, but whether it is the best possible pattern needs to be

examined in the light of further piloting. In addition, there may be a small number of occasions when no-notice visits would be appropriate. It is a power that HMCI will use sparingly but where there are serious concerns about the education of the pupils in a school it is only right that these should be followed up immediately.

## Process of Inspection

Inspectors will in the future spend a maximum of two days in a school. For many schools, this will be a sharp reduction in the time inspectors spend in their school.

The expected maximum period between inspections will be three years, instead of the current six years. Overall the weight of inspection – with much sharper inspections, a smaller team, but at a greater frequency – will be roughly half the current weight.

A shorter, sharper inspection will start from the school's self-evaluation, and will sample the quality of how the school serves its pupils and the school's core systems. Current inspections collect a wealth of information; in particular, inspectors build up an extensive database of lesson observation in all inspections. Direct observation will always remain important, but it may not predominate to quite the same extent in the new era. The pattern of inspection activities undertaken will depend on the lead inspector's analysis of the issues arising from the school's self-evaluation. This does not mean that inspectors will be predisposed to track weaknesses rather than strengths, simply that they will undertake such activities as are necessary to clarify areas of obscurity, or remove apparent contradictions in the school's self evaluation.

Discussions with staff and pupils, scrutiny of written work, examination of data and assessment records and tracking of pupils through a school day will be much more prominent than the inspection of subjects of the curriculum. Ofsted will gather information about subjects through a separate programme of subject-focused surveys in a sample of schools. Religious education (RE) has, of course, a particular statutory position. Schools will be required, as now, to self-assess the extent to which they meet all statutory requirements, including the provision of RE and collective worship. The quality of provision in RE, as in other subjects of the curriculum, will be assessed through subject-focused surveys.

The views of parents will, as now, be an important influence on inspection findings. Inspectors will seek to reflect that in three ways:

- by scrutinising the school's self-evaluation for clear evidence that the school has sought the views of parents and pupils and reflected them in its planning
- by providing opportunities, such as website pages or an invitation to write to the inspectors at the school, for parents to make their views known to inspectors during the inspection



- by examining the possibility of establishing a permanent local presence, to which representations can be made.

Governors, including parent governors, will be invited, as now, to meet inspectors during the course of inspection.

## The Staffing of Inspections

HMI will have some involvement in all inspections. They will lead many, especially in the secondary phase, and will have a management role in relation to others. It follows from that proposal, which has widespread support, that HMCI should own all reports. This differs from the current position, whereby registered inspectors are responsible for the publication of reports. It would be impossible to defend to schools a position whereby some had reports from HMCI, and some from registered inspectors; some had reports that HMCI could amend, while others did not. Such a disparity would lead naturally to suspicions of a two-tier system.

Contracted inspectors will nevertheless continue to lead and be team members in a large number of inspections. Overall, they will do the bulk of the work. Ofsted has consulted the contractors who currently tender for, organise, staff and manage school inspections on what kind of arrangements will best serve the new inspections. We need to make full use of the expertise of the best independent inspectors. We also want to find ways of involving serving headteachers.

It will not be possible to include lay inspectors in every inspection. Where inspections are carried out by only one inspector, the inspector clearly needs to be a professional with significant experience in teaching. Ofsted continues, however, to value the contribution of lay inspectors and is exploring (and piloting) more flexible ways of using them, for example across a group of schools within an area, to explore partnership working with parents and other stakeholders.

## A Common Inspection Framework

School inspections will still need to cover the four areas of the Education Act 1996:

- quality of education provided
- educational standards achieved
- leadership and management
- spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

These remain key to inspection; development work has focused on ensuring that these areas can be adequately covered by a small team of inspectors, working for a very short time: one

inspector for one day in the smallest primary schools and no more than five inspectors for two days in the largest secondary schools.

At the same time, inspections of schools and other educational settings, whether in the early years or in the learning and skills sector, must cover the contribution of the institutions, as appropriate, to the five outcomes for children and young people set out in *Every Child Matters*. These are:

- being healthy
- staying safe
- enjoying and achieving
- making a productive contribution
- enjoying economic well-being.

In order to evaluate the success of services in securing these outcomes inspectors conducting joint area reviews of children's services will need to collect evidence from the inspection of schools, colleges and other settings. They will be greatly assisted if the evidence is available in a similar format; the public, too, would perhaps find it helpful if Ofsted inspection reports resembled each other more closely than they currently do.

Of course, it would be absurd to argue that the foundation stage in a small primary school can be inspected with the approach that works in a large, further education college. There is no intention to seek a uniform approach or even, at this stage, a common inspection framework 0-19. It is, however, clear that, while still meeting the particular needs of the phases and sectors they cover, our inspection frameworks can share a large number of common characteristics. They can:

- have the same overall architecture
- ask the same key questions
- use the same grading scales
- follow the same principles of inspection
- cover the five outcomes set out in *Every Child Matters*
- share the same terminology
- lead to reports of approximately the same length and structure
- be focused on outcomes.

The Common Inspection Framework for inspection post-16 has been a great success. It has been widely accepted, not only in colleges, but across the whole of the Adult Learning Inspectorate's (ALI) very wide remit. Ofsted has agreed some amendments with the ALI, which will enable the Common Inspection Framework to be extended to schools.

For schools, we intend to devise a framework that will set out the statutory purpose of inspection. We are discussing how the four areas of the 1996 Act and the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters* can best be integrated.

## Self-Evaluation

Schools that do not know themselves cannot adequately manage themselves. Their planning is at best a shot in the dark. The school's self-evaluation form is therefore both a key part of the evidence base for inspectors and a large part of the central nervous system of the school made visible. Where a school possesses inadequate evidence, or makes insufficiently rigorous use of evidence, inspectors will draw conclusions about its management.

Inspectors will, therefore, at all stages of the inspection actively and consciously engage with the school's self-evaluation, involving the school in a dialogue which will lead, not only to a rigorous report on the school, but also to a strengthening of the self-evaluation process itself. By engaging in that critical relationship with the central management processes of the school, inspectors will be drawing on and strengthening the professionalism of teachers.

Schools will be expected to keep a self-evaluation form updated at least once a year in preparation for inspection. The self-evaluation form will be a key document for inspectors and for schools. Ofsted will make clear guidance available for its completion.

The self-evaluation form is no more than the record of the school's self-evaluation; it does not seek to prescribe the processes whereby the school arrives at the detailed knowledge of itself that is necessary for adequate management and planning. These are matters for the school, and there are many examples of good practice on which schools can draw. Ofsted and the DfES will issue guidance on self-evaluation, but at the level of principle, not detailed prescription. The key is that the school's self-evaluation should be based on a rigorous and honest analysis of adequate evidence, which will include the views of parents and of pupils.

## Reporting

Inspectors will give feedback throughout the inspection: for example, to teachers who are observed teaching, or, where possible, to headteachers and senior management teams at the end of each day. Such feedback will be brief, and will often refer to issues that have arisen, rather than to definitive judgements that have been made. Where the team is contemplating a judgement that the school is inadequate, the lead inspector will make this clear to the school as soon as possible.

Before leaving the school, the lead inspector will briefly indicate to the headteacher and wherever possible, governors, whether in the team's view, the school is making adequate provision and will feed back on the different sections of the evaluation framework. The lead

inspector will then return the following day with a draft of the report, or will send it electronically to the school. This will allow the school's senior team (and governing body) to see the draft and check it for factual accuracy. The aim is to read and moderate reports and have them published within three weeks of the inspection.

## Schools Causing Concern

The current arrangements for schools causing concern have been notably successful in bringing about the schools' improvement. The designations have concentrated minds on remedying the weaknesses. Monitoring visits by HMI reinforce the accountability of all parties for the schools' progress. In the case of special measures, the regularity and frequency of the visits, and the engagement of HMI helps to steer the urgent process of improvement.

There is scope to improve the current arrangements. Occasionally, schools have been made subject to special measures when they have already made enough progress to demonstrate that they have sufficient capacity to improve without the additional support and challenge of special measures. Nor has it always been easy to justify the differences between the monitoring regimes for the various categories, and elements of the systems (for example, the production and evaluation of the action plan) are unnecessarily bureaucratic and time consuming.

The underachieving category has been the least effective. Although most of the schools placed in the category have improved, many schools which are performing less well than others in similar contexts have not been designated as underachieving and so the current arrangements have not fully got to grips with the underperformance of some schools.

Consequently, it is proposed to retain just two categories of schools causing concern: schools which require special measures because they are failing to provide an acceptable standard of education and show insufficient capacity to improve; and those that, while providing an acceptable standard of education, are nevertheless not performing as well as they should in one or more respects, and should be served with an improvement notice.

In making both designations, inspectors will consider standards or criteria relating to: underperformance of the school and weaknesses in the progress of learners; weaknesses in the climate for learning and personal development; weaknesses in teaching; and weaknesses in leadership and management, and in the school's capacity for improvement.

In making the judgement that special measures are required, specific attention will be given to the school's capacity to improve. In serving an improvement notice, specific attention will be given to the learners' progress and the value added by the school.

Statutory requirements relating to corroboration will no longer be necessary because HMCI will own all school reports. We also intend to remove the statutory requirement for post-inspection action plans. Rather, schools will be expected to modify their existing plans to

address weaknesses identified in their inspections, but there will not be a statutory requirement for the production of a specific document. LEAs will be expected to provide effective support and will be required to produce a statement of action within two weeks of the school's designation in either of the 'causing concern' categories. The LEA's statement, its impact and the effectiveness of the LEA's support will be evaluated by HMI when they visit the school. HMI will provide school improvement seminars for schools subject to both proposed designations.

The powers of intervention of the Secretary of State, the LEA and, where appropriate, the diocese, will be the same as those which currently apply to schools requiring special measures and schools with serious weaknesses, except that the Secretary of State's power to direct closure of the school will apply only to schools requiring special measures.

The progress of schools requiring special measures and, where appropriate, of schools served with an improvement notice will be monitored by HMI, with appropriate statutory backing. Schools requiring special measures will receive their first visit four to six months after designation. HMI will be able to publish a report at any time imposing or removing either of the two proposed designations.

Schools that remain subject to special measures two years after designation will be re-inspected and a new report published renewing or removing the designation (where appropriate, substituting an improvement notice). Schools served with an improvement notice will be re-inspected after one year, when the designation will be removed or renewed, or the school made subject to special measures.

## Chapter 3

# The Proposed New Inspection System – how it will work for schools?

Ofsted conducted a small number of pilot inspections in the spring term and amended the methodology to take account of the lessons learned. A further series of pilots began in early May and will continue through the summer and autumn terms. It is too early to define what the process will look like ultimately. Nevertheless, these early experiences are close to meeting the principles set out in the consultation paper launched by HMCI in February.

Schools will experience an inspection that feels very different to what has gone before. The reduced time inspectors spend in the school, the short notice of the inspection, the central use made of the school's own self-evaluation to focus the inspection on the 'central nervous system' of the school, rather than subjects of the curriculum, are important changes. An experienced HMI comments on one of the pilot inspections:

*This inspection felt different to those done in the past. It was professionally rewarding to feel we were working with the grain of the school and involving them more in reaching our judgements. This is a fairer and less stressful approach, and schools are more likely to be convinced about what they need to do to improve.'*

While a headteacher comments:

*The inspection was a positive experience for us. We welcomed the team's openness in sharing the initial notes and in meeting regularly with the senior management team to discuss findings and clarify issues.*

*The team's methodology involved us as partners in the inspection process to a greater extent than before. We felt that our professional assessments (as expressed in the self-evaluation form and during the inspection) were understood and respected.*

*Even though the inspection was shorter, it was rigorous and clearly focused and the team's observations were perceptive and informative. The feedback was stimulating and has already improved work on developments to move the school forward.*

## Pre-inspection

Schools in the pilots were asked to complete a self-evaluation form, which they accessed through the Ofsted website. The self-evaluation form takes the place of the current forms S1 to S4 and gives inspectors the information they need directly from the school before inspection. It will be a 'smart form' so that, after the head has filled in the basic details about the school, the rest of the form contains only questions relevant for that type of school. The latest draft of the self-evaluation form has comparatively few, high-level questions for schools to answer, based on the evaluation requirements of the Common Inspection Framework.

Pilot schools have responded well to the self-evaluation form although they have found the analysis required to complete the form challenging. One head teacher in the first round of pilots describes completing the SEF as:

*The most important experience yet in shaping the future of the school*

He goes on to add:

*The SEF made me realise my own management weaknesses at this school and was a stressful time.*

The most effective self-evaluation forms are evaluative; they set out issues clearly, explain what the school is doing to address them and describe what impact actions are having on pupils. For example, in its analysis of how well learners achieve one school states:

*Analysis of the relative performance of boys and girls has been undertaken, revealing that our less able girls tend to perform better than our less able boys. We have raised staff awareness of this issue, building on earlier in-service training, and have in place the following strategies for addressing this imbalance...*

The school goes on to set out the impact the strategies are having on the achievement of the boys concerned. However, in many self-evaluation forms the impact of the school's actions on pupil outcomes is not sufficiently explicit.

Typically in these new inspections the lead inspector contacts the school a couple of days before the inspection and discusses arrangements with the headteacher. An open and honest relationship is essential particularly as the inspections are short and are focused on the school's view of itself.

The inspection methodology places self-evaluation at the heart of the inspection. The form is the most crucial piece of evidence available to the inspection team. It is used by the lead

inspector, along with the previous report and the school PANDA, to develop pre-inspection hypotheses which are used to brief the inspection team, to focus the inspection and as an agenda for discussion with the senior managers in the school. Given the short notice, there is little time for preparation by inspectors prior to arriving at the school. Here again the SEF is crucial as it has to provide inspectors with the information they need to understand the context of the school, key strengths and weaknesses and actions the school is taking to develop the strengths and improve the weaknesses.

## The inspection

The collection of evidence throughout the inspection focuses on what is necessary to corroborate the self-evaluation form's assertions and explore any differences. This process strongly encourages a sense that the inspection is undertaken 'with' and not 'to' the school. Where this has worked best in the pilots there have been regular meetings between the senior management of the school and the inspection team to explore the self-evaluation form's assertions and the evidence which has been gathered.

The early part of the inspection has usually involved corroborating the school's view about the standards and progress achieved by the pupils and an initial exploration of inspection issues. 'Inspection trails' have been used to test particular assertions made in the self-evaluation form. These have involved lesson observations, but have equally focused on discussions with staff and pupils and the examination of the school's monitoring arrangements.

Performance data form an important part of the inspection. Judgements about the progress pupils make are, in part, based on the value added by the school, but also come from first-hand observation and discussion with the school about data it may hold, which throw light on the performance of different groups of pupils. At an early stage in the inspection, standards are evaluated by agreeing the performance data with the senior management team. A secondary school report states:

*Inspectors judge that further improvements in the students' achievement and standards can be made. However, they agree with the school that overall they are good. This view is supported by the consistent upward trends in recent results and data that show that most students make good progress overall during their time in the school.*

Along with a continued focus on the personal development of pupils, including their behaviour and attendance, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, prominence is given to the five outcomes with which *Every Child Matters* is concerned. They are woven inextricably into the evaluation schedule and reporting arrangements. For example, on 'being healthy' a pilot report states:



*Parents and pupils hold very positive views about the welfare arrangements... The pupils feel safe and know routines well. The school places a high priority on staying healthy and numerous initiatives, such as the 'Trim Trail', encourage pupils to appreciate a healthy lifestyle. They know that a balanced diet is important and some expressed concerns that their school meals did not always have healthy options. They are keen to improve their environment through active litter campaigns and recycling schemes.*

The inspection concentrates on those issues which are highlighted as significant within the school, through specific inspection trails, using case study material, discussion with pupils and members of staff and with other support services where necessary. So for example, there may be issues to consider concerning a significant number of pupils with particular needs. Inspectors will want to be clear how well the school knows the pupils' needs, what they are achieving, the quality of teaching they receive, whether the curriculum is matched to their needs, how well they are supported and how effectively provision is monitored and evaluated by the school's management.

This is illustrated well in this report on curriculum provision in a large secondary school.

*Some students are guided towards the bridge project, which supports younger students who need specific support, or onto pathway plus, which includes a half day at college for students aged 14 to 16. The best teachers adapt the curriculum so that it effectively challenges gifted and talented students and builds up the skills of those with special educational needs, but the extent of good practice is inconsistent.*

The quality of teaching is judged on a wide range of evidence. Clearly the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve are directly related to the quality of the teaching they receive. The school's view about teaching is set out in the self-evaluation form. In the pilot inspections this view was tested partly through lesson visits; for example where the school identified strengths and weaknesses or areas for improvement, and by examining records of monitoring. In two of the pilots lesson observations took place with the school's senior managers to test the accuracy of their judgements. Discussions with pupils about their work proved to be an important source of evidence about the consistency and quality of the teaching they receive. In the following example inspectors reporting on a large secondary school state that:

*The school's view that the quality of teaching is good, with some very strong features, is well founded. It explains why standards are as high as they are. The judgements that senior managers make of the quality of individual lessons are accurate, which was demonstrated when they joined inspectors for the observation of two lessons. Inspectors' visits to lessons, and discussions with pupils, further confirmed that teaching is strong in most parts of the school. It was clear that teachers are well informed and have very good relationships with the pupils, who come ready and willing to learn. Teachers plan their lessons well and systematically move the pupils forward. In the best lessons, they take things a stage further by*

*stimulating the pupils' interest and curiosity and by making them think hard about what they are doing. However, the pupils can be all too willing to let teachers do much of the work for them. From the evidence of several lessons seen, teachers need to stimulate and challenge the pupils more if standards are to be securely levered up. Many pupils explained that their work is not thoroughly marked and assessed, an issue from the previous inspection that has not been fully resolved. They would also like to have more active involvement in self-evaluation to help them understand better where and how they need to improve their work.*

The quality of leadership and management, especially where key figures have been in place for some time, will usually be revealed by their impact on the progress and personal development of the pupils, and the quality of teaching, curriculum and care. These new shorter inspections shift the balance of accountability between the external inspection process and the school's own judgements. They place a greater onus on the school's own process of self-evaluation to be a professional and objective evaluation of its performance, priorities for improvement, and targets. Where a school's own judgements are found to be partial or inadequate, inspectors will draw conclusions about a lack of quality shown in leadership and management by the school's management team and governing body. The strength of leadership and management is a major factor in determining the school's capacity to improve. In one large secondary school inspectors report:

*The school judges that the quality of leadership and management is very good, and inspectors agree. The leadership of the school, including governors, has successfully communicated a clear vision and high expectations of success to the broader community. Improvements in performance have been secured, but not at the expense of care for individuals. Morale is high.*

Another inspection reports a different story:

*Current plans have too many priorities for a clear, strategic direction to emerge. There are procedures to check that actions are completed, but it is not always clear what is expected and exactly when it should be done. A critical weakness is that there is no way of checking what effect the actions are having on the pupils because the plans do not say what this should be, and so the school and the governors have no way of knowing if the policies are working or not. As a result, potentially effective policies have not achieved the desired effect because they are not carried out properly. This has led to a false view that progress is being made.*

# Appendix

## Future of Inspection Consultation Response – Final Analysis

Total responses (including all internet responses, e-mails and letters): 1,377

### Responses from:

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Schools – 63% (869, including 105 from teachers)

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Inspectors – 14% (196)

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Parents – 9% (120)

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National Organisations – 4% (56)

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Pupils/students – 1% (7)

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LEAs – 1% (13)

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Others – 8% (116)

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Total number of responses from organisations: 849

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Total number of responses from individuals: 528

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Average support for each consultation question: 77%.

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Average opposition for each consultation question: 9%.

### Summary

LEAs, headteachers and governors have strongly welcomed the future of inspection consultation document. Most teaching unions offered broad support. The National Union of Teachers supported the proposal to introduce a more consistent approach through the 0-19 age group, but expressed reservations about other proposals outlined in the consultation paper. Independent inspectors have generally supported the suggestions outlined in the

consultation document, but some expressed concern about the range and volume of work available for independent inspectors and contractors in the short and medium term.

## Future of Inspection Consultation Questions

### Should inspections be more frequent, but shorter?

Full/partial support: 74% (1019)

Do not agree: 15% (210)

There is broad agreement in this area. However, a small number of respondents (11) expressed concern that the new model of inspection would exclusively target the core curriculum. In addition, two specialist schools expressed concern that inspections would not evaluate the effect of the subject specialism on the wider curriculum. Nine respondents expressed concern whether section 23 inspections of faith schools and inspections under the new Ofsted model could continue to follow the same cycle, and the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) expressed concern that the introduction of a reduced inspection cycle for Ofsted could result a different cycle for independent schools, which are inspected jointly with CSCI.

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) asked that the new inspection framework should provide evidence for how schools are promoting social inclusion for minority ethnic groups. Concerns on progress should be brought to the attention of the CRE. The National Association of Governors & Managers asked for inspections to continue to review governors' documents until they can ascertain whether governors find the process useful.

### Should schools be given less notice of an inspection?

Full/partial support: 74% (1012)

Do not agree: 17% (227)

Overall, 75% of headteachers and governors, 58% of teachers and 73% of independent inspectors supported the idea of a shorter notice period. Parents in particular felt that this would enable inspectors to see the "real school". The National Governors' Council and the National Association of Governors & Managers, together with 13 individual headteachers and governors, suggested that a notice period of one week would increase the possibility of governor involvement, reduce the amount of unnecessary preparation in schools and would enable a school to rearrange practical issues which may inhibit an inspection gaining a typical view of a school (such as the headteacher being on a training course). A further 12 respondents suggested a two-week notice period. Only five (0.4 per cent) wanted the status quo to be maintained.

A governor suggested that parents and governors' meetings should be organised after inspection or that the lead inspector could contact the chair of governors by phone to discuss the progress of the inspection.

**Should there be greater collaboration between Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and independent inspectors in school inspection?**

Full/partial support: 78% (1075)

Do not agree: 3% (46)

The proposal was supported by 84% of headteachers, governors and teachers as they perceive that this would increase consistency. Only 1% of schools and school staff expressed a view on the future of lay inspectors, although 79% of those do not consider that lay inspectors have added value to the inspection process. The CSCI suggested that young people should be recruited as lay inspectors.

Seven independent inspectors have expressed concern about the potential for bias or the perception of bias in one inspector undertaking a primary inspection. One inspector suggested that several primary inspections could take place in an area at one time so that inspectors can support each other at key meetings. The Institute of Education, NASUWT, the General Teaching Council, the Secondary Heads Association, the Learning Skills & Development Agency and six schools suggested that headteachers should participate in inspection teams.

**Should Ofsted take a more consistent approach to the inspection of education and care through the age range 0-19 years?**

Full/partial support: 78% (1073)

Do not agree: 3% (38)

The majority of respondents who commented on this area wanted assurance that a consistent inspection model would not be rigorously applied without taking account of substantive differences in education and care for different age groups.

**Should Ofsted inspections capture the views of parents/carers, pupils/students, and governors, outside of the inspection visit, for example, as part of the school's self-evaluation process?**

Full/partial support: 80% (1094)

Do not agree: 7% (78)

Concern was expressed by 12% of independent inspectors about the quality of some schools' self-evaluation material: 84% of schools (particularly those that appeared to have embedded self-evaluation in their organisational culture) welcomed the proposal. Seven schools suggested that HMCI should publish a guide to self-evaluation so Ofsted's expectations were clearly stated prior to the first tranche of inspection under the new model.

**Should Ofsted produce inspection reports more quickly and place inspection judgements alongside those of the school?**

Full/partial support: 80% (1105)

Do not agree: 6% (77)

One governor asked that Ofsted carefully review the use of jargon in inspection reports and four respondents said that the reports should be more concise.

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